



# NORTHERN MIDDLESEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

## ATTENDANCE

Date: February 21, 2024

### BILLERICA

- ✓ Andrew Deslaurier
- ✓ Christopher Tribou
- ✓ Mary McBride (A)

Christopher Tribou  
Mary McBride

### CHELMSFORD

- ✓ Pat Wojtas
- ✓ Annita Tanini
- ✓ Douglas Bruce (A)

Pat Wojtas  
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### DRACUT

- ✓ Heather Santiago-Hutchings

Michael Pestana

- ✓ Philippe Thibault (A)

Philippe Thibault  
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\_\_\_\_\_

### DUNSTABLE

Ron Mikol

- ✓ Jim Wilkie

Jason Silva (A)

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\_\_\_\_\_

### LOWELL

Sokhary Chau

- ✓ Gerard Frechette

Position Vacant (A)

Gerard Frechette  
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### PEPPERELL

- ✓ Chuck Walkovich

Position Vacant

- ✓ Stephen Themelis (A)

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\_\_\_\_\_  
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### TEWKSBURY

- ✓ Jayne Wellman

James Duffy

Alexandra Lowder (A)

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\_\_\_\_\_

### TYNGSBOROUGH

Ron Keohane

Steven O'Neill

Katerina Kalabokis (A)

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### WESTFORD

Christopher Barrett

- ✓ Darrin Wizst

James Silva (A)

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### OTHER

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## Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

A Multi-Disciplinary Regional Planning Agency Serving:  
Billerica – Chelmsford – Dracut – Dunstable – Lowell – Pepperell – Tewksbury – Tyngsborough – Westford

### NOTICE OF MEETING

The next meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) will be held on **Wednesday, February 21, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at NMCOG, 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, Lowell, MA 01854** with optional remote access via Zoom. To join this meeting via Zoom, please go to: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83176268692>. The Meeting ID is: 831 7626 8692. If you are joining by phone, dial (309) 205-3325, Meeting ID# 831 7626 8692#

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### AGENDA

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**
2. **Meeting Minutes** – (Vote Required)  
Minutes from NMCOG Strategic Planning Meeting 1/13/24 and NMCOG Council Meeting 1/17/24
3. **Financial Report and Warrant** - (Vote Required)
4. **Finance Committee Report - Approval of Community Assessments for FY 2025** (Vote Required)  
By law, NMCOG must notify municipalities of their assessments no later than February each year so that they may be included in city/town budgets. The NMCOG Finance Committee met on February 6, 2024 and their recommendation will be presented.
5. **Presentation and Discussion of Development Schedules for: FFY 2025 – 2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Development and FFY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**
6. **Schedule of NMCOG meetings March through June** (Vote Required)
7. **Report of the Executive Director** – January 2024
8. **Community Exchange**
9. **Reminders and Announcements**  
*Greater Lowell Vision Zero Public Forum* – February 27, 6-8 PM  
*NMCOG Open House* – March 14, 4-6 PM  
*NMCOG Council Meeting* – March 20, 7 PM
10. **Other Business** not known at the time of posting of this agenda
11. **Adjourn**

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**CITY/TOWN CLERKS: PLEASE POST PURSUANT TO OPEN MEETING LAW**

Please contact Lesley Shahbazian at [Ishahbazian@nmcog.org](mailto:Ishahbazian@nmcog.org) with any questions on this agenda.

**Northern Middlesex Council of Governments  
Special Council Meeting on January 13, 2024  
at  
Chelmsford Public Library  
25 Boston Road, Chelmsford**

**Meeting Minutes**

**I. Call to Order and Attendance**

The January 13, 2024 special meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) was held at the Chelmsford Public Library. The meeting was called to order at 12:15 p.m. Chair Andrew Deslaurier opened the meeting and presided over a Call to Order and Attendance. The following Councilors were in attendance:

- Andrew Deslaurier, Chair, Billerica Select Board
- Mary K. McBride, Clerk, Billerica Alternate
- Pat Wojtas, MPO Representative, Chelmsford Select Board
- Douglas Bruce, Chelmsford Alternate
- Heather Santiago-Hutchings, Dracut Select Board
- Philippe Thibault, Dracut Alternate
- Jim Wilkie, Dunstable Alternate
- Chuck Walkovich, Pepperell Select Board
- Joan Ladik, Pepperell Planning Board
- Stephen Themelis, Vice Chair, Pepperell Alternate
- Jayne Wellman, Asst. Treasurer, Tewksbury Select Board

**Staff:**

- Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director
- Kelly Lynema, AICP, Deputy Director
- Christopher Hayes, AICP, Housing and Economic Development Manager

**II. Strategic Planning Session**

The Chair then turned the meeting over to Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director, who facilitated the rest of the meeting. Ms. Raitt reviewed the agenda. Ms. Raitt then reviewed the icebreaker "Getting to Know You". The Council members organized into pairs and shared information about themselves and then reported out a common theme.

Ms. Raitt then shared the prior Group Agreement to determine what behaviors Council members wanted to see or not see exhibited as they worked together during the strategic planning special meeting. The group confirmed the agreement as a reference for meeting participants and the facilitator throughout the meeting.

Ms. Raitt then reviewed the prior two strategic planning sessions and environmental scan of the organization. The presentation included information about the current Council and staff, its history, key issues identified within the

conferences

Ms. Raitt concluded the meeting by discussing next steps in the strategic planning process, including providing updates through the newsletter, NMCOG website, and with the Strategic Planning Committee. The final step in the strategic planning process will be a wrap up meeting in late spring. City and Town Managers and other key municipal staff, and NMCOG staff will be invited to participate.

Ms. Raitt thanked the group for their time and input, the Officers, members of the Strategic Planning Committee, and staff in attendance. She then turned the meeting back over to the Chair who thanked the group for attending. The meeting was then adjourned at 3:00 PM.

**CLERK'S CERTIFICATE**

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the meeting of January 13, 2024.



Attest:

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**Mary K. McBride, Clerk**

**Northern Middlesex Council of Governments**  
**672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100**  
**Lowell, MA 01854**

**Minutes from Council Meeting January 17, 2024**

**I.** The January 17, 2024 meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) was held hybrid at 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, in the conference room and via Zoom. The meeting was called to order by Stephen Themelis at 7:05 p.m. The following were in attendance:

Councilors:

- Mary McBride, Clerk, Billerica Alternate
- Pat Wojtas, MPO Rep, Chelmsford Select Board
- Annita Tanini, Chelmsford Planning Board
- Douglas Bruce, Chelmsford Alternate
- Heather Santiago-Hutchings, Dracut Select Board
- Jim Wilkie, Dunstable Planning Board
- Gerard Frechette, Treasurer, Lowell Planning Board
- Chuck Walkovich, Pepperell Select Board
- Joan Ladik, Pepperell Planning Board
- Stephen Themelis, Vice Chair, Pepperell Alternate
- Jayne Wellman, Assistant Treasurer, Tewksbury Select Board
- Ron Keohane, Tyngsborough Select Board
- Darrin Wizst, Westford Planning Board

Staff:

- Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director
- Kelly Lynema, Deputy Director
- Sara Schreiber, Finance and Benefits Manager
- Lesley Shahbazian, Executive Assistant
- Christopher Glenn Hayes, Housing and Economic Development Manager

**II. Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes of the December 20, 2023 meeting were distributed to all Councilors for review. Pat Wojtas identified some edits that were corrected. Based on a Motion by Darrin Wizst, seconded by Mary McBride on a roll call vote, the Council approved the Minutes of the December 20, 2023 meeting.

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) provided us with a favorable update regarding the approval for our Economic Development District designation. We also are likely to receive support via an EDA planning assistance grant. These funds will help us to update our next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

Meghan Tenhoff will start as NMCOG's new sustainability planner on January 22.

## **VI. Community Exchange**

**Billerica** – Mary McBride – Billerica is holding a special election regarding the Town Common project vote. The Town has a new voting machine and poll workers will be receiving training on the new equipment in the next few weeks.

**Chelmsford** – Pat Wojtas – Before the Governor announced 9C budget cuts, the Town maintained one of their earmarks for \$75,000 for a new police incident response van. Another earmark received half of the funding requested. Annita Tanini reported that there has been discussion about a citizens' petition for a Town Meeting warrant article to vote against approving the MBTA Communities zoning amendment.

**Dracut** – Heather Santiago Hutchings – There will be a joint Select Board and Planning Board meeting to discuss the MBTA Communities zoning being developed by Zoning Bylaw Review Committee. The Town is working with NMCOG on this and a community survey. Dracut is facing a \$2.5 million budget deficit. The Town Manager is investigating all revenue options, including an updated agreement with the public schools. The MA School Building Authority did not select the Greenmont School to move forward in the process. Dracut will resubmit the application next year.

**Dunstable** – Jim Wilkie – Dunstable has a budget deficit of over \$800,000 and the FY26 and FY27 projections are not positive. 62% of Dunstable's budget supports the school system, primarily based in Groton as part of a regional district. Dunstable is reviewing a 156-unit development at the corner of Main Street and Lowell Street. This would be a community with the primary residents being age 55 and older.

**Pepperell** - Joan Ladik – Pepperell continued interviewing prospective Town Planners. The Town hired a part-time consultant to assist with Planning Board meetings. In 2022 the town voted to approve the Community Preservation Act and a Community Preservation Committee was created. Pepperell is accepting applications for funding. Chuck Walkovich reported that a warehouse is being proposed and the applicant has been working to address any issues raised by community members.

**Tewksbury** – Jayne Wellman – Tewksbury submitted their draft MBTA Communities model to the state for review. The Town is aiming for a May Town

**CLERK'S CERTIFICATE**

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the meeting of  
January 17, 2024.

Attest:



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Mary K. McBride, Clerk

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments  
Vendor & Payroll Warrant  
02/22/2024 through 03/20/2024

Date: February 21, 2024

Amount: \$ 169,154.64

WE THE COUNCILORS OF NORTHERN MIDDLESEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS BY A MOTION  
TO APPROVE, VOTE IN FAVOR TO AUTHORIZE PAYMENT OF THIS WARRANT.

SIGNED: Jenny Raff, Executive Director  
Jennifer Raff

<u>Christopher Tjilrow</u>	, Billerica
<u>Samuel McNeill</u>	, Billerica
<u>Pat W. Jones</u>	, Billerica
	, Chelmsford
	, Chelmsford
	, Chelmsford
<u>James G.</u>	, Dracut
	, Dracut
	, Dracut
	, Dunstable
	, Dunstable
	, Dunstable
<u>Paul J.</u>	, Lowell
	, Lowell
	, Lowell
	, Pepperell
	, Pepperell
	, Pepperell
	, Tewksbury
	, Tewksbury
	, Tewksbury
	, Tyngsborough
	, Tyngsborough
	, Tyngsborough
	, Westford
	, Westford
	, Westford



Northern Middlesex Council of Governments  
Warrant Report

	<b>Vendor</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Description</b>
2/22	Anstiss	15,000.00	2023 (partial) Audit Services
2/22	Guardian IT Services	72.50	Admin/Offsite Services
2/22	Guardian IT Services	870.00	Admin/Offsite Services
2/22	Guardian IT Services	108.75	Admin/Offsite Services
2/22	Guardian IT Services	1,631.21	Admin/Offsite Services
2/22	Guardian IT Services	1,051.25	Admin/Offsite Services
2/22	Joyce Contractors	869.00	Office Furniture
2/22	Khmer Post USA	467.60	Posting
2/22	Khmer Post USA	452.00	Posting
2/22	National Grid Electric	425.88	National Grid Electric 12/23 - 1/22
2/22	National Grid Gas	582.79	National Grid Gas 12/23 - 1/22
2/22	Owl Stamp	54.00	Business Cards Mark
2/22	PCG	367.60	Offboarding process
2/22	Staples	183.77	Office Supplies
2/22	The Lowell Publishing Group	956.99	Public Notice posting in newspaper
2/22	The Main Street America group	1,476.00	Workers Comp renewal
2/22	The Warren Group	828.00	Subscription Renewal
2/22	URISA	195.00	Training/Devel Carlin
2/26	Verizon	50.00	Stormwater Mobile Broadband 4GB SHR
3/1	Canon Financial Services	682.83	Copier Lease February 2024
3/1	Farley White	7,477.92	Rent February 2024
3/1	Guardian Life	375.76	Life Insurance & AD&D March 2024
3/1	Staples	718.10	Office Supplies
3/2	GMS	274.00	January 2024 Accounting Software
3/5	B&H Photo-Video	199.71	Printer Supplies
3/6	MWMA	250.00	Annual Dues and Meeting Registration W&M
3/6	National Grid Gas	582.79	National Grid Gas 1/24 - 2/21
3/7	PCG	125.00	Local back up service agreement Mar/2024
3/7	WB Mason	52.49	Office Supplies
3/10	Ricelake	501.85	Cases for W&M
3/14	Coco Luna	900.00	Mill #5 rental for kickoff summit
3/15	Guardian IT Services	2,934.00	Back Up invoicing Oct-Mar
3/15	National Grid Electric	425.88	National Grid Electric 1/23 - 2/21
3/16	Stellar Story	1,125.00	Professional Services
3/17	Comcast	144.32	Business internet 3/10-4/9
3/20	M.I.I.A. Health Trust	30,584.47	*est Insurance Employee & Retiree March 2024

<b>Vendor Totals</b>	<b>72,996.46</b>
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	<b>PAYROLL &amp; TAXES</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Description</b>
2/29	PR-05	48,079.09	Pay period 02/10/24-02/23/24
3/14	PR-06	48,079.09	Pay period 02/24/24-03/08/24

<b>Payroll &amp; Taxes Totals</b>	<b>96,158.18</b>
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<b>Warrant Total</b>	<b>169,154.64</b>
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**Northern Middlesex Council of Governments  
 Schedule of Member Assessments  
 FY2025**

Member Municipalities	2020 U.S. Census Population	Population as a Percent of the Region	FY 2024 Assessment	FY 2025 Recommended Assessment	FY2026 Recommended Assessment	FY2027 Recommended Assessment
			Per Capita Rate: \$ 0.3491	+7% Per Capita Rate: \$ 0.3735	+8% Per Capita Rate: \$ 0.4034	+10% Per Capita Rate: \$ 0.4438
Billerica*	42,119	14%	14,704.70	15,733.00	16,991.65	18,690.81
Chelmsford	36,392	12%	12,705.27	13,593.76	14,681.26	16,149.39
Dracut	32,617	11%	11,387.33	12,183.66	13,158.35	14,474.18
Dunstable	3,358	1%	1,172.35	1,254.34	1,354.68	1,490.15
Lowell	115,554	37%	40,342.52	43,163.69	46,616.79	51,278.47
Pepperell	11,604	4%	4,051.22	4,334.52	4,681.29	5,149.41
Tewksbury	31,342	10%	10,942.20	11,707.40	12,643.99	13,908.39
Tyngsborough	12,380	4%	4,322.14	4,624.39	4,994.34	5,493.77
Westford	24,643	8%	8,603.43	9,205.07	9,941.48	10,935.63
	310,009	100%	\$ 108,231.16	\$ 115,799.83	\$ 125,063.82	\$ 137,570.20

\*Population does not include the inmates of county, state or federal institutions per MGL 40B Section 7

To: Northern Middlesex Council of Governments, Council and Alternate Members  
From: Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director  
Re: Executive Director's Report for January  
Date: January 2024

## REGIONAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES

### Transportation/ Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO)

- **Traffic Counting Program**

Staff finalized and advertised a Request for Proposals to retain a consultant to assist with data collection for the 2024 traffic counting season. This RFP was released on January 31, 2024 via COMMBUYS, the official procurement record system for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Staff will begin review of all bids on March 1. In the month of February, staff will work to finalize the count locations for the 2024 season with MassDOT and NMCOG member communities. The Annual 2023 Traffic Volume Report will be forthcoming.

- **Federal Certification Review**

Every four years, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are required to review the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted by the NMMPO, MassDOT, LRTA, area providers of public transportation, and local municipal partners in order to certify that they are carrying out the process in accordance with all applicable Federal requirements. As part of this review, staff hosted a public info session conducted by FHWA and FTA on January 24 to hear from the public on their views of how the metropolitan transportation planning process is conducted in the region.

Additionally, staff spent time in January preparing for a day-long Federal Certification Review meeting on February 8.

- **Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) Planning Support**

NMCOG staff began a comprehensive LRTA bus stop inventory, assessing and documenting the condition, accessibility, and amenities at each stop. Staff inventoried approximately 25% of LRTA bus stops and submitted a list of discrepancies to LRTA to review.

## REGIONAL ACTIVITIES AND COLLABORATION

- **Greater Lowell Vision Zero Plan**

Staff facilitated the third Vision Zero Advisory Committee meeting to assist with developing the Regional Safety Action Plan. During the virtual meeting, WSP presented the draft High Injury Crash Network and asked the committee members to provide specific areas of transportation safety concerns. Staff are planning a virtual public forum on February 27 from 6-8 p.m., during which WSP will present our region's high-injury crashes and high-risk networks. Register at : <https://bit.ly/GreaterLowellVZPF1> Finally, staff prepared a Greater Lowell Vision Zero Survey to encourage the community to share regional safety issues, inform project selection, and identify roadway improvements. Participants can enter specific locations, add comments, and propose roadway improvements using a mobile phone or a computer. Take the survey at <https://bit.ly/GreaterLowellVZSurvey>

that will be voted on by the CEDS committee in March and, if successful, presented to the NMCOG Council for a vote at the Council's March meeting. After adoption, the report is sent to EDA and posted on the NMCOG website.

- **Economic Development Administration (EDA) Grant**

NMCOG received a "merits further consideration" letter from the EDA for a \$75,000 planning grant to create a new Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS); this strategy is critical both for allowing NMCOG and its member communities to receive grants from EDA and for coordinating and prioritizing the activities of NMCOG; local, regional, and state economic development agencies; and municipalities. The current CEDS expires May 30, 2025. This letter outlines the final documentation that NMCOG must send by mid-February to be awarded the grant.

#### **ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITIES**

- **Multi-Family Zoning for MBTA Communities – Compliance Activities**

NMCOG continued work with communities subject to MBTA Communities Law across the region. NMCOG worked with planning staff in Chelmsford and Billerica to formalize public outreach plans leading up to their respective Town Meetings. The goal of the outreach is to educate the public, municipal staff and board members, and Town Meeting Members on the Section 3A MBTA Communities Multi-Family Zoning Law requirements, non-compliance consequences, selected district boundaries and the proposed bylaw amendments.

NMCOG staff continued work with Dracut to prepare for a February town-wide survey and two public informational sessions on February 8 and February 29. This included evaluating the compliance of areas selected by Dracut's Zoning Bylaw Review Committee (ZBRC) and Town staff and recommending possible options including the areas to present in the town-wide survey. NMCOG presented these options to a joint meeting of the Dracut Select Board, Planning Board, and ZBRC in January, adjusted the survey options based on their feedback, and worked with town staff on an agenda for the information sessions. The joint meeting also resulted in a unanimously-approved statement of intent to create compliant zoning.

NMCOG also hosted a monthly technical support conference call with all seven participating MBTA Communities from the NMCOG region on January 9.

- **Dunstable Union Building Rehabilitation and Future Use**

NMCOG met with the Dunstable Union Building Rehabilitation Committee on January 31 to review the 200 responses to the Union Building Reuse Survey and confirm plans for a second public meeting for the project, to be held on February 8.

- **Dunstable Mass Trails Grant**

Staff assisted the Town of Dunstable in preparing a scope of work, budget, application narrative, and submitting a grant application for MassTrails funding. The funding request is to study the feasibility of connecting Town-owned lands and key municipal, educational, commercial, recreational, and historic assets in Dunstable Town Center with the Town's new sidewalk to create a multi-use trail network. The study follows on recommendations in the

- **Personnel Update – Welcome, Meghan!**

Meghan Tenhoff joined NMCOG in January 2024 at a Sustainability Planner II. Using a climate justice lens, Meghan supports NMCOG's communities in sustainability planning through climate mitigation and adaptation projects and programs, hazard mitigation, community engagement and education, capacity building, water resource management, and grant writing.

Before joining NMCOG, she was a Climate Resilience Planner and Project Manager for Launch Consulting out of Charlottesville, Virginia, where she supported counties, cities, and utilities in preparing emergency response plans, hazard mitigation, climate action/adaptation plans, and led equity-focused community engagement and education projects.

Meghan holds a B.A. in Anthropology and Environmental Studies from the University of Washington and an M.A. in Urban & Environmental Policy & Planning from Tufts University. Her award-winning 2021 Master's Thesis explored the gendered differentials of climate action plans. Meghan is a member of the American Planning Association (APA), the American Society of Adaptation Professionals (ASAP), and EcoDistricts. Additionally, she holds a Certificate in Fundraising Management from the University of Washington and the ENV SP credential.



## Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

A Multi-Disciplinary Regional Planning Agency Serving:  
BillERICA – ChELMSford – DRacut – Dunstable – LowELl – PEPPERell – TEWksbury – TyngsbOROUGH – Westford

### Proposed FY25 and FY26 Budget Process and Timeline

Months/ Year	Activities
February, March, April 2024	Staff review and update expenses in operating budget and adjust revenue projections
April 2024	NMCOG sends invoices to communities for FY25
April, May, June 2024	Finalize FY25 contracts
May 22, 2024	Council Meeting to review and approve FY25 Budget
June 13, 2024	Final Strategic Planning Retreat
July, August 2024	Finalize draft Strategic Plan
August 2024	Begin Council Officer nominations and ballot distributed
September 2024	Council votes on Officers Council begins review of draft Strategic Plan Start FY26 Budget Process
October 16, 2024	NMCOG Annual Meeting Council votes to approve Strategic Plan
November 2024	Council vote on FY26 Community Assessments
October, November 2024	Executive Director and Deputy Director meet with Select Boards and Planning Boards to discuss priorities/ budget/ projects
December 2024	Send letters to Treasurers
April 2025	NMCOG sends invoices to communities for FY26
April, May 2025	Develop FY26 budget
	Staff review and update expenses in operating budget and adjust revenue projections
	Finalize FY26 contracts
May 2025	Council votes on FY26 budget
July 2025	New fiscal year begins