Programs & Services Committee Report

City of Newton
In City Council

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

Present: Councilors Krintzman (Chair), Malakie (Vice Chair), Oliver, Baker, Farrell, Charm, and Bixby

Absent: Councilor Micley

City Staff: Jonah Temple, Deputy City Solicitor; John Rice, Chief Community Service Officer; Miles Starkey, Committee Clerk

All 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/programs-services-committee

For more information regarding this meeting, a video recording can be found at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fFk2044adY

#110-26 **Request for pre-budget planning discussion**
COUNCILORS KRINTZMAN, FARRELL, OLIVER, MALAKIE, IRISH, and CHARM requesting discussion among members of the Programs & Services Committee before FY26 budget process begins. A Pre-budget conversation will allow the Committee to consider expectations for department presentations and brainstorm questions before the City Council starts to schedule FY26 items (180 Days: 09/12/26).

Action: **Voted No Action Necessary 6-0 (Bixby not voting)**

Notes: Newton's FY27 budget runs from July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027. The Mayor's Budget Speech will occur on Monday, April 27, which begins the process of City departments presenting their budget proposals to the relevant City Council committee. The Programs & Services Committee will have three dedicated budget meetings on April 30, May 6, and May 14. Departments under the purview of Programs & Services include: Schools, City Clerk, City Solicitor, Health & Human Services, Older Adult Services, Veterans, Information Technology, Museum, Library, Culture & Arts, and Parks & Recreation. The Chair invited the committee to share questions and topics that the City Council may want to have answered during upcoming budget meetings.

A Councilor asked about the Law Department and how the decision is made to utilize outside counsel (consultants) for specialized issues like labor management. The Councilor also wanted to know the status of the judgements and settlements account. The Councilor also asked about the Elections office within the City Clerk department and what resources that office may need due to changing nature of elections e.g. mail-in ballots.

A Councilor asked about cuts in the Newton Public Schools budget and what mitigation efforts will be made to offset the losses of FTEs and support services.

A Councilor asked a question about long-term programming & capital planning of Newton Public Schools and wanted to discuss how the City plans to increase revenue more generally.

A Councilor asked a question about the revolving funds of departments and unfilled positions.

The Chair explained that department presentations typically include figures from previous budgets but stated that he would like to see what additional expenditures were made in the department, i.e. a separate column for expenditures that were not contemplated within the proposed budget providing a more complete picture of last year's departmental expenditures.

A Councilor wanted to communicate the desire of the Committee to help departments in any way they can. The Councilor also asked departments to provide suggestions for what they would do with "an extra dollar" in their budget.

A Councilor asked about endowments for Newton Public Schools and the ability to fund the School department outside of tax revenues. The Councilor also mentioned budget overrides and the consequences of the inflation rate.

A Councilor spoke about the creation of a STEM Center that would attract students and outside investment into Newton's public school system. The Councilor wanted to learn more about capital campaign programs that could be created for Newton's school buildings

A Councilor asked about debt exclusion and potential for operating (budget) override.

The Chair motioned to vote no action necessary, which passed unanimously.

Referred to the Programs & Services and Finance Committees

#113-26 **Authorization to appropriate and expend $300,000 to the Newton Communications Access Center, INC.**

HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend three hundred thousand dollars ($300,000) from the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund, with one hundred fifty thousand dollars ($150,000) from Acct# 5516R114-590001, RCN CATV License Fees, and one hundred fifty thousand

dollars ($150,000) from Acct# 5517R114-590001, Verizon CATV License Fees, to the Newton Communications Access Center, Inc.

Action: **Approved 6-0 (Bixby not voting)**

Notes: The Chair introduced Bob Kelly**,** CEO of NewTV, who joined the committee to answer questions.

A Councilor asked about the source of the expenditure, noting that funds would be expended from Verizon and RCN accounts, but not Comcast. The Councilor asked if the committee could get information on the balance of the three cable operator accounts.

Bob Kelly explained the funding structure of NewTV and the relationship with the City. The City of Newton derives revenues from franchise fees and capital payments made by Comcast, RCN, and Verizon. These are allocated between the City and NewTV pursuant to a grant agreement between the City and NewTV. NewTV receives 80% of the franchise fee revenues and 40% of the capital payments, while the City receives 20% of the franchise fee revenues and 60% of the capital payments. On July 11, 2017, the City accepted MGL chapter 44 section 53F(3/4) which established a separate revenue fund known as the PEG (Public, Educational, and Government) Access and Cable Related Fund. By statute, monies in the PEG fund shall only be apportioned for cable-related purposes consistent with the franchise agreements, including but not limited to (i) support of public, educational, or governmental access cable television services; (ii) monitoring compliance of the cable operators with their franchise agreements; or (iii) preparing for renewal of the franchise agreements.

A Councilor asked a question about trends in the funding. Mr. Kelly responded that NewTV has requested as much as $350,000 in previous years, typically obtaining around $200,000. Mr. Kelly estimated that there were over 28,000 cable subscribers in Newton; there are less than 14,000 cable subscribers currently in 2026. The decrease of over 50% in subscribers has reduced the funds that are shared between the City and NewTV. Mr. Kelly stated that there was a $500,000 deficit in the NewTV budget this year. Mr. Kelly mentioned Bill H.91 (link here) that aims to create a streaming service tax that would supplement the current cable operator taxes. The City would receive 2%, community T.V. 2%, and the State 1%.

A Councilor asked about the percentage split between the City and NewTV, and how the funding amount is dictated. Mr. Kelly explained that funds from cable operator fees are designated for specific uses and used the cameras inside City Hall committee rooms as examples of the infrastructure that are developed by NewTV.

Councilor Charm motioned to approved, which passed unanimously.

#76-26 **Discussion about establishing a Commission to review compensation for the Mayor, City Council and School Committee**

COUNCILOR KRINTZMAN requesting discussion about establishing a Commission to review compensation for the Mayor, City Council and School Committee and make a recommendation to the City Council regarding any ordinance modification. The Commission should review the current salary of the Mayor, City Councilors and School Committee Members; evaluate the impact that salary has on the willingness of residents to seek elected office; and evaluate how the compensation reflects the workload of the various elected offices (180 days: 08/17/2026).

Action: **Held 7-0**

Notes: The Chair began discussion by describing questions the City Council receives regarding their salary and full-time status.

The Chair stated that there was strong interest in the community to pursue a role on the City Council but there are serious concerns about compensation; City Councilors currently make $15,500 a year. The current stipend increased from $9,750 in 2019. The Chair recommended that the City Council form a commission to research the salaries of Newton's elected officials to learn the impact a different salary may have on political participation *i.e.* running for city councilor.

A Councilor asked that the focus of this item be the City Council and the School Committee. The Councilor asked that a separate commission be created for the Mayor's compensation.

The Chair mentioned that the City Council compensation was traditionally 10% of the Mayor's salary.

A Councilor stated that workload and composition of the City Council would have a large impact on the salary of City Councilors.

A Councilor stated that the role of City Councilor should be attractive to a wide range of the community and the low compensation limits the field of candidates.

A Councilor shared Sec. 3-1 of the City Charter, which mandates that no change in the Mayor's salary may occur during the current term of the Mayor.

A Councilor said they did not believe compensation was preventing potential candidates from running and that campaign fundraising was one of the real obstacles. The Councilor was interested in conducting a survey that would ask residents what might prevent them from running for City Council.

A Councilor stated that the Mayor's salary is below the market rate and shared another Councilors concern that the current councilor salaries tend to draw demographics with savings and wealth because they would not rely on their public office as their main source of income.

A Councilor spoke about the expertise they would like to see on a commission, such as residents with HR experience who may have experience with salary ranges and organizational structures.

A Councilor asked that the Committee review materials from the last salary commission that produced recommendations.

The Chair told the committee that he would gather materials from the previous salary commission to help construct the charge and parameters for a new salary commission and asked committee members to share their desires for qualifications for potential commissioners.

A Councilor shared concern with the suggested idea that the Council President or Committee chairs receiving a higher salary/additional stipend.

A Councilor asked that Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) to be included in the commission's work on potential salary changes.

Councilor Farrell motioned to hold, which passed unanimously.

#77-26 **Review of Newton City Charter**
COUNCILORS KRINTZMAN, LUCAS, BLOCK, SILBER, ALBRIGHT, FARRELL, KALIS, ROCHE, DAHMUBED, GOLDEN, and BIXBY requesting discussion and review of the Newton City Charter that should include an evaluation of the structure, composition, role and duties of Newton's City Council and School Committee. The review should also include any other component of the Newton City Charter deemed appropriate. The review should be presented to the Newton City Council for its consideration (180 days: 08/17/2026)
Held 8-0 on 03/04/26

Action: **Held 7-0**

Notes: The Chair described the calendar he had created (attached to agenda) that lays out a timeline for when Articles of the City Charter are planned to be discussed during Committee meetings.

A Councilor asked if the topics of discussion within the Chair's calendar were derived from the previous Commission's (2017) recommendation. The Chair clarified that the red-line document was the result of the previous Commission's final recommendation but that it was intended to

serve as an example of previous work, not a contemporary draft of what the Chair would like to see be done by the Committee.

A Councilor spoke about the recommendations from a previous City Council subcommittee, which undertook charter reform and asked for the material to be added to the report as educational material for Councilors. The Councilor also spoke about the proposed calendar and was concerned about the Committee spending time on topics that had previously been pursued and rejected by voters and previous Mayors.

The Chair began discussion on the suggested edits to Article 6 "Reorganization Plans", which would strike Sec. 6-1 that allows the City Council to submit departmental reorganization plans. The Chair said that it was not appropriate for the City Council to make changes to department structures and that this responsibility should be designated only for the Mayor. The second suggested change would be that any reorganization plan "reasonably expected to affect the ensuing financial year's budget" be submitted no later than March 1, to allow the City Council to review the plan before budget meetings begin in late April.

Councilors shared their thoughts on the potential of "giving up" a power and the implications of a date, such as March 1, that a Mayor would need to submit a reorganization plan.

A Councilor spoke about Sec. 2-8 "Clerk of the Council; Other Staff" and interest in seeing that topic be discussed in further conversations on Charter review.

A Councilor shared a quote from the Charter Commission of 2017 regarding the recommendation of a March 1 deadline for Mayoral reorganization plans: *"we have heard from councilors that they have been frustrated when reorganization plans are initiated during the annual budget process when the legislative body has limited capacity to thoroughly vet a proposal…".*

A Councilor reminded the committee that commissioners of the 2017 Charter Commission have offered to serve as a resource for councilors who wish to learn more about the recommendations that were developed.

The Chair took a straw vote of support for the two recommended changes to Article 6.

1. The vote was 5-3 to remove Sec. 6-1.
2. The vote was 5-3 to include a deadline that reorganization plans expected to impact the budget be submitted before March 1

The Chair began discussion on the proposed changes to Article 7 "Planning". The Acts of 1975 established Newton's Department of Planning & Development and the Planning & Development Board. The recommended changes to this article would align the language found in Article 7 with the language that established it. The recommendations from the 2017

Commission were to strike extraneous and superfluous language in favor of clearer references to State law.

Jonah Temple, Deputy City Solicitor, joined the committee to answer questions about this item. Attorney Temple supported the inclusion of explicit references to the Acts of 1975, which would allow Article 7 to be connected to all amendments that occur to the Acts of 1975.

The Chair shared that the last Comprehensive Plan was passed in 2007 and that the Charter Commission of 2017 had recommended a regular review of the plan to occur after a new Mayor is elected. Within two years of taking office, the Mayor would submit a new plan or support the existing plan without introducing changes.

A Councilor was hesitant to support the recommendation to refer more explicitly to the Acts of 1975 and the Comprehensive Plan because it would take away power from the City Council. The Councilor also shared concern with including regular interval review requirements of the Comprehensive Plan due to the long-time commitment that review requires.

A Councilor asked if a requirement could involve a presentation and review to the City Council, which would be more manageable for the Mayor and City Council than producing a full-scale proposal.

A Councilor mentioned that current staffing levels of the Department of Planning & Development could serve as an obstacle in performing regular reviews of the Comprehensive Plan.

A Councilor wanted to hold discussion on changes to Article 7 until a more definitive redline was ready for the committee to review.

The Chair said the committee would not have a straw vote on Article 7 until he returned to the committee with an updated version of the recommended changes.

Councilor Malakie motioned to hold, which passed unanimously

The committee adjourned at 9:30 PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Josh Krintzman, Chair

#113-26

Marc C. Laredo
Mayor

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March 9, 2026

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

Dear Councilors:

I respectfully submit a docket item to your Honorable City Council requesting authorization to appropriate and expend $300,000 from the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund (the "Fund") to the Newton Communications Access Center, Inc. ("NewTV").

The single payment of $300,000 from the Fund to NewTV will allow the station to balance their FY26 budget with level staffing, cover payments for fixed expenses, maintain a high level of overall service, and increase governmental services including meeting coverage.

The City of Newton derives revenues from franchise fees and capital payments made by Comcast, RCN and Verizon. These are allocated between the City and NewTV pursuant to a grant agreement between the City and NewTV. NewTV receives eighty percent (80%) of the franchise fee revenues and forty percent (40%) of the capital payments, while the City receives twenty percent (20%) of the franchise fee revenues and sixty percent (60%) of the capital payments.

On July 11, 2017, the City accepted G.L.c. 44, §53F¾, which established a separate revenue fund known as the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund (the "Fund"). Monies in the Fund are derived solely from the City's portions of franchise fee and capital payments made by the three cable operators in accordance with their franchise agreements. By statute, monies in the Fund shall only be appropriated for cable-related purposes consistent with the franchise agreements, including but not limited to (i) support of public, educational or governmental access cable television services; (ii) monitoring compliance of the cable operators with their franchise agreements; or (iii) preparing for renewal of the franchise agreements.

The $300,000 in this docket item is consistent with the use of PEG Funds to support public, educational, and governmental access cable television services.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Mayor Marc C Laredo

#113-26

INVOICE

TO: City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459

DATE: February 24, 2026
INVOICE #: PEG02242026
PAYMENT TERMS: Net 30 Days

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT DUE
• PEG Services Support for FY26/27	$300,000.00
	TOTAL DUE: $300,000.00

Please make checks payable to NewTV

23 Needham Street • Newton, MA 02461 | 617.965.7200 | newtv@newtv.org

NewTV is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

TO: Programs and Services Committee

FROM: Josh Krintzman

DATE: April 6, 2026

RE: PROPOSED CHANGES, Articles 6 & 7

On Wednesday, we will begin discussion of the Newton City Charter. We will start with articles 6 & 7, which are fairly brief. Below I've explained some of the proposed revisions and provided links to some backup documents.

Article 6 - ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENTS

Article 6 of the Newton Charter is devoted to reorganization plans of the city executive departments. In the existing charter, the city council may propose reorganization of departments, abolish an agency, and establish new city agencies. Agency heads have always been appointed by the Mayor (with approval by the City Council).

Present practice is for the Mayor to have control over the executive departments.

Previously, recommendations were made to limit reorganization plans to those proposed by the Mayor.

However, because there are often budgetary implications involved with any reorganization (either savings generated or additional costs incurred) there was a belief that a reorganization should be conveyed to the City Council in advance of the beginning of the fiscal year.

Proposed changes to Article 6:

- Eliminate City Council generated reorganization plans
- Require the Mayor to submit a reorganization plan, by March 1st, if the re-organization is expected to affect the ensuing fiscal year's budget

Article 7 - PLANNING

1. The Massachusetts Legislature passed a bill (chapter 705 of the acts of 1975), which has been amended and updated as recently as 2007. That law establishes the Newton Department of Planning and Development, the planning and development board and the community development authority. Largely, the act is focused on the implementation of the master plan, zoning changes and revisions.

The enabling language in the charter was proposed to be updated to reflect the current law. This proposal followed a professional recommendation that the charter should continue to make reference to the planning and development board, as the charter should account for this entity which is included in other provisions of Article 7. The professional recommendation also advised that the city charter

should eliminate the reference to the community development authority as that authority's purpose is more operational.

Proposed enabling language (section 1) reads:

There shall be a planning and development board, and department of planning and development. The membership and term of office of the planning and development board shall be determined by ordinance. The mayor shall appoint the members of the board subject to council confirmation as provided in section 3-3 of this charter.

2. Another question that was previously addressed was the frequency with which to refresh the comprehensive plan. The Charter Commission proposed that a new Mayor, within 2 years of taking office, either re-new or affirm the comprehensive plan. Absent a new Mayor, the recommendation was to refresh the plan within 8 years.

It is a pure policy choice about whether to require regular updates.

I hope that the committee can come prepared to discuss articles 6 and 7 of the current charter and proposed revisions.

Here are links to documents used by the Charter Commission on article 6, article 7, including chapter 705 of the acts of 1975.

ARTICLE 6.

ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENTS

~~**SECTION 6-1. Reorganization Plans by City Council.**~~

~~Except as otherwise provided by law or this charter, the city council may by ordinance: (i) reorganize, consolidate or abolish any existing city agency in whole or in part; (ii) establish new city agencies; and (iii) prescribe the functions of any city agencies. All city agencies under the direction and supervision of the mayor shall be headed and administered by officers appointed by the mayor.~~

SECTION 6-1~~2~~. Reorganization Plans by Mayor~~.~~

(a) The mayor may ~~, from time to time,~~ prepare and submit to the city council reorganization plans which may, subject to applicable law and this charter, reorganize, consolidate or abolish any city agency, in whole or in part, or establish new city agencies as the mayor considers necessary or expedient. The reorganization plan shall be accompanied by an explanatory memo which shall include: (i) reference to any ordinances to be repealed or modified; and (ii) a summary of proposed ordinance language changes to be put into effect by the plan.

(b) Every reorganization plan shall, upon receipt by the clerk of the council, be referred to an appropriate committee of the city council which shall, not more than 30 days later, hold a public hearing on the matter and shall, not later than the second regular meeting of the city council following the hearing, report either that it approves or disapproves of the plan. A reorganization plan shall become effective 90 days after the date it is received by the city council unless the city council has prior to that date voted to disapprove the reorganization plan or unless a later effective date is specified in the plan. A reorganization plan presented by the mayor to the city council under this section ~~may~~ shall not be amended by the city council but shall either be approved or rejected as submitted. Reorganization~~s~~ plans ~~and~~ shall not be subject to charter objection as provided in subsection (c) of section 2-9.

(Referendum of 11-04-75; Acts of 1992, Chap 174.)

(c) The mayor shall provide notice, not later than March 1, to the city council of any reorganization plan reasonably expected to affect the ensuing fiscal year's budget.

SECTION 6-2~~3~~. Publication of Reorganization Plan~~.~~

~~An~~ The city clerk shall maintain an up-to-date record of any reorganization plan adopted under this article ~~shall be kept on file in the office of the city clerk~~ and copies of all such plans shall be included as an appendix in any publication of the ordinances of the city.

ARTICLE 7.
PLANNING

Sec. 7-1. Department of Planning and Development.

There shall be a department of planning and development and a planning and development board. The membership and term of office of the planning and development board shall be determined by ordinance. The mayor shall appoint the members of the board subject to council confirmation as provided in Section 3-3(a).~~Department of Planning and Development.~~

Sec. 7-2. Comprehensive Plan.

(a) Content—There shall be a comprehensive plan containing the plan elements described in section 81D of chapter 41 of the General Laws; provided however, that the city may also undertake planning activities relating to particular services or specific geographic areas within the city as the mayor or city council shall determine. ~~setting forth in graphic and textual form policies to govern the future physical development of the entire city. The plan shall cover the entire city and all of its functions and services or shall consist of a combination of plans governing specific functions and services or specific geographic areas.~~

(b) Adoption— Within 2 years of the swearing in of a new mayor or not less frequently than every 8 years, the mayor shall submit a comprehensive plan, including the recommendations from the planning and development board, to the city council. Upon receipt ~~from the mayor of a proposed comprehensive plan or a proposed modification of the existing plan, the city council shall refer the proposal to the planning and development board which shall, within a time specified by the city council, report its recommendations on the proposal. After receipt~~ of a proposed comprehensive plan and the recommendations of the planning and development board, the city council shall hold at least 1 public hearing on the proposed comprehensive plan ~~or the proposed modification of the comprehensive plan~~ and shall, by resolution, adopt the ~~same~~ comprehensive plan with or without amendments. ~~The city council may thereafter from time to time modify the comprehensive plan.~~

The mayor may submit to the city council modifications to the comprehensive plan as the mayor deems necessary. The city council shall, by resolution, adopt the modifications with or without amendments.

~~(~~(c) Effect—The ordinances of the city, including but not limited to the zoning ordinances, shall reflect the comprehensive plan. Within 2 years after the adoption of a comprehensive plan or not less frequently than every 8 years, the city council shall review the city's ordinances for consistency with the comprehensive plan, and shall involve resident and professional assistance as the council deems appropriate.~~serve as a guide to all future action by the city council concerning land use and development regulations, urban renewal programs and expenditures for capital improvements.~~

Sec. 7-3. Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

(a) Land Use and Development Regulations—In accordance with the General Laws, the city council may by ordinance adopt land use and development regulations including, but not limited to, an official map and zoning regulations reflecting the intent of the city's comprehensive plan.

~~(b) Urban Renewal—In accordance with the General Laws, the city council may by ordinance provide for redevelopment, rehabilitation, conservation and renewal programs for the alleviation or prevention of slums, obsolescence, blight or other conditions or deterioration.~~

(b~~c~~) Action by the City Council—Before acting on any proposed ordinance concerning land use and development regulations~~, urban renewal~~ or expenditures for capital improvements, ~~where~~ if the proposed ordinance involves a matter ~~covered~~ addressed ~~by~~ in the comprehensive plan, the city council shall refer the proposal to the planning and development board which shall, ~~within a time specified by the city council and prior to the public hearing on the proposed ordinance,~~ report its recommendations in writing ~~its recommendations~~ to the city council on the propos~~al~~ed ordinance in accordance with section 5 of chapter 40A of the General Laws. ~~Upon adopting any such ordinance, the city council shall make findings and report on the relationship between the ordinance and the comprehensive plan and the comprehensive plan shall be deemed to be amended in accordance with the findings and report.~~