



CITY OF GARDNER

FIRE DEPARTMENT
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FY26 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

DEPARTMENT SALARIES & WAGES (85% of Budget)

The Gardner Fire and Ambulance Departments have a total of forty-one (41) budgeted positions. Thirty-three (33) of these positions are on the Fire side of the budget and eight (8) are on the Ambulance side. Hiring, training, and retaining employees continues to be a challenge. The breakdown of the positions is as follows:

FIRE DEPARTMENT:

- Fire Chief (1)
- Fire Captain (1)
- Fire Lieutenants (6)
- Firefighters (24)
- Executive Coordinator (1)

AMBULANCE DEPARTMENT:

- Firefighters (8)

The Fire Chief, Fire Captain, Executive Coordinator, and one Fire Prevention/Training Lieutenant work a weekday schedule to handle administrative functions of the Department. The remainder of the staff are divided into four Groups (or platoons) working rotating schedules to provide 24-hour per day coverage for emergency responses. Currently, this coverage consists of a minimum of one Fire Lieutenant (Shift Commander) and seven Firefighters. They are assigned as follows:

- Car 2 (Command Vehicle) – One Lieutenant, one Firefighter
- Tower 1 (Aerial Ladder) – Two Firefighters
- Engine 3 (Pumper) – Two Firefighters
- Rescue 3 (Ambulance) – Two Firefighters

For major incidents, the Fire Department will recall off-duty personnel to provide additional assistance at a scene and/or for station coverage.

The following information regarding staffing at the Fire Department was included in the FY25 Budget narrative. It has not changed as no action has been taken on these matters.

In 2022, the City hired John Parow Consulting & Associate to conduct an Audit of the Ambulance and Fire Departments, which included a review of the current staffing model in place at the Fire Department. The Audit made several recommendations, the first of which is to create a Deputy Fire Chief position. This position would be a non-union, confidential, second-in-command officer of the Fire Department to assist the Fire Chief and oversee day-to-day operations. Currently, the Fire Chief is the only non-union position at the Fire Department.

The second recommendation of the Audit was to add a second supervisor to each Group to address the current span of control of one Fire Lieutenant to seven or eight Firefighters. A second supervisor would bring the span of control down to a more manageable level. The Audit suggests creating a Fire Captain's position on each Group to act as Shift Commander, and the current Fire Lieutenant would act in more of a foreman's position to directly oversee a company of Firefighters operating at a scene. The recommendation is to create this position from within the current staffing level, not adding any additional staff, which would minimize cost.

The Audit further recommends that the City address national OSHA and NFPA staffing standards. NFPA 1710 is a national consensus guideline that addresses staffing levels for both operations at fire scenes and individual fire companies (Engine or Ladder company). Gardner Tower 1 (Ladder company) and Engine 3 (Engine company) both currently operate with an assigned crew of two Firefighters. NFPA 1710 recommends these companies operate with a crew of one Officer and three Firefighters for safe and effective fireground operations. In an ideal world, these two Gardner Fire units would operate with a crew of four. This would require adding an additional four positions per Group, for a total of sixteen (16) additional positions at the Fire Department.

DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS (15% of Budget)

This includes Vehicle and Building Repairs & Maintenance and Supplies, Firefighter Protective Clothing, Energy & Utilities, Fire Prevention & Training Supplies, Information Technology & Communications, Ambulance Supplies, Minor Equipment, and other daily operating expenses. The Ambulance Budget also includes Professional Services, which is funds paid out to the medical billing company that handles Ambulance billing, and funds paid to the City's ALS contractor for providing a Paramedic that treats patients at the Advanced Life Support level when needed on-board the Fire Department Ambulance.

Operations expenditures continue to be strained by the tight operating budget. Prices continue to increase, this year energy costs in particular have seen a significant rise. Many repairs to fire apparatus must be outsourced as the current Fire Department Headquarters building lacks adequate space for mechanics, and many of the advanced systems on the trucks require specially trained and certified technicians to perform repairs. Traditionally, expensive repairs to

complicated fire apparatus are some of the most unpredictable operations expenses, as breakdowns cannot be anticipated.

BUDGET DIRECTIVE RESPONSE

Wish List

The below list is budget requests with no regard for available funding that would make the Fire Department the best it could be for FY2026:

- Increased wages – The City and IAFF Local 2215 recently signed a contract that included wage adjustments for all union members to bring salaries closer to other area Fire Departments. Firefighters continue to leave Gardner to accept similar jobs with other communities or private sector employment. This on-going issue of inability to retain employees manifests in other ways- including high overtime expenditures, burnout of employees due to excessive & forced overtime, and low morale for remaining employees.
- Increased staffing – The City should look at the current staffing levels and determine what adequate staffing is. I recommend following up on the 2022 Fire Department Audit and begin implementing recommendations from that report to meet the needs of citizens. Not in the Audit, but additional positions that would benefit overall Fire Department operations include a “Group Floater” Firefighter position. This Firefighter would be able to be assigned to any of the four Groups (or platoons) that are short staffed for extended periods of time (resignation, sickness, line of duty injury, etc.) to prevent overtime. The Overtime Study conducted in 2015 by The Collins Institute recommended this position, concluding that the savings in overtime would cover the salary of the employee. Also, transitioning the EMS Coordinator position from a part-time Collateral Job to a full-time EMS Coordinator/Training Officer position would benefit the Fire Department with more direct oversight of Ambulance operations as well as provide the capability of additional Fire & EMS training for all Firefighters. The additional cost to create this position would only be half that of one full time position as there is already \$40,000.00 budgeted annually for the current part-time position.
- Major Renovation/Replacement of current Fire Headquarters facility – The current Fire HQ building was constructed in 1978 and is approaching 50 years old. It lacks adequate space for the level of service currently provided by the Fire Department. The wind-storm damaged roof replacement project is approaching completion after multiple delays. This will stabilize the building for the foreseeable future and should be a catalyst to move forward with other renovations and upgrades to meet the Fire Department’s current and future needs. The 2022 Audit includes a broad review of the facility and what it lacks, a more in-depth study of Fire Department needs should be conducted to begin this process.

Recommendation to the Mayor

These budget requests are what the Fire and Ambulance Departments will need to maintain services at current levels for FY26. It includes anticipated cost of living wage adjustments and modest increases to areas of the operating budget where costs are expected to increase due to inflation. There are two notable changes in this section. First, a new line item for “Out of Grade” is requested. This expense is for when a Lieutenant is off on leave and another Lieutenant cannot be found to backfill the position, a senior Firefighter then assumes the duties of “Acting Out of Grade Lieutenant.” Currently there is no line item for this scenario. Second, the “Professional Services” line item in the Ambulance Budget has been reduced to reflect operational and billing changes with the City’s private ALS contractor, Wood’s Ambulance. No additional personnel are included for FY26.

Reduced Budget

This reflects a total reduction of 3% in operating expenses for both Fire and Ambulance Departments, on top of the 3% reduction from last year’s budget. Of course, it would have a negative effect on the Departments’ ability to provide services and may result in budget overruns. Unforeseeable expenses, such as major vehicle repairs due to breakdowns, may not be able to be covered within the operating budget.

FY25 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Three new major vehicles were added to the Fire Department fleet during FY25. This includes a new Ambulance, new Engine, and new Heavy Rescue truck. These vehicles were all paid for with federal ARPA funds, totaling approximately \$2 million. The City also provided funding for new tools, hose, and other equipment for these vehicles to replace older, worn items. Firefighters continue to train and become familiar with the new vehicles and equipment. These new vehicles, along with the new Tower Ladder that is on order, place the Fire Department’s fleet in good shape for several years to come.

FY26 GOALS

Looking forward to FY26, the Fire Department will continue to work on the construction process for the new Tower Ladder truck that was ordered in 2024. The new truck is currently scheduled to go into production before the end of 2025.

Replacement of the Fire Department’s portable radios continues to be a top priority. The current radios are now 15+ years old and do not meet current standards for fire service use. They are not water or heat resistant, which is an issue in the harsh environments in which Firefighters often work. Portable radios are critical for communications and Firefighter safety. Three previous applications for funding for new radios through the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program have not been successful, the City’s contracted grant writers assisted with the application process this year. Hopefully the funding will be secured this year. The cost for forty (40) new fire-service rated portable radios is just over \$360,000.00.

PERFORMANCE UPDATE

In calendar year 2024, the Gardner Fire Department responded to 6,060 emergency calls for service, an 8% increase over 2023. This included 41 building fires, 20 brush/grass fires, 8 vehicle fires, and 7 dumpster/trash fires. Also handled were 167 motor vehicle accidents, 51 hazardous materials spills/leaks, 56 electrical problems, 53 water problems, and 19 burner/boiler malfunctions. This was the busiest year on record for the Fire Department, with yearly call volume increasing steadily since 2020.

The Fire Department Ambulance transported a total of 2,167 patients to area hospitals. The revenue collected from ambulance transports receipts was sufficient to cover the entire operating budget of the Ambulance Department. Mutual Aid was provided to surrounding communities 262 times during the year, the majority of which was for Ambulance calls. The Fire Prevention/Code Enforcement Division conducted 814 inspections and issued 421 permits.

The Gardner Fire Department conducted over 2000 man-hours of in-house training sessions covering many aspects of basic firefighting, technical rescue, hazardous incidents, building familiarization, apparatus operation, and pre-incident planning during 2024. In addition to this, three new members of the Gardner Fire Department were extensively trained in all aspects of the operations of the department prior to attending the Massachusetts Fire Academy Career Recruit Training Program, which is a 10-week, 400-hour basic training program.

GRANTS RECEIVED FY25

The Fire Department was awarded a total of \$15,355.19 through the FY25 State of Massachusetts Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant Program. The Gardner Fire Department is receiving the following new equipment:

- Two (2) Electric Vehicle Emergency Plugs.
- One (1) Multi-gas Detection meter.
- Twenty-two (22) 50' lengths 1 ¾" Hose.
- Fourteen (14) 50' lengths 2 ½" Hose.
- One (1) Thermal Imaging Camera.

The majority of the new equipment will be replacing older equipment that is either out of service due to failure or beyond recommended replacement dates. The multi-gas meter, a device that detects hazardous gases including natural gas, propane, carbon monoxide, and hydrogen cyanide, will replace an older defective unit that was not repairable. The 1 ¾" and 2 ½" hose will be replacing hose that is over 20 years old, significantly beyond the 10-year NFPA recommended service life of firefighting hose.

Some of this funding will also equip Gardner Firefighters with current technology to meet our ever-changing response needs. Two new electric vehicle "Emergency Plugs" are designed to disable electric vehicles in the event of damage from fire or accident, allowing firefighters to safely work around the vehicle. Also, a new Thermal Imaging Camera will be placed in service. These cameras use infrared technology to allow Firefighters to see victims through smoke in

zero-visibility conditions, as well as pinpointing heat sources, allowing Firefighters to locate and extinguish the seat of a fire.

This grant funding from the State is critical to the City and Fire Department for the purchase of much needed equipment, most of which could not be funded through the regular Fire Department operating budget.

The Fire Department was unsuccessful in securing federal grant funding to replace portable radios. The current models used are now over 15 years old, the model is no longer made or supported by the manufacturer and are not heat or water resistant. The City will have to consider using local funds to replace these radios in the near future if funds through the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant program cannot be secured.

RECOGNITIONS

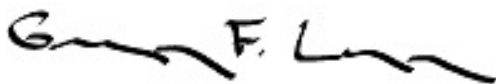
There were three new Firefighters that successfully completed the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Career Recruit Training Program in FY25. This is an intense, physically, mentally, and intellectually challenging program that prepares new Firefighters for their career. Upon completion they are certified to the Firefighter I & II standard, as well as the Hazardous Materials Operations level. The following Firefighters completed this training:

- James Angelopoulos
- John Hulette
- Matthew Addonizio

Several Firefighters also reached career Years of Service milestones with the Gardner Fire Department during FY25. They are as follows:

- Captain Craig Osowski – 25 years of service
- Lieutenant Eric Hulette – 25 years of service
- Firefighter Peter Gamache - 20 years of service
- Firefighter Sean Kelley - 20 years of service
- Firefighter Jeffrey Chartier – 15 years of service
- Lieutenant Kenneth Chase – 10 years of service
- Firefighter Ryan Benoit – 5 years of service

Respectfully submitted,



Gregory F. Lagoy
Fire Chief

**CITY OF GARDNER
FY2025 BUDGET PROPOSAL
AS OF MAY 1, 2025**

LINE#	ORG	OBJ	DESCRIPTION	2024 ACTUAL	2025 REVISED BUD	2025 YTD ACTUAL	2026 DEPARTMNT	2026 MAYOR
582								
583	12220	FIRE						
584	12220	51010	DEPT HEAD SALARY & WAGES	\$ 107,708	\$ 110,939	\$ 95,909	\$ 163,808	\$ 130,968
585	12220	51011	CAPTAINS SALARY & WAGES	\$ 92,494	\$ 92,892	\$ 80,850	\$ 507,034	\$ 99,853
586	12220	51012	SENIOR CLERK SAL & WAGES	\$ 53,640	\$ 59,355	\$ 52,975	\$ 63,858	\$ 64,103
587	12220	51013	PRIVATES SALARY & WAGES	\$ 1,274,320	\$ 1,412,235	\$ 1,064,028	\$ 2,072,963	\$ 1,550,763
588	12220	51014	EMS COORD/TRAIN OFFICER SAL	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50,000	\$ -
589	12220	51015	GROUP FLOATER SAL&WG	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ -
590	12220	51016	LIEUTENANTS SALARY&WAGES	\$ 477,007	\$ 499,479	\$ 411,787	\$ 909,931	\$ 515,219
591	12220	51021	DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF SAL & WAGES	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 110,000	\$ -
592	12220	51030	OVERTIME	\$ 513,291	\$ 200,000	\$ 660,838	\$ 400,000	\$ 200,000
593	12220	51050	HOLIDAY PAY	\$ 222,848	\$ 210,484	\$ 113,246	\$ 238,298	\$ 238,306
594	12220	51090	CLOTH/UNIFORM ALLOWANCE	\$ 35,920	\$ 38,250	\$ -	\$ 5,000	\$ -
595	12220	51101	COLLEGE CREDITS	\$ 30,000	\$ 32,000	\$ 32,000	\$ 36,000	\$ 34,000
596	12220	51102	COLLATERAL JOBS	\$ 60,722	\$ 55,000	\$ 64,144	\$ 55,000	\$ 55,000
597	12220	51103	EDUCATIONAL INCENTIVE	\$ 4,642	\$ 10,000	\$ 2,653	\$ 10,000	\$ 8,000
598	12220	51104	WORKING OUT OF GRADE	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,000
599	12220	51105	SICK LEAVE INCENTIVE	\$ 472	\$ 3,500	\$ 1,110	\$ 3,500	\$ 2,000
600	12220	51200	PHYSICAL FITNESS	\$ 12,600	\$ 12,800	\$ 4,600	\$ 15,200	\$ 3,500
601	12220	51415	STIPEND SAL EXP	\$ 26,450	\$ 26,000	\$ 39,250	\$ 48,880	\$ 46,800
602	12220	51460	LONGEVITY	\$ 1,080	\$ 1,080	\$ -	\$ 1,110	\$ 1,110
603	12220	51551	TERMINATION LEAVE	\$ (3,274)	\$ 175	\$ 175	\$ 327,675	\$ -
604	12220	52030	REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE	\$ 90,183	\$ 85,000	\$ 99,291	\$ 90,000	\$ 82,800
605	12220	52040	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	\$ 9,831	\$ 9,700	\$ 6,135	\$ 10,000	\$ 9,700
606	12220	52050	MINOR EQUIPMENT	\$ 12,528	\$ 14,000	\$ 3,754	\$ 15,000	\$ 13,000
607	12220	52110	ENERGY & UTILITIES	\$ 31,376	\$ 31,000	\$ 34,119	\$ 35,000	\$ 31,000
608	12220	52150	COMMUNICATIONS	\$ 67	\$ 500	\$ 144	\$ 500	\$ 250
609	12220	52151	TELECOMMUNICATIONS	\$ 3,941	\$ 4,800	\$ 3,201	\$ 4,800	\$ 4,500
610	12220	52170	PROFESSIONAL DEV & TRAVEL	\$ 7,706	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,241	\$ 12,000	\$ 9,500
611	12220	52190	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	\$ 3,813	\$ 5,000	\$ 2,427	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,000
612	12220	52230	OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$ 5,335	\$ 5,800	\$ 2,311	\$ 6,000	\$ 5,000
613	12220	52238	FIRE PREVENT/TRAINING SUPPLIES	\$ 1,484	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,325	\$ 2,200	\$ 1,800
614	12220	52240	VEHICLE SUPPLIES	\$ 22,678	\$ 25,000	\$ 10,537	\$ 27,000	\$ 23,000
615	12220	52995	PHYSICAL FITNESS	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 859	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,000
616	12220	55114	PROTECTIVE FF CLOTHING	\$ 18,865	\$ 38,500	\$ 23,580	\$ 45,000	\$ 30,000
617	12220	55146	STUDENT AWARE OF FIRE EDU	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,000	\$ 500
618	12220	62030	ENCUMB REPAIRS & MAINTEN	\$ 10,867	\$ 4,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
619	12220	62050	ENCUMB MINOR EQUIPMENT	\$ 976	\$ 2,472	\$ 1,637	\$ -	\$ -
620	12220	62110	ENCUMB ENERGY & UTILITIES	\$ -	\$ 624	\$ 624	\$ -	\$ -
621	12220	62151	ENCUMB TELECOMMUNICATIONS	\$ 41	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

LINE#	ORG	OBJ	DESCRIPTION	2024 ACTUAL	2025 REVISED BUD	2025 YTD ACTUAL	2026 DEPARTMNT	2026 MAYOR
622	12220	62240	ENCUMB VEHICLE SUPPLIES	\$ -	\$ 2,322	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
623	12220	65114	ENC PROTECT FF CLOTHES	\$ 9,856	\$ 26,776	\$ 26,776	\$ -	\$ -
624	12220	65123	ENCUMB NEW EQUIPMENT	\$ 76,285	\$ 54,792	\$ 37,069	\$ -	
625	12220	65146	ENCUM STUDENT AWARE OF FIRE ED	\$ -	\$ 2,000	\$ -	\$ -	
626								
627	TOTAL	FIRE		\$ 3,215,752	\$ 3,089,474	\$ 2,887,595	\$ 5,284,757	\$ 3,167,672
628	12231	AMBULANCE						
629	12231	51013	PRIVATE AMBULANCE SAL&WAGES	\$ 358,402	\$ 447,935	\$ 327,824	\$ 402,681	\$ 560,019
630	12231	51030	OVERTIME	\$ 102,028	\$ 70,000	\$ 93,542	\$ 100,000	\$ 70,000
631	12231	51050	HOLIDAY PAY	\$ 32,673	\$ 47,033	\$ 21,067	\$ 50,865	\$ 61,755
632	12231	51090	CLOTH/UNIFORM ALLOWANCE	\$ 7,875	\$ 9,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
633	12231	51101	COLLEGE CREDITS	\$ 2,000	\$ 4,000	\$ -	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
634	12231	51102	COLLATERAL JOBS	\$ 40,072	\$ 35,000	\$ 30,884	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000
635	12231	51103	EDUCATIONAL INCENTIVE	\$ 145	\$ 2,000	\$ 288	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,000
636	12231	51415	AMBULANCE SERV STIPEND	\$ 45,521	\$ 40,000	\$ 49,613	\$ 69,888	\$ 60,000
637	12231	52030	REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE	\$ 22,123	\$ 10,000	\$ 201	\$ 15,000	\$ 10,000
638	12231	52037	AMBULANCE SUPP/EXPENSES	\$ 16,494	\$ 20,000	\$ 13,727	\$ 22,000	\$ 18,000
639	12231	52040	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	\$ 11,479	\$ 11,000	\$ 10,738	\$ 12,000	\$ 11,000
640	12231	52041	LISC RENEWALS/FEES/ INSPECTION	\$ 9,342	\$ 7,000	\$ 507	\$ 8,000	\$ 7,000
641	12231	52050	MINOR EQUIPMENT	\$ 1,144	\$ 2,500	\$ -	\$ 3,500	\$ 2,000
642	12231	52151	TELECOMMUNICATIONS	\$ 2,252	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,706	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,500
643	12231	52170	PROFESSIONAL DEV & TRAVEL	\$ 3,565	\$ 5,400	\$ 3,731	\$ 6,000	\$ 4,500
644	12231	52190	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	\$ 316,920	\$ 310,000	\$ 296,280	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000
645	12231	52230	OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$ 216	\$ 500	\$ 296	\$ 500	\$ 500
646	12231	52240	VEHICLE SUPPLIES	\$ 2,896	\$ 5,000	\$ 550	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,000
647	12231	62050	ENCUMB MINOR EQUIPMENT	\$ 2,384	\$ 2,356	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
648	12231	65123	ENCUMB NEW EQUIPMENT	\$ 30,603	\$ 6,091	\$ 5,582	\$ -	\$ -
649								
650	TOTAL	AMBULANCE		\$ 1,008,134	\$ 1,037,815	\$ 856,536	\$ 887,434	\$ 999,274