



# City of Malden

Malden City Hall  
215 Pleasant Street  
Malden, MA 02148

## Meeting Minutes - Final Finance Committee

*Councillor McDonald, Chair*  
*Councillor Taylor, Vice Chair*  
*Councillor Condon*  
*Councillor Luong*  
*Councillor Sica*  
*Councillor Simonelli*

---

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

6:00 PM

215 Pleasant Street  
Malden, MA 02148

---

**Watch the meeting with Teams: <https://tinyurl.com/4cr22hxc>**

A quorum of the City Council may be present at this meeting. While no formal votes or actions are anticipated by the City Council, members may participate in the discussion of topics listed on this agenda. This notice is filed to ensure compliance with the Open Meeting Law should a quorum of the parent body be present.

**Present:** 5 - Carey McDonald, Ari Taylor, Paul Condon, Michelle Luong and Chris Simonelli

**Absent:** 1 - Jadeane Sica

### Roll Call

Also Present: Council President Linehan, Councillors Crowe, O'Malley,  
Winslow  
Mayor Christenson  
Maria Luise-Special Assistant to the Mayor  
Prasanna Rajasekaran-Assistant City Solicitor

Councillor McDonald called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.  
There will be audio and video of this meeting via Teams.

### Minutes to be Approved

[266-26](#)

Minutes of May 12, 2026 to be approved.

**A motion was made by Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Luong, that the Committee Minutes of May 12, 2026 be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.**

### Business

[233-26](#)

Order: The Mayor will submit the Fiscal Year 2027 Annual Appropriation Orders for the General Fund.

**Sponsors:** Carey McDonald

**Attachments:** [Mayor Christenson's Memo](#)

[Link to Proposed FY2027 Budget](#)

[FY 2027 Summary Report Expenditures by Department for DBB](#)

[Finance Schedule of Meetings](#)

[FY2027 Budget Overview May 4th 2026](#)

[FINAL FINANCE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE FOR DEPARTMENT MEETINGS FY27 PROPOSED BUDGET](#)

*Councillor McDonald said similar to last week we've asked department heads to come and so we've got two groups today. We've got our Health and Human services plus recreation and then we also have our Legal Department and City Clerk's Office. So we're going to spend roughly 30 minutes on each one. He thanked the Mayor for attending the meeting and began with the Health and Human Services Director.*

*Laura Vlasuk, Director of Health and Human Services, Teen Center, Senior Center, Veterans outlined the elimination of several positions: an open Senior Center position, a full-time Teen Center position, a Veterans Affairs clerk, a reduction in hours for a coordinator, and the removal of a language access individual and part-time nurse in the Health Department. The department will hire a new Veterans Officer, with interviews starting in June, and will assess gaps after July 1st to minimize service loss. She also addressed the loss of the language access coordinator, and explained the department will utilize a list of multilingual employees, continue translating permits and flyers, and rely on tools like PocketTalk and the language line. Staff with language skills will assist, but no additional compensation will be provided for these duties, and the impact will be evaluated after July 1st. She also oversees the recovery coaches which were going to be cut but they received donations to continue these services.*

*Councillor Linehan asked if the donations were Public or Private*

*Laura discussed alternative funding sources, such as private donations for recovery coaches and foundation support for youth programs. Raising participation fees was considered but rejected to avoid excluding children in need. The departments emphasized their commitment to maintaining as many services as possible despite financial constraints.*

*Councillor Taylor inquired about the ratio of resident to nonresident participation and the value of nonresident fees in the Senior Center*

*Laura said the Senior Center charges minimal fees for classes, with a small difference between residents and nonresidents. The department confirmed that all participants are currently accommodated, and the impact of nonresident participation is minimal.*

*Cathy MacMullin Teen Center Coordinator described the Teen Center's plan to manage the loss of a staff member by redistributing responsibilities among existing staff and youth program participants, ensuring coverage of hours and continuity of programs.*

*Councillor Luong asked if there was an opportunity to ask for more grants?*

*Cathy responded by saying they do have a Board of Directors who raise funds and CDBG grants also helped with running great sports programs*

*Joe Levine, Director of Recreation Center explained the recreation center was formed*

years ago, has expanded its offerings but faces challenges due to the loss of part-time staff, resulting in increased workload for remaining employees and slower permit processing. Raising participation fees was considered but rejected to avoid excluding children in need. He emphasized his commitment to maintaining as many services as possible despite financial constraints.

Councillor Taylor inquired about the ratio of resident to nonresident participation and the value of nonresident fees.

Joe reported that 95% of recreation program participants are residents, with a small percentage of nonresidents, and that fees for nonresidents are slightly higher but not a significant revenue source.

Alicia McNeil, City Solicitor representing the Legal Department, explained that to accommodate budget cuts, hours for two part-time City solicitors were reduced, and the special assistant position was halved. The department increased collaboration with other city departments to reduce reliance on outside counsel, particularly for contract work, and set clear expectations for response times.

Councillor O'Malley reviewed the Legal Department's strategies for managing increased legal costs, including staff adjustments, reliance on outside counsel for ongoing lawsuits, and efforts to settle worker's compensation cases to reduce future liabilities.

Alicia explained due to understaffing in previous years, the Legal Department increased spending on outside counsel to handle significant lawsuits, which remain ongoing. The department is now more fully staffed, but outside counsel is still needed for cases already in progress. The department negotiated lump sum settlements for long-term worker's compensation cases, aiming to eliminate ongoing payments and reduce future liabilities. The city is self-insured for worker's comp, and settlements are managed internally. She also clarified the differences between damages, miscellaneous expenses, and legal court judgments, explaining that damages cover small claims and miscellaneous losses, while court judgments are for cases that go to trial.

Carol Ann Desiderio, City Clerk explained the Clerk's Office lost a full-time employee focused on language access and election outreach. To mitigate this, the office hired bilingual poll workers, digitized census forms using QR codes, and streamlined early voting to reduce staffing costs. The office will continue to use language access lines and multilingual staff, and may bring back the outreach coordinator as needed for specific tasks. Carol Ann described recent changes to election processes with cost saving measures. The office implemented QR codes for census forms, allowing residents to complete forms online and reducing the need for costly second mailings, resulting in significant savings. Early voting is now conducted at City Hall during normal business hours, eliminating the need for additional poll worker staffing at multiple locations. The introduction of poll pads for voter check-in has halved the required staffing per precinct, reducing both Election Day and training costs. She also explained the office anticipates higher costs for mail-in ballots due to longer ballots in upcoming elections, and is seeking ways to manage these expenses while complying with mandatory vote-by-mail requirements.

Councillor Linehan raised concerns about the potential loss of outreach questioned how the impact on voting and city services would be measured.

Carol Ann documented outreach processes and will monitor effectiveness, with the option to bring back the coordinator for specific needs.

*Councillor Luong raised concerns particularly for the Asian community*

*Carol Ann said the Clerk's Office will continue recruiting bilingual poll workers and use language access lines.*

*Maria also said that the Mayor's office meets quarterly with Chinese Organizations.*

*Councillor O'Malley discussed the possibility of ad hoc translation requests accumulating costs comparable to a dedicated position, and considered whether restoring the position would be preferable if funds allow and emphasized the importance of maintaining compliance with federal requirements. Based on elections I would ask if we're able to find cutting 40 grand somewhere else, would this be one of the positions we would try to add.*

*Mayor Christenson no we would want to restore Police and Fire first.*

*Councillor O'Malley asked in addition to that*

*Mayor Christenson said I do not see us doing more than that Councillor we should be using 0. If we don't see anything change next year as a matter of fact, if nothing changes, we'll be doing the same thing again next spring.*

*Councillor McDonald said next week we will continue with more department heads and the next week Schools and OSPCD and Library.*

The Finance Committee will continue discussion of the FY27 Proposed Budget with the following Departments:

Laura Vlasuk- Director Health/Human Services/Veterans/Teen Center/Senior Center

Cathy MacMullin-Coordinator Teen Center

Carol Ann Desiderio- Director City Clerk

Alicia McNeil- City Solicitor/Director Legal Department

Dora St Martin- Director Library

Joseph Levine- Director Recreation Department

## Other Business

### Tabled Papers

[260-26](#)

Minutes of May 5, 2026 to be approved.

**A motion was made by Councillor Simonelli, seconded by Councillor Taylor to take Paper 260-26, minutes of May 5, 2026 off the table. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.**

**A motion was made by Councillor Simonelli, seconded by Councillor Luong, that the Committee Minutes May 5, 2026 be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.**

## Adjournment

**A motion was made by Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Luong, that this meeting be adjourned at 7:11 PM. The motion carried unanimously.**

If you would like to request a reasonable accommodation, please contact Maria Luise, ADA Compliance Coordinator at [mluise@cityofmaiden.org](mailto:mluise@cityofmaiden.org) or 781-397-7000 Ext. 2005

For instructions on enabling live translated captions in Teams, please visit:  
[www.cityofmaiden.org/captions](http://www.cityofmaiden.org/captions)