October 20, 2026

Resolve # 2627-22

TOWN OF GRAY
MEETING ITEM COMMENTARY

AGENDA ITEM:	Vote on Council Priorities
COUNCIL RESOURCE:	Anne Gass
STAFF RESOURCE:	Lauren Asselin

BACKGROUND: At our Council retreat we agreed that we would vote on the final Council priorities with opportunity for public comment beforehand. (See last bullet under Workshop Guidelines).

2) Workshop Guidelines (5 min)
o Views of all Council members and staff are encouraged
o Stay on high ground – focus on issues, not people or personalities
o See the forest & avoid the weeds
o Assume good intent
o Constructive questioning and disagreement are appreciated

EXHIBITS: 2026 Council Retreat Agenda
2026 Council Workshop Results

FISCAL IMPACT: None

RECOMMENDATION:

MOTION: Be resolved, that the Gray Town Council approves the Council's annual priorities as set at the Town Council retreat on September 22, 2026.

Town of Gray
Town Council Workshop:
Setting the Town's 2027 Annual Priorities

September 22, 2026, 5:00 PM
Town Hall Council Chambers
AGENDA

Participants:
Town Council Members
Town Manager
Facilitators: Kristina Egan & Paul Johnson, GPCOG (and Camille)

1) **Welcome & Introductions** (10 min)
   Chair Palange will offer welcoming remarks and Kristina will facilitate quick introductions, with a twist, to get us off to a fun start.

2) **Workshop Guidelines** (5 min)
   - Views of all Council members and staff are encouraged
   - Stay on high ground – focus on issues, not people or personalities
   - See the forest & avoid the weeds
   - Assume good intent
   - Constructive questioning and disagreement are appreciated
   - **Public comment will be taken at a future meeting when the Council is scheduled to adopt the FY27 Town goals.**

3) **Purpose and Expected Outcomes** (5 min)
   - To review the respective roles and responsibilities of the Town Manager and the Town Council
   - To develop a shared list of annual Town priorities that are reasonable to accomplish, are assigned to lead people or committees, and have defined next steps. This will provide guidance to the Town Council on how to spend its limited time and to the Town Manager as she prepares the budget.

4) **Council and Manager Roles** (15 min)
   Attachment A lays out the division of decision making between the Town Council and the Town Manager. Kristina will review these roles, and the group will clarify anything that needs discussion or resolution.

5) **Recap of Progress on Last Year's Priorities** (10 min)
   Interim Town Manager Asselin and Chair Palange will provide information on progress on the FY26 priorities. See Attachment B for the list.

6) **Town Budget Process** (5 min)
   Interim Town Manager Asselin will update the group on the proposed schedule and process for developing next year's budget for Gray.

7) **Universe of Potential Priorities** (30 min)
   The Town Council and Town Manager will identify the key issues and challenges the town is facing. In a round robin, each person will share their top 2 or 3 priorities, limiting themselves to speaking no more than 1 minute on each proposed priority.

8) **Staff Perspective** (10 min)
   The Town Manager will describe the ongoing workload of staff to provide perspective on the staff's capacity to address the priorities proposed by the group. The Town Council will then add any additional issues to the Universe of Potential Priorities, as appropriate.

9) **Prioritizing** (10 min)
   From the universe of potential priorities, Town Councilors will use a 'hot dot' process to identify the highest five (5) priorities of the group.

10) **Directional Goals** (60 min)
    For each of the selected priorities, the group will work to draft a one sentence goal that is achievable, can be done in a year, and defines who, or what body, will be responsible for shepherding the goal to the finish line.

11) **Next Steps** (10 min)
    The group will define its expectations for information sharing and moments for Town Council input for each priority.

Attachment A: Roles of Town Council and Town Manager

Honor Boundaries & Clarify the Unclear

Town Council	Manager
Sets priorities, levels of service, tax rate	Provides advice and input
Adopts budget and recommends it to the voters	• Drafts proposed budget • Manages resources, once adopted
Makes, alters, repeals ordinances	• Oversees development of proposed ordinances and policy • Implements adopted ordinances and policy
Appoints and supervises Town Manager; appoints other selected positions	Serves as administrative head of Town, directing staff

Attachment B: FY26 Priorities

Below is an excerpt from last year's Town Council retreat:

"Using a dot voting system, the group identified the priorities to guide the Town Councils annual goals and provide guidance to the Town Manager when he drafts the FY26 budget.

- Get finances in order (audit catch-up) – 6 votes
- Design better budget process – 5 votes
- Zoning (Commercial zoning audit/Rezoning based on comp plan) – 5 votes
- Employee support actions – 5 votes
- Future of transfer station – 4 votes
- Traffic and pedestrian safety – 3 votes
- Village Transformation – 3 votes
- Water Quality (Watershed Management Plan + SWPO) – 2 votes
- Update charter – 2 votes
- Understanding TIFs – 1 vote

Other items discussed but not prioritized included mooring ordinances, MainePERS for employees, increasing meeting frequency, and understanding financial impacts of unionization."

GPCOG
GREATER PORTLAND COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Town of Gray
Town Council Workshop on 2027 Priorities
9/22/26

OUTCOMES & NEXT STEPS

Participants:

Town Councilors:	Vincent Palange, Chair; Judy Simoneau, Vice Chair; Anne Gass; Michael Johnson; Pam Edson
Staff:	Lauren Asselin, Interim Town Manager
Facilitators:	Kristina Egan & Paul Johnson, GPCOG

Executive Summary

Town leadership recapped the progress made on last year's priorities, reviewed the respective roles of the Town Council and Town Manager, and identified priorities for the Council's work in the coming year. The next step is for the Town Council to review the goals and adopt them at an upcoming Town Council meeting.

Proposed FY27 Goals

1. Assess town operations to identify efficiencies, cost savings, and ways to protect the town from legal labilities in staffing and human resources, finance, contracting, and legal.
2. In the FY28 budget, separate the library budget from the recreation department budget. Ensure the recreation department strives to be budget-neutral and offers profitable recreation programs.
3. Gather data on the New Gloucester–Gray financial relationship for the recreation department and complete a cost-benefit analysis of Gray's current fiscal agent responsibility.
4. Enhance non-property tax revenues.
5. Gather data on the cost to go cashless at transfer station and consider the cost of this transition in the budget process.
6. Identify and pursue a solution to address car congestion as people leave the transfer station.

Progress on Last Year's Priorities

- **Audits**: FY2025 audit is in progress; FY2026 audit will begin upon completion of the FY2025 audit. The Town will explore options for audit services upon expiration of the current contract.
- **Budget process**: The Council is starting the budget process earlier. The sequence is that department heads will submit their budgets to the Town Manager in October, the Town Manager will review line items with each department, and a preliminary budget will be developed by the finance department in November. The Council will review the draft proposal in early January, and department heads will present directly to Council, which represents a shift from the previous practice of the Town Manager presenting the full budget.
- **Zoning**: The ordinance advisory committee is simplifying zoning and tying it to the comprehensive plan.
- **Employee support**: Last year, staff felt underappreciated. A union has formed and there's been staff turnover in recent months. The Town Manager has an open-door policy and is working to boost morale.
- **Transfer Station**: There has been major progress on process and staffing changes.

Discussion of Annual Town Priorities

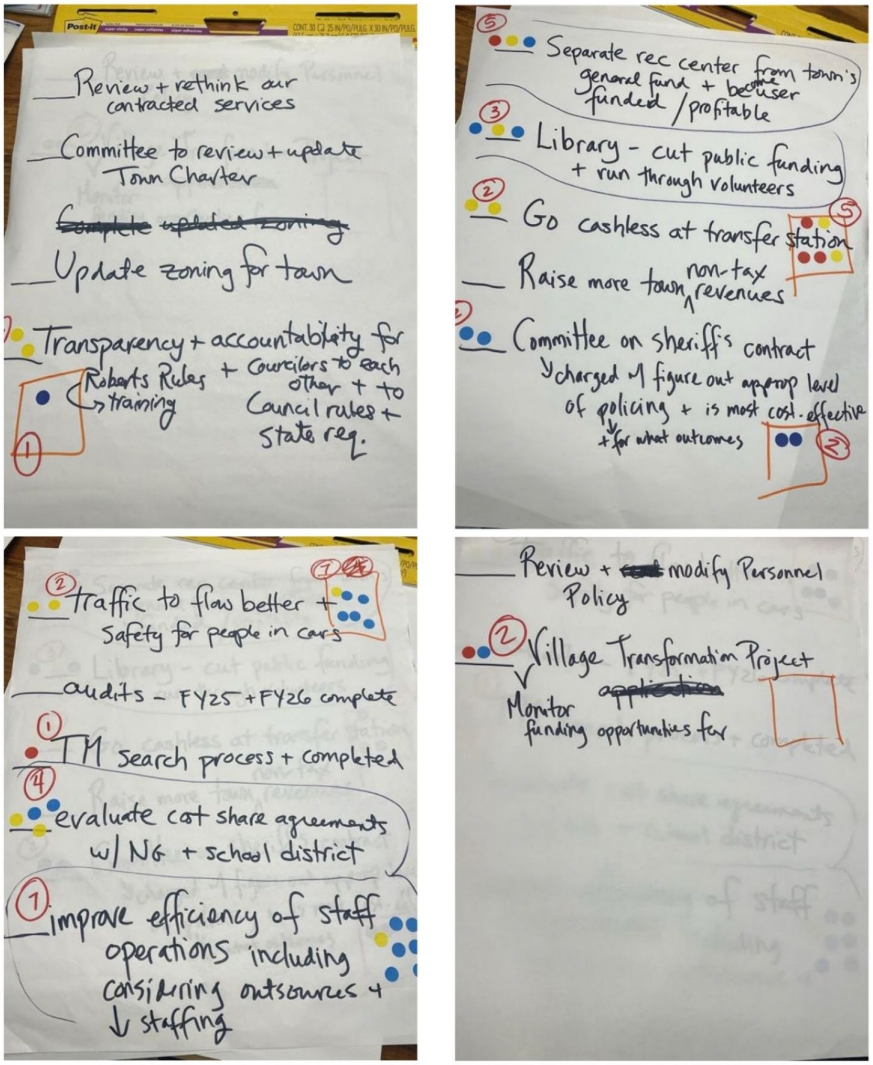
Town Councilors and the Interim Town Manager offered priorities for the upcoming year. The Councilors, through a hot dot voting system, ranked the various issues. Below is the vote tally for each issue, and below that are pictures that capture this part of the workshop process.

Topic	Votes
Outsource/streamline staff operations	7
Separate Recreation from Library in the budget and become user-funded	5
Evaluate cost-share agreements with New Glouster and the school district	4
Cut library budget in favor of volunteers	3
Improve traffic safety	2
Go cashless at the transfer station	2
Form an ad hoc committee on the Sheriff's contract	2
Improve transparency and adherence to Robert's Rules	2
Explore Village Transformation Project	2
Complete Town Manager search	1
Raise non-tax revenues (fees, fines, licenses)	0

Revisit contracted services	0
Update the Town Charter	0
Update zoning with potential state funding via LD 2173	0
Update personnel processes	0
Complete audits for FY25 and FY 26	0

Some of the proposed issues didn't rank high in votes since the group clarified that they are underway and will be done:

- The FY25 and FY26 audits will be completed this year.
- A search for the new Town Manager will be launched this fall.
- A review of the Personnel Policy will be done this year.
- The Town awaits a decision on federal funding to implement the Village Transformation Project

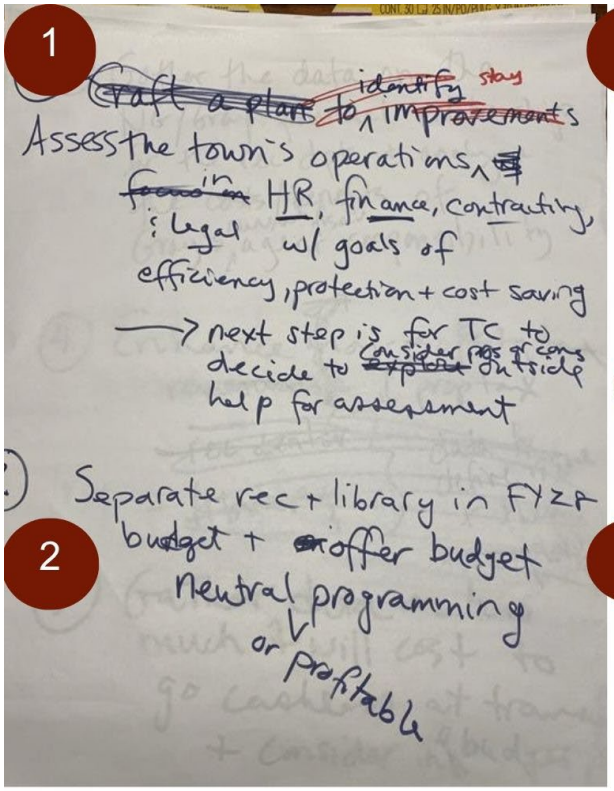


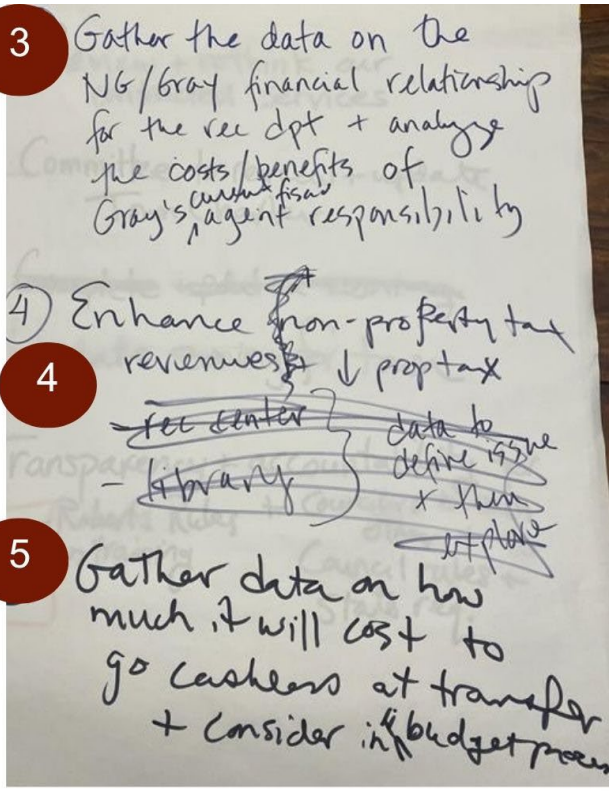
Top FY26 Priorities

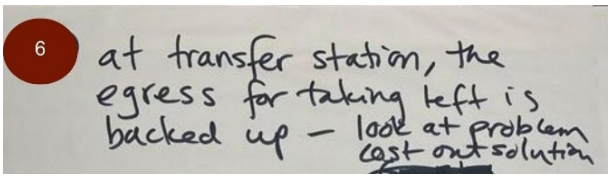
Using a dot voting system, the group identified the priorities to guide the Town Councils annual goals. The below are the verbatim sentences generated in the meeting. In the Executive Summary, GPCOG have lightly edited the priorities for clarity.

Of note is that on the top priority, the group identified the next step as considering whether to hire outside help to assess the opportunities to improve Town operations.

- Assess town operations to identify improvements in HR, finance, contracting, and legal with goals of efficiency, protection, and cost savings.
    - Next step is for Town Council to decide to consider pros and cons of outside help for assessment
- Separate the Recreation Center from the Library in FY 28 budget and offer budget-neutral or profitable programming.
- Gather data on the New Gloucester–Gray financial relationship for the Rec Department and analyze the costs/benefits of Gray's current fiscal agent responsibility.
- Enhance non-property tax revenue and lower property tax.
- Gather data on how much it will cost to go cashless at transfer station; consider it in budget process.
- At the transfer station, the egress for taking left is backed up – look at the problem and cost out solution


1
identify stay
Assess the town's operations, HR, finance, contracting, legal w/ goals of efficiency, protection + cost saving
next step is for TC to decide to outside help for assessment
2
Separate rec + library in FY24 budget + offer budget neutral programming or profitable


3
Gather the data on the NG/Gray financial relationship for the rec dpt + analyze the costs/benefits of Gray's current fiscal agent responsibility
4
Enhance non-property tax revenues ↓ prop tax
fee center
library
data to define issue + then explore
5
Gather data on how much it will cost to go cashless at transfer + consider in budget


6
at transfer station, the egress for taking left is backed up – look at problem cost out solution