



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
DATE: JUNE 11, 2026
TIME: 6:07 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS JOSEPH LOPES, CHAIR; IAN ABREU; DEREK BAPTISTE (6:11); SHANE BURGO; NAOMI CARNEY (6:12); LEO CHOQUETTE; SHAWN OLIVER (6:12); SCOTT PEMBERTON; RYAN PERERIA; JAMES ROY

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR BRIAN GOMES

Councillor Lopes called the Finance Committee meeting to order, took attendance, and explained that the meeting was being recorded and live-streamed. The Clerk read two Communications into the record, one from Councillor Gomes explaining his absence and one from Councillor Carney explaining her tardiness. The Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Roy and seconded by Councillor Abreu.

COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0617) and AN ORDINANCE (Matter ID #0618), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, Amending Chapter 16, Municipal Utilities and Services, Section 16-94 – Rate Charges, to provide the Council and the Administration greater flexibility in setting the wastewater rates. (Referred – May 12, 2026.)

Shawn Syde, City Engineer for the Department of Public Infrastructure (DPI), was recognized and provided an overview and an explanation of the proposed Ordinance. Mr. Syde stated that the current City Code does not allow for multi-year rate increases, limiting the Council to setting the rates one year at a time. This new Ordinance would allow the Council to implement a rate increase for up to and including five years at one time. This would allow the City to 'smooth out' the rates, helping both the City and rate payers to budget more accurately for a longer term. Also, Mr. Syde explained that the Council could still modify the rates as deemed necessary. He added that this also prevents rates from outpacing inflation and internal deficits.

On motion by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Pemberton, the Committee VOTED: To receive and place on file a copy of the presentation submitted by Shawn Syde.

Councillor Pereira stated that he would prefer that rates be set for two to three years at most versus five years.

Councillor Roy asked Mr. Syde what he and DPI thought of setting rates for two years at a time versus five years. Mr. Syde responded that he actually agrees with Councillor Pereira, stating that DPI would not recommend setting rates for five years, but would recommend three years instead.

Councillor Pereira asked CFO Robert Ekstrom how this would affect budgeting. Mr. Ekstrom answered that this would make budgeting easier and more precise because the rates would be a known factor for more than one year at a time.

Councillor Pereira expressed that another concern he has is that setting the rate for five years could potentially create large surpluses that may not be used with the rate payers' best interest in mind by future DPI Commissioners, etc.

Mr. Syde explained that surpluses would really only occur if/when significant debt service drops off, which they will be aware of ahead of time and could project the necessary rate in order to make the appropriate adjustment.

A motion was made by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Burgo to Amend the Ordinance by striking 'up to 5 years' and replacing it with 'up to 3 years' in Sec. 1.

On the question, Councillor Carney stated that she does not agree with setting rates for more than one year at a time, as it allows the Council to keep a closer eye on the rates.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To Amend the Ordinance by striking 'up to 5 years' in Sec. 1 and replacing it with 'up to 3 years'. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 9, Nays 1. (Councillor Carney OPPOSED.)

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the full City Council APPROVAL of the ORDINANCE, as Amended. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 9, Nays 1. (Councillor Carney OPPOSED.)

COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0619) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #0620), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, for proposed wastewater rates for Fiscal Year 2027 and Fiscal Year 2028 and proposed Wastewater Annual Base Charges for Fiscal Year 2027, to take effect on July 1, 2026. (Referred – May 12, 2026.)

Mr. Syde again provided an overview of the increased Wastewater Rate proposal and provided the Committee with a slide presentation. He provided reasons for the increasing rates, which included:

- Changes in SRF funding requirements
- Necessary and critical infrastructure upgrades and repairs
- Projects delayed due to COVID 19 now needing to be completed

He explained that the CIP includes upgrades to equipment repairs in the so-called 'new' Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is now 30 years old. The 20.4 million dollar appropriation includes repairs and upgrades needed at the plant. One such piece is to ensure that the odor controls are up to date and working properly.

Councillor Carney stated to Mr. Syde that it was her understanding that the City received a two-year extension to complete the projects that were delayed due to COVID 19. Mr. Syde responded that yes, that is correct, but he asked Atty. Richard Davis to address the details of that concern.

Atty. Davis explained that the extension allowed the City to complete the projects through June of 2027, but the costs associated with the projects still accumulated, meaning that the debt service payments were still due on the original schedule even though the projects themselves were extended.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the full City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 9, Nays 0. (Councillor Carney not present for vote.)

COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0621) and a LOAN ORDER (Matter ID #0622), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, appropriating \$20,400,000.00 for the purpose of financing the cost of projects outlined in the City's Long Term CSO Control and Integrated Capital Improvement Plan. (Referred – May 12, 2026.)

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the full City Council ADOPTION of the LOAN ORDER. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 9, Nays 0. (Councillor Carney not present for vote.)

Councillor Abreu made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Choquette.

The meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

ATTEST:

Dennis W. Farias
City Clerk / Clerk of the City Council