



FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday March 18, 2026 @ 6PM

CITY CLERK TREASURER: STACEY HOSKING

FINANCE CHAIR: MISTY FULLER

FINANCE COMMITTEE: MARIA MAZZARA

JEFFREY RHOADES

MICHAEL HOCKENBERRY

GERALD ONEY - ALTERNATE

Call to Order: 6:00pm

Pledge of Allegiance

Members Present: Misty Fuller, Michael Hockenberry, Jeffrey Rhoades, Gerald Oney, Jason Vicchiariello, Stacey Hosking, Yvonne Duryea, Nina Balsamo

Public Comment: (5 minute limit per person).

Approval of the Minutes: February 18, 2026 - Approved

Civil Service Update:

Civil Service Commissioners reported a severe backlog and compliance failures after a state review, requiring ground-up rebuilding of records and processes.

They requested budget support to move Nina to full-time work, fund training, and coordinate cost-sharing with the school and other agencies.

1. State review and current condition of Civil Service Key points- A state civil service review (3-day review) was initiated after commissioners raised concerns; findings indicated conditions worse than expected and work must start from ground zero.

- Rules and procedures are outdated (referenced as from 2006, with unclear update history).
- A 2023 purchased software system was essentially unused, with no information entered.
- Personnel records are largely missing; newer hires often have no files, while some very old records exist.
- Decentralized exams were not returned to the state for years; boxes of graded exams were found and must be returned (target: within two weeks).
- Application review, eligible lists, certifications, appointment documentation, and roster cards were missing or incomplete.
- Thousands of personnel change forms were found without supporting documentation; commissioners are building electronic tracking to catch up.
- Payroll certification is legally required but currently cannot be verified due to missing underlying records; city is asked to keep sending payroll while records are rebuilt.
- Commissioners emphasized they are not blaming individuals and are working closely with the state for guidance, forms updates (some from the 1990s), and a future follow-up review.

2. Staffing, budget, and cost-sharing request- Request Move Nina to full-time (40 hours/week) to run day-to-day operations and accelerate backlog cleanup; Yvonne would remain part-time (3 days/week, 10–4) with a goal of stepping back after a few months.

Key points-

Commissioners currently work 3 days/week but report significant additional unpaid time at home; they use sign-in/out tracking.

- State indicated catching up could take years at current staffing, especially while handling ongoing incoming work.
- Cost allocation was discussed across city, school, library, and housing authority; initial proportions cited included city around 31% and school around 63% based on employee counts.
- Participants stressed the need to validate allocation percentages and obtain school district buy-in before expanding costs to avoid later disputes.
- Full-time status may trigger benefit requirements (health insurance, leave, retirement) that must be included in true cost estimates.
- Discussion included concerns that current hourly pay may exceed comparable civil service titles, which could matter if the role is later converted into a different position.

3. Training, conference, and system modernization Training needs- Civil service conference attendance was requested to learn updated laws and procedures and to get direct support from state representatives on current transformation initiatives.

- Conference cost estimate: hotel about \$594, registration about \$650, travel about \$198, total about \$1,442.
- Focus areas include NY HELPS and T&E (training and experience) hiring processes and state “Transformation” changes.

- Suggested site visits to Middletown and Orange County personnel offices to see the purchased software in active use and learn implementation.
 - Current approach includes building interim Excel databases that can later be merged into the official system.
4. Governance and HR consolidation discussion Options discussed- Participants discussed whether civil service could be combined with a personnel officer / HR function, including legal structure implications.
- If moved to a “personnel officer” model, the commission structure could change or be eliminated, requiring clarity on oversight and responsibilities.
 - Concern raised: school district may not be able to pay a large share of an employee doing city-only HR work when multiple municipalities share civil service costs.
 - Commissioners’ recommended sequencing: stabilize and organize civil service first, then consider consolidation or new position structures.

Clerks Report:

Old Business:

- **2025 Financials / Audit** - Clerk reported progress on the 2024 audit, with delays due to additional DOT audits required when CHIPS reimbursements exceed \$750,000; they are now going back to 2023 to complete DOT audit requirements.
- **Meal Allowance Policy** - Police submitted proposed edits, including allowing an affidavit when a detailed receipt cannot be obtained; discussion included ensuring at least some receipt (credit card/unitemized) and keeping alcohol excluded. Meal reimbursement increases were discussed (small per-meal increases), with recognition that existing amounts are low; decision deferred for cleanup and inclusion of receipt language.
- **BOA Property** - Lease/buyout discussion for the building across the street (bank) included a figure around \$829,000 plus interest (about \$8,000/month), with potential total around mid-\$800,000s depending on timing.
 - Renovation needs described as mostly interior work (walls, flooring, removal of counters), with systems largely maintained (roof and HVAC noted as in good condition) and parking lot work possibly needed.
- **Bond/BAN discussion** - discussed issuing a BAN to fund near-term projects while audits are finalized, with an approach of borrowing an estimated amount and later reducing the final bonded amount to what was actually spent.
 - Projects mentioned included fire apparatus (about \$325,000), water filtration plant match (about \$500,000), Church Street Park resurfacing (figures discussed around \$550,000 to near \$1,000,000 depending on scope and grant share), and a DRI park match (about \$1,000,000) slated later.
 - Opportunity for two new dial-a-buses with city share about \$24,000.
 - DPW facility needs were noted as upcoming.
 - Financing conversations were underway with multiple banks and capital markets; timing depends on receiving audit drafts.
- **Postal Service Meeting** - USPS Multiple attempts to contact the postmaster were unsuccessful; suggestion made to send a certified letter.

New Business:

- **City Procurement Policy** - Request to update procurement policy thresholds to reflect rising costs, including increasing certain personal services limits (example discussed: raising to \$125,000), with legal review and later council approval.
- **Tourism Chair** - Request raised to make the tourism chair a paid position; discussion included fairness to other volunteer boards, need for accountability (minutes, cooperation), and potential stipend-style approach.

Other:

Public Comment: (5 minute limit per person)

Adjournment:

Next Meeting April 22, 2026 at 6:00pm, in the Council Chambers