



BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Mission Statement

The Budget and Appropriations Committee is responsible for ensuring taxpayer dollars are expended prudently and equitably. BA will exercise regular oversight of the funding and spending practices of City agencies, the City's budget, expenditures, loans, and other financial matters. The committee's areas of jurisdiction include all budgets & appropriations, taxation, financial services, consumer protection, audits, and the Comptroller's Office.

The Honorable Danielle McCray

CHAIR

PUBLIC HEARING

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

9:00 AM

CLARENCE "DU" BURNS COUNCIL CHAMBERS

LO26-0048

Legislative Oversight on Vacancies and Overtime

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**BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE****The Honorable Danielle McCray**
CHAIR**Legislative Oversight Hearing***LO26-0048**Legislative Oversight on Vacancies and Overtime*

Purpose calling on the Department of the Finance – Budget and Management Research (BBMR) and the Department of Human Resources to brief the City Council on vacancy rates, hiring practices, and overtime expenditures.

REPORTING AGENCIES

- Department of the Finance – Budget and Management Research (BBMR)
 - Department of Human Resources
-

BACKGROUND

Following up from last year’s Committee of the Whole hearing (LO25-0020), the Budget and Appropriations Committee is investigating overtime expenses and staff vacancies across agencies reporting to the Administration.¹ Data provided by the Department of Finance - Budget and Management Research (BBMR) shows a notable reduction in long-term vacant positions between FY2026 and FY2025, while overtime costs are flat, but remain high between Calendar Year 2024 and Calendar Year 2025.

Vacant Positions: The preliminary FY2027 budget shows a reduction in long-term aged vacancies from the previous year. Under the City’s Vacancy Reduction Initiative there has been a reduction of more than 100 positions (including many vacant three or more years), saving more than \$9 million. An analysis of BBMR’s vacancy data shows that 280 General Fund positions that are vacant for 18 months or more are funded in the FY2027 preliminary budget with salaries totaling \$18.4 million.

Table 1 provides a snapshot from FY2026 (March 2026) and FY2025 (May 2025) showing the vacancies at a point in time. The Table represents the total number of General Fund vacant positions across agencies reporting to the Administration, including a breakdown of short-term (less than 18 months) versus long-term (more than 18 months).

Table 1

	<u>Vacant < 18 Months</u>	<u>Vacant > 18 Months</u>	<u>Total Positions</u>
<u>FY2026 (March 2026)</u>	996	383	1379
<u>FY2025 (May 2025)</u>	994	530	1524

Overtime: Table 2 shows the total overtime dollars expended within the General Fund across agencies reporting to the Administration over the last three Calendar Years. Table 3 denotes both the Fire and Police Departments, which stood out as the primary drivers of the total overtime cost within the General Fund over the past three Calendar Years.

Table 2

<u>Calendar Year</u>	<u>Overtime</u>
2025	\$139 million
2024	\$139 million
2023	\$114 million

Table 3

<u>Calendar Year</u>	<u>Fire Overtime</u>		<u>Police Overtime</u>	
	<u>Costs</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Costs</u>	<u>Hours</u>
2025	\$44.9 million	705,000 hours	\$63.6 million	875,000 hours
2024	\$45.4 million	744,000 hours	\$64.2 million	977,000 hours
2023	\$39.2 million	687,000 hours	\$51 million	794,000 hours

Supplementary Appropriations: Year-end supplementary appropriations have been used in the past several years to balance the City’s budget when an agency has actual spending that has exceeded its original approved budget. Table 4 shows the largest year-end supplementals that were enacted in the last two Fiscal Years and Table 5 represents the original adopted budgets for FY2024-2026, and the Preliminary Budget for FY2027 for those same agencies.

Table 4

<u>Agency</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>FY 2024</u>
Fire Department	\$38.5 million (25-0106)	\$33.4 million (25-0026)
Police Department	\$47.5 million (25-0110)	\$3.3 million (25-0030)
Recreation & Parks Department	\$5.6 million (25-0111)	\$7 million (25-0032)
Department of Transportation	\$4.5 million (25-0113)	—
Sheriff’s Office	\$3.4 million (25-0112)	—

Table 5

<u>Agency</u>	<u>FY 24 Adopted Budget</u>	<u>FY 25 Adopted Budget</u>	<u>FY 26 Adopted Budget</u>	<u>FY 27 Preliminary Budget</u>
Fire Department	\$336 million	\$327 million	\$362 million	\$391 million
Police Department	\$594 million	\$593 million	\$613 million	\$657 million
Recreation & Parks Department	\$68.4 million	\$75.4 million	\$79.3 million	\$86.1 million
Department of Transportation	\$219 million	\$224 million	\$236 million	\$248 million
Sheriff's Office	\$27.8 million	\$28.3 million	\$27.9 million	\$31 million

FISCAL NOTE

Legislative Oversight on this subject has no immediate fiscal impact, however it directly addresses the issues of vacancies and overtime spending currently impacting the City's budget.

Analysis by: Paroma Nandi
Analysis Date: 5/4/2026

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¹ The data presented was provided by the Finance Department – Bureau of Budget and Management Research. The original data is in the Bill file for [LO26-0048](#). The data reflected in this synopsis excludes agencies that do not report directly/solely to the Administration, such as the City Council, Council Services, the Comptroller's Office, the Circuit Court, Legislative Reference, the Sheriff's Office, and the State's Attorney's Office.

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

LO26-0048

Legislative Oversight on Vacancies and Overtime

Agency Reports

City Council Bill LO 26-0048

Briefing on Vacancies and Overtime

May 5, 2026



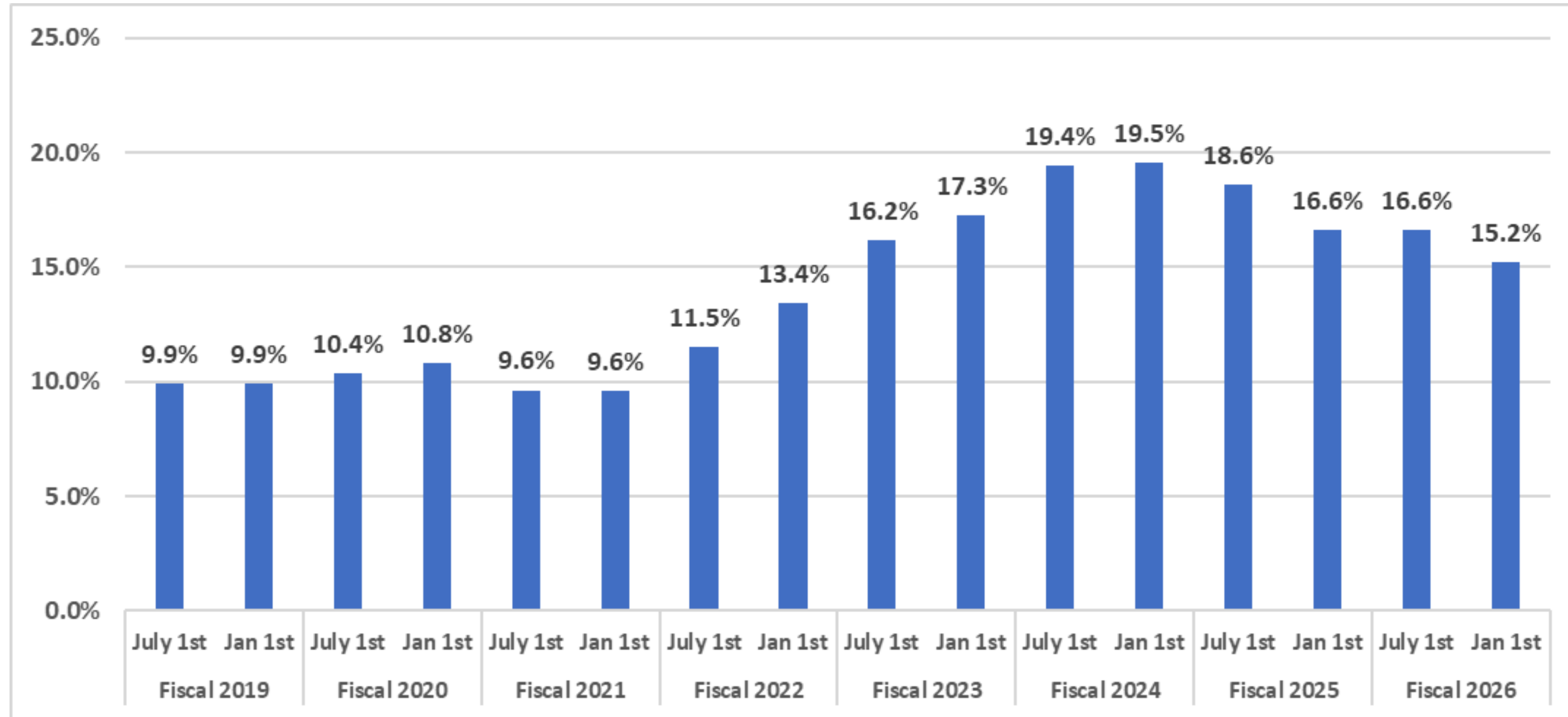
Position Vacancies



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

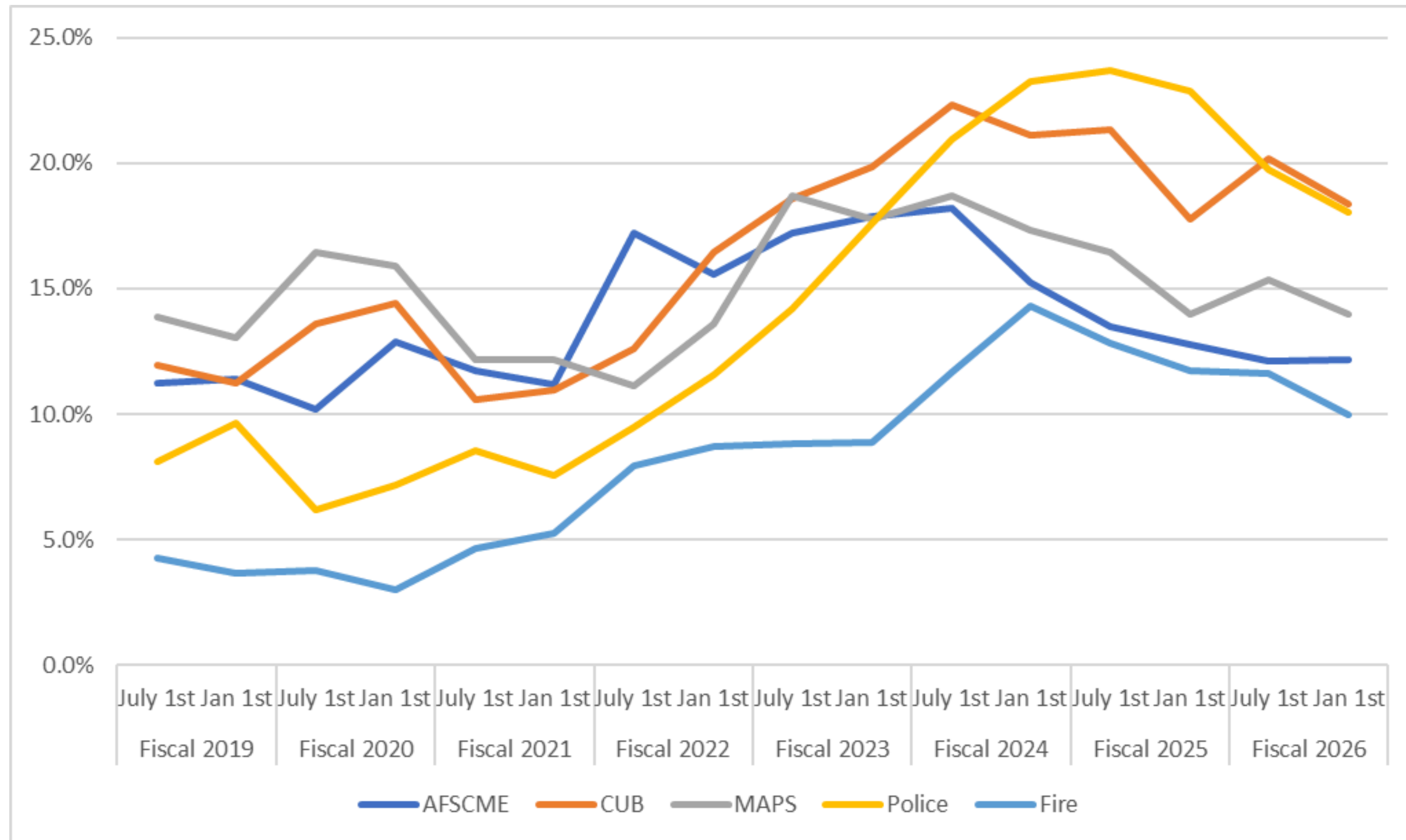
City-Wide General Fund Vacancy Rate - Overall Trend

Vacancy rate has improved over the last two fiscal years but has not returned to pre-COVID levels.



City-Wide General Fund Vacancy Rate - by Union

Vacancy rate began improving in Fiscal 2024 across all employee union groups.



Salary Investments

Recent targeted salary investments are aimed at improving recruitment and retention, with the goal of further reducing the vacancy rate.

AFSCME

(Fiscal 2026-28 agreement)

- Local 44 members will receive an average of **19%** in wage increases over the life of the contract.
- A new 25-step scale which 18-month steps to accelerate mid-career salary progression.
- Increase of minimum salaries to at least \$20 an hour.

MAPS

(Fiscal 2026-27 agreement)

- Fiscal 2026: **2%**
- Fiscal 2027: **3%**
- First COLA at 3% or above since Fiscal 2008.

Fire

(Fiscal 2025 and Fiscal 26)

- Fiscal 2025:
 - Average gain of **7.9%** for Firefighters
 - Gain ranging from **7.5% to 11.4%** for Fire Officers.
- Fiscal 2026
 - Equivalent of approximately **6%** across both units.

Police

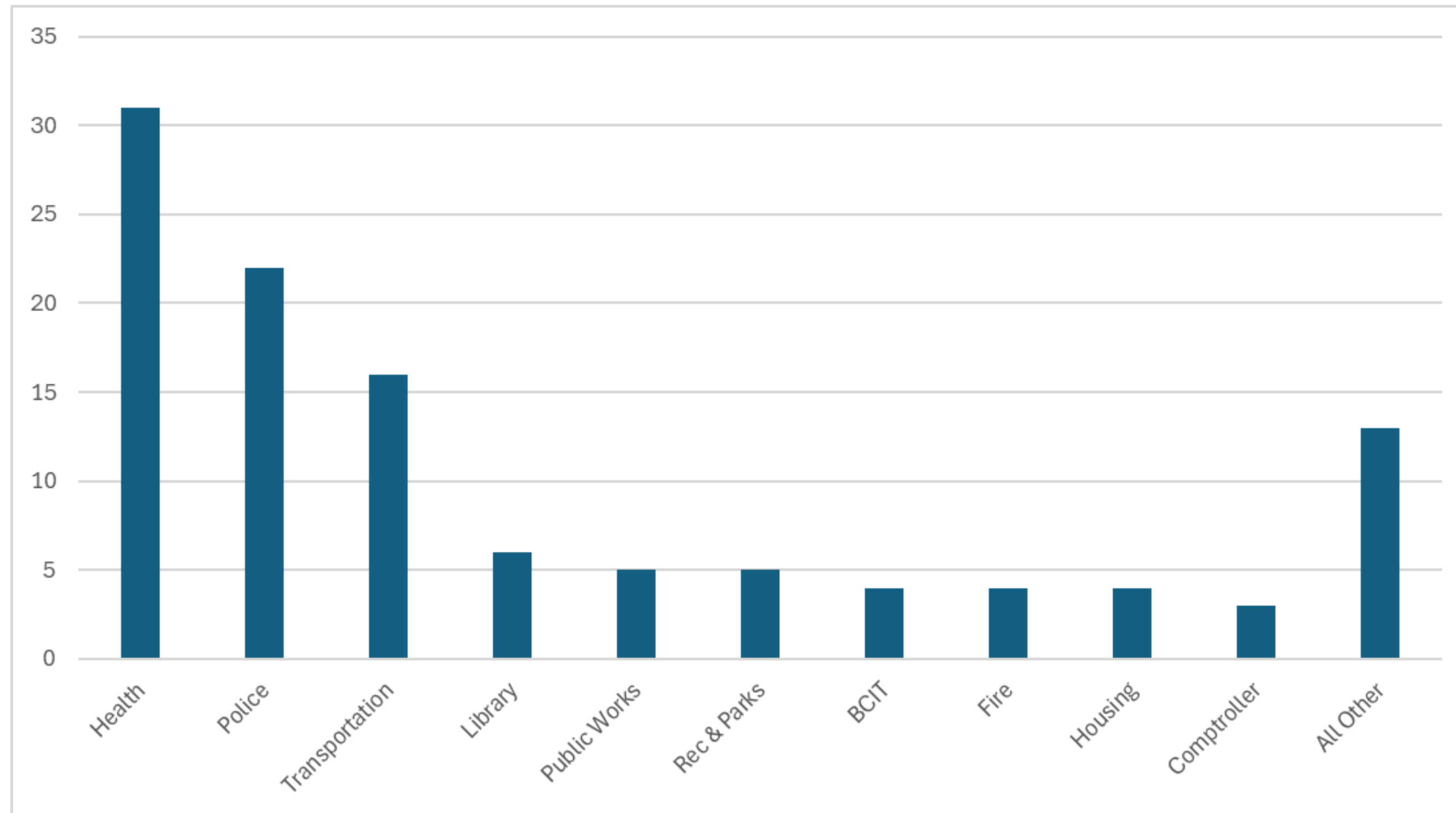
(Fiscal 2026-27 agreement)

- Fiscal 2026: **4%**
- Fiscal 2027: **4%**



Long-Term Vacant Positions Policy

The Fiscal 2027 budget abolishes 113 General Fund positions, freeing up \$9.2 million for re-investment.



Overtime



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

Overtime

Overarching Principles



- 1** Overtime can be managed and is a controllable cost.
- 2** But, some overtime is driven by underlying factors that make it harder to control in the short-term.
 - Operational
 - Legal
 - Collective Bargaining Contracts
- 3** Overtime is best viewed in the context of an agency's overall personnel budget.

Overtime Drivers

Operational examples

1 City Position Vacancies

(various agencies)

- Overtime is most commonly used to fill staffing shortages.

2 Minimum Staffing Requirements

(various agencies)

- Many agencies, and especially public safety agencies, have minimum staffing requirements for certain functions.
- These levels should change over time to reflect service demands.
- These levels are discretionary and should be linked to policy goals
- Examples:

- Police - Patrol shift constant - officers needed per shift per district → # of minutes from dispatch to arrival on scene
- Fire - staff needed for fixed EMS / Suppression units per shift → % of EMS response within 9 minutes



Overtime Drivers

Legal examples

1

EMS Schedule

(Fire Department)

- Current EMS schedule averages 42 hours of work per week.
- Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires EMS work beyond 40 hours weekly to be paid at OT rate (1.5x), which results in two hours of OT pay each week for every EMT or Paramedic assigned to EMS.

2

Fire Suppression Schedule

(Fire Department)

- Current Fire Suppression schedule averages 46.3 hours per week.
- New State law, effective in October 2028, will require all hours of work beyond 42 hours weekly to be paid at OT rate.
- Estimated cost ranges from \$5 million to \$22 million.



Overtime Drivers

Collective Bargaining Contract examples

1

Holiday Pay

(various agencies)

- Some collective bargaining contracts provide overtime pay if a regularly scheduled shift falls on a major holiday such as Christmas or Thanksgiving.

2

Sick Leave Policies

(Fire Department)

- City contract with Fire unions allows for up to six months of leave for non-line of duty sickness or injury, which leads to significant OT to backfill those slots.

3

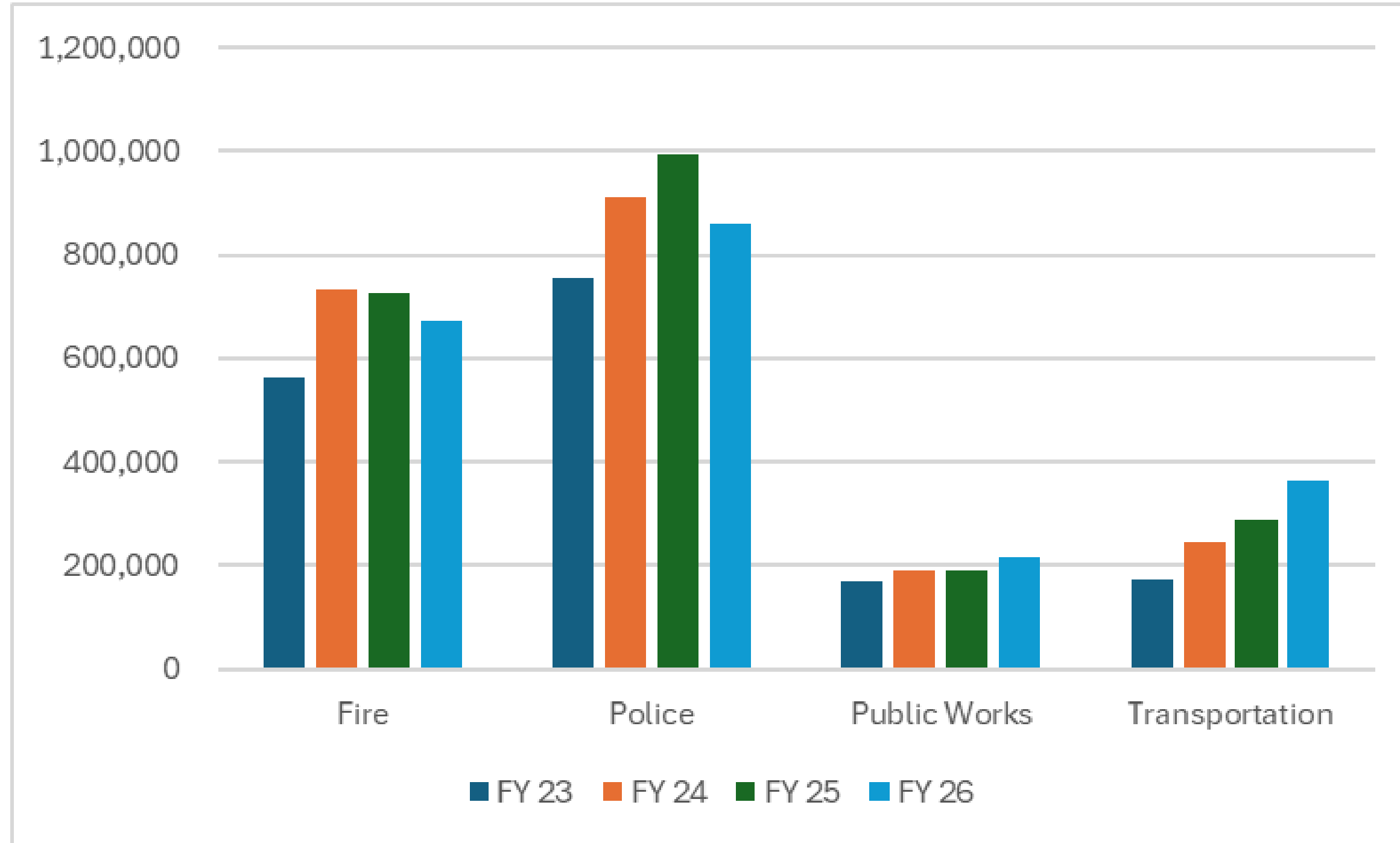
Task Work

(Public Works)

- City contract with AFSCME requires overtime to be paid for hours worked in excess of an assigned "task" (shift) for Sanitation and Street Cleaning workers.



General Fund Overtime Hours - Large Agencies

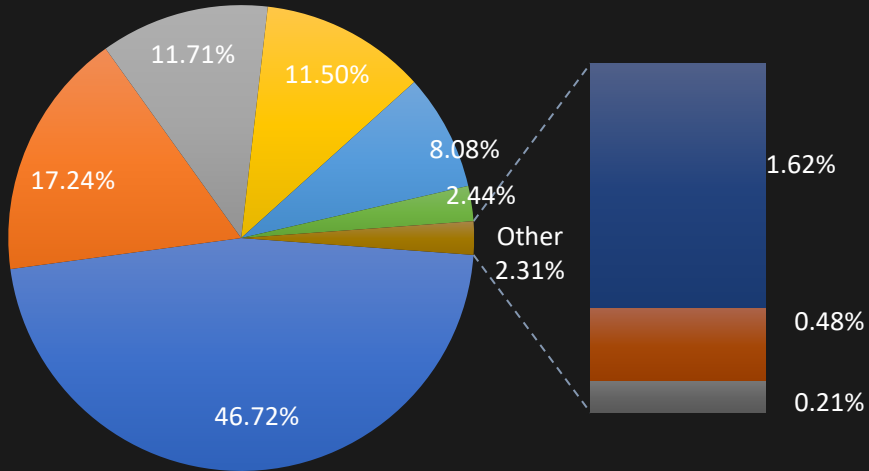


Notes:

- Fiscal 2026 figures are full-year projected hours based on data through the end of March 2026.
- DOT hours include snow response costs in Fiscal 2026.

Overtime Cost Breakdown by Category — FY 2026 YTD

LO26-0046



- Vacation/Holiday Backfill
- LOD Sick (FMLA+A)
- FLSA EMS Overtime
- Fire Academy Overtime
- Snow Storm Response
- Non-LOD Sick (FMLA+S)
- Recruits in Academy (OT)
- MOU Mandated Holidays
- Events & SOC

Category	Cost
Vacation/Holiday Backfill	\$20,916,433
Non-LOD Sick (FMLA+S)	\$7,719,665
LOD Sick (FMLA+A)	\$5,244,354
Recruits in Academy (OT)	\$5,149,511
FLSA EMS Overtime	\$3,618,000
MOU Mandated Holidays	\$1,091,835
Fire Academy Overtime	\$725,710
Events & SOC	\$215,021
Snow Storm Response	\$93,968
TOTAL	\$44,774,497



1

Fiscal Stat Forum

Monthly internal performance & accountability forum with executive-level review of overtime expenditures, spending trends, budget performance, and corrective action strategies.

2

Agency-Wide OT Dashboard

Real-time dashboard tracking budgeted vs. actual overtime, identifying variances and supporting timely management decisions at command and executive levels.

3

Bi-Weekly Top Earners Report

Command staff review a bi-weekly report identifying employees with the highest overtime earnings to verify legitimacy, monitor usage patterns, and ensure supervisory oversight.

4

Multi-Level Data Review

Overtime data routinely reviewed by department leadership, fiscal personnel, and executive management to reinforce accountability and responsible stewardship of public funds.

5

Strategic Staffing Adjustments

Operational staffing adjustments implemented to better align resources with service demand and reduce overtime dependency across divisions.



BPD Overtime

Annual Budget

Section	Annual Hourly Budget	YTD Hours	Hours Projected	Projected Hourly Surplus/ (Deficit)	Annual \$ Budget	Amount Paid	Spending Projected	Projected \$ Surplus/ (Deficit)
Operations Bureau	536,543	550,306	681,331	(144,788)	\$35,608,053	\$38,307,307	\$47,428,094	(\$11,820,042)
Chief of Staff	15,399	22,349	27,670	(12,271)	\$1,021,964	\$1,837,061	\$2,274,457	(\$1,252,493)
Resources & Accountability Bureau	55,618	52,993	65,611	(9,993)	\$3,691,125	\$3,177,160	\$3,933,626	(\$242,502)
Requires Correction		496	614	(614)	\$0	\$32,980	\$40,833	(\$40,833)
Non BPD Cost Center Codes		496	614	(614)	\$0	\$32,980	\$40,833	(\$40,833)
Total	607,560	626,144	775,226	(167,665)	\$40,321,141	\$43,354,508	\$53,677,010	(\$13,355,869)

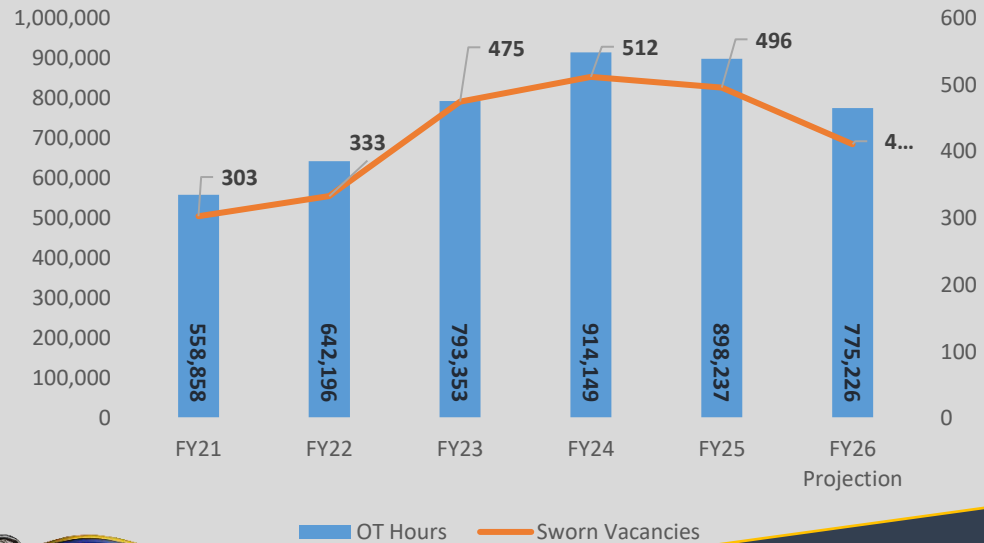
Overtime Drivers

- Backfilling Patrol Vacancies (Meeting Constants)
- Staffing Levels (Professional and Sworn)
- 2 shifts for 24 Hr Operations
- On Call
- Cancelled H Days
- Deadlines
- Special Events (Planned & Unplanned)
- Executive order
- Sworn Members not at Full Duty

Internal Controls

- Policy Restrictions: 35hrs cap, Pre-approval on Vol OT
- Workday Dashboard
- Post Reporting Dashboard
- Internal Audits by Performance Standards
- Comstat Reporting
- Quarterly meetings with Service Managers (and DCs)
- Overtime Trainings (In person & online)

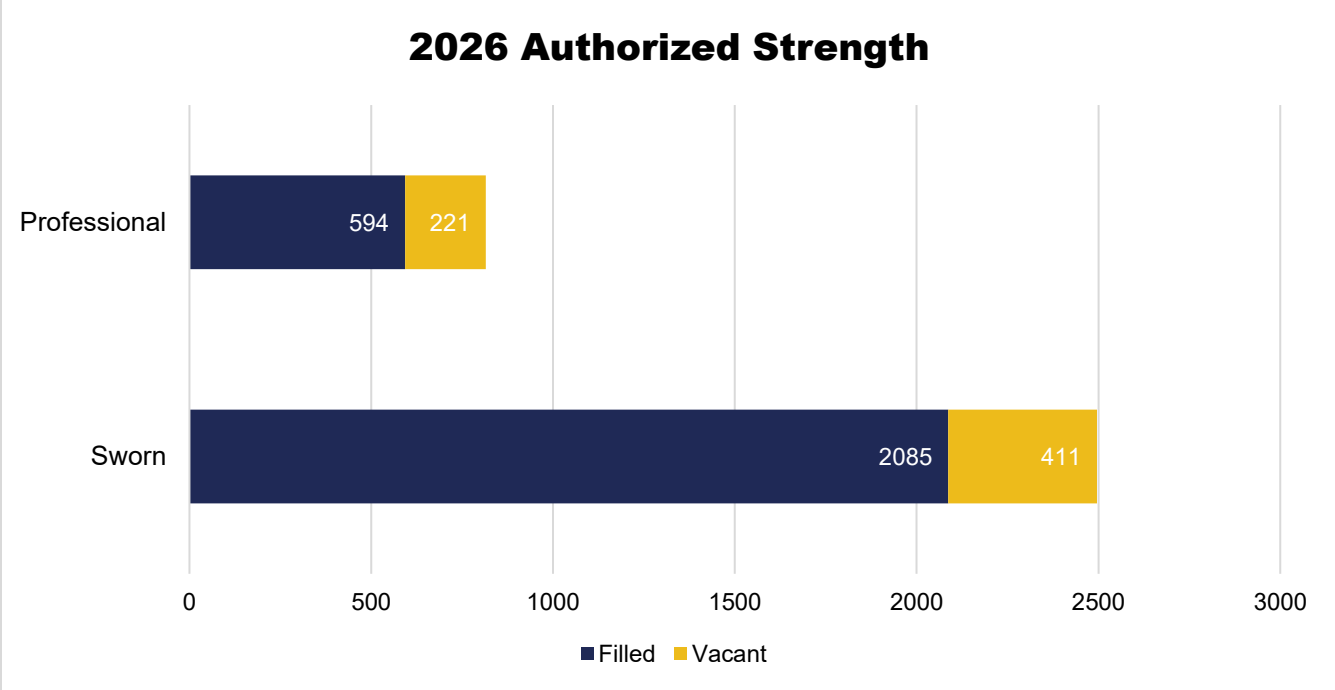
Overtime Use & Sworn Vacancies



BPD Vacancies

As of April 16th

FY26 Budgeted:
Professional: 815
Sworn: 2496



Questions?



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

BMORE BUDGET