



# Programs & Services Committee Budget Report

## City of Newton In City Council

**Wednesday, May 8, 2024**

Present: Councilors Krintzman (Chair), Humphrey, Oliver, Micley, Malakie, and Lobovits

Absent: Councilors Baker and Farrell

Also Present: Councilors Albright, and Getz

City Staff: Seth Bai, Veterans Services Director; Linda Walsh, Commissioner of Health and Human Services; Alissa Giuliani, City Solicitor; Mignonne Murray, Senior Services Director; Jenna Bancroft, Director of Social Services; Ruth Hoshino, Director of School Health; Shin-Yi Lao, Public Health Manager; Barney Heath, Director of Planning; Perry Rosenfield, FP&A Manager; Connor Roach, Senior Financial Analyst; 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:  
[Programs and Services - May 8, 2024 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

*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 Solicitor**

**Veterans Services**

**Health and Human Services**

**Senior Services**

### **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 Solicitor**

**Note:** Alissa Giuliani, City Solicitor, stated that the FY25 budget for the Department is a 4% increase over the FY24 budget and that the Department has seen an increase in the number of claims. This documented increase is due to the Department implementing robust procedures to better track these claims. About one-third of these claims are either for street defects or water/sewer. In the budget, the increase in the printing line item was due to a wrongful death lawsuit against the City and anticipated work regarding this lawsuit. There have also been increases in the cost of the public records request system due to an increase in the number of requests received.

A Councilor asked what is entailed in the section of Outcome #2 that refers to additional support provided to the City Clerk's Office in preparation for the November 2025 election. Attorney Giuliani stated that this election will have a ballot question, and these traditionally require extra work for the City Clerk's office and want to be ready to support them as needed. Questions were also asked by Councilors regarding changes to Title IX. The City will receive on average one or two complaints every 18 months and this work would be to assist the schools in updates to match the new federal guidelines. Regarding an increase in the legal services line item, Attorney Giuliani noted that this is due to an expected increase in work for the wrongful death lawsuit. When asked what one thing she would like for the Department, Attorney Giuliani stated that an extra attorney is desired.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the City Solicitor Department's proposed Budget of \$2,254,762, as well as the Supplemental CIP and the CIP, which passed unanimously.

**Veterans Services**

**Note:** Seth Bai, Veterans Services Director, stated that this budget has a \$10,000 increase over FY24 but is otherwise unchanged. Councilors thanked Director Bai for his work and asked if his department had any issues regarding discoverability. Director Bai responded that his Department advertises both digitally and physically and welcomed the idea of routinely spotlighting the Department in the Mayor's Newsletter.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the Veterans Services Department's proposed Budget of \$210,729, as well as the Supplemental CIP and the CIP, which passed unanimously.

## Health and Human Services

**Note:** Linda Walsh, Commissioner of Health and Human Services, noted that she is joined by Jenna Bancroft, Director of Social Services; Ruth Hoshino, Director of School Health; and Shin-Yi Lao, Public Health Manager. She described that this department is multi-faceted and provides many services to the public. The budget highlights the number of residents that have been served by the Department including the 473 food establishments that the Department oversees licensing and inspections of.

A Councilor asked what the biggest challenges facing the Department and community were. Commissioner Walsh stated that the Department has challenges in the school health and environmental health divisions due to staff turnover and vacancies that have yet to be filled. The social services division is facing challenges due to unfortunate events in the community during FY24. Regarding issues facing the community, Commissioner Walsh highlighted the impacts that climate change and emerging infectious diseases can have on the City. Later in the discussion, a Councilor asked if the City pays competitive salaries to retain employees. Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer, stated that the Human Resources Department is looking into this and seeing how we compare to other communities. Questions were also asked by Councilors if the Newton Thrives program will be continued by the Department, and what caused the increase in the allocation to the counseling services line item. Commissioner Walsh stated that the Newton Thrives program would not be carried on by the Department once this funding runs out but that the partner EmPath is looking to continue it once funding runs out. The increase in the counseling services line item was due to the City needing to take on the full cost of these services when in previous years the City was responsible for a portion of the fee. The City is also engaged in the MetroHealth collaborative which is funded through a 10-year grant to help communities standardize practices where possible.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the Health and Human Services Department's proposed Budget of \$5,161,765, as well as the Supplemental CIP and the CIP, which passed unanimously.

## Senior Services

**Note:** Mignonne Murray, Director of Senior Services, noted that her Department currently serves over 22,000 residents over the age of 60 along with collaborating with several other Departments. The Department is currently undergoing a project on building the Cooper Center for Active Living along with a needs assessment to give better insight into older adults in Newton. The results of this needs assessment will be used to tailor future programming in combination with an effort to reframe aging in a more positive outlook.

Councilors asked if the Department would have appropriate staff when the Cooper Center for Active Living opens in Fall 2025. Director Murray and Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer, noted that the administration is coordinating with the Department to ensure adequate staffing when the new facility opens. Questions were also raised regarding NewMo and how that is funded. The NewMo program is

funded through \$275,000 from the City with the rest in grants to result in roughly a \$500,000 budget for the program. The contract for this program is up in June and the City is looking at sending the program out to bid for continuing the program. A Councilor asked about the grant-funded position under the Department and what the increase could be attributed to. Director Murray noted that these are funded through a state grant program and the increase was due to the number of residents over 60 increasing in the federal census.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the Senior Services Department's proposed Budget of \$929,560, as well as the Supplemental CIP and the CIP, which passed unanimously.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Josh Krintzman, Chair**