



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
DATE: JUNE 18, 2025
TIME: 7:00 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS LINDA MORAD, CHAIR; IAN ABREU;
DEREK BAPTISTE; NAOMI CARNEY; LEO
CHOQUETTE; MARIA GIESTA; BRIAN GOMES;
JOSEPH LOPES; SHAWN OLIVER; RYAN PERERIA

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR SHANE BURGO

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Councillor Morad called the Finance Committee meeting to order, took attendance, and explained that the meeting was being recorded and live-streamed. She announced that Councillor Burgo was not present due to a family matter.

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COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0861) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #0862), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Health Department, known as the **HEALTH DEPARTMENT COMPLIANCE PROGRAMS REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$60,000.00 is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**. (Referred – May 22, 2025.)

The Chair announced that Stephanie Sloan, Health Department Director, was unable to attend tonight's meeting due to a personal issue. She recognized CFO Robert Ekstrom to address questions in Ms. Sloan's absence; however, Mr. Ekstrom stated it would be preferable to ask Ms. Sloan at a future meeting, as he would have to defer to her for appropriate responses.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Giesta, the Committee VOTED: To table the matter at this time.

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COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0873) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #0874), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Community Services Department, known as the **ADULT SOCIAL DAY PROGRAM REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$330,000.00 is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**. (Referred – May 22, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Pamela Amaral-Lema, Director for the Council On Aging, who stated that the requested increase is due to step increases and health insurance, which now has to be covered within the department's budget, and will continue that way moving forward. This funds six full-time employees for both Adult Social Day Program locations.

Councillor Pereira asked if there had been a change in the number of employees. He was told no, but that one employee had moved up to full-time. The Councillor asked if the patrons' attendance was covered by MassHealth. He was told that it was.

Councillor Morad asked how many residents are currently being served in the program. She was told 50-60. All proceeds received are from MassHealth or private pay. The Councillor asked Mr. Ekstrom how the money is received to pay for this program. He replied that payments are typically received using the ACH process. There is very little petty cash received. He was asked if he was comfortable with the controls in place as it relates to the exchange of cash in preventing fraudulent activity. Mr. Ekstrom replied that he was, not only for this Department but for others as well.

Councillor Gomes asked if the use of the program is growing. Ms. Amaral-Lema said it was, and they receive one to two referrals a month.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Community Services Department, known as the **ADULT SOCIAL DAY PROGRAM REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$330,000.00 is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**.

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The following items were taken up together, without objection:

COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0867) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #0868), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Department of Inspectional Services, known as the **DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$133,000.00 is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**. (Referred – May 22, 2025.)

COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0865) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #0866), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Department of Inspectional Services, known as the **VACANT BUILDING REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$188,545.00 is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**. (Referred – May 22, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Danny Romanowicz, Commissioner for the Department of Inspectional Services. Addressing the Demolition of Buildings and Structures Revolving Fund, he explained that the request is the result of his Department incurring an expensive demolition at 1 Rear Coffin Avenue.

Addressing the Vacant Building Revolving Fund, Councillor Morad asked why there was such a significant decrease, as the amount went from \$497,000 to \$188,000. Mr. Ekstrom was recognized and explained that the fund is being limited to its fund balance, plus estimate revenues for the coming year. Councillor Morad understood and agreed, but stated that last year they adopted \$497,000. Mr. Ekstrom stated that the fund must have collected a large amount of money, adding that in FY24, there was some type of financial windfall into the fund, but he did not have specific information with him. Councillor Morad requested that an explanation be provided to the Committee before June 26, 2025 (the next City Council meeting) on how the additional \$300,000 was accrued in FY24. Mr. Ekstrom and Mr. Romanowicz agreed to gather the information and report back to the Committee.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Department of Inspectional Services, known as the **DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$133,000.00 is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Department of Inspectional Services, known as the **VACANT BUILDING REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$188,545.00 is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**.

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COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0863) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #0864), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the School Department and the Department of Facilities and Fleet Management, known as the **TANGIBLE SUPPLY DISPOSITION REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$170,000.00 (School - \$100,000.00, DFFM - \$60,000.00 and Police \$10,000.00) is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**. (Referred – May 22, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Dr. Barry Rabinovitch, from New Bedford Public Schools, who explained that these funds would be used toward the repair of several HVAC units. Councillor Lopes questioned if this amount would be enough to do such repairs. Dr. Rabinovitch replied that it was for smaller units, such as bathroom and kitchen vents.

Councillor Pereira asked if the repairs would qualify for funding under the SBA program. He was told it would not. Councillor Morad asked how the Tangible Supply funds were secured. Dr. Rabinovitch stated that they are received by scrapping old metal, like school chairs and desks that are beyond their usage, and other items as well.

Jennifer Vieira, Director for the Department of Facilities and Fleet Management was recognized and was asked about the \$60,000 request within the Order. Ms. Vieira stated that the funds would be used to purchase a vehicle to be used by any employee in any City department that needed to borrow it for travel and work-related business. She added that her Department scraps metal as well.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Baptiste, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the School Department and the Department of Facilities and Fleet Management, known as the **TANGIBLE SUPPLY DISPOSITION REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$170,000.00 (School - \$100,000.00, DFFM - \$60,000.00 and Police \$10,000.00) is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**.

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COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0859) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #0860), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Department of Facilities and Fleet Management, known as the **QUEST CENTER REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at **\$208,514.00** is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**. (Referred – May 22, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Jennifer Vieira, Director for the Department of Facilities and Fleet Management, who explained that the request is to cover operating and maintenance expenses for the property. She shared that the rental fees have increased for tenants once their leases are up for renewal. They have projected an income of \$149,000 for FY26, with expenses estimated at \$180,000, which will result in less funding being requested for FY27.

Derek Santos, Executive Director for the Economic Development Council, was recognized and explained that with funding and grants, the third floor of the Quest Center's interior is underway; once complete, it will be rented out.

Councillor Pereira asked if there was a grant coming in to help with the development of the Quest Center, could the money allocated at this meeting be given back to the City and applied to the retirement fund. Mr. Santos stated he believed it might be possible, but he would have to come before the Council for permission.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Baptiste, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Department of Facilities and Fleet Management, known as the **QUEST CENTER REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at **\$208,514.00** is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 9, Nays 1. (Councillor Morad OPPOSED.)

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The following items were taken up together, without objection:

COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0857) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #0858), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, Amending the Order Adopted by the City Council on June 27, 2024 and signed by the Mayor on July 9, 2024, which, in accordance with M.G.L., Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the Revolving Fund under the control of the Parks, Recreation and Beaches Department, known as the **SUPPORTIVE RECREATION REVOLVING FUND**, whose amount limited at **\$55,000.00** is hereby authorized at **\$105,000.00** for **FISCAL YEAR 2025**. (Referred – May 22, 2025.)

COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0871) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #0872), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, known as the **SUPPORTIVE RECREATION REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at **\$120,000.00** is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**. (Referred – May 22, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Mary Rapoza, Director of Parks, Recreation & Beaches, who explained that these funds are secured through reverse program fees, permit fees, Andrea McCoy Center rentals and recreational park programs. The increase is the result of two staffing positions at the McCoy Center. All fees secured are deposited and held in an account, and are used to pay vendors. The fees now have to be included in the budget process. Other increases include service and maintenance at the Veterans Museum and the Low Tide Yacht Club buildings.

Councillor Pereira asked if any of the funding came from the General Fund; he was told it did not. Councillor Oliver asked if there would be an increase in fees now that the maintenance requirement has shifted; he was told no, not at this time. Councillor Morad asked if cash was taken in; she was told very rarely, 99.9% of payments are made by credit card, as most permits and rentals are done online.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Baptiste, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, submitted by Mayor Mitchell, Amending the Order Adopted by the City Council on June 27, 2024 and signed by the Mayor on July 9, 2024, which, in accordance with M.G.L., Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the Revolving Fund under the control of the Parks, Recreation and Beaches Department, known as the **SUPPORTIVE RECREATION REVOLVING FUND**, whose amount limited at \$55,000.00 is hereby authorized at \$105,000.00 for **FISCAL YEAR 2025**.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Baptiste, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, known as the **SUPPORTIVE RECREATION REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$120,000.00 is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**.

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COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #0869) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #0870), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, known as the **FORT TABER REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$230,000.00 is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**. (Referred – May 22, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Mary Rapoza, Director of Parks, Recreation & Beaches, who explained that the funds for the Fort Taber Revolving Fund are secured through parking, events, community center rentals and Kennedy Summer Camp fees. This revenue covers summer staffing at the Fort, Summer Camp day staff and building maintenance.

Councillor Lopes asked if the Parks Department has a signed agreement with the Museum. He was told not yet, but that the attorneys from both sides are working on it. Councillor Pereira asked if the building repairs are being spread out equally. He was told that they were.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E ½, the revolving fund under the control of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, known as the **FORT TABER REVOLVING FUND**, whose revenues collected, and amount limited to be spent estimated at \$230,000.00 is hereby authorized for **FISCAL YEAR 2026**.

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COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a Tax Increment Exemption Housing Development Incentive Program and Agreement for Couto Residences, 4586 Acushnet Avenue (Matter ID #0983), a DRAFT, Housing Development Incentive Program and Tax Increment Exemption (TIE) Agreement, between the City of New Bedford and Couto Residences LLC (Matter ID #0984) and a RESOLUTION, Approving the Tax Increment Exemption Housing Development Incentive Program and Agreement for Couto Residences, 4586 Acushnet Avenue (Matter ID #0985). (Referred – June 12, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Jordan Latham, Vacant Property Development Manager for the Office of Housing & Community Development. Ms. Latham explained that the request is for a TIE, which would allow the developer to secure State tax credits through the HDIP program. The location at 4856 Acushnet Avenue, a former nursing home, is to be developed by Couto Residences into 63 market-rate units, with 20% income-restricted units under the HDIP guidelines. The project includes a \$12 million investment. The TIE would allow for \$335,000 in tax relief and would include \$220,000 in new tax revenue for the City. This is the City's only HDIP project being submitted for the August round.

Councillor Pereira asked Ms. Latham if her Department was confident that the HDIP would be granted. She stated that she was because it is the only one being submitted for New Bedford this year. Councillor Oliver asked Ms. Latham how many parties were interested in the property. Ms. Latham did not know and agreed to obtain that information and forward it to the Committee.

Derek Couto, the developer, was recognized and stated that the project is highly reliant on grants and securing the TIE. He shared that he knew some other interested parties included a rehab clinic, a rooming house and a nursing home, and that those proposals were to keep the building as-is. The Couto proposal would gut the inside and keep the outside as-is.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Choquette, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the RESOLUTION, approving the Tax Increment Exemption Housing Development Incentive Program and Agreement for Couto Residences, 4586 Acushnet Avenue. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 10, Nays 0.

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Councillor Pereira made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Baptiste.

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.
Clerk of Committees