

# **City of Dover**

## **Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Narrative**

Following is a general overview of the various responsibilities and functions of each city department as included in the Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Budget. This overview includes the department's mission, key strategic plan objectives and highlights of significant adjustments reflected within each department's budget for the coming year:

### **City Council:**

The City Council, as a body, establishes policies and sets forth the long-term direction for municipal services. The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and seven City Councilors comprise the City Council and together serve as the governing and legislative body of the municipality. The ultimate aim of the City Council is reflected in the community's vision "To be a city with an emerging urban vibrancy guided by a small town sense of community."

The City Council consists of nine elected officials, a Mayor and eight City Councilors, all elected at the same time to serve a two-year term. Voters within each of the City's six voting wards elect a person residing in their respective ward to serve as the Ward City Councilor. In addition, voters across the City elect two persons residing in the City to serve as At-Large City Councilors. Voters across the city also elect a person to serve as Mayor. One of the eight elected City Councilors is subsequently chosen by the Mayor and Council to serve as Deputy Mayor.

In addition to legislative responsibilities in adopting local ordinances and regulations, a key task of the City Council involves authorizing a careful plan of appropriations deemed necessary for the effective and efficient delivery of municipal services. The Mayor and Council work together in keeping communication open with and between the citizens of Dover, various boards and commissions of the City and the City Manager in delivering services meeting the needs of the community. The City Council function is funded within the General Fund portion of the City's Annual Operating Budget.

The proposed City Council budget for FY2026 maintains the funding necessary to support the governing and legislative function performed by the Mayor and Council. This includes funding the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councilor wages as required by the Dover City Charter along with providing funding for various supplies and services utilized by the City Council. The proposed City Council budget also allocates funds for grants and subsidies made to several non-profit organizations delivering services within the Dover community. In this area, there is a significant increase in funding for FY2026 being requested for COAST public transit services. However, this increase is offset partially by the proposed elimination of funding requested for the COAST Smart Commute program and grant funds previously allocated for the Main Street organization. The amounts previously budgeted for the Dover Doers and Don't Trash Dover campaigns are proposed to be absorbed as expenses reimbursed through the Community Services Department.

### **Executive Department:**

The Executive Department is comprised of six executive offices responsible for specific functions supporting operations across all municipal departments. These offices and an overview of their responsibilities and proposed budget highlights include:

**Office of the City Manager (OCM):** The OCM mission is “To provide effective leadership and direction in the administration of policies established by the Mayor and City Council as well as to supervise and guide the efficient operation of all city departments.” Comprised of the City Manager and Executive Assistant to the City Manager, this office is responsible for coordinating the development and analysis of policy recommendations presented to the Mayor and City Council. And, in turn, the OCM directs and ensures the implementation of the policies enacted by the Mayor and City Council. The OCM is funded within the General Fund portion of the City’s Annual Operating Budget.

The proposed OCM budget for FY2026 maintains funding necessary to support the Mayor and Council in fulfilling their governing and legislative responsibilities and for the management of the overall administrative affairs of the City. Notable planned funding increases include a Cost of Living wage adjustment for the City Manager consistent with other employees and an adjustment for the Executive Assistant in accordance with the city-wide classification and wage plan.

**Office of Human Resources (OHR):** The OHR mission is “to support the goals and challenges of the City of Dover, NH, by providing services that promote a work environment characterized by fair treatment of staff, open communications, personal accountability, trust and mutual respect. The OHR seeks to provide solutions to workplace issues that support and optimize the operating principles of the organization.” In fulfilling this purpose, the OHR is responsible for recruitment, payroll processing, benefits administration, labor relations, employment law compliance, risk management and employee safety for nearly 463 employees occupying 313 FTE positions across all non-school departments. OHR also provides consultation to assist the School Department, as needed, in meeting human resources needs of an additional 734 employees for 538 FTE positions. The OHR is funded within the General Fund portion of the City’s Annual Operating Budget.

The proposed OHR budget for FY2026 maintains funding for the personnel, services, and supplies required to support the human resources function necessary for the effective performance of management and employees. Funding increases include personal services costs associated with collective bargaining agreements and the City’s Merit Plan. A part-time clerical position supporting legally required personnel recordkeeping is maintained and is no longer offset by grant funds as done in previous years. Funding is also maintained for the administration of the National Citizen/Employee Surveys used for performance benchmarking across the municipal organization.

**Office of Media Services (OMS):** The OMS “develops and manages the City of Dover’s communications tools and resources, helps improve stakeholder relationships, public engagement, and community outreach, and delivers accessible and responsive communication and public information about government operations and services.” This is accomplished by OMS using a variety of communications platforms and resources, which include the city’s governmental and educational cable access channels, the public-facing website, electronic newsletters, social media, public information, media releases, special alerts and notifications, and public service announcements. OMS also maintains internal and external communications standards, ensures consistent messaging across all departments and services, and provides a wide variety of multimedia technical assistance to city and school operations, public bodies, and the public. OMS also oversees the city’s cable franchise agreements with Comcast and Breezeline. The OMS is funded within the General Fund portion of the City’s Annual Operating Budget.

The proposed OMS budget for FY2026 maintains funding for the personnel, services, and supplies required to support a comprehensive communications plan and access to information for all stakeholders and employees. Funding increases include personal services costs consistent with collective bargaining agreements and the City's Merit Plan. Funding of a portion of the Director of Media Services position is no longer offset by grant funds. Notable budget adjustments reflect the continuing equipment replacement and upgrade of the citywide broadcast system. Also included is funding for continuing improvements to the city's website and e-commerce platforms in support of an ongoing commitment to transparency and open/accessible government. This will involve a significant redesign of the City's website.

Planned work in FY2026 also includes pursuing new delivery methods for some publications, and new communications tools. OMS will also continue to allocate staff time and resources to help inform the public about its public schools and educational system.

**Office of the City Attorney (OCA):** The OCA mission is "to provide proactive, high-quality, efficient, timely and cost-effective legal services, advocacy and advice to the City of Dover and its City Manager, City Council, subsidiary bodies, and City staff, delivered with a focus on the client, integrity, innovation, accountability and stewardship." This is accomplished by representing and advocating for the City of Dover municipal corporation in Court and administrative proceedings; assisting Boards, Commissions and Committees with procedures and laws; drafting and reviewing contracts, deeds, leases and other documents; conducting research and rendering legal opinions to support the City's decision-making; drafting and reviewing ordinances and resolutions; assisting with risk management activities and pursuit/resolution of claims; and, assisting with code enforcement. The OCA also provides legal services to the Dover School Department on a variety of issues important to helping it achieve its goals and defray expenses on use of outside legal counsel. This also includes continuing to facilitate the recent use of joint labor contract negotiator for City and School department collective bargaining agreements. The OCA is funded within the General Fund portion of the City's Annual Operating Budget.

The proposed OCA budget for FY2026 maintains funding necessary for provision of the legal services needed to support the operations of municipal government. Funding increases include personal services costs consistent with collective bargaining agreements and the City's Merit Plan. Funding is also provided for contracted services for the continued publishing and update of the Dover Code (when new ordinances or regulations are enacted), and required continuing education courses for our legal professionals.

Planned for FY2026, the OCA will continue to monitor changes in the law that do or could affect the City or its interests or operations; assist with and provide in-house counsel concerning environmental compliance; prosecute and defend litigation actions in the interests of the City that may arise over the course of the year, including code enforcement; provide ongoing training and compliance monitoring on RSA chapter 91-A and other legal issues to City staff and public officials; provide staff support for the Municipal Records Committee, Ethics Commission and City Council Ordinance Committee; assist with major policy initiatives, and, assist with furthering City interests involved in development projects, public-private partnerships, and the management and disposition of City-owned real estate.

**Office of Business Development (OBD):** The OBD's mission is "to sustain and grow our City's vibrant businesses and outstanding quality of life, by providing leadership and resources for business creation, expansion, retention, new business recruitment and community development."

The OBD responsibilities include supporting the Dover Business and Industrial Development Authority (DBIDA) in connecting with the business community and advocating for business and industrial growth across the community; coordinate (with the City Manager) the development and monitoring of Public Private Partnerships recommended by DBIDA and approved by the City Council; support the Cochecho Waterfront Development Advisory Committee (CWDAC) and coordinate responsibilities between all municipal departments to achieve a successful implementation of the waterfront development; enhance the marketing of Dover, its businesses and quality of life; administer the City's established tax increment financing districts and coordinate other programs that support the desired growth and development of businesses throughout the community. The OBD is funded within the General Fund portion of the City's Annual Operating Budget.

The proposed OBD budget for FY2026 includes the funding necessary to support the ongoing support and coordination of development activities including the related positions of Deputy City Manager for Strategic Initiatives, Business Development Coordinator, and Business Development Specialist. Funding increases include personal services costs consistent with collective bargaining agreements and the City's Merit Plan, the funding for the Business Development Specialist position is no longer offset by grant funds.

In addition to general management and administrative responsibilities assisting the City Manager, the Deputy City Manager oversees the overall business development function for the municipality. The Business Development Coordinator coordinates activities and programs with Dover's larger businesses and development entities. This position also supervises the Business Development Specialist, who focuses more on smaller businesses. Both Business Development positions continue to serve the needs of businesses and seek to be creative problem solvers helping our business community to grow and thrive.

Planned for FY2026, the OBD will continue outreach efforts including a business visitation program initiated in 2023. The office will work to advocate for Dover projects within the Regional Comprehensive Economic Development strategy. Furthermore, the office will continue to be an integral part of code compliance process by reinforcing the OBD's role as an information resource and advocate for the business and development community. Partnering with UNH, the OBD will develop a market analysis and plan for the business community. OBD staff continue to perform project management supporting CWDAC in coordinating the City's involvement in the waterfront development project, and oversee the implementation of the public improvements associated with the project. Finally, OBD staff will work with DBIDA to complete its strategic plan for how the Authority will continue to support and advise the City Council regarding business growth in Dover.

**Office of Information Technology (OIT):** OIT "is a trusted partner in creating solutions and by consistently providing accurate and responsive data to support decision making. OIT leadership deploys forward-thinking and accessible technology for use by both municipal staff and the Dover community. OIT safeguards resources, actively listens at all levels of the municipal operation, transparently communicates and prioritizes OIT work." OIT is responsible for the management and security of a comprehensive municipal voice and data network, referred to as "DoverNet", that spans across all City departments. DoverNet, referring to the overall Municipal Information

Technology Systems and Services (MITSS) essential to providing municipal services across all departments, involves the full spectrum of networking from the physical to application layers.

OIT performs an essential function that supports critical operations across the entire municipality. There are approximately 350 “connected” employees and user client systems, 90 physical and virtual servers and related applications, 226 cellular lines supporting cell phones, tablets, and internet hotspots providing information accessibility in the field, nearly 294 total VoIP phone numbers (i.e. desk or soft phones, conference room phones, call queues, fax lines), 40 alarm lines, and roughly 238 board and commission members’ municipal mailboxes that are managed and supported by OIT. Additionally, OIT is responsible for supporting the management of all municipal infrastructure through the use of a municipal geographic information system (GIS), operation of enterprise applications that interface with GIS, and administration of Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems that are necessary to properly monitor and operate the public water and sewer utilities, traffic control systems, and building HVAC. OIT also supports administration and management of the municipal Public Safety server and application systems. The OIT is funded within the DoverNet Fund portion of the City’s Annual Operating Budget.

In FY2026, the City’s cybersecurity posture remains a priority and continues to be enhanced in accordance with federal standards and industry best practices. The first half of FY2026 will focus on completing active, wireless upgrade and security system projects that are funded by state and federal grants and the capital improvement program. Per recommendation of cybersecurity assessment, FY2026 proposed budget adds cloud-based immutable storage to existing data protection/retention plan. The proposed budget also increases management and standardization of client devices.

The DoverNet telecommunications budget funds all fiber optic and broadband voice and data services that support our enterprise-wide area network. It also accounts for wireless services that are publicly available in most municipal buildings and a few adjacent public spaces. The FY2026 proposed budget moves resiliency forward by adding redundant fiber service to three water and sewer plant locations. The City continues to leverage federal grant funding through December 2026 to support VoIP services citywide.

Lastly, the FY2026 DoverNet proposed budget reflects continuing investment in network threat, endpoint and identity protection, vulnerability management and SIEM platform. In accordance with strategic plan goal of supporting systems through the lifecycle, FY2026 proposed budget will target replacement of switches that support public safety radio and SCADA communications, replacement of two host servers and targeted client operating system updates.

#### **Finance Department:**

The Finance Department is the trusted safeguard of the City’s financial resources and public records. The department is comprised of four divisions responsible for functions supporting the financial and recordkeeping operations across all municipal departments. These divisions and an overview of their responsibilities and proposed budget highlights include:

**Finance, Accounting and Purchasing Division (FAP):** This division’s mission is “to handle the financial resources of the City in a safe, fair, accurate, efficient and professional manner to meet

all areas of responsibilities, including compliance with Federal, State and local laws and generally accepted accounting principles, and to timely report the financial position and performance of the City to the City Council, management, debt underwriters, rating agencies and the public". It is responsible for the accounting and management of the overall financial resources of the City by administering all the cash management, accounting/financial reporting and purchasing and accounts payable functions across the municipal corporation. This division provides administrative support to the Board of Trustees of Trust Funds. This division is funded in the General Fund portion of the City's Annual Operating Budget.

The proposed FAP budget for FY2026 maintains funding necessary for provision of the financial management, accounting and purchasing services needed to support the operations of municipal government. Notable planned funding increases include personal services costs associated with collective bargaining agreements and the City's Merit Plan. There are increased software maintenance costs for the City's enterprise wide financial resource management system relied upon by all municipal departments inclusive of the School Department. The costs for a comprehensive Electronic Public Procurement platform (EPP) are reflected in FY2026.

In FY2026, FAP will be utilizing a comprehensive Electronic Public Procurement platform (EPP) for solicitation of bids and bid submissions. The EPP will replace the current manual system streamlining the submission and review process while also aiding with increasing bid responses. The debt management software, utilized by FAP, will continue to be utilized to provide the necessary tracking and reporting on leases to meet the financial reporting standard of Governmental Accounting Standards Boards (GASB) Statement 87. The tracking and reporting of subscription based technology services are also being maintained in the debt management software to comply with the reporting requirements of GASB Statement 96. The City implements GASB requirements to ensure the City's award-winning Annual Comprehensive Financial Report meets professional standards.

**Tax Assessment Division (TAD):** This division's mission is "to increase the quantity and quality of professional appraisal and assessment services to the taxpayers and the public at large, through the application of advanced technology and modern management practices." Responsibilities include maintaining annual assessments of properties at market value; administering tax exemptions and credits; conducting field inspection of all properties on a cyclical basis; maintain the Computer Aided Mass Appraisal (CAMA) database; processing and resolving abatements; administering the assessment of timber and excavation taxes; and administering current use assessment and land use change tax. This division is funded in the General Fund portion of the City's Annual Operating Budget.

The proposed TAD budget for FY2026 maintains the funding necessary for the proper assessment of property taxes and other related services required by State law. Notable planned funding increases include personal services costs associated with collective bargaining agreements and the City's Merit Plan. Personal services costs also reflect an increase in FY2026 due to an Assistant Tax Assessor and a Tax Assessing Data Collection Technician. These two positions' costs are offset by cost reductions in other areas of the TAD budget. The funding for contractual vendor obligations for field inspection and data collection services has been discontinued in FY2026 budget as the vendor ceased operations in the middle of FY2025. The funding for the contractual services is being utilized to fund the Assistant Tax Assessor and Tax

Assessing Data Collection Technician positions. Also included is the cost for a sales data subscription service to provide additional data for non-residential sales.

In FY2026, TAD will be entering Year 2 of a new CAMA software system. The FY2023 budget provided the final year funding needed for replacement of the existing CAMA system. Undertaking the conversion and ensuring a new CAMA system is fully tested and operational was a priority during FY2024 and finished in mid FY2025. The updated and fully functioning CAMA system is essential for ensuring fair and equitable taxation of property throughout the community and will be utilized for FY2026 tax assessments.

**City Clerk/Tax Collection Division (CC/TC):** This division's mission is "to serve all our customers in a timely and professional manner; which includes the governing body, legislative body, residents and city staff; to dutifully record and preserve the Vital Records of this community for historical continuity as mandated by New Hampshire Statute and support the City Clerk/Tax Collector serving as the election official for all elections held in Dover; and, to ensure the safe and accurate collection and timely deposit of city moneys while serving customers in a professional and courteous manner." Responsibilities include recording and issuing vital records; receiving and recording water/sewer bill payments; collecting property tax payments; processing State of NH motor vehicle registrations; accounting for and depositing daily collections received from all other municipal departments; archiving official city records; and, administering local, state and federal elections. This division is funded in both the CC/TC and Elections cost centers of the General Fund portion of the City's Annual Operating Budget.

The proposed CC/TC budget for FY2026 maintains the funding necessary for the administrative and clerical operations needed to fulfill the statutorily required responsibilities of City Clerk, Tax Collector and conduct of elections. Funding increases include personal services costs associated with collective bargaining agreements and the City's Merit Plan, increased funding for postage for city-wide mailings and statutory notices. Also addressed is the funding necessary for conducting the city municipal election.

**Utility Billing Division (UBD):** This division's mission is "to administer the metering system for the water and sewer utility in order to accurately process invoices for the residential and industrial water and sewer customers as well as conduct timely review and process of utility abatements." Responsibilities include interfacing with the Community Services Department to coordinate meter repairs/replacements and periodic readings required for billing; produce and deliver usage and service invoices for water and sewer utility customers; and review and process utility bill abatements. This division is funded in both the Water Fund and Sewer Fund portions of the City's Annual Operating Budget.

The proposed UBD budget for FY2026 maintains the funding necessary for the proper and timely administration of the City's water and sewer utility billing, as well as backflow testing compliance. Funding increases include personal services costs associated with collective bargaining agreements and the City's Merit Plan, increased postage for bill mailings and backflow notices, along with funds for continued meter upgrades and replacements that maintain the accuracy and timeliness of meter reading as well as allow customers to access and monitor their own billing and usage information.

**Planning and Community Development Department:**

The Planning and Community Development Department mission is “to be a trusted provider of innovative solutions and collaborate with stakeholders to pursue the community’s vision”. The Planning and Community Development Department consists of a Planning (Land Use, Resiliency, and long-range planning) Division, Community Development Division, and Inspection Services Division.

Through the highest ethical and professional standards, demonstrating respect for customers and the public, the Planning Division works to develop, implement and enforce land use changes. This is done in support of Master Plan goals and objectives, in coordination with long range strategic planning initiatives. This work helps to ensure our community develops responsibly. In order to pursue this workplan, responsibilities include: providing customer service to residents, business owners, and potential newcomers; supporting the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment in managing the growth and impacts of development of the community; assisting all municipal departments inclusive of the School Department with program development and long-range planning, including capital infrastructure investment; priorities in regional and state projects such as the State Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan and COAST public transit services; fostering opportunities for public art installations in support of the Arts Commission; addressing climate change and resiliency in support of the Energy Commission; and promoting the preservation of open space and historical community features by supporting the efforts of the Open Lands Committee, the Conservation Commission and the Heritage Commission.

The Community Development Division is responsible for administering the City’s Community Development Block Grant from the federal Housing and Urban Development Department.

The Inspection Services Division is dedicated to safeguard the public’s, health and general welfare through structural strength, means of egress components, sanitation, light and ventilation, energy conservation, and safety for life and property from fire and other hazards attributed to the built environment, and to provide safety to first responders during emergency operations. Inspection Services is responsible for issuing building construction related permits in accordance with City Ordinances and adopted NH Building and Fire Codes. Building codes apply to the construction, design, structure, maintenance, and use of all buildings or structures to be erected and the alteration, renovation, rehabilitation, repair, removal or demolition of all buildings and structures previously erected shall be governed by the provisions of the state building code. (RSA 155-A:2)

Permits that are issued and related inspections include -building, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, fire alarm, sprinkler systems, and kitchen hood suppression systems. Building permits are required for all residential new building, addition, renovation, rehabilitation, alteration, to include decks, pergolas and porches or addition of Accessory Dwelling Unit or repairs. The Inspection Services Division also issues demolition permits for any type of structure. All building permits receive a plan review prior to issuance. Issuance of annual Place of Assembly permits as required by state statute and the adopted State of NH Fire Code. Annual Health Licenses and inspection of food service establishments are completed in accordance with State of NH rules and City Ordinance for safe food handling for the protection of the public. Inspection of family daycare homes, daycare group homes, daycare centers and/or nurseries, and inspection of Foster Care homes are also completed. The division also administers and investigates Housing Standard complaints and works with tenants and landlords for resolution; administer and investigate Fire Code and Life Safety concerns; and, reviews plans for new residential, nonresidential and mixed-use projects for Technical Review Committee (TRC) meeting prior to being presented at Planning Board.

The Building Official overseeing the Inspection Services Division is responsible for maintaining the official street listing throughout the city and also serves as the primary 911 coordinator for the city – assigning numbers and streets as well as any number and/or street changes in accordance with RSA 231:133-a, and 231:133. This position is also responsible for inspections of public and private schools biannually and provides reports to the NH Fire Marshal’s Office. Inspection staff perform four fire drills annually for all public and private schools annually within the city

The Planning and Community Development Department is funded through the General Fund and CDBG Fund portions of the City’s Annual Operating Budget along with an allocation provided from the Conservation Commission’s Fund and with grant funding awarded to a newly established Housing fund.

The proposed Planning and Community Development Department budget for FY2026 maintains the funding necessary for fulfilling the City’s statutory obligations in establishing and administering land use regulations and all other identified department responsibilities. One significant funding change is the need to update the Transportation Chapter of the Master Plan which requires more technical knowledge and review and is therefore more expensive to conduct compared to other chapters. Another significant increase is due to Inspection Services now having their own building and the associated costs such as utilities. Other notable funding increases include personal services costs associated with collective bargaining agreements and the City’s Merit Plan, and other additional software and membership costs as prices have increased.

In FY2026, the department is planning to complete an update for the Transportation chapter of the Master Plan; continued implementation of the Citywide Resilience Plan and the other Master Plan action items and Council goals. Coordinating the development of the next six-year Capital Improvements Program and initiating the design work for the downtown pedestrian and vehicular access project will also be occurring.

The department plans to continue advancing initiatives for a variety of housing, resiliency, and responsible development within the City along with timely inspections, permits, and licenses through Inspection Services.

**Police Department:**

The Police Department mission is to “enforce laws of society, maintain order, protect life and property, deliver quality services to the community and to assist the public at large in a manner consistent with the rights and dignity of all persons as provided for by law and under the constitution of the United States and the State of New Hampshire.”

The proposed FY2026 Police Department operating budget reflects the Department’s continued commitment to provide high quality public safety services to the community through the use of nationally recognized best practices and in compliance with the standards of national accreditation identified by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). Additionally, it allows for the on-going implementation the Dover Police Department’s Strategic Plan, and an understanding of the challenges and needs of the greater community.

The Police Department’s responsibility of ensuring public safety encompasses many tasks. Based on the most recent calendar year 2024 data, patrol officers assigned to the Field Operations Division responded

to 34,923 calls for police service, conducted 7,467 motor vehicle stops, made 1,134 criminal arrests, and investigated 1,139 motor vehicle collisions. Detectives assigned to the Support Services Division conducted 443 felony level criminal investigations, 45 death investigations, 9 fatal overdose death investigations, tracked 6,646 items of evidence, and registered 40 sexual offenders. Dispatchers assigned to the department's Communications Bureau received 92,447 telephone calls, 217,409 radio transmissions, and 5,281 emergency 911-calls. The Department's Outreach Bureau continued to operate the Dover Teen Center. Additionally, Dover's youth were provided with drug and alcohol prevention strategies through Dover Youth to Youth, DARE, and other prevention presentations. A total of 395 individuals were referred to the department's social workers, 301 cases were referred to the Division of Children Youth and Families and officers made an additional 303 mental health related referrals to non-law enforcement services. The department's Records Unit ensured all police cases were appropriately processed, defendants were provided discovery, and records requests were met. The department's Professional Standard's Unit ensured appropriate training for all staff, as well as compliance with nationally recognized best practice standards to maintain national accreditation through CALEA.

The Police Department's budget is divided into five cost centers. Administration, which accounts for approximately 3% of the overall budget, Field Operations Division is 47%, Support Services is 37%, Police Facility is 2%, and Dispatch is 11%. The department's budget is funded in the General Fund, Parking Activity Fund and Special Details Fund portions of the City's Annual Operating Budget. Additionally, the department will receive \$883,092.00 in grant funding in FY26, with an additional \$200,000 in pending grant applications.

The increases in the proposed FY26 budget can be attributed to the following drivers;

- Increase in contractually obligated personnel costs
- Funding the City share of grants
- Increase in court overtime

The most significant single impact on the department's budget is not surprisingly costs related to personnel as the service delivered by the department depends upon the people that are hired, trained and retained to provide those services. Although necessary, it is not equipment or supplies that deliver police services, simply put it is police officers, dispatchers and civilian staff that respond to calls for service and meet the public safety needs of the community. The increase in personnel costs are predominantly due to contractual obligations. These costs are related to ensuring a workforce that is paid within the acceptable range for positions within the department.

Given the current state of employment across all sectors, and the specific recruitment and retention challenges facing law enforcement agencies nationwide, it is imperative that the City of Dover remain competitive with other municipalities to successfully recruit and retain a professional police staff. Over the course of the last year numerous strategies to attract and retain qualified candidates for vacant police department positions have been taken. In addition to a significant decrease in the number of overall candidates applying for police officer positions, the numbers that are actually able to meet the department's minimum acceptable standards has also decreased. This, added to the time it takes to hire and properly train a police officer, which is on average 10 to 12 months (approximately 3 months to complete hiring process, 16 weeks to attend the police academy, and 16 weeks of on the job Field Training) has placed significant strain on existing staff, all while meeting an increase of demand from a growing population.

As identified by the Police Department's strategic plan, the volume and variety of services provided by the Dover Police Department to a growing community as well as their legal implications, requires the use of industry accepted best practices. Poor police services will lead to unsatisfied customers, an increase in crime, a decrease in quality of life for residents, and more liability (i.e. expense) for the City. The ability to maintain appropriate staffing levels has specific and direct impacts on the ability to deliver professional police services. Dover's population has been growing and, as a result, so have demands on the department without a correlating increase in staff. Increases in calls for service as well as an increase in records requests are taxing police staff. Having more work than staff to complete it leads to the inability to meet expectations of the community, slow response times to non-emergency calls for service, officer safety concerns, and the inability for patrol officers to be proactive.

In 2021, in an effort to better respond to issues facing the community, as well as an effort to limit police involvement in non-criminal matters that would be better addressed through proper referral to and involvement with social service providers, the Police Department applied for and was awarded a one year grant to fund a social worker. Since then the department has added two additional social workers. The Police Department Social Worker Unit is comprised of civilian employees that work as liaisons with various social service agencies and clinical providers with the goal of providing more direct follow-up referrals for individuals and families. The goal of the Social Work Unit is to provide referral assistance to individuals and families when they are no longer experiencing a crisis in order to reduce the number and frequency of those crises requiring officer response. Police social workers do not respond directly to police calls nor do they provide ongoing clinical services. Rather; they work closely with police officers, firefighters, community mental health agencies, recovery centers, anti-poverty agencies, the school department, other city departments, and other social service agencies to coordinate the wrap-around care individuals and families need. This is done by following up with individuals and families after police or fire department interactions to provide clear direction on how to obtain appropriate services and help them through that process. The Police Social Work Unit refers individuals and families to the resource(s) most equipped to assist. The Police Social Work Unit has been incredibly successful with over 395 referrals in 2024, resulting in a significant decrease in police contacts for those individuals that were helped. The proposed FY26 budget funds 100% of the costs of the three police social worker positions through the use of grant funds.

Additionally, through the use of a Department of Justice Office of Community Policing Oriented Services (COPS) grant the department is able to fund a Problem Oriented Police (POP) Officer through FY2026. As required by the COPS grant, the Problem Oriented Police Officer is focused on substance misuse issues and violent crime. The grant escalates the City of Dover share each year with a commitment that the City will maintain the position and all other existing sworn officer positions for a fourth year (FY26). Additionally, and also through the use of a DOJ COPS grant, the department is able to fund a portion of two additional police officer positions, increasing the department's sworn strength from 54 officers to 56 officers. The budget request associated with these positions is the City's share of the grant. As obligated by the grant and recognized when acceptance was authorized, should the City not fund its share of the grant or eliminate any existing sworn officer position, any expended grant funds would need to be paid back. This would also negatively impact the City's ability to receive any future DOJ grants.

Although an increase, the total number of officers remains considerably below what is required to keep pace with the public safety needs of a growing community and is at a level significantly below what is provided by any of the City of Dover's comparable communities. For purposes of perspective, in 1998 the population of Dover was approximately 26,000 residents, the department responded to

approximately 20,000 calls for service, and had 54 officers. In 2024, the City has a population of nearly 34,000 residents, the department responded to approximately 35,000 calls for service and the police and still only has 54 officers.

Additionally, the Department of Justice through the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting program reports a National average of 2.3 officers per 1000 residents, a New England average of 1.9 officers per 1000 residents, and a New Hampshire average of 2.2 officers per 1000 residents. With 54 sworn officers the City of Dover's current officer per 1000 residents is 1.62 officers. To meet the Department of Justice UCR National average, Dover would need to have 77 officers (63 to meet NE average / 73 to meet NH average). The Police Department's strategic plan recommends a minimum of 57 officers to meet existing needs. For the City of Dover to provide the same police level as the City of Portsmouth, Dover would need 102 officers (nearly double what we currently have). To meet the level provided by the Cities of Somersworth or Rochester, the City of Dover would need 80 or 65 officers respectively.

The issue of police funding has been at the forefront over the last few years. What has become clear through experiences across the county as well as here within the City of Dover, is that there is a need for the police to enforce the law, protect property and maintain order. Reductions in police services leads to an increase in crime and negatively impacts the quality of life expected by the community. Additionally, as highlighted by the loss of police positions during the recession in the early 2000's, in which the Dover Police Department's sworn officer strength fell as low as 46 officers, it takes years if not decades and an increase in costs to add staff back. The proposed police department budget works to address the necessary focus on providing professional police services accounting for the needs of the community while increasing efficiency, transparency, legitimacy and trust.

#### **Fire & Rescue Department:**

The Fire & Rescue Department mission is "to be a quality-of-life resource for anyone in need, and to assist community members in achieving health and safety through community risk reduction." The department is an all-hazards response organization that is responsible for protecting life, property and the environment. This is accomplished in part by providing emergency services including: advanced life support emergency medical services (EMS), paramedic-level ambulance transport, fire suppression, wildland firefighting, search & rescue, water mitigation/removing water from buildings, technical rescue services (vehicle extrication, disentanglement, confined space, high angle rescue, water and ice rescue), pet and wildlife rescue/mitigation, tactical rescue-EMS task force operations (providing emergency medical services in active threat situations i.e. active shooter), hazardous materials mitigation, response to electrical and natural gas distribution system hazards, and radiological emergency response.

The Fire & Rescue Department's budget is divided into four cost centers. Administration, Fire Suppression, and Buildings. The department's budget is funded in the General Fund and Special Detail Fund portions of the City's Annual Operating Budget.

In addition to emergency fire, rescue and EMS responsibilities, emergency management services are also provided by the department. This involves coordinating preparedness and responses to natural and human-caused disasters, including public health crises, pandemics, homelessness, opioid/drug use, and mental health; domestic and international terrorism, civil unrest, mass-casualty incidents, among others. The increasing frequency and severity of weather events continues to increase demands on Fire & Rescue services as well as emergency management services (before the event-preparedness & mitigation, during the event-response, and after the event-recovery). The department coordinates

and/or provides local, regional, state, and federal engagement in risk and disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery in accordance with the Department of Homeland Security's national emergency management preparedness missions.

The Fire & Rescue Department is also responsible for fulfilling the City of Dover's obligations as an evacuation reception site for the state of New Hampshire Radiological Emergency Preparedness program for radiological emergencies involving the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant. All department personnel are trained and equipped to conduct radiological monitoring and decontamination to federal standards.

The Fire & Rescue Department's service deliveries have expanded over time from a traditional delivery of fire suppression to a variety of complex emergency response and other public safety services. In addition to fire prevention efforts, the department also has responsibility for a complex life safety discipline which is now known as Community Risk Reduction. Community Risk Reduction is a process to identify and prioritize local risks, followed by the integrated and strategic investment of resources to reduce their occurrence and impact.

In providing non-emergency public services, the Fire & Rescue Department assists persons with motor vehicle lock-outs, residential lock-outs, lift-assists (assisting citizens who are non-ambulatory or have mobility difficulties), home safety inspections, smoke detector installation/battery replacements, well-being checks. Department personnel also conduct public education that includes CPR, fire extinguishers operations, fire & life safety presentations to high-risk populations and early childhood education.

The Fire and Rescue Department operates out of three fire stations with 24/7 staffing provided by 4 shifts each with 15 certified Fire/EMS personnel. The North End Fire Station serves as the City's fire department headquarters where the fire administration offices and Inspection Services offices are also co-located. The Planning and Community Department's Inspection Services personnel continue to operate out of the Liberty North-end Fire Station until the new office space being constructed at Mast Road is ready for them to move into. This is expected to occur in the later part of FY2025.

The Fire & Rescue Department command staff consists of five administrative chief officers: Fire Chief & Emergency Management Director, Deputy Fire Chief, Assistant Chief of Operations, Division Chief of Training & Safety, and Division Chief of EMS. These administrative-level positions work a Monday through Friday daytime schedule, 42-hour per week. All Chief Officers provide command coverage 24/7 on a rotating schedule above and beyond their regular week day administrative duties. This coverage provides a chief officer's immediate response won the initial dispatch to complex incidents such as building fires, large-scale/critical incidents, technical rescues, and all mutual aid fire responses. Large-scale incidents receive multiple Chief Officers who fill roles in the Incident Command System.

Fire & Rescue emergency services are provided by 4 shifts (battalions), each with 15 certified and licensed fire/EMS personnel. All personnel hold International Accreditation for Fire Service Organizations Pro Board Firefighter Certifications (Pro Board): 100% Pro Board Firefighter Level I, 100% Pro Board Firefighter Level II, 50% Pro Board Firefighter Level III. 100% of Company Officers and Chief Officers hold Pro Board certifications in Fire Officer Level I, and 51% are certified to Fire Officer Level II. 100% of Company Officers and Chief Officers hold a Fire Instructor Pro Board certification. 100% of Fire & Rescue personnel hold Pro Board Hazardous Materials Decontamination/Operations while 47% of personnel are certified at the higher level of Pro Board Hazardous Material Technicians. 15% are on the regional hazardous materials team. Four paramedics are members of the regional SWAT team serving as

tactical-medics. 100% hold National Registry EMS certifications and 100% hold NH Bureau of EMS Patient Care Provider Licenses. 8% are EMT's, 41% are Advanced-EMT's, and 51% are Paramedics. Six personnel are currently enrolled in an accredited Paramedic Program, and 3 personnel are in an Advanced EMT program. 68% of the Fire & Rescue personnel hold at least one college degree: 20 Associate's degrees, 17 Bachelor's degrees, 5 Master's degrees. 6% are pursuing a college degree.

The Fire & Rescue Department was a co-founder and remains an active supporter of the Dover School Department Career Technical Center's Firefighter & EMT programs. Numerous Fire & Rescue personnel serve as instructors for these programs and mentor the high school students. Several of the students have been certified through the program and have been successfully hired by Dover Fire & Rescue in recent years.

The Fire & Rescue Department FY2025 budget proposal requests funding to achieve strategic plan objectives, maintain emergency response operations, and enhance Community Risk Reduction. The methodology used to strategize a reduction in the community's risk hazards is to take a multi-angle approach of enhancing prevention & preparedness initiatives, and assuring emergency response resources efficiently align with the community's emergency response needs. Dover Fire & Rescue's proposed FY2025 budget includes the funding requests necessary to contend with increasing fire and EMS emergency response needs, support Community Risk Reduction strategies through local, state, and federal reporting, data collection & analysis, maintaining the City's investment in its three fire stations, and prioritize the recruitment, retention, and professional development the City's firefighters, paramedics, company officers, and chief officers.

The emergency services workforce market has changed considerably over recent years, and as a result, recruitment of experienced firefighters and paramedics has become a sustained challenge (nationally). This has precipitated the need for the department to enhance its ability to support the professional development and training of its personnel which remains an organizational priority. Fire & Rescue has adopted the U.S. Fire Administration National Professional Development Model for the development and delivery of the department's training, education, and professional development standards.

Increases to the proposed FY2025 operational budget include the third-year phase-in-period for transitioning eight personnel from 100% grant-funded positions in FY2023 to 33.3% grant funded positions in FY2025. This phase-in, from grant funding to general funding over a four-year period is a planned strategy to support the onboarding of eight fire/EMS personnel and equipment needed to operationalize a third emergency response ambulance and increased overtime for shift coverage and off-duty professional development.

The proposed FY 2025 budget includes the funding necessary to maintain emergency response resources as well as resources to improve risk reduction efforts, with the goal of reducing demands on emergency response resources. Enhancing Community Risk Reduction efforts is imperative to curbing the unprecedented growth in call volume for emergency services. Fire & Rescue has strategized a plan to increase community resiliency by reducing the occurrence of preventable fires, hazards, illnesses, and injuries which would otherwise necessitate the need for an emergency response. These efforts underpin the department's mission and trajectory of its vision. Community Risk Reduction is a multi-stakeholder process used to identify risk factors unique to Dover's community and mitigate them using a coordinated, strategic approach. Enhancing Community Risk Reduction through the integration of

information technologies, and the duties and responsibilities of a City Fire Marshal are foundational components to closing a public safety gap within our community.

**Community Services Department:**

The Community Services Department mission is “to provide continuous, reliable, cost-effective and high-quality public works service to the community. We strive to protect and enhance the community’s public health, infrastructure, public assets and environment.” The department is responsible for the essential services that residents and businesses rely on day-by-day. The Community Service Department directly impacts people’s lives on a daily basis whether it’s through the provision of safe, reliable potable water; collection and treatment of sanitary sewer waste; management of stormwater and flood controls; or maintaining a network of safe roads, bridges, sidewalks, along with their corresponding signs, street lights and traffic signals. The department serves as a steward of the both the natural and built environment, including responsibilities for public sanitation, snow removal, solid waste and recycling collection. Engineering and Administration staff manage capital improvement projects to ensure the department is properly maintaining, operating, and sustaining critical public infrastructure. The department is also responsible monitoring and caring for all City buildings, parks, grounds, cemeteries, and vehicles.

The proposed FY2026 Budget supports the Department’s continued provision of critical services and utility functions, while also assuring public infrastructure is being appropriately monitored and managed to help guide cost-effective and sustainable reinvestment. The operational nature of Community Services means we rely extensively on vehicles and equipment, and also on purchased services such as electricity, chemicals, road salt, and fuel. The current replacement value of all Community Services vehicles and equipment is over \$9 million. To illustrate the reliance on equipment, during a winter storm event Community Services will deploy more than 30 vehicles, loaders or tractors.

The Community Services Department makes up the largest portion of the City’s annual operating budget. The department’s budget is funded in the General Fund, Water Fund, Sewer Fund, Solid Waste Fund and the Fleet Services Fund portions of the City’s Annual Operating Budget. Across these funds, Community Services is divided into 7 distinct divisions that operate over 15 budget costs centers. The divisions are:

- Facilities, Grounds & Cemeteries - 3
- Engineering - 1
- Highways & Drainage - 4
- Solid Waste & Recycling - 2
- Utilities (Water & Sewer) - 3
- Administration - 1
- Fleet Services – 1

By the nature of its work, public works related operations are heavily reliant on purchased services such as electricity, chemicals, fuel, piping, pavement, equipment, etc. There are also related Capital Improvement investments that hit the general fund budgets for sidewalks, drainage, traffic signals and annual paving program. With such a wide range of operational responsibilities and related infrastructure needs, a more detailed discussion of each operations division and budget cost centers follows.

**Facilities, Grounds & Cemeteries Division (FG&C):** The FG&C Division operates over three budget cost centers which includes General Government Buildings; Cemeteries; and Facilities & Grounds. They are responsible for 30 parks, 20 buildings, 12 sports fields, and 100’s of acres of public space utilizing a crew comprised of 9 full-time staff, 1 part-time office support staff and a

varying number of full-time and part-time seasonal staff, depending on the time of year. Collectively bargained wages and benefits are up primarily impacting Cemetery and Facilities & Grounds. There is a significant increase in purchased electricity for City buildings and facilities, and an increase for contracted services related to HVAC and plumbing work. Cemetery has increases in purchased services for anticipated tree pruning and maintenance, and also includes increases in capital outlay for procurement of replacement mowers and a pickup truck. Last year's vehicle increase was used to purchase a new bucket truck which is utilized for making repairs to signs, traffic lights, buildings and tree work. There are increases for installation of new downtown street trees and contracted increases for mowing and organic turf management. The contracts for organic turf treatment and mowing are being combined into a single source to provide a higher quality user experience, with greater accountability. Last year's budget allowed the planting of 15 new street trees around the downtown area.

**Engineering Division:** The Engineering Division operates within a single budget cost center, overseeing all infrastructure capital improvement projects. This includes technical guidance and inspection for development projects, as well as permitting related to the City's rights-of-way and public properties. Over the past couple of years, the division has spearheaded new engineering initiatives focused on improved infrastructure management, informed by ongoing studies. These initiatives encompass a range of areas, including traffic signal planning for annual upgrades, sidewalk reconstruction, pavement management, and pedestrian improvements. These efforts are designed to enhance the city's infrastructure and improve the quality of life for residents.

Personnel services costs have increased due to collectively bargained wages and benefits, and also include support for two part-time interns. The City leverages its proximity to the University of New Hampshire to engage engineering students. These students provide valuable assistance with key tasks such as the EPA-mandated Lead Service Line Inventory, MS4 monitoring and reporting, and general support for the various construction projects underway. These projects include the ongoing Waterfront Redevelopment, as well as upcoming major infrastructure improvements like the reconstruction of Court and Union Streets, Henry Law Avenue and Payne Street, and water system improvements at Garrison Hill. The division is also embarking on the calibration of a citywide water and sewer model to better assess demand on existing municipal systems and plan for future needs.

The division's largest non-personnel budget expense is funding for technical services related to the City's obligation at the former Tolend Road Landfill site. This EPA-regulated Superfund Site requires ongoing work to control the spread of groundwater contaminants. Currently, this involves expanding the network of groundwater collection wells. The EPA is reviewing plans for the installation of additional extraction wells and upgrading the system to year-round operation.

**Highways & Drainage Division:** The Highways & Drainage Division operates over four budget cost centers which includes Streets; Snow Removal; Storm Water; and Street Lighting. Personal Services have increased slightly for both Streets and Storm Water due to allowed wage increases via collectively bargained contracts and along with insurance costs. Snow Removal and Street Lighting don't have any significant personnel-related impacts. Streets has relatively little change for purchased items or contracted services, but there is a \$15,000 increase for heavy-vehicle maintenance. The larger diesel equipment is very costly to maintain and operate. To provide a few examples, a diesel exhaust particulate filter can cost as much as \$15,000; a cylinder head replacement on a dump truck can be in excess of \$10,000; and a wing-activator mechanism for a loader can cost \$7,500. The most significant budget impacts are in the Capital Outlay line items, as

per the recommended, long-term CIP. For Streets there are CIP increases for annual paving program, traffic signals, bridges, and sidewalks. For the traffic signals, a comprehensive assessment of the 35+ signalized intersections was conducted and the final report noted that repairs/replacement of the structural mast-arm components needed to be implemented. Historically, efforts had been focused on upgrading the signal controls, but the structural supports holding up the signals needs attention. Similarly, a City-wide sidewalk assessment was conducted to determine priorities along with recommendations for a funding program to ensure sufficient repairs and replacements occur to sustain safe and reliable pedestrian traffic.

Stormwater has similar personal increases as that of Streets. Stormwater also has a \$25,000 increase in the Capital Outlay line related to additional funding of various general drainage improvement projects. As an example, when the Hough Street culvert collapsed, the general drainage improvement funds were used to replace the old system with an updated unit that could accommodate sufficient flow, but also passive of aquatic organisms. General drainage improvement funds are also use to retrofit and upgrade old BMP's with more effective treatment measures.

Snow Removal actually shows a decrease in overall budget due to a couple of factos. Based on both 5 and 10-year running averages, the annual expenditures (on average) appear to be coming down. One of the leading reasons is the City's commitment to optimizing brine for roadway treatments, along with enhanced, composite plow blades, which has helped reduce the amount of annual road salt required.

Street Light budget is essentially flat, with only a 0.15% increase related to the actual cost of purchased electricity. The prior conversion to LED light fixtures saved the City approximately \$100,000 annually, but although electricity supply rates are increasing, the street lights are not "metered-service" and have seen relatively flat price changes.

**Solid Waste & Recycling Division:** This Division oversees and manages two budget cost centers as the names imply, Solid Waste (SW) and Recycling. There are significant changes to both the FY2026 budgets for SW and Recycling as FY2025 is the 5<sup>th</sup> and final year of a 5-year collections contract with Waste Management (WM). SW has historically been operated as a Special Revenue Fund with sale of the pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) bags and bulky tags intended to generate enough revenue to support the curbside collection and final disposal costs (tipping fees). But a 2-year contract extension is being finalized with WM, with the intent to prepare for a transition away from the PAYT bags and implementation of automated-collection with WM trucks using mechanical arms for collection of 64-bins (toters). In anticipation of this transition, SW is being transferred over to the City's General Fund. This includes both expenses and revenue (sale of PAYT bags). In addition to this impact, the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) recommended the addition of 2 new staff. SWAC felt the addition of new staff would help create a dedicated position for monitoring and more timely enforcement of code-compliance issues, such as illegal dumping. With the transition to the General Fund, one position survived the City Manager's review, with one position eliminated. The expectation is that another Operator can help lead to additional coverage or extended hours at the Recycling Center, and help with illegal dumping or compliance violations.

Regarding the specifics of the two budgets, there is actually a combined decrease. Last year's Recycling Budget included a one-time purchase of a roll-off truck that was \$300,000 (offset by

ARPA grant funds). So, while that one-time expenditure has gone away, there is a big budget adjustment for Recycling to capture the costs of transportation, processing and ultimate disposal of single-stream curbside collection, which is projected as 2,600 tons at \$135/ton, for a total FY2026 impact of \$351,000.

SW will experience increases in contract services for the curbside collection of trash, along with increases in tipping fees and also costs for miscellaneous items such as downtown trash receptacles and dumpster service at various City facilities.

**Utilities (Water & Sewer) Division:** The Utilities Division operates over three budget cost centers which include Water, Sewer and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. FY2025 was the first year of operation of the new Pudding Hill Water Treatment Plant, and there had been a prior cost increase of about 15%. This coming FY2026 Water costs are projected to increase 4.46%. Personal expenses are up for both collective bargained wages and benefits. Looking at the expenditures, increases are included for additional outside SCADA assistance (which is the computerized control system that allows Operators to safely control, monitor and operated the facilities). Staff are still tracking the migration of PFAS through the treatment media, and operational costs remain essentially flat from FY2025's large increase. Of note is that the responsible contaminating party for the PFAS has deposited in an escrow account what it believes will be necessary to cover the first 3 years of operations and maintenance costs. The new operational impacts for contamination account for about a \$300,000 added annual expense. Water staff are responsible for 11 wells, 3 treatment plants, 4 storage tanks, 2 pressure zones and approximately 165 miles of buried distribution system piping. Another item of note is that staff expect to clean and rehab 2 supply wells each year. This helps sustain capacity and ensures no fouling of the intake screens.

Sewer is broken into 2 separate budgets. There is one budget center for the collection system, which has over 120 miles of piping and over 3,500 individual manholes and 23 mechanical pumping stations. The other budget center is the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) that is tasked with treating over 1 billion of wastewater, which in turn generates about 3,200 wet-tons of accumulated bio-solids. Together, the 2 budgets are showing a combined increase of 2.7%. Outside of collectively bargained wages and benefits, the largest budget drivers related to the collection system portion is additional contracted maintenance and cleaning for the collection system that serves the Tolend Road Landfill. But in turn, the collective responsible parties of the Landfill in turn pay the Sewer fund about \$285,000 in annual sewer use volumetric charges. There is also an allowance for purchased electricity, as between the pump stations and WWTP, the projection is for annual sewer-related electrical costs to be over \$700,000. There is also a significant increase at the WWTP for contracted services related to the transportation and disposal of 3,200 tons of bio-solids. The disposal costs have risen significantly as WWTP biosolids have shown accumulations of concentrated PFAS.

**Administration:** Administration operates within a single budget cost center, and is tasked with providing oversight and support for all Community Service functions. In addition to collectively bargained personal service costs, this budget accounts for the main public works facility at 271 Mast Road, so this is where purchased utility services for electricity, heat, water and sewer are tracked. In turn, Administration charges out the various other divisions for a pro-rata share of the facility. There was a small increase in general office equipment to update and replace some

of the furnishings that date back 20 years to the original construction of the 271 Mast Road facility.

**Fleet Services Division:** Fleet Services operates within a single budget cost center to provide preventative maintenance services to approximately 135 City vehicles, along with another 170+ external vehicles related to the Dover School Department and other municipal or non-profit entities such as the Dover Housing Authority, Town of Rollinsford, and Strafford County. The FY26 budget is relatively stable, with a 1.91% increase. The key driver is personal-related costs for wages and benefits. The only other notable increase is in the cost for purchased services or diagnostic support. The City maintains several vehicle diagnostic programs and software. Otherwise, the budget line items remain relatively flat.

Environmental factors continue to have a significant impact on the department's budgets across the board. This includes compliance with the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) General Permit, the EPA-issued Great Bay Total Nitrogen General Permit, and stricter PFAS limits in drinking water and wastewater bio-solids. EPA also issued an updated National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for the wastewater treatment plant, that will contribute to added costs for sampling and monitoring. Commitments to fully fund non-toxic turf management and weed control help protect and sustain the environment, but have a corresponding budget impact. These environmental initiatives or opportunities put Dover in a leadership role, helping guide regional responses and developing initiatives to find creative means of compliance and funding in these areas remains critical. The City has been proactive and recognized with awards for environmental leadership, asset management proficiency, and stormwater creativity. Other New Hampshire municipalities typically reach out to Dover for advice and guidance. This supports another strategic initiative to be seen as industry leaders, which embraces the "Dover-First" mentality.

#### **Recreation Department:**

The Recreation Department mission is "to provide affordable, high quality recreation facilities and programs in collaboration with other City departments and local organizations, ensuring participants have access to a variety of recreational opportunities, thereby enhancing their quality of life". The department is responsible for the operations of several major public recreation facilities and provides/facilitates a comprehensive list of programs for all ages and abilities. The department is also responsible for the operations and maintenance of the McConnell Center facility supporting a variety of municipal and social service related agencies. The Recreation Department's budget is funded in the General Fund, McConnell Center Fund, and Recreation Programs Fund portions of the City's Annual Operating Budget.

The Dover community is very fortunate to have a legacy of investment in what it takes to provide high quality recreational experiences for area residents. The basis of this investment, both in infrastructure and human capital, is the view that one of the measures of the quality of a person's life is what they share with others around them. Recreation by design brings people together in various settings to develop community, build relationships and give back to others through volunteerism and sponsorship opportunities.

The mechanisms in place in Dover to build the enjoyable lifestyles recreational activities can bring include: Sports Leagues for all ages and competitive and instructional levels, Special Events, Lessons for all sports, Cultural and Arts Events, Parks and gathering places for individual and group activities, Senior

Center Trips, Community Recreation and Fitness Center, Indoor and Outdoor Pools, Twin Sheet Ice Arena, Disc Golf Course, Skatepark, Sledding and Snowboard Hills, Dog Park, Walking Trails, Playgrounds, Tennis and Pickleball Courts, Basketball Courts, Performing Arts Venues and, Trails, Natural and Conservation Areas for Passive Recreation.

The Recreation Department is involved with the operation and provision of most of the community recreational activities to varying degrees. The facilities operated by the department host much of the programming available to the community. Our staff either run those programs or coordinate the reservations and/or rentals of those community venues with private leagues/ groups or individuals.

The public parks and athletic facilities are managed by the Recreation Department in cooperation with the Community Services Department and the Dover School Department. The integral role that the Dover Recreation Department plays creates and enables athletic and recreational opportunities for tens of thousands of people every year whether a participant or spectator. The FY2026 budget provides the resources for the department to operate the recreation facilities and support the programming that serves the community every day. The changes in these sections year to year can impact that ability as they are supported and consistently funded.

The Recreation Department also manages and operates the McConnell Center. This major facility serves as a Recreation Center, Senior Center, Teen Center, Community Center, Multi-Tenant Nonprofit Center and also is the city's primary Emergency Shelter. The Recreation budget supports the consistent, safe and efficient operation of the McConnell Center and provides the community with many uses and resources to take advantage of over the course of their lives in Dover.

The Strategic Plan of the Recreation Department focuses significantly on the delivery of quality services to our community and customers. That is articulated in the areas of marketing and customer communications specifically. The needs in those areas are addressed in many ways through the hiring and training of qualified staff who can best represent those intangible traits that demonstrate public service. The number of front-line positions in the Recreation Department that need to be hired and trained on an annual basis is significant. This has been a challenge in the current economy however due in large part to talented and dedicated full time staff the department has been able to navigate this issue especially important over the last few years. The solidifying of our full-time staff positions at all facilities has really given the department a firm foundation from which to recruit and train the people that deliver services day by day. The FY2026 budget funds the continuance of this very important aspect that is clearly connected to the level and quality of service we deliver to our community.

In order to account for the many services that the Recreation Department provides, the department's budget is broken into several cost centers including: Administration, Recreation Programs, Indoor Pool, Jenny Thompson Pool, Ice Arena, McConnell Center and several other Recreation Special Revenue Fund programs. There are consistent areas of impact across all these cost centers in the FY2026 budget.

The proposed Recreation Department budget for FY2026 does eliminate one (1) full-time Recreation Program Supervisor position via attrition. Existing staff have been tasked with and will strive to absorb the program responsibilities previously supported by this position. Therefore, the budget as proposed provides funding for the personnel, services, and supplies required to support the comprehensive recreation program and facilities enjoyed by the Dover community. Funding increases across all cost centers are primarily attributable to the third year of the wage and classification plan implementation

and utility costs. Helping to offset these increases are the revenues generated by the various recreation facilities and programs.

The Recreation Department's General Fund operating revenues traditionally cover 60 to 70% of the General Fund expenses and the McConnell Center and other Special Revenue accounts revenue as an aggregate cover 100% of their respective expenses. The result of this is that the net cost of the Recreation Department to the Dover taxpayer is typically 1% of the total City General Fund accounts translating into an annual cost to the individual residential taxpayer of approximately \$80. The inherent value to the residents of the investment that the City of Dover has made in public recreation services over the years and is currently supporting through the budget process has consistently exceeded the level of recreation services provided by any community in northern New England.

**Public Library:**

The Dover Public Library's mission is to support lifelong engagement in reading, discovering, learning, and creating. The Library prides itself on being responsive to the needs and desires of the population it serves. It serves as both a physical space and virtual portal for the curation and discovery of ideas, the convening of community, and the power of information.

The Dover Public Library responsibilities include: promoting reading, learning, and creative activities for youth and teens through story times, summer reading programs, homework help, and enriching and entertaining STEM, Family Place, and Makerspace experiences; providing research assistance, readers' advisory services, technology and maker classes, and tutoring in the use of electronic, online, and e-reader resources; allowing access to digital, electronic, and streamed content via website and through outreach on popular, customer-focused social software platforms; filling patron requests for books and materials through inter- and intra-library loan; and serving as a community repository, preserving, making accessible, an extensive collection of historical materials about Dover, the seacoast region, and NH; and supporting libraries in the five Dover public schools by providing system administration and collaborative services within a shared library automation system.

The Public Library is funded in the General Fund and Library Fines Fund portion of the City's Annual Operating Budget.

The Dover Public Library budget for FY2026 maintains funding to support the collection, programming and materials needed to maintain the services our community relies upon. Funding increases include personal services costs associated with collective bargaining agreements and the City's Merit Plan. An increase in funding can also be found in staff development so that staff can attend conferences and trainings to learn about new and relevant services for the community. This is a key strategic plan for the Library.

The Dover Public Library continues to be a community hub with a 6% increase in visits to the Library. The demand for programming and community events at the library also continues to grow with a 9% increase in program attendance. The budget for FY2026 proposes an increase in Special Programming to meet the demands of our community. This budget line is offset by generous donations from the Friends of the Dover Public Library.

The Library relies on statistics and surveys to gauge user interest. While total material circulation is rising the largest increase is for digital services with a 9.7% increase in downloaded materials. The budget for FY2026 proposes an increase in Software Subscriptions & Licenses which encompasses many of our digital products. The Dover Public Library is a member of the New Hampshire Downloadable Book Consortium which the NH State Library manages for participating libraries. The program receives grant funding through the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the NH State Library.

### **Public Welfare Department:**

The Public Welfare Department mission is “to provide a general assistance program to meet the genuine needs of all eligible residents in compliance with NH State Law (NH RSA 165) and the City guidelines, in a respectful and fiscally responsible way which fosters dignity and self-sufficiency.” The department is accessible to and serves Dover residents in their times of need. Responsibilities include: providing General Assistance program for Dover residents as required by State law; maintain accurate case plans/records; investigate/verify eligibility for all applications for public assistance; coordinate opportunities for workfare program; and, make referrals and work with State and local agencies to coordinate services. This department is funded in the General Fund portion of the City’s Annual Operating Budget.

Welfare is mandated in New Hampshire by the state government yet it is paid for by local tax revenue. It is intended to be temporary, emergency assistance that will stabilize or minimize a crisis situation allowing people to regain independence. Dover Welfare addresses “Basic Needs” such as housing, food, heat, utilities and medical issues. Staff are dedicated to providing the most assistance allowed for their clients yet remain constantly aware of the fiscal responsibilities to the Dover taxpayer whose money is being expended. All laws that govern Local Welfare as dictated by state statutes are adhered to including following the adopted “Guidelines” that define the who, what, where, when and how of what may be provided.

Each person who contacts the Public Welfare Department is offered polite, respectful and professional service. This is not always an easy task to accomplish as many of those seeking “Assistance” are angry, anxious, frightened and confused. Some arrive having substance use disorders or mental health issues. If they cannot be helped directly, efforts are made to refer to other programs and agencies that can. While personal identifiable information is protected by law the data about how many we serve, in what way and how much it costs is available on the City of Dover Website. Department staff are regularly researching the available services in our area and throughout the state, keeping current with regular trainings and remaining active in all groups that are relevant to concerns addressed by this department.

The current fiscal year has seen a significant increase in the requests for Dover Welfare assistance. This has been most noticeable among Dover’s elderly, disabled and families There has been a rapid rise in cost of rent with a continued lack of rentable units available. Food, heating costs and other Basic Needs have also increased. Rental assistance and emergency shelter costs account for the largest increase in expenditures.

The proposed Public Welfare Department budget for FY2026 will allow for continuing quality service in providing the general assistance that addresses the needs of Dover residents in the coming year regardless of what unpredictable situations and needs arise.