



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
DATE: NOVEMBER 19, 2025
TIME: 7:00 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS LINDA MORAD, CHAIR; IAN ABREU;
DEREK BAPTISTE (7:16); SHANE BURGO (7:11); NAOMI
CARNEY (7:02); LEO CHOQUETTE; MARIA GIESTA;
BRIAN GOMES (7:02); SHAWN OLIVER; RYAN
PERERIA

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR JOSEPH LOPES

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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. The Clerk read a Communication into the record from Councillor Lopes explaining his absence. The Communication was received and placed on file by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Oliver.

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WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Lopes and Morad, requesting, that Derek Santos, Executive Director of the New Bedford Economic Development Council, provide to the Committee on Finance the annual program report detailing the status of the City of New Bedford Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Special Tax Assessments (STA) and Tax Increment Exemption (TIE) activity for all active certified projects. (Matter ID #0229) (Referred – February 27, 2025.) (May 12, 2025 – tabled w/ a RELATED MOTION that the Solicitor's Office provide the Committee with an updated SOP on how TIFs/STAs will be processed based on the changes made by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Office of Business Development.) (September 18, 2025 – tabled 30 days) (October 16, 2025 – tabled)

The item was not read and remained on the table.

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COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #1697) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #1698), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, that in accordance with Section 19-7(c) of the New Bedford Code of Ordinances, the Mayor is hereby authorized to advertise, negotiate the salary of and hire, between now and March 1, 2026, for the position of Executive Finance and Operation Manager in the Auditor's Office. (Referred – October 23, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Quillan Lowney, City Auditor, who explained that he is having difficulty filling the position of Executive Finance and Operation Manager in his office, so he is requesting approval to offer an increased starting salary. He stated that the advertised position has received 38 applications, of which he has reached out to 24 of the candidates, four being internal. He has offered the position twice; one removed themselves from consideration and the other did not accept the position because of the salary being offered.

José Gouveia, Personnel Director, was recognized and explained that it is hard to attract qualified candidates when the private sector is able to offer much higher salaries. He added that offering positions to qualified applicants at Step One is often challenging.

Robert Ekstrom, CFO, stated that the position does need to be filled, it is a delicate position that oversees accounts payable and invoice auditing.

Councillor Pereira asked of the internal candidates, how many were interviewed. Mr. Lowney replied three.

Councillor Oliver asked of the 38 total applications and the 24 considered, how many were interviewed; he was told twelve. The Councillor asked if authority is given to have the ability to negotiate a salary up to Step Three, did the Auditor believe he would be able to hire a qualified person; he was told yes.

Councillor Abreu asked how the position would improve the oversight in the Auditor's Office. Mr. Lowney stated that bringing in someone who has management experience would be very beneficial to the department. They would be the gatekeeper of the invoices, overseeing the auditing of the current five-person department. The person hired would be familiar with the process and be able to hit the ground running.

Councillor Giesta stated she favors promoting from within and asked why a person has not been selected internally. Mr. Lowney stated that he would like to promote from within, however in this case, the internal applicant did not possess the appropriate accounts payable experience to fill the management role.

Councillor Morad asked if the Assistant City Solicitor and the Grants Auditor would be on the same level as this new hire. Mr. Lowney said they would not be. The Councillor asked the same question of Mr. Ekstrom. Mr. Ekstrom explained that this is a specialized position that needs to be filled, and the starting salary would not surpass those of the Assistant City Solicitor or the Grants Auditor.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, that in accordance with Section 19-7(c) of the New Bedford Code of Ordinances, the Mayor is hereby authorized to advertise, negotiate the salary of and hire, between now and March 1, 2026, for the position of Executive Finance and Operation Manager in the Auditor's Office.

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COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #1546), AN ORDER (Matter ID #1547) and a LEASE AGREEMENT (Matter ID #1548), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, between the New Bedford Airport Commission and Sandpiper Air, Inc. for the access to a certain tract of land for the operation and servicing of aircraft and related activities. (Referred – September 25, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Scot Servis, Airport Manager, who explained that this would allow the City to enter into a 30-year lease agreement with Sandpiper Air to include an option for two five-year extensions, for a grand total 40 years. The lease will be backdated to 2022, when the original lease expired. To exercise the additional two five-year options, the lessee will need to infuse \$300,000 toward capital improvements to the property. He went on to say that Sandpiper Air has been a long-standing tenant since 1997 and the new lease has been reviewed and approved by the Airport Commission.

Councillor Oliver asked if the \$300,000 in capital improvements will have to be approved by the Airport Commission; he was told yes.

Councillor Pereira asked for further clarification on the maintenance stipulation. Mr. Servis explained that the Airport Commission is requiring that the facility be properly maintained throughout the existence of the lease. The Councillor asked if the airport did yearly visits. He was told no but that if something needed to be addressed, the Commission would reach out to the owner informing them of their concern.

Councillor Morad asked if the company was a good tenant; she was told that they were. She asked if the rental charge per square foot was in line with corporate standards; she was told that it was.

On motion by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, between the New Bedford Airport Commission and Sandpiper Air, Inc. for the access to a certain tract of land for the operation and servicing of aircraft and related activities.

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COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #1549) and AN ORDER (Matter ID #1550), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, for the City of New Bedford to accept a donation of real estate from Wayland Development Corp., consisting of 2 parcels shown on City of New Bedford Assessors Map 132 as Lot 62 and the second on Map 132 as Lot 6. (Referred – September 25, 2025.)

On motion by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Pereira, the Committee VOTED: To receive and place on file a presentation submitted by the Conservation Commission.

The Chair recognized Michele Paul, Director of Resilience and Environmental Stewardship, who then introduced Chancery Perks, a Conservation Agent in her department, who has been coordinating the real estate donation.

Mr. Perks stated that the City has an opportunity to save a large parcel of land at the head of the Atlantic waters of the Cedar swamp. In total, they are looking at twelve acres, comprised of two lots.

Councillor Pereria asked Mr. Perks to speak to any maintenance that would have to go into this property should the City acquire it. He was told very little maintenance would be necessary.

Councillor Oliver asked Mr. Perks if he was concerned about the natural buffers that were in place where the property abutted residential areas, specifically as it related to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). He was told that this was not a concern because the property is primarily wetlands, which are protected and would be challenging for any type of construction. The Councillor asked if the taking of this land would result in a loss of tax revenue. Mr. Perks did not know what that amount was but stated that when you raise the value of the land in perpetuity, it far outweighs the loss of tax revenue, especially when water is so important to the City as a whole.

Councillor Choquette asked if the Administration was aware that this valuable water resource is only 500 feet from where they wanted to put the largest trash recyclable transfer company in Massachusetts. Mr. Perks was not able to respond to the question.

Councillor Morad asked how much the Phase One study was to determine that the area was not contaminated. He answered that the cost was \$45,000 and was secured as a CPA grant from the City back in 2023. He went on to state that there are no contaminants on the property, and that the funds were used for the survey and site cleanup. The Councillor asked what future expenses would be incurred by the City on that site. She was told basically none, with the exception of vegetation control.

Councillor Morad expressed concern related to the loss of commercial tax income and wanted to know what the amount would be. Atty. Katherine Schuko, Associate City Solicitor, was recognized and shared that Lot 62 is valued at \$141,900, and the City receives \$1,604.89 in taxes. Lot 6, the larger of the two parcels, is valued at \$323,200, and the City receives \$5,486.48 in taxes. The Councillor wanted to know if the tax figures were discounted figures. Atty. Schuko stated that she would confirm whether the tax figures referenced were discounted amounts and would get back to the Committee with that information.

Councillor Pereira asked that the requested information be provided to the Committee prior to the vote at the November 25th City Council meeting. Both Mr. Perks and Atty. Schuko agreed.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Giesta, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, for the City of New Bedford to accept a donation of real estate from Wayland Development Corp., consisting of 2 parcels shown on City of New Bedford Assessors Map 132 as Lot 62 and the second on Map 132 as Lot 6. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 7, Nays 2. (Councillors Morad and Oliver OPPOSED; Councillor Gomes not present for vote.)

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The following items were taken up together, without objection:

COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #1689) and a LOAN ORDER (Matter ID #1690), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, appropriating \$21,865,465.00 for accelerated repair projects at the Sgt. William Carney Memorial Academy, Hayden-McFadden Elementary School and Casimir Pulaski Elementary School. (Referred – October 23, 2025.)

COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #1691) and a LOAN ORDER (Matter ID #1692), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, appropriating \$7,911,603.00 for accelerated repair projects at the Elwyn G. Campbell Elementary School, Ellen R. Hathaway Elementary School and Carlos Pacheco Elementary School. (Referred – October 23, 2025.)

COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #1693) and a LOAN ORDER (Matter ID #1694), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, appropriating \$200,000.00 to pay the costs of a schematic design/feasibility study as required by the Massachusetts School Building Authority with respect to the proposed accelerated repairs to the Trinity Day Academy. (Referred – October 23, 2025.)

COMMUNICATION (Matter ID #1785) and a LOAN ORDER (Matter ID #1786), submitted by Mayor Mitchell, appropriating \$5,703,804.00 to pay costs of an accelerated repair project at the Whaling City Jr./Sr. High School. (Referred – November 13, 2025.)

On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Baptiste, the Committee VOTED: To receive and place on file a presentation submitted by the School Department.

The Chair recognized Andrew O’Leary, Superintendent for New Bedford Public Schools, who stated that he is before the Committee requesting approval for the funding necessary to replace the roof on the two schools referenced in the presentation. He was pleased to announce that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has informed them that they are eligible for 80% reimbursement for the proposed repairs. He went on to explain that the life expectancy for the current roofs have passed their usefulness and that by replacing these roofs, it will add to the life expectancy of the schools by 30 years.

Dr. Barry Rabinovitch, School Construction Facilitator, was recognized and gave an overview of the requests being made, which included the following information:

- Campbell School
Total budget cost \$3,504,690 / MSBA reimbursement \$2,680,763 / Cost to the City \$823,927
- Hathaway School
Total budget cost \$2,234,276 / MSBA reimbursement \$1,705,955 / Cost to the City \$528,318
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- Carlos Pacheco School
Total budget cost \$2,172,640 / MSBA reimbursement \$1,661,902 / Cost to the City \$510,738
- Whaling City Jr./Sr. High School
Total budget cost \$5,703,804 / MSBA reimbursement \$4,362,696 / Cost to the City \$1,341,108
- Hathaway School
Total budget cost \$2,234,276 / MSBA reimbursement \$1,705,955 / Cost to the City \$528,318
- Carney School
Total budget cost \$6,951,662 / MSBA reimbursement \$5,178,835 / Cost to the City \$1,772,827
- Hayden-McFadden School
Total budget cost \$6,769,629 / MSBA reimbursement \$5,070,168 / Cost to the City \$1,699,461
- Hathaway School
Total budget cost \$2,234,276 / MSBA reimbursement \$1,705,955 / Cost to the City \$528,318
- Pulaski School
Total budget cost \$8,144,174 / MSBA reimbursement \$6,084,811 / Cost to the City \$2,059,363

Regarding the Gomes School, they anticipate submitting this project during the December 12, 2025 MSBA Board Meeting. This project was delayed because it tripped the 30% of assessed value and necessitated a full ADA upgrade.

Councillor Pereira asked if the solar ready figures on the presentation were required by the MSBA. He was told that they were. The Councillor asked if those figures were reimbursable by the MSBA as a part of the 80%. He was told that was correct.

Councillor Pereira reiterated his concern about the Whaling City Jr./Sr. High School/PRAB building. He stated that while he did not doubt the roof needed repairs, he believes the building should move in a different direction. Mr. O'Leary said that he understood his concerns and they have been exploring different directions for the building, but that if the building should be sold at any point in time, a new roof would be a good selling point.

Councillor Pereira asked if the 80% is received and at some point the building is sold for something other than educational purposes, would there be a penalty from the MSBA. Mr. O'Leary explained that in that instance, they would need to renegotiate with the MSBA for a payback for the amount of time the school was no longer used for educational purposes.

Councillor Giesta inquired about the term “solar ready” and asked if it meant that the buildings will actually be solar ready, or is the City just paying money to prep the buildings to become solar ready, without panels being put in place. Mr. O’Leary replied that there is a very viable potential. He stated that solar panels could be financially beneficial to the School Department as a whole, but that they are no longer eligible for federal credits for solar like they received for the DeValles-Congdon School currently being built.

Councillor Giesta asked if a calculation had been determined for removal of the skylight at Pulaski. Dr. Rabinovitch replied that it had not been considered because the skylight provides lighting to classes that would not otherwise have windows. He added that it was not part of the approved original proposal submitted to the MSBA.

Councillor Oliver asked if the City would be in a position to have to pay the MSBA back if they moved forward with replacing the roof but then a decision was later made to replace the school entirely. Mr. O’Leary shared that it is highly unlikely that they will be able to continue to use the Pacheco Building, but repairing the roof now will help maintain the building. However, if a decision was made to rebuild, the MSBA would calculate what would be owed for the remaining years of the roof.

Councillor Morad asked for the total amount that would be the City’s responsibility if all of the proposed projects were approved. After a brief discussion, it was determined that the amount would be \$8,735,742.

Councillor Burgo pointed out that the figures for the Hathaway School were not accurate. It was determined that the correct slide was not added to the presentation; Dr. Rabinovitch stated he would send a revised figure to the Committee.

Councillor Oliver asked how the costs would be handled with HVAC units needing to be removed and replaced. He was told that the School Department has taken the possibility of extra expenses into consideration, but that those would not be part of the MSBA grant.

Councillor Morad asked Mr. Ekstrom if the City would be able to absorb the financial debt being requested. Mr. Ekstrom replied that the City would be in a position to secure this money, and that they will be doing a loan order for the entire amount. The City has the ability to go for bond anticipation notes which the City would repay with proceeds from the MSBA.

On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Pereira, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the LOAN ORDER, appropriating \$21,865,465.00 for accelerated repair projects at the Sgt. William Carney Memorial Academy, Hayden-McFadden Elementary School and Casimir Pulaski Elementary School. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 9, Nays 0. (Councillor Gomes not present for vote.)

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On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Baptiste, the Committee VOTED: To recommend that the City Council take **“NO FURTHER ACTION”** on the following items:

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPROPRIATION of \$175,000.00 from ORDINARY REVENUE AND MUNICIPAL RECEIPTS to WASTE COLLECTION & DISPOSAL, PURCHASE OF SERVICES. (Matter ID #1251) (Referred – July 17, 2025.) (October 16, 2025 – tabled)

AN ORDER, (Matter ID #1252) (Referred – July 17, 2025.) (October 16, 2025 – tabled)

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPROPRIATION of \$63,662.00 from ORDINARY REVENUE AND MUNICIPAL RECEIPTS to MIS, PURCHASE OF SERVICES. (Matter ID #1253) (Referred – July 17, 2025.) (October 16, 2025 – VOTE for ADOPTION – FAILS; Remain in Committee)

AN ORDER, (Matter ID #1254) (Referred – July 17, 2025.) (October 16, 2025 – VOTE for ADOPTION – FAILS; Remain in Committee)

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Councillor Oliver made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Carney.

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.
Clerk of Committees