



City of Malden

Malden City Hall
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Meeting Minutes - Final Finance Committee

Councillor McDonald, Chair
Councillor Colon-Hayes, Vice-Chair
Councillor Condon
Councillor Crowe
Councillor Spadafora
Councillor Winslow

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

6:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Watch the meeting with Teams: <https://tinyurl.com/2jjnj8fk>

Roll Call

Present: 6 - Councillor Carey McDonald, Councillor Karen Colon Hayes, Paul Condon, Peg Crowe, Craig Spadafora and Stephen Winslow

Also Present: Council President Linehan, Councillor Taylor
Councillor O'Malley via Teams
Mayor Gary Christenson
Maria Luise, Special Assistant to the Mayor
Ron Hogan, Chief Strategy Officer
Charles Ranaghan, CFO/Controller
Daniel Grover, Treasurer
Nate Cramer, Assessor
Eric Rubin, Director Public Facilities
Yem Lipp, City Engineer
Alex Pratt, Director OSPCD
Anthony Rodrigues, IT Director
Bob Knox, Director DPW
Christopher Mooney, Assistant City Solicitor

Councillor McDonald called the meeting to order at 6:16 PM.
There will be audio and video via Teams for this meeting.

Minutes to be Approved

[367-25](#)

Minutes of August 28, 2025 to be approved.

A motion was made by Councillor Colon Hayes, seconded by Councillor Condon, that the Committee Minutes of August 28, 2025 be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Business

[363-25](#)

Order: That the City of Malden hold a Special Municipal Election on February 10,

2026 and to include the following ballot question:

Shall the City of Malden be allowed to assess an additional \$5,400,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of stabilizing the City's budget and to support ongoing city services across all departments, including public schools, public safety, public library, public works and general government, for which the monies will be used for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026?

A yes vote would support an increase in real estate and personal property taxes beginning with fiscal year 2027 (7/1/26 to 6/30/27).

A no vote would make no change to the current tax structure.

Sponsors: Amanda Linehan and Stephen Winslow

Attachments: [Mayor's Memo to the City Council 9 25 2025](#)

[Public Comment September 30](#)

[Graph Printouts 22x 28 \(2\)](#)

[Graph Printouts 28x 22 \(3\)](#)

[FY2026 General Fund Summary Oct 2026](#)

[Steps Taken to Implement Budget Savings Oct 2025](#)

[363-25 New Growth & Ec Dev Presentation Oct 21 2025](#)

The Clerk read Paper #363-25 into the record see attached.

Councillor McDonald clarified Paper #363-25 is phrased as an order to allow for discussion and debate at the City Council. No vote has been taken yet on whether to place this on the ballot. The Finance Committee expects to have multiple meetings to address the many questions and options related to the proposal and will do their due diligence with all the options at hand. The goal is to ensure thorough evaluation and understanding of the fiscal picture and choices available and begins with a presentation from the Finance Team. Chuck Ranaghan Controller/CFO presents the information to the Finance Committee.

Chuck Ranaghan said he thought it was a good starting point that last week when the Mayor came down we referenced a website we created for the Council and the residents with information on what a Prop 21/2 override: cityofmalden.org/override. He wanted to reiterate to the constituents how easy it is to get information regarding this override. He referred to the first paragraph; on September 25, 2025, Mayor Christensen sent a correspondence to the Malden City Council asking that the City Council take under consideration a Prop 21/2 override. For Prop 21/2 override to be put before the voters both the Mayor and the majority of the Malden City Council must support the override. The City Council will refer the paper to committee and if that succeeds which they did, then the Finance Committee will have a series of meetings on the proposal that's why we are here tonight. He recapped what we went over last week with the tab on the left, How do we compare?. There has been a lot of talk Malden doesn't have a revenue problem but a spending problem. He highlighted that Malden has one of the lowest per capita spending rates compared to other cities, spending on average \$2,800 per capita. This includes expenditures on public safety, general government, and debt. He explained that Malden is required to allocate 43% of its available revenue to school spending, significantly higher than other cities. This state-mandated requirement is a major factor in the city's budget challenges. He also discussed the potential effects of a \$5.4 million override, which would help stabilize the city's budget. The override would result in an average tax increase of \$360 per year for a single-family home assessed at \$666,000 and

noted that Malden spends less on public safety per capita compared to surrounding cities, making it eligible for public safety staffing grants. He highlighted that Malden has done a good job of containing debt, spending \$114 per capita on debt, which is lower than many surrounding cities. Chuck referred to the chart in the presentation Required School Spending as a Percent of Local Taxes and Receipts in the presentation and said this is one of the most important slides we will be talking about tonight.

Councillor McDonald asked if Chuck could explain why we are looking at the group of cities on the charts as comparisons.

Chuck said this group includes surrounding cities and demographic wise some that are very similar to Malden. These are commonly used communities to compare Malden for Joint Labor Management Committee decisions that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will use. He discussed the disproportionate impact of the state-mandated school funding formula on Malden, which requires 43% of available revenue to be allocated to schools, significantly higher than other cities.

Councillor McDonald asked Chuck to clarify this percentage of school spending we are on the higher end as required by the state. Talking about the formula that is increasing at a higher rate because we are so far below what the state truly expects us to pay and we are being assessed an additional penalty and we have to do even more because of what the state believes we should be spending. This high amount is even \$10mill away from what the state expects us to do.

Chuck explained that Ron Hogan has put together a slide which talks about the increase in Malden that proportionately it doesn't make sense to the other communities. Malden has been actively engaging with state leaders and agencies to seek relief from the disproportionate school funding requirements. Efforts include meetings with the state delegation and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Chuck emphasized the need for future meetings to focus on economic development possibilities, including strategies to increase local revenue through commercial development and other means. He indicated that the required school spending percentage is expected to continue increasing, exacerbating the city's financial challenges. He outlined potential cuts and savings, including a preliminary analysis showing that a 15% reduction in workforce could result in the loss of nearly 60 positions across various departments and provided a breakdown of potential cuts by department, including 3 positions from the library, 6 from DPW, 14 from the fire department, 16 from the police department, and 18 from general government. He mentioned that the city is exploring various alternative savings measures, including fee updates and potential furloughs, to mitigate the need for workforce reductions.

The committee has asked for the following information from the Controller and the Assessor: Compile a comprehensive list of all grants received by the city, including school grants, a detailed report on the opioid settlement funds received and their allocation, investigate and report on existing and potential property tax relief programs for seniors and individuals on fixed incomes. Explore the feasibility of implementing furloughs as an alternative to layoffs and present findings. They also asked for a detailed report on potential economic development opportunities, including underutilized parcels and strategic growth areas, an exact figure of the ARPA funds used for budget stabilization over the past years, to investigate the possibility of requesting voluntary tax payments from tax-exempt property owners and report findings and to gather data on potential revenue from increasing the number of cannabis dispensaries and present it.

Councillor McDonald discussed the importance of having detailed conversations about potential budget cuts, including specific departmental reductions and their impact on city services. The Finance Committee will be scheduling future meetings to address these topics, ensuring that the committee has adequate time to explore all options and make informed decisions. The committee highlighted the importance of engaging the public in these discussions, including holding public meetings and providing opportunities for residents to share their input and concerns.

Councillor McDonald reiterated the need to collect and analyze data on various aspects of the budget and economic development to inform their discussions and decisions.

Other Business

Adjournment

A motion was made by Councillor Crowe, seconded by Councillor Winslow, that this meeting be adjourned at 8:20 PM. The motion carried unanimously.

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www.cityofmalden.org/captions