



TOWN OF WESTFORD
TOWN MANAGER

TOWN HALL
55 Main Street
WESTFORD, MA 01886
Telephone (978) 692-5501 Fax (978) 399-2557

To: Westford Select Board
Westford Personnel Advisory Committee
From: Mike Edwards, Assistant Town Manager – Strategic Operations
CC: Kristen Las, Town Manager
Pam Hicks, Human Resources Director
Date: January 14, 2026 - **REVISED January 21, 2026**
Re: FY2027 ~~Management~~ Operations Analyst Proposal

REVISED: *The Personnel Advisory Committee (PAC) met in an open meeting on January 20th to review the proposed job description and placement in the Town’s Pay and Classification Plan. After reviewing the scope of duties and responsibilities, the Committee recommended the job title be changed to Operations Analyst and classified at pay band 3 due to the strong focus of the position on Town operational efficiency.*

The PAC voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the Operations Analyst job title and classification and additionally recommended Town Meeting approval of the new position.

This memorandum has been revised to reflect the recommendations of the PAC. Additions are noted as underlined text, while deletions are noted as ~~striketrough text~~.

Purpose and Fiscal Context

In our current challenging fiscal environment, the Town must prioritize investments that protect taxpayers, stabilize future budgets, and maintain service delivery while working within the tax levy. While additional frontline staff such as teachers, firefighters, DPW workers, and police officers are clearly needed, they do not generate revenue, reduce operating costs, or improve the systems that drive long-term financial sustainability that allow such positions to be funded long-term.

In the FY27 budget, we propose adding the position of ~~Management~~ Operations Analyst. This is a position unique to municipal government and is a professional role that focuses on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of municipal operations through research, data analysis and providing support to the Town Manager’s office. Often, these positions also serve as additional internal support staff for other Town departments for special projects and research on an as-needed basis.

The ~~Management~~ Operations Analyst would report to the Assistant Town Manager – Strategic Operations (ATM-SO) and support that position as well as provide support to the Finance Director. The role would provide dedicated analytical and program support capacity, allowing senior staff to focus on high-level financial strategy while ensuring programs that affect residents’ costs and services are well managed and operating at peak efficiency and effectiveness.

Westford's proposed ~~Management~~ Operations Analyst position is a targeted investment designed to:

- Generate net financial returns;
- Improve resident services and responsiveness;
- Reduce future budget pressure and risk to Town services; and
- Ensure taxpayer dollars continue to be managed efficiently and transparently.

This position directly supports the Strategic Plan's goal of Responsive and Responsible Town Government by focusing on cost control, revenue optimization, and operational efficiency.

Background and Financial Results to Date

In March 2024, the Town Manager reorganized the Assistant Town Manager (ATM) role with no budget impact or additional positions into:

- Assistant Town Manager – Land Use & Economic Development (ATM-LU&ED), (this was an internal job title change, not a new position); and
- Assistant Town Manager – Strategic Operations (ATM-SO), focused on efficiency, cost savings, and financial performance (this was a change to the existing ATM position).

Since that reorganization, the ATM-SO's office has produced over \$3 million in direct financial benefit to taxpayers, primarily through:

- Improved solid waste and recycling contract enforcement;
- Alternative funding strategies for energy efficiency projects and aggressive pursuit of rebates, grants, and no-interest financing using energy savings; and
- Other process improvements and efficiencies, such as online surplus disposition, risk management efforts, energy account audits, and lease renegotiations.

These results were achieved despite staffing reductions, including the elimination of the part-time Finance Department Administrative Analyst and full-time Sustainability Coordinator, and demonstrate the return on investment from focused financial and analytical work.

Financial and Resident Benefit - Solid Waste, Recycling & Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)

Solid waste and recycling programs directly affect the entire town; more than 8,000 households receive curbside services, and all 11,000+ households and businesses pay the program costs. The curbside collection program represents a major operating cost and comprises the two single largest contracted services (collection and disposal) for the Town. The ~~Management~~ Operations Analyst would provide day-to-day support and contract performance tracking that improves service quality while controlling costs.

Key benefits include:

- **Stronger contract enforcement and savings.** Nearly \$130,000 has already been recovered through liquidated damages and commodity pricing audits. Additional penalties go untracked due to limited staff capacity.
 - **Improved PAYT management.** In addition to supporting the proposed PAYT program, the potential to meet resident demand for larger or additional carts will increase program complexity and administrative workload. Without dedicated staff, these service enhancements will not be possible without a significant offset in duties elsewhere.
 - **Better customer service.** A dedicated analyst would track missed pickups, ensure contract compliance, and follow up on resident complaints—reducing frustration and
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improving accountability. Customer service is now fully provided by the contractor due to town staffing limitations. The penalties noted above are strong incentives to improve performance.

- **Expanded recycling opportunities.** PAYT revenues can fund additional recycling events and programs, but current staff capacity limits expansion. Improved oversight also reduces liability risk related to vendor contracts and insurance.

Financial and Resident Benefit - Energy Management and Utility Cost Control

Energy costs are a growing pressure on Town and School budgets. Starting in July of 2024, the Town ceased many broader sustainability-related efforts and focused instead on energy efficiency activities and projects which financially benefit our taxpayers; these duties are now carried out by the ATM-SO but have since grown in complexity and scale such that a significant amount of time is now spent on routine data entry and analysis.

From June 2024 to January 2026:

- \$3.765 million in energy efficiency projects completed or underway with only \$178,814 in upfront taxpayer funding;
- Leveraged over \$3.5 million in rebates, grants, net metering credits, and 0% financing; and
- Approximately \$198,000 in avoided costs and nearly \$470,000 in annual net savings after repayments.

The ~~Management~~ Operations Analyst would:

- Track data for and submit annual Green Communities and Large Building Energy Reporting (mandatory as of June 2025), which is work that is currently done by a consultant and funded by a temporary ARPA-funded contract ending in 2026;
- Track and analyze data from 116+ utility accounts and multiple solar net-metering agreements which allocate credits across 30 different accounts, requiring frequent adjustments and rebalancing; and
- Support future investments, including the pending solar installation at Blanchard Middle School and a planned Chapter 25A performance contract. Performance contracts allow municipalities to finance energy-efficiency improvements through guaranteed energy cost savings that pay for the project over time; while they ensure savings are maximized and risks minimized, they add considerable burden on staff to ensure contract terms are met.

Financial and Resident Benefit - Financial Analysis, Research, and Program Support

The loss of the Finance Department's part-time Administrative Analyst in July of 2025 significantly reduced analytical capacity for the organization. As a result, executive staff are performing routine analysis—an inefficient use of taxpayer dollars.

The ~~Management~~ Operations Analyst would:

- Perform financial and program analyses;
- Identify cost-saving opportunities and efficiency improvements; and
- Provide the analyses and research to ensure policy and program decisions are supported by accurate and timely data.

Additional duties with direct financial impact include:

- **Surplus asset sales.** Since the ATM-SO updated the Town's Surplus Disposition Policy in June of 2024, online auctions of retired vehicles, equipment, and supplies have generated \$54,652, compared to \$26,162 total from FY17–FY24. The Analyst would support the ATM-SO and other departments in their management of inventory and dispositions to continue this revenue stream.
- **Town-wide fee review (FY27).** The Budget Task Force recommended all fees be regularly evaluated to ensure they cover the costs of the services they provide. Many fees have not been updated in years, including athletic field reservation fees which have remained the same for over a decade while costs have risen significantly. Aligning fees with actual service costs reduces subsidy from the tax levy. The Town Manager's Office and Finance Department will lead the Town-wide fee review with analytical and data support from the Management Operations Analyst.
- **Insurance and risk management.** Improved asset tracking, claims monitoring, and training documentation reduce premiums (through MIIA Rewards) and have already generated \$21,000 in FY25 savings.

Budget Impact

The salary is budgeted at \$80,000. Benefits can vary widely based on individual selections, with an average cost of \$22,000.

Consequences of Not Approving the Position

If this position is not approved, we anticipate the following to occur:

- Cost savings and revenue opportunities may be lost or substantially delayed;
- The recent rapid advancement of energy efficiency investments (which substantially reduce long-term operating costs) will become difficult to sustain or expand further;
- Expanded recycling events and services will be significantly curtailed or not pursued at all;
- The potential expansion of PAYT trash collection to include variable sized carts in the future will not happen without reducing or eliminating other important duties or responsibilities; and
- Pressure on future operating budgets will increase and current level and quality of services may suffer.
- ATM-SO and Finance Director continue to work on routine analysis and data entry when their skills and expertise should be directed towards higher level staff oversight and strategic planning.

Conclusion

The Management Operations Analyst is a low-cost, high-return investment that protects taxpayers, improves everyday services residents rely on, and strengthens the Town's long-term financial position. In a constrained fiscal environment, this position represents a responsible and strategic use of limited resources. Moving analytical and research duties to this lower-cost position will allow the ATM-SO to more fully support the implementation of the Strategic Plan and focus more time on the development of a comprehensive, long-term Capital Improvement Plan to better manage and plan major investments in Town and School facilities and asset maintenance and replacement. It will also allow the Finance Director to focus on higher level issues rather than dedicating substantial time to data collection and analysis. Finally, this position will free up time spent by Town Manager's Executive Assistant/Project and

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Procurement Specialist to focus more on Townwide communications efforts and a high level of customer service, which is consistently identified as a priority for the Select Board and residents.

