



Finance Committee Agenda

City of Newton In City Council

Monday, January 12, 2026

7:00 PM

The Finance Committee will hold this meeting as a virtual meeting on Monday, January 12, 2026 at 7:00 PM. To view this meeting using Zoom use this link: <https://newtonma-gov.zoom.us/j/84742613620> or call 1-646-558-8656 and use the following Meeting ID: 847 4261 3620.

You may also:

1. Watch a live broadcast of the meeting on NewTV's government channel (Comcast 9, RCN 13, 614 (HD), Verizon 33).
2. View a live stream on NewTV's YouTube channel at:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQvNeCJkA3PftuLLvfAh3cQ>

Items Scheduled for Discussion:

#24-26

Requesting authorization to transfer \$300,000 to fund new positions in the Mayor's Office

HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer a total of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) from Acct# 0140120-511002 (\$100,000), Acct# 0110952-511001 (\$100,000), Acct# 0110162-513040 (\$50,000), and Acct# 0110162-512001 (\$50,000) to Acct# 0110320-511001 Executive Office, Full Time Salaries for the purpose of funding two new critical management positions, Chief of Community Services and Chief of Staff, as well as temporary funding for a period of overlap for a new Chief Financial Officer.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Walker Grossman, Chair of Finance Committee

The location of this meeting is accessible, and reasonable accommodation will be provided to persons with disabilities who require assistance. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA Coordinator at least two business days in advance of the meeting: ADACoordinator@newtonma.gov or (617) 796-1253. The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089. For the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), please dial 711.



Marc C. Laredo
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor

#24-26

Telephone
(617) 796-1100

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(617) 796-1113

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(617) 796-1089

Email

mayor@newtonma.gov

January 1st, 2026

Honorable City Council
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Honorable City Councilors:

I respectfully submit a docket item to your Honorable Council requesting authorization to transfer a total of three-hundred-thousand dollars (\$300,000) from the below accounts to Acct # 0110320-511001 Executive Office, Full Time Salaries for the purpose of funding two FTE's for critical positions for my administration, as well as temporary funding for a period of overlap for a new Chief Financial Officer.

Specifically, I am requesting transfers from the below listed accounts to Acct # 0110320-511001 Executive Office – Full Time Salaries:

<u>Department</u>	<u>Acct Name</u>	<u>Account #</u>	<u>Amount</u>
City Clerk	Elections – Seasonal Wages	0110162-512001	\$ 50,000
City Clerk	Elections – Work by Other Depts	0110162-513040	\$ 50,000
Human Resources	Full Time Salaries	0110952-511001	\$100,000
D.P.W.	Street Division – Full Time Wages	0140120-511002	\$100,000

The approval of this funding request and additional FTE's will enable me to immediately begin implementing my vision for the community.

Several vacancies in both the Public Works and Human Resources Departments resulted in projected unexpended appropriations in excess of the amounts shown above. Due to only having one election this year, the City Clerk's Department projects to have unexpended appropriations in excess of the amount shown above.

After serving on the City Council for more than a decade, and after listening to our residents during my campaign, it is clear to me that there are certain key positions that would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our City Government.

I believe the Executive Office needs additional staffing immediately. Therefore, in addition to the positions that have historically been housed in this office, I have created two new key management positions:

- Chief of Community Services, and
- Chief of Staff

The Chief Community Services Officer position will be filled by John Rice. This position will provide direct support for Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture, Older Adult Services, Health and Human Services, Library, Veterans Services, and Historic Newton. Building a stronger sense of community is a major priority of my administration, and this priority was shared by many of the constituents I spoke with during my campaign. This position will ensure that we are making the most of our civic, cultural, and arts events, and that we are partnering with Newton's vast array of non-profits and community groups to help preserve the fabric of our villages and community as a whole, while simultaneously making the most of every opportunity to bring our community together.

The Chief of Staff position will be filled by Dana Hanson. This position will provide general support for constituent services and customer service, and direct support for Human Resources and Economic Development. It will provide concierge service and act as a first point of contact for City Councilors for issues beyond committee work. This position will also be the chief contact with federal, state, and other local governments and major institutions and organizations within and outside the city. Ultimately, this position will improve customer service and governmental efficiency for the entire community including residents, business owners, and the City Council.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marc Laredo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marc" and last name "Laredo" clearly distinguishable.

Marc Laredo
Mayor



Marc C. Laredo
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor

#24-26

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mayor@newtonma.gov

January 2nd, 2026

Honorable City Council
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Honorable City Councilors:

Newton is unique in many ways, though not all of them are immediately obvious. We all know that Newton has thirteen villages, but what is often underappreciated is what that truly means in practice: Newton is essentially a city of small towns.

Most of our villages have their own elementary schools, parks, village centers, and civic infrastructure. As a result, Newton has significantly more infrastructure per capita than our peer communities.

For example, compared to Waltham, Brookline, Somerville, and Watertown, Newton has more playgrounds, more municipal buildings, and more street trees, and it's not even close.

Despite this complexity, the Mayor's Office has operated with just seven staff members for many years. How does that compare to our peers? Brookline, Somerville, Quincy, Brockton, Framingham, Concord, and Watertown all have more executive office staff than Newton. The average among these communities is nine, with 3-5 senior executive staff members in each community.

Increasing Newton's core executive office staff from seven to nine does not put us ahead of our peers, it simply brings us in line with them. Even with nine staff members, Newton would still have more residents per executive office employee than Brookline, Somerville, Framingham, Needham, Watertown, and many others. Given how labor-intensive Newton is to manage, that seems entirely appropriate.

Just this past spring, Mayor Fuller moved the Sustainability division under the Mayor's Office, and we're about to do the same for Economic Development, but the comps explained above are focused just on those core positions traditionally found in Mayor's and Town Manager's offices and who provide executive level support and supervision to the various departments.

I've worked for the City of Newton for 18 years. I started under Mayor Cohen and served under Mayor Warren and Mayor Fuller. Shortly after Mayor Warren took office, I told him it was clear the executive office needed more staff. I said the same thing to Mayor Fuller in November 2017. This need is something that has been plainly obvious to those in City Hall for many years.

I have seen the personal and professional toll this lean staffing model placed on previous Chief Operating Officers. I've seen the overwhelming volume of emails, phone calls, and lines outside office doors. The daily calendars of our COOs were almost comical, often four or five meetings scheduled at the same time, every hour of the day.

Managing and supporting the operations of roughly 1,000 employees, 21 department heads, a \$630 million operating budget, capital projects totaling hundreds of millions more, and a city of 88,000 residents is simply more than any one person can reasonably do.

I have tremendous respect for Jonathan Yeo and the COOs who came before him. They were doing their best to keep their heads above water. Every one of them would tell you there was far more they wanted to accomplish but simply didn't have the time.

So, if we've survived this long with one COO carrying the load, why add a Chief of Staff and a Chief Community Services Officer?

Because we don't want Newton to merely survive, we want Newton to thrive.

We want our executive office staff to be able to step away from their desks and get out into the community.

Sixteen of our 21 department heads have less than five years in their roles. For those 16, the average tenure is just one year in the seat. Only one department head has more than ten years of experience in their current position. Our executive office needs the capacity to mentor and support these leaders so they can grow and succeed.

Half of our City Council has less than two years of experience, and the learning curve is steep. Only four Councilors have more than ten years of service. In partnership with Council leadership, the Mayor's Office must be better positioned to support our newly elected officials.

Nearly everything about managing Newton is more complex than when the current executive office staffing model was created over 50 years ago. Computers didn't exist. Cybersecurity wasn't a concern. Many procurement rules, labor laws, building codes, ADA requirements, and regulatory frameworks didn't exist. Mental health services, affordable housing initiatives, community assistance programs, and social services were not central municipal responsibilities. The list goes on.

Newton, and the world, looks dramatically different in 2026 than it did in the 1960s.

The Mayor's Office is long overdue for additional support.

Chief of Staff

The Chief of Staff position will provide support for constituent services, customer service, Human Resources, and Economic Development. It will act as a concierge and primary point of contact for City Councilors on issues beyond committee work. It will serve as the chief liaison to state and federal governments, major institutions, and regional partners.

Most importantly, it will improve customer service and efficiency for residents, businesses, department heads, and the City Council.

One of the greatest impacts will be on Councilors and department heads. The concierge model ensures every Councilor, regardless of tenure or connections, can get timely answers and support. Councilors who feel effective are more likely to stay, preserving institutional knowledge while still welcoming new voices.

Department heads today receive tens of thousands of emails per year, sometimes 500 in a single day. A single email to citycouncil@newtonma.gov can trigger dozens of messages and hundreds of follow-ups across departments. This consumes enormous time and pulls leaders away from managing staff, training teams, and being present in the community.

The Chief of Staff will streamline these communication flows, improving response quality and speed while freeing department heads to focus on leadership and service delivery.

Chief Community Services Officer

The Chief Community Services Officer will support Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture, Older Adult Services, Health and Human Services, the Library, Veterans Services, and Historic Newton.

This role directly advances the administration's priority of strengthening community. It ensures we maximize civic, cultural, and arts programming and deepen partnerships with nonprofits and community groups, preserving the fabric of our villages while bringing residents together in meaningful ways.

Creating this position also makes the COO's workload manageable, enabling senior leadership to mentor department heads, improve customer service, anticipate challenges earlier, and modernize systems for transparency and efficiency.

Cost and Value

Will these positions save money? Yes.

Between the \$630 million operating budget and hundreds of millions in capital projects, the executive leadership team oversees close to \$1 billion in annual expenditures.

Tonight we are asking to move \$300,000 into the Executive Office budget, about **0.03%** of the spending these positions help oversee.

Put simply: if you were given \$1,000 to improve your yard, could you save 30 cents by shopping wisely? Of course you could. That's the scale of this request, and we're bringing on some very smart shoppers.



Josh Morse
Chief Operating Officer
City of Newton

CITY OF NEWTON

IN CITY COUNCIL

DRAFT

ORDERED:

That, in accordance with the recommendation of the Finance Committee through its Chair Rebecca Walker Grossman, authorization to transfer a total of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) from accounts listed below to Executive Office, Full Time Salaries for the purpose of funding two new critical management positions, Chief of Community Services and Chief of Staff, as well as temporary funding for a period of overlap for a new Chief Financial Officer, be and is hereby approved as follows:

FROM:	City Clerk, Elections – Seasonal Wages (0110162-512001).....	\$50,000.00
	City Clerk, Elections – Work by Other Depts (0110162-513040).....	\$50,000.00
	Human Resources, Full Time Salaries (0110952-511001).....	\$100,000.00
	DPW, Street Division – Full Time Wages (0140120-511002).....	\$100,000.00
TO:	Executive Office, Full Time Salaries (0110320-511001).....	\$300,000.00

Under Suspension of Rules
Readings Waived and Approved
DRAFT

(SGD) DREW WILLISON
City Clerk

(SGD) MARC LAREDO
Mayor

Date: _____