



Finance Committee Budget Report

City of Newton In City Council

Monday, May 13, 2024

Present: Councilors Gentile (Chair), Grossman, Lipof, Bixby, Malakie, Greenberg, Micley and Humphrey

Also Present: Councilor Block

City staff present: Manager of Financial Planning & Analysis Perry Rosenfield, Senior Financial Analyst Connor Roach, Comptroller Stephen Curley, Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux, Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo, Director of Assessing Jim Shaughnessy, Fire Chief Greg Gentile, Deputy Fire Michael Bianchi, Health and Human Services Director Linda Walsh, Director of Parks, Recreation and Culture Nicole Banks, Energy Coach Liora Silkes, Co-Director of Sustainability Ann Berwick, Co-Director of Sustainability Bill Ferguson and Assistant Superintendent Liam Hurley

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:

**Assessing
Financial Services
Executive/Sustainability**

Referred to Finance and Appropriate Committees

- #8-24 Submittal of the FY2025 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 FY2025-FY2029 Supplemental Capital Improvement**
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

Assessing

Note: Jim Shaughnessy joined the committee to discuss the Assessing Department's budget. He expressed his support for his staff and how they have filled in for vacancies throughout the year. Mr. Shaughnessy explained that their main function is getting the property values approved by the Department of Public Revenue and then talking to taxpayers if they have any questions. He noted that their budget has stayed level from last year's budget. There is currently only one open position that they are currently working on getting filled that has been open since early March.

A councilor questioned what happens if the Department of Revenue does not approve the values. Mr. Shaughnessy explained that it has never happened in Newton but if this were to happen it would impact the payment schedule for the tax bill.

Regarding inspections, a councilor questioned if the department uses real estate listings if they can not get into the property. Mr. Shaughnessy explains that they use any public information that can be found on the property.

A councilor questioned if short term rentals are being captured for tax purposes. Mr. Shaughnessy explained that they do know of them, but they have not seen that the short-term rentals add value to the property.

A councilor questioned if they are able to capture those who use their home as a business address. Mr. Shaughnessy explained that they can easily find this information. This does not increase the value of a property, but it changes how it is taxed.

Councilors thanked the Assessing Department for their work.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the Assessing Budget of \$1,411,781, the supplemental CIP, and the CIP which passed unanimously.

Financial Services

Note: Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer and Perry Rosenfield, Manager of Financial Planning and Analysis joined the committee to discuss the Financial Services budget. Mr. Rosenfield explained that they are made up of two separate departments, one side is Financial Planning & Analysis, and the other is payroll. The payroll department ensures that every employee in the city is being paid accurately and on time. The financial planning & analysis department does have one opening. The major projects for the department include the municipal budget, the capital improvement plan and the long-range financial forecast. Mr. Rosenfield explained that they also work with other departments to provide accurate data and financial projections to assist them with making informed financial decisions. They also work on collective bargaining agreements.

Councilors thanked the Financial Services department for their work.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the Financial Services Budget of \$789,368, the supplemental CIP, and the CIP which passed unanimously.

Executive/Sustainability

Note: Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer, Bill Ferguson, Co-Director of Sustainability, Ann Berwick, Co-Director of Sustainability and Liora Silkes, Energy Coach joined the Committee to discuss the Executive/ Sustainability Budget.

Ms. Lemieux explained that there have not been any major changes to the executive budget. The staffing has not changed and all the controllables have stayed flat besides an increase in dues and subscriptions to \$7,500. There was also an increase of one employee taking the healthcare this year that has not in previous years.

Ms. Silkes presented the attached presentation explaining the work they have done. She noted that there is work related to the climate being done throughout the city and they keep themselves and the public informed of these projects. They have been discussing the Climate Action Plan as a whole and what initiatives are happening throughout the city.

Mr. Ferguson explained that that his priority this fiscal year has been the adoption and implementation of BERDO, which covers large commercial buildings, and they account for 23% of total emissions in the city. The goal of BERDO is to put a plan in place that requires annual reporting and requires building owners to reduce their emissions to 0 by 2050. A consultant has been hired to help with technical assistance. He noted that there is further information on the City of Newton website. Mr. Ferguson also noted that for the solar canopy project they have entered contracts for 7 of the phase three projects that previously they were not able to make progress on. They continue to try to put solar on every roof they can.

Ms. Berwick explained she has been working on Newton Power Choice, electrification, and micro grants. The micro grants are given in response to requests made by advocacy groups, students or residents that require a small amount of money. There has been a total of 6 grants given. For Newton Power Choice, Ms. Berwick explained that they continue to work on outreach to residents and noted that Newton is a one of the leaders in this field. The electrification ordinance allows Newton to be in the 10 communities program with the state that allows them to pass an ordinance to require all new construction and major renovation to be all-electric.

A councilor questioned how the City is dealing with resiliency and if the city had the budget would a Chief Resiliency Officer help. Ms. Berwick explained that in their team Jennifer Steel, the Conservation Commission has been dealing with that issue the most. This has become more of a priority, and they will continue to work with a number of city staff members on this.

A councilor asked which solar projects were under contract. Mr. Ferguson explained that these projects are at Angier Elementary School, Cabot Elementary School, Williams Elementary School, the Ed Center

parking lot canopy, the Memorial Spalding Elementary School parking lot canopy, behind the Brown Middle School and the Wheller Road lot canopy.

The Committee thanked the Executive/Sustainability department for their work.

The Committee took a straw vote to accept the Executive/Sustainability Budget of \$1,461,808, the supplemental CIP, and the CIP which passed unanimously.

The Committee adjourned at 9:03 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Leonard Gentile, Chair



Active City Initiatives

Administration & Communication	Clean Energy	Transit & Streetscapes	Buildings	Consumption & Disposal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data tracking & reporting ● Relationships with NCCE, Solid Waste Comm., Bike/Ped Advocacy Comm. ● Relationships with nonprofits, state gov., community orgs, etc. ● Updates via website, newsletters, social media, etc. ● Use of Energy Stabilization Fund ● Budget Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Newton Power Choice ● Solar at Municipal Facilities ● Encouraging residential & commercial solar ● Advocating for utility network geothermal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improving bike & pedestrian infrastructure ● NewMo ● Complete Streets projects ● All-electric City passenger fleet ● Implement City-wide EV adoption and charging plan ● Enforce idling restrictions ● Exploring EV medium duty vehicles ● Bluebikes ● Advocate for better MBTA ● Exploring e-busses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Code implementation/Electrification Ordinance ● Improving sustainability requirements for special permit projects ● Village Center Zoning Redesign ● Advcacy for state-wide electrification ● Update Public Buildings Sustainability Guidelines ● Embodied Carbon requirements ● 4 Our Future outreach Campaign ● Design Review Team input ● Energy Coaching ● Municipal building renovations (efficiency and decarbonization) ● Green Communities grants ● BERDO ● ARPA affordable housing decarb projects ● Revise permit process to capture desired data ● Work w/Assessing to gather desired data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Composting ● Waste reduction efforts (plastics, carbord, yardwaste) ● HELPSY at schools ● Food habits ● Single-use plastic ordinance ● Waste hauling contract
Natural Resources & Resilience				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stormwater management ● Stormwater ordinance ● Planting & Maintaining street trees ● MS4 permit ● Flooding, floodplain ordinance ● Other trees under City care ● Tree ordinance ● Conservation areas ● School gardens ● Other land use policies 				