



MAYOR GINA-LOUISE SCIARRA

City of Northampton

Office of the Mayor

210 Main Street Room 12

Northampton, MA 01060-3199

(413) 587-1249 Fax: (413) 587-1275

mayor@northamptonma.gov

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Statement from Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra on the Passage of Fiscal Year 2026 Financial Orders in Support of Northampton's Capital Projects

On Thursday, January 16, and Wednesday, January 22, the Northampton City Council approved a series of mayoral financial orders funding a wide range of capital projects in Fiscal Year 2026 which will improve our roads, sidewalks, water and sewer infrastructure, and much more.

Of the \$19.4 million in appropriated funds and borrowing authorizations approved by the Council over the course of the two meetings, \$3.32 million supports school-related needs, including \$1.6 million covering about half the cost of the planned road safety project in front of Northampton High School. Money is also appropriated for new student Chromebooks, projectors, Jackson Street School insulation, Leeds Elementary heating, Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School ventilation, and other school repairs and replacements across our districts.

An additional \$2.75 million was dedicated to road resurfacing, an 83 percent increase from the Fiscal Year 2024 amount, and \$1 million was dedicated to sidewalks, a fivefold increase from the appropriations in Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024.

Included in these financial orders is \$3.15 million for water and sewer work under Main Street, upgrading infrastructure that dates back as far as 1871. These funds originated from the American Rescue Plan Act pandemic relief program. The work will happen in conjunction with the Picture Main Street redesign, which will greatly improve the safety of pedestrians, rollers, cyclists, and drivers with wider sidewalks, narrower crosswalks, dedicated bike lanes, and clearly marked travel lanes. Picture Main Street is largely funded with MassDOT transportation funds, so performing underground infrastructure upgrades at the same time will save Northampton taxpayers money on necessary digging costs.

Northampton faces a long backlog of deferred maintenance because the city's Capital Stabilization Fund had dwindled to nearly zero in Fiscal Year 2011. Stabilization funds are interest-bearing accounts, similar to household savings accounts, which help stabilize budgets in the event of unexpected cost increases, revenue dips, or other emergencies. Any long-range capital plan needs healthy stabilization funds to ensure projects will have the financing

necessary for completion. Adherence to Northampton's Fiscal Stability Plan, begun in Fiscal Year 2014, has helped build up the city's reserves over the last decade, giving us the means to more ably address deferred maintenance.

Approval of the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations for capital projects occurred a couple of months earlier than in the past. This was done because city officials are looking to limit fast-growing construction costs by decreasing the time between estimating and bidding, and by being in a better position to bid competitively on contracts by doing so earlier in the season.

Our plans for addressing deferred maintenance are detailed in the city's rolling [five-year Capital Improvement Program](#). I thank the City Council for its strong support of the overall program and for the expeditious approval of the Fiscal Year 2026 financial orders needed to carry out the program.

You can find more details about Northampton's five-year Capital Improvement Program, including Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations and funding sources [at this link](#)

For additional background about the city's ongoing fiscal management practices, [please view the Mayor's January 8 presentation](#) to the City Council Finance Committee, [or view the presentation](#).

For the city's FY2026 budget projections, [please watch the Mayor's January 30 presentation](#) to the City Council, School Committee, and Smith Vocational Trustees, and view the presentation [at this link](#).