



TOWN of BROOKLINE

Massachusetts

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Daniel F. Bennett
Building Commissioner

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: April 8, 2025

To: Select Board, Bernard Greene, Chair
School Committee, Andy Liu, Chair
Advisory Committee, Dennis Doughty, Chair

From: Daniel Bennett,
Building Commissioner

Re: **Building Department FY 2026 Operating Budget**

The purpose of this Memo is to summarize the FY 2026 budget process and proposed cuts to the Building Department operating budget. There have been multiple versions of proposed cuts from both the Town and School.

I received the annual Town Financial Plan Memo for FY 2026 Budget in September. The Memo detailed the financial challenges that the Town is facing and asked that the non-personnel budgets be kept level this year, with some exceptions.

Shortly after the Building Department budget submission, I had a meeting with Town Administrator Carey, Melissa Goff and Charlie Young, to discuss the proposed Town budget and potential budget reductions that would help close the budget gap. Cuts were discussed for various line items and implemented several days later. The total reductions made by the Town Administrator total \$78,500.00 from Town repair and maintenance, vehicle and construction materials.

Building Department staff first learned of the proposed School Committee budget cuts via a Facebook post in early February. The post indicated an email was sent out and it listed Town Public Building Department (TDB FTE) est. \$400,000. This was a surprise to Building Department staff since there was no communication with staff of the proposed cuts or what the implications would be. On March 3, 2025, Charlie Simmons, Public Buildings Director, received an email from the Superintendent of Schools informing him the "School Committee has asked us to share a level-services budget and also look for additional ways to lower our overall FY 2026 budget request." Further, he asked Charlie to determine the implications of reducing \$400,000 from the repair and maintenance/personnel budget

lines and provide the items/actions that would get deferred/delayed/not done by reducing the FY 2026 School/Repair and Maintenance funding given this is the size of the ask. This request was made Monday morning and he needed the information by Tuesday. The Building Department responded that there is no time to come up with hypothetical FY 2026 budget reductions and its impacts on such short notice.

Charlie feels the school's maintenance and repair budget is his responsibility and these proposed cuts would not be in the school's best interest. Charlie and I have spent many years justifying the expansion of Public Buildings staff and an operating budget to ensure the buildings are properly maintained, town and school alike. This is taking a very large step back and will have numerous adverse effects on school building operations and maintenance for years to come. The Building Department has never exceeded its budget with services, supplies or salaries. The financial situation the School Department is facing has nothing to do with Public Buildings Division, and has not contributed to any budget deficit.

A reduction in the amount of \$400,000 from the Building Department budget would result in the following work being eliminated; window cleaning and repair, screen repair, repair/replacement of shades and window treatments, all painting, flooring work (tile, lvt, vinyl, carpet, wood, etc.), masonry and some carpentry work (walls, doors, ceilings).

The most recent information on the School Committee proposed cuts to the Building Department budget can be found on their website under FY 2026 Budget Summary of Actions to Reduce Projected Deficit dated April 4, 2025. The new amount of the proposed cut is listed as \$162,499. The impacts of this reduction would be no window cleaning and repair, screen repair, repair/replacement of shades and window treatments, and all painting.

The initial \$400,000 reduction was based on a few incorrect assumptions by the School Committee and staff. They assumed there would be surplus energy funds and repair & maintenance (R&M) carry over funds to the next fiscal year. However, Charlie explained he had not received bills for January, February or March and some sites since September and that it was too early to determine if there will be surplus funds. With respect to R&M, the department carries over funds every fiscal year in order to allow us to pay the previous year's bills in the new fiscal year. This is a longstanding process and does not mean there are extra funds turned in at the end of the year. These issues have been explained many times and hopefully have been put to rest.