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Office of the
SELECT BOARD
ABBOT HALL
188 Washington Street
MARBLEHEAD, MASSACHUSETTS 01945

Thatcher W. Kezer III
Town Administrator

MEMORANDUM

To: Select Board
From: Thatcher Kezer, Town Administrator
Date: October 22, 2025
Re: Town Administrator Update

This memorandum provides a consolidated summary of key ongoing projects, operational updates, and upcoming initiatives currently underway across town departments.

FY26 State Earmark Funding

The Governor has authorized the release of FY26 earmarks for distribution to cities and towns. Marblehead will receive **\$50,000 for repairs and irrigation at Waterside Cemetery** and **\$35,000 for updated firearms for the Police Department**. These earmarks are not subject to MBTA 3A compliance. The funding release will follow the same procedures as in prior years, and agency contact information is available through the state website.

Special thanks to **Representative Jenny Armini** and **Senator Brendan Creighton** for their continued advocacy and support in securing these important local earmarks for Marblehead.

FY26 Community One Stop and Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Grant Loss Summary

In FY26, the Town of Marblehead submitted **seven strategic grant proposals** through the **Community One Stop for Growth and Coastal Zone Management (CZM)** programs. These projects supported key Town priorities in accessibility, infrastructure modernization, economic development, and climate resilience. However, despite strong alignment with state objectives, all submitted grants were deemed **ineligible due to the Town's current non-compliance with the MBTA 3A multifamily zoning requirements**.

This resulted in a **total loss of \$2,816,493 in potential funding** for FY26, bringing the cumulative impact of MBTA 3A-related funding losses to **nine grants totaling \$3,601,493**.

The affected projects include:

Program	Project Title	Funding Request	Status	Reason
Community One Stop – Underutilized Properties	Abbot Hall Attic & Accessibility Project (Construction)	\$999,320	Ineligible	MBTA 3A Non-Compliance
MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund	Marblehead Rail Trail Improvements (Design Phase)	\$866,930	Ineligible	MBTA 3A Non-Compliance
Community One Stop – MassWorks Infrastructure Program	Washington Street Corridor Improvements (Design Phase)	\$301,050	Ineligible	MBTA 3A Non-Compliance
Community One Stop – Real Estate Services	Coffin School Reuse/Redevelopment Study	\$50,000	Ineligible	MBTA 3A Non-Compliance
Massachusetts Downtown Initiative	Downtown Parking Study	\$30,000	Ineligible	MBTA 3A Non-Compliance
Community One Stop – Vacant Storefronts Program	Vacant Storefront Tax Credit Program	\$50,000	Ineligible	MBTA 3A Non-Compliance
Coastal Zone Management – Coastal Resilience Grant	State Street Landing & Tucker Wharf Resilience Project (Design Phase)	\$519,193	Ineligible	MBTA 3A Non-Compliance

Total Lost Grant Funding: \$2,816,493

Overview and Impact

At the time the Town submitted these applications, Marblehead was considered compliant under MBTA 3A; however, subsequent state determinations rendered the Town ineligible. The loss of these grants delays critical planning and infrastructure efforts and limits the Town’s ability to leverage future investment opportunities.

These projects collectively represented progress toward several Town goals, including ADA accessibility at Abbot Hall, multimodal transportation via the Rail Trail, downtown revitalization through parking and storefront programs, adaptive reuse planning for the Coffin School property, and climate resilience through waterfront infrastructure improvements.

The inability to secure these funds has a **direct and measurable impact** on economic development, public safety, and sustainability initiatives. Each unfunded project not only delays immediate progress but also weakens Marblehead’s ability to compete for future grant cycles that build upon prior design or feasibility work.

The Town will continue to prioritize compliance with state housing and zoning mandates, maintain project readiness, and pursue all available opportunities for reapplication in upcoming fiscal years.

Council on Aging (COA) Roof Replacement Project

Roof replacement work at the Council on Aging (COA) building is underway. The contractor has mobilized, and construction is proceeding according to schedule. Operations and programming at the COA continue with minimal disruption to staff and visitors. Once completed, the new roof

will significantly improve weather protection, reduce maintenance needs, and extend the useful life of the building.

Mary Alley Building Roof Project

Roofing materials for the **Mary Alley Municipal Building** were delivered last week, and the contractor has begun site setup for the roof replacement project. A **staging area has been established in the Mary Alley parking lot** to store materials and equipment and to provide safe access for the construction team. As a result, **several parking spaces are temporarily unavailable**, which may cause some short-term parking challenges for staff and visitors. Signage has been posted, and departments affected by the parking limitations have been notified. The project is expected to take approximately **four weeks to complete**, weather permitting. Upon completion, the new roof will enhance the building's structural integrity, improve energy efficiency, and protect the critical municipal offices housed in the facility.

Coffin School Reuse Project

The Community Development & Planning Department continues to make steady progress on the **Coffin School Reuse Project**, which aims to determine the most beneficial long-term reuse of the former school property while balancing community needs, financial feasibility, and potential partnerships.

The Town recently completed its **Municipal Expression of Interest (EOI)** process, receiving submissions from the **Marblehead Municipal Light Department**, the **Recreation and Parks Commission**, the **Cemetery Commission**, and the **Marblehead Housing Authority**. These responses demonstrate strong interdepartmental interest and provide valuable insight into possible municipal reuses of the property.

In parallel, the Town issued a **Request for Information (RFI)** seeking input from nonprofit organizations and private developers to gather creative and financially sustainable reuse concepts. The RFI asks respondents to provide preliminary redevelopment ideas, relevant team qualifications, and feedback on feasibility and partnership structures. **Responses are due by Thursday, October 30, 2025**, and will be used to shape the framework for a future **Request for Proposals (RFP)**.

Community engagement remains an important component of this process. The Department hosted an **initial public meeting** attended by approximately **15 to 20 residents**, both in person and virtually, to discuss the property's condition, community priorities, and possible uses. **Invitations were mailed to 20 abutting property owners** to ensure direct outreach. A **second community meeting** is being planned for the **week of November 3 or November 10**, pending Select Board availability, where the Department will share a summary of RFI responses and seek additional public input. Once all responses have been reviewed, the Planning Department will synthesize the findings and prepare **recommendations for the Select Board later this fall** to guide next steps in determining the property's long-term future.