

CITY OF GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF FEBRUARY 10, 2026

The Finance Committee meeting was called to order by Councillor Aleksander Dernalowicz at 4:00 PM in the City Council Chamber, Room 219, City Hall.

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

Also participating, Mayor Michael Nicholson and Assistant City Clerk Jayen Kumar.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minute(s)

On a motion made by Councillor Mack and seconded by Councillor Heglin, it was voted to waive the reading and accept the Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2026, and January 28, 2026, as presented.

3 yeas, motion passes.

#11776 - An Ordinance to Amend Exhibit F of Attachment 1 of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled "Primary Non-Union Compensation Schedule," by adding a new Section 10 to cover temporary positions

Mayor Nicholson explained that certain positions previously covered under the non-union compensation ordinance have since become unionized. As a result, when temporary or intermittent personnel are needed to fill those roles, there is currently no ordinance-based compensation structure in place. He added that the proposed amendment would allow temporary or intermittent employees filling unionized positions to be compensated at the same rate established in the applicable collective bargaining agreement. He noted this ensures consistency, fairness, and improved budgeting predictability.

Councillor Dernalowicz clarified that this was the first time the item had been on the agenda, so it will remain with the Committee.

#11777 - An Ordinance to Amend Exhibit F of Attachment 1 of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled "Primary Non-Union Compensation Schedule."

Mayor Nicholson explained that this amendment incorporates department head positions that had previously been omitted from the recently adopted non-union compensation schedule. These include the Veterans Director, Council on Aging Director, Purchasing Agent, Civil Enforcement Director, City Auditor, and Director of Community Development and Planning. He further clarified adjustments to golf enterprise account positions to correct step discrepancies and ensure alignment between staff positions and supervisory roles.

Councillor Dernalowicz clarified that this was the first time the item had been on the agenda, so it will remain with the Committee.

Attachment 2

| | | Pay Grade | Starting Salary | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 |
|----------------------------|----|------------------|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | | Years of Service | Less than 1 | 1 Year | 2 Years | 3 Years | 4 Years | 5 Years |
| | | % Increase | | 1.50% | 1.50% | 1.50% | 1.50% | 1.50% |
| Hourly Staff | | | | | | | | |
| Golf Course Staff | | | | | | | | |
| Mechanic | 3C | | \$21.75 | \$22.08 | \$22.75 | \$23.09 | \$23.75 | \$24.11 |
| Grounds Maintenance Worker | 3C | | \$21.75 | \$22.08 | \$22.75 | \$23.09 | \$23.75 | \$24.11 |

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- #11778 - Donation Acceptance Order - Council-on-Aging**
- #11779 - Donation Acceptance Order – Gardner Animal Shelter**
- #11780 - Donation Acceptance Order – Youth Center**
- #11781 - Donation Acceptance Order – Police Department**
- #11782 - Donation Acceptance Order – Gardner Community Action Team**
- #11783 - Donation Acceptance Order – Fire Department**

These six items were addressed together. Mayor Nicholson explained that Massachusetts General Laws require Council acceptance of all donations, including monetary, goods, and services.

The Committee expressed appreciation for the generosity of the community.

Councillor Dernalowicz clarified that these items were on the agenda for the first time, so they will remain with the Committee.

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

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

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

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 updated information regarding the Salt Shed project. A report from DPW Director Dane Arnold indicated the project is approximately 95% complete. Final work will be completed in the spring, leaving between an estimated \$70,000 and \$75,000, which would be returned to the Stabilization Account.

The Committee discussed prior expenditures from the account, including chassis purchases, and requested clarification from the City Solicitor regarding permissible uses under the original appropriation language.

A detailed discussion followed regarding repayment methods, free cash contributions, stabilization policy goals, and whether prior appropriations should be counted toward repayment beyond the standard 5% stabilization policy.

Councillor Heglin presented a proposed resolution outlining the Committee's understanding that contributions exceeding the standard 5% stabilization deposit would be considered repayment toward the salt shed withdrawal, while recognizing that unforeseen financial circumstances may affect annual contributions.

A 5-minute recess was called for review of the proposed resolution.

On a motion made by Councillor Heglin and seconded by Councillor Mack, it was voted to provide an update to the full Council by proposing the resolution.

3 yeas, motion passes.

**A RESOLUTION RELATING TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF FUNDS FROM
THE STABILIZATION ACCOUNT AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE
NEW DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS SALT SHED**

WHEREAS, On January 25, 2024 the Mayor submitted to the City Council a request to withdraw Six Hundred Twenty Five Thousand dollars from the Stabilization Account for the construction of a new salt shed; and

WHEREAS, The Mayor described this plan as a “loan from ourselves” that included a repayment plan which would be fulfilled by increasing the amount of money deposited from ‘free cash’ on an annual basis to be an additional ten percent of the total certified funds on top of the regular five percent;

NOW THEREFORE, the City Council hereby expresses its will that the stabilization fund should be made whole from this withdrawal as judged by the following conditions:

1. The deposit of six hundred twenty five thousand dollars plus the interest those funds would have otherwise accrued had they not been withdrawn.

2. Only funds deposited that make total annual deposits into the stabilization account to exceed five percent of the total certified free cash amount for that fiscal year will be credited towards repayment of the original withdrawal; and

FURTHER, Until such time that the repayment conditions are met, the City Council will not consider the matter concluded, and will strictly scrutinize requests for appropriations from ‘free cash’ that would cause to prevent funds from being available for repayment.

George Tyros, City Council President
On Behalf of the City Council of the City of Gardner

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

Mayor Nicholson confirmed that the Committee had received the contract proposal requested at the prior meeting.

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

AUTHORIZING A FIVE-YEAR CONTRACT PERIOD FOR CURBSIDE COLLECTION AND RECYCLABLES

VOTED: To authorize the City to enter into a contract not to exceed five (5) years to provide for curbside collection and recyclables, pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30B, section 12 and under the terms outlined in the Purchasing Agent's January 14, 2025, Memorandum.

3 yeas, motion passes.

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

Mayor Nicholson stated this item follows the same procedural framework as the previous contract authorization.

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

AUTHORIZING A FIVE-YEAR CONTRACT PERIOD FOR WEBSITE MAINTENANCE AND HOSTING SERVICES

VOTED: To authorize the City to enter into a contract not to exceed five (5) years to provide for website maintenance and hosting services, pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30B, section 12 and under the terms outlined in the Purchasing Agent's January 14, 2025, Memorandum.

3 yeas, motion carries.

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

Councillor Dernalowicz proposed changes to the language of the Order for this item, and the following item, 11769.

Following discussion of Councillor Dernalowicz' proposed changes, it was decided on changing "revert to the General Fund," to "revert as required by State Law," for both items.

On a motion made by Councillor Dernalowicz and seconded by Councillor Heglin, it was voted to recommend to the full Council adoption of the updated order:

AN ORDER APPROPRIATING FROM FREE CASH TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT – NEW EQUIPMENT ACCOUNT

ORDERED: That the sum of Thirty-Five Thousand Two Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$35,200.00) be appropriated from the Free Cash to the Fire Department – New Equipment Account for the sole and exclusive purpose to cover the grant match for the replacement of portable radios for the Fire Department;

FURTHER ORDERED: That said appropriation shall be expended only for the purpose stated herein, and no portion of this appropriation shall be used for any other purpose, whether directly or indirectly;

FURTHER ORDERED: That upon completion of the stated purpose, or upon determination by the Mayor that no further expenditures are required for said purpose, any unexpended or unencumbered balance shall revert to the General Fund, if not otherwise prescribed by Mass General Laws, and shall not be transferred, repurposed, or re-appropriated except by a separate vote of the City Council.

3 yeas, motion passes.

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

The Committee acknowledged receipt of additional information from the Police Chief outlining vehicle conditions and associated equipment costs.

On a motion made by Councillor Dernalowicz and seconded by Councillor Mack, it was voted to recommend to the full Council adoption of the updated order:

AN ORDER APPROPRIATING FROM FREE CASH TO THE POLICE DEPARTMENT - NEW VEHICLE ACCOUNT

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ORDERED: That the sum of Two Hundred One Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$201,000.00) be appropriated from the Free Cash to the Police Department – New Vehicle Account for the sole and exclusive purpose of purchasing three new police vehicles, and other costs related to the purchase or outfitting of those vehicles;

FURTHER ORDERED: That said appropriation shall be expended only for the purpose stated herein, and no portion of this appropriation shall be used for any other purpose, whether directly or indirectly;

FURTHER ORDERED: That upon completion of the stated purpose, or upon determination by the Mayor that no further expenditures are required for said purpose, any unexpended or unencumbered balance shall revert to the General Fund, if not otherwise prescribed by Mass General Laws, and shall not be transferred, repurposed, or re-appropriated except by a separate vote of the City Council.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Order as Discussed at Finance Committee for Police Vehicles and Fire Department Radio Grant Portion

From Alek Dernalowicz <adernalowicz@gardner-ma.gov>

Date Wed 2/11/2026 9:13 AM

To Jayen Kumar <jkumar@gardner-ma.gov>; Titi Siriphan <tsiriphan@gardner-ma.gov>

Cc George Tyros <gtyros@gardner-ma.gov>; Mayor <Mayor@gardner-ma.gov>

Be it Ordered by the City Council

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Aleksander H. Dernalowicz, Esq.
Ward 5 City Councillor
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