



WHEATON CITY COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP SESSION MINUTES

MAYOR PHILIP J. SUESS

COUNCILWOMAN ERICA BRAY-PARKER | COUNCILWOMAN LEAH BRICE | COUNCILMAN SCOTT BROWN
COUNCILMAN BRADLEY CLOUSING | COUNCILWOMAN LYNN ROBBINS | COUNCILMAN SCOTT WELLER

WHEATON CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 303 W WESLEY STREET, WHEATON, ILLINOIS 60187

Monday, November 10, 2025

I. Call to Order

The Wheaton City Council Budget Workshop Session was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Suess. The following were:

Physically Present: Mayor
Councilwoman Bray-Parker
Councilwoman Brice
Councilman Clousing
Councilwoman Robbins
Councilman Weller

Absent: Councilman Brown

City Staff Present: Michael G. Dzugan, City Manager
William Kolschowsky, Assistant City Manager
Jason Ackerlund, Forestry Superintendent
Susan Bishel, Public Information Officer
Robert Brill, Fire Chief
Thomas Corrigan, Director of Building & Code Enforcement
Dawn Didier, City Attorney
Pat Keegan, Director of Information Technology
James Kozik, Director of Planning & Economic Development
Vince Laoang, Director of Public Works
Robert Lehnhardt, Director of Finance
Al McMillen, Water Superintendent
Nathan Plunkett, Street Superintendent
Holly Schulz, Director of Human Resources
Joseph Tebrugge, Director of Engineering
Sean Walsh, Assistant Director of Public Works
Sam Webb, Fleet Superintendent
Princeton J. Youker, Chief of Police

II. 2026 Draft Budget Overview – Presentation

City Manager Dzugan expressed his appreciation for the Finance Department for their efforts in creating the 2026 Draft Budget. He stated that the Budget Workshop will provide an overview of revenues and expenditures, a presentation by the Wheaton Public Library (WPL), and departmental reviews of 2025 data and 2026 goals.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt introduced the budget overview by stating that Strategic Plan goals and the 2025 Community Survey informed the preparation of the 2026 Draft Budget. Total 2026

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revenues are estimated at \$160.8 million and expenditures at \$153.1 million. Staffing includes 270 full-time personnel, reflecting the elimination of three full-time positions and four added part-time or seasonal positions. City pension costs will increase by \$100,000 and health and liability transfer costs by \$400,000.

He reviewed the City's revenue sources. There will be no increase to the parking rates, sanitary sewer rates, or stormwater utility fee. The local grocery tax remains at 1%. The water rate will increase by 5.1%, generating an additional \$800,000 in revenue. To cover the debt service for the 2026 General Obligation (G.O.) Bond, the City's property tax levy will increase by 3%, local sales tax by .25%, and the natural gas use utility tax by \$0.05 per therm. These measures maintain the General Fund's 40% reserve target.

Key expenditures include the 2026 G.O. bond, which will fund the Police Station remodel and the replacement of Fire Station 39; debt service payments will require an annual \$1 - \$1.9 million in revenue. Capital improvements constitute an estimated \$45 million, including \$22 million for facility improvements, \$5.6 million for road improvements, \$4.9 million for sanitary sewer improvements, \$2.8 million for water improvements, and \$2.3 million for sidewalks.

III. Library – 2026 Draft Budget Presentation

Christine Fenne, Treasurer of the Wheaton Public Library Board, reviewed the library's requested budget for 2026, which includes \$5.2 million in revenues and \$5.3 million in expenditures. She discussed challenges the WPL is facing regarding staffing, facilities, and technology services, particularly rising e-book costs. She noted that the WPL has either not purchased services or has eliminated services that other peer libraries have.

In response to Council questions, Treasurer Fenne stated that, before a service is cut, the Library evaluates usage and costs. The Library will then present their recommendation to the Library Board for approval and patron notification.

IV. Review of 2026 Draft Budget

A. Budgets Reviewed

i. General Government

For the Mayor and City Council, City Manager Dzugan reviewed increases in liquor licenses and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Goals for 2026 include an update of the Strategic Plan and the appointment of the next City Manager.

In response to Council questions, City Attorney Didier stated that many of the FOIA requests the City receives are commercial FOIA requests, which have an extended time period for response.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that the Mayor and City Council's budget will increase by approximately \$157,000, \$150,000 of which will be a contribution to the Wheaton Park District for a celebration of the 250th anniversary of the America's founding. Within the budget for the Mayor and City Council, another \$25,000 is allocated for the America 250 celebration. In response to a Council question, he stated the \$150,000 contribution is flexible and that the Wheaton Park District could provide more information to the Council at a future Planning Session.

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City Manager Dzugan reviewed the Boards and Commissions' budgets. Expenditures for all Boards and Commissions are estimated at approximately \$163,000. He stated that each of the Boards and Commissions will present their budget requests and their action items at the November 24 Planning Session.

For the Senior Citizens' Programs, City Manager Dzugan reviewed the senior transportation programs, highlighting ridership data from Ride DuPage and Ride DuPage to Work that indicates that these programs serve a small number of users. He added that staff has been discussing the upcoming 2026 subsidy agreement with Pace and that the subsidy amount will decrease in 2026. For 2026, he stated that a goal of the Senior Citizens Programs is to increase outreach for home-delivered meals and well-being checks.

For the City Manager's Office, City Manager Dzugan discussed data on traffic concerns received, noting that traffic management was a top concern in the 2025 Community Survey. In 2026, he stated that the City Manager's Office plans to update the Strategic Plan, incorporating the results of the 2025 Community Survey. Another goal is to evaluate the City's overall traffic management and provide a report to the City Council.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that the City Manager's Office's budget for 2026 is \$100,000 higher than the 2025 budget; however, both the projected 2025 expenditures and the 2026 Draft Budget reflect a filled vacancy and health, liability, and fleet services transfers.

For the Legal Department, City Attorney Didier outlined key work areas. In 2026, the Legal Department plans to provide legal assistance for the Streams Lake Meander project, review City Code for revisions, and comprehensively review the City's zoning ordinance with the Planning and Economic Development Department.

For the Finance Department, Director of Finance Lehnhardt reviewed the annual debt service payments for the 2026 G.O. Bond. He stated that the Finance Department's goals in 2026 were to develop sustainable funding strategies for stormwater, sanitary sewer, and roadway infrastructure.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that the Finance Department's budget has increased by approximately \$250,000.

For the Human Resources Department, Director of Human Resources Schulz stated that a 2025 action item was to maintain a "C" package rating for the City's employee wellness program to continue receiving a rebate for employee health insurance premiums. For 2026, she stated that the Human Resources Department plans to negotiate successor collective bargaining agreements with all four collective bargaining units, enhance the Wellness Program for employees and spouses, and assist in recruiting the next City Manager.

For the Information Technology Department, Director of Information Technology Keegan discussed data on the average age of the City's computers, which has decreased due to the department's goal of replacing old desktops. The department also upgraded all devices to Windows 11 in 2025. For 2026, he stated that the Information Technology Department will implement a network vulnerability scan and conduct security exercises and departmental needs assessments.

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Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that the budget for the Information Technology department will decrease by \$187,000, reflecting the transfer of software to the Finance Department.

For the Communications Department, Public Information Officer Bishel reviewed metrics from the City's launch on social media platforms like Nextdoor and LinkedIn. She stated that, in 2026, the Communications Department plans to apply the 2025 Community Survey to 2026's communications content, provide support to the Police and Fire Department during their community outreach programs, and educate residents on LRS' recycling program.

In response to a Council question, Public Information Officer Bishel stated that the City's social media pages, particularly the City's Nextdoor and Facebook pages, can reach approximately 17,500 households or about 85% of the City's households.

For the Planning and Economic Development Department, Director of Planning and Economic Development Kozik discussed permitting activity. In 2026, he stated that the department plans to prepare an RFP for a comprehensive review and update of the zoning ordinance, train code enforcement officers to identify zoning ordinance violations in the field, and provide permitting and licensing assistance for development projects.

In response to Council questions, Director of Planning and Economic Development Kozik stated that the purpose of the zoning ordinance update was to identify and revise areas of the zoning ordinance that have previously been updated in a piecemeal way.

For the Engineering Department, Director of Engineering Tebrugge highlighted data showing the cumulative sidewalks installed since the New Sidewalk Program's launch. He stated that the 2026 goals of the Engineering Department were to complete plans for the Road, Sewer, and Water Rehabilitation Program, complete the underground installation for the Basin 3 and 4 Discharge Replacement Program, and draft a policy for pedestrian crossing signs.

In response to Council questions, Director of Engineering Tebrugge stated that the Gary Avenue Reconstruction Project is awaiting a guardrail but remains on schedule for paving before asphalt plants close. Additionally, he anticipated that Golf Road and Golf Circle should receive temporary asphalt before plant closure.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that the Engineering Department's 2026 budget is projected to increase by \$132,000.

For the Building and Code Enforcement Department, Director of Building and Code Enforcement Corrigan highlighted the reduced plan review time since the implementation of online permitting software. In 2026, he stated the department seeks to further enhance the efficiency of the software by identifying workflow and customer service improvements. Finally, he stated that the department plans to analyze code enforcement service requests to determine opportunities to improve customer service.

In response to Council questions, Director of Building and Code Enforcement stated that the department provides information on the City website for frequent permits. In 2026, the

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department will explore further opportunities to provide information on the necessary requirements for a permit. He stated that, since the launch of the online permitting software, the IT department has assisted in improving software workflows and usability for the customer.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that the budget for the Building and Code Enforcement Department is increasing by \$6,000.

For the Facilities Department, Assistant City Manager Kolschowsky reviewed the 539 work requests completed in 2025. For 2026, staff will address the work items identified in the 2024 Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA) and update the City's asset management software to include the FCA's work items. Director of Finance Lehnhardt added that the 2026 Draft Budget combines all General Funds facilities organizations into one organization.

ii. Police Department

Police Chief Youker shared the results from Police Department engagement events with the public, reflecting residential priorities in traffic and school safety. 2026 goals include conducting targeted recruitment efforts, consolidating the two parking citation platforms, and producing public service announcements on policing issues and available services.

In response to Council questions, Police Chief Youker stated that emergency response time remains the same as last year's. He stated that the Board of Fire and Police commissioners are meeting to proactively fill projected vacancies.

iii. Fire Department

Fire Chief Brill shared the attendance data from community outreach events, such as open houses, station tours, school visits, and block parties. He stated that attendance at community outreach events increased from 2024. In 2026, the Fire Department's goals are to finalize the design for Fire Station 39's replacement based on the conclusions of the site analysis and space study, update the City's Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Governance plans, and evaluate the current emergency medical services delivery system to determine whether paramedics should be contracted or in-house.

In response to Council questions, Fire Chief Brill stated that the paramedic contract will expire in April 2027. He stated that two ambulances and a ladder truck are pending delivery and that paramedic staffing remains challenging because of resignations.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that the Fire Department's budget is \$13.6 million, which is mostly even with last year's budget.

iv. Public Works – General Fund

Street Superintendent Plunkett reviewed data from LED streetlight replacement. For 2026, the Streets Division plans to pave four miles of road, replace 900 squares of sidewalk, and replace 400 signs that are in poor condition.

In response to Council questions, Street Superintendent Plunkett stated that the total amount of sidewalk replacement has decreased from previous years due to increased materials and labor costs.

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Forestry Superintendent Ackerlund reviewed 2025 data on parkway tree pruning. He stated that, in 2026, staff plans to maintain its parkway tree pruning cycle and obtain the fortieth consecutive "Tree City USA" designation.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that the 2026 Draft Budget reflects an increase of \$587,000, which includes special events barricades for the French Market.

v. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Funds

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that TIF District #2 expired in 2022 and it will be closed out in 2025 since the City has received the final cost for Phase Four of the streetscape project. He stated that he anticipates a surplus distribution of an estimated \$400,000, including \$47,000 to the City.

He stated that TIF District #3 expires in 2028. In 2026, TIF District #3's revenues are projected to be \$2.5 million, and its expenditures are projected to be \$100,000. At a previous meeting, staff and the Council approved distributing \$3 million in surplus revenue from the TIF district, \$300,000 of which would return to the City.

vi. Capital Project Funds

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that expenditures for the Capital Project Fund are projected to be \$4.2 million. He noted that, in 2026, there will be no transfer from the General Fund to the Capital Projects Fund. Additionally, there is a 2026 G.O. bond with \$21.9 million in bond proceeds in revenue and \$21.9 million in expenditures; these expenditures are for the Police Station remodel and Fire Station 39's replacement.

vii. Public Works – Water Fund

Water Superintendent McMillen reviewed data on the lead service line replacement program. In 2025, the Water Division replaced one hundred lead service lines; one hundred more lead service lines are planned for 2026. Additionally, the Water Division plans to replace 6,500 feet of water mains and conduct increased sample collection.

In response to a Council question, he stated that the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency determines which facilities require collection samples.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that, for 2026, the budget for the Water Division will be increasing by \$600,000 to \$16.3 million in expenditures. He added that the water rate will be increasing in June 2026 in alignment with the DuPage Water Commission.

viii. Public Works – Sanitary Sewer Fund

Assistant Director of Public Works Walsh highlighted data on the Sanitary Lateral Replacement and Overhead Sewer programs. In 2026, he stated the site restoration goal of sixty days will remain; the average is twenty-eight days for site restoration.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that, for 2026, the Sanitary Sewer Fund's expenditures are budgeted at \$7.1 million, \$4.9 million for capital expenses and \$2.2 million for operating expenses, a \$100,000 increase from 2025.

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ix. Public Works – Storm Sewer Fund

Assistant Director of Public Works Walsh reviewed data showing the annual amount of catch basins cleaned contrasted with the amount of debris removed from those catch basins. For 2026, he stated that the Sewer Divisions aims to replace forty storm sewer structures that have failed inspection, clean 145,000 feet of storm sewer, and inspect 65,000 feet via closed-circuit television.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that the Storm Sewer Fund has projected revenues of \$1.7 million and projected expenditures of \$3.5 million, \$1.8 million for operating expenses and \$1.7 million for capital projects.

x. Parking Fund

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that a goal for 2026 will be reviewing the effect of parking fee increases on the Parking Fund. Projected 2026 revenues are \$1 million and expenses are \$1.3 million.

xi. Public Works – Fleet Services Fund

Fleet Superintendent Webb stated that a 2025 action item was to purchase vehicles and equipment with a focus on fuel savings. He reviewed the Fleet Division's replacements of non-hybrid vehicles with hybrid gasoline-electric models; he noted that, at thirty hybrid vehicles, it is most likely the limit for hybrid replacements. For 2026, he stated that the Fleet Division plans to reduce costs by extending the service life of vehicles and equipment and manage the generator replacements at the Police Station and Fire Station 38.

In response to a Council question, he stated that five vehicles have been carried over from previous years.

V. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

VI. City Council/Staff Comments

Mayor Suess thanked the staff for their efforts in compiling the 2026 Draft Budget. He stated that reflects the increased provision of City services with the same resources.

Councilwoman Brice echoed Mayor Suess' praise for staff's efforts.

Councilwoman Robbins thanked the staff, specifically Building Department, Forestry Division, Human Resources Department, Police Department, Fire Department, and the Finance Department.

Councilman Weller echoed the appreciation of the City Council for City staff.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erik Berg