



## **Finance Committee Report**

### **City of Newton** **In City Council**

**Tuesday, May 27, 2025**

**Present:** Councilors Gentile (Chair), Malakie, Greenberg, Bixby, Lipof, Humphrey, and Grossman

**Also present:** Councilor Farrell

**Absent:** Councilor Micley

**City staff present:** Comptroller Steve Curley; Financial Planning & Analysis Manager Perry Rosenfield; Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux; Financial Analyst II Trevor Goehring; Senior Analyst Endrit Poreci; Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo; Director of Parks and Open Space Luis Demorizi; Commissioner of Public Buildings Joshua Morse; Commissioner of Public Works Shawna Sullivan; Commissioner of Health and Human Services Shin-Yi Lao; Assistant Fire Chief Antonio Bianchi, Police Chief George McMains; Library Director Jill Mercurio; Historic Newton Director Lisa Dady

All Finance agendas and reports, both past and present, can be found at the following link:  
<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/city-clerk/city-council/council-standing-committees/finance-committee>

For more information regarding this meeting, a video recording can be found at the following link:  
[https://youtu.be/XM0\\_90nNETU?si=YemPiSxVY3aDPY8R](https://youtu.be/XM0_90nNETU?si=YemPiSxVY3aDPY8R).

**#147-25      Appointment of Rajeev Parlikar to the Horace Cousens Industrial Fund**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR appointing Rajeev Parlikar, 252 Pearl Street, Newton as a trustee of the Horace Cousens Industrial Fund for a term of office set to expire on June 1, 2028 (60 Days: 07/19/2025).

**Action:**      **Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:**      Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo introduced Rajeev Parlikar. Rajeev Parlikar detailed his experience as part of the School Committee and the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC). Though he will not be running for re-election on the School Committee, he wishes to remain involved in the community.

Councilor Greenberg thanked Mr. Parlikar and moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**Referred to Public Safety & Transportation and Finance Committees**

**#112-25      Appropriation of \$90,000 for a new plow truck for the Newton Fire Department**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate ninety thousand dollars (\$90,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash to fund the purchase of a new plow truck for the Newton Fire Department.

**Action:** Finance Approved 7-0

**Note:** Assistant Fire Chief Bianchi explained that the requested vehicle is a pickup truck responsible for cleaning the front of the stations so that trucks can enter and exit during storms. It is also responsible for salting, sanding, and cleaning the parking lots of the station. It will replace a 2009 pickup truck that has been breaking down.

Councilor Lipof moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

### **Referred to Programs & Services and Finance Committees**

#### **#122-25 Appropriation of \$150,000 for Library data wiring**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash to add to and update the Newton Free Library's data wiring to improve connectivity, data security and transmission speed in heavily used patron and staff areas.

**Programs & Services Held 6-0-2 (Councilors Baker and Humphrey Abstained) on 05/08/2025**

**Finance Held 6-0-1 (Councilor Humphrey Abstained) on 05/08/2025**

**Action:** Finance Approved 7-0

**Note:** Library Director Jill Mercurio explained that the 34-year-old Library building still relies on its original Cat 3 data wiring. Given the high volume of daily internet use by visitors and staff, there is a need to update the wiring. This will support upgrades to the technology in the building's three meeting rooms and eleven study rooms, the installation of door locking systems, and updates to the building's security cameras.

Councilor Malakie moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

#### **#149-25 Accept and expend the sum of \$25,000 to upgrade and develop the exhibits at Historic Newton**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) from an FY25 State budget earmark to upgrade and develop the exhibits at Historic Newton.

**Action:** Finance Approved 7-0

**Note:** Historic Newton Director Lisa Dady thanked Senator Cynthia Creem who helped put this earmark into the budget. She explained that the earmarked funds will go towards the designer for a new exhibit on the first floor of Jackson Homestead to cover major themes in Newton History.

Councilor Malakie moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**#116-25      Appropriation of \$40,000 to repair the fountain located within the traffic island at the Chestnut St and Highland St intersection**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to repair the fountain located within the traffic island at the Chestnut St and Highland St intersection.

**Finance Held 7-1 (Councilor Micley Opposed) on 05/12/2025**

**Action:      Finance Approved as Amended Adding "from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash" 7-0**

**Note:**          Director of Parks and Open Space Luis Demorizi explained that the Anne Whitney *Child with Calla Lily Leaves* fountain is 122 years old. The requested funds would support mechanical, electrical, irrigation, and lighting repairs to the fountain and its traffic island. Particularly, they would repair its basin and failing mechanical and pump system so the water can be recirculated to avoid losing water. He noted that the department is partnering with neighbors who want to hire consultants to polish the fountain.

A councilor asked whether using Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds through Historic Preservation had been considered. Mr. Demorizi answered that Free Cash was identified as the quickest and most straightforward way to fund the repair. The same councilor asked whether the repairs would take place this summer, which Mr. Demorizi confirmed. Chief Operating Officer Yeo added that using Free Cash made more sense than pursuing a full CPA project proposal given the project's small scope and timeline.

Lisa Foote from the Friends of the Fountain neighborhood group highlighted the group's involvement, noting that they have funded previous repairs and are currently contributing \$15,000 toward the project.

The Chair thanked Lisa Foote and the Friends of the Fountain group for their work preserving the fountain.

Councilor Malakie moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**#99-25      Accept and expend a grant of \$13,500 from the National Environmental Health Association**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend a grant of thirteen-thousand five-hundred dollars (\$13,500) from the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) to improve the City's conformance with the US Food and Drug Administration's Voluntary National Retail Food Program Standards.

**Action:      Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:**          Commissioner of Health and Human Services Shin-Yi Lao explained that the department has received this grant for multiple years in a row. It supports improvements to the food safety program,

particularly in conducting food establishment inspections by funding inspection equipment, training, and software.

Councilor Greenberg moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**Referred to Programs & Services and Finance Committees**

**#101-25**

**Authorization to transfer and expend \$76,975 for temporary school nursing staff**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer and expend seventy-six thousand nine-hundred seventy-five dollars (\$76,975) from Acct# 0150103-511001, Clinical Health - Full-time Salaries, to Acct# 0150103-531300, Clinical Health - Temp Staffing for temporary school nursing staff.

**Programs & Services Approved 8-0 on 05/07/2025**

**Action:**

**Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:** Commissioner Lao explained that staffing school nurses remains difficult. While several nurses have been hired in the past month, the department relies on a temporary staffing agency to ensure all schools meet the required nurse staffing levels. She added that the request is to transfer funds from the full-time staffing line item to the temporary staffing line in order to pay the agency nurses.

A councilor asked about the primary challenges in hiring school nurses. Commissioner Lao responded that there is a general nursing shortage, particularly following COVID-19 when many nurses left the field. Additionally, school nursing is a specialized field that requires specific skills and training, making candidates even harder to find.

Councilor Malakie moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**Referred to Programs & Services and Finance Committees**

**#106-25**

**Appropriation of \$75,000 for Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash to allow the Health & Human Services Department to do a Community Health Assessment and prepare a Community Health Improvement Plan for the City.

**Programs & Services Held 6-0-2 (Councilors Baker and Humphrey Abstaining) on 05/07/2025**

**Action:**

**Finance Approved 3-2-2 (Councilors Grossman and Malakie Opposed) (Councilors Gentile and Bixby Abstaining)**

**Note:** Commissioner Lao explained that the plan involves collecting both existing data, from sources such as the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the National Institute of Health, and new data gathered through surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews. This would inform a strategic plan for the Health department, identifying gaps in services and strategies to address them.

A councilor brought up similar health assessments conducted in Brookline and Needham, noting that many of their recommendations are either already being implemented in Newton, are initiatives the City would pursue if funding allowed, or are not practical. She expressed concern that this assessment may not be the best use of funds.

Another councilor inquired about the department's goals and expectations for the assessment. The Commissioner answered that they would identify gaps in the community's health and focus on areas that the Health department can control, such as issues related to the State sanitary code, and reviewing the structure of the department and which services they provide, akin to Watertown's assessment.

Chief Operating Officer Yeo mentioned mental health services as an area of study for this assessment. He added that strategic plans such as these are healthy for any Health department to conduct on a regular basis, around every 5 to 10 years.

A councilor asked when the last time a health assessment was done. Commissioner Lao responded that there hadn't been one in her 9 years here.

Chief Financial Officer Lemieux suggested approving the item to allow the transfer of funds to a non-lapsing account, provided that a more defined scope is presented to the Programs and Services Committee. A few councilors responded that they would not support the item, expressing concern that the process was moving in the wrong order. They felt that funding should only be voted once a clear scope has been presented.

A councilor asked for clarification on the total cost of the study. Chief Operating Officer Yeo answered that it would cost \$150,000 with \$75,000 coming from the proposed Free Cash request, and the remaining \$75,000 coming from the opioid fund.

Councilor Greenberg moved to approve the item, provided that no funds are expended until the scope of services is more clearly defined at the Programs and Services Committee, which passed with three Councilors in favor, two opposed, and two abstaining.

**#152-25      Accept and expend a grant of \$423,052.50 for part of the Local Bottleneck Reduction Program**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend a grant of four hundred twenty-three thousand fifty-two dollars and fifty cents (\$423,052.50), from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, as part of the Local Bottleneck Reduction Program.

**Action:**      **Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:**          Commissioner of Public Works Shawna Sullivan explained the grant would be used to upgrade traffic signals at two intersections, at Commonwealth Ave and Central Street, and Ward Street

at Central Street. The equipment will include new traffic signals, controllers, vehicle and pedestrian signal heads, video detection, and wireless cellular communications. She added that the funds would enable the department to improve operational efficiency and safety at those intersections.

A councilor expressed support for the item and asked what video detection services are. Commissioner Sullivan explained that they are usually used between two intersections to coordinate the light traffic signals. She clarified that they are not used for enforcement and noted she would get back to the councilor with more details.

Another councilor inquired about whether the technology could be installed at the Walnut at Central Street intersection.

Another councilor asked how these two intersections were chosen. Commissioner Sullivan noted these two intersections were the highest need candidates for this grant program.

Councilor Grossman moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

### **Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#98-25**

#### **Appropriation of \$225,576 for prevailing wage rate adjustment**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the sum of two-hundred twenty-five thousand five-hundred seventy-six dollars (\$225,576) from Acct# 0001-3240, June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash to Acct# 0140133-529200, Sustainable Materials - Solid Waste to fully fund the prevailing wage rate adjustment under the City's current contract with Waste Management.

**Public Facilities Approved 7-0 on 05/14/2025**

**Action:** **Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:** Commissioner Sullivan explained that the FY25 prevailing wage rates were not available until February, but the City must still fully fund Waste Management. Chief Financial Officer Lemieux added that the timing did allow for the new prevailing wages to be included into the solid waste projections for the FY26 budget.

A councilor asked when the contract is up for renegotiation. Commissioner Sullivan answered that the new 5-year contract starts on July 1<sup>st</sup>. The councilor followed up by asking when renegotiation typically begins, to which Commissioner Sullivan responded that it generally begins a year and a half in advance of the contract's expiry.

A councilor recalled that going out to bid for this contract saved the City a significant amount of money. Chief Financial Officer Lemieux confirmed that the City saved millions of dollars thanks to then Commissioner McGonagle, Deputy Commissioner Sullivan, and Waneta Trabert. Chief Operating Officer Yeo noted that the contract does allow for changes to be negotiated.

Councilor Malakie moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#104-25 Appropriation of \$4,500,000 to support the City's Transportation Network Improvement Program**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting a total of four million five hundred thousand dollars (\$4,500,000) to support the City's Transportation Network Improvement Program with three million dollars (\$3,000,000) appropriated from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash, and one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000) transferred from snow and ice reserves within the Comptroller's budget.

**Public Facilities Held 7-0 on 05/14/2025**

**Action: Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:** Commissioner Sullivan explained that these funds make up part of the \$9.5 million that the department spends each fiscal year for the City's Transportation Network Improvement Program.

Chief Financial Officer Lemieux added that in the past several years, the department has funded this \$9.5 million with \$2.3 to \$2.5 million in operating budget of appropriations and \$2.3 million in Chapter 90 State paving funds. The remaining funding is "cobbled together" through a combination of departmental savings from attrition, requests for Free Cash, and occasional additional funding from the State.

A councilor expressed concern about raising paving costs. Commissioner Sullivan and Chief Operating Officer Yeo responded that ARPA funds have been helpful in compensating for the increases.

The same councilor noted the connection between maintaining the roads and obtaining stable funding sources for Newton Public Schools.

Another councilor asked where the City stands in terms of developing a long-term funding plan for the Transportation Network Improvement Program, rather than continuing to rely on Free Cash to fill funding gaps. Chief Financial Officer Lemieux explained that the City previously received only \$1.6 million from Chapter 90 funds, but now allocates approximately \$3.3 million from the operating budget for paving, in addition to receiving \$2.3 million each fiscal year from Chapter 90.

Councilor Malakie moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#118-25 Appropriation of \$100,000 for the Rumford Avenue Resource Recovery Center**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash to purchase and install a second trailer at the Rumford Avenue Resource Recovery Center.

**Public Facilities Held 7-0 on 05/14/2025**

**Action: Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:** Commissioner Sullivan explained that this funding would allow the purchase of a second trailer at the Rumford Recycling Center. Currently, the superintendent and the yard waste and sweeper crews are based at the Craft Street location. The addition of a second trailer at Rumford Avenue would bring all personnel to the Rumford site and provide an additional restroom and locker space for the approximately 20 employees working there.

A councilor asked where employees go to cool off during the summer months. Commissioner Sullivan responded that both the existing trailer and the proposed new trailer are equipped with air conditioning.

Councilor Grossman moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

### **Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

#### **#117-25 Appropriation of \$43,100 for Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate forty-three thousand one hundred dollars (\$43,100) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash to purchase and install Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at prioritized crosswalk locations throughout the City.

**Public Facilities Held 7-0 on 05/14/2025**

**Action:** **Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:** Commissioner Sullivan explained this funding would allow the purchase of two RRFBs which are proven to improve pedestrian safety.

A councilor asked where these RRFBs would be installed. Commissioner Sullivan answered that they are planned for Parker Street at Hagen Street and Chestnut Street at Winter Street, if the City does not receive the MassDOT grant. If the grant is awarded, the RRFBs would be installed at the next two locations on the department's prioritization list.

A councilor asked whether neighborhoods could raise funds to install RRFBs at specific crosswalks in the City. Chief Operating Officer Yeo added that it is generally not the City's practice to rely on neighborhood funding, as the City follows a prioritization process for everything. Another councilor raised concerns about equity across neighborhoods, which Chief Financial Officer Lemieux confirmed is a significant issue.

Councilor Grossman moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

#### **#150-25 Appropriate and expend the sum of \$50,000 for sidewalk construction**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) from the Trio land use special permit mitigation fund, from Acct# 5560R114-590001, Washington Place TRIO mitigation, to Acct# 01C40129-

586001, Lowell Ave Sidewalk Construction, for use by the DPW Streets Division for sidewalk construction.

**Action:** **Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:** Commissioner Sullivan explained that 375 feet of sidewalk is missing on Lowell Avenue. This item will fund a pedestrian connection between Page Road and the intersection of Watertown and Lowell Streets. The path leads to the Horace Mann School and is near the Education Center.

A councilor asked whether the Ward 2 Councilors had reviewed the item. Commissioner Sullivan confirmed that there had been some conversations.

Councilor Greenberg moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#102-25 Appropriation of \$250,000 for the Police Headquarters Improvements**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the sum of two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash for the Police Headquarters Interior Paint, Finishes, and Improvements project.

**Public Facilities Held 7-0 on 05/14/2025**

**Action:** **Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:** Commissioner Morse explained this item comes as a follow-up to HVAC projects, upgrades to the roof and dispatch, improvements to the garage, and more. He noted this was a temporary solution as they would be looking at a larger facility project in the future. The project's goal is to improve the look and feel of the working environment.

Police Chief George McMains thanked everyone for their continued support.

A councilor inquired about whether air filtering and air quality remained a priority. Chief McMains answered that they had many improvements to the HVAC system and temperature control has since improved.

The same councilor asked if any exterior work was planned. Commissioner Morse replied that he did not anticipate a separate request for this, as it would be addressed through the "Under 75k" line item in the Public Buildings budget.

Councilor Grossman moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#110-25 Appropriation of \$150,000 for City Hall Boiler Condensate Tank**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) from the FY25 Budget Reserve for the City Hall Boiler Condensate Tank Replacement project.

**Public Facilities Held 7-0 on 05/14/2025**

**Action:** **Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:** Commissioner Morse presented the attached picture of the tank. He noted that the City's heating system is steam and the condensate tank is where all the water condenses after the radiators have heated the building. When the tank fails, the only way to keep heat is to use cold city water which is problematic. The tank has been patched a couple of times, and it is now time to replace it.

Councilor Greenberg moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#115-25 Appropriation of \$160,000 for City Hall Elevator Modernization project**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate one hundred sixty thousand dollars (\$160,000) from the FY25 Budget Reserve for the City Hall Elevator Modernization project.

**Public Facilities Approved 7-0 on 05/14/2025**

**Action:** **Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:** Commissioner Morse explained that City Hall has two elevators, one built in the 1970s facing Homer Street, and a more recent one at the War Memorial. This request regards the older elevator, which is in significant need of modernization. While it continues to pass state inspections, it has become highly unreliable. He noted that contractors are ready to begin work and noted strong support for the project from the Commission on Disability and ADA coordinator Jini Fairley.

Councilor Malakie moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#119-25 Appropriation of \$100,000 for Inspectional Services HVAC Improvements**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) from FY25 Budget Reserve for the Inspectional Services HVAC Improvements project on the second floor of City Hall.

**Public Facilities Held 7-0 on 05/14/2025**

**Action:** **Finance Approved 6-0-1 (Councilor Grossman Abstaining)**

**Note:** Commissioner Morse explained that the existing system is approximately 30 years old. Over this period, the heating load has increased due to more computers and staff as the Planning department also shares this space.

A councilor expressed frustration, saying that items like this leave her feeling torn. She raised concerns about the Ward School building, noting that it had become increasingly uncomfortable. Last year's 5th grade graduation had to be relocated at the last minute due to temperatures over 100 degrees. She added that she would abstain.

Councilor Malakie moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

### **Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

#### **#120-25 Appropriation of \$150,000 for Fire Station #1/#2 Living Quarters Improvements**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash for the Fire Station #1/#2 - Living Quarters Improvements project.

**Public Facilities Approved 7-0 on 05/14/2025**

**Action: Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:** Commissioner Morse explained this item comes as a follow-up to other projects to replace windows at both stations, improve the HVAC system, install an emergency generator, and several others including the kitchens. He explained that the day rooms are the second-most heavily used space in the stations but have not been upgraded in over 50 years. The project would modernize and make these spaces more comfortable for the workers. He noted this project was developed in partnership with Fire Chief Gentile and Assistant Fire Chief Bianchi. He reminded the Committee that these two fire stations did not get major renovations or rebuilds.

Councilor Greenberg moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

#### **#121-25 Appropriation of \$50,000 for Jeannete West Recreation Center restroom improvements**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash for the Jeannete West Recreation Center Restroom Improvement project.

**Finance Held 6-2 (Councilors Humphrey, Micley Opposed) on 05/12/2025**

**Action: Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:** Commissioner Morse presented the attached picture of the building's restroom. He noted the building is used by Mason Rice School for their after-school program, summer camps, and several Parks & Recreation programs. The project will include new flooring, painting, ceilings, lighting, and general cleanup.

A councilor asked how many people are in the building at a time. Commissioner Morse answered that the most he saw in the building was 60 people.

Another councilor asked whether more comprehensive projects are planned for buildings like this, or if smaller upgrades are the only option. Commissioner Morse explained that the building is classified as

“pre-existing non-conforming,” meaning it doesn’t meet current codes but is grandfathered in. This makes modifications challenging. He added that a major renovation is unlikely, so smaller projects are the more realistic option from a resource perspective.

The same councilor inquired about public access to the bathrooms.

Councilor Bixby moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#105-25**

**Appropriation of \$75,000 for the Newton Centre Tree Lighting project**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash to the Newton Centre Tree Lighting project.

**Public Facilities Held 7-0 on 05/14/2025**

**Action:**

**Finance Approved 6-1 (Councilor Malakie Opposed)**

**Note:** Commissioner Morse explained that a combination of trees in the green and parking lot area would be lit up. The project’s goal is to create a visually appealing space that draws people to Newton Centre and helps local businesses. He explained the money would pay for the lights themselves as well as the additional electricity needed to power them.

A councilor expressed concerns about electrical lights’ potential nefarious effect on tree health. She added that she believes this expenditure is unnecessary and incongruous with the NPS’s unresolved budget needs.

A few councilors expressed support for the item.

Commissioner Morse responded to concerns about tree health, stating that they are exploring the use of globe lights, which are less harmful to trees. He also noted that staff regularly adjust string lights at other locations in the City to help preserve tree health.

Gloria Gavris and Meryl Kessler from Newton Community Pride expressed their support for the project.

Councilor Bixby moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

**Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#123-25**

**Appropriation of \$2,525,000 for priority school facility projects**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate the sum of two million five hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$2,525,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash for the purpose of completing a list of priority school facility projects throughout the district.

**Public Facilities Held 6-0 on 04/30/2025**

**Public Facilities Held 7-0 on 05/14/2025**

**Action:** Finance Approved 7-0 as Amended Changing “\$2,525,000” to “\$1,425,000”, Changing “two million five hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$2,525,000)” to “one million four hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$1,425,000)” and Adding “These funds shall be placed in an account under the control of the Public Buildings Department.”

**Note:** See item #123(2).

**Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#123-25(2)** **Appropriation of \$1,100,000 for one-time school facility projects typically funded out of the Newton Public School charter maintenance account.**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate the sum of one million one hundred thousand dollars (\$1,100,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash for the purpose of completing specified school facility projects typically funded out of the Newton Public School charter maintenance account. These funds shall be placed in an account under the control of the Public Buildings Department.

**Action:** Finance Approved 7-0

**Note:** The Chair noted that the Committee is being asked to divide item #123-25 into two separate items as part of a compromise reached during the budget process.

Chief Financial Officer Lemieux noted that the final part of the budget compromise involving Newton Public Schools was to revise the original docket item #123-25, leading to the two separate items presented this evening.

Councilor Grossman moved to divide item #123-25 and approve it as amended, which passed unanimously.

A councilor asked for clarification on the different Newton South High School projects. Commissioner Morse explained that the original list included two separate projects for Newton South, totaling \$1 million. When the total funding available was adjusted to \$1,425,000, Newton Public Schools modified the funding amounts to fit within that limit. They identified the most important components of the two original projects and combined them into a single item.

Councilor Grossman moved to approve item #123(2), which passed unanimously.

**#151-25** **Expend the sum of \$10,000 for a settlement**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to expend the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) from Legal Claims & Settlements, for the full and final settlement of Elizabeth Marino v. City of Newton.

**Action:** Finance Approved 7-0

**Note:** Assistant City Solicitor Krisna Basu explained that Elizabeth Marino filed suit against the City claiming that she slipped and fell on snow and ice in the Cherry Street parking lot which is owned by the City. The case was headed for a jury trial. However, given the unpredictability of a jury and its potential risk to the City, the Law department believes \$10,000 is a reasonable settlement.

A councilor asked what Ms. Marino's initial demand was. Ms. Basu responded that the City negotiated the settlement down from an initial request of \$100,000, which Ms. Marino later reduced to \$35,000 and that the City negotiated to \$10,000.

Councilor Humphrey moved to approve the item which passed unanimously.

The Committee adjourned at 9:35PM.

**Respectfully submitted,  
Leonard Gentile, Chair of Finance Committee**

#110-25



#121-25

