



**TOWN OF WESTFORD
TOWN MANAGER'S
OFFICE**

TOWN HALL
55 Main Street
WESTFORD, MA 01886

MEMORANDUM

To: Select Board
Finance Committee
Kristen Las, Town Manager

From: Mike Edwards, Assistant Town Manager of Strategic Operations

Subject: Article 5, Cameron Senior Center HVAC Article
March 28, 2026 Annual Town Meeting

Date: February 9, 2026

Members of the Select Board and Finance Committee:

Overview

This memorandum is provided to supplement the authorization approved at the June 2022 Annual Town Meeting for the Cameron Senior Center HVAC replacement project. At that time, Town Meeting authorized \$1.1 million toward replacing a partially failed HVAC system serving the Senior Center. Based on updated project development, escalation in construction costs, and additional scope required to ensure proper system integration and efficiency, the total project cost is now expected to approach \$2.0 million. Accordingly, the Town is requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$900,000.

Background

The Cameron Senior Center's HVAC system includes a failed and obsolete Sanyo VRF system that can no longer be serviced, along with an existing gas-fired boiler operating under separate controls. These systems do not communicate with one another, resulting in inefficiencies and operational challenges. Temporary measures have been employed to maintain building operation; however, these are not sustainable long-term solutions.

The project is being developed in coordination with Ameresco under an Energy Management Services Agreement, which allows the Town to implement energy efficiency improvements through an integrated design, construction, and performance verification process.

Why Proceed Now

Multiple components of the existing HVAC system have failed, and remaining equipment is aging and unreliable. To maintain acceptable conditions in the building, the Town is currently

relying on a combination of temporary and portable cooling units. While this has allowed continued use of the facility, it is inefficient, costly to operate, and does not provide consistent comfort or reliability.

Continued deferral increases the risk of additional failures, service interruptions, and potential impacts on building occupants—particularly vulnerable populations who rely on the Senior Center during periods of extreme heat or cold. Temporary solutions also increase energy use and operating costs while delivering suboptimal performance.

Proceeding now allows the Town to address known system failures before a complete loss of service occurs, avoid further escalation in construction costs, and provide a permanent, reliable solution that stabilizes building operations.

Reasons for Increased Project Cost

The increase in anticipated project cost is driven by two primary factors:

- 1. Escalation Due to Delay and Market Conditions**

Construction and equipment costs have increased significantly since the original authorization in 2022. Delaying implementation while continuing to operate an inefficient and failing system has resulted in higher projected costs as the project moves toward construction.

- 2. Expanded Scope to Improve Integration and Efficiency**

The updated project scope includes integrating the existing gas-fired boiler into a unified building management system. This integration is necessary to prevent the new electric HVAC system and the existing boiler from operating in conflict, a condition that has historically resulted in inefficiency and unnecessary energy consumption.

In addition, the new system will be configured so that electric heating provides first-stage heating, with the gas-fired boiler serving as supplemental heat only when required. This approach improves overall system efficiency, reduces fossil fuel usage, and advances the Town’s sustainability and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Project Schedule

Construction is anticipated to begin between the summer and fall of 2026, with an estimated duration of approximately three to six months. The schedule is intended to minimize disruption to building occupants while ensuring the system is operational ahead of the subsequent heating season.

Potential Offsets and Grants

The Town is actively pursuing funding sources to offset project costs, including:

- **Utility Incentives:** Estimated at approximately \$150,000. While these incentives are anticipated, the full amount is not guaranteed at this time.
- **Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER):** The Town is applying for Green Communities funding, which may further reduce the net project cost if awarded.

Any incentives or grant funds received will be used to reduce the amount borrowed and the associated debt service.

Debt Service and Budget Impact

Debt service associated with the original \$1.1 million authorization approved in 2022 is already incorporated into the Town's financial plan and operating budgets.

If the full anticipated project cost of approximately \$2.0 million is incurred, the additional debt service associated with the supplemental \$900,000 authorization is estimated to be approximately \$130,000 annually. The first debt service payment for the full project is expected to occur in Fiscal Year 2028 and will be incorporated into future budget planning.

Conclusion

The requested supplemental appropriation reflects the current and realistic cost to deliver a fully integrated, efficient, and reliable HVAC system for the Cameron Senior Center. Advancing the project now will address ongoing system failures, reduce operational risk, limit further cost escalation, and support the Town's long-term energy efficiency and sustainability objectives.