



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, December 2, 2025

6:30 PM

City Hall, Room 105
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Watch the meeting with Teams: <https://tinyurl.com/5n7tt7ms>

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 O'Malley and Colon Hayes via Teams
Mayor Gary Christenson
Maria Luise-Special Assistant to the Mayor
Ron Hogan-Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer
Charles Ranaghan-Controller/CFO
Daniel Grover-Treasurer
Carol Ann Desiderio-City Clerk
Prasanna Rajasekaran-Assistant City Solicitor

Councillor McDonald called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.
There will be audio and video of this meeting via TEAMS.

Minutes to be Approved

Business

[363-25](#)

Order: That the City of Malden hold a Special Municipal Election on March 31, 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](#)

[FY2025 ACTUALS](#)

[FY2025 Grants](#)

[FY2025 OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS](#)

[2025 ACTUALS](#)

[P&E Report-Quarter 1 2025 \(January-March\)](#)

[P&E Report-Quarter 2 2025 \(April-June\)](#)

[P&E Report-Quarter 3 2025 \(July-September\)](#)

[Copy of AllApprovedRequestsTrackingCurrent](#)

[Council Override Concerns](#)

[Winslow Motion Related to Paper 363-25](#)

[Mayor's Finance Memo for 12 9 2025](#)

[Ranaghan Handout Fin 12925](#)

Councillor McDonald explained the meeting tonight is to clarify if there are any changes to Paper 363-25 before it is sent to the Full Council.

Councillor Winslow Councillor Winslow presented a motion to develop a three-tiered tax override proposal. Tier 1 at \$5.4M, Tier 2 at \$7M, and Tier 3 at \$9M. The first tier would likely result in service and job cuts, the second tier would address a \$1.6M Chapter 70 school funding shortfall and maintain a tight budget, and the third tier would allow for inflation adjustments and potential investments in the commercial tax base. The first tier would likely result in service and job cuts, the second tier would address a \$1.6M Chapter 70 school funding shortfall and maintain a tight budget, and the third tier would allow for inflation adjustments and potential investments in the commercial tax base. The proposal was inspired by a similar approach used by Melrose City Council. He is not asking to pass this override tonight, but this is a working paper. A collaboration between fellow Councillors and the Mayor. It is a proposal for discussion purposes based on what the Mayor has presented and the Budget Forum.

Councillor McDonald asked the Mayor if he would like to comment on Councillor Winslow's motion or have more discussion first.

Mayor Christenson would like to have discussion first then he would like to comment.

Councillor Condon feels that they need to take the approach to find out how constituents feel about this. We need to explain to the constituents why we are asking this ballot question but we need to put it on a ballot to see how the residents feel about the 2 1/2 override so we need to put it out for a vote. We need to find out how the people we represent feel and put it on the ballot.

Councillor Colon Hayes likes the idea of having the tier approach and heard that at the Budget Forum. She also mentioned the one debt exclusion that passed and if that would be discussed or on the ballot. She thanked Councillor Winslow for getting the tier approach started.

Councillor McDonald explained the debt exclusion that was referred to Finance is not on the agenda tonight we need to process what is in front of us first before addressing the Debt Exclusion Paper which is the intent for tonight.

Councillor O'Malley expressed support for the tiered approach and expressed support for the tiered approach but raised concerns about messaging. It is not cumulative, if all three passed we would not be receiving \$20mill.

Councillor Winslow explained the one that gets the most votes is what gets passed.

Councillor O'Malley also questioned the inclusion of infrastructure investments in the \$9M tier, what does that mean additional staff, infrastructure?

Councillor Winslow the \$9M tier is part of the aspirations we are hoping for to put the City on good financial standing in the future decade. He agreed to clarify the language to emphasize investment in building the commercial tax base, with examples such as improvements to Commercial Street and planning for future projects.

Councillor Linehan liked the idea of putting this forward for discussion. She is worried about the jump going from \$5.4 to \$9mill is a big jump and feels that it is important to give a good explanation before putting this on the ballot. She agrees with Councillor Condon that we need to put this on the ballot. She feels it is particularly challenging to get to that big number with all the unknowns. She would like to get more information about how we get to that number from \$5-\$9 from constituents and colleagues on how we word that and feels that the tiered approach is the right way to go.

Councillor Crowe also agrees with the tiered approach. She feels keep the status quo and do more things. We need to make some cuts because if we don't show we have some skin in the game nothing will pass.

Councillor Spadafora appreciates the tiered approach because unfortunately \$5mill will only cover 1 year or maybe 1-1/2 years. He feels that we are kidding ourselves if we think we are Melrose. Melrose cut 61 positions, didn't pass the budget then went back and restored everyone. We're saying we are going to tax more money and not going to cut anybody. If we keep on asking for money and not do a reduction of staff it's still a structural budget problem. Until we get the school funding formula fixed we are going to keep on writing checks. He feels you ask for the \$7mill and pray something happens but feel like just tax our way out of this is not fair.

Daniel Grover said the estimated tax increases for an average \$650,000 home: \$344 for the \$5.4M tier, \$442 for the \$7M tier, and \$572 for the \$9M tier, with consideration for residential exemptions that could offset some of the increases which is the impact of the override.

Mayor Christenson said change will be coming no matter how many questions or amounts our team will be making changes to the organization.

Councillor McDonald stated from the Chair also supports this tiered approach and feels we need to be as specific about types and numbers of cuts of positions as we can. We

will not make cuts if we ask the highest threshold. The language has very clear rational's around the \$7mill but the reality is even at the \$9mill we will still need more money and still have to trim budgets and make some cuts. We are just talking about next year and is not interested in coming back the following year and ask for another override. This is the bridge of what we really need to resolve the things that really matter to the City. To not offer the \$9mill we are handcuffing ourselves or not being honest. We need to be clear about why that is but it is true and we should not be afraid of giving the voters the chance to say yes we support that. Everyone has the right as voters but we at a minimum should have the right to have an option that represents what we think is the fiscally responsible thing to do for the City so that this is an affordable place to live.

Mayor Christenson said let us take this back and determine to see if we can come to some agreement on how to move forward. They are open to this proposal. He would like to confer with the team after tonight to see what they think about the language to get it to where we need it to go.

Councillor Winslow agrees that was his intention to propose this and have the Mayor and his Team go back and have specific language and it gives you the framework to move this forward.

Councillor Linehan made a reminded the committee that we need to vote on this by December 16th.

Carol Ann confirmed that the council must approve the exact language of the ballot questions, which must comply with the Prop 2½ statute and avoid political or threatening wording. The legal department will review and advise on permissible language, ensuring clarity and neutrality. She also clarified that while the Secretary of the Commonwealth does not need to approve the ballot question, the office will be notified, and the clerk's office will handle ballot preparation. The legal department will ensure the question meets statutory requirements and is not subject to challenge.

The following motion was made:

Motion to request the Mayor and Legal Department to come back to this committee with exact ballot language based on the three tiers: \$5.4mill, \$7mill and \$9mill taking into account infrastructure, positions, cuts and school funding was made by Councillor Winslow and seconded by Councillor Crowe.

Councillor Linehan discussed the restrictions on using city resources for political advocacy, the need for legal and ethical guidance, and strategies for educating the public about the override without campaigning. She suggested contacting the Legal Department or the State Ethics Department with any questions

Councillor O'Malley requested that the legal department provide links and resources, such as state ethics guidelines and MMA webinars, to ensure all council members are informed about permissible activities and language.

Council members discussed the importance of engaging residents, holding informational meetings, and developing clear messaging to explain the override proposal and its impact, with a focus on transparency and informed decision-making.

Councillor McDonald asked the Clerk of Committees to schedule a meeting for Tuesday, December 9, 2025 at 6:00 PM. The timeline was set to ensure the measure could be brought to the floor for a full council vote before the deadline of December 16, 2025.

Other Business

Adjournment

A motion was made by Councillor Condon, seconded by Councillor Winslow, that this meeting be adjourned at 7:31 PM. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yea: 6 - McDonald, Councillor Colon Hayes, Councillor Condon, Councillor Crowe, Councillor Spadafora and Councillor Winslow

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