

Finance Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Monday, February 9, 2026

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

City staff present: Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux, Comptroller Steve Curley, Director of Transportation Planning Jenn Martin, CPA Program Manager Mollie Hutchings, NPS Assistant Superintendent and Chief Financial and Administrative Officer Liam Hurley

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/OZRXVsqWEdw?si=UYB5bqnWK9a7rQhH>.

#73-26 **CPC recommendation to appropriate \$34,626 for bike parking at parks and high schools**
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending the appropriation of thirty-four thousand six hundred twenty-six dollars (\$34,626) in Community Preservation Act funding from Acct# 5800-3599, CPA Unrestricted Fund Balance, for the installation of bike parking at various park locations citywide and at both high schools.

Action: **Finance Approved 8-0**

Note: Community Preservation Act (CPA) Program Manager Mollie Hutchings presented the attached slides.

She gave an overview of CPA funding. She explained that CPA funds are raised as part of a 1% surcharge in property taxes which, combined with a state match of about 15%, bring in approximately \$4.5 million per year. Each year, about \$1.5 million of this funding is allocated to debt service payments, which are previous projects that the City has taken out bonds on, and about \$2 million go to the Newton Affordable Housing Trust (NHAT). Remaining funds are allocated to projects in four categories, including Open Space, Recreation, Historic Resources, and Affordable Housing. Projects are reviewed by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) and recommended to the City Council.

She stated that funding for this project would come from Recreation funds. The project is the third phase of a three-part bicycle parking initiative to install bicycle parking at public parks and conservation areas and add more racks at the high schools, where bicycle parking is at capacity. She mentioned that earlier phases focused on elementary schools and village centers.

She presented a list and map of bicycle parking installation locations.

She detailed that the City would provide less than 20% of the total project cost, with the remaining funds covered by a large state match.

A Councilor asked how many bicycles each rack accommodates. Director of Transportation Planning Jenn Martin replied that one bicycle can be parked on each side of a rack hoop, noting that some locations will receive a single hoop while others will receive two. She detailed that locations were selected by the Parks and Recreation Department and the Planning Department's Conservation Team.

In response to a Councilor's question, Director Martin answered that ten bicycle hoops would be added to each high school. There had been a demand for additional covered bicycle parking at these locations, so they are excited to add a second covered bicycle parking area and repair the damaged shelter plexiglass at both high schools.

A Councilor inquired about the current bicycle parking capacity at the high schools. Director Martin responded that the highest recent bicycle count at Newton North High School was two hundred. She added that the City is also evaluating where residents are biking to ensure the racks are placed in the most appropriate locations.

The same Councilor asked whether the City planned to keep adding bicycle racks in the future. Director Martin answered that they are open to suggestions for future additions. She detailed that this item's state grant is the Boston Region MPO Community Connections Grant, which could be a source for bicycle racks in the future.

Another Councilor asked whether the bicycle racks had already been purchased. Director Martin answered that the City is awaiting their contract from the Boston Region MPO, so they do not yet have permission to spend. She added that they will be installing the bicycle racks in the summer.

A different Councilor asked whether these would be installed by the City or one of its independent contractors, to which Director Martin replied it would likely be installed by one of the City's on-call contractors.

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

#67-26 Appropriation of \$43,800.68 to Newton Public Schools
HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend forty-three thousand eight hundred dollars and sixty-eight cents (\$43,800.68) from Acct# 0001-3240, June 30, 2025 Certified Free Cash, to Newton Public Schools Acct# 01C30109-579500, School Sustainability Initiatives, for Helpsy textile collection and recycling

Action: Finance Approved 8-0

Note: Newton Public Schools (NPS) Assistant Superintendent and Chief Financial and Administrative Officer Liam Hurley presented the item. He explained that NPS receives approximately 11 cents per pound of recycled material from Helpsy bins. In 2025, they recycled approximately 400,000 pounds, which represents the money that has been sent to Newton's General Fund. This request seeks to reimburse NPS for that amount, which NPS only uses for sustainability initiatives. Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux clarified that this was a housekeeping item, due to the state's process in reimbursing the City.

A Councilor expressed support for the program, but noted that containers were often overfilled. Mr. Hurley responded that there has been reports of overfilling or trash left near the bins. He noted that Helpsy has been responsive to NPS's needs, but requested that the Councilor email him any specific schools where this has been observed.

In response to a Councilor's question, Mr. Hurley noted that as of April 2026, NPS will be paid 13 cents, rather than 11 cents, per pound of recycled materials.

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

#68-26 Appropriation of \$17,600 to Newton Public Schools

HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate seventeen thousand six hundred dollars (\$17,600) from Acct# 0001-3240, June 30, 2025 Certified Free Cash, to Newton Public Schools Acct# 01C30106-538301, Foster Care Transportation, for disadvantaged student transportation.

Action: **Finance Approved 8-0**

Note: Mr. Hurley explained that NPS reported approximately \$37,000 in expenses for foster care transportation in FY24. The state reimburses this amount in FY25, however, NPS must wait for Free Cash to be made available. For that year, the state reimburses at 47% of the incurred costs, as reflected in the request amount. He added that the funds apply towards foster care transportation and in some cases, homeless transportation.

A Councilor asked what the target percentage for state reimbursement was, noting that the state rarely meets its targets. Mr. Hurley responded that the Councilor may have been thinking of circuit breaker reimbursement for transportation rather than foster care transportation. He explained that after the state meets their instructional and tuition expenses, its goal is to reimburse 75% of costs, though the current reimbursement rate is closer to 60%. He added that reimbursements for McKinney-Vento and foster care transportation have typically ranged between 40% and 50%.

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

Referred to Programs and Services & Finance Committee

#66-26 Transfer of \$82,000 to provide funding for Arts and Culture Director

HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer sixty-six thousand dollars (\$66,000) from Acct# 0160251-511001, Parks and Recreation Full-Time Salaries, and sixteen thousand dollars (\$16,000) from Acct# 0160251-57HLTH, Parks and Recreation Health Insurance, to Acct# 0160480-511001, Arts and Culture Full-Time Salaries and Acct# 0160480-57HLTH, Arts and Culture Health Insurance, respectively to provide funding for Arts and Culture Director Meryl Kessler through Fiscal Year 2026.

Programs and Services Approved 8-0 on 02-04-2026

Action: **Finance Approved 8-0**

Note: Chief Financial Officer Lemieux explained that the request was a housekeeping item at this point in the term, as the Council had already approved both the creation of the Arts and Culture Department and the appointment of Meryl Kessler as its Director. The request would transfer funds from the Parks and Recreation Department, where Director Kessler's salary had been paid from, to the Arts and Culture Department to cover six months of salary and health insurance benefits retroactive to January 1st.

A Councilor asked which job openings were generating the savings to support this salary. CFO Lemieux responded that there had been staffing adjustments in the Parks and Recreation Department, savings from the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner positions, which are currently filled on an acting basis, and a vacancy in the Assistant Open Space Coordinator role. She added that the City is not seeking to eliminate these positions.

The same Councilor suggested it would be helpful to check on these openings as the City heads into budget season.

Another Councilor asked whether the City was holding back from hiring. CFO Lemieux responded that the City is not holding back, but would likely re-evaluate job descriptions to ensure they align with the new administration's goals.

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

The Committee discussed its meeting format, considering whether to remain hybrid, fully virtual, or a mix of both. The consensus leaned towards primarily hybrid meetings, while remaining flexible for emergencies and the availability of the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The Committee adjourned at 7:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Walker Grossman, Chair of Finance Committee

Bike Parking

Presentation to Finance Committee

February 9, 2026

CPA Funding Overview

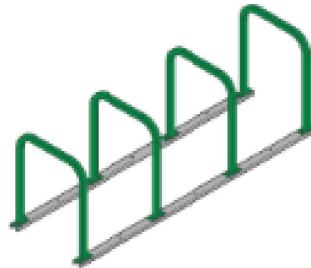
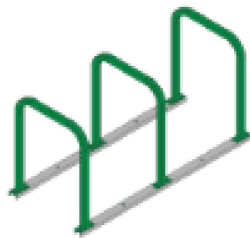
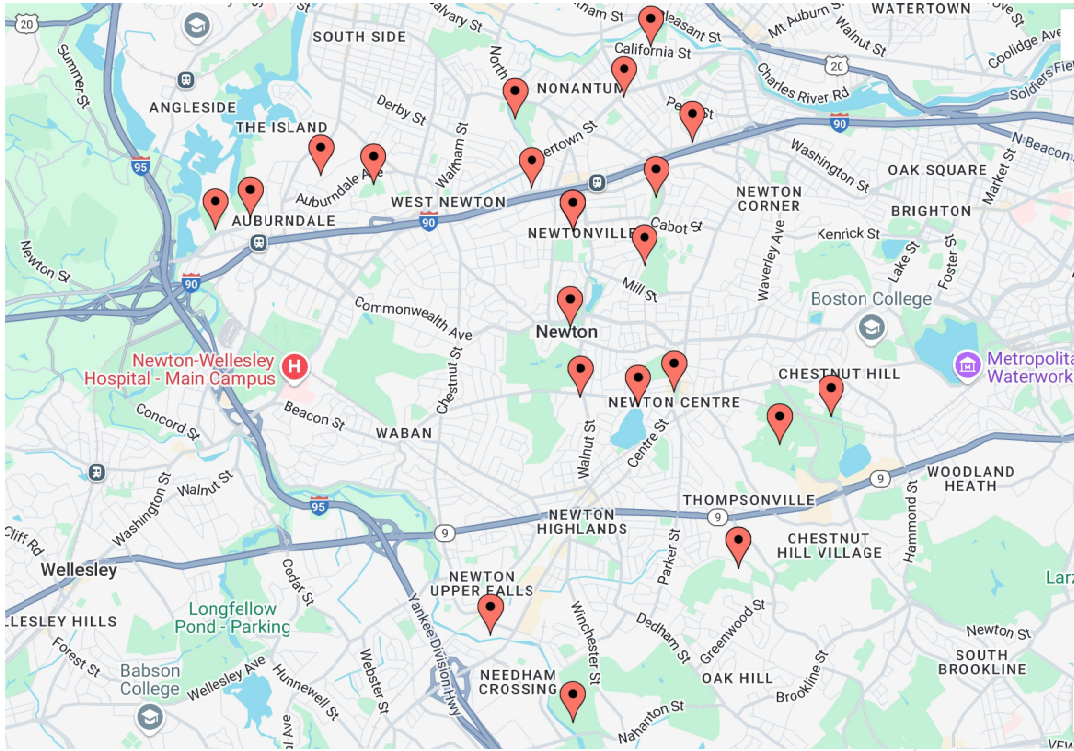
- ▶ CPA funds are raised as part of a 1% surcharge in property taxes, which (combined with a state match ~15%) brings in approx. \$4.5 million per year.
- ▶ Each year ~1.5 million of this funding is allocated to debt service payments, and \$2 million to the Newton Affordable Housing Trust.
- ▶ Projects fall into four categories:
 - ▶ Open Space
 - ▶ Recreation
 - ▶ Historic Resources
 - ▶ Affordable Housing (administered through the NAHT)
- ▶ Projects are reviewed by the CPC, and recommended to the City Council.

Project Scope

This project is the third phase of a three-part bike parking initiative. This phase will install bike parking at public parks and conservation areas and add more racks at the high schools, where bike parking is at capacity.

Locations

- ▶ Albemarle Field
- ▶ Burr Elementary School Fields
- ▶ Cabot Park
- ▶ Cold Springs Park
- ▶ Coletti Magni Park
- ▶ Cronin's Cove/Crystal Lake
- ▶ Edmands Park
- ▶ Forte Park
- ▶ Nahanton Park
- ▶ Newton Centre Greene
- ▶ Norumbega Park
- ▶ Walker Park
- ▶ Auburndale Park
- ▶ Dolan Pond
- ▶ Houghton Gardens
- ▶ Spears Park
- ▶ Upper Falls Riverwalk
- ▶ Webster Woods
- ▶ Newton North High School
- ▶ Newton South High School
- ▶ Newton City Hall



Recommended Funding and Request

Account	No.	Amount
Unrestricted Prior Year Funds	5800-3599	\$34,626

Thank you!

