



Zoning & Planning Committee Budget Report

City of Newton In City Council

Tuesday, April 30, 2023

Present: Councilors Baker (Chair), Oliver, Albright, Wright, Krintzman, Getz, Danberg, and Kalis

Also Present: Councilors Downs, Block, Lucas, Greenberg, Bixby, and Farell

City Staff: Barney Heath, Director of Planning; Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director of Planning; Zachary LeMel, Chief of Long Range Planning; Lara Kritzer, Director of Housing and Community Development; Jenn Marton, Director of Transportation Planning; Mollie Hutchings, CPA Program Manager; Katie Whewell, Chief Planner for Current Planning; Shubee Sikka, Urban Designer; David Lewis, Chief Preservation Planner; Barbara Kurze, Senior Preservation Planner; John Sisson, Economic Development Director; Perry Rosenfield, Manager of Financial Planning & Analysis; Connor Roach, Senior Financial Analyst; Anthony Ciccariello, Commissioner of Inspectional Services; Deb Finamore, Administrative Assistant; Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer; and Jaclyn Norton, Committee Clerk

For more information regarding this meeting, a video recording can be found at the following link:

[Zoning and Planning Committee - April 30, 2024 - YouTube](#)

Please Note: Budget materials can be found on the City's website at the following link:

<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/comptroller/budget>

DEPARTMENT BUDGET & CIP DISCUSSIONS:

Inspectional Services Department

Planning Department

CPA Administration

Referred to Finance and Appropriate Committees

#8-24

Submittal of the FY 2025 to FY 2029 Capital Improvement Plan

HER HONOR THE MAYOR submitting the Fiscal Years 2025 to 2029 Capital Improvement Plan pursuant to section 5-3 of the Newton City Charter.

#194-24

Submittal of the FY25 – FY29 Supplemental Capital Improvement Plan

HER HONOR THE MAYOR submitting the FY25 – FY29 Supplemental Capital Improvement Plan.

#195-24 Submittal of the FY25 Municipal/School Operating Budget

HER HONOR THE MAYOR submitting in accordance with Section 5-1 of the City of Newton Charter the FY25 Municipal/School Operating Budget, passage of which shall be concurrent with the FY25-FY29 Capital Improvement Program (#8-24).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF SUBMISSION 04/16/24; LAST DATE TO PASS THE BUDGET 05/31/24

Inspectional Services

Note: Anthony Ciccariello, Commissioner of Inspectional Services, noted that as of February the department had issued 6,627 in FY24. This number is consistent when compared to previous fiscal years. He also described that the Department has been working on the project to close all open permits as earlier this year the department had over 1,000 open permits. In many cases, all that was needed to close the permit was the final inspection. The Commissioner advised the public that they should not pay a contractor until the permit is closed and that the department is trying to get back to individuals within a week of them contacting the Department about an open permit. Regarding enforcement, the Department at the time of the meeting had 216 open enforcement complaints, closed 152 with 53 of them closed within 30 days. A Councilor asked what the goals were for getting these enforcement complaints closed and the Commissioner stated that he would need to follow up after the meeting.

Councilors asked about the status of filling the opening for a Zoning Enforcement Officer. Commissioner Ciccariello noted that the City has increased the starting salary for this position and that the Department is doing outreach to help fill this position. Regarding the Development Services Assistant position, Commissioner Ciccariello described that this position has been left open intentionally for the past few fiscal years to evaluate the workload with the NewGov system on existing staff. Councilors also asked how the Department works to add Special Permits to NewGov. Multiple staff members described that currently, all new and current special permits are in NewGov and that adding old special permits will take time and requires continued collaboration between the Inspectional Services and Planning Departments. Committee members agreed to have a future discussion regarding how both the public and staff access the NewGov system. There was also a question about the school safety task force. Commissioner Ciccariello described that the Department already inspects schools, and this task force is restarting after a pause due to the pandemic.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the Inspectional Services Department's proposed Budget of \$2,138,498, which passed unanimously.

Planning Department

Note: Barney Heath, Director of Planning, described that the Planning Department staffs several boards and commissions and provides various customer service functions to the public. The attached presentation was then handed off to each of the division heads that are described below.

Conservation

Jennifer Steel, Chief Environmental Planner, stated that this division manages several projects including the administration of the state Wetlands Protection Act and the city's floodplain ordinance. This division also oversees the land management of over 300 acres of conservation land along with consultation with City departments regarding wetlands, stormwater, and green infrastructure. In FY25 this division sets to work with the City Council on crafting a new floodplain ordinance, infrastructure projects at various conservation areas, updating the Climate Action Plan, and assisting with the Christina Street Bridge project.

A Councilor asked regarding the maps that are being used to develop the floodplain ordinance. Ms. Steel responded that they are using the recently updated maps from FEMA. Questions were also asked by multiple Councilors regarding the amount of funding set aside for maintaining conservation lands. Ms. Steel stated that there is \$25,000 from Newton Commonwealth Golf Course and \$50,000 from the City. Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer, added that other funding sources such as ARPA supplement this funding.

Long-Range Planning

Zachary LeMel, Chief of Long-Range Planning, leads the Long Range Planning Division which also consists of two staff members to support the division. This division leads policy, planning, and development studies to achieve citywide goals, oversees community outreach for the Department, and provides technical assistance on data collection and analysis at the local and state levels. Staffing responsibilities for this division include the Zoning & Planning Committee and the Planning & Development Board. In FY25 the division sets out to research technical and tactical zoning amendments to meet citywide goals and objectives, apply for a grant to study all manufacturing zones within Newton, and track and review VCOD applications.

Councilors asked questions regarding the money spent on consultants and the status of interest in the VCOD. Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director of Planning; and Zachary LeMel, Chief of Long-Range Planning stated that \$58,000 was spent on Utile for the VCOD and that the City received a \$70,000 grant for work on the VCOD last summer. Regarding interest in the VCOD, there has been one application for development in the MRT district, and all other proposed projects were inquiries.

Current Planning

Katie Whewell, Chief Planner, outlined that the Current Planning Division provides individuals with customer support regarding zoning, land use, and development within the city; development review support along with support to appropriate boards and commissions as needed. In FY25 this division

will be implementing the VCOD and providing support to the Planning & Development Board regarding site plan review.

Urban Design

Shubee Sikka, Urban Design Planner, staffs the Urban Design Commission along with reviewing sign applications and fence appeals. This division also is involved in guiding design reviews and street enhancement projects. In FY25 the division will be involved in assisting with special permit and comprehensive permit design reviews, the Newton Highlands street enhancement project, and the city seal redesign.

A Councilor asked how the benches in Newton Highlands are being selected due to public criticism of the benches in Newtonville. Ms. Sikka described that the Department will be working with the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department to select a bench that is currently used by the Department.

Historic Preservation

David Lewis, Chief Preservation Planner; and Barbara Kurze, Senior Preservation Planner, stated that this division staffs the Newton Historical Commission along with the four local historic district commissions. They also review applications for projects on buildings over 50 years old or within a historic district, provide guidance to the public regarding historic preservation, and resolve violations of the Demolition Delay and Historic District ordinances. In FY25 the division is working on continuing the project to survey post-war architecture in Newton, adopt one set of revised Rules & Regulations for all local historic districts, and update historic preservation design guidelines.

Councilors asked questions about creating a unified set of Rules & Regulations for local historic districts. Mr. Lewis and Ms. Kurze noted that this would entail having one general document that notes which areas are distinct for each of the local historic districts. They have been meeting with each of the commissions and a draft is currently being reviewed by the Law Department.

Housing & Community Development

Lara Kritzer, Director of Housing & Community Development, stated that this division provides support to the Newton Housing Partnership, Fair Housing Committee, Affordable Housing Trust, and Commission on Disability. This division also oversees the administration of approximately \$3 million in federal grants and 15 subgrants for human service programs. In FY25 the division will be working on a review on the IZ ordinance, and projects at the Walker Center, West Newton Armory, and the West Newton Family Navigation Center.

A Councilor asked why the FamilyAid project is currently being delayed. Ms. Kritzer noted that the project is currently working on construction and securing additional funding.

Transportation

Jenn Martin, Director of Transportation Planning, noted that this division oversees multiple projects that are outlined in the attached presentation. In FY25 the division will work on the implementation of the Washington Street Pilot, complete and adopt the Walk/Ride/Roll Master Plan,

and design and bid on the Christina Street Bridge project. The division will also track a number of other projects as outlined in the attached presentation.

Councilors asked about parking concerns in Newton. Ms. Martin stated that any development of a parking plan would be led by the Public Works Department. Regarding EV charging, Director Heath added that the City is working on an action plan for EV charging.

Economic Development

John Sisson, Director of Economic Development, provides concierge services to assist businesses in navigating municipal regulations and utilizes on-the-ground data to evaluate existing regulations and policies that affect businesses. This division also oversees consultants performing studies of local land use, economic opportunity, and strategic planning. In FY25 the division will work with the City Council on amendments to make the zoning ordinance more friendly to businesses, work to increase foot traffic in village centers, and identify and evaluate commercial areas where redevelopment could lead to higher foot traffic.

Councilors urged support for the increases in the budget allocation for this division to do more outreach to businesses and if the City could look into facilitating pop-up programs. Mr. Sisson noted that the main limiting factor for his division is capacity and Director Heath stated that the City has had previous success with pop-ups. In response to Councilors questions regarding helping displaced businesses and if the City can help support the West Newton Cinema in light of the recent donation. Director Heath noted that Mr. Sisson routinely works with businesses to find retail space and that the West Newton donation is promising in ensuring an additional attraction in West Newton. Regarding helping businesses navigate municipal processes Mr. Sisson noted that there could be some improvement to existing processes to make them easier to navigate.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the Planning Department's proposed Budget of \$2,654,549, which passed 6-0-1 (Councilor Wright Abstaining) (Councilor Albright Not Voting).

CPA Administration

Note: Mollie Hutchings, CPA Program Manager, described that CPA funding comes primarily from a local revenue surcharge of 1% on property taxes and a match from the state based on the prior fiscal year's local surcharge. This funding can be used in the year it becomes available or for future projects. The amounts for each funding source are in the attached presentation. Ms. Hutchings did note that the rollover amount was significantly decreased due to the City receiving a lower amount of state matching funds in FY24 than in previous fiscal years. Regarding expenditures, there was a drop in program administration costs due to staffing changes along with an increase in debt service payments. This increase in debt service payments is attributed to the City taking on more projects that were bonded such as the Gath Pool.

A Councilor asked what money in this budget is set aside for the Affordable Housing Trust. Ms. Hutchings stated that the Affordable Housing Trust receives the Community Housing Reserve

funding which is traditionally set at 35% of the CPA funding. Another Councilor asked regarding the community outreach as described in outcome #2. Ms. Hutchings and Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director of Planning stated that prior workshops have been held and are welcome to ideas on how to better engage the community.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the CPA's proposed Budget of \$5,010,119, which passed 7-0 (Councilor Albright Not Voting).

Respectfully submitted,

R. Lisle Baker, Chair

**City of Newton
Department of Planning & Development
FY2025 Budget Presentation**

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APRIL 30, 2024

**Department of Planning & Development
Division Structure**

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- Conservation
- Long-Range Planning
- Current Planning
- Urban Design
- Historic Preservation
- Housing & Community Development
- Transportation Planning
- Economic Development
- Community Preservation (separate presentation)

Conservation Division

Jennifer Steel, Chief Environmental Planner

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- Key Functions

- Wetland protection via implementation of the State Wetlands Protection Act and the City's Floodplain Ordinance
- Land Management of over 300 acres of Conservation land
- Land acquisition and trails development projects, as opportunities arise
- Consultation with City departments regarding wetlands, stormwater, and green infrastructure
- Plan creation and implementation: Open Space and Recreation, Climate Action, Climate Resiliency, and Hazard Mitigation Plans

- FY25 Projects

- Craft a new Floodplain Ordinance
- Undertake major infrastructure improvement projects at Norumbega Conservation Area, Kessler Woods Conservation Area, and Kennard Conservation Area
- Update Climate Action Plan
- Assist with the Christina Street Bridge project

Long-Range Planning Division

Zack LeMel, Chief of Long-Range Planning

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- Key Functions:

- Lead policy, planning, and development studies to implement and achieve Citywide goals.
ex. Village Center Zoning, California Street Manufacturing District
- Provide technical assistance on data collection and analysis at the local and regional level.
ex. Census information, housing trends
- Oversee community engagement and outreach for department.
e.x. Washington Street Pilot, Walk/Ride/Roll Master Plan
- Staff the Zoning and Planning Committee (City Council) & Planning & Development Board.

- FY25 Projects:

- Technical/tactical zoning amendments to achieve Citywide goals and objectives.
ex. grading/siteworks, promoting the preservation and creation of starter homes, and incentivizing small businesses
- Grant application for Phase II of updates to Newton's manufacturing district zoning.
ex. zoning for California Street (Nonantum), new study areas outside of Nonantum village center and across the City
- Track and review Village Center Overlay District applications.

Current Planning Division

Katie Whewell, Chief Planner

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- Key Functions:

- Provide customer service to stakeholders, residents, interested parties on items related to zoning, land use, and development within the city (counter, email, phone).
- Development Review at preapplication stage and taking the following applications and reviews through their respective processes: Special Permits, Comprehensive Permits, 5-58 Reviews for Public Buildings, and Administrative Site Plan Review. Additionally, zoning review is needed for all variance applications, but current planning staff do not provide the same level of support as they do for special permits. For larger special permit and comprehensive permit projects this includes identifying mitigation payments, attending community meetings and site visits, and providing support to the appropriate Board/Council.
- Building Permit and Occupancy Review for all approved special permit and comprehensive permits. This includes adherence to any unique conditions, requesting documentation ensuring compliance with conditions, collecting and directing payments to the appropriate departments and accounts, and providing support to rectify any issues via consistency and insubstantial change.

Urban Design Division

Shubee Sikka, Urban Design Planner

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- Key Functions:

- Staff the Urban Design Commission
- Review sign applications
- Provide guidance on design reviews
- Review and make decisions on fence appeals
- Provide input on street enhancement projects

- FY25 Projects:

- Assist with Special Permit/Comprehensive Permit Design Reviews
- Newton Highlands street enhancement project
- City seal design

Historic Preservation Division
David Lewis, Chief Preservation Planner

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• Key Functions:

- Staff the five Historic Commissions: the citywide Newton Historical Commission and four Local Historic District Commissions
- Review applications for exterior alterations, and proposed demolitions and new construction to all building that are either greater than 50 years old or in a local historic district
- Provide guidance to public about the historic processes for historic building reviews and appropriate historic building treatments.
- Resolve violations of the Demolition Delay and Historic District ordinances

• FY25 Projects:

- Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey & Planning Grant for FY24
 - Continuation of multi-phase project to survey post-war architecture in Newton
- Adopt and publish one set of revised Rules & Regulations for all four Local Historic Districts
 - Document and clarify the critical HDC processes required by the ordinance
- Updating the Design Guidelines
 - Update the existing City of Newton Historic Preservation Design Guidelines, last updated in 2012

Housing and Community Development Division
Lara Kritzer, Dir. of Housing & Community Development

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• Key Functions:

- Oversight and management of federal grants totaling approximately \$3 million annually.
- Management and oversight of inclusionary zoning ordinance.
- Housing development and rehabilitation programs.
- Provide staff support for Newton Housing Partnership, Fair Housing Committee, Newton Affordable Housing Trust, and Commission on Disability.
- Management of approximately 15 subgrants annually for human service program.

• FY25 Projects:

- Potential Walker Center affordable housing
- West Newton Armory redevelopment
- West Newton Family Navigation Center redevelopment
- IZ ordinance look-back

Transportation Division

Jenn Martin, Dir. of Transportation Planning

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- Key Functions:

- Support Complete Streets Design of roadways via Village Enhancement project, Traffic Calming, Safe Routes to School, and other roadways projects
- Special Project Involvement including Washington Street Pilot, Christina Street Bridge, Commonwealth Ave Carriageway, MBTA Commuter Rail, & MassDOT projects.
- Work with Senior Services Department to oversee transportation system for seniors and low-income users
- Coordinate with Office of Sustainability on implementation of sustainable transportation and EV Charging projects

- FY25 Projects:

- Implementation of Washington Street Pilot
- Completion/Adoption of Walk/Ride/Roll Master Plan
- Design/Bid Christina Street Bridge
- Track status of MBTA Commuter Rail, MBTA Newton Highlands, MassDOT Needham St, MassDOT Carriageway, MassDOT Newton Corner

Economic Development Division

John Sisson, Dir. of Economic Development

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- Key Functions:

- Provide concierge service to and assist businesses with permitting processes and other challenges presents by municipal regulations
- Collaborate within Planning and across departments
- Take lessons learned in the field back to City Hall to evaluate regulations and policy that affect commercial enterprises and property owners
- Oversee consultants performing studies of local land use, economic opportunity, and strategic planning

- FY25 Projects:

- Help Newton become more business friendly by working with the City Council on incremental updates to the Zoning Ordinance
- In concert with other departments, focus on strategies to assist small businesses and encourage foot traffic in the City's historic village centers
- Work to identify and evaluate commercial areas of the City where redevelopment would increase foot traffic and augment the commercial tax base

Planning Dept Customer Service

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- The Planning Dept.'s webpage has every member of the dept.'s individual email and phone number:
 - <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/contact-us>
- The Planning Dept. also has an email set up for general inquiries:
 - planninginfo@newtonma.gov
- In addition to the Dept.'s project webpages, the Department releases a weekly Friday report that can be subscribed to:
 - <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/news-weekly-updates>

NEWTON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PROGRAM

FY2025 BUDGET

Presentation to Zoning and Planning Committee
April 30, 2024



Open Space

Community Housing

Recreation

Historic Resources

How does CPA Funding Work?

Newton's CPA Funding comes primarily from:

- Local revenue surcharge of 1% on property taxes
- State CPA Trust Fund match on the **prior fiscal year** local surcharge. For example, in FY24 Newton received a match of 20.01% of its FY23 CPA surcharge

CPA Funding can be used in the year that it becomes available **OR** saved for future projects.

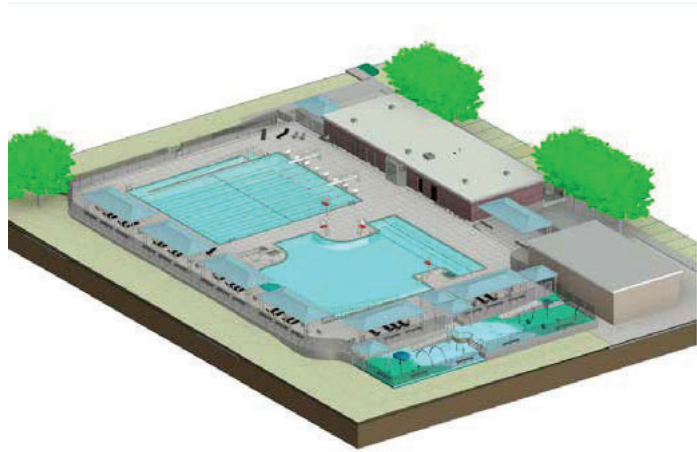
| City of Newton COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUND | CPA Administration Budget | |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Fiscal 2024 FINAL | Fiscal 2025 PROVISIONAL |
| Program Budget - Revenue | | |
| Local CPA Surcharge | \$4,120,278 | \$4,264,488 |
| State Matching Funds - Estimated at 18% (In FY24 actual match was 20.1%. Current Estimate is at 18%, given Community Preservation Coalition announcement that match was expected to be below 20% in FY25) | \$796,154 | \$741,650 |
| Rollover – Previous Year State Match (Difference between Prior Year Estimated State Match and Actual Funds Received) | \$703,910 | \$3,981 |
| Additional Local Revenue: (assume \$0 in budget) | | |
| TOTAL REVENUE | \$5,620,342 | \$5,010,119 |

| City of Newton, Massachusetts COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUND | Fiscal 2024 | Fiscal 2025 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| | FINAL | PROVISIONAL |
| Program Budget - Expenditures | | |
| Program Administration (max. 5% of annual new funds) | \$182,907 | \$164,853 |
| Debt Service Payments (after Open Space Reserves) | \$132,819 | \$994,759 |
| BUDGETED RESERVES | | |
| Community Housing Reserve (10% minimum of Total Revenue) | \$562,034 | \$501,020 |
| Historic Resources Reserve (10% minimum of Total Revenue) | \$562,034 | \$501,020 |
| Open Space Reserve (10% minimum of Total Revenue) | \$562,034 | \$501,020 |
| General Reserve (unrestricted, any CPA purpose) | \$3,618,514 | \$2,347,447 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURES | \$5,620,342 | \$5,010,119 |

Gath Pool Renovation

Recreation

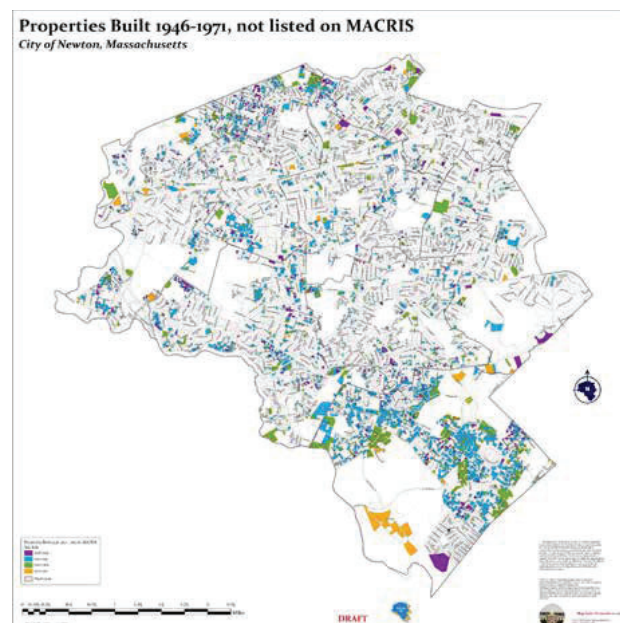
- Gath Pool received a total of \$7,034,362 in CPA funds for the Phase III Construction:
 - \$5,834,362 originally approved in June 2023, and an additional \$1,200,000 in October 2023
 - These funds were authorized as 30 year bonds.
- Previous Phases had received a total of \$545,500 in CPA funds, which allowed for an existing conditions survey and design work
- Gath Pool is currently finishing Phase III of the project, and is scheduled to be open in June.



Midcentury Architecture Survey

Historic Resources

- The City undertook a survey project to inventory Newton's mid-20th century architecture.
- \$17,500 in CPA Historic Resource funds were given to the project, with a 50% match from the Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey & Planning Grant program.
- Work was completed in September 2023, adding a total of 241 new inventory forms to MHC's historic buildings database.
- City staff is pursuing a second phase of the project, and has received another round of funding from MHC.



Haywood House

Affordable Housing

- The Newton Housing Authority requested \$3,000,000 in CPA housing funds in 2018, and an additional \$77,900 in 2020, for Haywood House.
- The project created 55 new units, which are restricted as permanently affordable one-bedroom rental units for residents 62+ years old.
- The project was completed in Summer 2023.



CPA FUND “FINANCES AT A GLANCE”

Fiscal Year 2024

Revenue

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Beginning balance | 4,323,992 |
| Local CPA surcharge | 4,120,278 |
| State match | |
| Budget for this FY | 800,135 |
| Additional from prior FY | 714,416 |
| Total Available Resources | 9,958,822 |

Actual FY23 State Match 20.01%

Expenses

| | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Bond repayment obligations | 694,853 | 12% |
| New funding authorizations | 2,242,619 | 40% |
| Administrative costs | 182,907 | 3% |
| Total Expenses | 3,120,379 | 55% |
| Current Fund Balance | 6,838,443 | |

*Webster Woods
Includes funding recommended by CPC*

Fiscal Year 2025

Revenue

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Beginning balance | 6,838,443 |
| Local CPA surcharge | 4,264,488 |
| State match | |
| Budget for this FY | 741,650 |
| Additional from prior FY | 3,981 |
| Total Available Resources | 11,848,562 |

Estimated at 18%, based on most recent information

Expenses

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Bond repayment obligations | 1,495,779 | 30% |
| New funding authorizations | - | 0% |
| Administrative costs | 164,853 | 3% |
| Total Expenses | 1,660,632 | 33% |
| Projected Fund Balance | 10,187,930 | |

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