

CITY OF GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF JANUARY 28, 2026

The Finance Committee meeting was called to order by Councillor Aleksander Dernalowicz at 4:00 PM at the Gardner Police Headquarters

Finance Committee Members, Councillor Brad Heglin and Councillor Judy Mack, were also present.

Also participating, Mayor Michael Nicholson, Fire Chief Gregory Lagoy, Police Chief Eric McAvene, and City Clerk Titi Siriphan.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minute(s)

Councillor Heglin noted an error under the adjournment section of the minutes, indicating that the adjournment had been seconded by Councillor Mack, who was not present at that meeting. He requested that the minutes be removed from the Committee calendar for correction and resubmission.

On a motion made by Councillor Heglin and seconded by Councillor Mack, it was voted to remove the January 14, 2026 meeting minutes from the calendar for resubmission with corrections.

3 yeas, motion passes.

City Council Rules Update

Councillor Dernalowicz addressed that new City Council Rules require items to remain with the committee for a minimum of two meetings, unless an override is exercised, prior to going to the full City Council. He stated that this procedure would be followed going forward.

#11766 - A Measure Authorizing a Contract of Up to Five (5) Years for Curbside Waste and Recycling Collection

Mayor Nicholson explained that Massachusetts General Laws require legislative approval for contracts extending beyond three years. He stated that the current contract with EL Harvey is structured as a three-year contract with two one-year renewal options. He added that EL Harvey provided the most cost-effective option, and an authorization for a five-year term would allow the City to avoid higher short-term pricing.

The Committee requested that contract submission materials be provided for review. Councillor Dernalowicz requests more time and that this item remains on the Finance Committee agenda until additional information has been received,

There were no objections, more time was granted.

#11767 - A Measure Authorizing a Contract of Up to Five (5) Years for Website Hosting

Similar to the previous item, Mayor Nicholson stated that legislative approval is required for contracts extending beyond three years. He explained that this item relates to renewal of the City's website hosting contract with CivicPlus. The City went out with a full solicitation to ensure the best pricing, and CivicPlus was the best option.

Councillor Dernalowicz requests more time and that this item remains on the Finance Committee agenda.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

#11768 - An Order Appropriating \$35,200.00 from Free Cash to Fire Department New Equipment Account

Mayor Nicholson explained that the appropriation represents the City's required match for a federal Assistance of Firefighters Grant. He noted that increased equipment costs resulted in a slightly higher local match.

Fire Chief Lagoy stated that the grant will fund replacement of outdated radios. He explained that price increases and added features reduced the number of radios from 42 to 38, and the additional match would allow the Department to maximize purchases. He emphasized the safety benefits of the upgraded radios, including improved water resistance and compatibility with regional mutual aid systems. He referenced recent incidents involving radio failures due to water exposure.

The Committee confirmed that the two-meeting requirement would not jeopardize the grant timeline.

Councillor Dernalowicz requests more time and that this item remains on the Finance Committee agenda.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

#11769 - An Order Appropriating \$201,000.00 from Free Cash to Police Department New Vehicle Account

Mayor Nicholson explained that the appropriation supports the annual replacement of three police vehicles: one marked cruiser, one unmarked vehicle, and one pickup truck. Police Chief McAvene discussed fleet replacement schedules, trade-ins of older vehicles, and the importance of balancing maintenance costs with replacement timing.

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The Committee requested an updated fleet inventory and replacement schedule.

Councillor Dernalowicz requests more time and that this item remains on the Finance Committee agenda.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

#11728 - A Discussion on the Current State of Facilities Management for all Municipal Buildings

Councillor Dernalowicz reported that he, Council President Tyros, the Mayor, and the Human Resources Director had met to discuss facilities management. He stated that the Mayor is developing a proposal and requested additional time to allow refinement.

Mayor Nicholson provided background on the current facilities management structure, noting that it originated during the 2009–2010 administration when custodial staff were reassigned to individual departments. He also provided an update on recent City Hall closure due to a gas leak discovered during most recent winter storm. He explained that carbon monoxide detectors alerted officials to elevated levels caused by a boiler malfunction. Repairs were completed, the boilers were cleared for operation, and City Hall would reopen the following day. He added that carbon monoxide detectors were not previously installed throughout City Hall and that corrective actions are underway to ensure compliance and improve safety.

Councillor Dernalowicz requests more time and that this item remains on the Finance Committee agenda.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

#11744 - A Measure Confirming the Gift of \$10,643.67 from the Department of Public Works to the Gardner Community Action Committee.

Mayor Nicholson stated that the donation resulted from proceeds of redeemed scrap metal and acknowledged that improved procedures are necessary to ensure future donations follow municipal approval requirements. He noted that guidance from the City Solicitor has been distributed to department heads.

Councillor Mack emphasized the importance of consistent Council review for all donations, regardless of amount, and expressed appreciation for the clarification of procedures.

On a motion made by Councillor Mack and seconded by Councillor Heglin, it was voted to recommend the measure to the full Council for confirmation:

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A MEASURE CONFIRMING THE GIFT OF \$10,643.67 FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS TO THE GARDNER COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEE

VOTED: Whereas, the employees of the City of Gardner Department of Public Works has traditionally worked annually to assist the food pantry services offered by the Gardner Community Action Committee, and

Whereas, the Gardner Community Action Committee has experienced a significant increase in demand for their food pantry operations as well as the other services they offer to the residents of the City, and

Whereas, the Department of Public Works has collected scrap metal over a period of several years to be able to be exchanged for a donation for the Gardner Community Action Committee's Food Pantry,

Now Therefore, the City Council of the City of Gardner hereby confirms the issuance of the gift of \$10,643.67 from the Department of Public Works to the Gardner Community Action Committee as a result of the collection of the aforementioned scrap metal for assisting in the operations and expenses related to their food pantry.

3 yeas, motion passes.

#11752 - Study and Report on the Salt Shed Repayment Issue

Mayor Nicholson provided an update on the salt shed repayment and snow and ice operations. He reported that approximately 1,500 tons of salt remain on hand and explained current salting and plowing costs. It take about 100 tons to salt the entire City once, which is about \$8,000. With labor included, it is about \$10,000 total to salt the whole City. He also reviewed the City's free cash policy, explaining the difference between the policy-recommended 15% allocation and the remaining balance required to fully restore the Stabilization Account, including interest considerations.

The Committee discussed timing considerations related to snow and ice deficits and the eventual close-out of the salt shed project.

Councillor Dernalowicz requests more time and that this item remains on the Finance Committee agenda.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

#11763 - Discussion of the Recurring Internet Outages at City Hall and other City Departments

Mayor Nicholson corrected information provided at the prior meeting, stating that there were four outages affecting City Hall, DPW, and the Youth Center. He described steps being taken to centralize billing, improve tracking, and prevent future outages.

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Councillor Mack expressed concern about the operational impacts of outages but was thankful Mayor Nicholson was implementing corrective measures.

On a motion made by Councillor Mack and seconded by Councillor Heglin, it was voted to remove the item from the Finance Committee agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Councillor Heglin and seconded by Councillor Mack, it was voted to adjourn at 4:47 p.m.