

**CITY OF WOBURN
CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
As a Committee of the Whole
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
WOBURN CITY HALL
THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.**

Voting Members present: Chair Charles Viola, Councilor Joanne Campbell, Councilor Joseph Demers, Councilor Robert Ferullo, Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Councilor Lou DiMambro, Councilor Robert Toro, Councilor William Pappalardo, and President Jeffrey Dillon.

Also present: Mayor Michael Concannon; City Auditor Charles Doherty; Police Chief Robert Rufo; School Committee Vice Chair Patricia Chisholm, School Committee member Jessie Wetzel; and Leonard Burnham, Director of School Facilities

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Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Mercer-Bruen to take items #2-5 out of order from the posted agenda; approved, 9-0.

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Order that the sum of \$118,000 be appropriated from the Cemetery Interest Fund to various Cemetery Accounts for FY 2026: Mayor Concannon said he spoke to Cemetery Commission Chair John Sawyer and this is the commission’s usual annual transfer. He said \$25,000 will go toward landscaping. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo that the order “ought to pass;” approved, 9-0.

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Order that \$103,599.40 to be transferred from Unreserved Fund Balance Acct# 01-356000 to Parks Sick Leave Buy Back Acct# 0163051-515400: Mayor Concannon said this transfer represents the final sick leave buy back payment to Parks Dept. Supt. James DeLong, who after working for the city for 52 years retired at the beginning of May. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo that the order “ought to pass;” approved, 9-0.

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Order that \$150,000 for transferred from Unreserved Fund Balance Acct#01-356000 to Medicare Match Acct# 0198051-517600: City Auditor Doherty said this transfer will cover the increases in Medicare payments as a result of the salary increases in the contracts with the city’s labor unions. He said six of the seven labor unions have agreed to contracts. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo that the order “ought to pass;” approved, 9-0.

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Order that \$750,000 be transferred from Overlay Reserve Acct# 01-322000 to OPEB Trust Fund Acct# 750048-483011: Mayor Concannon said the transfer covers the city’s annual contribution to pay down the OPEB liability. He said the city has been consistent with the annual \$750,000 payments. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo that the order “ought to pass;” approved, 9-0.

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Motion to return to the regular order of business; all in favor, 9-0.

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Discussion of the FY 2026 Capital Budget: Mayor Concannon said there are several department heads present to answer particular questions. Councilor Campbell asked for the School Dept. to elaborate on a \$300,000 line item for “District-wide maintenance projects.” Director Burnham said there are too many repairs to list on the fact sheet. Mr. Burnham said the line item was worded that way because there are too many items to list individually. He said there will be floor repair, window repair, roof repairs, mechanicals, pipes, valves, etc. He said it is a way for the School Dept. to do a maintenance projects. Councilor Campbell said Councilor Toro last week brought up the condition of the roofs at the Linscott and Shamrock elementary schools. Mr. Burnham said the cost to repair the roof at the Shamrock School will cost about \$1.5 million and the School Dept. will fix it. He said there is about \$1 million in repairs to the roof of the Linscott and the School Dept. will fix that, as well. Councilor Campbell asked about a \$121,836 line item for mobile device replacements. Mr. Burnham said the expenditure is mostly on lap tops and iPads, and the replacement of broken Chromebooks. Councilor Pappalardo asked if the proposed repairs to the roofs will put the School Dept. in a good position as far as roof repair is concerned. Mr. Burnham said the roof at the Reeves Elementary School is already 25 years old. He said the roofs throughout the district are at any and all ages. He said the roofs at the Shamrock and the Linscott are in the worst condition. He said one side of the Linscott is from the 1980s. Councilor Toro said he would like to see the roofs at the Linscott and the Shamrock get addressed. He said he is concerned about the residual effects of patching. He said the patches only go so far. He said he would like to prioritize the two items for roof repair. Mayor Concannon said the city is hoping to receive grant funding for the Shamrock roof. He said if the city cannot get the grant, the next step would be to talk with the City Council about a funding mechanism. He said the administration will be prepared to have that discussion. Mr. Burnham said the School Dept. has a general sense of pricing, but not the entire scope of the project. Councilor Toro asked how long quotes are active. Mr. Burnham said the School Dept. would have to act on a quote within 30 days. He said it would go 10 percent either way. He said one grant includes solar, which adds to the cost. Councilor Toro said he wants to make sure it gets done. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she agrees with Councilor Toro. She said she wants safety. She said the old Goodyear roof was held together with glue. She said she has a concern about spending money on a roof when there is a plan to build one of these new schools. She said she is wondering if there were changes to the plan to build a new Altavesta School next. Councilor DiMambro asked what the condition of the roof is at the Altavesta School. Mr. Burnham said the roof currently does not have any active leaks. Councilor Demers said he agrees the council does not want to spend money wastefully but the Linscott roof is pretty important. He said the Linscott has value as a property asset. He said the city has to do this the right way, so kids won’t be dodging containers full of water. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she hasn’t really thought of the

Linscott as an asset the city is going to keep, and if it does, the city should take care of it. Chair Viola asked if there are any short term solutions to extend the life of the school roofs. Mr. Burnham said they have looked at the roof membrane at both the Linscott and Shamrock schools. He said the insulation damage is more than 30 percent, so it's not cost-effective to repair. He said overlays at the Reeves Elementary School, the high school and the White School will give those roofs another 15 years. Chair Viola asked if there are any active leaks at the high school, the White Elementary School and the Reeves. Mr. Burnham said there are no leaks at those schools. Vice Chair Chisholm asked if the committee wants to hear about the Elementary Math Pilot program. Councilor Campbell answered affirmatively. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Mercer-Bruen to accept from Vice Chair Chisholm and Ms. Wetzel a document entitled "Elementary Math Pilot;" approved, 9-0. Vice Chair Chisholm invited the committee to peruse the School Dept.'s comprehensive list of capital improvements. She said some of the proposed improvements involve upgrades to security. She said she does not want parents sending their kids to school thinking they are not safe. Councilors Campbell and Ferullo, along with Chair Viola, said that document is not in front of the committee. Mayor Concannon said Vice Chair Chisholm is referencing a safety and security study performed by a consultant that the School Committee has begun reviewing. He said there were conversations with the Supt. of Schools during the budget process. He said what he has been advocating for is the creation of a bit of a task force to understand and implement those recommendations from the safety and security consultant. He said the superintendent is on board with that. He said the idea would be to have Mr. Burnham from the School Dept. and the facilities manager from the city side, IT folks, and Deputy Police Chief Brian McManus comprise the task force, have that group take a look at the recommendations from the consultant and come up with a plan. He said without divulging too much is has to do with locks, man traps, access, the ability to communicate room to room; things like that. He said that would likely be something they would come back to the council for, much like the roof issue, for a significant investment. He said he thinks the School Dept. is pleased with the analysis and the professionalism and the competence of the analysis, but it's in a format that needs to be digested. He said it is not in front of the committee tonight because he does not think there is a dollar amount that is ready to be applied to it. Councilor Demers said he has sat on the School Committee and has gone through many of those safety reviews. He said many of his colleagues may have the urge to ask specific questions about school security issues, but a lot of that is left out of the public realm because they do not want to give away too much inside information that may help a bad actor. He said some questions may not be able to be answered in a public forum due to the nature of the security matters. School Committee member Wetzel said the Elementary Math Pilot presentation was put together by Courtney Young, Asst. Supt. of Curriculum & Instruction. Member Wetzel said Reveal Math is a pilot program. She said last year they paid for half of the program through the capital budget and there is a line item in this year's capital budget for the other half of the program. She said it has been very well-received by both staff and students. She said it is good to hear lots of positive feedback. She said the Chromebooks are instrumental to the curriculum. She said part of this curriculum is done on laptops and that's another reason why it is very important for the School Dept. to replace the laptops as they're getting older. She said the handout describes how the curriculum is selected, and a little bit about the Reveal curriculum. She said she is happy to answer any questions the committee may have, and if there are questions she can't answer, she can certainly bring them to Asst. Supt. Young and get back to the committee. Councilor Ferullo asked how many other curricula at different subjects exist at this level. He asked if there is a

geography curriculum, a science curriculum, or other curricula that could be integrated into the school system. Vice Chair Chisholm said that is the plan. She said the School Dept hasn't had a new math program since 2011. Councilor Ferullo asked if there will be another topic next year. Vice Chair Chisholm answered affirmatively. She said Asst. Supt. Young likes to implement a pilot program, and get teachers involved to work out the kinks. Councilor Ferullo asked if this is something the School Dept. can build out for a 5-6 year plan, for financial planning purposes. He said this looks like it could lead to \$250,000 a year for the next 4-5 years. Member Wetzel said she can ask that question of the administration. Councilor Demers asked if this process is similar to what the School Dept. did when he was on the School Committee, when Dibels was rolled out. Vice Chair Chisholm answered affirmatively. Councilor Demers said it is therefore a unified approach. He said when he was on the School Committee there wasn't even a curriculum mapping program in place. He said they started using Rubicon Atlas to make sure every student was learning the same curriculum, so if you moved from one elementary school to another you were on the same educational track. Vice Chair Chisholm said that's why Asst. Supt. Young was so excited to do the pilot program, so the teachers could have input, and this program was chosen from the others that were out there. Councilor Demers said that's great because you need the buy-in from staff in order to make this work. He said curriculum is no longer purchasing books and lesson plans and supplemental materials. He said it is very technological now and when technology gets involved the prices tend to go up. He said this is great work in the sense of curriculum because you can't rely on the same curriculum for more than 10 years. He said standards are changing. He said assessments change. He said he thinks this is a step in the right direction and he is looking forward to the implementation of new curricula in other subjects. Councilor Mercer-Bruen asked how the School Dept. will know if this curriculum is successful. She said the council will also want to know if the \$200,000 they are spending is effective. Member Wetzel said the efficacy of the curriculum will be determined by test scores. She said there will be evaluative dialog with teachers about what they are seeing in the classroom. She said they can glean information from not just standardized tests but also tests and quizzes in the classroom. Councilor Mercer-Bruen asked if the council can have a discussion in five months with the School Dept. and will there be scores available. Member Wetzel said the next five months include summer break but they will make an effort to get the data the council wants. Councilor Mercer-Bruen asked if there will be scores by January or February. Member Wetzel said she thinks the School Dept. can have something tangible by January. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said Councilor Demers is right that times are changing and kids aren't learning the same. She said she always asks the same questions each year about how programs are being measured. Vice Chair Chisholm said the administration will be on top of this like a new baby. President Dillon said asked for an explanation on the page of the handout that quantifies MCAS scores in 2023 and 2019 by subgroup. Vice Chair Chisholm said those are subgroups for MCAS scores. She said those numbers indicate which groups need to be targeted for extra help. She said those were the numbers from 2019 and 2023, with Covid in between. Councilor Campbell asked what the percentages meant. Vice Chair Chisholm said they refer to the percentage of the student body that took the exams. President Dillon asked if the scores actually went down in 2023. Vice Chair Chisholm said some of them went up. She said multi-language learners could qualify for two or three subgroups. She said they could be counted in many of these subgroups. President Dillon said it seems to him that all the percentages were higher in 2019. He asked if that means the scores were higher. Vice Chair Chisholm said it means there were more students who qualified in these subgroups. Councilor Campbell asked if 39 percent of all students meet or exceeding

expectations in 2023. Vice Chair Chisholm said the ratio refers to that subgroup. She said it does not mean 36 percent of the whole grade. Councilor Ferullo asked what the bottom line of text is, the text outside the box. He asked what age group the chart refers to. He asked what the 39 percent number refers to. Vice Chair Chisholm said some groups are excelling and there are some groups that need improvement. She said it's a small minority of students who have been broken out in this table, so they know to whom they can direct extra help. Councilor Campbell asked if these numbers are positive. She said the chart doesn't make any sense. Vice Chair Chisholm said the School Dept. knows it has work to do. Councilor Campbell asked if the School Dept. knows why it is getting worse. Vice Chair Chisholm said it could be the number of students. She said she thinks almost 50 percent of students in Woburn are classified as economically disadvantaged. She said the 36 percent could refer to that subset of students. Councilor Demers said the chart shows the difference between MCAS scores in 2019 and 2023. He said there was a sizeable world event in between those years that really hampered the district's high needs students. He said the numbers on the chart may represent the difference in scores for the high needs students between 2019 and 2023, and the scores have dipped. He said there has been an effort made to improve those scores, and the figures may also represent the shifting population where different types of learners may be impacting the scores. He said there were probably more multi-lingual students in 2023 than in 2019. He said that could also be a reason. He said if a student moves here and lives in Woburn for than six weeks, the state still requires that student to take the MCAS. He said he appreciates Asst. Supt. Young putting together this presentation, but having a little bit more background on that chart would have been helpful. He said he thinks the chart indicates the scores have dipped due to the changing needs of the district. Councilor DiMambro asked if he is to understand that 61 percent of the students are not meeting expectations in mathematics. Vice Chair Chisholm said students could be in several of these different categories. She said this could all be 100 students. She said a student could be, for instance, both a Hispanic and a multilingual student. Councilor DiMambro said he is looking at percentages as a whole. Vice Chair Chisholm said the entire student body is doing much better than that. She said this page refers to these categories of students. Councilor DiMambro asked how the entire student body is doing in terms of mathematics. He asked what percentage meets or exceeds expectations. Vice Chair Chisholm said she does not have those numbers today. She said the MCAS results from last year are not back yet. Councilor DiMambro asked if those numbers are available for 2023. Vice Chair Chisholm and Member Wetzel said the numbers for 2023 are reflected in the handout. Councilor DiMambro said that leads him back to his question about whether 61 percent of the student body is not meeting or exceeding expectations. Member Wetzel said these numbers are inflated because you can have the same student in more than one of these categories. She said you would have to look at each student and determine which boxes they fit into. She said she agrees the chart is a bit confusing and agrees that more information would have been very helpful. She said they can certainly work on that and get updated MCAS numbers when they are available. Vice Chair Chisholm said those numbers should be available in the fall. Councilor Pappalardo said the chart is very confusing. He said he assumes this is not saying 39 percent of all Woburn students either met or exceeded expectations in mathematics. Vice Chair Chisholm said the 39 percent number refers to just this group. Councilor Ferullo said he would like to take another try as explaining the 39 percent. He said this is in comparison to 39 percent of all students. He said what the chart said to him is 24 percent of economically disadvantaged students didn't meet or exceed expectations, 23 percent of Black students didn't meet or exceed expectations, 21 percent of Hispanic students didn't meet or exceed expectations,

and so forth, and the 39 percent is in comparison to all students. He asked if that was a bad interpretation. He said he would be concerned if 61 percent of the student population failed to meet or exceed expectations. He said the way he reads that bottom line if that's what it says. Vice Chair Chisholm said out of the entire page there could be 100-200 students, but that same student could be counted twice. Councilor Ferullo asked if that 39 percent figure is even related to the chart. Member Wetzel said she thinks the chart is confusing because it has the term "all students" in it. She said she would have to get clarification. Vice Chair Chisholm said they can get back to the committee about that. Councilor Ferullo said that information would be valuable for Monday night. Chair Viola asked how the kids that were on that polit program perform. Member Wetzel said her daughter is involved in one of the pilot programs in second grade and she is doing better and has been doing better since kindergarten. She said math is still not her daughter's favorite subject, however, she is doing better in it. She said she knows her daughter's teacher at the Goodyear School enjoys teaching the curriculum. Chair Viola asked if it seems like the kids are enjoying this curriculum more. Member Wetzel said yes from her child's perspective. She said she knows it has also been well-received by the educators. She said she assumes that means the kids are also enjoying it. Councilor Campbell said she has a question about a line item for the Parks Dept. Mayor Concannon said new Parks Supt. Stephen Miele is at the monthly meeting of the Recreation Commission but he may be able to answer the councilor's questions. Councilor Campbell said she enjoys working with gadgets. She said she got a table saw for Mother's Day and she enjoys using it. She asked the mayor to elaborate on a proposed \$50,000 outlay for a "Reel Master Side Winder Cutting Unit." Mayor Concannon said he understands the device is a really big lawn mower. Councilor Toro asked how the cutting unit will be used. Mayor Concannon said this is a multi-purpose lawn mower the Parks Dept. will use to do the bulk of their cutting. Councilor Campbell said the Parks Dept. does need proper equipment. She said this is great. She said the Parks Dept. works so hard, and they ought to have the right equipment. Councilor Campbell said she has a question about the Cisco phone system migration outlay for \$40,000. She asked if that money will be used to connect the new City Hall annex. IT Director David Mastronardi said the connection of the annex will be done in-house, but all the lines will need replacement in the next five years. He said there will be a savings versus the cost of outsourcing. Councilor Campbell said there is also a \$140,000 outlay for cybersecurity standardization. She said cybersecurity is really important but it seems like a lot of money. Director Mastronardi said the IT Dept. obtained a \$105,00 grant to move forward with an effort to implement standardized security. He likened the cyber security system to a home security system in that if all the windows aren't locked, the entire home is vulnerable to a security breach. He said the cost of not doing this could be greater than the cost of implementing it. He said a lot of it is patching little holes. He said he did divert some money from his department's operating budget. Councilor Pappalardo asked if the \$36,000 outlay for Flock safety cameras involves the security system the committee discussed with Police Chief Robert Rufo a couple of months ago, Chief Rufo answered affirmatively. Councilor Pappalardo referred to a layout of \$408,432 for cruiser replacement and asked how many vehicles that figure will buy. Chief Rufo said that outlay will cover the cost of three marked units and three unmarked units. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo that the matter be sent "back for action;" approved, 9-0.

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MOTION made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo to adjourn; all in favor, 9-0. Chair Viola adjourned the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees