



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 9, 2025

6:00 PM

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

Watch the meeting with Teams: <https://tinyurl.com/2ufu2fcj>

Roll Call

Present: 5 - Councillor Carey McDonald, Councillor Karen Colon Hayes, Paul Condon, Peg Crowe and Stephen Winslow

Absent: 1 - Craig Spadafora

Also Present: Council President Linehan, Councillor O'Malley

Mayor Gary Christenson

Maria Luise-Special Assistant to the Mayor

Ron Hogan-Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer

Alicia McNeil-City Solicitor

Charles Ranaghan-Controller

Dan Grover-Treasurer

Carol Ann Desiderio-City Clerk

Councillor McDonald called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

This meeting will have audio and video via Teams.

Minutes to be Approved

463-25 Minutes of November 25, 2025 to be approved.

A motion was made by Councillor Winslow, seconded by Councillor Colon Hayes, that the Committee Minutes of November 25, 2025 to be approved as amended to remove the extra "i" in Minutes. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

464-25 Minutes of December 2, 2025 to be approved.

A motion was made by Councillor Winslow, seconded by Councillor Colon Hayes, that the Committee Minutes be approved as amended to attach the paper he was addressing at the meeting. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Business

363-25

Order: That the City shall include the following instructions to the inhabitants of the City of Malden on the ballot of the Special Municipal Election to be held on March 31, 2026;

Instructions to voters

Questions 1A and 1B are separate questions. You may vote for or against each question independently. Each question requires a majority of those voting on that question to pass. If both questions pass, the question with the highest dollar amount will prevail.

1A

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?

1B

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 \$8,200,000 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?

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 All Approved Requests Tracking Current](#)
[Council Override Concerns](#)
[Winslow Motion Related to Paper 363-25](#)
[Mayor's Finance Memo for 12.9.2025](#)
[Hogan Handout Fin 12925](#)
[Ranaghan Handout Fin 12925](#)
[Fw: Support for Proposition 2½ Override to Protect Public Safety and Maintain Essential Police Services](#)
[MEA Letter Re 2.1.2 Override](#)
[Finance Committee Report - Override Presentation 12.16.25](#)
[363-25 Public Comments 12.16.2025](#)
[Ron Hogan Memo RE: School Funding 12.16.2025](#)
[Final Paper 363-25 Prop 2.5 Override](#)

Councillor McDonald explained handed out information to the Finance Committee from the Mayor and updated ballot language for their review and proceeded with the logistics of the meeting. The committee has had several meetings discussing the ballot question. The Mayor has given the committee a memo and we also received the updated ballot language because the Council has to vote on the exact language of the ballot. The hope is that we get to a vote in committee with the discussion this evening to stay on track with the timeline of March 31, 2025 to proceed with the process. Hopefully a vote to be reported out of committee and send it to the Full Council for next week

Mayor Christenson thanked Councillor McDonald and the committee for their continued work on this issue. He explained he and his team has met often since last weeks Finance Committee Meeting and presented two main ballot options: the original \$5.4 million increase and a second question for \$7 million, with updated language to reflect increased funding required by law for public schools. They did consider a third option but feels it is hard enough to accept the first and second option and it wasn't appropriate at this time to add a third. It doesn't mean down the road depending where we land we

may have to do something like that but right now having the first and second question to get us back to where we need to be is the right way to go.

Councillor McDonald asked the committee if there were anymore questions about the memo. (See attached)

Councillor Winslow asked if the Financial Team has specific language for the ballot for tonight. Ultimately that is what the Finance Committee has to recommend out of committee tonight.

Ron explained that is the language from the Controller. (See attached)

Chuck explained the differences between the ballot options, 1A is the language from the initial proposal and 1B with the main distinction being the inclusion of language about increased funding required by law for public schools in the second option, it says as well as increased funding required by law for the public schools and the difference in amounts (\$5.4 million vs. \$7 million), which addresses the net school spending deficit.

Councillor Linehan thinks the language looks excellent. She questioned if we consider if we explore increasing to \$8mill and keep the same language or would we be in unchartered territory there.

Mayor Christenson said we did consider it but we need to mindful for where our community is and they tried to deal with the penalty we are continuing working with the State Delegation and they have informed him they are having some discussions with the penalty on Beacon Hill but honestly even if they didn't address it we are getting away from what we intended to do back in September.

Councillor Linehan shares that concern with the leap from \$5.4 to \$7 and she doesn't want to get to a number where we keep adding.

Councillor Colon Hayes asked Chuck the difference between 1A and 1B why is the Public Schools added in 1A and not 1B

Chuck explained the public schools is in 1A. In 1B it talks about additional funding increased funding by law which addressing the net school deficit spending as opposed to mentioning the net school in a ballot question. Increased funding required by law we all thought was a better way to have it listed on the ballot question.

Councillor McDonald explained that the city faces a net school spending deficit due to not meeting state-mandated funding levels in previous years, resulting in a requirement to add \$1.6 million to the budget to catch up and clarified that the state imposes penalties when the city falls short of its target local contribution for schools, with penalties ranging from 1% to 2% of the shortfall, amounting to \$600,000 to \$1.2 million annually, which must be factored into budget planning. Councillor McDonald described how the penalty is calculated based on the gap between the city's actual contribution and the state's target, emphasizing that even meeting net school spending requirements does not eliminate the penalty if the target is not reached. We've been paying 2% consistently over the last couple. Last year this was 1.1 9,000,000 in the past years its gone up a little bit every year. We're close but every year the target goes up which is part of our concern.

Ron said the range is 2.5% to 7.5%.

Councillor McDonald likes the language of the penalty but would like to look ahead and

get two years out of the additional penalty but feels that one year is reasonable and we move forward. From the perspective of what we're asking for voters this is part of what I hear my colleagues asking about is we're covering the increased funding required by law from public schools we should include all of the increased funding required. That would be my perspective on this.

Mayor Christenson explained we did consider this but he is not saying stop discussions but it's getting out of our range of what we think our community would be willing to accept at all.

Councillor Colon Hayes said she knows push back from the community has been strong but has faith in the voters who read and understand. As long as we get the information out they may not vote for the \$9mill but if we put it on the ballot let the voters say what they want.

Mayor Christenson said the reason we are going with the \$5.4 and not the \$7 because those are solid. They are real anything beyond that is speculative. We don't know what is going to happen in January with the Governor's Budget. Our advice is to deal with what we know right now. We have to stop bleeding our reserves to balance the operating budget that is the number one goal right now. Our team feels like we have to at least give the community an option to clear up the structural deficiencies now if they don't want to then we'll have to regroup and come up with a plan D.

Councillor McDonald asked if it would be helpful to talk about the potential cuts and suggested getting into that discussion

Ron explained they have estimated that for every \$2 million not funded, approximately 21 staff positions would need to be cut across departments, with the total impact potentially reaching 60 full-time equivalents if no ballot measure passes. If nothing passed you would be cutting \$6-\$7mill. Cuts would disproportionately affect personnel, as most city expenses are tied to staffing, and that non-personnel savings such as overtime reductions could only cover a small portion of the deficit.

Councillor McDonald asked how do you plan on getting that information on the website or out to the help educate the public?

Ron said we need to educate the public about the level of cuts and what it means to staffing levels while recognizing that in urban districts that greatly rely on state aid like we do its not like a Melrose or Stoneham that know they are getting the minimum aid and their budgeting is a lot more predictable. From our perspective you need to educate and share the magnitude without threatening the impact of potential budget cuts if the ballot measures do not pass and outline strategies for educating the public about what is at stake, including staffing reductions and departmental impacts. He noted that variables such as health insurance savings and state aid make it difficult to provide exact figures, but the committee committed to sharing realistic estimates and ranges to inform public debate.

Councillor McDonald reviews the three proposals on the table: one is as proposed by Councillor Winslow is the \$7mill which the Mayor has explicitly endorsed plus an additional \$9mill which gives us more potential to incorporate or deal with unexpected costs or just extend the timeline, the second option is to eliminate the \$9mill and simply add the \$7mill which represents the deficit solely on the one year net school spending requirement. The other option is something in between those which is two options which would be 1B the same language plus an additional amount to take into account one

year of this penalty about \$1.2mill or consider less than that. Councillor McDonald would like to hear from everybody on where they are at and if we are prepared to take a vote on which of those we would recommend to the Full Council.

*The committee weighed in on the options and made the following motion:
Motion to recommend the ballot question with the \$8.2 million amount, reflecting the structural deficit, net school spending deficit, and anticipated penalty, which made by Councillor Colon Hayes and seconded by Councillor Winslow. Roll Call Vote: Colon Hayes-yes Condon-yes Crowe-yes Winslow-yes McDonald-yes
Unanimous vote 5-Yay 0-Nay.*

Other Business

Adjournment

If you would like to request a reasonable accommodation, please contact Maria Luise, ADA Compliance Coordinator at mluise@cityofmalden.org or 781-397-7000 Ext. 2005

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www.cityofmalden.org/captions