

WARD COUNCILLORS

1 – David R. Thibault-Muñoz
2 – Dana M. Heath
3 – Paul G. Tassone
4 – Karen G. Hardern
5 – Aleksander H. Dernalowicz, Esq.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT

George C. Tyros



COUNCILLORS AT LARGE

Calvin D. Brooks
Craig R. Cormier
Brad E. Heglin
Elizabeth J. Kazinskas
Judy A. Mack

City of Gardner Massachusetts

City Council



CALENDAR FOR THE MEETING

of

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 8, 2026

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER

7:30 P.M.

AMENDED

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. CALL OF THE ROLL OF COUNCILLORS

III. OPENING PRAYER

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

V. ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPEN MEETING RECORDINGS

Any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a meeting, or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to reasonable requirements of the chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. Any person intending to make such recording shall notify the Chair forthwith. All documents and exhibits used or referenced at the meeting must be submitted in duplicate to the City Clerk, as they become part of the Meeting Minutes.

VI. READING OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING(S)

- August 6, 2026 - Regular Meeting (*Page 5*)

VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

11922 A Communication from the Mayor Updating on the Status of City Property Sales(*Page 26*)

IX. PETITIONS, APPLICATIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

11923 - Gardner City Council Investigative Report: Review of Fraudulent Vendor Payment Incident and Opportunities for Process Improvement (*Page 33*)

X. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

FINANCE COMMITTEE

11841-A - An Ordinance to Amend Attachment F of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled "Primary Non-Union Compensation Schedule" to add the position of Transfer Station Safety Program Development and Compliance Coordinator (*Page 40*)

11862 – An Ordinance to Increase Oversight of Professional Development and Travel, (*6/16/26 Submitted; 7/1/26 more time, 7/29/26 meeting 2 and referred to Council, 8/3 First Printing*)(*Page 42*)

11870 – An Ordinance to Increase Financial Transparency, Financial Governance, and Budget Preparedness, (*6/23/26 Submitted; 7/1/26 more time, 7/24/26 Meeting 1. 7/29/26 Meeting 2 and referred to Council, 8/3 More Time*)(*Page 43*)

11872 - A Measure Accepting a Donation of \$5,000.00 from Lynn Barrieau, in Memory of Deputy Chief Rock Barrieau (ret.), For Gardner Police Department Community Policing Programs (*6/24/2026 submitted; 7/1/2026 Finance Meeting 1, more time, 7/24/26 Finance Meeting 2-referred to City Council*) (*Page 45*)

11873 - A Measure Accepting a Donation to the City of Gardner from Keller Partners Co. of an American Flag flown over the US Capitol Building to Commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the United States (*6/24/2026 submitted; 7/1/2026 Finance Meeting 1, more time, 7/24/26 Finance Meeting 2-referred to City Council*) (*Page 48*)

11874 - A Measure Accepting a Donation of a 2026 Chevrolet Pick Up Truck for the Gardner Police Department K9 Program (*6/24/2026 submitted; 7/1/2026 Finance Meeting 1, more time, 7/24/26 Finance Meeting 2-referred to City Council*) (*Page 51*)

11885- An Ordinance To Amend Section 22 of Chapter 600 the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled "Parking Meter Fees Waived," to add a new exemption for Blue Star Plates (*7/7/26 submitted, 7/24/26 Meeting 1, 7/29/26 Meeting 2 and referred to Council, 8/3 First Printing*)(*Page 54*)

11919 - An Order Transferring the sum of \$189,009.21 from Various FY2026 Salary Accounts to the City Health Insurance Operating Expense Account (*Pending a vote suspending Council Rule 22*) (*submitted 8-25-26, 8/28 Meeting 1, referred to City Council*)(*Page 65*)

11920 - A Measure Setting the Rate of Compensation for the City Conservation Agent (*Pending a vote suspending Council Rule 22*) (*submitted 8-25-26, 8/28 Finance Meeting 1, referred to City Council*)(*Page 68*)

11921 - A Measure Setting the Rate of Compensation for the Assistant Director of Community Development and Planning (*Pending a vote suspending Council Rule 22*) (*submitted 8-25-26, 8/28 Finance Meeting 1, referred to City Council*) (*Page 71*)

XI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND MATTERS FOR RECONSIDERATION

XII. NEW BUSINESS

XIII. COUNCIL COMMENTS AND REMARKS

XIV. CLOSING PRAYER

XV. ADJOURNMENT

Items listed on the Council Calendar are those reasonably anticipated by the Council President to be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Gardner City Council was called to order by President George Tyros at 7:30 p.m.

Roll Call

Present:

- President George Tyros
- Councillor Calvin Brooks
- Councillor Craig Cormier
- Councillor Alek Dernalowicz
- Councillor Dana Heath
- Councillor Brad Heglin
- Councillor Judy Mack
- Councillor Elizabeth Kazinskas
- Councillor Paul Tassone
- Councillor David Thibault-Muñoz

Absent:

- Councillor Karen Hardern

A quorum was declared present.

The Council recited the Opening Prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Open Meeting Law Announcement

President Tyros announced that any person wishing to make an audio or video recording of the meeting, or transmit the meeting through any medium, was required to notify the Chair pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A, §20.

APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

The Chair explained that, following concerns previously raised by the Council regarding the quality and timeliness of meeting minutes, the City Clerk had completed a comprehensive review of all outstanding Council and committee minutes dating back to the beginning of 2024. The review identified corrective actions necessary to ensure the accuracy of the official record and improve future processing of Council minutes.

The Chair commended the City Clerk for the extensive work involved, noting that approximately 53 sets of minutes had been developed, along with corrections to Council records and website postings. He further stated that, going forward, the Council should strive to consider minutes in chronological order and within approximately thirty days of each meeting as a matter of best practice.

Amendment to Previously Distributed Minutes

Councillor Dernalowicz moved to amend the May 12, 2026 (School Budget), June 8, 2026 Special Meeting, June 22, 2026 Committee of the Whole, and June 22, 2026 Special Meeting minutes by correcting the meeting type in the call to order section, replacing the word "Regular" with the appropriate designation ("Informal," "Special," or "Committee of the Whole," as applicable).

Seconded by Councillor Kazinskas.

Vote: Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes

Councillor Mack moved to approve the following meeting minutes, as amended:

- August 5, 2024 Regular Meeting
- January 8, 2026 Inauguration Ceremony
- April 21, 2026 Regular Meeting
- May 4, 2026 Regular Meeting
- May 12, 2026 Informal Meeting (School Budget)
- May 12, 2026 Informal Meeting
- May 18, 2026 Regular Meeting
- May 26, 2026 Informal Meeting
- June 1, 2026 Regular Meeting
- June 8, 2026 Special Meeting
- June 15, 2026 Regular Meeting
- June 22, 2026 Committee of the Whole
- June 22, 2026 Special Meeting
- July 6, 2026 Regular Meeting

Seconded by Councillor Kazinskas.

Vote: Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

Executive Session Minutes

The Council recessed briefly to allow members to review the executive session minutes of May 12, 2026 and May 26, 2026.

Upon returning to open session, Councillor Kazinskas moved to approve both sets of executive session minutes.

Seconded by Councillor Mack.

Vote: Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

The Clerk collected the executive session minutes following the vote.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

Item 11902 – Response to Item No. 11857: City Charter Section 25 Information Request Regarding Compliance with City Code Article I, §464-1

Councillor Heglin moved to place the communication on file.

Seconded by Councillor Dernalowicz.

During discussion, Councillor Kazinskas thanked both the Mayor and the Council President for their efforts in resolving the issue. She stated that while she appreciated the matter had ultimately been corrected, she remained concerned that a department head had failed to follow City Code, that the issue had remained unresolved for several months after being identified, and that formal Council action ultimately became necessary before compliance was achieved. She emphasized the Council's oversight responsibility and expressed the hope that similar situations would be resolved more promptly in the future.

There being no further discussion, the motion to place the communication on file carried by voice vote.

Item No. 11895 – A Measure Transferring Various FY2026 Salary and Wage Appropriations to Various FY2026 Operating Expense Appropriations

Council Rule 22 was suspended without objection to permit immediate consideration of the item.

Finance Committee Chair Dernalowicz explained that the measure, along with the next several agenda items, involved year-end transfers between salary, wage, and operating expense accounts. He advised the Council that revisions had been made to Items 11895 and 11899 and

requested a brief recess so members could review the amended documents distributed at the meeting.

Following the recess, Councillor Dernalowicz explained that the amendment to Item 11895 added the Police Department section, which had been inadvertently omitted from the original submission, and removed the Mayor's Unclassified appropriation related to Waterford Energy, Utilities, and Telephone expenses. He noted that the latter transfer would instead be addressed under Item No. 11899.

Councillor Dernalowicz then moved to amend the measure by changing the total transfer amount from **\$218,871.85** to **\$149,548.00**.

Seconded by Councillor Mack.

Vote on Amendment: Motion carried by voice vote.

Councillor Brooks stated that he supported the transfer and appreciated that these adjustments were now being brought before the Council rather than handled administratively without Council awareness. He expressed hope that similar transfers would be presented throughout the fiscal year, rather than as one large package at year-end, so the Council could better monitor departmental spending and maintain greater transparency regarding the City's finances.

Council President Tyros agreed, noting that improved financial reporting and the financial transparency ordinance pending before the Council would provide better visibility into transfers and the City's fiscal condition throughout the year.

There being no further discussion, the Clerk called the roll.

Brooks	Cornier	Heglin	Dernalowicz	Hardern	Heath	Kazinskas	Mack	Tassone	Thibault-Muñoz	Mr President
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	DNV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Item No. 11896 – A Measure Transferring Various FY2026 Operating Expense Appropriations to Various FY2026 Salary and Wage Appropriations

Council Rule 22 was suspended without objection.

Councillor Dernalowicz moved adoption of the measure.

Seconded by Councillor Heglin.

There being no discussion, the Clerk called the roll.

Brooks	Cornier	Heglin	Dernalowicz	Hardern	Heath	Kazinskas	Mack	Tassone	Thibault-Muñoz	Mr President
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	DNV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Item No. 11897 – A Measure Transferring Various FY2026 Departmental Salary and Wage Appropriations to Other FY2026 Departmental Salary and Wage Appropriations

Council Rule 22 was suspended without objection.

Councillor Dernalowicz moved adoption of the measure.

Seconded by Councillor Heglin.

There being no discussion, the Clerk called the roll.

Brooks	Cornier	Heglin	Dernalowicz	Hardern	Heath	Kazinskas	Mack	Tassone	Thibault-Muñoz	Mr President
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	DNV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Item No. 11898 – A Measure Transferring Various FY2026 Departmental Operating Expense Appropriations to Various Other FY2026 Departmental Operating Expense Appropriations

Council Rule 22 was suspended without objection.

Councillor Dernalowicz moved adoption of the measure.

Seconded by Councillor Heglin.

There being no discussion, the Clerk called the roll.

Brooks	Cormier	Heglin	Dernalowicz	Hardern	Heath	Kazinskas	Mack	Tassone	Thibault-Muñoz	Mr President
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	DNV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Item No. 11899 – An Order Transferring Various FY2026 Departmental Salary and Wage Appropriations to FY2026 Departmental Operating Expense Appropriations

Council Rule 22 was suspended without objection.

Councillor Dernalowicz moved adoption of the order.

Seconded by Councillor Heglin.

Councillor Dernalowicz then moved to amend the order by changing the total transfer amount from **\$87,356.55** to **\$163,178.34**.

Seconded by Councillor Heglin.

Vote on Amendment: Motion carried by voice vote.

There being no further discussion, the Clerk called the roll.

Brooks	Cormier	Heglin	Dernalowicz	Hardern	Heath	Kazinskas	Mack	Tassone	Thibault-Muñoz	Mr President
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	DNV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Item No. 11862 – An Ordinance to Increase Oversight of Professional Development and Travel

Councillor Heglin moved that the ordinance be sent to **First Printing**.

Seconded by Councillor Dernalowicz.

Speaking in support of the motion, Councillor Heglin explained that the proposal stemmed from discussions held during the FY2026 budget process regarding the City's professional development and travel expenditures. He noted that Council members had raised concerns about oversight of those expenditures, resulting in the consolidation of professional development and travel appropriations into a single budget account during the FY2027 budget process. While emphasizing that neither he nor the Council opposed professional development, he stated that the Council sought greater accountability and transparency regarding the expenditure of those funds.

Councillor Heglin summarized the ordinance as establishing minimum standards for the administration of professional development and travel funding. Under the proposal, employees, including the Mayor, would submit written requests identifying the professional development opportunity, its cost, the reason for attendance, and the anticipated benefit to the City. Those requests would then be provided to the Council on a periodic basis through the City Auditor or by another reporting method established by the Council. He stated that the ordinance was intended to establish a baseline level of accountability while allowing future administrations to implement additional procedures if desired.

Councillor Heglin further noted that the Human Resources Director had already developed a comprehensive request form incorporating many of the concepts contained in the proposed ordinance, demonstrating that the administrative process envisioned by the ordinance was both practical and achievable. He characterized the measure as creating a foundation upon which future Councils could build if additional oversight proved necessary.

Councillor Brooks stated that while he believed the ordinance had been thoughtfully prepared, he was not inclined to support it at that time. He observed that the Council had recently restructured the professional development budget by consolidating funding into the Mayor's Unclassified account and believed that existing review procedures surrounding those appropriations already provided an adequate level of oversight. He questioned whether additional legislation was necessary given those changes and sought clarification regarding how the funds would be administered going forward.

In response, Finance Committee Chair Dernalowicz stated that all financial transfers, including those involving professional development appropriations, would continue to come before the Council for review where appropriate. He suggested that adopting the ordinance would not prevent future adjustments should the Council later determine that additional or fewer reporting requirements were warranted.

At the invitation of the Chair, Mayor Michael Nicholson addressed the Council regarding the administration's intended process. The Mayor explained that, after discussions held during the budget process, the administration intended to pay professional development expenses directly from the consolidated Mayor's Unclassified account rather than transferring funds into individual

departmental budgets. He stated that this approach would avoid delays associated with Council approval of transfers, particularly where employees needed to register for conferences or licensing courses before the Council's next scheduled meeting. The Mayor further explained that periodic reports from the City Auditor would provide the Council with visibility into expenditures while avoiding administrative delays.

Councillor Mack stated that she recalled the Council's earlier discussions differently than had been suggested. She explained that the intent had not been to require Council approval of transfers for each professional development request, but rather to have the City Auditor maintain records showing how expenditures from the consolidated account were allocated among departments. She expressed concern that requiring transfers for every expenditure would unnecessarily complicate the process and potentially delay employees' participation in required training or licensing programs.

Councillor Brooks sought additional clarification regarding whether all professional development expenditures would continue to be paid directly from the Mayor's Unclassified account rather than departmental budgets. Councillor Heglin responded that such an approach would remain permissible under the proposed ordinance and acknowledged that concerns regarding administrative efficiency and timing were valid. He stated that, although there could be merit in requiring transfers, the Council should first evaluate the effectiveness of the new reporting system before considering additional requirements in the future. He reiterated that the ordinance established only a minimum framework and could later be strengthened if necessary.

Before calling the question, Council President Tyros reminded members that sending an ordinance to First Printing allowed additional time for review, public comment, and potential amendment before final adoption.

There being no further discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion to send the ordinance to **First Printing** carried, with Councillor Brooks voting in opposition.

Item No. 11870 – An Ordinance to Increase Financial Transparency, Financial Governance, and Budget Preparedness

Introducing the measure, Councillor Heglin stated that the proposal was intended to strengthen the City's long-term financial planning and establish more consistent reporting practices. He explained that, while he intended to allow additional time for review before final action, he wished to provide the Council with an overview of the ordinance's principal provisions.

Councillor Heglin stated that the ordinance sought to improve fiscal discipline by requiring the administration to provide more financial information to the Council both earlier and more frequently throughout the fiscal year. He noted that one of the proposal's central features required preparation of an annual five-year financial forecast, enabling both the administration and the Council to engage in more meaningful long-term planning rather than responding only after fiscal challenges had developed. Councillor Heglin explained that the ordinance was intended to create a more proactive approach to municipal financial management by requiring regular revenue projections, spending reports, and long-term planning rather than relying solely on the annual budget process.

He further stated that the proposal reflected recommendations and best practices promoted by the Massachusetts Division of Local Services and incorporated concerns raised by members of the Council during recent budget deliberations, particularly regarding revenue reporting, financial forecasting, and budget transparency. He emphasized that Gardner operated an organization with an annual budget exceeding \$85 million and should adopt financial management practices consistent with that level of responsibility.

Councillor Heglin noted that one section of the ordinance would require the Mayor to prepare an annual five-year financial forecast, allowing both the administration and the Council to better anticipate future obligations and financial challenges. He observed that while preparing the initial forecast would require significant effort, maintaining and updating it annually would become substantially easier and would provide the City with a valuable planning tool.

He further stated that additional sections would require more frequent revenue projections and expenditure reports, enabling the Council to identify developing financial issues before they became year-end problems.

Councillor Heglin also explained that portions of the proposal were inspired by comments made by Councillor Brooks during the FY2027 budget process regarding the difficulty of evaluating revenue estimates and projected expenditures within the statutory budget timetable. By requiring earlier reporting and regular updates throughout the fiscal year, he believed future Councils would have better information available when making budget decisions.

He stated that requiring earlier revenue projections and periodic financial reports would allow both the Council and the public to better understand the City's fiscal condition before major budget decisions were made. He reiterated that the ordinance was intended to improve planning, increase transparency, and establish consistent financial reporting practices rather than limit the administration's authority.

Councillor Heglin concluded by stating that, because of the breadth of the proposal, he preferred that the ordinance remain before the Council for additional review before advancing further. He welcomed comments from members and moved that the matter remain on the agenda for **more time**.

Seconded by Councillor Dernalowicz.

Councillor Brooks expressed appreciation for the work that had gone into preparing the ordinance and stated that he supported taking additional time for review. Drawing upon his own experience preparing municipal financial reports, he observed that while some of the proposed reporting requirements would be relatively straightforward, others would require considerable effort.

Councillor Brooks explained that he had been working closely with the City Auditor regarding financial reporting and noted that the Auditor had inherited significant challenges after the position remained vacant for several months. He stated that much of the Auditor's recent work had necessarily focused on closing out FY2026 and preparing the FY2027 budget, limiting the City's ability to produce the type of comprehensive reports contemplated by the ordinance. Nevertheless, he indicated that he believed many of the reports requested by the ordinance could soon be generated using the City's financial software and anticipated that regular monthly reporting could begin during FY2027. He stated that he generally supported the direction of the proposal and appreciated the opportunity to review it further before final action.

Following Councillor Brooks' remarks, there being no further discussion, the Chair called the question on Councillor Heglin's motion for **more time**.

Vote: Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously, and the ordinance was granted **more time**.

Item No. 11880 – An Order Transferring Reappropriated Bond Proceeds from the Greenwood Pool Roof Replacement Project to the Perry Auditorium Window Replacement Project

Councillor Heglin moved adoption of the order.

Seconded by Councillor Dernalowicz.

Speaking in support of the motion, Councillor Heglin reported that the Finance Committee had unanimously recommended approval. He explained that the order would transfer approximately **\$65,000** in remaining bond proceeds from the Greenwood Pool Roof Replacement Project to the Perry Auditorium Window Replacement Project, while leaving approximately **\$81,000** in the Greenwood Pool account should additional eligible needs arise.

Councillor Heglin stated that, as work progressed at Perry Auditorium, additional conditions had been discovered that increased project costs. Specifically, asbestos abatement and mitigation were required, and deterioration of the existing wooden window frames was more extensive than originally anticipated, making it impossible to adequately support modern insulated windows without additional reconstruction. He noted that although contingencies had been included in the project budget, these unforeseen conditions necessitated additional funding.

There being no further discussion, the Clerk called the roll.

Brooks	Cornier	Heglin	Dernalowicz	Hardern	Heath	Kazinskas	Mack	Tassone	Thibault-Muñoz	Mr President
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	DNV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Item No. 11881 – An Order Rescinding Portions of Reappropriated Bond Proceeds to Various Capital Projects with a Lifespan of at Least 30 Years

Councillor Heglin moved adoption of the order.

Seconded by Councillor Dernalowicz.

Councillor Heglin explained that the order was related to another item appearing later on the agenda. He stated that it would rescind previously reappropriated bond proceeds intended for Community Center electrical improvements, flooring upgrades, and concrete accessibility improvements. He emphasized that work already underway, including construction of the concrete ramp serving the future Senior Center entrance, would continue to completion. However, additional planned concrete work and other improvements would be deferred while the City sought alternate funding sources.

Councillor Heglin stated that the Finance Committee unanimously supported the order because more pressing capital needs had since arisen at the Community Center and those funds would be redirected accordingly.

There being no further discussion, the motion was adopted by **voice vote**.

Item No. 11885 – An Ordinance to Amend Section 22 of Chapter 600 of the Code of the City of Gardner ("Parking Meter Fees Waived") to Add an Exemption for Blue Star Plates

Councillor Heglin moved that the ordinance be sent to **First Printing**.

Seconded by Councillor Dernalowicz.

Councillor Heglin explained that the ordinance would extend Gardner's existing parking meter fee exemption to vehicles displaying newly authorized Massachusetts **Blue Star**

commemorative license plates. He noted that the plates, recently authorized by the Commonwealth, recognize the immediate family members of law enforcement officers who died in the line of duty.

He explained that eligibility for the plate was limited by state law, including restrictions limiting issuance to one qualifying plate per eligible vehicle and family. Adoption of the ordinance would therefore extend Gardner's existing parking exemption to those qualifying vehicles. Councillor Heglin further observed that Gardner would become the first municipality in Massachusetts to recognize Blue Star plates in this manner and noted that representatives of MassCOP were present in support of the proposal.

The Finance Committee unanimously recommended the ordinance.

There being no further discussion, the motion to send the ordinance to **First Printing** carried by **voice vote**.

Item Nos. 11887, 11888, and 11890 – Acceptance of Donations

Upon motion of Councillor Mack, and without objection from the Council, Items **11887**, **11888**, and **11890** were considered together.

The Clerk read:

- **Item 11887** – A Measure Accepting Donations to the Gardner Animal Shelter.
- **Item 11888** – A Measure Accepting Donations for the Gardner Food Truck Festival from Gateway Fiber.
- **Item 11890** – A Measure Accepting a Donation of **\$2,019.00** from Amanda Morse to the Gardner Police Department Domestic Violence Division.

Speaking on behalf of the Finance Committee, Councillor Mack summarized each donation. She noted that the Animal Shelter continued to receive generous monetary and in-kind donations from members of the community, all of which were detailed in the Council packet. She further recognized **Gateway Fiber** for its **\$1,000 donation** supporting the Gardner Food Truck Festival and explained that Human Resources Director **Amanda Morse** had organized a successful meat raffle fundraiser benefiting the Police Department's Domestic Violence Division, resulting in the \$2,019 donation.

Councillor Mack reported that the Finance Committee unanimously recommended acceptance of all three donations and moved adoption of the measures.

Seconded by Councillor Dernalowicz.

Before the vote, Councillor Mack, speaking on behalf of the Council, expressed appreciation to all of the donors for their generosity and support of City programs and services.

There being no further discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously. The donations were accepted.

Item No. 11892 – Order to Reappropriate Unexpended Bond Proceeds to Other Capital Projects – Waterford Community Center Asbestos Abatement

Councillor Mack moved adoption of the order.

Seconded by Councillor Dernalowicz.

Presenting the Finance Committee's recommendation, Councillor Mack explained that the order would reappropriate previously authorized bond proceeds to fund asbestos abatement at the **Waterford Street Community Center**, specifically within the building's two-story wing. She further explained that the project would include installation of a new water service line sized to accommodate a future fire sprinkler system. Although installation of the sprinkler system itself was not currently required, providing the water service during the present construction project would avoid substantially greater costs in the future.

Councillor Mack acknowledged that the asbestos abatement work would temporarily delay occupancy of portions of the Community Center by agencies intending to relocate there. However, she emphasized that completing the work was necessary to ensure the long-term safety of all future occupants. She also directed the Council's attention to the June 11, 2026 engineering report included in the meeting packet, which supported the recommended work.

Councillor Dernalowicz stated that he had participated in the walkthrough of the building with representatives of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. He reported that the inspection had been thorough and that consultants had advised those present that the portions of the building currently occupied remained safe while the asbestos abatement project was being planned and implemented.

Councillor Heglin noted that the previously adopted order rescinding bond proceeds from other Community Center improvements would provide the funding for this project.

Councillor Brooks expressed support for inclusion of funding for an **Owner's Project Manager (OPM)**. He stated that having an independent professional overseeing the project on behalf of the City would help ensure that the Council received objective assessments regarding the building's condition, project progress, and any additional work that might become necessary. Although employing an OPM represented an additional expense, he believed it would ultimately provide significant value by protecting the City's interests throughout the project.

Responding to Councillor Brooks' comments, Councillor Mack noted that during each of the Finance Committee's two most recent meetings, the committee had requested that, once an Interim Building Commissioner had been appointed, the Mayor provide the Council with a comprehensive status report identifying all outstanding projects at the Community Center and the status of each. She stated that such reporting would assist the Council in monitoring the project's progress and future capital planning.

There being no further discussion, the Clerk called the roll.

Brooks	Cormier	Heglin	Dermalowicz	Hardern	Heath	Kazinskas	Mack	Tassone	Thibault-Muñoz	Mr President
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	DNV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Item No. 11756 – Measure Confirming the Mayor's Appointment of Dennis Ashe as Plumbing and Gas Inspector

Councillor Heath reported that the Appointments Committee had reviewed the appointment and unanimously recommended confirmation.

Councillor Heath moved confirmation of the appointment.

Seconded by Councillor Heglin.

Speaking in support of the appointment, Councillor Heath stated that Mr. Ashe had recently completed a temporary appointment in the position, during which he quickly proved to be a valuable asset to both the Building Department and the City. Prior to entering municipal service, Mr. Ashe owned and operated his own plumbing company for many years, bringing **38 years of trade experience** and extensive knowledge of state plumbing and gas codes. Councillor Heath further noted that Mr. Ashe had made himself highly accessible to residents and contractors, approaching inspections as opportunities to educate and assist the public. He also received strong recommendations from the Mayor, former Building Commissioner McDonald, and Interim Building Commissioner Roland Jean. Councillor Heath concluded by stating that Mr. Ashe intended to complete his career with the City of Gardner and that the Appointments Committee unanimously recommended confirming the appointment.

There being no further discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously. The appointment of Dennis Ashe as Plumbing and Gas Inspector for a term expiring December 3, 2028, was confirmed.

Item Nos. 11797 and 11798 – Approval of Job Description Changes for the Human Resources Director and Youth Services Director

Councillor Kazinskas requested that **Items 11797 and 11798** be considered together. Hearing no objection, the Chair directed the Clerk to read Item 11798.

Councillor Kazinskas reported that the Appointments Committee had reviewed the proposed revisions to the job descriptions for the **Human Resources Director** and **Youth Services Director** and unanimously recommended approval.

Councillor Kazinskas moved approval of both job descriptions.

Seconded by Councillor Heglin.

There being no discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously. The revised job descriptions for the Human Resources Director and Youth Services Director were approved.

Item No. 11839 – Measure Authorizing a Job Description for a Transfer Station Safety Program Development and Compliance Coordinator

Councillor Heath reported that the Appointments Committee had reviewed the proposed job description and unanimously recommended approval.

Councillor Heath moved adoption of the measure.

Seconded by Councillor Dernalowicz.

Speaking in support of the measure, Councillor Heath explained that it represented the final administrative step in implementing a position that had already been established and funded by the Council. He stated that expanded safety requirements issued by the Massachusetts Department of Labor Standards and OSHA had created the need for dedicated oversight at the City's transfer station and capped landfill to ensure compliance with updated workplace safety standards.

Councillor Heath further explained that the position would be funded by reducing the hours allocated to an existing vacant Transfer Station Monitor position, resulting in **no additional cost to the City**. He concluded by noting that the Appointments Committee unanimously recommended approval.

There being no further discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously. The measure was adopted.

Item No. 11907 – Quarterly Economic and Community Development Update

Councillor Kazinskas presented the Committee's quarterly report, explaining that the committee met on **July 29, 2026**, with Community Development and Planning Director Jason Stevens providing his second quarterly update of the year. The June update had been deferred until July to allow additional progress on departmental projects.

Beginning with staffing, Councillor Kazinskas reported that the Department of Community Development and Planning had experienced the departures of the Assistant Director and Conservation Planning Agent. Although both employees had moved on for personal and professional reasons, department staff continued to advance projects and support City boards and commissions. She noted that hiring for the Assistant Director position was in its final Human Resources review while recruitment for the Conservation Agent position remained ongoing.

Councillor Kazinskas next reviewed several major capital and planning projects:

- **Rear Main Street South Project:** The \$3.5 million MassWorks-funded project had been awarded and was under contract. Current efforts were focused on acquisition of a key parcel needed to support future private development, parking, and underground utilities. No private developer had yet been selected.
- **Waterford Street Community Center:** Staff were seeking approval to redirect approximately **\$122,000 in CDBG funding** from previously planned fire and electrical improvements to asbestos abatement in the future Senior Center space. Environmental reviews and required documentation were being prepared for the funding amendment.
- **Community Development Block Grant Programs:** CDBG funds continued to support youth recreation scholarships, domestic violence prevention, food assistance through the Gardner Community Action Committee, and veterans' services through Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center. Increased funding this year included assistance for the Community Action Committee's new food delivery van.
- **Rear Main Street North Project:** Construction was nearing completion, with remaining work dependent upon National Grid and Verizon completing utility relocations before final electrical work and removal of existing utility poles could occur. Director Stevens continued working directly with both utilities to avoid delays.
- **South Gardner Village Center Utility Improvements:** Survey work had been completed, and the design team was awaiting right-of-way information from National Grid before advancing to the next phase of relocating overhead utilities underground.

Councillor Kazinskas also reported that the department continued work on numerous long-range planning initiatives, including the Downtown Phase V Project, Greenwood Memorial Pavilion,

Master Plan update, Hazard Mitigation Plan, Housing Production Plan, Municipal Surplus Property Plan, and Downtown Mobility Plan. She emphasized that maintaining these plans positions the City to compete successfully for future grant opportunities and disaster recovery funding.

Regarding the **Greenwood Memorial Pavilion**, Councillor Kazinskas explained that currently available funding would construct the pavilion structure while additional fundraising and grant efforts would support future historical features and site improvements. She noted that architectural elements salvaged from the former Greenwood Memorial Pool had been inventoried, preserved, and would ultimately be incorporated into the completed pavilion. Future phases would also address lighting, maintenance, and related infrastructure improvements.

Following completion of the report, Councillor Kazinskas moved that the quarterly update be **placed on file**.

Seconded by Councillor Cormier.

There being no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Item No. 11820 – Application for a Class II Motor Vehicle Dealer's License – J&T Trailer Sales, 421 West Broadway

Following clarification that suspension of the rules was not required because the matter properly appeared under New Business, Councillor Tassone explained that the application had been reviewed with the City Clerk and that the delay in bringing the application forward resulted from an administrative oversight. He stated that the applicant was otherwise in good standing and moved approval of the license application.

Seconded by Councillor Thibault-Muñoz.

There being no discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously. The Class II Motor Vehicle Dealer's License application for J&T Trailer Sales was approved.

Item No. 11900 – Assistant City Clerk Pay Measure

President Tyros announced that he would temporarily relinquish the chair so that he could address the measure. Councillor Kazinskas assumed the chair during consideration of the item.

Speaking in support of the measure, President Tyros explained that this was the third time he had presented such a compensation measure during his tenure as Council President and wished to clarify the purpose of the City's recently adopted compensation system. He stated that the Council had reformed the compensation structure to improve employee recruitment and retention while maintaining an appropriate salary floor.

President Tyros explained that the current system allows prior professional experience to be credited within the established salary schedule, enabling the City to recruit qualified mid-career candidates while still accommodating entry-level applicants. He emphasized that this approach was neither unique nor unprecedented, noting that comparable systems are widely used by other municipalities and had long existed within other City departments.

President Tyros further noted that the Council packet included the newly hired Assistant City Clerk's résumé, letter of interest, and proposed salary placement. He then moved adoption of the pay measure.

Seconded by Councillor Heglin.

There being no discussion, the Acting Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously. The Assistant City Clerk pay measure was adopted.

President Tyros then resumed the chair.

Item No. 11901 – Order Transferring \$2,228 within the City Clerk's Budget

Councillor Dernalowicz explained that the order would transfer **\$2,228** from the City Clerk's Overtime Salary and Wage Account to the Minor Equipment Expense Account to purchase two HP ProBook laptop computers for the City Clerk and the newly hired Assistant City Clerk. He noted that the Assistant City Clerk had been sharing equipment and already was working significant hours for the City.

Councillor Dernalowicz moved adoption of the order.

Seconded by Councillor Mack.

There being no discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously. The transfer order was adopted.

Item No. 11903 – Report on the Status of City Council Minutes

Councillor Brooks moved that the report be **placed on file**.

Seconded by Councillor Cormier.

There being no discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously. The report was placed on file.

Item No. 11904 – September 1, 2026 State Primary Order

Councillor Dernalowicz explained that this item, together with the following two agenda items, related to preparations for the upcoming September 1, 2026 State Primary Election. He noted that the Council annually adopts these measures before each primary and general election.

Councillor Dernalowicz moved adoption of the order.

Seconded by Councillor Heglin.

There being no discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously. The order was adopted.

Item No. 11905 – Appointment of Election Workers for 2026

Councillor Dernalowicz moved approval of the appointments.

Seconded by Councillor Heglin.

There being no discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously. The appointments of election workers were approved.

Item No. 11906 – Police Officer Election Poll Detail Assignments

Councillor Dernalowicz moved approval of the police officer election poll detail assignments.

Seconded by Councillor Heglin.

There being no discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously. The police officer election poll detail assignments were approved.

Council Comments and Remarks

The Chair opened the floor for Council Comments and Remarks.

Councillor Brooks

Councillor Brooks referenced the Council's recent votes on the upcoming September primary election and addressed public discussion surrounding election security. Drawing upon his experience working for the City and serving as an Assistant Registrar of Voters, he stated that Gardner and the Commonwealth maintain a secure election system.

Councillor Brooks explained that established election procedures make it virtually impossible for individuals to vote more than once or otherwise manipulate the election process. He noted that while ballots are counted electronically when cast, the physical ballots are retained and are subject to state-required post-election audits in which ballots are hand-counted to verify the accuracy of machine tabulations. He further observed that election equipment is tested by the City Clerk's Office before each election to ensure it functions properly.

Concluding his remarks, Councillor Brooks stated that residents should have confidence in the integrity of Gardner's elections and thanked the City Clerk's Office and election workers throughout the Commonwealth for their dedication to administering honest and secure elections.

Councillor Heath

Councillor Heath thanked the City Clerk for her dedication and hard work, noting that she had been working long hours and frequently sending emails late into the evening. He expressed appreciation for her efforts and, referencing the Council's earlier approval of laptop computers for the Clerk's Office, jokingly suggested that the next improvement should be providing the City Clerk with a proper nameplate at the Council table.

Councillor Tassone

Councillor Tassone reflected on several committee reports presented during the meeting, particularly the Economic and Community Development Committee update. He stated that

effective leadership requires creating an environment where employees want to remain, grow professionally, and work toward common goals.

He observed that while hope is important, it is not itself a strategy, emphasizing that successful leadership requires a clear plan. Councillor Tassone remarked that he believed the City Council had been moving in the right direction through its work and expressed appreciation for the leadership provided by the Council President. He concluded by encouraging continued attention to leadership throughout City government to ensure departments foster positive workplace cultures and shared goals.

Councillor Kazinskas

Councillor Kazinskas responded to Councillor Tassone's comments by highlighting the Department of Community Development and Planning as an example of positive organizational leadership. She noted that although two employees had recently left the department, both departed on positive terms.

She explained that the Conservation Planning Agent left to pursue further education and publicly expressed appreciation for his experience working for the City. Likewise, the former Assistant Director spoke positively about the opportunities she had been given and the projects she completed during her tenure before accepting another position for personal reasons.

Councillor Kazinskas stated that these departures reflected the positive workplace culture fostered by Director Jason Stevens. She observed that both employees had spoken favorably about their experiences before the Economic and Community Development Committee, demonstrating the department's commitment to employee development and professional growth.

Councillor Cormier

Councillor Cormier encouraged residents seeking local entertainment to attend the Theatre at the Mount production of **"Footloose"** over the following two weekends. He praised Mount Wachusett Community College's theatre program, describing it as a high-quality and affordable cultural resource for the community.

President Tyros

President Tyros then recognized a recent donation to the City. He announced that Representative Jonathan Zlotnik had secured, through the nonprofit **Revolution 250**, a framed replica of the **Declaration of Independence** modeled after the copies distributed in 1776. He

explained that the document had been donated to the City in recognition of Massachusetts' role in the nation's founding and would be prominently displayed in Gardner.

He thanked Representative Zlotnik and the members of Revolution 250 for securing the historic display and encouraged residents to visit City Hall to view it.

Councillor Dernalowicz

Councillor Dernalowicz jokingly asked whether a map had been found on the back of the Declaration.

President Tyros responded humorously that he had kept the document in his oven for safekeeping but confirmed that no map had been found.

*Note: This is an allusion to the movie “National Treasure” in which the protagonist, played by Nicholas Cage, discovers a map on the back of the Declaration of Independence revealed by a combination of heat and lemon juice. The protagonist's father, played by John Voight, suggests “throw it in the oven” before realizing what the document was.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Council, President Tyros entertained a motion to adjourn following the closing prayer.

Motion: Councillor Tassone moved to adjourn.

Second: Seconded from the floor.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Following the customary closing prayer, the meeting adjourned.



City of Gardner – Mayor's Office

Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

August 11, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, City Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: A Communication from the Mayor Updating on the Status of City Property Sales

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

With the recent adoption of the Municipal Surplus Property Plan, as well as progress being made on our recently sold properties, I wanted to provide you an update on the status of those sales.

As a result of the below listed sales, the proposed use adds approximately 88 new units of housing and has brought in an approximate additional amount of tax revenue for the City of \$30,000 based on current assessments in their current conditions.

As a reminder, there are two state laws that govern the way municipalities in Massachusetts can sell properties, that are based on the way the City obtained ownership of the property.

SALE PROCESSES:

Properties not taken by tax title:

For all properties that were not obtained through the tax title process, the property must be sold through a Request for Proposal (RFP) bidding process as outlined by Chapter 30B of the General Laws of the Commonwealth. This process requires an advertising period of at least thirty (30) days. The property solicitation has to be published online in the Central Register, COMBUYS, and the City website, printed copy has to be posted outside the Purchasing Department's door, and the advertisement for the property must also be published in a local newspaper twice, with each advertisement published no less than a week apart, in two consecutive weeks, with the second advertisement published no less than 8 days before the RFP opening which concludes the bidding process.

The minimum asking price for the property is set at Mayoral recommendation subject to approval by the City Council. If the minimum asking price is less than a fair market value assessment of the property, the Mayor must document how having a lower asking price has a greater public good in the long term than having a higher asking price. In this process, Fair Market Value is determined by "means generally accepted in the real estate sector." Unlike sales in the private sector, the City cannot accept any offer lower than this number.

Once the proposals are received, a document listing the names of all those who submitted proposals is then made public.

At that point, the Mayor appoints a review committee of at least three (3) individuals to score the proposals based their technical merit, before a review of the price proposals (i.e. offer to buy the property) is reviewed. The committee then makes their individual recommendations to the Mayor who then makes the final award. If the review committee makes a recommendation for a property that is not the highest bidder, and if the Mayor accepts that recommendation to go with someone other than the highest bidder, the City must provide written documentation why the merits of the technical proposal (i.e. proposed use of the property) outweigh an offer for a higher price in the overall public good and benefit of the sale.

Properties taken by tax title:

For properties taken through the tax title foreclosure process, the law recently changed as part of the recent Home Equity Theft Law that was signed by Governor Healey.

Under this new process, when a foreclosure judgment is obtained by the Court, the City has thirty (30) days to determine whether it wishes to sell the property or retain the property for municipal purposes.

If the City elects to sell the property, the City is required to contracted with a licensed real-estate broker to advertise the property for sale within the first one hundred eighty (180) days and must contract with the broker for that specific property for a minimum period of twelve (12) months.

During this advertisement period, the broker compiles all of the offers on the property (both financial and any contingencies included) and presents them as they come in to the City Treasurer as the City's tax title custodian, and works with the Mayor to make the final decision on offers received.

In the event no offers are received by the time the twelve (12) month broker period expires, the City must then have a full appraisal of the property made and put the property up for public auction, at which, the City cannot accept any offer for less than two-thirds (2/3) of what the appraisal report says the property is valued at.

Once either the process is completed and a successful offer is received on the property, the City must then produce a calculation report. This report must list the amount of backed taxes that were owed on the property, all interest collected on the late taxes – at a rate of eight percent (8%) per year¹, closing costs, legal fees, real estate agent fees, and any other costs reasonably associated with the tax title process and sale of the property.

The interest rate is prorated for to the number of days during the calendar year the property has been in tax title, and is a percent of the back taxes owed on the property.

¹ Interest is collected at a rate of 8% per year for all properties that entered tax title before the new law went into effect on Nov 1, 2024. For all properties that entered the tax title process prior to that date, interest is earned at a rate of 16% per year.

When payment for the property is received, the City then retains the amount listed on the calculation report and then send a check for the difference in the sale of the property and the amount on the calculation report back to the original owner of the property to return the excess equity in the property that the original owner had obtained.

While we have not recently sold property under the new tax title regulations since they took effect on November 1, 2024, I do anticipate this may be coming soon. Additionally, given the recent request for information for the City's tax title properties, I felt this would be helpful to include.

PROPERTIES RECENTLY SOLD BY THE CITY

130 Elm Street- Helen Mae Sauter School

Prior to the sale of the property, I authorized the City Assessor and City Engineer to subdivide the property, as it had originally been on the same parcel as Elm Street School (160 Elm Street), Stone Field, the Elm Street Playground, and the Big Chair. The parcel was then subdivided out of the larger parcel with the City maintaining ownership of the Chair, Stone Field, and the surrounding areas, with the sale including land from the stone wall and parking lot surrounding the building.

The City initiated a Request for Proposal (RFP) bidding process for this property on August 27, 2025 with a minimum sale price of \$300,000.²

Per the requirements of the General Law, this was posted in all necessary locations and advertised in the Gardner News on September 9, 2025 and September 19, 2025.

When the bidding period closed for this process on October 1, 2025, no submissions were received.

The City then put the property back out to an RFP bidding process again on October 15th, 2025.

Per the requirements of the General Law, this was posted in all necessary locations and advertised in the Gardner News on October 21, 2025 and October 28, 2025.

When the bidding period closed on November 14, 2025, the City received one (1) request for proposal response.

I then appointed Mr. George Ouellet, Dr. Stephanie Marchetti, and Councilor Brad Heglin to serve as the review committee for this property.³

The committee came back with a unanimous recommendation that the property be awarded to the sole bidder, Molina Companies, after which the price proposal was opened.

² See Item # 11614, voted City Council Meeting July 7, 2025

³ See Item # 11696, voted City Council Meeting October 6, 2025

I then authorized the closing of the sale of the property with Molina Companies at their offer of \$450,000.00 for the property. The sale closed on May 15, 2026.

Molina Companies plans to convert the former school building into 27 market rate condominiums.

53 School Street- School Street School

On July 29, 2024, the City had announced that we had been awarded a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) award in the amount of \$925,000, of which \$725,000 would be used to demolish the former School Street School structure.

After this virtual press conference was published, the City began to receive interest in the property from various developers.

As a result, as a last way to see if the property could be salvaged, the City put the property back out for sale. If the sale did not come through, the demolition of the property would move forward.

As a result, the City initiated a Request for Proposal (RFP) bidding process for this property on August 20, 2025 with a minimum sale price of \$1.00.⁴

Per the requirements of the General Law, this was posted in all necessary locations and advertised in the Gardner News on September 2, 2025 and September 12, 2025.

When the bidding period closed for this process on October 2, 2025, two (2) submissions were received- Molina Companies, and Matias Properties. Molina Companies planned to save the existing structure and convert into housing. Matias Properties proposed to demolish all structures on the site and construct twelve (12) town houses in its place.

I then appointed Mr. George Ouellet, Dr. Stephanie Marchetti, and Councilor Elizabeth Kazinskas to serve as the review committee for this property.⁵

The committee came back with a unanimous recommendation that the property be awarded to Molina Companies, after which the price proposal was opened. Molina Companies proposed an offer of \$200,000.00. Matias Properties proposed an offer of \$1.00.

I then authorized the closing of the sale of the property with Molina Companies at their offer of \$200,000.00 for the property. The sale closed on May 8, 2026.

Molina Companies plans to convert the former school building into 32 market rate apartments.

⁴ See Item #10778, voted City Council Meeting Sept 7, 2022

⁵ See Item #11697, voted City Council Meeting October 6, 2025

Following this, the CDBG Steering Committed voted to re-deploy the funds that had previously been assigned for the demolition of the property to supplement funds for the construction of the new Greenwood Memorial Pavilion.

94 Pleasant Street:

Following the City taking the property located at 94 Pleasant Street by eminent domain, the City initiated Request for Proposal (RFP) bidding process for this property on August 14, 2024 with a minimum sale price of \$1.00.⁶

Per the requirements of the General Law, this was posted in all necessary locations and advertised in the Gardner News on August 21, 2024, and August 30, 2024.

When the bidding period closed for this process on September 17, 2024, two (2) submissions were received. Matias Companies who proposed to convert the building into a 6-unit apartment building, and Edwin Flooring who proposed converting the building into a 4-6 unit apartment building.

I then appointed Mrs. Rebecca Marois, Councilor Karen Hardern, and Councilor Brad Heglin to serve as the review committee for this property.

The committee came back with a unanimous recommendation that the property be awarded to Matias Properties, after which the price proposal was opened. Matias Properties proposed an offer of \$1.00. Edwin Flooring proposed an offer of \$1,000.00.

Following the recommendation of the review committee, I directed that the property sale move forward with Matias Properties for those reasons outlined in the rubric grading done by the review committee.

The sale closed on January 15, 2025.

75 East Broadway – Prospect Street School

The City initiated a Request for Proposal (RFP) bidding process for this property on February 15, 2023 with a minimum sale price of \$100,000.⁷

Per the requirements of the General Law, this was posted in all necessary locations and advertised in the Gardner News on March 2, 2023 and March 9, 2023.

When the bidding period closed for this process on March 21, 2023, five (5) submissions were received.

I then appointed Mrs. Rebecca Marois and Councilor Aleksander Dernalowicz to serve as the review committee for this property.

⁶ See Item#11362, voted City Council Meeting August 5, 2024

⁷ See Item # 10777, voted City Council Meeting September 7, 2022

The proposals were first reviewed on their technical merits and then price proposals opened.

A summary of the proposals received is as follows:

Name	Proposal	Price (\$)	Other:
MPZ Development	53 apartment units. Requires construction of second building on site.	295,000	-Required 5 year closing timeline -Required \$1.2 million tax break from City
Furnished Homes, LLC	After purchase would conduct survey to either attract national business or build housing if couldn't find a business.	126,151	LLC dissolved by Secretary of the Commonwealth
Molina Realty Group	Upscale market rate residential housing	105,000	
East Coast Properties, Inc	Art Studio Loft Apartment building. 6 Art studios on first floor, apartments for artists on second floor.	100,000	A part of Empire Management Company
NewVue Communities	65 rental apartments for mixed income- extreme low income to workforce housing. 15 one-bedroom apartments reserved for seniors. Requires construction of second building on site.	100,000	Also required sale of parking lot behind South Gardner Fire Station

The committee unanimously recommended that the property be awarded to Molina Realty for their proposed use. I then directed that the sale move forward in accordance with their recommendation for a sale price of \$105,000.

While MPZ Development was the top bidder, the Review Committee and the Administration did not believe that the 5-year closing time period and the \$1.2 million property tax break by the City were in the best interest of the City.

Furthermore, while Furnished Homes, LLC was the second highest bidder, their LLC was dissolved by the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Corporations Division and after repeated requests for either clarification as to why this happened or new documentation showing otherwise, the company did not respond. As a result this bid had to be ruled as an incomplete submission and thrown out.

The sale closed on August 4, 2023.

Molina Realty Group plans to convert the building into 23 market rate apartments, that are expected to be completed in Spring of 2027.

How Money from Sales can be used:

Chapter 44, section 63 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth, dictates that whenever the City sells a property that it obtained by any means other than through the tax title foreclosure process, the proceeds of the sale must be used for certain specific purposes and must be deposited into a separate account, not into the General Fund.

If the proceeds of a sale are less than \$500, they are directly deposited into the account.

If the proceeds of the sale are more than \$500, the money must first reimburse the City for any costs associated with the sale of the property (appraisal, broker costs, closing costs, legal fees, etc.) and must then be used to pay off any debt incurred in either obtaining or selling the property. For instance, if the City took out a mortgage on the property, all proceeds of the sale must first go toward paying down the mortgage before being deposited into the City's sale of Real Estate Proceeds Account.

If the City did not incur any debt in obtaining or selling the property, the proceeds are deposited directly into the Sale of Real Estate Proceeds Account and can be appropriated by majority vote of the City Council for any project that the City would be eligible to take a loan out for to perform the work, in place of taking a loan for the project instead.

As always, please feel free to reach out if you have any questions on the above information.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Michael J. Nicholson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" being more prominent than the last name "Nicholson".

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

Gardner City Council Investigative Report: Review of Fraudulent Vendor Payment Incident and Opportunities for Process Improvement

Prepared for: Gardner City Council to fulfill the requirements of Item 11856 - City Charter Section 25 Investigation Authorization – Vendor Payment Process Failure as voted by the City Council in a Regular Meeting of June 15, 2026

Prepared by: Councillor Brad Heglin

Purpose: This report summarizes information gathered through interviews with City personnel regarding the fraudulent diversion of a vendor payment intended for Leed Salt. This report identifies the apparent sequence of events, documents observations made by those involved, and offers potential recommendations to strengthen internal controls and reduce the likelihood of similar incidents in the future.

Executive Summary

Based on interviews conducted with City staff and the documents that I reviewed, the fraudulent payment appears to have resulted from a sophisticated business email compromise (BEC) and electronic funds transfer (EFT) fraud scheme. The available information indicates the incident was not the result of malicious conduct or negligence by City employees, but rather by weaknesses in the vendor verification procedures that allowed fraudulent banking information to be entered into the City's financial system.

Multiple employees described the scam as sophisticated and indicated that departments responded promptly once the issue was identified. Documentation provided by the Assistant Auditor supports this assessment. The interviews further suggest that while existing separation-of-duty controls help reduce the risk of internal fraud, one critical control, independently verifying vendor banking changes before updating payment information, was not consistently followed.

Overall, the information gathered indicates an opportunity to strengthen procedures, improve communication between offices, and enhance the City's use of available technology to better safeguard public funds.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this review is to summarize information obtained through interviews with City personnel and documentation review, identify apparent procedural strengths and weaknesses, and provide recommendations for consideration by the Gardner City Council.

This report is intended to assist policymakers in evaluating current financial controls and identifying opportunities for improvement. It is not intended to assign fault or determine legal liability.

Methodology

This report is based upon interviews conducted with:

- City Auditor Karen Butler (July 24)
- City Treasurer Jen Dymek (July 24)
- DPW Director Dane Arnold (July 28)
- Assistant City Auditor Jackie Leger (August 7)
- Gardner Police Detective Chris Starzynski (August 13)

The report also considers information shared during those interviews regarding communications with Leed Salt, the banking institutions involved, the Gardner Police Department, and the City's MUNIS financial management system.

Limitations of This Review

This report is based on interviews conducted with City personnel and information and documentation voluntarily provided during those interviews.

This review does not constitute:

- a forensic audit,
- a criminal investigation,
- a legal opinion,
- or a comprehensive cybersecurity assessment.

The findings presented are limited to the information available at the time of the interviews. Additional documentation, electronic records, investigative findings, audit work, or information obtained from outside agencies may supplement, clarify, or modify the conclusions contained in this report.

Accordingly, the observations and recommendations should be viewed as policy considerations intended to strengthen internal controls rather than definitive findings regarding legal responsibility or judgement of individual conduct.

Background

Leed Salt contacted the Department of Public Works after not receiving payment for an invoice.

Subsequent review determined that payment had instead been transmitted electronically to an unauthorized bank account after fraudulent EFT information had been entered into the City's financial system.

The incident prompted coordination among the Treasurer's Office, Auditor's Office, affected departments, the City's banking institution, the Gardner Police Department, and the vendor.

Findings

Finding 1

Fraudulent EFT requests were processed without independent vendor verification.

Auditor Karen Butler reported learning that two EFT change requests had previously been received on official City vendor forms.

According to Auditor Butler:

- Assistant Auditor Jackie Leger processed the EFT changes.
- The vendor was not contacted directly to verify the banking changes.
- Auditor Butler was not informed that the requests had been received or processed.

Auditor Butler stated that direct confirmation with vendors should be considered the minimum standard before modifying banking information.

City Treasurer Jen Dymek independently confirmed that she routinely verifies banking changes through direct telephone calls with vendors or financial institutions.

The Assistant City Auditor, Jackie Leger, confirmed that the EFT request came on the appropriate City form and that there was a W-9 that matched what was already on file. Emails she exchanged with the supposed Leed Salt employees, now known to be the fraudsters, were also very convincing.

Evidence

- Interview with City Auditor Karen Butler
- Interview with City Treasurer Jen Dymek
- Interview with Assistant City Auditor Jackie Leger
- Emails from the Leed Salt impersonators

Finding 2

Existing separation-of-duty controls reduce internal fraud risk but did not prevent this external fraud.

Both Auditor Butler and Treasurer Dymek described the current workflow intended to reduce the risk of internal fraud by separating financial responsibilities.

Auditor Butler described the current process as follows:

1. Vendor records may be created or modified by designated financial personnel.
2. Departments process invoices.
3. The Auditor's Office reviews invoices and initiates payments.
4. The Treasurer's Office issues payment.
5. Final processing is completed by the Auditor's Office.

Treasurer Dymek emphasized that she intentionally does not modify vendor records because maintaining separation of duties is an important internal control.

NOTE: These safeguards appear appropriate for preventing internal fraud; however, they did not prevent an external actor from exploiting weaknesses in vendor verification procedures. This in part, as noted by all three interviewees listed below, was likely due to the lack of policy around ETFs. The City only recently started allowing ETFs for vendor payment.

Evidence

- Interview with City Auditor Karen Butler
- Interview with City Treasurer Jen Dymek
- Interview with Assistant City Auditor Jackie Leger

Finding 3

Departments responded promptly after the fraud was discovered.

Interviewees consistently described the City's response as timely.

Auditor Butler believes department heads responded appropriately. Auditor Butler, Treasurer Dymek, and Detective Starzynski connectedly quickly once the issue was discovered.

Treasurer Dymek immediately:

- confirmed payment records,
- verified information directly with Leed Salt,
- contacted the City's banking institution,
- contacted the Gardner Police Department,
- disabled additional EFT capability for the affected vendor.

Director Arnold and Detective Starzynski likewise stated that departments handled the situation appropriately once the fraud was identified.

Evidence

- Interview with Auditor Karen Butler
- Interview with Treasurer Jen Dymek
- Interview with DPW Director Dane Arnold
- Interview with Detective Starzynski

Finding 4

Communication between offices presents an opportunity for improvement.

Auditor Butler expressed concern that communication between financial offices could be strengthened.

Specifically, she indicated she was unaware:

- that fraudulent EFT requests had been received,
- that vendor banking information had been modified,
- that concerns regarding payment verification existed.

She believed stronger communication protocols would improve the City's internal controls.

Detective Starzynski noted that having at least two sets of eyes, but ideally three points of contact, on financial transactions of a significant dollar amount is incredibly important to help catch issues and red flags of any kind. Additionally, he also noted, as did other employees interviewed, that phone calls to vendors to verify EFT (or other) requests is a strong defense against fraud attempts.

Evidence

- Interview with Auditor Karen Butler
- Interview with Treasurer Jen Dymek
- Interview with Detective Starzynski

Finding 5

Technology may provide additional safeguards that are not currently being utilized.

Treasurer Dymek indicated that MUNIS should be capable of sending payment confirmation notifications to both the City and vendors, but stated that this functionality is currently not operating as expected.

According to Treasurer Dymek:

- MUNIS support has been unable to resolve the issue.
- The City's IT Department advised that the matter falls within MUNIS administration.
- Several related investigations remain ongoing.

NOTE: If automated payment notifications can be implemented, vendors may identify unauthorized payments significantly sooner.

Evidence

- Interview with Treasurer Jen Dymek

Finding 6

Additional cybersecurity support and training may further reduce future risk.

DPW Director Arnold suggested information technology could contribute by providing:

- additional employee training,
- software tools,
- enhanced fraud detection resources.

Although this incident appears to have resulted primarily from procedural weaknesses rather than a compromise of City systems, additional cybersecurity awareness and technological safeguards could complement existing financial controls. Detective Starzynski also stated that having the police department periodically brief City employees on what types of fraud attempts they are seeing could also be beneficial.

Evidence

- Interview with DPW Director Dane Arnold
- Interview with Detective Starzynski

Analysis

The interviews consistently indicate that this incident was the result of a sophisticated social engineering attack rather than a technical breach of City systems. The review of relevant documents corroborates that.

The principal control weakness appears to have been the acceptance of revised banking information without independently verifying the requested change directly with the vendor through a trusted communication method.

Several interviewees independently identified telephone verification as an essential safeguard.

The City's existing separation-of-duty controls appear effective in reducing internal fraud risk but are insufficient by themselves to prevent modern business email compromise schemes.

The interviews further suggest that improved communication between offices, combined with better utilization of available MUNIS functionality and enhanced cybersecurity awareness, would significantly strengthen the City's defenses against similar attacks.

Overall Conclusion

The information gathered during these interviews indicates that the City was the victim of a sophisticated external fraud scheme that exploited weaknesses in vendor payment verification rather than deficiencies in employee competence or departmental responsiveness.

The strongest recurring theme across all interviews is the importance of independently verifying vendor banking changes before processing payments. Existing separation-of-duty controls remain valuable but should be supplemented with stronger verification procedures, enhanced communication between offices, and improved use of available technology.

The City's response following discovery appears to have been prompt and coordinated. Moving forward, implementing stronger verification procedures, evaluating available MUNIS functionality, expanding cybersecurity awareness, and periodically reviewing internal controls would likely reduce the risk of similar incidents in the future.

While human error contributed to the success of the fraud, the evidence gathered suggests the underlying issue was primarily a process vulnerability rather than an isolated individual mistake. Strengthening those processes will better protect both City employees and public funds against increasingly sophisticated fraud schemes.



City of Gardner - Executive Department
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

June 2, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: An Ordinance to Amend Attachment F of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled "Primary Non-Union Compensation Schedule" to add the positions of Golf Administrative Assistant and Transfer Station Safety Program Development and Compliance Coordinator

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

I hereby submit a proposed ordinance amendment to the City's Primary Non-Union Compensation Schedule based on recent actions taken by various departments of the City.

The Golf Commission recently voted to make their Administrative Assistant position a weekly stipend position rather than an hourly position. This ordinance codifies this vote of the commission to have all employee compensation consistent in the same location.

The other position in this ordinance proposal relates to the Director of Public Health's request for the creation of a new Transfer Station Safety Program Development and Compliance Coordinator position.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND EXHIBIT F OF CHAPTER 8 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF GARDNER, THEREOF ENTITLED “PRIMARY NON-UNION COMPENSATION SCHEDULE” TO ADD STIPENDED POSITIONS

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GARDNER AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1:

That the following be added to Section 4 of Exhibit F of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled “Special”:

Safety Program Development and Compliance Coordinator	4	\$10,000.00	Annually
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SECTION 2:

That this ordinance take effect upon passage and publication as required by law.

The City of Gardner
City Council

PRESENTED BY

Brad Heglin

AN ORDINANCE TO INCREASE OVERSIGHT OF
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAVEL

Be it ordained by the City Council:

SECTION 1. The Code of the City of Gardner is hereby amended by adding the following new.

Section 1: Whenever an employee, or official of the City of Gardner seeks to make an expenditure from a line item titled ‘Professional Development and Travel’, approval must first be obtained from the relevant department head and the Mayor. Such approval may only be granted after the requestor has provided written explanation of the requested expenditure in a format to be determined by the Mayor, but shall include a description of the expense including total cost, explanation of its benefit, and rationale as it relates to the employee’s or official’s duties for the City of Gardner.

Section 2: These records shall be filed with the City Auditor. The City Auditor shall quarterly provide a report of these expenditures to the City Council Finance Committee, or in another manner as determined by the City Council.

The City of Gardner
City Council

PRESENTED BY

Brad Heglin

AN ORDINANCE TO INCREASE FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY, FINANCIAL
GOVERNANCE, AND BUDGET PREPAREDNESS

Be it ordained by the City Council:

SECTION 1:

Section 1: Part IV of the City Code is hereby amended by adding the following new chapter:

Chapter XX - Budgeting and Financial Oversight

§XX-1 Revenue Projections

- A. The Mayor shall annually by February 1, submit to the Finance Committee of the City Council, or in another manner as determined by the City Council, a report of expected revenues for the upcoming fiscal year that shall include:
 - a. A description of all revenue sources
 - b. A chart containing:
 - i. The current fiscal year revenue projections
 - ii. The current fiscal year to date revenue collections
 - iii. The previous five (5) years of revenue separated by source

§XX-2 Spending Reports

- A. The City Auditor shall submit to the Finance Committee of the City Council, or in another manner as determined by the City Council, reports on current expenditures in accordance with the following schedule:
 - a. On or before October 30, for the first quarter of the fiscal year;
 - b. On or before January 31, for the second quarter of the fiscal year; and
 - c. On or before the last day of each month during the third and fourth quarters of the fiscal year.

- B. Each report shall include current expenditures by line item and shall identify any line item that:
 - a. Is projected to exceed its appropriation; or
 - b. Is being expended at a rate materially higher than expected based upon the portion of the fiscal year that has elapsed and remains.

§XX-3 Revenue Reports

- A. The City Auditor shall submit at the end of the first three quarters of the fiscal year to the Finance Committee of the City Council, or in another manner as determined by the City Council, a report containing the current fiscal year revenue projections compared to the current fiscal year to date revenue collections.

§XX-4 Five-Year Financial Forecast

- A. The Mayor shall annually submit to the Finance Committee of the City Council, or in another manner as determined by the City Council, no later than March 1, a five-year financial forecast that includes projected revenues, expenditures, debt service obligations, collective bargaining obligations known at the time, and any projected budget gaps.

§XX-5 Revenue Variance Reporting

- A. If, at any time during the fiscal year, the City Auditor determines that total General Fund revenues are projected to be less than ninety-five percent (95%) of the revenues appropriated in the annual operating budget, the City Auditor shall notify the Mayor and City Council in writing. Within thirty (30) days of such notification, the Mayor shall submit to the City Council and Finance Committee a report identifying:
 - a. The causes of the projected revenue shortfall;
 - b. The estimated magnitude of the shortfall;
 - c. Any actions already taken to address the shortfall; and
 - d. Any additional measures proposed to maintain a balanced budget.



City of Gardner - Executive Department
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

June 23, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: A Measure Accepting a Donation of \$5,000.00 from Lynn Barrieau, in Memory of Deputy Chief Rock Barrieau (ret.), For Gardner Police Department Community Policing Programs

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

Ms. Lynn Barrieau has been a constant support of the City's Junior Police Academy and Community Policing Programming since the untimely passing of her late husband, retired Deputy Police Chief Rock Barrieau.

Ms. Barrieau has donated \$5,000.00 to support the Gardner Police Department's Community Policing Programs.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS AND GIFTS
COMMUNITY POLICING DONATIONS

VOTED: That the City of Gardner is authorized to accept certain donations for the Community Policing Program and gifts for use by the Police Department, said acceptance in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53A½ of the General Laws.

Donation in the amount of \$5,000 by donor Lynn Barrieau.



CITY OF GARDNER POLICE DEPARTMENT

200 Main Street
Gardner, Massachusetts 01440
Phone: (978) 632-5600
Fax: (978) 632-9045



Eric P. McAvene
Chief of Police

Nicholas P. Maroni
Deputy Chief of Police

June 23, 2026

The Honorable Michael J. Nicholson, Mayor
Gardner City Hall
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

Re: Acceptance of \$5,000 donation from Lynn Barrieau, in the memory of Deputy Chief Rock Barrieau (ret.), toward Gardner Police community policing programs

Dear Mayor Nicholson,

The Gardner Police Department has received another donation to our community policing program in the amount of \$5,000 from Lynn Barrieau, in memory of her husband, retired Gardner Police Deputy Chief Rock Barrieau.

Lynn has been a constant supporter of the Gardner Police Department's Community Policing Program since Rock's passing in February 2017. Past donations have gone to help pay for equipment and extras for the Junior Police Academy and other community outreach programs. We would not be able to continue improve, expand and enhance the program without Lynn's support.

Rock Barrieau was one of Gardner's first permanently assigned community policing officers back in the early 1990's. His community engagement efforts went on long before and long after he moved on from that assignment. We are humbled and honored to keep his memory alive through our continued community policing efforts. We will be renaming the annual Junior Police Academy in 2026 to honor Rock's memory and legacy.

We are grateful for the generosity of Lynn Barrieau and her family. I am asking that this donation be accepted by the city as gifts, as required by law.

Very truly yours,

Eric P. McAvene
Chief of Police



City of Gardner - Executive Department
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

June 23, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: A Measure Accepting a Donation to the City of Gardner from Keller Partners Co. of an American Flag flown over the US Capitol Building to Commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the United States

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

Keller Partners, Co., the City's on-call grant writing firm, has donated a flag that was recently flown over the US Capitol building in Washington DC to the City to commemorate the nation's semiquincentennial anniversary.

The flag has an approximate value of \$58.00

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS AND GIFTS
FLAG DONATION

VOTED: That the City of Gardner is authorized to accept a certain donation of a flag flown over the US Capitol for use by the Executive Department, said acceptance in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53A½ of the General Laws.

Donation of a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol with an approximate value of \$58.

Mayor

From: Thomas Keller <tkeller@kellerpartnersco.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2026 8:00 AM
To: Mayor
Cc: Rachel Roberts (Mayor's Office); Jon Boehmer
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Flag Flown Over US Capitol for Gardner

CAUTION: This email originated from a sender outside of the City of Gardner mail system. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

CAUTION: This email originated from a sender outside of the City of Gardner mail system. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Mayor,

Keller Partners is pleased to have a flag flown over the US Capitol Building in Washington, DC, for the City of Gardner, in honor of our nation's 250th Birthday Celebration! We appreciate Senator Markey's assistance with this request.

You should receive the flag and certificate in July. Enjoy the celebration with a special "stars and stripes!"

God bless the USA,

Tom and Team

--

Thomas C. Keller
Managing Principal

Keller Partners & Company, LLC
1201 Fifteenth Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005
Mobile: +1(202) 841-5283 | Office: +1(202) 207-1145
Email: tkeller@kellerpartnersco.com Website: www.KellerPartnersCo.com

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City of Gardner - Executive Department
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

June 23, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: A Measure Accepting a Donation of a 2026 Chevrolet Pick Up Truck for the Gardner Police Department K9 Program

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

Salvadore Chevrolet has donated a 3-year lease of a 2026 Chevrolet Pick Up Truck with option to purchase at the end of the term to the Gardner Police Department to assist in the K9 program.

The lease has an approximate value of \$53,000.00.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS AND GIFTS
POLICE K9 PROGRAM DONATIONS

VOTED: That the City of Gardner is authorized to accept certain donations for the Police K9 Program and gifts for use by the Police Department, said acceptance in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53A½ of the General Laws.

Donation of a leased 2026 Chevrolet Pick Up Truck with an approximate value of \$53,000.



CITY OF GARDNER POLICE DEPARTMENT

200 Main Street
Gardner, Massachusetts 01440
Phone: (978) 632-5600
Fax: (978) 632-9045



Eric P. McAvene
Chief of Police

Nicholas P. Maroni
Deputy Chief of Police

June 23, 2026

The Honorable Michael J. Nicholson, Mayor
Gardner City Hall
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

Re: Acceptance of a donated 3-year pick up truck lease from Salvadore Chevrolet.

Dear Mayor Nicholson,

On June 5, 2026, the Gardner Police Department received a donated 3-year pick up truck lease for use by K9 Rocky and his handler, Officer Joshua Willis. The overall value of the truck was \$53,000. As the donation only includes the lease period, we will plan to purchase the truck at the end of the lease for market value rate.

We are thankful and appreciative of the support given to the Gardner Police Department by the entire Salvadore Family and Salvadore Chevrolet. The program would not continue to grow without generosity from local business and residents.

Thank you for your time and I ask that this donation be accepted by the city as gifts, as required by law.

Very truly yours,

Eric P. McAvene
Chief of Police



City of Gardner – Mayor’s Office
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

July 20, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant St
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: An Ordinance To Amend Section 21 of Chapter 600 the Code of the City of Gardner, thereof entitled “Parking Meter Fees Waived,” to add a new exemption for Blue Star Plates

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

On July 15, 2026, Governor Maura Healey signed a new law directing the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles to create a new “Blue Star” license plate to honor the families of police officers who died in the line of duty.

As you may remember, in 2024, the City adopted a new ordinance waving parking meter fees for all those with various Veterans Plates as a way to recognize our veterans and their families for their service to the County.

The families of our fallen officers are equally deserving of recognition for the service and sacrifice of their family members who died protecting and serving our residents and visitors. I am therefore requesting that the new Blue Star License Plate be added to the list of license plates exempted from paying parking meter fees.

This exemption only exempts the vehicle from paying the parking meter fee itself. The vehicle is still required to adhere to all time restrictions and other parking laws and regulations in the parking meter area.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY OF GARDNER, CHAPTER 600,
THEREOF ENTITLED “VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC,” TO AMEND SECTION 22 ENTITLED
“PARKING METER FEES WAIVED.”**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GARDNER AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1: That a new Section 22 be added to Chapter 600 of the Code of the City of Gardner to be entitled, “Parking Meter Fees Waived” by adding a new subsection 15 as follows:

15. Blue Star

SECTION 2: That this ordinance take effect upon passage and publication as required by law.

REDLINED VERSION SHOWING EDITS

§22 Parking Meter Fees Waived

- A. Vehicles affixed with the following license plates, issued by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Registry of Motor Vehicles shall be exempt from payment at parking meters throughout the City:
- a. Handicap/ADA/Disability
 - b. Veteran (of any branch of service)
 - c. Disabled Veteran
 - d. Bronze Star
 - e. Congressional Medal of Honor
 - f. Distinguished Flying Cross
 - g. Ex-POW
 - h. Gold Star Family
 - i. Legion of Valor
 - j. Medal of Liberty
 - k. National Guard
 - l. Pearl Harbor Survivor
 - m. Purple Heart
 - n. Silver Star
 - o. Blue Star**
- B. All vehicles with plates listed in Section A shall still be liable for all other time limits, restrictions, regulations, or other limitations prescribed by ordinance or the General Laws of the Commonwealth.



OFFERED BY Governor Maura Healey and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll

PRESS RELEASE

Governor Healey Signs Blue Star Family License Plate Legislation Honoring Families of Fallen Police Officers

New law establishes commemorative license plates for family members of officers who made the ultimate sacrifice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

7/15/2026

Governor Maura Healey and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll

MEDIA CONTACT

Jacqueline Manning, Press Secretary

Phone

[\(617\) 725-4025](tel:6177254025)

Online

jacqui.manning@mass.gov

BOSTON — Today, in a ceremony with families of fallen Troopers and Officers, Governor Maura Healey signed [S2903, An Act honoring Blue Star families](https://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/194/S2903_) ([https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/S2903_";!!CPANwP4y!RI1gHbm4ImqX1HRO3QI4O_IOIowAWaAya9z4KadsZ_fxayUcqbxACuba9XjxHGp5c9vdwXdSp5ISwiN5uSvQQNhEw_D_UKvy33I8NRw\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/S2903_)), creating a new commemorative license plate for eligible family members

of those killed in the line of duty. Thanks to bipartisan legislation filed by Senator Bruce Tarr and Representative Thomas Walsh, the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) will issue the plates free of charge in recognition of the extraordinary sacrifice made by police personnel and their families.

“Every day, police officers put on the badge knowing the risks that come with serving their communities. Their families understand those risks, too. And when an officer is killed in the line of duty, that loss is carried not only by a department, but by parents, spouses, children, siblings, grandchildren, friends, and entire communities,” said **Governor Healey**. “These Blue Star Plates will be a visible tribute to their loved ones’ sacrifices. I hope everyone who sees them on the roads will pause and remember those who gave their lives in the service of others. I’m deeply grateful for the advocacy of the Blue Star families who shared their stories in support of this bill and to the legislators whose leadership made it possible.”

“We appreciate the work of our colleagues in the Legislature on both sides of the aisle who shared our vision to make this important tribute a reality,” said **Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll**. “Creating a new license plate is a small gesture from the people of Massachusetts that means so much to Blue Star Families.”

“Blue Star Plates provide a symbol of respect for law enforcement families who made the ultimate sacrifice for the safety of Massachusetts communities,” said **Secretary of Public Safety and Security Gina Kwon**. “We appreciate the Legislature’s work to deliver this bill to the Governor’s Desk, and we pledge our full support to families applying for a plate through the forthcoming Registry of Motor Vehicles’ process. We will never forget the fallen heroes of this Commonwealth.”

"There is no larger sacrifice a public servant can make than giving their lives in the line of duty to protect the public. The Blue Star plate is one way we can honor the families of those heroes for their loss, and in my opinion, we can never do enough to honor our fallen and stand together, in remembrance, with their families and loved ones," said **Massachusetts State Police Colonel Geoffrey Noble**.

“We are honored to have a role in making the Blue Star Family License Plate a reality. Creating this plate serves as a meaningful way to recognize these fallen heroes and their families. We are grateful to all of those who helped to make this possible and look forward to making these plates available so eligible family members can proudly display this symbol of service and support,” said **Registrar of Motor Vehicles Colleen Ogilvie**.

"Every day, law enforcement officers across the Commonwealth put themselves between danger and the people they serve. These heroes left their families and never came home," said **Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland)**. "This law won't erase these tragic and heartbreaking losses, but it will ensure their memory, and the memories of all our fallen officers, travel with the families who carry it every day. I'm grateful to my Senate colleagues for prioritizing this important bill and to Governor Healey for signing it into law."

"This bill is about recognizing the sacrifice made by the families of fallen law enforcement officers," said **House Speaker Ronald J. Mariano (D-Quincy)**. "By making license plates available to the spouses, parents, and children of law enforcement who were killed in the line of duty, Massachusetts is ensuring that the legacy of those who gave their lives in service to our communities is never forgotten. I want to thank Governor Healey for signing this important legislation into law, as well as my colleagues in the House and our partners in the Senate for their hard work on this issue."

"It's especially fitting to bestow this highly visible blue license plate in honor and recognition for families of law enforcement officers who made the ultimate sacrifice protecting their communities. With the Governor signing this bill into law, the special plate proudly displaying the "Blue Star Family" emblem will now be available to spouses, children, and parents of fallen law enforcement officers all across the Commonwealth, at no additional charge from the Registry," said **Senator Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means (D-Westport)**. "This initiative is a meaningful token of appreciation that will forever honor these brave men and women who paid the price when answering the call to duty."

"When family members lose a loved one who dies while protecting our public safety, they make an incalculable sacrifice that endures for every day they carry on without that person in their lives," said **Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester)**. "That sacrifice should be recognized and honored with a license plate that allows all of us to be aware of it, and to capture every opportunity to express our respect, gratitude, and support."

The bill requires the RMV to issue distinctive motor vehicle license plates and motorcycle license plate emblems that read "Blue Star Family" upon the request of the parent, child, sibling, grandchild or spouse of a law enforcement officer who was killed in the line of duty. The RMV will begin implementing the new license plate program and will announce application details once they become available.

Governor Healey previously [submitted testimony](/news/governor-healey-supports-blue-star-family-license-plate-legislation) in support of this legislation.

Statements from Impacted Families

Maral Bucci, mother of Massachusetts State Trooper Tamar Bucci

“As the parents of fallen Massachusetts State Trooper Tamar Bucci, my husband and I know that no law, honor, or tribute can ever replace the child we lost. But knowing that Massachusetts has chosen to recognize Blue Star families is a powerful reminder that the sacrifices made by our loved ones, and by the families who stand behind them, will never be forgotten. This legislation is more than a bill. It is a promise that the service, dedication, and ultimate sacrifice of those who wear the badge will continue to be honored for generations to come. We are grateful to the legislators, advocates, and everyone who worked to make this recognition reality. We hope this serves as a lasting tribute not only to Tamar, but to every family whose life has been forever changed by the loss of a loved one in the line of duty. Tamar lived with courage, compassion, and a commitment to serving others. We will continue to honor her legacy by ensuring that her sacrifice, and the sacrifices of all fallen heroes, are never forgotten.”

Barbara Trainor, mother of Massachusetts State Trooper Kevin Trainor

“Our family is grateful to everyone supporting the Blue Star plate and helping ensure Kevin’s service and sacrifice are never forgotten.”

Shannon LaPorta, wife of Uxbridge Police Officer Stephen A. LaPorta:

“As the wife of Uxbridge Police Officer Stephen A. LaPorta (E.O.W. 01-07-26), I want to express my heartfelt gratitude, on behalf of myself, my son Matthew, and our entire family, to State Representative Thomas P. Walsh, presenter of S.2903, “The Blue Star Family License Plate”; to everyone who supported this meaningful legislation; and especially to Governor Maura Healey for signing it into law. This symbol means more to our family than words can fully capture. As a Blue Star Spouse and mother, I am deeply grateful for the kindness, compassion, and support shown to us, and to all Blue Star families who will now be able to proudly display this symbol of sacrifice, service, and remembrance.”

Kristin Tracey, widow of Waltham Police Officer Paul Tracey:

“As the widow of fallen Waltham Police Officer Paul Tracey (EOW December 6, 2023), I am beyond grateful and deeply moved by the passing of the Blue Star License Plate bill. This legislation is more than just a license plate—it is a meaningful symbol of recognition, remembrance, and support for the families who continue to carry the loss of a loved one who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their community. Knowing that my family will now have this visible tribute is both comforting and inspiring. I sincerely thank everyone who worked tirelessly to make this bill a reality and for honoring the legacy of our fallen heroes and the families they left behind. A special appreciation and acknowledgment to Fraternal Order of Police Director Frank Frederickson and MCOP VP John Nelson for their continued efforts for years to get this bill supported and passed.”

Denise Morency Gannon, mother of Yarmouth Police Sergeant Sean Gannon:

“On behalf of Patrick, Dara and my children and their spouses, we're so grateful to know such compassion and support from everyone who participated in the process of producing the Blue Star License Bill and its passage into Law. We are not present today because even 8 years after the murder of our son, Sergeant Sean Gannon from Yarmouth Police Department, we are entering a second appeal by the defendant, Thomas Latanowich to appeal his case for the second time. Today, as you celebrate the passage of this Bill into Law, we are in the District Attorney's office with his team to listen to the next steps of the Appellate process. We're thinking and praying with you and for you.

On behalf of all families who have experienced a line of duty death and the years that justice for the victim, the Officers who died often takes a toll on their families' physical and mental health, this Gratitude Plate can be a reminder to the public of the daily expense that Police Officers willingly give on behalf of public safety. The streets of Heaven are too crowded with Blue angels. We pray that all officers who serve will remain safe and return home at the end of every shift. God bless everyone who helped to make this Blue Star License Plate a reality.”

The Tarentino Family, family of Auburn Police Officer Ronald Tarentino Jr.:

As a family, we are so gracious for everyone who has had a hand in making the Blue Star License Plates possible, from creating the initiative to where we are today. It was an all-around team effort from all involved and we are beyond proud to support the Blue Star License Plates. This is near and dear to our hearts, and we make every effort to honor the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice and support their families in the same way our own family has been supported^{PAGE 61} and what a tremendous honor it is, to

display the pride we have for our heroes and remind those passing by that Law Enforcement Officers are humans. In honor of Officer Ronald Tarentino, Jr., our son, brother, father, husband, uncle and friend - and every officer who has made the ultimate sacrifice in the Line of Duty - you will NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

Les Vitale, brother of Saugus Police Officer Harold L. Vitale:

"When I receive my Blue Star Plate, I plan to take it in my arms and hold it to my chest, because it will make me feel like I'm getting to hug my brother one more time.

Then I'll probably drive around town with my Blue Star Plate and it will feel like my brother is my guide riding with pride that only a Blue Star family can really understand and appreciate."

Jim O'Leary, son of Boston Police Patrolman James B. O'Leary:

The passage of the Blue Star License Plate bill is deeply personal to me and brings a lifetime of emotions to the surface. The grief and sorrow of losing a loved one in the line of duty never truly disappear. They remain just beneath the surface, even after nearly 63 years. I was only six years old when my father, A Boston Police Officer, was killed during an armed robbery. Like so many families of fallen officers, we have carried that loss every day. While time moves forward, the sacrifice made by our loved ones is never forgotten

This legislation ensures that Massachusetts' fallen law enforcement officers will be honored every day on the roads of our Commonwealth. Too often, the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice fades from public awareness. The Blue Star License Plate will not only commemorate their courage, dedication, and service, but also serve as a lasting reminder of the risks that law enforcement officers willingly face to protect our communities.

Statements of Support

Scott Hovsepian, President, Massachusetts Coalition of Police:

"Thank you to everyone who has been involved in advocating for the Blue Star Family Plate bill, especially the most important people of all...the Blue Star Families. Their involvement has been nothing short of amazing. They deserve all of the honor and recognition of getting this bill passed. It has always been about them and will always be

about them. We will never forget their sacrifice, and we will never forget those who have gone before us."

Massachusetts Fraternal Order of Police:

"The Massachusetts Fraternal Order of Police is very pleased at the passage of "An Act Honoring Blue Star Families." This important law provides a Blue Star License Plate for the families of fallen law enforcement officers, creating a lasting tribute to their loved ones' service, courage, heroism, and sacrifice.

More than a symbol, the Blue Star License Plate gives families a meaningful way to honor their fallen officer while serving as a constant reminder that their sacrifice will never be forgotten. It represents pride, remembrance, comfort, and the enduring legacy of a hero. It also recognizes the tremendous cost of protecting others and fosters greater respect for the law enforcement profession. I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact the loss of an officer has on a family, a police department, and an entire community. I have also had the privilege of working alongside many families of fallen officers as they advocated for this legislation. They shared with me what this plate would mean to them on a deep personal level. One family member, whose brother was killed in the line of duty more than 30 years ago, told me, "I can't wait to touch my plate. It will feel like I am touching my brother again." Those words capture the profound significance of this tribute.

The Massachusetts Fraternal Order of Police extends its sincere gratitude to the Governor, the Legislature, the bill sponsors, and everyone who helped make this meaningful tribute a reality."

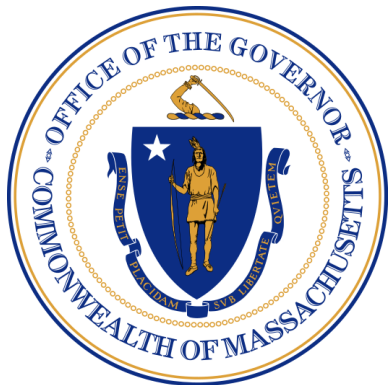
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Media Contact

Jacqueline Manning, Press Secretary

Phone

(617) 725-4025



Governor Maura Healey and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll

Since taking office, Governor Healey and Lieutenant Governor Driscoll's top priority has been lowering costs, making life easier and protecting what makes Massachusetts the best place to live, work and learn.

[State Organizations \(/massachusetts-state-organizations\)](#)

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City of Gardner – Mayor's Office
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

August 21, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, City Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: An Order Transferring the sum of \$189,009.21 from Various FY2026 Salary Accounts to the City Health Insurance Operating Expense Account

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

At the recommendation of the City Auditor, I am hereby submitting a transfer request from various surplus salary appropriations from FY2026 to the FY2026 Health Insurance Operating Expense Account.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

AN ORDER TRANSFERRING THE SUM OF \$189,009.21 FROM VARIOUS FY2026
SALARY AND WAGE ACCOUNTS TO FY2026 HEALTH INSURANCE EXPENSE
ACCOUNT

ORDERED:

That the sum of one hundred eighty nine thousand nine dollars and twenty one cents (\$189,009.21) be transferred from various FY2026 salary and wage accounts to FY2026 Health Insurance operating expense account according to the attached schedule:

Org	Object	Project	Description	2026 Revised Budget	2026 Actual	2026 Encumbrances	2026 Available
11171	51014		BOARD & COMM SAL & WAGES	5,370.15	5,250.00	0.00	120.15
11175	51014		BOARD & COMM SAL & WAGES	3,869.93	3,264.42	0.00	605.51
11182	51011		ASST DIR/GRANTS ADMINISTRATOR	3,870.89	3,716.99	0.00	153.90
11182	51013		PROJ MNGR/FINANCIAL ADMIN	2,353.99	0.00	0.00	2,353.99
11182	51015		ECON DEV COORD SALARY	53,107.09	53,092.27	0.00	14.82
11194	51010		DEPT HEAD SALARY & WAGES	75,045.98	73,596.24	0.00	1,449.74
11194	51013		PART TIME PRODUCTION ASST	22,173.00	18,079.27	0.00	4,093.73
11199	51000		SALARY UNDISTRIBUTED	462.15	0.00	0.00	462.15
12210	51010		DEPT HEAD SALARY & WAGES	154,533.20	154,494.09	0.00	39.11
12210	51012		SENIOR CLERKS SAL & WGS	151,697.93	150,477.68	0.00	1,220.25
12210	51016		CUSTODIAN SALARY & WAGES	59,092.90	58,572.12	0.00	520.78
12210	51017		POL LIEUTENANTS SAL & WGS	212,879.53	212,539.17	0.00	340.36
12210	51021		DEPUTY CHIEF SAL & WGS	132,554.85	132,527.11	0.00	27.74
12210	51032		COMPENSATORY TIME	0.00	-469.35	0.00	469.35
12210	51050		HOLIDAY PAY	190,688.00	190,668.00	0.00	20.00
12210	51090		CLOTH/UNIFORM ALLOWANCE	3,800.00	3,250.00	0.00	550.00
12210	51100		SHIFT DIFFERENTIAL	215,527.37	214,192.04	0.00	1,335.33
12210	51102		WORKING OUT OF GRADE	4,500.00	4,387.42	0.00	112.58
12220	51105		SICK LEAVE INCENTIVE	2,000.00	1,390.08	0.00	609.92
12220	51551		TERMINATION LEAVE	0.00	-890.33	0.00	890.33
12240	51013		FULL TIME DISPATCHERS SAL	557,425.00	548,016.70	0.00	9,408.30
12240	51015		PUB SAFETY COMM SAL & WAGES	90,716.45	86,538.90	0.00	4,177.55
12240	51032		COMPENSATORY TIME	0.00	-124,972.28	0.00	124,972.28
12240	51050		HOLIDAY PAY	65,686.58	57,052.80	0.00	8,633.78
12240	51090		CLOTH/UNIFORM ALLOWANCE	9,000.00	7,975.00	0.00	1,025.00
12240	51100		SHIFT DIFFERENTIAL	38,820.00	38,096.53	0.00	723.47
12241	51018		PLUMBING & GAS INSP SAL & WAGE	8,422.82	8,413.52	0.00	9.30
12244	51010		DEPT HEAD SALARY & WAGES	12,086.00	11,773.66	0.00	312.34
12290	51011		ANIMAL CONT OFF SAL & WAGES	134,236.80	129,432.72	0.00	4,804.08
12290	51030		OVERTIME	11,000.00	9,058.81	0.00	1,941.19
12290	51031		ON-CALL/STANDBY	20,060.00	19,510.00	0.00	550.00
12291	51010		DEPT HEAD SALARY & WAGES	12,082.19	11,773.66	0.00	308.53
12292	51012		ADM COORD SAL & WAGES	41,528.53	41,098.20	0.00	430.33
12292	51023		ALT ANIMAL CONT OFF SAL&W	38,100.78	36,675.90	0.00	1,424.88
12292	51030		OVERTIME	400.00	0.00	0.00	400.00
12293	51010		DEPT HEAD SALARY & WAGES	2,500.00	2,499.96	0.00	0.04
14410	51013		GIS / AUTOCAD TECHNICIAN	62,275.12	60,750.35	0.00	1,524.77
14421	51010		DEPT HEAD SALARY & WAGES	56,286.74	52,286.74	0.00	4,000.00
14421	51551		TERMINATION LEAVE	0.00	-510.00	0.00	510.00
15512	51010		DEPT HEAD SALARY & WAGES	58,013.56	57,272.82	0.00	740.74
15512	51014		BOARD & COMM SAL & WAGES	3,775.86	3,750.00	0.00	25.86
15543	51012		CLERK/ASST SAL & WAGES	41,621.68	39,455.97	0.00	2,165.71
16610	51016		CUSTODIAN SALARY & WAGES	65,113.61	63,820.70	0.00	1,292.91
16610	51460		LONGEVITY	2,580.00	2,100.00	0.00	480.00
16625	51020		P/T PLAYGROUNDS SAL&WGS	146,668.81	145,758.75	0.00	910.06
19910	51014		BOARD & COMM SAL & WAGES	17,481.87	16,633.52	0.00	848.35
19910	51023		TEMP SALARY & WAGES	2,000.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00

189,009.21



City of Gardner – Mayor's Office
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

August 21, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, City Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: A Measure Setting the Rate of Compensation for the City Conservation Agent

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

I respectfully request the City Council's approval, pursuant to Item 11733 and Exhibit F of the City's Primary Non-Union Employee Compensation Schedule, to recognize a portion of Tyler Ellison's prior professional experience when determining his initial placement within the compensation schedule for the position of Conservation & Planning Agent.

Following an extensive recruitment process, Mr. Ellison was selected as the preferred candidate for this position. His professional experience includes managing municipal stormwater programs, coordinating environmental infrastructure projects, administering regulatory compliance activities, and working collaboratively with local governments & development professionals. These experiences provide a strong foundation for the work expected of Gardner's Conservation & Planning Agent.

Recognizing a portion of Mr. Ellison's prior experience through placement at Step 1 is consistent with both the language and intent of the ordinance.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

A MEASURE RATIFYING THE MAYOR'S RECOMMENDATION FOR STEP DESIGNATION FOR
THE CONSERVATION/PLANNING AGENT

BE IT HEREBY ENACTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GARDNER AS FOLLOWS:

That the designation of steps for the purpose of compensation in accordance with the provisions of Attachment F of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner be ordered as follows for the Conservation/Planning Agent at the recommendation of the Mayor:

Position	Employee	Group	Step	Years of Credit
Conservation/Planning Agent	Tyler Ellison	2	1	1

CITY OF GARDNER

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Manca Annex, 115 Pleasant Street, Room 201, Gardner, MA 01440

Telephone: (978) 630-4014 ♦ Fax: (978) 632-1905



To: Jennifer Pelavin – City Clerk

Cc: George Tyros – President, City Council

From: Jason Stevens – Director, Community Development & Planning

Date: August 14, 2026

Re: Recommendation for Step Increase – Conservation and Planning Agent

Honorable Members of the City Council,

I respectfully request your approval, pursuant to Item 11733, An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the City of Gardner, Chapter 8, "Personnel," Exhibit F – Primary Non-Union Employee Compensation Schedule, to recognize a portion of Tyler Chase Ellison's prior professional experience for purposes of determining his starting compensation step as Conservation & Planning Agent.

Mr. Ellison possesses more than five years of progressively responsible experience in environmental permitting, stormwater management, ecological restoration, municipal infrastructure coordination, regulatory compliance, and project management. His experience includes serving as a Stormwater Project Manager with the Charles River Watershed Association, where he coordinated engineering and water quality projects across 35 municipalities, and previously as a Stormwater Coordinator for the Town of Farragut, Tennessee, where he worked to ensure compliance with environmental regulations while reviewing and supporting major development projects. These responsibilities closely mirror many of the core functions performed by Gardner's Conservation & Planning Agent.

Pursuant to the ordinance, employees must possess a minimum of five years of prior service, and credited time may not exceed fifty percent of that service. Mr. Ellison satisfies the minimum experience requirement, and I believe awarding credit equivalent to two years of relevant experience, resulting in placement at Step 2, appropriately reflects both the similarity of his previous positions and the qualifications required for this role.

For these reasons, I respectfully recommend that the City Council approve recognizing Mr. Ellison's prior professional experience and authorize his appointment at Step 2 of the Primary Non-Union Employee Compensation Schedule.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jason Stevens

City of Gardner, Director of Community Development & Planning



City of Gardner – Mayor's Office
Mayor Michael J. Nicholson

August 26, 2026

Hon. George C. Tyros, City Council President
And City Councilors
Gardner City Hall, Rm 121
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: A Measure Setting the Rate of Compensation for the Assistant Director of Community Development and Planning

Dear Mr. President and Councilors,

I am writing to formally recommend that the City Council approve the placement of Adam Steiner, the candidate selected for the position of Assistant Director of Community Development & Planning, at Step 1 of the Primary Non-Union Employee Compensation Schedule. This recommendation is made pursuant to the provisions of Item 11733, *An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the City of Gardner, Chapter 8, "Personnel," Exhibit F – Primary Non-Union Employee Compensation Schedule*.

Mr. Steiner brings professional experience in municipal government, urban policy, community development, and infrastructure planning. This experience is directly relevant to the responsibilities of the Assistant Director position within the Department of Community Development & Planning.

The requested placement at Step 1 recognizes Mr. Steiner's relevant prior professional experience and I believe is both warranted and consistent with the intent of the City's compensation ordinance.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Nicholson
Mayor, City of Gardner

A MEASURE RATIFYING THE MAYOR'S RECOMMENDATION FOR STEP DESIGNATION FOR THE
CONSERVATION/PLANNING AGENT

BE IT HEREBY ENACTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GARDNER AS FOLLOWS:

That the designation of steps for the purpose of compensation in accordance with the provisions of Attachment F of Chapter 8 of the Code of the City of Gardner be ordered as follows for the Conservation/Planning Agent at the recommendation of the Mayor:

Position	Employee	Group	Step	Years of Credit
Assistant Director of Community Development and Planning	Adam Steiner	2	1	1

To: Jennifer Pelavin – City Clerk
Cc: George Tyros – President, City Council
From: Jason Stevens – Director, Community Development & Planning
Date: August 25, 2026
Re: Recommendation for Step Increase – Assistant Director, Community Development and Planning

Honorable Members of the City Council,

I respectfully request the City Council's approval to recognize Adam Steiner's prior professional experience in establishing his starting compensation as Assistant Director of Community Development & Planning. Pursuant to Item 11733, *An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the City of Gardner, Chapter 8, "Personnel," Exhibit F – Primary Non-Union Employee Compensation Schedule*, I believe Mr. Steiner's professional background satisfies the criteria for recognition of prior service and supports his placement at Step 2 of the applicable compensation schedule.

Mr. Steiner brings substantial professional experience in municipal planning, public policy, community development, infrastructure and climate-resilience planning, grant development and administration, and many other applicable and relevant fields.

His qualifications likewise demonstrate a strong relationship to the requirements of the position. Mr. Steiner holds a Master of Public Affairs with a concentration in Urban Policy Analysis from Brown University and a Bachelor of Environmental Studies from the University of Waterloo. His combination of graduate-level education and practical municipal experience provides an appropriate foundation for assuming the responsibilities of the Assistant Director position at a level beyond that of an individual entering the field.

Based upon my review of his qualifications and the responsibilities he will assume within the Department, I believe placement at Step 2 appropriately recognizes the relevant professional experience Mr. Steiner brings to the City.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Stevens', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jason Stevens
Director of Community Development & Planning, City of Gardner