

WARD COUNCILLORS

- 1 – David R. Thibault-Muñoz
- 2 – Dana M. Heath
- 3 – Paul G. Tassone
- 4 – Karen G. Hardern
- 5 – Aleksander H. Dernalowicz, Esq.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT

George C. Tyros

COUNCILLORS AT LARGE

- Calvin D. Brooks
- Craig R. Cormier
- Brad E. Heglin
- Elizabeth J. Kazinskas
- Judy A. Mack

**CITY OF GARDNER
MASSACHUSETTS**

CITY COUNCIL



FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING NOTICE

Date: Tuesday, April 14, 2026
Time: 3:30 P.M.
Location: City Council Chamber, City Hall

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER

ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPEN MEETING RECORDINGS

Any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a meeting, or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to reasonable requirements of the chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. Any person intending to make such recording shall notify the Chair forthwith. All Documents and exhibits used or referenced at the meeting must be submitted in duplicate to the City Clerk, as they become part of the Meeting Minutes.

I. Review and Approval of Meeting Minute(s)

- March 31, 2026

II. Department Updates

- Clerk

III. First Time on the Agenda

11813 - A Measure Authorizing a Contract of up to Five Years for Police Department Policy & Procedures/Rules & Regulations System. *Page 11*

11814 - A Measure Accepting the Job Description of a New Chief of Staff Position for the Mayor’s Office. *Page 14*

11815 - An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the City of Gardner, Section 8 of Chapter 625, thereof entitled “Water Rates”. *Page 23*

11816 - An Ordinance to Amend the Attachment F of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled "Primary Non-Union Compensation Schedule". *Page 35*

11817 - A Measure Ratifying the Mayor's Recommendation for Steps for Various Department Head Positions. *Page 38*

11818 - A Communication from the Mayor Regarding the current non-essential spending freeze. *Page 40*

IV. In Subcommittee

11482 - Discussions regarding the City's Health Insurance Payments and Trust Fund. *Page 42*

11728 - A Discussion on the Current State of Facilities Management for all Municipal Buildings. *Page 44*

11752 - Study and Report on the Salt Shed Repayment Issue. *Page 44*

11800 - LifeLine Services Update. *Page 53*

11804 - FY2027 City Council Budget Proposal by the Council President. *Page 54*

11805 - Discussion on City Council Budget Transfers. *Page 55*

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE: The listing of Agenda items are those reasonably anticipated by the Chairman which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

CITY COUNCIL OF GARDNER

Aleksander H. Dernalowicz

Aleksander H. Dernalowicz

Chair, Finance Committee

CITY OF GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF MARCH 31, 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's Executive Aide Ryan Egan; Treasurer/Collector Jen Dymek; Auditor Karen Butler; City Solicitor Vincent Pusateri; Community Development and Planning Director Jason Stevens; and Assistant City Clerk Jayen Kumar.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minute(s)

On a motion made by Councillor Heglin and seconded by Councillor Mack, it was voted to waive the reading and accept the Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of March 10, 2026, as presented.

3 yeas, motion passes.

Department Updates

Treasurer/Collector, Auditor, and Law:

DRAFT

**TREASURER/COLLECTOR
DEPARTMENT UPDATE
MARCH 31, 2026**

When I last updated the committee in September, we were in the process of collecting the first quarter preliminary taxes. At that time, we had collected about 52% of the total amount billed. This figure represented those that paid the first quarter only, as well as those that had paid first and second quarters. Since that time, 7,143 actual real estate tax bills were mailed. The total billed, for real estate only, in FY26, was \$33,550,028.56. To date, we have issued \$7,026.82 in refunds and \$172,985.86 in abatements. We have collected \$25,029,987.95. This represents a 75% collection rate with the 4th quarter payments due on May 1. This collection rate is on par with what we did for the same time period last year.

For personal property, we mailed 306 actual 3rd and 4th quarter tax bills for January 1. The total billed amount, for FY26, was \$1,551,624.62. To date, we have issued \$7,954.52 in refunds and \$9,635.26 in abatements. Total collected is \$1,206,944.38. This represents a collection rate of 79% with 4th quarter payments still due.

For Motor Vehicle Excise, the RMV issued 4 additional billing commitments for 2025 and 2 billing commitments for 2026. For 2025, the commitments totaled \$2,675,857.38. We issued \$36,749.76 in refunds and \$68,706.38 in abatements. The 2025 collection to date is \$2,437,366.51 for a collection rate of approximately 92%. For 2026, the commitments totaled \$2,342,674.77. We issued \$1,978.88 in refunds and \$13,450.70 in abatements. Total collected is \$1,572,687.69 which is approximately 65% of the amount billed. Currently, residents receive their bill and have 30 days to pay without penalty. After the due date, interest begins to accrue and we allow about 30 days before we move the bills to demand. This adds a \$30 fee, and interest still accrues on the base amount. Residents have 14 days to pay the demand bill. If a bill is still not paid within about 30 days of the due date of the demand, we turn the bills over to our Deputy Collector and they add a \$10 first warrant fee and a \$12 mailing fee. If the bills still remain unpaid after 3-4 months, a \$17 service fee is added. Approximately 3 months after that, a \$20 marking fee is added and the person gets a non-renewable mark on their license and/or registration. That marking ensures eventual payment on the excise. There is current legislation pending to remove the ability for the RMV to mark for non-renewal. From a municipal standpoint, this is not practical as there would no longer be any incentive to pay an excise tax bill.

Parking Meter collection is still taking place about 3 times per week. Since the last update, we have collected \$25,364.70 in revenue from coins and cards and have paid \$2,742.27 in card processing fees, netting \$22,622.43 in 6 months. Since September, 674 parking violation tickets have been issued by the Police Department with fines totaling \$11,010.00. Most notably, 151 were for meter violations, 466 for code red parking ban violations, and 33 obstructing/interfering with snow removal violations. Seven percent (7%) of the tickets were voided/abated and 63% were paid. The total value of the tickets outstanding is \$3,355.00, not included any fees.

I recently purchased a cash counting machine for faster processing of cash payments. The machine allows a stack of bills to be inserted. It will read each note for its value and check for counterfeit currency. The machine also calculates the total and will print a receipt of the cash submitted. This double check protects the City as well as the resident, to be sure that everyone agrees on the amount submitted.

We were never able to correct the issue with our check printer. All checks either require the use of my signature stamp or I have to hand sign all checks. A case was opened with Munis to see if we could modify the Forms template. The template only allows for the check to print at the bottom of the page. Our checks stock is for top printing. There is no work around for this. We may try to order checks with the check on the bottom, but timing could be an issue.

I believe the upgrade with the water/sewer/trash billing module has been completed. Bills have been delayed so the collection in the office has been lower than normal over the past month. This upgrade is supposed to create a digital file to upload to Unipay so that residents will be able to see what is owed for utilities, without having the physical bill, and make payment.

I have submitted my reports (Cashbooks, Warrant, Transfer, and Reconciliation) for November, December, January, and February, to the Auditor. I expect reconciliation reports to be completed shortly.

I have completed my work with Community Development. Transactions are current, and drawdown requests are being done regularly and timely. I'm confident that there won't be any issues moving forward.

We're also reviewing employee master files in Munis. There are some discrepancies with regard to Status (PT over 20 hours, PT under 20 hours, and Temporary/Seasonal) and Group Codes and Munis account numbers. I don't believe anyone has ever looked at these discrepancies before and making changes in one area doesn't necessarily update other areas of the pay record. We're also still having issues with communication regarding appointed board members. Some boards pay their members a stipend. If the newly appointed member doesn't complete paperwork with HR, they aren't entered into the system and they aren't paid. The Treasurer's office sends out pay sheets, either monthly or quarterly, and we have not been notified that anyone is missing from the pay sheets. As a matter of practice, all board members should meet with HR and, at a minimum, have a file created and a CORI check, as they are City representatives. The Treasurer's office has had discussions about this with HR and we're trying to find the best way to minimize issues with newly elected board members.

My senior account clerk, Lisa Arseneau, retired on Friday, March 27. She worked with the department for 7 years and we were sad to see her leave but excited for her to begin her next chapter. Lisa gave me a month's notice, so we were able to advertise the position internally. We had one candidate apply. Tammy, my assistant treasurer, and I, interviewed and hired Margaret Jordan, from the Building Department. Margaret has had experience with Munis and dealing with the public during her time in Building. She also worked, in the private sector, for various law offices and that experience is invaluable, especially since a lot of our calls are from law offices for tax information for real estate closings. Margaret will be trained to process, and answer questions related to, taxes as well as utility payments. Her main focus, however, will be the utility collection.

My department's draft budget for FY27 has been submitted to the Mayor's office.

Auditor Monthly Department Update

- Overall department updates:
 - Working on FY25 audit with CBIZ, outside auditors, to finish up the Audit Report. They just requested more backup this morning for more potential stop losses totaling just under \$1.3M. Shooting to be completed by March 31st and have report draft in hand. The mayor's office filed for a 30-day extension

- Month End Financials update:
 - All monthly Journal Entries have been made through January. Working on February now.
 - Reconciled cash up to Feb
 - Working on Receivables for Nov-Feb
 - Snow & Ice account currently has a \$805,138.83 deficit.
 - Health Trust balance \$2,398,027.24 as of 02/28/2026.

- Ways to streamline processes in the Auditor Dept:
 - Set up workflow for Journal approvals
 - Identified some expenses are being reclassified to other expense accounts instead of transferring funds to cover the over-budget items.
 - **Reclass entries** are appropriate **only** when the **original account was wrong** (coding mistake, wrong project, etc.).
 - **Budget transfers** are appropriate when expenses are **correctly coded** but the budget for that line/department is **insufficient**.
 - Using **reclasses** to "cover" overspending can obscure variances, weaken reporting accuracy, create audit and control concerns, and negatively impact the budget for the next fiscal year.

Law Department Update:

City Solicitor, Vincent Pusateri, reported that the addition of a new Assistant Solicitor has had a positive impact on departmental operations, describing it as “putting wind in the sail.”

He outlined ongoing work, including real estate matters, zoning issues, litigation, and general legal support to City departments. He also noted continued coordination with the Mayor’s Office, including involvement in union negotiations.

It was reported that the department has increasingly handled matters in-house, reducing reliance on outside counsel. Solicitor Pusateri stated that the goal moving forward is to continue managing as much work internally as possible.

The Committee acknowledged the workload and expressed appreciation for the department’s responsiveness.

#11803 - A Resolution Supporting the Redeployment of Prior Authorized Funds

Executive Aide, Ryan Egan, and Community Development and Planning Director, Jason Stevens, provided a detailed overview of this proposed Resolution, utilizing funds related to the Rear Main Street project. It was explained that remaining funds from prior project components, including savings and previously authorized bond proceeds, are proposed to be reallocated to cover increased costs associated with National Grid work.

Director Stevens outlined the financial history of the project, including original estimates and updated costs. It was noted that utility-related expenses significantly exceeded initial projections due to the relocation of electrical infrastructure. Available funding sources were reviewed, including unexpended balances from related project components and prior allocations. It was stated that sufficient funds are available to complete the project, with a projected remaining balance upon completion.

Discussion included project timelines, coordination with National Grid, and transparency in the use of funds. The Committee expressed appreciation for the detailed presentation.

Councillor Mack clarified that she would be abstaining from the vote due to a conflict.

On a motion made by Councillor Heglin and seconded by Councillor Dernalowicz, pending suspension of the two-meeting rule, it was voted to recommend the resolution to the full City Council for adoption:

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE REDEPLOYMENT OF PRIOR AUTHORIZED FUNDS

WHEREAS, The Council has previously approved Item 11499, allowing an appropriation to support the Rear Main Street Redevelopment Project in the amount of \$800,000.00; and

WHEREAS, The stated purpose of this appropriation was to cover expenses related to the remedy of certain subsurface conditions; and

WHEREAS, The cost for that remedy have come in under budget; and

WHEREAS, The final estimate for electrical work is in excess of original projections;

NOW THEREFORE, the City Council hereby offers its consent for prior authorized spending to be used to cover the increased cost of electrical work.

2 yeas, motion passes.

#11804 - FY2027 City Council Budget Proposal by the Council President

The Committee expressed general support but indicated that additional time is needed for further review. Discussion included consideration of implementing a rolling schedule for technology replacements rather than large one-time expenditures.

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

There were no objections.

#11805 - Discussion on City Council Budget Transfers

The Committee discussed recent budget transfers, including a \$15,000 transfer from the City Council salary account. It was noted that this transfer may have been made in error.

Discussion focused on ensuring proper allocation of expenses to the appropriate departmental budgets and improving review processes to prevent similar issues.

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

There were no objections.

CITY OF GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF MARCH 31, 2026

#11806 - A Measure Ratifying the Council President's Recommendation for Step Designation for the City Auditor

The Committee considered a measure regarding the step placement of the newly hired City Auditor. It was explained that the recommendation places the Auditor at Step 2 based on 7.5 years of experience, aligning with current compensation and providing a modest increase.

On a motion made by Councillor Heglin and seconded by Councillor Mack, pending suspension of the two-meeting rule, it was voted to recommend the measure to the full Council for authorization:

A MEASURE RATIFYING THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION FOR STEP DESIGNATION FOR THE CITY AUDITOR.

BE IT HEREBY ENACTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GARDNER AS FOLLOWS: That the designation of steps for the purpose of compensation in accordance with the provisions of Attachment F of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner be ordered as follows for the City Auditor Position at the recommendation of the Council President:

Position	Employee	Group	Step	Years Credit
City Auditor	Karen Butler	1B	2	7.5

3 yeas, motion passes.

#11482 - Discussions regarding the City's Health Insurance Payments and Trust Fund The Committee discussed the status of the City's health insurance trust fund. Updated figures will be provided following completion of monthly reconciliation.

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

There were no objections.

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

The Committee received an update on efforts to centralize facilities management across municipal buildings. Executive Aide, Ryan Egan, reported that the Mayor is developing a plan in coordination with department heads and staff, which is expected to be presented to the City Council in the near future.

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

There were no objections.

CITY OF GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF MARCH 31, 2026

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

Executive Aide, Ryan Egan, provided the Committee with an update on the salt shed repayment issue. Recent work includes completion of lighting improvements and demolition of the former structure.

A full financial review will be conducted, and any necessary corrective transfers and remaining balances will be presented to the City Council.

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

There were no objections.

#11799 - An Order Transferring the sum of \$3,588.00 from Auditing Department Salaries to Auditing Department Expense Account - Professional Services

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

AN ORDER TRANSFERRING APPROPRIATIONS FROM AUDITOR DEPT SAL & WAGES TO AUDITOR DEPT OPERATING EXPENDITURES

ORDERED: That there be and is hereby transferred the appropriations sum of Three Thousand Five Hundred Eighty-Eight Dollars and No Cents (\$3,588.00) from Auditor Dept Salaries & Wages to Auditor Dept Operating Expenditures as follows:

Professional Services Expense	\$3,588.00
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3 yeas, motion passes.

#11800 - LifeLine Services Update

It was clarified that an update and presentation will be provided at the next Finance Committee meeting.

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

There were no objections, more time was granted.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Councillor Heglin and seconded by Councillor Mack, it was voted to adjourn at 4:28 p.m.



City of Gardner - *Executive Department*

Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

April 9, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, Council President
And City Councilors

Gardner City Hall, Rm 121

95 Pleasant Street

Gardner, MA 01440

RE: A Measure Authorizing a Contract of up to Five Years for Police Department Policy & Procedures/Rules & Regulations System

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

As you are aware, the General Laws of the Commonwealth require that municipalities receive legislative approval when soliciting for contracts with a term of greater than three (3) years.

The attached authorization request is being submitted to enter into a contract for a Policy & Procedure/Rules & Regulation delivery system for the Gardner Police Department.

These systems are designed to deliver relevant policies to employees and track their receipt and understanding of these policies. It will also be used to track the certification process for the police department when it becomes a mandatory requirement through the P.O.S.T. Commission. The Gardner Police Department is currently using the POWER DMS platform. The price is annual and continues to rise quickly. Chief McAvene has informed me that he is seeking alternative options to keep the cost lower for as long as possible.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

AUTHORIZING FIVE-YEAR CONTRACT PERIOD
POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES/RULES & REGULATION
DELIVERY SYSTEM

VOTED: To authorize the City to enter into a contract not to exceed five (5) years for Police Department – Policy & Procedures/Rules & Regulation Delivery System, pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30B, section 12 and under the terms outlined in the Purchasing Agent’s Memorandum.

CITY OF GARDNER
PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Room 217 - City Hall
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440-2687



Joshua Cormier, Director
jcormier@gardner-ma.gov
Telephone (978) 632-0426

TO: Gardner City Council
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

FROM: Joshua Cormier, Purchasing Agent

DATE: April 6, 2026

SUBJECT: Request for 5-year contract

According to MGL c 30B, any contract that exceeds three years must be approved by a majority vote by the City Council.

I respectfully request permission from the Gardner City Council to seek up to a five-year contract (including renewals) for the below listed projects. Following compliance with procurement requirements, all such contracts will continue only if the contracted vendor(s) is in good standing.

- Policy & Procedures/Rules & Regulation Delivery System – Police Department

My intention to seek a longer-term contract is to attract more competitive rates from vendors and to conduct more effective contract management.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me for additional details.



April 10, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, City Council President
And Gardner City Council
95 Pleasant Street, Rm 121
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: A Measure Accepting the Job Description of a New Chief of Staff Position for the Mayor's Office

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

Over the past year, there have been several discussions regarding the way facilities staff is managed and overseen throughout the City's buildings. This discussion, coupled with the foreseen tighter budget years, lead to a larger discussion regarding ways efficiencies can be better increased and improved upon to save time, energy, and funding by having a centralized point person overseeing vital functions that are currently scattered and decentralized.

As such, I am submitting my proposal for the creation of a Chief of Staff position within the Mayor's Office. This position will replace the existing Executive Aide position that currently exists within my office.

The proposed Chief of Staff role builds upon the existing Executive Aide duties by creating a position capable of assuming a broader and more elevated level of responsibility within the Mayor's Office. This would allow for certain day-to-day functions to be placed under a more experienced and qualified professional to independently manage complex operational and strategic executive-level tasks that currently require direct mayoral involvement. It is important to note that while an elevated level of responsibility will be given, all final executive decision-making authority will remain with the Mayor. All department heads will also still have full access to the Mayor with this position allowing for an additional resource for department heads in the assistance they are looking for.

The intention of the proposed Chief of Staff position is to function as a senior-level partner to the Mayor with the main objectives to advance strategic city priorities, improve operational efficiency, and ensure consistent execution of City initiatives. Notably, the Chief of Staff would serve as the central point of coordination for departmental and City projects, providing operational oversight, guidance, and assistance. Designating a single, experienced professional to oversee interdepartmental coordination, the City will be better positioned to manage complex projects, respond proactively to emerging issues, and ensure fiscal and operational compliance. During my State of the City Address in 2024, while addressing the Maki Park issue and other issues that arose in the Community Development Department, I promised to come up with new ways to increase direct oversight from my office on the City's larger projects and utilize this increased accountability measure to break down the silos that can easily arise between departments when working on projects. I believe the creation of this position and addition of these duties adds this level of protection and accountability to the largest projects we undertake.

In addition to the elevated responsibilities, the Chief of Staff would directly manage three critical areas that have long required a centralized project manager:

- **Facilities Management:** The Chief of Staff will directly oversee and coordinate facilities operations, including supervision of the City maintenance staff and management of the associated budget. This centralized oversight will improve planning, prioritization, and cost-efficiency across all municipal buildings and maintenance operations. Prior to the switch to the Building Department, the oversight of facilities operations had fallen under the Mayor's Office until a

change was made in the early 2010s. This position allows us to return to that model, ensuring operational equity and efficiency for municipal buildings through a centralized management contact.

- **Communications:** The Chief of Staff will be responsible for the City's communications channels and strategy, ensuring that messaging across social media, press releases, the City's website, and notification systems is consistent, professional, and centralized. This centralization will not only enhance transparency and resident engagement but will professionalize the City's image and modernize operations. If an item is being posted and published by the City, it should be a vetted, consistent message that puts forward the same information no matter where it is posted. Currently, communication duties are assigned and performed but not centralized, leading to different verbiage and content being posted in various platforms with large potential to lead to inconsistencies.
- **Waterford Street Community Center:** The Chief of Staff will serve as the main point of contact and oversee operations of the Waterford Street Community Center. This position will manage the logistics of all construction and facilities projects, coordinating with existing and prospective tenants, assist the Senior Center with any needs, track financials associated with the center, and perform all other duties relating to the day-to-day operations of the center. This important project has lacked an internal central project manager which the creation of this position establishes. This position would also oversee coordination with any outside groups looking to utilize space in the building for various initiatives and projects and coordinate the calendar of events for the shared spaces of the building.

The discussions that have taken place over the last few years have shown that these three critical areas are all in need of a centralized project manager who can ensure they move forward in a coordinated, professional, and efficient manner.

Beyond operational improvements, establishing this position is also an investment in the professionalization of the Mayor's Office and the City as a whole. The Chief of Staff role is structured to attract and retain a highly qualified candidate with significant experience in municipal government, project management, and executive leadership. In the attached job description, I have added the requirement to obtain a Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official (MCPPO) designation. This further ensures the high level of expertise in procurement and compliance. While the City's Purchasing Department oversees all procurement operations of the City, having someone with this designation overseeing aspects of a project while it is on-going allows for further compliance with all relevant laws and regulations that the City is to abide by. An executive level professional with municipal government experience will allow for crucial support and guidance for our department heads who keep our city running every day.

Ultimately, the creation of a Chief of Staff position will enhance the City's ability to operate efficiently, respond to challenges, and deliver on its priorities. The creation of this position represents a forward-looking approach to municipal management that emphasizes coordination, professionalism, and strategic leadership.

I have not been shy of stating that I believe the upcoming budget year and those after it are going to have an increased level of difficulty with them that the City has not seen in a few years due to various cost increases and funding level concerns from the federal government. It is because of those reasons that I believe that this position is needed now more than ever. We have seen what happens through decentralized systems when things fall through the cracks and time gets wasted while decisions need to be made and costs go up. We have made significant improvements project oversight and have seen how job duty consolidation, professionalization, and oversight have exponentially increased the efficiencies of of the City's Community Development and Planning Office- this brings that same goal to a full City-wide

basis. We need to be sure we are doing everything we can to keep tasks, operations, and projects on time, within budget, and now pushed aside eventually leading to the need for increased funding. This level of oversight brings an additional check to make sure the City is operating in the best and most efficient manner possible.

Per the requirements of the City Code, I have attached a proposed job description for this position for your review, combining the existing Executive Aide job description with the additional duties listed above. I look forward to working with the City Council as the review of this item moves forward.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael J. Nicholson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

A MEASURE AUTHORIZING THE JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THE POSITION OF CHIEF OF STAFF
TO BE HOUSED IN THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

VOTED: That the job description for Chief of Staff, here attached, be approved and accepted under the provisions of section 6 of Chapter 3 of the Code of the City of Gardner.

Job Title:	Chief of Staff
Position Status:	Exempt
Report to:	Mayor
Date:	April 2026

Position Purpose:

Under the direction of the Mayor, this position serves in a Chief of Staff–style capacity, providing senior-level coordination, strategic planning support, and executive administration for the day-to-day operations of the City of Gardner Executive Department. The position supports and advances the Mayor’s strategic goals and objectives by overseeing executive department relations, coordinating planning and outreach efforts, and ensuring the delivery of accurate, consistent, and positive communications regarding City programs and services. This role facilitates engagement and coordination with community members, civic and non-profit organizations, businesses, public bodies, elected officials, and City staff to strengthen awareness, alignment, and effective governance.

Supervision:

Supervision Scope: Performs highly responsible administrative, managerial, and strategic functions requiring independent judgment, discretion, and initiative. Interprets policies, directives, and objectives of the Mayor and implements them across City operations.

Supervision Received: Works under the general direction of the Mayor, with considerable latitude for independent action. Matters of major policy or unusual complexity are reviewed with the Mayor.

Job Environment:

Work is performed primarily in an office setting with frequent interaction with City departments, elected officials, union representatives, contractors, community organizations, and the public. The position requires extensive communication, coordination, and discretion. The role has access to confidential and sensitive information, including labor relations matters, contract negotiations, personnel issues, and executive decision-making.

Errors in judgment or execution could result in operational disruption, labor relations challenges, financial impacts, or reputational harm to the City.

Essential Functions:

(The essential functions or duties listed below are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work that may be performed. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related or a logical assignment to the position.)

Works directly with the Mayor on all City projects and initiatives overseen by the Executive Department.

Works directly with the Mayor in the oversight of City departments and labor relations with

collective bargaining units.

Performs a variety of duties requiring a high degree of precision, discretion, and knowledge of Executive Department operations.

Performs duties involving advanced computer knowledge and utilization.

Maintains files, compiles statistics, and posts and maintains general and confidential records.

Performs phone duties and provides services to the public entering the Executive Department.

Performs outreach, coordination, and support duties as directed by the Mayor.

Serves as the Mayor's Designee for bargaining with City employment unions and collective bargaining units, as directed.

Provides overall leadership and strategic oversight of all City facility operations and staff; directs and coordinates maintenance, custodial services, and facilities-related projects; and works closely with department heads to develop schedules, set priorities, and ensure efficient, compliant, and cost-effective operation of all municipal facilities.

Serves as Special Projects Coordinator for large-scale City initiatives; collaborates with department heads and key stakeholders to oversee project planning, implementation, and progress; and ensures projects advance in a timely manner with appropriate oversight, performance tracking, and accountability to the Mayor's Office.

Oversees operations at the City's Community Center and serves as the primary liaison between the Mayor's Office and building tenants; coordinates maintenance work, space scheduling, and leaseholder relations; and acts as the primary contact for all construction, renovation, and fit-out projects, including coordination with contractors.

Provides executive-level leadership over media relations, public messaging, public relations, social media, crisis communications, and policy messaging; acts as a public-facing spokesperson for the City as directed by the Mayor; leads interdepartmental communications coordination; and ensures consistent, accurate, and timely internal and external messaging aligned with City and Mayor's Office priorities.

Serves as the primary point of contact for contractors working on City projects; coordinates with the Purchasing Office to ensure compliance with procurement laws and contract requirements; and conducts regular check-ins to monitor progress, address issues, and provide status updates to the Executive Department.

Assists in municipal budget preparation and implementation.

Coordinates the operating departments of the City in conformance with Mayoral directives.

Receives, tracks, and responds to inquiries from City Councilors directed to the Executive Department.

Receives, processes, and manages correspondence received by the Mayor.

Responds to general inquiries from the public and refers matters to appropriate departments, commissions, or individuals when necessary.

Serves as liaison to City Councilors on matters relating to the Executive Department.

Assists in the planning, coordination, and organization of Mayoral functions and meetings.

Researches and organizes information for Mayoral speeches, presentations, reports, and briefing materials.

Serves on boards and committees at the discretion of the Mayor.

Assists in strategic planning initiatives and implementation.

Coordinates and research issues as delegated by the Mayor.

Performs general constituent services.

Works collaboratively with State and Federal officials, City Council, and local businesses.

Performs all other duties and responsibilities necessary to maintain the efficient operation of the Executive Department, as assigned by the Mayor.

Recommended Minimum Qualifications:

Education, Skills and Experience:

Bachelor's degree in Public Administration, Business Administration, Communications, Political Science, or a related field is preferred. A minimum of five (5) to seven (7) years of progressively responsible experience in municipal government, public administration, executive management, communications, facilities management, or a related field is required, or an equivalent combination of education, training, and experience.

Special Requirement:

Must possess the ability to maintain confidentiality and handle sensitive information with discretion. Must be able to attend meetings outside of normal business hours as required. Must obtain MCPPO designation from the Office of the Inspector General within one (1) year of appointment, if applicable. Must possess a valid Massachusetts driver's license.

Knowledge, Ability and Skill:

Knowledge: Knowledge of municipal government operations, local, state, and federal laws and regulations, collective bargaining processes, labor relations, public finance, procurement requirements, and public records and open meeting laws. Knowledge of public communications, media relations, crisis communications, and strategic planning principles. Knowledge of facilities operations and project coordination within a municipal environment.

Ability: Ability to plan, organize, and coordinate complex initiatives across multiple City departments. Ability to exercise sound judgment, discretion, and confidentiality in sensitive matters. Ability to communicate effectively with elected officials, department heads, union representatives, contractors, community organizations, and the general public. Ability to prioritize competing demands in a fast-paced executive environment. Ability to interpret and implement Mayoral directives and policy objectives.

Skill: Strong organizational and time-management skills. Excellent written, verbal, and public presentation skills. Demonstrated skill in research, analysis, and report preparation. Proficiency in Microsoft Office applications, including Word, Excel, Outlook, and database systems; familiarity with municipal financial or ERP systems such as MUNIS is a plus. Skill in relationship-building, negotiation support, and interdepartmental coordination.

Physical Requirements:

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodation may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is required to sit; frequently required to communicate, talk and hear; occasionally must walk, and must be able to handle, or feel objects, tools, or controls. The employee seldom must lift and/or move objects weighing up to 10 pounds. Vision and hearing at or correctable to normal ranges to read documents and analyze data. This position requires the ability to operate a keyboard at efficient speed.

Selection Guidelines

Formal application, rating of education and experience; oral interview and reference checks; job related tests may be required. The duties listed above are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work that may be performed. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related or a logical assignment to the position.

(This job description does not constitute an employment agreement between the employer and employee and is subject to change by the employer as the needs of the employer and requirements of the job change.)

Employee Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Approved by Human Resources: _____ Date: _____

Approved by Department Head: _____ Date: _____

Approved by Mayor: _____ Date: _____

The City of Gardner is an EOE/AA employer: Pay Equity/Equal Opportunity/Americans with Disabilities Act Employer.



City of Gardner - Executive Department

Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

April 10, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, City Council President
 And Gardner City Council
 95 Pleasant Street, Rm 121
 Gardner, MA 01440

RE: An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the City of Gardner, Section 8 of Chapter 625, thereof entitled "Water Rates"

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

Attached, please find a proposal and recommendation from the Department of Public Works regarding the City's water rates over a four-year period beginning July 1, 2026 (FY27). The proposed rates are as follows:

Effective Date	Rate (per 100 cu ft)
July 1, 2025 (current)	\$6.50
July 1, 2026 (FY27)	\$7.80
July 1, 2027 (FY28)	\$9.00
July 1, 2028 (FY29)	\$10.36
July 1, 2029 (FY30)	\$11.40

The recommendation, which I am in support of as presented, protects and prevents the City's Water Enterprise Fund from dropping to a zero balance in FY27 and ensures we maintain our commitment to funding critical infrastructure investments. This move is in line with our practice of reviewing our various rates and fee schedules every five years. The last time that the City reviewed water rates took place June of 2019.

The current rate of \$6.50 per 100 cubic feet has been in place since FY22. All the while, annual costs for maintenance crews, energy and utilities, and other operational line items within our Water Enterprise Fund have collectively grown over \$550,000 since FY19. In order to cover rising costs and stabilizing rates through COVID, the increased annual costs were absorbed through the rate increase that took place between FY19-FY23. Covering those increased costs while stabilizing rates came at the price of deferred maintenance, which can no longer be postponed.

The FY19 schedule was designed with the expectation that another adjustment would be required within five to seven years—a threshold we have now reached. While increasing rates are a decision no one takes likely, it must be done in line with our review schedules in order to ensure the enterprise fund maintains its sustainability and allows the City to uphold its fiduciary responsibility to our rate payers. The average Gardner household water bill is approximately \$25.00 per month. With the proposed FY27 increase the average Gardner household will see (on

average) a \$5.00 monthly increase. Similarly, at the newly proposed FY27 rate, Gardner's water rates will either be on par or below many of its neighboring communities.

It is my recommendation that the City Council adopt the proposed four-year water rate schedule as outlined in this proposal. Without this action, the Water Enterprise Fund will shortly be exhausted, leaving the City without the financial resources to maintain safe and reliable water service. The proposed water rate schedule is grounded in twelve years of revenue data, reflects realistic budget projects, and provides a sustainable path forward for the City's water system, infrastructure, and Enterprise Fund.

Director Arnold and I are happy to discuss the proposed rate schedule and welcome any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael J. Nicholson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 625 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF GARDNER,
THEREOF ENTITLED, "WATER."**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GARDNER AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1: That Subsection A of Section 8 of Chapter 625 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled, "Water Rates," be deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

- A) Metered water rates (quarterly).
 - a. Effective July 1, 2026: \$7.80
 - b. Effective July 1, 2027: \$9.00
 - c. Effective July 1, 2028: \$10.36
 - d. Effective July 1, 2029: \$11.40

SECTION 2: This ordinance shall take effect upon passage and publication as required by law.

CITY OF GARDNER
Department of Public Works

11815

Highway
Water
Sewer
Forestry
Parks/Playgrounds
Cemeteries



Dane E. Arnold, Director
50 Manca Drive
Gardner, MA 01440-2687
Telephone (978) 630-8195
darnold@gardner-ma.gov

Mayor Michael J. Nicholson
City Hall
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: Water Capital Planning Projects and Water Rates

March 23, 2026

Dear Mayor Nicholson:

The Water Department must increase water rates in order to avoid reaching a "\$0" balance sometime in Fiscal Year 2027.

***Please see attached graph titled:
"Water Enterprise Fund (Critical Maintenance ONLY)"

This graph encompasses the current Water Rates and the Critical Maintenance Issues that the Water Department must undertake in the immediate future listed below:

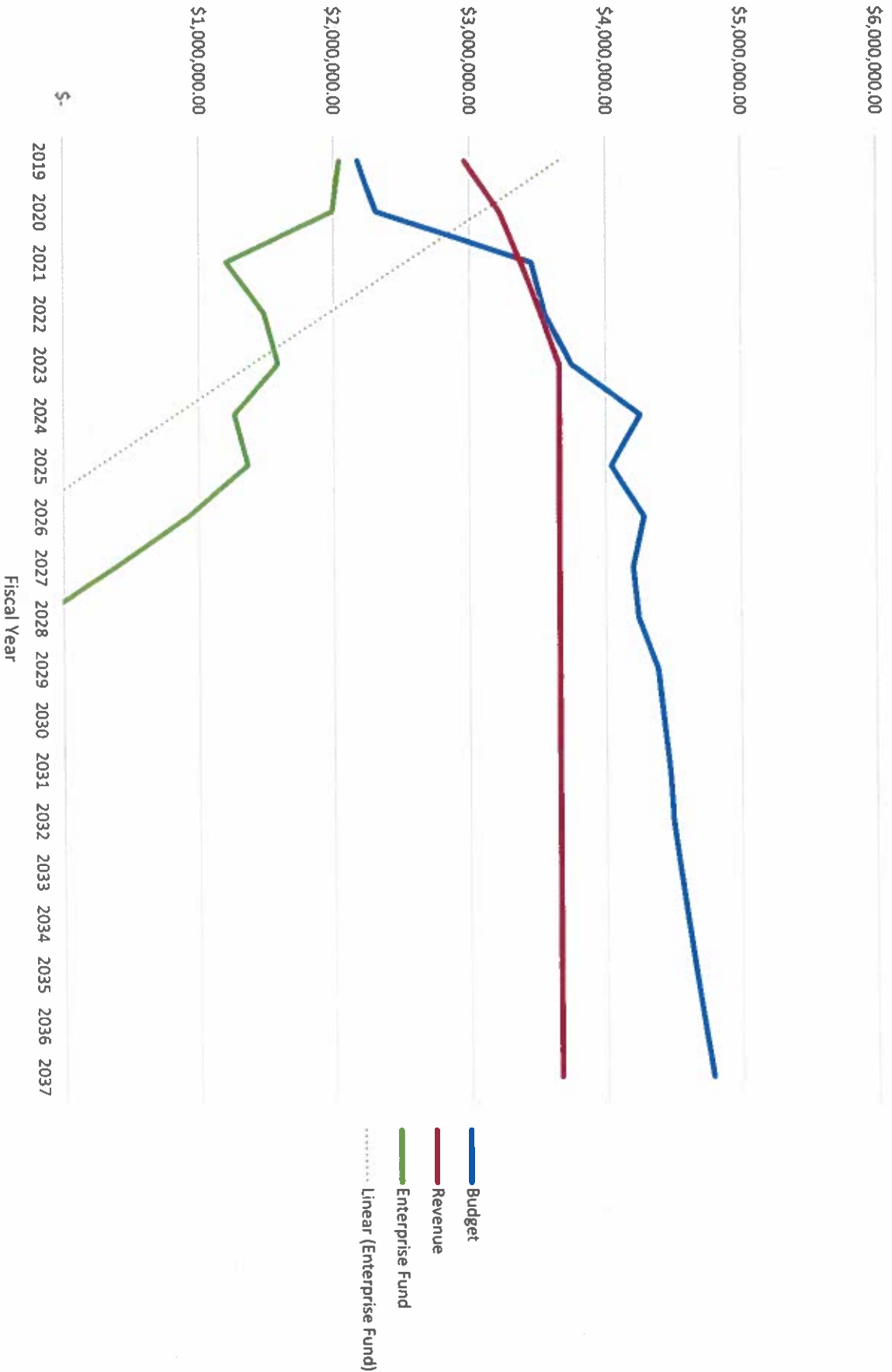
- Filter media (green sand) at Snake Pond (\$185,000-\$200,000)
- Replacement of the computer and SCADA systems in the facilities (\$250,000-\$300,000)
- Redevelopment of the Snake Pond Well (\$50,000)
- Coating of an exterior fuel tank (\$35,000)

From the Graph, you can see that the Water Enterprise Fund reaches "\$0" in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2027.

The Water Rates were last raised in FY2019 for 4 consecutive years, ending in FY2023. In FY2019 (2018) it was anticipated that the Water Rates would have to be raised within 5-7 years. Please keep in mind these water rates were created pre-COVID and were able to sustain the Water Enterprise Fund through that turbulent period.

There has been a substantial increase in the Maintenance Crew, Energy and Utilities, Chemical costs, Veolia Contract, and general parts and pumps since 2018.

Water Enterprise Fund (Critical Maintenance ONLY)



- Maintenance Crew line item has increased \$296,600 from \$235,900 to \$532,500
- Energy and Utilities have increased \$197,700 from \$161,800 to \$359,500
- Other operational costs have added well over \$75,000 over the last 6 years.

These operational increases total over \$550,000 annually but were able to be absorbed into the rate increases from FY2019 -FY2023. The developing problem became that general maintenance and routine replacement of parts and pumps and other items were put off to pay for the rising costs of operations.

We have input anticipated projects and budgetary costs and input them into a Water Enterprise Forecast for the next 10 years as we will outline in this letter.

Some other projects that must be performed in the not-too-distant future are:

- Dam work at Pearly Brook and Cowee Pond Dams (\$1,500,000-\$2,000,000)
- Cyber security updates at the Facilities (\$300,000)
- Replacement of Filters at Crystal Lake Water Treatment Facility (\$600,000-\$750,000)
- Water Meter Replacement (\$1,000,000)
- Exterior Cleaning and coating of the Elevated Storage Tank (\$500,000)
- Improvements at both facilities including pump replacements and maintenance
 - Both Snake Pond Well and Crystal Lake Water Treatment Facility were put on-line just over 25 years ago (\$2,000,000)
- Phase III Water Main Replacement (\$10,000,000)

These are projects that we are aware of, but there will no doubt be other unanticipated costs to the Water Enterprise that are not budgeted in the rate structure.

*****Please see attached table titled:
“Anticipated Projects”**

This table places the estimated costs of projects in the Fiscal Year we believe they will be necessary.

In order to fund the critical maintenance and near future projects, we have developed the following rate structure:

July 1, 2025	\$6.50	Current Rate
July 1, 2026	\$7.80	20% increase
July 1, 2027	\$9.00	15% increase
July 1, 2028	\$10.36	15% increase
July 1, 2029	\$11.40	10% increase

This rate structure provides the Water Enterprise with enough revenue to cover most of the anticipated projects and leaves a little room for some unanticipated issues as well. Obviously if there is something that is catastrophically high, we will need to reevaluate the rates again.

ANTICIPATED PROJECTS

ISCAL YEAR	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037
99-50-57601 Water Principal	\$ 460,000.00	\$ 460,000.00	\$ 460,000.00	\$ 460,000.00	\$ 460,000.00	\$ 435,000.00	\$ 435,000.00	\$ 435,000.00	\$ 435,000.00	\$ 435,000.00	\$ 435,000.00
99-50-57611 Water Interest	\$ 363,727.50	\$ 341,427.50	\$ 319,127.50	\$ 296,827.50	\$ 275,577.50	\$ 256,592.50	\$ 239,430.00	\$ 222,875.00	\$ 206,285.00	\$ 190,267.50	\$ 174,612.50
James St Rehab \$2 Mil 2025											
Transmission Mains \$2 Mil 2024											
Elev. Tank Interior Coating \$1 Mil		\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
Crystal Lake Improvements/Filter/PLC/SCADA	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00
Water Meters \$1 Mil	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00
Dam Repairs-Pearly-Covee			\$ 170,000.00	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 170,000.00
Facility Upgrades/Well Rehab/Pumps/Filter Media			\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00
Phase III Water Mains \$10 Mil		\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00
Water System Improvements/Valves/Hydrants	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00
Principal	\$ 760,000.00	\$ 1,810,000.00	\$ 2,080,000.00	\$ 2,080,000.00	\$ 2,080,000.00	\$ 2,055,000.00	\$ 2,055,000.00	\$ 2,055,000.00	\$ 2,055,000.00	\$ 2,055,000.00	\$ 2,055,000.00
Interest	\$ 363,727.50	\$ 341,427.50	\$ 319,127.50	\$ 296,827.50	\$ 275,577.50	\$ 256,592.50	\$ 239,430.00	\$ 222,875.00	\$ 206,285.00	\$ 190,267.50	\$ 174,612.50
Total Water Loans	\$ 1,123,727.50	\$ 2,151,427.50	\$ 2,399,127.50	\$ 2,376,827.50	\$ 2,355,577.50	\$ 2,311,592.50	\$ 2,294,430.00	\$ 2,277,875.00	\$ 2,261,285.00	\$ 2,245,267.50	\$ 2,229,612.50

***Please see attached graph and table titled:
“Water Enterprise Fund (Proposed Rate Increase & Capital Planning)”
&
“Rate Structure with Revenue and Enterprise Fund Projections”

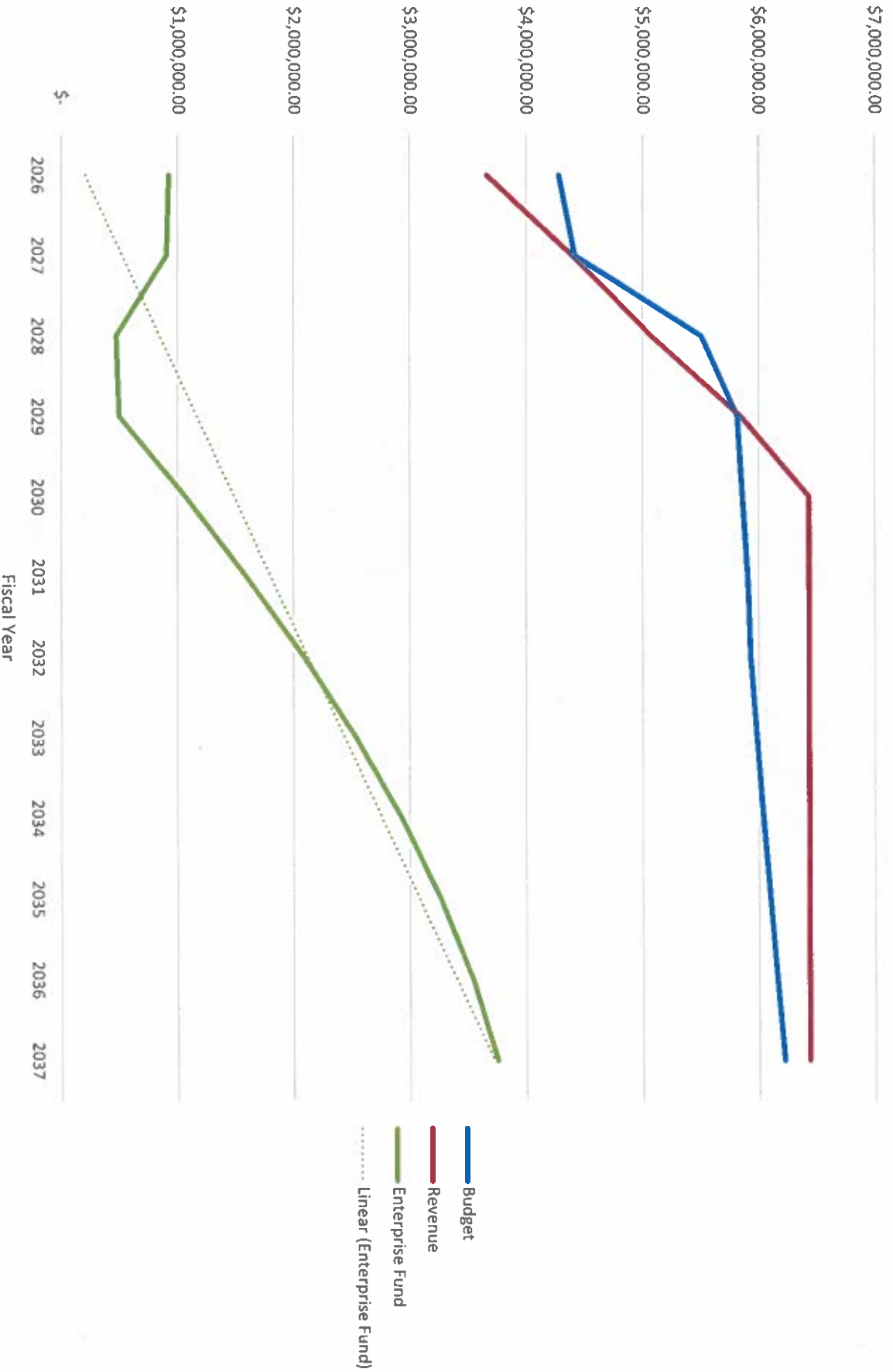
Please note that in Fiscal Years 2028 and 2029 the Enterprise account is hovering at \$300,000 which is a critical point in time. This is why the 20% increase in Year 1 is necessary to avoid depleting the Enterprise Fund.

How does Gardner compare to other Cities and Towns:

City and Town Comparison	
	Water
	100 cu ft
Acton	\$ 11.50
Templeton	\$ 10.86
Gardner Rate 2030	\$ 10.00
Hudson	\$ 9.89
Gardner Rate 2029	\$ 9.10
Ashburnham 4500+ cu ft	\$ 8.63
Westminster	\$ 8.62
Gardner Rate 2028	\$ 8.26
Winchendon	\$ 8.05
Gardner Rate 2027	\$ 7.50
Fitchburg	\$ 7.11
Barre	\$ 7.00
Gardner Rate 2026	\$ 6.50
Ashburnham 2501-4500	\$ 4.91
Athol	\$ 4.82
Ashburnham 501-2500	\$ 4.17
Holden	\$ 3.51

We have inserted the proposed water rates into this table to show where Gardner’s rates will fall compared to other communities. Based on TODAY’S rates of other cities and towns, we still are relatively competitive even with our highest proposed rate in FY2030. This does not account for these cities and towns possibly raising their rates during the next 4 years.

Water Enterprise Fund (Proposed Rate Increase & Capital Planning)



RATE STRUCTURE with REVENUE and ENTERPRISE FUND PROJECTIONS

WATER		6 50	7 00	9 00	10 36	11 40	11 40	11 40	11 40	11 40	11 40	11 40	11 40	11 40	11 40	11 40	11 40	11 40	
Rate																			
Enterprise Fund Cart	\$ 1,545,515.00	\$ 877,036.30	\$ 797,650.17	\$ 297,202.92	\$ 243,078.92	\$ 725,470.36	\$ 1,162,753.11	\$ 1,575,854.51	\$ 1,936,093.86	\$ 2,240,953.43	\$ 2,488,504.51	\$ 2,676,155.83	\$ 2,801,469.56	\$ 2,926,784.29	\$ 3,052,098.06	\$ 3,177,411.73	\$ 3,302,725.40	\$ 3,428,039.07	
Fiscal Year	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	
Total Budget	\$ 4,286,076.50	\$ 4,420,503.49	\$ 5,509,428.81	\$ 5,820,018.33	\$ 5,862,318.54	\$ 5,907,427.24	\$ 5,931,608.58	\$ 5,984,470.83	\$ 6,039,850.41	\$ 6,097,158.91	\$ 6,157,058.66	\$ 6,219,396.25	\$ 6,284,182.84	\$ 6,351,419.43	\$ 6,421,107.02	\$ 6,494,244.61	\$ 6,570,832.20	\$ 6,650,869.79	\$ 6,734,357.38
Projected Usage	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	556,553.51	
Projected Revenue	\$ 3,617,597.80	\$ 4,341,117.36	\$ 5,008,981.56	\$ 5,765,894.33	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	\$ 6,344,709.98	
Net Change in Fund	\$ (196,195.00)	\$ (668,478.70)	\$ (79,386.13)	\$ (500,447.24)	\$ (54,124.00)	\$ 482,991.44	\$ 437,282.74	\$ 413,101.41	\$ 380,239.35	\$ 304,859.57	\$ 247,551.07	\$ 187,651.32	\$ 127,751.57	\$ 67,851.82	\$ 17,952.07	\$ 32,052.32	\$ 82,152.57	\$ 132,252.82	
Actual Change																			
Enterprise Fund Est	\$ 877,036.30	\$ 797,650.17	\$ 297,202.92	\$ 243,078.92	\$ 725,470.36	\$ 1,162,753.11	\$ 1,575,854.51	\$ 1,936,093.86	\$ 2,240,953.43	\$ 2,488,504.51	\$ 2,676,155.83	\$ 2,801,469.56	\$ 2,926,784.29	\$ 3,052,098.06	\$ 3,177,411.73	\$ 3,302,725.40	\$ 3,428,039.07	\$ 3,553,352.74	

What is the impact on our users:

Household Impact (monthly)	
WATER ONLY	
FY2027 20% increase	
\$ 20.00	\$ 24.00
\$ 25.00	\$ 30.00
\$ 30.00	\$ 36.00
FY2028 15% increase	
\$ 24.00	\$ 27.60
\$ 30.00	\$ 34.50
\$ 36.00	\$ 41.40
FY2029 15% increase	
\$ 27.60	\$ 31.74
\$ 34.50	\$ 39.68
\$ 41.40	\$ 47.61
FY2030 10% increase	
\$ 31.74	\$ 36.50
\$ 39.68	\$ 45.63
\$ 47.61	\$ 54.75

We took 3 general water bills and added the 4-year increases. A typical family of 4 average monthly bill is around \$25. Please note that most homes receive a utility bill for Water-Sewer-Trash and a total amount for these services. It is only the Water portion of the bill that is being proposed to increase.

Lastly, how did we determine the Revenue, Budgets, and Enterprise Fund amounts:

The Water Budget is the same spreadsheet that is submitted annually to the Mayor and Council during the budget process. Many Line Items were adjusted by 2%-4% annually to account for inflation. The Revenue was calculated by taking the average last 12 years of revenue earnings and then taking 95% of the average to be conservative in the event of a wet summer or Water Ban that may cause lower revenues. The Water Enterprise Fund is what is currently in the fund plus revenue minus the budget.

WATER			
Fiscal Year	Water Revenue	Rate	Rev/Rate
2025			
2024	\$ 3,780,549.00	\$6.50	\$ 581,622.92
2023	\$ 3,595,276.00	\$6.50	\$ 553,119.38
2022	\$ 3,577,315.00	\$6.50	\$ 550,356.15
2021	\$ 3,680,553.00	\$6.26	\$ 587,947.76
2020	\$ 3,223,393.00	\$6.00	\$ 537,232.17
2019	\$ 3,202,698.00	\$5.72	\$ 559,912.24
2018	\$ 3,230,035.00	\$5.26	\$ 614,075.10
2017	\$ 3,248,022.00	\$5.26	\$ 617,494.68
2016	\$ 3,173,966.00	\$5.26	\$ 603,415.59
2015	\$ 3,151,355.00	\$5.26	\$ 599,116.92
2014	\$ 3,225,295.00	\$5.26	\$ 613,173.95
2013	\$ 3,222,711.00	\$5.26	\$ 612,682.70
Average	\$ 3,262,003.11		\$ 585,845.80
95% Revenue	\$ 3,617,597.80		\$ 556,553.51
90% Revenue	\$ 2,935,802.80		\$ 527,261.22
85% Revenue	\$ 2,772,702.64		\$ 497,968.93

Current Enterprise Fund + Revenue – Budget = Enterprise Fund at end of Fiscal Year

We understand there is no good time to raise water rates, but given the financial state of the Water Enterprise Fund and critical need to address maintenance items and replace our aging water mains, the City must invest in its Water System.

Sincerely



Dane E. Arnold, Director
Department of Public Works

Pc: Karen Butler, City Auditor
Rob Oliver, City Engineer



City of Gardner - Executive Department
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

April 10, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: An Ordinance to Amend the Attachment F of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled "Primary Non-Union Compensation Schedule"

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

With the proposed job description for a new Chief of Staff position, I am attaching an ordinance proposal to add this position to the Non-Union Compensation Schedule should the job description process be approved.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ATTCHMENT F OF CHAPTER 8 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF GARDNER, THEREOF ENTITLED “PRIMARY NON-UNION COMPENSATION SCHEDULE,” TO ADD THE POSITION OF CHIEF OF STAFF TO GROUP 2

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GARDNER AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1: That the attached schedule be added to group 2 of Attachment F of Chapter 8 of the code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled “Primary Non-Union Compensation Schedule.”

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

	Group	Pay Grade	Starting Salary	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
		Years of Service	Less than 1	1 Year	2 Years	4 Years	6 Years	8 Years	10 Years	12 Years
		% Increase		2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Direct and Supervisory Staff										
Chief of Staff	2		\$ 80,000.00	\$ 81,600.00	\$ 83,232.00	\$ 84,896.64	\$ 86,594.57	\$ 88,326.46	\$ 90,092.99	\$ 91,894.85



City of Gardner - Executive Department
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

April 10, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: A Measure Ratifying the Mayor's Recommendation for Steps for Various Department Head Positions

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

Following the recent vote to send the latest additions to the Non-Union Compensation Schedule to final printing, I hereby submit my recommendations for steps for those positions that were included in the latest revision.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

**A MEASURE RATIFYING THE MAYOR'S RECOMMENDATION FOR STEP DESIGNATION
FOR VARIOUS DEPARTMENT HEAD EMPLOYEES**

BE IT HEREBY ENACTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GARDNER AS FOLLOWS:

That the designation of steps for the purpose of compensation in accordance with the provisions of Attachment F of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner be ordered as follows for the below listed positions:

Position	Employee	Group	Step	Years Credit
Community Development and Planning Director	Jason Stevens	1A	Starting	1.25
Senior Center Director	Michael Ellis	1A	2	7.5
Director of Purchasing and Civil Enforcement	Joshua Cormier	1A	3	10.75
Director of Veterans Services	Niqui Lavoillette	1A	Starting	0.5



City of Gardner - Executive Department
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

April 10, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: A Communication from the Mayor Regarding the current non-essential spending freeze

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

On January 13, 2026, I implemented a non-essential/non-public safety spending freeze for the City. While this is usually done by the mayor in the April/May timeframe to provide a thorough review of how city accounts are faring, there are certain best practice benchmarks that I use when determining whether or not to issue a freeze and the parameters of said freeze.

There are a few items that lead to this decision. The first being that the City's snow and ice account was projected to be at a level higher than the previous fiscal year. As a way to watch potential funding sources to cover increased deficits in this account, this is often used as a primary barometer for a freeze implementation.

Additionally, overtime costs for required minimum staffing in the fire and police departments is also over budget at this time. While we have hired additional personnel to address the vacancies that existed in these departments, the overtime costs being what they were required us to take a look at ways to address those accounts through the spending freeze to identify potential transfers to bring these accounts back into the black.

However, the freeze is not an absolute freeze. The types of spending freezes that we have put in place in recent years have required additional oversight to make sure money is being spent appropriately with additional checks to make sure every cost saving measure is taken into effect prior to any checks being cut or payments issues.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

Mayor

From: Mayor
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 8:41 AM
To: Ryan Egan
Subject: Non-Essential Operational Spending Freeze and Non-Essential Hiring Freeze

Good Morning Department Heads,

Effective immediately and until further notice, the Administration is implementing a **non-essential operational spending freeze**, and a **hiring freeze** for all expenditures and positions paid for out of the **General Fund**.

Spending Freeze:

All expenditures paid for out of any enterprise account, grant funding, a contractual obligation, or in the matters of public safety may continue as usual.

All expenditures submitted for payment with a value over \$1000 must first have written approval from the Mayor's Office before a requisition should be submitted.

All projects that are currently active and already started are okay to move forward.

Hiring Freeze:

Hiring for all other positions is hereby halted until further notice, unless written approval is received from the Mayor.

This freeze also include a **freeze on all non-essential and non-public safety overtime**.

As many of you are aware, several costs are increasing this year at a rate much higher than usual. This coupled with the current search for a new City Auditor has led to this decision being made to be sure we are watching the City's budget as closely as we can.

Should anything change with this, I will be sure to let you know.

Best,

Mike Nicholson

Michael J. Nicholson

Mayor of the City of Gardner
Gardner City Hall, Rm 125
95 Pleasant St
Gardner, MA 01440

Titi Siriphan

From: George Tyros
Sent: Wednesday, January 29, 2025 8:54 PM
To: Alek Dernalowicz; Titi Siriphan
Subject: Re: Finance Committee - January 29, 2025 Meeting Recap

Thank you Mr. Chair,

Madam Clerk,

Please add items 11479, 11480, 11481 to the next Council agenda.

Please create an item 'Discussions in regard to the City's Health Insurance Payments and Trust Fund' and assign it to the Finance Committee.

Thank you both,
 George

From: Alek Dernalowicz <adernalowicz@gardner-ma.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, January 29, 2025 8:48 PM
To: Titi Siriphan <tsiriphan@gardner-ma.gov>; George Tyros <gtyros@gardner-ma.gov>
Subject: Finance Committee - January 29, 2025 Meeting Recap

Mr. President and Madam Clerk,

Below is a recap of the the actions taken at the January 29, 2025 Finance Committee Meeting. They are organized into sections based on the outcome at the meeting.

Assigned/Referred Items - To Place On The Full Council Calendar:

- 11479 – A Communication from the Mayor regarding the City's Health Insurance Payments and Trust Fund.
- 11480 – An Order Authorizing the City to Borrow \$100,000 for the Feasibility Study and Schematic Design of the Middle School Roof Replacement Project in Conjunction with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.
- 11481 –An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the City of Gardner, Chapter 171, thereof entitled Personnel, to add the position of Human Resources Manager to the Compensation Schedule.

New Items Originating in Committee - To Place On The Full Council Calendar:

- None

New Items Originating in Committee - To Place On The Finance Committee Calendar:

- Discussions in regard to the City's Health Insurance Payments and Trust Fund

- o Note: This proposal was made via motion during discussion and related to *11479 – A 11482 Communication from the Mayor regarding the City's Health Insurance Payments and Trust Fund*. This will require a new item number .

In Subcommittee - To Remain With The Finance Committee:

- 11457 – An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the City of Gardner to have the Community Development Block Grant Steering Committee Meet Monthly.
- 11454 – Report on the Investigation of the Maki Park Project.
- 11477 – Discussions in Regard to Internal Working Groups Review of the Salary Study.

I have retained the *"New Items Originating in Committee - To Place on the Full Calendar"* subsection to avoid confusion with *"New Items Originating in Committee - To Place on the Finance Committee Calendar"*.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best,

--

Aleksander H. Dernalowicz, Esq.
Ward 5 City Councillor
(978) 632-0243

Facilities Manager Discussion

A proposal by President Tyros that the City Council discuss the current state of facilities management for all municipal buildings to evaluate the proper management, cost-effectiveness, current practices, and to explore potential improvements, ensuring responsible stewardship of city assets.

RECEIVED

2025 APR - 3 P 3: 59

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE
GARROVER, MA



City of Gardner - *Executive Department*

Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

April 28, 2025

Hon. Aleksander H. Dernalowicz, Chair
And Finance Committee Members
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: Additional Information Requested for Item #11518: A Proposal by President Tyros that the City Council discuss the current state of facilities management for all municipal buildings

Dear Mr. Chairman and Councilors,

At the previous Finance Committee meetings, it was requested that the Administration provide a break down of the City's facilities management breakdown.

All School Department buildings are maintained by the School Department's custodial contractor- Mora's Cleaning. Their grounds and larger facilities projects are overseen by the School Departments' facilities manager, Wayne Anderson, who has three staff members under him.

The City's Water and Wastewater treatment plants are maintained by the City's contractor overseeing those plants- Veolia.

The DPW buildings are maintained by the staff at the DPW.

The Gardner Senior Center and Greenwood Memorial Pool are maintained by a shared maintenance staff member who assists with the pool in the summer months. This staff member reports jointly to Director Ellis and Director Morse and is a member of the AFSCME Union.

The Gardner Police Department has their own facilities maintenance manager. When this person is out, the City Hall maintenance staff covers the rounds at the police station. This staff member reports to Chief McAvene and is a member of the AFSCME Union.

City Hall has a Maintenance Manager who oversees one additional staff member. The manager works from 7am to 3:30pm, and the night shift maintenance manager works from 1pm to 9:30pm. Aside from being the back up staff for the Police Station, they also oversee any additional facilities that the City has- Waterford Community Center, School Street School, Helen Mae Sauter, Etc. These staff members report to Commissioner Zuppa and are members of the AFSCME Union.

The Levi Heywood Memorial Library has three non-union maintenance positions who oversee all of the work there and report to Director Klements.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

**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

CITY OF GARDNER
Department of Public Works



Highway
Water
Sewer
Forestry
Parks/Playgrounds
Cemeteries

Dane E. Arnold, Director
50 Manca Drive
Gardner, MA 01440-2687
Telephone (978) 630-8195
darnold@gardner-ma.gov

Mayor Nicholson and City Councilors
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

January 30, 2026

RE: Salt Shed

Dear Mayor Nicholson and City Councilors;

The salt shed project is approximately 95% complete and is currently in use. The remaining work includes installation of lighting and site loaming and seeding. The lighting will be completed by the City's on-call electrical contractor; a purchase order has already been generated and charged to the appropriate account. Loaming and seeding will be performed in the spring, with an estimated cost ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000, depending on whether traditional seeding or hydroseeding is selected.

The original budget for the project was \$625,000. Due to a significant portion of the work being completed in-house by the Department of Public Works, total expenditures to date are \$540,789, leaving a remaining balance of \$84,210.39. This total also includes \$19,000 for the purchase of two used cab and chassis units, which will replace two existing salt trucks dating back to 1988 that the Mayor approved a few months ago.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out by phone or email.

Sincerely,

Dane E. Arnold, Director
Department of Public Works

Fiscal	2024	2025	2026 (YTD)	FY26 per policy	Difference between appropriation and policy
Principal	\$ 2,972,902.89	\$ 3,405,984.49	\$ 3,446,990.43		
Transfers	\$ 128,978.00	\$ 261,809.00	\$ 100,975.00	\$ 375,000.00	\$ 274,025.00
Interest	\$ 92,392.00	\$ 171,272.00	\$ 55,929.83		\$ 118,741.58 Difference
% of Interest	2.98%	4.67%	1.62%		
Interest without Salt Shed*	\$ 111,008.12	\$ 172,141.30	\$ 58,489.83		
Difference Salt Shed v without	\$ 18,616.12	\$ 869.30	\$ 2,560.00		
	Total Lost Interest		\$ 22,045.42		

Total Deposit Appropriations	\$ 491,762.00
Salt Shed Appropriation	\$ (625,000.00)
Total Interest without SS	\$ (22,045.42)
Left to bring back whole	\$ (155,283.42)

* Interest without Salt Shed Formula:

2024 (Principal + Transfers + 625,000)*%of Interest Line

2025 (Principal+2024 Difference Salt Shed v Without + Transfers)* % of Interest

2026 (Principal+2025 Difference Salt Shed v Without + Transfers)* % of Interest

Note: December 2025 Interest \$2,187.99

Fiscal	2024	2025	2026 (YTD)
Principal	\$ 2,972,902.89	\$ 3,405,984.49	\$ 3,446,990.43
Transfers	\$ 128,978.00	\$ 261,809.00	\$ 100,975.00
Interest	\$ 92,392.00	\$ 171,272.00	\$ 55,929.83
% of Interest	2.98%	4.67%	1.62%
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* Interest without Salt Shed Formula:

2024 (Principal + Transfers + 625,000)*%of Interest Line

2025 (Principal+2024 Difference Salt Shed v Without + Transfers)* % of Interest

2026 (Principal+2025 Difference Salt Shed v Without + Transfers)* % of Interest

Note: December 2025 Interest \$2,187.99

STABILIZATION TRUST ACCOUNT HISTORY AS OF 10/31/25

Description	2026 Actual	2025 Actual	2024 Actual	2023 Actual	2022 Actual	2021 Actual	2020 Actual	2019 Actual
F/B STABILIZATION TRUST BALANCE	\$ 3,446,990.43	\$ 3,405,984.49	\$ 2,972,902.89	\$ 3,376,531.97	\$ 3,188,962.31	\$ 2,938,257.22	\$ 2,651,095.74	\$ 2,284,737.78
FC TRANSFERS	\$ -	\$ 261,809.00	\$ 128,978.00	\$ 130,819.00	\$ 180,582.00	\$ 220,913.06	\$ 309,484.00	\$ 223,429.00
INTEREST	\$ 41,005.94	\$ 171,272.60	\$ 92,392.92	\$ 56,750.66	\$ 70,123.09	\$ 66,248.42	\$ 56,509.96	\$ 41,425.35
OTHER TRANSFERS	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (625,000.00)					\$ (601,947.00)

Appropriations Since Salt Shed	
FY2024	\$ 128,978.00
FY2025	\$ 261,809.00
FY2026	\$ 100,975.00
Total	\$ 491,762.00
Difference from Salt Shed Appropriation	\$ 133,238.00
Interest Since Salt Shed	
FY2024	\$ 92,392.92
FY2025	\$ 171,272.60
FY2026 (YTD)	\$ 41,005.94
Total	\$ 304,671.46



Salt Shed Item - Finance Committee

From Brad E. Heglin <bheglin@gardner-ma.gov>

Date Mon 12/8/2025 7:14 PM

To Jayen Kumar <jkumar@gardner-ma.gov>

Cc Titi Siriphan <tsiriphan@gardner-ma.gov>

Greetings and salutations,

I wanted to flag, in case it was missed, that at the last full council meeting on an item pertaining to free cash/stabilization I made the following motion that was approved:

We accept the order appropriating \$100,975.00 from Free Cash to the City Stabilization Account

AND

We direct the Finance Committee to study and report on the salt shed repayment issue.

The bottom part, boldened and underlined, means a new item needs to be created for the next (not this upcoming 12/10 meeting but the subsequent one) finance committee agenda.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Brad

Woodford Electric, inc.

74 Sand St
Gardner MA. 01440

Estimate

Date	Estimate #
1/13/2026	4595

Name / Address
Gardner DPW 50 Manca Drive Gardner, Ma. 01440

Terms	Due Date	Project
Net 30	2/12/2026	

Description	Qty	Rate	Total
Install 1, 20' light pole with 2 flood heads to illuminate the entrance and the side lot. Lighting to be controlled with dusk to dawn sensors. Light pole will need excavation and concrete.	1	16,000.00	16,000.00
Install a flood light at the peak of the shed entrance to illuminate the area in the front of the shed.			
Install 2 high bay fixtures in the shed to illuminate the interior.			
Flood light and interior lighting to be controlled by a single pole switch located on the left side of the entrance. Excavation, backfill, concrete work by others.		0.00	0.00
		Total	\$16,000.00

Phone #
978-730-8870



Finance Committee

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

Date Wed 3/4/2026 9:03 AM

To Jayen Kumar <jkumar@gardner-ma.gov>

Cc Titi Siriphan <tsiriphan@gardner-ma.gov>; George Tyros <gtyros@gardner-ma.gov>

Jay,

Can you have these items on the agenda for the next meeting as well:

1. Lifeline Update
2. Health Insurance Trust Fund Status

Thanks,
Dern

--

Aleksander H. Dernalowicz, Esq.
Ward 5 City Councillor
(978) 632-0243

**CITY OF GARDNER
FY2027 BUDGET PROPOSAL
AS OF 03/24/26**

LINE#	ORG	OBJ	DESCRIPTION	2025 ACTUAL	2026 BUDGET	2026 REVISED	2026 YTD ACTUAL	2027 DEPARTMENT	2027 MAYOR
1	11111	CITY COUNCIL							
2	11111	51010	COUNCILORS SALARIES	\$ 88,917	\$ 98,381	\$ 96,758	\$ 67,348	\$ 98,381	\$ -
3	11111	51012	CLERK/ASST SAL & WAGES	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500	\$ 2,625	\$ 3,500	\$ -
4	11111	51023	TEMP SALARY & WAGES	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
5	11111	52050	MINOR EQUIPMENT	\$ -	\$ 400	\$ 400	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
6	11111	52150	COMMUNICATIONS	\$ 5,298	\$ 10,185	\$ 10,185	\$ 8,455	\$ 7,500	\$ -
7	11111	52170	PROFESSIONAL DEV & TRAVEL	\$ 863	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
8	11111	52190	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	\$ 1,284	\$ 1,940	\$ 1,940	\$ 5,831	\$ -	\$ -
9	11111	52230	OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$ 634	\$ 970	\$ 2,593	\$ 156	\$ -	\$ -
10	11111	62050	ENCUMB MINOR EQUIPMENT	\$ -		\$ 8,000	\$ 7,930		
11	11111	55010	GOVERNMENT PICTURE	\$ 458	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 400	\$ 500	\$ -
12	11111	62150	ENCUMB COMMUNICATIONS	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 380	\$ 380	\$ -	\$ -
13	11111	65010	ENCUMB GOV PICTURE	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
14	11111	68308	ENCUMB CC CHAMBER AUGMT EXP	\$ 955	\$ -	\$ 12,665	\$ 213	\$ -	\$ -
15									
16	TOTAL	CITY COUNCIL		\$ 101,909	\$ 117,376	\$ 138,421	\$ 93,338	\$ 109,881	\$ -



Item Assignments

From George Tyros <gtyros@gardner-ma.gov>

Date Tue 3/24/2026 10:40 PM

To Jayen Kumar <jkumar@gardner-ma.gov>

Cc Titi Siriphan <tsiriphan@gardner-ma.gov>; Alek Dernalowicz <adernalowicz@gardner-ma.gov>

 2 attachments (60 KB)

FY27 Council Budget Proposal_Council President.pdf; FY27 Council Budget Proposal_Council President.xlsx;

Jay, please assign the Resolution in the folder to Finance.

Please create the following items for the Finance Committee:

1. FY2027 City Council Budget Proposal by the Council President (attached)
2. Discussion on City Council Budget Transfers

Thank you,
George

George Tyros
*Council President &
Councillor At-Large
City of Gardner*

978.340.1449
gtyros@gardner-ma.gov
gardner-ma.gov\citycouncil