



Marc C. Laredo  
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts  
Office of the Mayor

Telephone  
(617) 796-1100  
Fax  
(617) 796-1113  
TDD/TTY  
(617) 796-1089  
Email  
mayor@newtonma.gov

---

To: Councilor Rebecca Walker Grossman, Finance Committee Chair  
From: Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer  
Date: May 26, 2026  
Subject: Responses to City Council FY2027 Budget Resolutions #'s 1 through 5  
Cc: Marc Laredo, Mayor  
All City Council Members  
Joshua Morse, Chief Operating Officer  
John Rice, Chief Community Services Officer  
Dana Hanson, Chief of Staff  
Drew Willison, Clerk of the Council  
Stephen Curley, Comptroller

---

Please accept this communication as the Administration's response to the FY2027 budget resolutions #'s 1 through 5 submitted by the Honorable City Council on May 21, 2026.

**Budget Resolution #1 – Executive Office/Law Department**

**Resolution requesting that the Mayor maintain a fully-funded ADA Coordinator position with a job description that goes beyond the minimum requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.**

**Administration Response:**

The Laredo Administration is built on several principles, and one of our north stars is to always listen carefully and remain open-minded. We are always seeking to improve, and recognize that there will be times when our partners in government and our residents have better and/or more creative solutions to challenges and opportunities.

Over the last several weeks, we have listened carefully to the Commission on Disability and the City Council regarding how best to ensure that the ADA Coordinator role meets the needs and expectations of the community.

We had previously proposed requiring this position to hold a juris doctor degree to strengthen its role in compliance and advocacy.

We watched the Commission on Disability's May discussion on this topic, carefully reviewed the Commission's letter dated May 11, 2026, and recently met with Ima Jonsdottir and Jack Lovett, the Co-Chairs

of the Commission on Disability, to discuss this matter further. We continue to be inspired by the passion, dedication, and thoughtfulness of the residents who serve on the Commission.

We also listened carefully throughout the City Council’s budget deliberations. Taking to heart the sage advice of our councilors and reflecting on the advocacy and perspective shared by Ima and Jack on behalf of the full Commission, we have decided to move the ADA Coordinator position to the Health and Human Services Department.

This will remain a full-time position and will benefit from the strong synergy created by being fully integrated within the department’s human services division. We believe this structure will strengthen collaboration, improve responsiveness, and further support the City’s ongoing commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and service to our residents.

Therefore, we respectfully request the following motion be made to amend the Mayor’s Proposed FY2027 City of Newton Municipal and School Budget.

<u>Account Description</u>	<u>Account #</u>	<u>Amendment</u>	
<b>H&amp;HS, Full-Time Salaries</b>	<b>0150104-511001</b>	<b>Add:</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>
<b>Law Dept, Full-Time Salaries</b>	<b>0110851-511001</b>	<b>Subtract:</b>	<b>\$97,304</b>
<b>Law Dept, Legal Services</b>	<b>0110851-530900</b>	<b>Add:</b>	<b>\$22,304</b>

Following these amendments the Legal Level of Control of the Health & Human Services and the Law Departments will now be as follows:

H&HS Legal Level of Control, Personnel:	\$4,269,392
<b>TOTAL H&amp;HS Budget to be Approved:</b>	<b>\$5,852,377</b>
Law Dept Legal Level of Control, Personnel:	\$1,591,466
Law Dept Legal Level of Control, Expenses:	\$ 409,229
<b>TOTAL Law Dept Budget to be Approved:</b>	<b>\$2,272,969</b>

**Budget Resolution #2 – Planning Department**

**Resolution respectfully urging the Mayor to revisit the Planning Department’s budget for the current fiscal year and consider funding to add at least one additional professional planning staff member, commensurate with the growth in planning demands facing our city;, and further urges the Mayor to conduct a comprehensive review of the compensation provided to Planning Department leadership and to ensure that salaries are benchmarked against and commensurate with those of planning directors and senior planning officials in comparable cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth.**

**Administration Response:**

The FY2027 budget was developed through a comprehensive evaluation of the needs of every department across the City. As part of that process, the administration worked closely with the Planning Department to assess the level of support that both the department and the relevant City Council Committees are expected to require based on policy initiatives currently under discussion, as well as those anticipated to arise during FY2027.

The Planning Department is currently navigating a period of transition following the recent departure of several key staff members. The City is actively working to fill both the Deputy Chief Planner and Director of Planning

and Development positions, while several employees have stepped into acting roles to help ensure continuity of operations during this process. We anticipate these positions will be filled and the transition substantially completed within the next few months.

In partnership with the Human Resources Department, the Mayor's Office is continuously evaluating the municipal labor market with respect to the salaries and benefits offered by comparable communities. This ensures that we remain competitive so that we can attract and retain great employees in each and every department to best serve our community.

Additionally, one of Mayor Laredo's earliest initiatives was to move the full-time Economic Development Director position from the Planning Department to the Executive Office and to add a Deputy Director. While this resulted in one less full time position in the Planning Department, the increased financial investment and Executive Office focus on Economic Development provides Mayoral-level support of existing Newton businesses, more resources devoted to attracting new businesses, direct executive leadership, and integrated coordination of City Hall functions to support Newton's critical commercial tax base. While the Economic Development function is no longer housed within the Planning Department, the synergy in these functions that has served Newton well for many years remains strong and unwavering today.

We are confident that the administration's approach will position the Planning Department to continue its important work and to enter FY2027 with strong leadership, organizational stability, and ongoing engagement to promote advancement and growth in the City. As such, we don't feel that an additional planning position is necessary at this time, as we remain focused on filling the current vacancies and strengthening the existing Planning Department team.

### **Budget Resolution #3 – Department of Public Works**

**Resolution requesting that the rain barrel program be reintroduced with the same or comparable savings for residents to purchase rain barrels at a wholesale rate as had previously been provided; that the City create additional savings to residents for necessary ancillary equipment to make rain barrels useful tools for irrigation such as rain chains, gutter diverters, and pumps; and that efforts be made to expand awareness and demand for the purchase of rain barrels.**

#### **Administration Response:**

For many years, the Department of Public Works maintained a rain barrel program. Ample marketing, public education, and outreach occurred. Ultimately, the program ended in 2022 due to a long period of limited public interest. Our inventory of rain barrels sat unused for far too long. The wholesale rate that Newton was, and is, able to offer, is not significantly lower than the cost residents would incur with the click of a mouse these days. Furthermore, the retail sector now offers hundreds of rain barrel options to meet the unique needs and interests of our residents.

It is for the above reasons that the administration will not be restarting this program. However, we would like to inform the City Council and our community that as part of our ongoing effort to revamp and update the City's website, we are working on a water conservation page that will provide ample tips to reduce water usage. This will include leveraging the existing resources for water conservation such as [alternatives](#) to grass lawns for residents who choose to go this path.

#### **Budget Resolution #4 – Newton Public Schools**

**Resolution requesting that bus fees for all students eligible to take the bus in the 2026-2027 academic year be significantly reduced or eliminated; that the Mayor utilize funds from the Educational Stabilization Fund to eliminate or significantly reduce bus fees for all students eligible to take the bus in the 2026-2027 academic year, and that the City utilize any savings from a transition to electric buses over the coming years to continue to reduce or eliminate fees for all students who are eligible to take the bus to school.**

#### **Administration Response:**

The School Committee sets all school fees and the FY2027 Budget assumes receiving bus fee revenue of approximately \$1,055,000. The revenue directly offsets the cost of the use of yellow buses, the total cost of which is \$3.75 million in FY2027. Without this revenue, NPS faces an immediate budget gap of \$1,055,000, forcing reductions in other areas within the Newton Public Schools.

As a reminder, all Kindergarten – 6th grade students who reside more than 2.0 miles from their school do not pay the bus fee. NPS has a strong tradition of being extremely generous to any family facing financial hardships and accepting all financial waivers and will continue to do so. The bus fee revenue derived is approximately 28% of the NPS direct yellow bus costs and the \$465 fee equates to \$2.58 per day for transportation to and from school. NPS transportation fees are in line with those of many other school districts.

In addition, NPS and the City continue to make walking and biking to school safer and easier, so students and families have an alternative to driving, whether in an automobile or a bus.

#### **Budget Resolution #5 – Newton Public Schools**

**Resolution requesting that the City prioritize and support the transition to electric school buses by identifying a city-owned site for an electric bus depot.**

#### **Administration Response:**

The City has been working collaboratively with Newton Public Schools, Councilors, and School Committee members since 2015, to evaluate hundreds of city and privately owned sites for bus depots. Each of these sites presented opportunities and challenges, but ultimately none of them were determined to be viable. These efforts were primarily driven by rate of school transportation cost growth sustained over many years, which was driven by having a single bidder on our school transportation contract for many years.

Due to the great efforts of the State's Operational Services Division, OSD, communities now have another opportunity for the procurement of school transportation services while simultaneously transitioning from diesel to full-electric buses. This is an opportunity that members of the School Committee, City Council, Newton Public Schools, and the Laredo Administration have recently begun exploring.

While finding a bus depot location would be helpful, we are confident it will not preclude our efforts in transitioning to electric buses, nor will it hinder our ability to introduce a more competitive bid market for school transportation here in Newton.

That said, we remain committed to continuing to work with Newton Public Schools to find viable sites for a future bus depot(s).