



*MEMORANDUM*

**TO:** Select Board

**FROM:** Christopher Dillon, Town Manager

**SUBJECT:** Town Manager's Report

**DATE:** March 13, 2026

**Town Manager**

**Website**

Staff and I have met with our current website provider and our previous provider. After discussions on challenges and concerns regarding the website, we have determined returning to our old site will be the best way to provide the most information to the residents. Once we return to the old website, staff will be challenged with updating all information from last September to today. This will take a little time, but staff is working on the best time to make this transition to make it as streamline as possible. Additionally, once the site returned and been updated, we will be working on a refresh/update.

**Budget**

**FY2027 Budget Change Drive Factors by %**

Total Town/School Budget Change	\$14,695,312.00	7.28%
Debt	\$4,215,749.00	28.69%
Bldg/Auto Liab	\$94,205.38	0.64%
Medicare	\$150,000.00	1.02%
Health Care	\$3,474,379.79	23.64%
Retirement	\$1,152,356.00	7.84%
OPEB	\$127,506.72	0.87%
	\$9,214,196.89	62.70%

\*62.70% of the budget change is related to Town/School Shared Costs

Town School	\$2,912,727.87	19.82%
Shawsheen	\$1,264,833.00	8.61%
	\$4,177,560.87	28.43%

\*28.43% of the budget change is related to Education Costs

\*Combined this contributes to 91.13% of the budget change leaving 8.87% (\$1,303,554) change which is the Town Departments (2.71%)

I'm sure you have received questions regarding the budget and the increase. I know I have read a lot on social media, people have called and stopped in. The numbers above further show the largest factors in the increase for the Town's budget. As I mentioned, when meeting with the Finance Committee, that if you were to remove the bond payment for DPW and level fund our health insurance, the budget would be up 3.5%.

### **Parker Street Signs**

I wanted the Board to be aware the signs were installed on Parker Street.

### **Preliminary Warrant**

The Preliminary Warrant draft index has been provided to the Select Board under Agenda Item #13. Please note that this index is a rough draft and the order of the articles may change. Warrant articles may continue to be submitted until Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>. Once the submission period closes, an updated Preliminary Warrant will be provided to the Select Board.

### **Department of Public Works**

On Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, I went before the Finance Committee for an initial overview of the FY2027 budget. After the presentation, while addressing questions/concerns, one of the members questioned our current solid waste contract as there is a sizeable increase, but the service has recently been an issue. What I learned the next day from the DPW Director was that he had met with our Solid Waste contractor on the 11<sup>th</sup> about the same concerns. What we learned was that the company hired a couple new drivers that are still learning and are not familiar with the routes yet. Mr. Russell has requested they add a third truck in the interim until the new drivers are trained.

### **Yankee Doodle Bike Path**

The pre-construction meeting for Phase 1 was held on March 12, 2026, at the MassDOT District 4 office in Arlington. The Contractor is Barletta Heavy Division, Inc. Tree clearing will be the first item of work performed for the project and is anticipated to begin in late April or May. DPW will attend bi-weekly update meetings as the project moves ahead. The construction completion date is November 13, 2028.

### **Water**

Water Storage Tank Rehab Project:

1. The project is in the final stages of contract approval with the work slated to start on the Boston Rd Storage Tank.
2. All emergency coordination preparation has been completed, to be prepared as best as possible: preparing staff and treatment plant, coordinating with Billerica police and fire, coordinating with neighboring towns.
3. Work Schedule
  - a. Currently slated to start draining on March 23rd, and to be finished by the end of the week, no later than March 30th.
  - b. Mobilization of the contractor's equipment to start the week of the 23rd.
  - c. Actual work to start there after
  - d. Work to be completed no later than June 30th.
  - e. Then moving onto the Locke Rd tank (1.0MG).
  - f. Full project completion End of August beginning of September

### Water Restrictions/ Water Ban:

1. With the Boston Rd Storage Tank offline and due to its critical nature to the distribution system in supplying pressure to the entire town, I have no choice but to institute a full water ban on outside water usage until the completion of the work on the Boston Rd tank is complete and it is back online.
2. Although we have the Locke Rd Tank, its overall size is of little help in modulating the system pressure which now will be taken up primarily by the operation of the treatment plant.
3. The plant and system cannot support both normal usage and the increase from irrigation and other outside usages. This decision was not reached lightly but nevertheless it is Imperative for the safe completion of the work to be done.

### Wastewater

- The town missed the SRF funding list for the Brown St. Force Main project by a small margin, we are appealing this in multiple ways including letters from the Town Manager and hopefully state reps, a conference call in late March with DEP, and involving MBTA since any future breaks on this line will impact their operation/infrastructure. Design work for this critical project continues to move forward despite every hurdle that MBTA/Keolis and now DEP throw at us.
- Snow melt has been rapid over the past week. Today 3/12/26 we are projecting to take 3 million gallons of non-municipal flow in the form of Inflow/Infiltration. Luckily, we have not seen a lot of rain which would significantly compound the situation. The plant will peak at a pace of 7.5 to 8.0 MGD (million gallons per day) and average around 6 million gallons for the day (dry weather we average 2.9 million gallons). I & I projects are extremely important and will be moving forward for the town to address aging infrastructure and make improvements in this area.
- We are currently halfway through the I&I rehabilitation project approved in 2024. Snow has slowed work down due to several manholes being buried in easements as well as the snow emergencies themselves making it difficult to perform the remaining work. We are still in good shape since National Watermain started quickly after being awarded the project.
  - We were just informed that Billerica has received a grant for loan forgiveness on this project, the dollar amount is \$63,357. We are awaiting further communication on this loan adjustment.
  - Work should resume soon since snow is disappearing quickly.
- 2/26/26 was the start up on the new Atlas Copco Turbo Blower. Atlas Copco, Woodard & Curran, and Weston & Sampson were all on site to assist. – Still some work to be done here to get the blower fully online, but it has been tested successfully.
- Design on the Admin and Sludge building roof replacements have started with Weston and Sampson.
- Cold weather along with FOG (fats, oils, grease) in the collection system has caused complications in the plant with its typical treatment operations. We are still waiting for water temperatures to increase (snow melt is a negative here since it will be colder than municipal wastewater) to help the microbiology get fully back to normal. We are having an engineering firm investigate what it would take to remove fog from the surface of our aeration tanks which would give us more flexibility when FOG from the collection system causes an issue in the plant.

- Research and planning are continuing to move forward on converting from emulsion style polymer to dry polymer for the phosphorus removal unit known as “comag” in the plant. This is better for the environment and over time dry polymer is cheaper than the emulsion style.
- Darby and Waterview design work has started
- Rehabilitation of sewer on Lowell St. made the SRF funding IUP list that was just released. This was the site of an SSO last year.

## **Recreation**

Summer Program Registration will go live on Wednesday, 3/18 at 10am. Summer registration is extremely competitive, and all residents interested in signing up for one of our many camps are strongly encouraged to be online and ready to go right at 10:00, as programs will fill quickly. It is also strongly recommended that you log in the day before to ensure you have no issues with your username or password. Programs are visible on our website now to view and plan ahead!

\*Spring program registration started two weeks ago and spots are filling up fast! Make sure to sign up before programs begin in just a few weeks!

## **Recreation Center Update**

This project continues moving along with exciting new milestones. The exterior panels have begun getting installed, and drywall is going up quickly on the interior. This project continues to be on schedule.