

FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY, AUGUST 11, 2025

A Finance and Budget Committee meeting was held on Monday, August 11, 2025, in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Committee Members Present: Martha Ptasnik, Committee Chair
Lynda L. Scheel, Committee Vice Chair

Committee Members Absent: Rob Gjonaj Donovic, Committee Member

City Officials and Others Present: Brandon McCullough, Council President
Carrie Budzinski, Councilmember
Laura Toy, Councilmember
Carter Fisher, City Attorney
Debra Lichtenberg, Finance Director
Connie Kumpula, Chief Accountant
Dave Varga, Mayor's Chief of Staff
Lori Miller, City Clerk

Residents – see sign in sheet

1. The subject matter of Advanced Budget Reviews Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Pre-Budget Meeting. (CR 161-12)
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The meeting convened at 6:00pm

The Committee Chair, Martha Ptashnik, opened the meeting with an explanation of the budgeting process and the purpose of the pre-budget meeting. Finance Director Debbie Lichtenberg gave an overview of the timeline and process.

Property taxes were up 4% from the previous year, expected to be up 6%. General fund revenue was flat, at a 2.2% increase. The city's major cost is staffing and personnel costs. The 2026 budget is not expected to add any new positions.

Capital Outlay Requests are expected to exceed the 2025 levels.

Council members were then given the opportunity to state their priorities, concerns and ask questions.

Committee Chair, Martha Ptashnik started with the following statement:

We need to be very aggressive in cost savings going into this budget - Every dollar must be assigned a purpose whether it is for needs, wants, savings or debt payment. We are no longer just looking at a previous year and adding a small percentage. We need to look at every expense to ensure it is still necessary and aligned with our current priorities.

The following suggestions were made by Vice President Ptashnik:

1. The \$2.4 million that was set aside for the City Hall project should now be directed to the CIP (418) fund.
2. The Capital Facilities Manager position to remain in the budget and the hiring a priority as we head into 2026.
3. The admin fee being charged to commercial properties and PRDA to be rescinded. It was to purchase the property for the Senior Center and should not continue going forward.

Financials on the Senior Center Project and Courthouse were requested before the preliminary budget meeting.

Looking at changing the fee structure was suggested, since the court system should not be supplemented by the general fund.

The Building/Ordinance Department was asked if more money should be allocated for increased inspection and what is needed as far as support for them. Vice President Ptashnik will be meeting with the director to work on some solutions to our fines structure.

The city is looking into some technology/software enhancements for Inspection and Inspection Director, Jerome Hanna, will be asked to share exactly what he will need as we get closer to finalizing the budget

Additional suggestions were made:

1. A usage study for the Bennett and Sandburg libraries. We need real data on traffic, usage, staffing, etc. This will allow us to make informed and responsible decisions regarding potential cuts and consolidation of library services.
2. Instead of wasting money on a salary survey, there are other resources we can tap into.

Vice Chair Lynda Scheel shared her priorities, requesting the following:

1. Status of the hiring of a Capital Improvement Director
2. Amount of money was spent on the municipal facilities millage
 - a. A balance sheet requested
 - b. Have all contracts in place been ordered to stop work, and if so, what date.
3. Amount of money spent on the new City Hall project to date
 - a. Updated balance sheet requested
 - c. What contracts are in place for this project
4. Current financials of the Senior Center
 - a. Updated complete balance sheet requested
5. Discussion regarding the Inspection Department losing money and what can be done to help them while trying not to increase fees on residents.
6. Where are we with looking at imposing additional fees on empty buildings; possibly being able to increase fees for those staying empty for an extended period.
7. Current financials of the courthouse. They have been going through financial hurdles the last few years, is this still projected for next year?
8. Balance of funds in our 418 account (Building Account), and/or any other account that we have that can be used for general building improvements
 - a. Balance sheet requested of income/expenses for last 5 years of that/those accounts
9. Any department that Administration can suggest downsizing, consolidate or eliminate completely. Concerns have been raised regarding
 - a. Clerk's office
 - b. Communications/Community Resources Department
 - c. Government Affairs/Liaison department
 - d. Mayor's office
10. The .5 mil for businesses only to be removed effective Nov 30 2025.

11. Updated list of City owned buildings and vacant land (NOT utilized Parks)
 - a. Specifically note vacant and/or under-utilized buildings/land
 - b. Specifically note if leased out and when contract ends
12. Updated list of Car Assignments/Car Allowance (how much) to specific job titles and how decided (Mayor/Charter/LOCC/contract)
13. List of grants received over the last two years (Not including police and fire)
14. Millage wording for the two millages that expire in 2026
15. Where can the millage wording be found for all other City millages that are part of our tax bill. (i.e. Police from 4/55, Police/Fire from 8/78, Libraries from 8/84 and Recreation from 9/99, just to name a few.
16. Balance Sheet of PRDA Funding for last 5 years – Income / Expenses
17. What City positions do the Council have control of Salary, besides ours?
18. Opposition to spending money on a salary survey. Rather, use the resources that the Conference of Western Wayne offers (they used to put something like this together) and see if we can get something similar from an Oakland County group.

Councilmember Carrie Budzinski shared her priorities:

1. Ensuring the city has funds to address obligations to staff and retirees
2. Filling the Capital Improvement Manager role as soon as possible and getting a capital plan together. Money to be budgeted so that the role can have funds to address the most critical building needs for public safety specifically.
3. Moving forward with the library's deferred plans - new roof, bathroom conversion and elevators
4. Hillcrest Park improvement (on the Parks and Rec Park schedule). NE Livonia does not have a new playground and the playground at this site does not even have sidewalk for families to easily access it.
5. Making sure Inspection/Enforcement have the resources necessary to address ordinance violations and getting legal's recommendation for establishing a compounding penalty for long-term vacant properties and making sure fees are as stringent as possible.
6. Creation of an Economic Development Position that could be shared part-time with PRDA. It's my understanding this was considered in the past and while we obviously need to be lean, the constant frustration we hear from residents is vacant buildings and not the businesses they want and should be addressed. Plymouth Road businesses are paying a special assessment, and don't get enough value. Other DDA's have websites that promote businesses/events and

offer a directory so that those wishing to patron businesses can do so easily. They could spend half of their time doing it for PRDA area and then use those skill sets for the city at large. I imagine this role to be like a 'concierge' for smaller businesses to help make sure they get priority in inspections or other approvals so it's easy to do business in Livonia. The ROI on this would be both economic with bringing in new business and a show of action for residents who feel like this concern is going unaddressed.

7. A city-wide salary survey
8. Explore the possibility of college partnerships for work-study programs to help attract young talent in the long-term.
9. A memo with financials related to the building - recent investments, building maintenance costs when open, current preservation costs, most recent estimates for rehabilitation provided in advance of the Noble meeting on August 18th.

Councilmember Laura Toy asked about:

1. Usage and access to city cars
2. Usage of city land

President Brandon McCullough requested the following:

1. Citywide Salary Survey. Conduct a comprehensive salary survey across all city positions to ensure competitive and equitable compensation.
2. Five-Year Comprehensive CIP Plan. Develop a five-year Capital Improvement Plan covering all areas of city government to guide long-term infrastructure and facility investments.
3. Property Maintenance Ordinance Investment Strengthen investment in both residential and commercial property maintenance enforcement, with the goal of establishing a proactive — rather than reactive — process.
4. Strategic Plan – Sandburg & Noble Renovations. Implement a targeted strategic plan to renovate both Sandburg and Noble facilities, ensuring they meet current and future community needs.

The meeting closed with the acknowledgement that not all of these requests and questions are part of the Finance department or the budget process but are still priorities for the Council.

The Finance Director thanked everyone for their input and gave closing remarks regarding the budget process.

The meeting adjourned at 6:46pm:

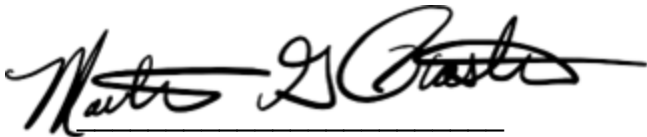
Note: This subject matter will remain in Committee as a standing item.

The Council Recommends:

- The September 18 Finance and Budget Committee meeting to be held at DPW instead of the 5th floor Gallery.
- To receive and place on file for the information of the Council, the City of Livonia 2025 Assessment Data booklet from the City Assessor, dated July 28, 2025.

This item is to be placed on the **Regular Meeting Agenda of August 25, 2025**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martha Ptashnik', written over a horizontal line.

Martha Ptashnik, Chair

FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY, JUNE 9, 2025 - 7:00PM

NAME

DEPT OR CONTACT INFO FOR NOTIFICATIONS*

*PERTAINING THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THIS MEETING

Dennis Mika

Jim Bragg

Pastor Tyette Klarred

Cindy Fleming

Marilyn Kataras

Jennifer O'Connor

Frances Tunis

Alex King

Robert Biga