



Town of *Wellesley*
FY2026 Budget Request
Planning Board Operating Narrative: Mission, Services & Priorities

MISSION AND DUTIES

The Planning Board consists of five elected members and one appointed associate member. The Board guides the Town of Wellesley in preserving and enhancing Wellesley's quality of life by fostering a diverse housing stock, multi-modal transportation options, valuable natural resources, resilient infrastructure, and a thriving local economy. Particular Town land use goals are identified in the Town's Unified Plan 2018-2028. The Planning Board achieves these goals through the creation and implementation of Zoning Bylaws, policies, long-term planning, and by promoting citizen participation in the planning process.

The role of the Planning Board is to make short- and long-term decisions related to land use in the Town of Wellesley. The Planning Board seeks to realize the vision of Wellesley residents for their community through the judicious use of municipal planning and project review. At the 2024 Annual Town Meeting, the Planning Board sponsored seven (7) articles, one of which was related to MBTA Communities compliance and another which was for the creation of a Residential Incentive Overlay (RIO) District. At the 2024 Special Town Meeting, the Planning Board sponsored three (3) articles, one of which related to MBTA Communities compliance passed and two proposed Residential Incentive Overlay (RIO) Districts which failed. At the 2025 Annual Town Meeting Planning expects to sponsor approximately five (5) articles.

The Planning Board is also involved with the review of, and issuance of permits for, many projects of all sizes throughout the Town as further discussed below.

The activities and duties of the Planning Board reflect the size and complexity of the Town of Wellesley. Wellesley is a desirable community in part because of the planning, both by private parties and the Town, that has shaped the Town. Providing for the continued use and redevelopment of this property base is essential to the Town and the quality of life for its residents. At the same time, the Town is built-out, so all new development requires further attention in shaping the bylaws and issuing permits for projects.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

The Planning Department is overseen by and supports the Planning Board to assist in the development and maintenance of a functional and attractive residential community by implementing the Zoning Bylaws and by initiating and reviewing projects.

The Planning Department currently is budgeted and staffed by five employees: the Planning Director, the Senior Planner, one full-time Planner, one full-time Preservation Planner and a part-time Office Administrator.

The Department also serves as professional staff to the Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, Design Review Board, and the Denton Road Neighborhood Conservation District Commission. It provides supplemental assistance to the Zoning Board of Appeals as needed, particularly for Comprehensive Permits under MGL c. 40B issued by the ZBA. The Department has frequent interaction with the Building Department and the Zoning Enforcement Officer on questions about the Zoning Bylaws.

The Planning Board is also involved with the review of many projects of all sizes throughout the Town. During FY24, the Planning Department staff prepared for and attended a total of seventy-four (74) meetings of the Planning Board, Design Review Board, Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, and Denton Road Neighborhood Conservation District Commission. Additionally, staff attended sessions of Town Meeting, Special Town Meeting, meetings of the Select Board and Advisory Committee, and meetings associated with special projects, such as the Mobility Committee, Housing Task Force and Building Working Group.

During the same period, the Planning Department staff processed one hundred (100) new applications for the Planning Board, Design Review Board, and Historic District Commission, Denton Road Neighborhood Conservation District, and applications for sixty-three (63) properties under the Town's Historical Preservation Demolition Review Bylaw. In addition, the Planning Board reviewed and made recommendations to the Zoning Board of Appeals for Planning Board for eighty-three (83) applications made to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

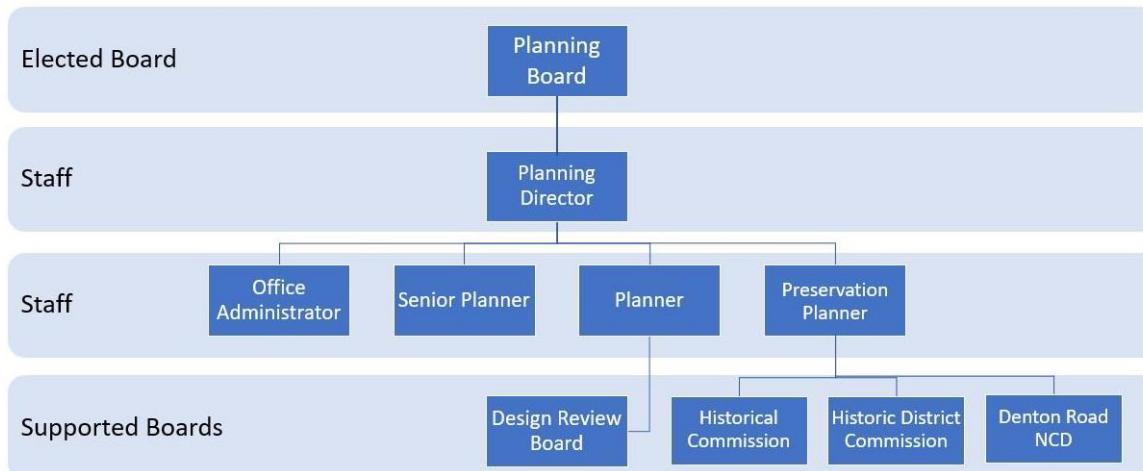


Figure 1: Structure of the Planning Department

PLANNING DIRECTOR

Reporting to the Board Chair, the Director's primary responsibility is to direct and administer the Town's planning programs and the permitting activities of the Planning Board and other supported Boards. The Director oversees the day-to-day operations of the Planning Department, directly supervises Department personnel, reviews all special permit applications presented to the Board, and prepares Town Meeting articles affecting the Zoning Bylaw.

The Director manages, directs and administers municipal land use planning, zoning, and subdivision control programs within the Town as delineated by state statute and Town Bylaws and Zoning Bylaws. The Director is instrumental in implementing the Unified Plan and the Housing Production Plan. The Director recommends, prepares, and implements policies, programs, plans, and studies needed to guide short-range and long-range planning and land use challenges and opportunities.

SENIOR PLANNER

The Senior Planner supports the Planning Director in carrying out municipal planning, zoning, and subdivision programs under the provisions of state law and Town bylaws. The Senior Planner performs a variety of complex technical and professional work in the current and long-range planning of the Town, including the development and implementation of land use policies and regulations. The Senior Planner plays a critical role in Large House Review and other permitting functions; provides staff support for the Planning Board and other serviced boards; assists the Director in staff and consultant supervision; and serves as Department Head in the Director's absence.

PLANNER & PRESERVATION PLANNER

Both the Planner & Preservation Planner perform work at both the technical and professional level in the preparation of community planning studies and reports. They make recommendations on comprehensive planning, zoning analysis, site plan review, design review, and related matters. They represent the Planning Board, the Director, and/or the Town at interdepartmental meetings, meetings of Town Boards, community groups, and regional and state agencies.

The Planner provide staff support to the Design Review Board and Planning Board and the Preservation Planner provides support to the Historic District Commission, the Historical Commission, and the Denton Road Neighborhood Conservation District Commission.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

The Office Administrator has extensive knowledge of all rules and procedures of the Department and is the initial contact for almost all inquiries from residents and others to the Department and is able to respond to a majority of all inquiries. The Office Administrator also maintains Department records and has primary responsibility for all record requests. The Office Administrator interacts with all other Town staff in organizing meetings and department interaction with other Town departments. The Administrator also handles correspondence, expense tracking, and issuance of notices by the Planning Board and Department.

The Planning Department also engages the services of an independent contractor to prepare minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board, the Design Review Board, the Historic District Commission, and the Historical Commission.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

The Planning Department's operating budget reflects an overall year-on-year increase of 1.96% consisting of an 11.75% increase in Expenses and 0.08% increase in Personal Services.

The increase in Expenses is a result of an increase in Postage budget line item from \$4,000 to \$9,000 (125%) and the Advertising line item from \$5,000 to \$9,000 (80%). The increases are to accommodate the Board's request for potentially more mailings of notices to abutters and neighbors of larger proposed projects and for potentially more notices of meetings in newspapers and other media venues.

Though 40/50/60 series staff receiving COLA, there is only a slight increase in Personal Services costs due to two employees being hired at a salary slight lower than expected.

PERMANENT STAFFING (FTEs)	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual	FY25 Budget	FY26 Request
Position Titles:					
Director	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Senior Planner	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Planner	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Secretary/Technical Assistant	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
Total Number of Positions	4.1	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6

Planning Department FY26 Operating Budget Request											
Org	Object	Account # 01-175 Account Title	Explanation	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual	FY25 Budget	FY26 Request	\$ Variance FY25-26	% Variance FY25-26	
PERSONAL SERVICES											
01175100	511010	Senior Administrator	Planning Director	\$ 96,337	\$ 106,734	\$ 109,467	\$ 115,684	\$ 117,998	\$ 2,314	2.00%	
01175100	511220	Other Professionals	Other Professionals	98,752	135,102	201,735	232,004	228,435	(\$ 3,569)	-1.54%	
01175100	511370	Support Staff	Support Staff	30,547	32,154	36,444	40,006	41,211	\$ 1,205	3.01%	
01175100	512290	Other Support Staff	Other Support Staff	10,580	9,975	10,139	12,685	13,065	\$ 380	3.00%	
PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL			PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL		236,216	283,965	357,784	400,379	400,709	\$ 330	0.08%
Benefits											
PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL + BENEFITS				236,216	283,965	357,784	400,379	400,709	\$ 330	0.08%	
EXPENSES											
01175200	517010	Medical Expenses		-	-	-			\$ -	0.00%	
01175200	517040	Tuition Reimbursement	For job related academic courses.	-	-	-			\$ -	0.00%	
01175200	530900	Other Professional Services ¹	For retaining professional and consultant services	-	-	10,000	50,000	50,000	\$ -	0.00%	
01175200	534010	Postage	For all mailing.	2,310	923	3,000	4,000	9,000	\$ 5,000	125.00%	
01175200	534030	Advertising - General	For all newspaper public notice of meetings and public hearings.	2,847	1,377	2,665	5,000	9,000	\$ 4,000	80.00%	
01175200	542010	General Office Supplies + Furniture	For all other office supplies needed by the Planning Department.	666	3,415	2,493	7,100	7,100	\$ -	0.00%	
01175200	571010	Travel - Mileage	For mileage reimbursement for use of private vehicles by Planning Department staff for subdivision, site inspections, regional meetings.	-	-	175	500	500	\$ -	0.00%	
01175200	571110	Prof. Development	For attendance at conferences and seminars.	9,500	753	718	3,000	3,000	\$ -	0.00%	
01175200	573010	Dues and Publications	For professional assoc. membership and Town's dues to MetroWest Regional Collaborative.	6,100	1,157	5,797	7,000	7,000	\$ -	0.00%	
01175200	578090	Unclassified Expenses							\$ -	0.00%	
01175200	583120	Office Machines Replacement		-	-				\$ -	0.00%	
EXPENSE SUBTOTAL			EXPENSE SUBTOTAL		21,423	7,624	24,848	76,600	85,600	\$ 9,000	11.75%
Other Charges & Expenses		fiscal year							\$ -	0.00%	
DEPARTMENT TOTAL			DEPARTMENT TOTAL		\$ 257,639	\$ 291,590	\$ 382,632	\$ 476,979	\$ 486,309	\$ 9,330	1.96%

¹ This account is used for consultant services associated with special projects/studies, and to respond to needs beyond the expertise or time available of Staff.

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Town of *Wellesley*

FY2026 Budget Request

Planning Department Operating Request

Department: 175

Department Head: Eric Arbeene, Planning Director

DEPARTMENT	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	\$ Variance	% Variance
EXPENDITURES	Actual	Actual	Actual	Budget	Request	FY25-26	FY25-26
Personal Services							
Director	\$ 96,337	\$ 106,734	\$ 109,467	\$ 115,684	\$ 117,998	\$ 2,314	2.00%
Other Professionals	98,752	135,102	201,735	232,004	228,435	\$ (3,569)	-1.54%
Support Staff	41,127	42,129	46,583	52,691	54,276	\$ 1,585	3.01%
Subtotal, Personal Services	236,216	283,965	357,784	400,379	400,709	\$ 330	0.08%
Expenses	21,423	7,624	24,848	76,600	85,600	\$ 9,000	11.75%
Encumbrances	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
Subtotal, Expenses	21,423	7,624	24,848	76,600	85,600	\$ 9,000	11.75%
TOTAL TAX IMPACT	\$ 257,639	\$ 291,590	\$ 382,632	\$ 476,979	\$ 486,309	\$ 9,330	1.96%
PERMANENT STAFFING (FTEs)	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26		
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Budget	Request		
Position Titles:							
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Senior Planner	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0		
Planner	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0		
Secretary/Technical Assistant	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6		
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PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL		PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL		236,216	283,965	357,784	400,379	400,709	\$ 330	0.08%		
Benefits												
PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL + BENEFITS				236,216	283,965	357,784	400,379	400,709	\$ 330	0.08%		
EXPENSES												
01175200	517010	Medical Expenses		-	-	-			\$ -	0.00%		
01175200	517040	Tuition Reimbursement	For job related academic courses.	-	-	-			\$ -	0.00%		
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EXPENSE SUBTOTAL		EXPENSE SUBTOTAL		21,423	7,624	24,848	76,600	85,600	\$ 9,000	11.75%		
Other Charges & Expenses		year							\$ -	0.00%		
DEPARTMENT TOTAL		DEPARTMENT TOTAL		\$ 257,639	\$ 291,590	\$ 382,632	\$ 476,979	\$ 486,309	\$ 9,330	1.96%		

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Planning Department FY26 Operating Budget Request

FY26 RATE REQUEST						
Job Title Employee Name	FY25 Rate as of 6/30/2025	Group - Step	Starting Rate 7/1/2025	Step Adjustment Date	Adjusted Rate	Total Budget Request
Planning Director E Arbeene	\$ 2,216.18	60	\$ 2,260.50	N/A	N/A	117,998
Senior Planner B Downey	\$ 1,600.03	57	\$ 1,632.03	N/A	N/A	85,192
Planner A Rivera	\$ 1,300.96	54	\$ 1,326.98	N/A	N/A	69,268
Planner M Vlass	\$ 1,389.36	54	\$ 1,417.15	N/A	N/A	73,975
Sec/Tech Assistant (PT) Lynda Schelling	\$ 766.48	45-6	\$ 789.47	N/A	N/A	41,211
Minutes - 9.0 hrs/wk * \$27/hr (D Takacs)	\$ 250.29		\$ 250.29			13,065
					Total Salary	\$ 400,709