



# Programs & Services Committee Budget Report

## City of Newton In City Council

**Thursday, April 18, 2024**

Present: Councilors Humphrey (Vice Chair), Oliver, Micley, Malakie, Lobovits, Baker, and Farrell

Absent: Councilor Krintzman

Also Present: Councilors Albright, and Bixby

City Staff: Carol Moore, City Clerk/Clerk of the Council; Cassidy Flynn, Deputy City Clerk; Joe Mulvey, Chief Information Officer; Jill Mercurio, Library Director; Lisa Dady, Historic Newton Director; Perry Rosenfield, FP&A Manager; Connor Roach, Senior Financial Analyst; Nicole Banks, Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture; Marc Welch, Deputy Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture; 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:

*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:**

City Clerk

Information Technology

Historic Newton

Library

Parks, Recreation and Culture

### **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**

## City Clerk

**Note:** Carol Moore, City Clerk/Clerk of the Council, presented the attached presentation which provides an overview of the accomplishments of the Department in FY24 and what projects the Department is working on. The Department has been fully staffed most of the year with one current vacancy that the Department is working to fill. In the City Clerk division of the office staff issue vital records and dog licenses along with implementing a new form for marriage licenses. There is a new process for completion of state conflict of interest training and staff are currently training on a new state system for vitals. For Elections, there were three successful elections conducted in FY24. The division employed 250 election workers per election, created a new student election worker program, and implemented new tabulators. The state is also going to be rolling out updates to the state voter system which will require training by staff. For vote by mail, the Department has documented a 126% increase since 2021. It is also important to note that staff in the City Clerk and Elections divisions are trained and perform duties in both divisions.

The City Council division has brought several services online including Auto Dealer License applications, Grants of Location, Water/Sewer/Drain Extensions, Special Permit payments, and a Docket Tracking system, and is currently in the process of transitioning to an online code management system. Staff in the City Council division are also developing manuals for best practices and continuity when new staff are hired.

In looking at the changes for FY25, the most significant changes are the reinstatement of a part-time administrative assistant for the City Council division, increases in the cost of postage, and increases in printing costs – the latter two associated in part with the presidential vote-by-mail. The attached presentation also provides an overview of the goals of the Department for FY25. When asked by a Councilor what the next thing that she would like to achieve within the Department, Ms. Moore stated that she would prioritize a review of the workflow and compensation for staff in the City Clerk and Election divisions.

Councilors thanked Ms. Moore and her staff for all the support that they provided to the public and the City Council. Councilors also asked about the lack of funding for training in the Department. Ms. Moore stated that she had spoken with the Finance Department and that this was missed. The Department will be moving money around to have funding for staff to receive necessary training for their positions. When asked about the CIP Ms. Moore responded that there are very few one-time purchases for the Department, but she would like to complete the renovations to the office that were partially completed in 2022.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the City Clerk Department's proposed Budget of \$2,480,345, as well as the Supplemental CIP and the CIP, which passed unanimously.

## Information Technology

**Note:** Joseph Mulvey, Chief Information Officer, stated that the IT Department routinely assists and collaborates with other Departments to achieve organizational goals. Regarding the status of City systems, Mr. Mulvey noted that the City is on the newest version of MUNIS which is used for all financial needs of the City, and that his Department is working on updates to the website and the 311 system. These updates to the website and a new phone app will make the system more user-friendly aiding residents in accessing services and filing 311 requests. This Department is also continuing to move city applications over to AWS (Amazon Web Services) to eliminate issues that were starting to arise due to aging internal servers. The City also had a risk assessment conducted to gauge the City's vulnerability to cyber-attacks. The results of this assessment were better than expected according to Mr. Mulvey and the City chose a provider, through a competitive interview process, which specializes in systems similar to that of the City.

Councilors asked about the improved search that would be part of the updates to the website. Mr. Mulvey explained that this project is being worked on by Rufen Liao, Senior Web Developer, and will transition from the current search which is through Granicus to a customized real-time Google search. Members of the public can give feedback on the new search once it is implemented. There was also discussion of the possibility of a chatbot to help users with customer service questions on the city website. Regarding the new 311 system, there will be training on the new system for staff and the public along with documentation available to assist users in learning the new system.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the Information Technology Department's proposed Budget of \$2,646,120, as well as the Supplemental CIP and the CIP, which passed unanimously.

## Historic Newton

**Note:** Lisa Dady, Historic Newton Director, described how this Department works to connect the public with history and current events. They have been engaged in a "museum without walls" program that was started during the COVID-19 pandemic and seeks to bring the resources of the Department into the Community to meet people where they are. Exhibits produced for the Department are not only used to educate the public but have been utilized as part of professional development conducted by the City. The Department is also working on making more of the collection available online along with cataloging the contents of the time capsule at the former Newton Senior Center. For larger projects, the Department is also engaged in the feasibility study (funded through the Community Preservation Act (CPA)) of Jackson Homestead for the restoration of the building and installation of an elevator.

When asked what she would like the Department to accomplish next, Ms. Dady stated that she would like to see the Department accelerate larger projects to better connect people and restore Jackson

Homestead. Councilors asked about the improvements to the burial grounds which included the removal of some fencing. Ms. Dady explained that she is looking for these spaces to be treated more as open spaces and will increase signage to make the public aware. When asked about the potential future role of Artificial Intelligence in the archival work of Historic Newton, she stated that the Department strives for accuracy and is concerned about potential errors by the system not being corrected for a long time due to the volume of items to index. A Councilor also asked if the Department had enough volunteers. She responded that the decrease in the number of volunteers was due to staffing shortages in the Department oriented toward volunteer activities and recruitment and that once these positions are filled then the number of volunteers and general attendance should increase. When asked if there is an opportunity for the collection of oral histories, Ms. Dady promoted the Newton Talks program which seeks to collect oral histories. The final page of the Historic Newton budget shows a change in health insurance spending that makes it appear as if there were a decrease in the department's overall funding compared to the prior fiscal year, but Ms. Dady explained that in practice it has been level-funded this fiscal year.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept Historic Newton's proposed Budget of \$319,712 as well as the Supplemental CIP and the CIP, which passed unanimously.

## Library

**Note:** Jill Mercurio, Library Director, outlined that the Newton Free Library has conducted many projects during FY24. These include over 700 youth programs, ESL classes, additions to the Library of Things, and additional programming during school closures, as well as recent programming for the solar eclipse. The Newton Free Library remains the busiest library in the Minuteman System. During FY24 the Department also went fine-free, which saw no drop in return rates. There was also a program to send an email to new borrowers informing them about the services of the Library. These emails have been successful with an over 85% open rate. The Library experienced an 8% increase in borrowing in FY24 and increases in the amount of digital circulation. Regarding staff, the Library has 79 full-time employees and Director Mercurio noted upcoming contract negotiations for the ASCME union, which could impact costs for the Department in upcoming fiscal years. She also mentioned the rising threat of book bans in Massachusetts as something the Library is monitoring. The Library is beginning a community engagement process on five-year planning and next year is the Library's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. There is a very popular Teen Room (also utilized by adults with intellectual disabilities), and there will soon be an exterior lockers program for picking up reserved items outside normal hours.

Councilors asked questions if the Library has adequate funding for maintaining both its physical and digital collections. Director Mercurio stated that the Library of Things is funded through grants but did note that the cost of eBook licensing has been increasing. The Library's book-buying budget has been level-funded despite rising digital rights costs. When asked about the term of these licenses, it was explained that these licenses are not in perpetuity and depend on the publisher.

Councilors also asked questions regarding the flooding of the Library parking lot on August 8th, 2023, and urged for signage to be re-posted regarding flooding. Director Mercurio noted that the Library does not need to cover any of the costs associated with that incident and mentioned that the flooding remains less frequent and severe than before the parking lot renovations, when it was more chronic. When asked about the next projects the Department would like to focus on, she stated that the focus would be on improvements to the facility's utilities, such as upgrades to the HVAC system, which have come before the Council recently, and other capital improvements. A minor wish list item is more power outlet access for seated patrons.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the Library Department's proposed Budget of \$6,561,717 as well as the Supplemental CIP and the CIP, which passed unanimously.

### **Parks, Recreation and Culture**

**Note:** Nicole Banks, Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture; and Marc Welch Deputy Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture, presented the attached presentation which provides an overview of the Department. The Urban Forestry division oversees 22,000 street trees and 1,000+ acres of City land. The city is beginning to break even on the loss of public trees versus new trees planted annually. This division is comprised of 8 employees and is working on insourcing most of its work. The addition of three tree care employees is budget neutral and will reduce reliance on contracted service. The Grounds Maintenance and Beautification division works on the maintenance of almost all City land and is engaged in several projects. The Parks and Open Space division engages in all phases of capital projects along with coordinating with several community groups. The attached presentation outlines a number of projects that the division is engaged in. The Department will also be hiring a new leadership position to oversee the Recreation and Community Programs division to strengthen community events coordination and staff work. In FY25 the Department will experience an 8% increase in its budget which can be attributed to staffing changes, the new Gath Pool, and increases in grounds maintenance costs.

Councilors asked questions on the limiting factor for the number of trees planted not equaling the number of trees removed. Mr. Welch described that the main limiting factor is staff capacity, as they can currently plant and maintain new plantings for 1200-1400 trees per week, and he hopes that the increase in house staffing can alleviate those capacity issues. Commissioner Banks added that having more openings will allow the Department more flexibility and can cast a wider net in searching for applicants. A Councilor raised concerns with the Department's plans to manage the brush growth in the Waban Hill Reservoir, which they plan to do only every few years due to challenging site conditions. A Councilor also asked about the reduction in the Gath Pool Services line item. Commissioner Banks stated that this is due to the new pools requiring less maintenance. The cost for pet waste bins was also moved to a line item in the budget instead of being funded through a separate account.

A Councilor asked if there were any wish list items that have yet to be funded, and the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner cited the forestry investments that had been planned for the unsuccessful operating override referendum as well as ongoing maintenance needs each yet.

Regarding fields, Councilors asked if the City could verify that the artificial turf from the City is being recycled along with a Councilor asking if the City has a plan for the improvement of additional fields. Commissioner Banks noted that the City has documentation noting that the artificial turf has been transported to the recycling facility and welcomes future conversations regarding plans to improve additional fields. When asked about the Department's use of consultants, Commissioner Banks said that they are useful for specific projects, but the Department does not rely heavily on them.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department's proposed Budget of \$9,126,430, as well as the Supplemental CIP and the CIP, which passed 6-0-1 (Councilor Baker Abstained).

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Bill Humphrey, Vice Chair**

# FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Clerk of the Council & City Clerk's Office

## Staff Appreciation

Outstanding work from our Team

Cassidy Flynn – Deputy City Clerk

- **Scott Matthews** – Assistant Clerk of the Council
- **Danielle Delaney** – Senior Committee Clerk
- **Jaclyn Norton** – Committee Clerk
- Vacant – Committee Clerk
- **John Doyle** – Election Supervisor
- **Chris Richards** – Census Coordinator
- **Sherry Murphy** – Election Coordinator
- **Kathaleen Poutas** – Bookkeeper
- **Janet Ferguson** – Vitals Coordinator
- **Jennifer Breslouf** – Contracts & Licensing Coordinator
- **Peter Ko** – Compliance Coordinator
- **Jessica Eldridge-Young** – Archivist
- **Charlie Hiller** – Document Scanner

## City Clerk Budget


• 3820

Meeting Views  
in NewTV




• 93

Special  
Permits Issued




• 141

Meetings




• 15

Ordinances  
Passed



• 420

Docket  
items




# NEWTON CITY COUNCIL

## 2023 BY THE NUMBERS



## New in FY24

### Council Committees

- Assistant Clerk of the Council, Scott Matthews, led the roll out of the new Docket Tracking system.
- Committee Clerks, Danielle Delaney and Jaclyn Norton, have been an integral part of testing and setting up Docket Tracking for implementation.
- Practicing Zoom security procedures and will continue to research the best way to remain transparent in our virtual meetings while protecting the public's right to comment and feel safe.
- Created a set format for Reports to ensure consistency for better public understanding.
- Committee Clerks are developing manuals for best practices and continuity.
- A successful Inauguration was held on January 1, 2024.

### Online Services

- Auto Dealer License applications and Certificates
- Grants of Location
- Water/Sewer/Drain Extensions
- (Worked with Planning) Special Permit payments

### Code Management

- Transition and preparation has begun.
- Using new system to prepare for the late 2022 Recodification - Docket item coming soon.



# CITY CLERK



2023 by  
the  
Numbers

- Vitals Records Requests
  - Births - 4,137
  - Deaths - 918
  - Marriage Intentions - 436
- Dog licenses Issued - 2,230
- Off-leash Permits - 1,771

## Administration

Kathaleen Poutas, our Department Bookkeeper, does more than keeping track of our expenses and time sheets. She helps me gather all prior expenses and new trends to assist me in creating the budget each year. Kathy trained in the updated city-wide Munis system this year.

## Vital Records

Implementation of new State Compliance process (where compliance forms and tests are now all online) by our Compliance Coordinator, Peter Ko.

Vitals Records Coordinator, Janet Ferguson, has transitioned our marriage certificates to new MGL compliant forms. She began training in the new State Vitals software (MAVRIC) that will roll out throughout 2024 and 2025.



REGISTRY OF VITAL RECORDS AND STATISTICS (RVRS)  
Department of Public Health

New in  
FY24

New in  
FY24

Licenses

Permitting and Licensing Clerk, Jenn Breslouf, updated our DBA applications into NewGov.

Dog licenses are being sent out now to residents.

Top five licensed Dog names are: Luna, Bella, Lily, Rosie, and Stella. Shout out to honorable mentions; Chewbacca and Porkbutt.

Archives

City Archivist, Jessica Eldridge Young, has been working on the organization our space on the third floor of the library and is nearing completion on that large task.

Document Scanner Charlie Hiller assisted other departments in their scanning projects and will be assisting the Committee Clerks in updating docket items in the new tracking system.

\* Claflin Park off-leash area

ELECTIONS

2023 by  
the  
Numbers

- 3 Elections Held in FY24, average turnout was 30%
- A total of 37,944 ballots cast in those elections.
- 250 Election Workers trained and worked each election with 73 new Election workers applying to assist us this year.
- 2% increase of Registered Voters totaling 59,654

New in  
FY24

**Elections and Census**

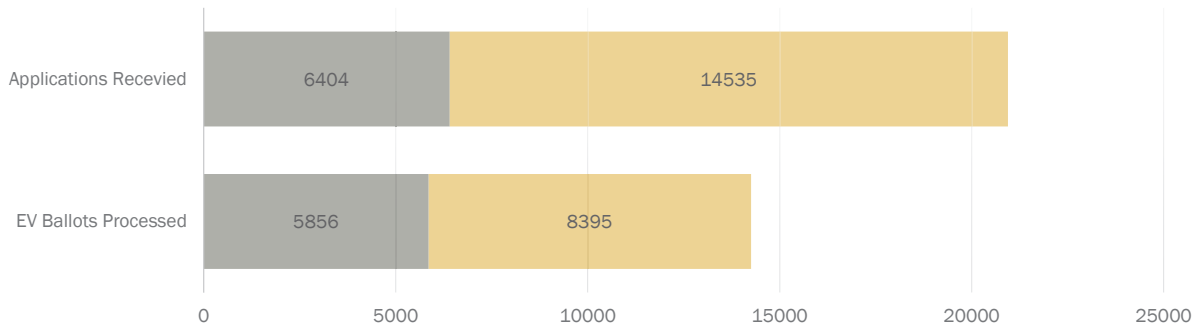
Successful implementation of our new tabulators, led by our Election Supervisor, John Doyle.

With the need for over 250 election workers each election, we are always recruiting new election workers. A New Student Election Worker program was developed by our Elections Coordinator, Sherry Murphy with more students applying for each election. This is a great way to encourage civic participation for our younger Newton residents.

Our Census Coordinator, Chris Richards, created the 2024 Census forms with a clearer translation services statement and included a Poll Worker Interest form. He also set up a Business Reply Mailing account and saved our department over \$4,000 in postage fees.



**COMPARISONS ON VBM ACTIVITY IN LOCAL ELECTIONS**



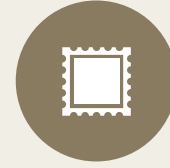
	EV Ballots Processed	Applications Received
■ 11/2/2021	5856	6404
■ 11/7/2023	8395	14535

■ 11/2/2021 ■ 11/7/2023

# SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FY25 BUDGET



REINSTATEMENT OF PT  
ADMIN ASSISTANT FOR  
THE CLERK OF THE  
COUNCIL



POSTAGE INCREASED  
TWICE IN FY24 AND  
WILL INCREASE AGAIN  
IN JULY.



PRINTING COSTS  
INCREASE EACH YEAR.

## FY25 Goals & Strategies

### CONTINUE PRIORITIZING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

- OFFICE WIDE CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING AND DEI WORKSHOP
- STUDENT ELECTION WORKER PROGRAM
- REVIEW AND UPGRADE OF POLLING LOCATION SET UPS
- DEVELOPING DOCKET TRACKING SYSTEM

### TECHNOLOGY: TRAINING, IMPLEMENTATION AND RESEARCH

- ONLINE DBAS, SPECIAL PERMIT PAYMENTS
- IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE CODE MANAGEMENT
- EXPLORING VOTER OUTREACH STRATEGIES AND POLL WORKER TRAINING

# FY25 Goals & Strategies

## SUPPORT STAFF IN NEW SOFTWARE TRAINING

- MAVRIC - VITALS
- VRIS - ELECTIONS

## RESEARCH, REVIEW, & SUPPORT ELECTIONS/CITY CLERK WORKFLOW AND ORGANIZATION

- COLLABORATION WITH HR AND ADMINISTRATION ON MOVING FORWARD

# Parks, Recreation and Culture Budget

Parks,  
Recreation &  
Culture FY25  
Budget  
Presentation  
4/18/24



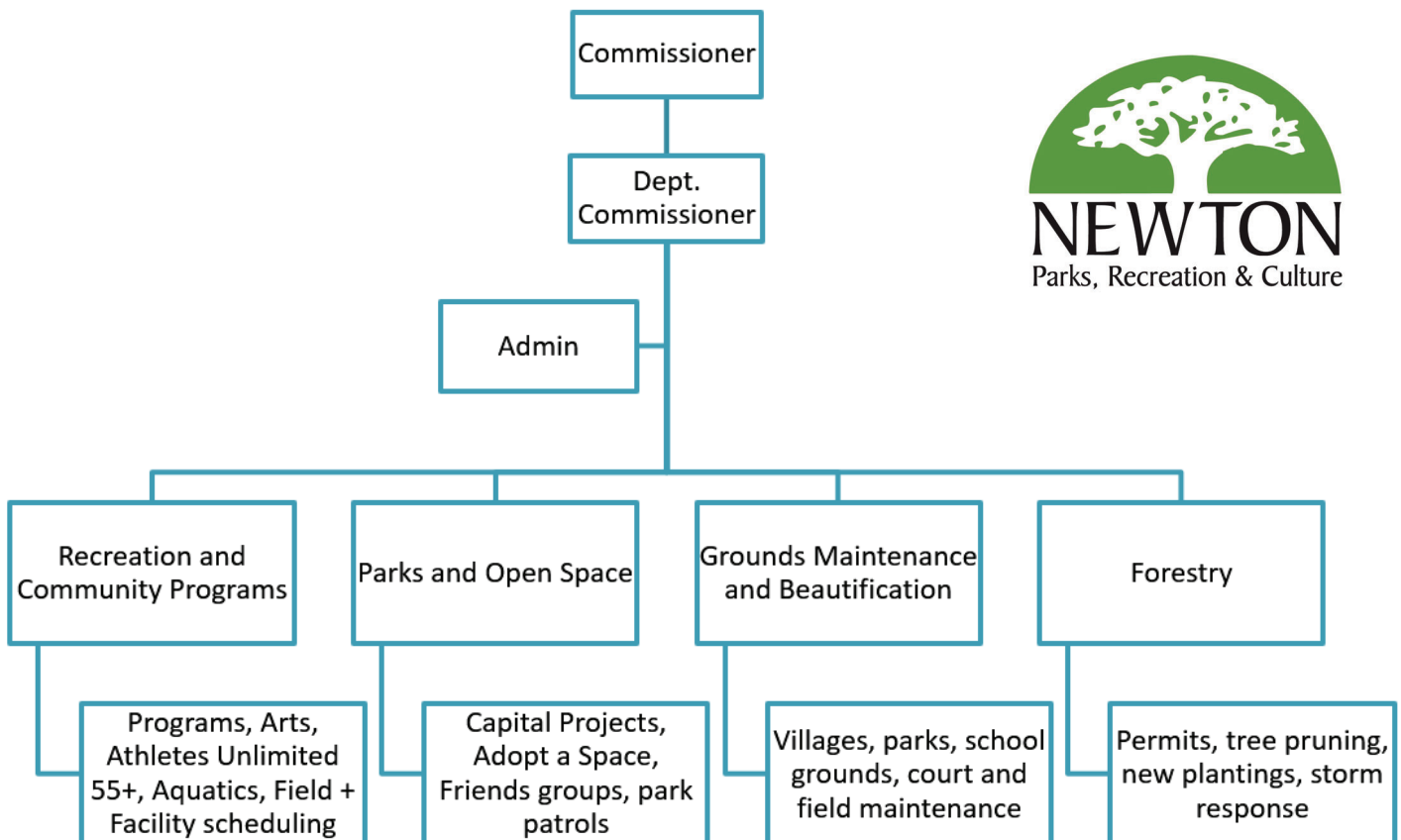
# NEWTON

Parks, Recreation & Culture



# NEWTON

Parks, Recreation & Culture



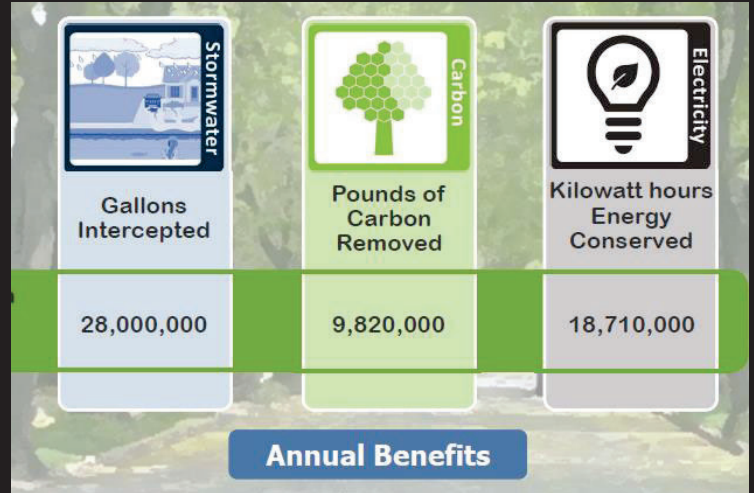
## Urban Forestry

Planting, pruning, removals, sapling care

22,000 Street Trees

8 Employees

1,000+ acres City Land



## Insourcing Work: Improved Control, Flexibility, Efficiency

### Annual Numbers

- 3,000+ service requests received
- 700 trees lost due to decline & storms
- 700 stumps ground
- 500 mature trees pruned
- 600 trees planted
- 1,400 urgent or emergency tree responses

### FY2025 Changes

#### Add 3 new tree care employees

- Budget neutral
- Reduce reliance on contracted service
- 115% increase in mature trees pruned
- 1,000 young/new trees cared for
- 40% increase in completed work units

# Grounds Maintenance and Beautification

<i>166 locations</i>	<i>600+ acres</i>	<i>24 school grounds</i>	<i>73 parks 7 dog parks</i>
<i>65 playgrounds</i>	<i>65 Tennis courts 16 pickleball</i>	<i>44 basketball, 8 bocce courts</i>	<i>Village Centers</i>
<i>Dozens of ballfields and playing fields</i>	<i>9 community center/ rec buildings</i>	<i>Crystal Lake/ Gath Pool 2 splash pads</i>	<i>Over 300 waste/ recycling containers</i>

## Parks and Open Space

### Capital Projects

- Design
- Community input
- Procurement
- Constr. Mgmt.

### Community Partnerships

- Friends groups
- Adopt a Space
- Bench memorials
- Scout projects





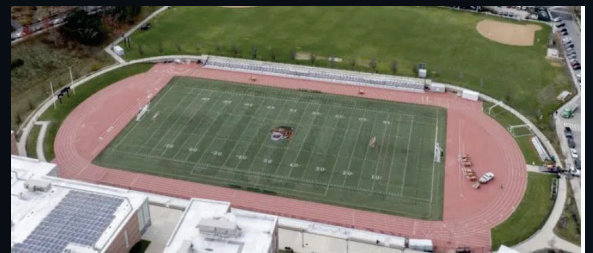
# Parks, Recreation and Culture Budget



Looking back:  
Athletic field projects



Albemarle Park



NNHS Track and Field



Burr Elementary Grounds

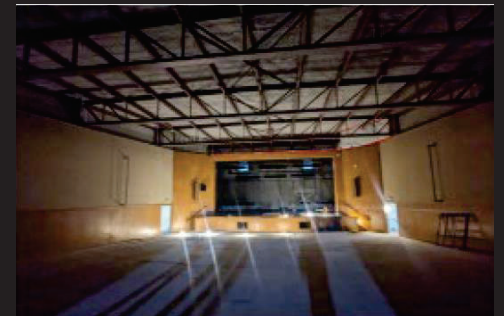
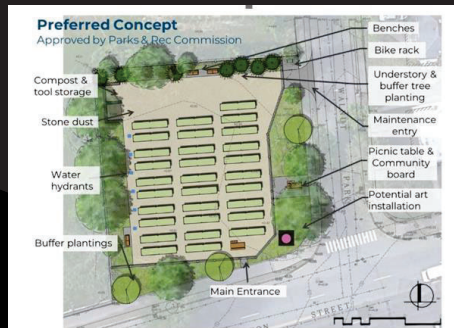


McGrath Park

Looking ahead:  
Athletic field projects

# Coming Soon!

- 2 pools
- 2 splashpads
- 6 pickleball courts
- Community garden
- Lincoln Eliot Community Theater
- Cooper Center
- New school playgrounds



## Recreation and Community Programs

### New Leadership Position

- Arts & Culture
- Holiday/Seasonal Events
- Aquatics
- Camps
- Special Needs
- Sports Programs
- 55+
- Community Centers
- Farmers Markets



# Parks, Recreation and Culture Budget

## Budget Highlights

- Staffing
- Grounds maintenance
- Aquatics (maint + ops)
- Courts/Playgrounds
- Arts and Culture



### Financial Highlights

FY25

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	< -----Actual ----->			Original FY2024	Proposed FY2025
	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023		
<b>Expenditure by Department</b>					
Indoor Recreation	\$ 3,695	\$ 1,004	\$ 819	\$ 9,400	\$ -
Special Needs Rec	\$ 144,943	\$ 160,877	\$ 172,548	\$ 181,962	\$ 187,583
Emerson Cmnty Ctr	\$ 20,092	\$ 13,980	\$ 20,073	\$ 21,250	\$ 21,250
Hamilton Cmnty Ctr	\$ 7,824	\$ 9,329	\$ 5,002	\$ 13,250	\$ 13,250
Senior Recreation	\$ 245	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 300	\$ -
Cultural Affairs	\$ 160,448	\$ 165,471	\$ 184,263	\$ 192,971	\$ 204,975
Recreational Vehicles	\$ 103,444	\$ 119,117	\$ 124,848	\$ 156,000	\$ 132,000
Recreational Buildings	\$ 258,676	\$ 397,802	\$ 437,819	\$ 407,000	\$ 444,000
Cmnty Beautification	\$ 874,268	\$ 1,034,456	\$ 791,253	\$ 1,207,335	\$ 1,254,474
Admin	\$ 1,144,321	\$ 1,286,781	\$ 1,368,318	\$ 1,476,028	\$ 1,629,029
Public Grounds Maint	\$ 2,019,954	\$ 2,412,314	\$ 2,735,215	\$ 2,717,252	\$ 3,126,509
Forestry Services	\$ 1,855,613	\$ 1,707,847	\$ 1,693,945	\$ 1,948,111	\$ 1,953,480
Snow/Ice Control*	\$ 33,619	\$ -	\$ 4,099	\$ -	\$ -
Recreational Activities	\$ 1,105	\$ 1,200	\$ 7,007	\$ 5,480	\$ 14,880
Outdoor Swimming	\$ 24,676	\$ 49,676	\$ 73,711	\$ 75,000	\$ 145,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 6,652,923</b>	<b>\$ 7,359,854</b>	<b>\$ 7,618,920</b>	<b>\$ 8,411,339</b>	<b>\$ 9,126,430</b>
% Incr		10.63%	3.52%	10.40%	8.50%
<b>** Snow/Ice Control Transfers to DPW</b>					
<b>Personnel</b>					
Full-Time	43	43	42	44	48
Part-Time	2	1	1	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>50</b>

# Funding Sources and Partnerships

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- Community Preservation Committee
- Friends Groups/ PTOs
- Grants and State Earmarks
- Sport Partners
- Local businesses
- Free Cash/ Budget Reserves
- Operating and Capital Budget
- Developer Mitigation
- ARPA



*Discussion*

