



City Council

Regular Meeting

~Final~

36 Court Street
Springfield, MA 01103

<http://www.springfieldcityhall.com>

Gladys Oyola-Lopez

November 24,
2025

5:00 PM

City Hall - Room 200

Roll Call

Councilors Click-Bruce, Govan, Brown and Santaniello were REMOTE for this meeting.

Councilor Brown arrived at 5:11 PM, Councilor Edwards arrived at 5:12 PM and Councilor Santaniello arrived at 5:15 PM.

Moment Of Silence - Pledge Of Allegiance

Reports Of Committee

The Springfield City Council held a special meeting to set the tax rate for fiscal year 2026. Councilor Allen introduced the Tax Advisory Committee members and highlighted their hard work in determining the tax rates. The council accepted the committee's report with a roll call vote. The first item on the agenda was a transfer of \$2 million from the stabilization reserve to the tax levy for Treasury bills interest, which was approved by the council.

AYES	Timothy Allen, Lavar Click-Bruce, Victor Davila, Jose Delgado, Michael Fenton, Zaida Govan, Maria Perez, Brian Santaniello, Tracye Whitfield, Kateri Walsh
NAYS	None
AWAY	None
RECUSE	None
ABSTAIN	Malo Brown, Melvin Edwards
ABSENT	

Orders

1. Stabilization Transfer for Tax Levy - Treasury Bills Interest

The council discussed transferring \$3 million in FY25 certified free cash to FY26 estimated revenues, with Councilor Allen explaining this was to keep property tax increases under \$2.50. Councilor Delgado requested historical free cash figures, which Kathy agreed to provide for the past 10 years. Councilor Govan expressed concern about consistent property tax increases and advocated for finding a way to reduce tax bills for residents, while Councilor Davila questioned the sustainability of using free cash for tax relief and suggested identifying steady revenue streams instead of relying on annual transfers.

Jessica Guerra, Chairperson of the Board of Assessors explained the residential exemption, which reallocates tax burden from lower-value to higher-value properties, noting its implementation in 16 Massachusetts municipalities, including Boston and Cambridge. She highlighted that while it does not reduce the levy, it can unintentionally benefit higher-income households and increase tax liability for renters. The council discussed the need for further budget cuts, with Cathy Buono, CAFO, having already reduced open positions and cut department budgets. Councilor Whitfield emphasized the importance of reviewing non-essential expenses, such as out-of-state travel, to provide some relief for property tax increases.

AYES	Timothy Allen, Lavar Click-Bruce, Victor Davila, Jose Delgado, Michael Fenton, Zaida Govan, Maria Perez, Tracye Whitfield, Kateri Walsh
NAYS	None
AWAY	None
RECUSE	None
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ABSENT	

2. Transfer — FY25 Certified Free Cash to FY26 Estimated Revenues — \$3,000,000.00 (Mayor Sarno)

Councilor Allen noted the cuts made this year in an effort to reduce the tax levy. The budget will increase in FY 26/27.

Councilor Whitfield spoke and thanked everyone involved in the process of setting the tax rate.

She is taking the time to review the budget line in detail, including unexpended line items. She noted that she cannot support anything that is put forward today. She has received call from constituents to support her.

Councilor Santaniello asked how much the COS gives out in abatement every year. Jessica said she would get the information to him as soon as she was able to.

Councilor Brown spoke on the budget. He noted that the City Councilors should be a 4-year full-time position. Currently unable to attend meetings.

Councilor Allen mentioned Courtney Brodey and John Callihan, who were in attendance.

Councilor Delgado noted that he would like to see a line-item breakdown of the budget. Councilor Davila asked what would happen if the City Council didn't vote for the tax factor. The Comptroller responded. Councilor Davila noted that the tax factor vote is not easy.

Councilor Perez noted that we need to vote today and start working on solutions for next year's tax factor starting tomorrow.

Councilor Whitfield noted that the Council has more options to get additional revenue towards the tax levy. Advocacy and encouraging residents to advocate for themselves to the Mayor and the Council. She noted that she educates the community about the budget process. If the budget increases, which causes taxes to increase, she will vote no. If the tax factor increases and causes taxes to increase, she will vote no. She will vote yes to transfer the free cash and no on the tax factor.

Councilor Govan, moved the question and Councilor Perez seconded. All Councilors voted YES on the MOTION and Councilor Curran was absent.

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NAYS	None
AWAY	None
RECUSE	None
ABSTAIN	None
ABSENT	Sean Curran

3. Tax Factor – FY26 = .7874

Councilor Allen made a motion to accept the residential tax factor of .7874, resulting in a residential tax rate of \$15.46 and a commercial/industrial/personal property tax of \$34.35. The motion was seconded by Councilor Davila.

Councilor Govan asked if the tax factor presented was the lowest possible tax factor. Councilor Allen, Councilor Fenton, and Assessor Guerra confirmed that it was the maximum shift, resulting in the lowest possible tax factor. Councilor Govan noted that she would not be voting in favor of the tax factor.

The City Council discussed the tax rate and budget, with Councilor Santanello expressing concerns about increasing property taxes and advocating for more creative revenue-generating ideas. The council reviewed a proposal for pilot fees on small businesses, which Councilor

Santanello opposed due to its lack of "teeth" and potential impact on small nonprofits. Councilor Brown raised questions about tax adjustments based on age and income, which Jessica explained were limited by state laws. The conversation ended with a discussion about improving communication between Councilors and the administration, as well as the need to consider transitioning the city council to a full-time, four-year position to better serve constituents. The Council discussed new growth initiatives in Ward 7, with Councilor Allen highlighting several ongoing developments, including 12 houses behind Socialite, plans for Tinkham Road, and a potential 17-20 acre development near St. Anthony's. Councilor Delgado raised concerns about the \$7 million budget decrease and emphasized the need for detailed line-item budget information for the next budget season, stating that council members need to see where the money is coming from and going to in order to make informed decisions. Councilor Davila warned about the need for radical changes to avoid a significant tax increase for residents in the coming years, and mentioned that Holyoke is implementing a successful pilots tax program. The City Council discussed and voted on the FY26 tax factor, with Councilor Allen proposing a residential tax factor of 0.7874, resulting in a residential tax rate of \$15.46 and a commercial/industrial/personal property tax rate of \$34.35. While some Councilors expressed concerns about rising property taxes and called for further budget scrutiny, the administration emphasized the need to approve the tax factor to allow quarterly billing and avoid a single annual bill dictated by state regulations. The council ultimately approved the tax factor, with Councilor Whitfield dissenting on principle, while others like Councilor Govan voted against it due to concerns about resident affordability.

The council discussed property tax rates and factors, with Councilor Govan expressing concerns about rising property values and bills while residents' incomes remain stable. Jessica explained that home values are considered in setting the tax rate, which has increased over recent years. The council also debated the roles and responsibilities of city Councilors, with Councilor Brown questioning why they are part-time positions rather than full-time, and why their terms are only two years instead of four. The conversation ended with a vote on adopting a residential tax factor, which required seven votes for approval.

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AWAY	None
RECUSE	None
ABSTAIN	None
ABSENT	

[MIN_SIGNATURES]