

CITY OF GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF FEBRUARY 24, 2026

The Finance Committee meeting was called to order by Councillor Aleksander Dernalowicz at 3:30 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; DPW Director Dane Arnold; 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 February 10, 2026, as presented.

3 yeas, motion passes.

#11790 - A Measure Accepting the FY2027 Capital Improvement Plan

Mayor Nicholson stated that Chapter 7, Section 8 of the City Code requires annual City Council approval of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) as submitted by the Capital Improvement Planning Committee. He explained that the plan is advisory in nature and serves as a guiding document for capital planning and borrowing. Projects must be included in the CIP in order to qualify for loan authorization and, in some cases, grant eligibility. The Mayor outlined the structure of the document, including a background section detailing committee membership and meetings, a priority list of projects, and a comprehensive departmental project listing. He clarified that projects included in the full departmental listing qualify for borrowing consideration even if not ranked on the priority list. Committee members discussed the process for amending the plan and adding additional projects. The Mayor explained that amendments would require action by the Capital Improvement Planning Committee and subsequent Council approval. Discussion included potential pedestrian safety improvements at the intersection of Timpany Boulevard and W. Broadway.

The Mayor also noted that while some capital requests may appear in departmental budget submissions, funding decisions will be based on revenue projections and fiscal constraints.

Councillor Dernalowicz stated that the item would remain with the Finance Committee.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

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#11791 - A Measure Accepting Donations to the Executive Department

Mayor Nicholson clarified that the General Laws of the Commonwealth require legislative approval and acceptance on donations received by the City. These donations represent sponsorships received during the last quarter of 2025 for various City events and festivals. The sponsorships fully covered event costs.

Councillor Dernalowicz stated that the item would remain with the Finance Committee.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

#11792- An Order Appropriating \$51,200.00 from Free Cash to Engineering Dept Bridge State Grant Account

Mayor Nicholson explained that the appropriation represents the City's required match for a Mass Trails Grant in the amount of \$204,800.00. This match is needed to complete the engineering and design work for the proposed bridge over Route 140 as part of the North Central Pathway. He emphasized that the appropriation is for planning, design, and engineering only, The City funds design costs and the Commonwealth funds 100% of construction costs. The current anticipated construction timeline is 2027.

The Committee discussed timing considerations and confirmed that the matter could remain with the Committee without jeopardizing project timelines.

Councillor Dernalowicz stated that the item would remain with the Finance Committee.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

#11793 - An Order Appropriating \$100,000.00 from Water Enterprise Retained Earnings to the Water Enterprise James Street Pump Station Repair Account

Mayor Nicholson explained that the City received a federal earmark grant in the amount of \$922,832.00 for repairs to the James Street Pump Station. The appropriation represents the City's required match and covers the difference between the grant award and the project bid amount. The pump station is integral to transmitting water from the Crystal Lake Treatment Plant to storage towers on James Street.

Director Arnold reported that the construction contract is expected to be signed shortly and that the contractor will have approximately 300 days to complete the project.

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Councillor Dernalowicz stated that both water enterprise items would remain on the agenda until the next meeting.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

#11796 - An Order Appropriating \$105,000.00 from Water Enterprise Retained Earnings (Surplus) to Water Enterprise Professional Services Account

This item is related to item #17793, and was taken out of order due to this.

Mayor Nicholson explained that this appropriation covers construction oversight services, including engineering review, procurement compliance, and project management. These services are not eligible for reimbursement under the federal earmark grant.

Councillor Dernalowicz stated that both water enterprise items would remain on the agenda until the next meeting.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

#11795 - A Measure Accepting Donations from the 2025 Flowerpot Sponsorship Program

Mayor Nicholson presented the list of sponsors for the 2025 Flower Park Sponsorship Program. Councillor Mack noted that a list of larger planter sponsors had been omitted and should be incorporated into the final acceptance.

Councillor Dernalowicz stated that the item would remain with the Finance Committee.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

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

The Committee continued discussion of the salt shed repayment issue. Mayor Nicholson stated that he is awaiting a legal opinion from the City Solicitor regarding the language of the vote from the Council for the salt shed.

Mayor Nicholson also clarified that the City's snow and ice account is about \$515,000 over budget, which is higher than the previous year, but is within what projections were.

Councillor Dernalowicz stated that the item would remain with the Finance Committee.

There were no objections, more time was granted.

#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

On a motion made by Councillor Mack and seconded by Councillor Heglin, it was voted to recommend passage of the ordinance to the full Council:

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” to add a new Section 10, regarding Temporary Positions.

Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Gardner as follows:

SECTION 1: That a new Section 10 be added to Exhibit F of Attachment 1 of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled “Primary Non-Union Compensation Schedule,” to read as follows:

Section 10: In the event the City hires a temporary employee - due to illness, injury, absence, vacancy, or other purpose - to cover the duties of a positions that falls under a collective bargaining contract, the temporary employee shall be paid at the rate listed in the collective bargaining contract for that position.

SECTION 2: That this ordinance take effect upon passage and publication as required by law.

3 yeas, motion passes.

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.”

On a motion made by Councillor Mack and seconded by Councillor Heglin, it was voted to recommend passage of the ordinance to the full Council.

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

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Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Gardner as follows:

SECTION 1: That the following positions be removed from Exhibit E of Attachment 1 of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled “Non-Union Compensation Schedule”:

- Veteran’s Director
- Council on Aging Director
- Purchasing Agent/Civil Enforcement Director
- City Auditor
- Director of Community Development and Planning

SECTION 2: That the schedule listed in Attachment 1 of this ordinance be added to Exhibit F of Attachment 1 of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled “Primary Non-Union Compensation Schedule.”

SECTION 3: That Section 3C of Exhibit F of Attachment 1 of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled “Golf Course Staff,” be stricken and replaced with the schedule listed in Attachment 2 of this ordinance.

SECTION 4: That this ordinance shall take effect upon passage and publication as required by law.

3 yeas, motion passes.

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

Councillor Dernalowicz clarified that the Committee would vote on all of the donation items together.

On a motion made by Councillor Heglin and seconded by Councillor Mack, it was voted to recommend to the full Council that the donations be adopted:

ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS AND GIFTS TO THE COUNCIL ON AGING

VOTED: That the City of Gardner is authorized to accept certain donations and gifts for use by the Council on Aging in their various programs, said acceptance in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53A ½ of the General Laws.

ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS AND GIFTS GARDNER ANIMAL CONTROL SHELTER DONATIONS

VOTED: That the City of Gardner is authorized to accept certain donations and gifts for use by the Gardner Animal Control Shelter, said acceptance in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53A ½ of the General Laws.

ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS AND GIFTS TO THE YOUTH CENTER

VOTED: That the City of Gardner is authorized to accept certain donations and gifts for use by the Youth Center in their various programs, said acceptance in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53A ½ of the General Laws.

ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS AND GIFTS COMMUNITY POLICING DONATIONS

VOTED: That the City of Gardner is authorized to accept certain donations for the Community Policing Program and gifts for use by the Police Department, said acceptance in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53A ½ of the General Laws.

ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS AND GIFTS TO THE GARDNER COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM

VOTED: That the City of Gardner is authorized to accept certain donations and gifts for use by the GCA T Program in their various programs, said acceptance in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53A ½ of the General Laws.

ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS AND GIFTS FIRE DEPARTMENT

VOTED: That the City of Gardner is authorized to accept certain donations and gifts for use by the Fire Department, said acceptance in accordance with the provisions of

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Chapter 44, Section 53A½ of the General Laws.

3 yeas, motion passes.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Councillor Heglin and seconded by Councillor Mack, it was voted to adjourn at 3:50 p.m.