



# **Finance Committee Report**

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

**Monday, January 12, 2026**

**Present:** Councilors Grossman (Chair), Bixby, Charm, Greenberg, Krintzman, Malakie, Micley, and Silber

**City staff present:** Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux, Chief Operating Officer Josh Morse, Comptroller Steve Curley, Director of Cultural Development Paula Gannon

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/vpMouAqLuAM?si=KCdVchfWlww3CdNY>.

**#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.

**Action:**      **Finance Approved 8-0**

**Note:**      Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux introduced the item. She noted that Mayor Laredo had talked about his vision for the new administration at the [Finance Committee's December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting](#), from which this item follows.

She explained that the item requests funding for two new positions, Chief of Staff and Chief of Community Services, as well as to search for a new Chief Financial Officer and train them during an overlap period until she retires in about 6 months.

She went over the source of the funds.

Firstly, funds would be taken from the Elections portion of the City Clerk's budget, as it accounted for two elections but only one was held this fiscal year. As a result, the department saved approximately one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) in poll worker salaries and work from other departments.

Secondly, funds would be taken from the Human Resources (HR) department which had multiple vacancies this year. With two positions filled and only two vacant, the department is projected to save at least one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) from attrition.

Finally, funds would be taken from the department of Public Works (DPW). CFO Lemieux noted that laborer positions are essential, especially in the winter due to snow plowing needs, but are difficult to fill. As such, there will be at least one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) in unexpended money from this portion of the DPW's budget this year.

She emphasized that the administration did not wish to use Free Cash or Budget Reserve funds for this item, preferring to repurpose funds that had already been budgeted for salaries.

Chief Operating Officer Josh Morse explained that, from his experience working closely with the Executive Office, much of the Executive Office's management responsibility previously fell on a single individual outside of the Chief Financial Officer. The Chief Operating Officer was responsible for overseeing all departments, supporting all City Councilors, and serving 88,000 residents across 13 villages. He noted the personal and professional toll this workload took on the COO, adding that some goals went unfulfilled due to the demands of the position.

He explained that the new positions will ensure there is adequate support for department heads, the City Council, and the community, and will allow city leadership to spend more time out of City Hall engaging with residents, businesses, and frontline staff. He added that, from his research into other communities, these positions will put Newton in line with its neighboring cities and help it operate in a more efficient way.

A Councilor expressed support for the item and inquired about the administration's plan moving forward. CFO Lemieux answered that their approach would differ for each department. They would budget for the expected number of elections in the Clerk's office and continue to work to fill HR's vacancies. She noted that they have not yet started the budget process with the transition to the new administration, but they will discuss whether funds for any DPW positions that historically go unfilled can be budgeted elsewhere in that department.

The same Councilor asked whether other vacancies had been investigated to fund the new Executive office positions, or whether these were the only available vacancies. CFO Lemieux answered that there were other vacancies, but these were chosen to limit the list of departments that money was taken away from. She confirmed that this item is not an indication that these positions will go away.

A different Councilor expressed support for the item and the staff chosen to fill the positions. She asked whether the HR department struggled to accomplish what they needed to with their current vacancies. CFO Lemieux answered that there are always difficulties when a smaller department faces vacancies, but they are working hard to find replacements.

In response to a Councilor's question, CFO Lemieux clarified that the Clerk's office funds would be taken from about fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) budgeted for poll worker salaries to staff Newton's 34 precincts on Election Day, and about fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) in Police staff to be deployed and Public Works staff to move voting equipment to polling locations and back to City Hall.

Another Councilor asked whether the Election funds for Police and DPW staff were budgeted as wages or salary allocations. CFO Lemieux answered that the Police department initially incurs the expense and pays it out to its employees, but they subsequently transfer the bill to the Clerk's office. She added that it is mostly categorized as overtime for the Police staff.

A Councilor inquired whether salaries and working conditions were affecting the retention rates and hiring difficulty for some of the City's chronically unfilled positions. CFO Lemieux responded that it is difficult to get professionals to turn to municipal work, noting that municipal salaries cannot compete with private sector salaries.

Another Councilor suggested that the next budget presentation include a list of positions that were reduced or eliminated compared to the previous budget. She also expressed concern about whether the City was adequately paying its employees and that funds would be taken from the Clerk's office, which struggles with retention and currently has two vacancies.

CFO Lemieux responded that an analysis of the Clerk's office resulted in pay adjustments for several of its union positions last summer. She added that a classification and compensation study by the Collins Center is currently underway to review the office's H-grade positions. She noted the Clerk's office has been in a transition period since former clerk David Olson's departure about 3 to 4 years ago, and that it sometimes takes that long for a department to get back on track.

The same Councilor asked how the administration would measure the effectiveness of the new Executive positions and the balance of their assigned departments. COO Morse answered that the success of the City's departments would be a byproduct of the Executive's mentorship and would serve as an accountability measure of the new positions' effectiveness. He added that the City's departments often interact, so the Executive leadership would collaborate on oversight.

The Councilor further asked whether a timeframe would be defined to review the department split. COO Morse answered that the budget process would serve as a natural point to evaluate it. He added that the administration would support department heads as well as their deputies for strong succession planning and would make adjustments as needed.

The same Councilor expressed support for the item but noted potential tension due to past contentious discussions about the schools and the ongoing notion that no additional money was available to fund them. CFO Lemieux emphasized that Newton Public Schools remain a top priority for the Mayor and that the new municipal positions will not affect this commitment. COO Morse added that this year's budget process will take a more collaborative and transparent approach with the City Council, School

Committee, school department, and community, and noted that the administration has already met with school leadership.

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

The Committee adjourned at 7:57PM.

**Respectfully submitted,**  
**Rebecca Walker Grossman, Chair of Finance Committee**