



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
DATE: APRIL 13, 2026
TIME: 7:00 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS JOSEPH LOPES, CHAIR; DEREK BAPTISTE (7:21); SHANE BURGO (7:11); NAOMI CARNEY; LEO CHOQUETTE; SCOTT PEMBERTON; RYAN PERERIA; JAMES ROY

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS IAN ABREU, BRIAN GOMES, SHAWN OLIVER

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 Abreu explaining his tardiness, and another from Councillor Gomes explaining his absence from the meeting. The Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Pemberton.

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Pereira, Carney and Council President Burgo, requesting, that representatives of The Z appear before the Committee on Finance to report on the financial and operating expenses of the Zeiterion Theatre. (Matter ID #1337) (Referred – July 22, 2025).

On motion by Councillor Roy and seconded by Councillor Choquette, the Committee VOTED: To receive and place on file a Statement of Activity Report provided by Rosemary Gill, President & CEO, Zeiterion Theatre.

The Chair recognized Ms. Rosemary Gill, President & CEO, Zeiterion Theatre.

Before Ms. Gill spoke, Councillor Pereira explained that the purpose of the motion was to ensure that the funding provided by the City was being used for insurance, maintenance, and utility expenses associated with the building.

Ms. Gill explained that funds received from the City have been used for improvements and will also support ongoing building upkeep. She added that the Zeiterion has an agreement with the City requiring submission of an annual financial report to the Administration. The report includes a full accounting and narrative of the organization's finances. She noted that the theatre's fiscal year ends in December, while the City requests the report at the close of its fiscal year; however, they will make every effort to provide an update by that time.

Ms. Gill explained that the information provided reflects the narrative and financial statements through December 31, 2025, representing approximately six months of the organization's fiscal year. The figures include funding from the support agreement, as the Zeiterion was closed for renovations during that period. Although they had anticipated reopening in October 2025, the opening was ultimately delayed. She added that last year marked the first time the narrative report was prepared and submitted to the administration, and this will continue annually in accordance with the City agreement.

Councillor Carney asked whether the material presented represented a full-year report, and Ms. Gill confirmed that it did. The Councillor then requested that the City Council receive a copy of the organization's fiscal year report in a timely manner, to which Ms. Gill agreed. Councillor Carney also inquired about anticipated increases in expenses and benefits now that the Zeiterion is operational. Ms. Gill stated that operating expenses are expected to rise by approximately \$6 million this year.

On motion by Councillor Burgo and Councillor Roy, the Committee VOTED: To recommend that the City Council take **"NO FURTHER ACTION"** on the matter at this time.

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Dunn, Giesta, Abreu, Lopes, Council President Morad, Councillors Gomes, Lima and Carney, requesting, that the City Council vote to accept the provisions of Chapter 33, Section 59 of the Massachusetts General Laws, that provides benefits to City employees who are temporarily absent from work due to service in the Armed Forces of the Commonwealth or a reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States. (Matter ID #0460) (CHARTER RULED by Council President Morad – March 14, 2019) (Referred – March 28, 2019) (April 17, 2019 – tabled until May 15, 2019).

On motion by Councillor Roy and seconded by Councillor Choquette, the Committee VOTED: To remove the motion from the table.

The Chair recognized Mr. Jose Gouveia, Personnel Director. Mr. Gouveia stated that, after receiving the invitation to the meeting, he began researching the request but has not yet completed the process. He suggested that the matter be tabled so he can continue his review and report back to the committee.

Councillor Pereira asked Atty. David Gerwatowski, Legal Counsel, if he had any information on what the intent was when the motion was proposed.

Atty. Gerwatowski said he did not recall the Councillor's reaching out to him when the original motion was drafted, but he believed the intent was to ensure that city employees, called to active military service, could continue receiving pay from the City during their absence. He added that additional research would be needed to determine whether provisions could be adopted to proceed with the motion as originally intended.

Councillor Pereira stated that he had reviewed the original language and considered it to be sound legislation, adding that City employees should not lose their tenure or benefits if they are activated.

It was agreed that more time would be needed to conduct the proper research into the motion's request.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To table the matter for 60 days at this time.

Councillor Pereira requested that the following information be provided before the motion is returned to the Committee:

From Jose Gouveia:

1. How many City employees have served on active military service over the past three years.
2. The approximate cost to the City in salaries and benefits.

From the City Solicitor:

1. Whether a previous version of the Ordinance section existed and, if so, whether it was ever adopted by the City.
2. An opinion from the Mayor regarding this section.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting AN ORDER for the TRANSFER of \$1,070,555.00 from STATE AID, and an ORDER for the TRANSFER of \$314,530.00 from STATE AID 950, to SCHOOL DEPARTMENT GENERAL EXPENSE. (Matter ID #0225), AN ORDER, (Matter ID #0226), and AN ORDER, (Matter ID #0227) (Referred – March 05, 2026).

The Chair recognized Mr. Robert Ekstrom, Chief Financial Officer, who explained that the request is intended to correct the Cherry Sheets for FY26. He stated that an allocation amount had been established for the City, but the Governor subsequently reduced the amount by 10%. The Senate and House later overrode the Governor's decision, restoring the funds that had been deducted. This override resulted in an unanticipated financial increase for the City, which must now be accounted for by the School Department with approval from the City Council. He noted that this is the basis for the two orders before the Committee.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDERS, for the TRANSFER of \$1,070,555.00 from STATE AID, and for the TRANSFER of \$314,530.00 from STATE AID 950 to SCHOOL DEPARTMENT GENERAL EXPENSE.

The Committee discussed whether to take up the following items or leave them in committee:

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting AN ORDER, that the Mayor and City Council President are authorized on behalf of the City to accept a grant of easement from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation for the new pedestrian bridge over Route 18. (Matter ID #1812), AN ORDER, (Matter ID #1813), and an EASEMENT, (Matter ID #1844) (Referred – November 14, 2024) (February 19, 2025 – Tabled conditionally until 1) The Committee receives the referenced documents that the Administration has as it relates to estimated yearly costs of maintenance associated with maintaining the structure as well as all easements associated with the bridge and the overpass 2) A conversation takes place with MassDOT regarding the possibility that the City will not accept the Easement and 3) DFFM Director Jennifer Vieira provides an estimate from the elevator contractor for the ongoing inspections and maintenance of the facility.)

It was decided that the items would remain in committee.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.
Clerk of Committees