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Gary Christenson, Mayor

TO: Malden City Council
FROM: Mayor Gary Christenson
DATE: June 4, 2026
RE: **Fiscal Year 2027 Budget**

Thank you for your focus, attention and dedication to this year's budget process. I know you all share in the pain of seeing people lose jobs, the concern for the future, and the commitment to do everything we can to put Malden on a sustainable path. That process begins with this budget but certainly doesn't end here.

While I'm leery of adding anything back to the budget knowing what the future holds, I'm also mindful of the collaboration that is needed between us and as a result, this memorandum is to inform you that we will support your resolution that was voted on unanimously at last week's finance meeting.

To summarize, your request was to do the following:

- Restore \$40,000 for the City Clerk's Office for Anna Tse to continue her work with our non-English speaking community on voting rights and other matters.
- Restore funding for ward-based activities and support, including Fourth of July, by budgeting for the following in the Ward Improvements line item. This singular line item will replace the Fourth of July line item:
 - \$7,500 per Ward Councillor
 - \$2,500 per At Large Councillor.

The net addition is \$87,500, which takes into account the fact that we already had \$20,000 budgeted in the Fourth of July line item which is now zeroed out. I am willing to increase the use of reserves to support your request in the spirit of collaboration and the community focus of these requests at last week's public hearing.

With the addition of funding to continue the good work that Anna Tse does for our community, I do want to address the topic of Language Access. As you know, the budget removes funding for an additional full-time language access position we had hired previously with ARPA funds and funded last year out of the general fund. This position was always intended to be

temporary in nature and establish a foundation for the organization to follow. With Anna's position restored, she will work closely with our DEI Coordinator Kashawna Harling to

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strengthen our overall efforts on language access. We will amend Anna's contract to formalize these additional goals, and Kashawna is also eager to lead in addressing our needs. Our City Clerk has also indicated that this capacity exists with Anna's role given the seasonal and temporary nature of elections.

I do want to proactively address some of the other ideas as well that while not presented at Finance Committee did come up during the Committee of the Whole meeting. It was suggested that we could cut police and fire overtime to restore positions. Both chiefs spoke in detail in Finance Committee about the necessity of overtime funding to address staffing shortages caused by things such as injuries, FMLA leave, vacations and sick time. Overtime funding is a necessity for any public safety organization to provide the flexibility necessary to respond to circumstances unique to public safety. Cutting overtime budgets won't help us rather it will simply leave these departments short mid-way through the fiscal year. For that reason, it's not a real cut and would result in a mid-year added appropriation from reserves. I cannot and will not support additional spending that would be funded by cuts that are on paper only while ultimately pulling more from reserves.

Similarly, recommendations to cut the salary reserve is simply irresponsible. We have open contracts with unions for time periods during which other unions received increases. Cutting funding here is once again not a real cut but rather just a back door increase to utilizing reserves to fund additional spending. This is not transparency. Again, I cannot and will not support additional spending funded by cuts to salary reserves that would then require the use of more reserves when contracts are settled.

There were several other items mentioned such as cutting professional services from the Legal Department that once again don't provide any actual positive savings. Please remember budgets are a combination of controllable and uncontrollable line items. The use of outside counsel is largely driven by circumstances out of our control, and this line item accounts for that uncertainty. Cutting the budget won't cut the need, it will only leave us short funded later on in the fiscal year.

I have provided for the docket a revised appropriation order for the meeting of June 9th which reflects the requests that were voted on in committee. I hope that with these requests being funded that the City Council can take an affirmative vote on the budget. There remains a lot of work to be done with the various collective bargaining units, and the sooner we have an approved budget the sooner we can finalize plans with these groups that meet the goals of the budget.

Thank you again for your time, attention and dedication to Malden.