

Finance Committee Report

City of Newton **In City Council**

Wednesday, October 15, 2025

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

City staff present: Comptroller Steve Curley, Financial Analyst II Trevor Goehring, Senior Analyst Endrit Poreci, Co-Director of Sustainability Sam Nighman, Commissioner of Public Buildings Josh Morse, Community Preservation Act Program Manager Mollie Hutchings, and Director of Housing and Community Development Lara Kritzer

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/IT08lsgzuG0?si=nuqlJZk_5y8s6v4o.

Referred to Public Facilities & Finance Committees

#256-25 Appropriate \$152,255 for a LED Lighting Project at the Newton Education Center
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the sum of one hundred fifty-two thousand two hundred fifty-five dollars (\$152,255) from the Energy Stabilization Fund to fund a LED Lighting Project at the Newton Education Center.
Public Facilities Approved 5-0 (Councilor Kelley Not Voting) on 09-17-25

Action: **Finance Approved 7-0 (Councilor Micley Not Voting)**

Note: Co-Director of Sustainability Sam Nighman explained that this project would convert the entire Education Center over to efficient LED lighting with lighting controls. Since 2014, the City has done around 24 LED lighting projects within its buildings, many at schools, and this project continues in this vein. The project's total cost of two hundred sixty-eight thousand dollars (\$268,000) was reduced thanks to a utility rebate of one hundred sixteen thousand dollars (\$116,000), leading to the item's requested amount of one hundred fifty-two thousand two hundred fifty-five dollars (\$152,255). Mr. Nighman added that the project is estimated to save over twenty-six thousand dollars (\$26,000) annually in electricity at Newton Public Schools, with some additional savings for maintenance-related costs.

A councilor asked whether Rise Engineering had worked for the City before. Mr. Nighman answered that they had conducted the majority of the City's LED projects so far, in addition to other energy-related work across its buildings.

Councilor Malakie motioned to approve the item, which passed unanimously.

Referred to Zoning and Planning & Finance Committees

#274-25

CPC recommendation to appropriate \$2,154,544.00 in CPA funding

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending appropriation of two million one hundred fifty-four thousand five hundred forty-four dollars (\$2,154,544.00) in Community Preservation Act funding, with one million six hundred fifty-four thousand five hundred forty-four dollars (\$1,654,544.00) from Acct# 5800-3599, CPA Unrestricted Fund Balance and five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) from Acct# 58R10498-57900C, CPA Housing FY26 Budgeted Reserves, to the control of the Planning & Development Department for a grant to Acct# 58C10499-595714, Newton Affordable Housing Trust for their FY26 funding.

Zoning and Planning Approved 5-0 on 09-25-25

Action: **Finance Approved 8-0**

Note: Community Preservation Act (CPA) Program Manager Mollie Hutchings presented the attached slides. She explained that this funding is requested every year. She reminded the Committee that the City Council established the Newton Affordable Housing Trust (NAHT) in December 2021. Over the last three years, Trustees have developed program guidelines and an application process, and are now accepting funding applications. She added that during the initial Ordinance review process, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) agreed to allocate its annual target for Community Housing funds to the Trust for use in future housing projects.

She explained that this year's funding application requests that the Community Preservation Program's target amount for Community Housing, which is currently equal to 35% of FY25 annual funds (\$2,154,000), be allocated to the Trust for future projects. She showed a breakdown of funding and the Community Preservation Committee's September finances at a glance.

A councilor commented that the Trust was created to streamline the funding process, and asked how the process was streamlined if future funding requests will still be required to meet all the requirements of the CPA.

Mrs. Hutchings replied that there are eligibility requirements for what projects CPA money can fund that the Trust must still comply with. For instance, they can fund building systems but not renovations of individual units. She clarified that the process is streamlined because it does not go through the two-to-three-month City Council approval that every other CPA process entails.

A councilor asked for a review of the Trust's latest actions and accomplishments in addition to what money had been allocated under this model.

Director of Housing and Community Development Lara Kritzer explained that the Trust most recently spent funding of four million dollars (\$4,000,000) for the Newton Gardens project on the Nonantum/Newtonville border that will provide 112 units of affordable housing, 30 of which are at or below 80% AMI, 16 of which will have vouchers to be significantly lower income, and the rest of which

will be capped at 110% AMI for workforce housing through the State program. The Trust also used funding to complete work at the Coleman house, an affordable senior housing development, as well as to look for places where more development can be done.

Newton Affordable Housing Trust member Peter Sargent detailed that the option to purchase the Newton Gardens was time sensitive, but due to the expedited process that the Trust could perform, they were able to purchase the property on the last day before it would have been lost to a market rate developer. He emphasized the Trust was thorough in vetting the project, and added this example underscores the intent of the Trust.

Another councilor inquired as to what made the purchase occur so close to the deadline. Mrs. Kritzer replied that part of the funding process involved obtaining State funding and assurances that they would have local support. Mr. Sargent added that a review of legal documents by outside attorneys, to ensure there would be no complications with the final closing, had gotten delayed.

The same councilor asked whether there would be any money left in the CPC fund after this appropriation. Mrs. Hutchings confirmed that they allocate the full 35% to the Newton Affordable Housing Trust. She noted they do have unrestricted funds, and a project could always in theory apply to CPC directly, but it seems the Committee prefers this system where the Trust reviews all housing projects.

The councilor further asked why budgeted reserves were proposed at five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000), a round number. Mrs. Hutchings answered that she had left buffer funds in the Housing Reserves account last year as she was uncertain about the State match. This year, she was more confident in their estimation of the State match, so she adjusted the amount.

Councilor Lipof motioned to approve the item, which passed unanimously.

Chair's note: A motion for Executive Session may be entertained for item #299-25.

#299-25 **Requesting discussion about a workers' compensation claim filed by Loretta Busa**
COUNCILORS GENTILE, GREENBERG, LEARY, OLIVER, ALBRIGHT, LUCAS, MICLEY, KELLEY,
MALAKIE, WRIGHT, BLOCK, HUMPHREY, GETZ, DANBERG, LOBOVITS, GROSSMAN,
FARRELL, KALIS, KRINTZMAN, LAREDO and LIPOF requesting fact finding and discussion
regarding a workers' compensation claim filed by Loretta Busa.

Action: **Finance Held 8-0**

Note: The Chair explained that the Administration had reservations about discussing an item regarding an individual employee. He read aloud a letter from Loretta Busa, which is attached to this report.

He noted that he would not ask for an Executive Session as City Staff were not present to answer questions and discuss the item. He added that he hoped to come to a compromise with the Administration.

He detailed that Loretta Busa is a 70-year-old woman living in Nonantum. She is a 43-year part-time employee of the City, working at the City-owned community building at the Hawthorne Park, where she cleans among other responsibilities. Mrs. Busa suffered a fall and was severely injured on August 13th while cleaning a bathroom. He noted the severity of the injury was evident by the fact she still resides in a rehabilitation facility, over two months following her injury.

He explained that a family member had reached out to him because he was given the impression that Mrs. Busa's workers' compensation case would be denied.

The Chair added he understood the extent of the Council's role, such that they cannot approve or deny claims, but wanted to obtain more information about the situation.

A councilor commented that he would be interested in whether this policy needs to be changed. He expressed it was unfathomable to him that part-time work disqualifies an employee from workers' compensation. Another councilor expressed support for his point.

The Chair mentioned a more general item may be docketed to discuss this policy with the Administration.

Councilor Greenberg motioned to hold the item, which passed unanimously.

Referred to Programs & Services & Finance Committees

#275-25

Request to set salary for City Clerk/Clerk of the City Council

COUNCILORS LAREDO, KALIS and KRINTZMAN requesting an amendment to Section 4-21(b) of the City of Newton Ordinances to set the salary for the City Clerk/Clerk of the Council.

**Programs & Services Approved 6-0-1 (Councilor Oliver Abstaining) on 10-08-25
Finance Held**

Note: The Chair explained that when this was last discussed, he had requested that the Clerk's salary be set within the advertised range, but this request exceeds the range and increases the salary amount by another \$4,500 in two months. He noted that former City Clerk Carol Moore was making a little under \$139,000 when she left the position.

He explained he had reached out to the Law department to understand how this current City Council can bind a future City Council, referring to the Clerk's proposed increase in salary for January 2026.

The Chair let the Committee know that he would not take up this item until he hears back from the Law department about his inquiry.

The Committee adjourned at 7:37 PM.

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

Newton Affordable Housing Trust Community Preservation Funding

Presentation to Zoning and Planning Committee

September 25, 2025

Program Overview

- ▶ City Council established the Newton Affordable Housing Trust in December 2021
- ▶ The seven member Trust began meeting bi-monthly in June 2022
- ▶ Over the last three years, Trustees have developed program guidelines and an application process and are now accepting funding applications
- ▶ During the initial Ordinance review process, the CPC agreed to allocate its annual target for Community Housing funds to the Trust for use in future housing projects



Current Funding Request

The Newton Affordable Housing Trust (NAHT) annual funding application requests that the Community Preservation Program's target amount for Community Housing, which is currently equal to 35% of FY25 annual funds, be allocated to the NAHT for future projects which acquire, create, support, preserve, and restore/rehabilitate affordable housing in Newton

Account Name	Account Number	Proposed Amount
Unrestricted Prior Year Reserves	#5800 3599	\$1,654,544.00
Community Housing FY24 Reserve Account	#58R10498 57900C	\$500,000.00
	Total	\$2,154,544.00

Recommended Funding

City of Newton Community Preservation Committee

Finances At a Glance

As of September 8, 2025

*Expenses as %
of total current
year revenue*

Fiscal Year 2026

Revenue

Beginning balance	5,195,833
Local CPA surcharge	5,597,549
State match	
Budget for this FY	811,239
Additional from prior FY	2,484
Total Available Resources	11,607,104

Estimated at 15%

Expenses

Bond repayment obligations	1,494,903	23%
NAHT payment	2,153,675	35%
New funding authorizations	-	0%
Administrative costs	162,207	3%
Total Expenses	3,810,784	59%
Current Fund Balance	7,796,320	

Webster Woods, Gath Pool, and Athletic Fields
Estimated
includes funding recommended by CPC*

Thank you

Dear Mayor Fuller and City Council Members,

I am writing to confirm that I am aware that Councilor Gentile and several Councilors have filed a docket item requesting information regarding a claim I submitted for Workers Compensation benefits. I support this item and appreciate this inquiry on my behalf.

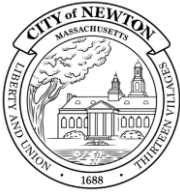
I am also aware that the item is scheduled to be taken up this Wednesday October 15, 2025 in the Finance Committee.

Unfortunately, I am still in a rehabilitation facility and will be unable to attend, but I am very comfortable with my case being discussed in both open and executive session.

I want to thank you again for your time to hear about my situation.

Respectfully,


Loretta Busa



Ruthanne Fuller, Mayor
Michelle Pizzi O'Brien, Director

CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Human Resources

#275-25

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October 8, 2025

Marc Laredo, President
Newton City Council

RE: Recommended Salary for Andrew Willison, City Clerk/Clerk of the Council

Dear President Laredo,

The purpose of this letter is to recommend the salary for Mr. Andrew Willison, the candidate appointed for the position of City Clerk/Clerk of the Council. As a reminder, the City Council votes both on the appointment and the salary for this position.

Following Mr. Willison's appointment on Monday, October 6, 2025, and our subsequent salary discussions on October 7, 2025, I am recommending a starting salary of \$146,479 (effective on his start date estimated for Monday October 27, 2025) and \$150,906 effective January 1, 2026 which would be the start of a two year term. Mr. Willison would complete the remainder of the two year term of the former City Clerk which ends on December 31, 2025.

This offer is based on the following factors:

- The posting range of \$134,000 to \$145,000 (which in our nonunion managerial scale equates to \$135,971 to \$146,479, which is the step on our compensation plan just above the posting range).
- A study of the salaries of this position or like positions in other municipalities.
- The salary of comparable positions within our organization.
- The duties and responsibilities of the position.
- Mr. Willison's experience, education, and training, as it relates to the position.

The Human Resources Department offered this salary to Mr. Willison on a conditional basis, following the Council's vote on Monday evening, and he has accepted.

Therefore, I recommend that the Programs and Services committee recommend the annual starting salary of \$146,479 effective upon hire, and \$150,906 effective January 1, 2026 for approval by the full Council.

Sincerely,

Michelle Pizzi O'Brien, M.P.A.
Director of Human Resources

CC: David Kalis, City Council Vice President
Joshua Krintzman, Chair of the Programs and Services Committee