



Town of Orange

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Subject: Summary of Proposed 2026 Workforce Reductions and Operational Impacts

Dear Mr. Chair,

Should the override fail, we must consider—and present to the Town—a series of workforce reductions and operational adjustments for 2026. These decisions are difficult, but they would be necessary to align with current budget constraints. This proposal is grounded in the following financial principles:

- Limit the use of Free Cash in the operating budget to \$300,000
- Fully fund OES at 100% of Net School Spending
- Appropriate for the entire certified regional school assessments
- Budget to cover all known or estimated insurance and debt payments
- Distribute reductions proportionally across departments to avoid disproportionately impacting any single area

Proposed Job Eliminations

(Estimated workforce reduction: 20 positions)

- **General Government:** 1 Full-Time Executive Assistant; 4 Part-Time roles (Assistant Accountant, Assistant Collector, Assistant Town Clerk, Assistant Treasurer)
- **Public Safety:** 3 Full-Time Firefighters; 5 Full-Time Police Officers (including Detective and School Resource Officer, based on input from the Chiefs)
- **Public Works:** 2 Full-Time Skilled Laborers; 1 Part-Time Sanitation Worker
- **Health & Human Services:** 1 Part-Time Council on Aging Administrative Assistant
- **Library:** 3 Part-Time Positions (based on internal estimates)
- **Building Department / Board of Health** Reduced Hours

Operational Impacts

- **Town Offices:** Consolidation of office staff at Town Hall or where space is available, potential for shortened hours, and possible delays in administrative processing
- **Public Safety:** Loss of third shift, exiting from the detective program/drug task force, end of regional school resource officer. Unable to properly staff the second ambulance; diminished fire response capacity from lack of FT firefighters.
- **Public Works:** Reduced transfer station hours, limited maintenance of parks, cemeteries, and public spaces; possible end of weekend burials; decreased road maintenance; increased risk of damage claims
- **Airport:** Increased risk of FAA non-compliance and safety concerns

Financial Considerations

While these reductions would technically balance the budget, they are not aligned with our long-term vision for the Town. We are relying on the override to preserve essential services and avoid the deeper consequences of these cuts. Without it, we face significant long-term risks, including:

- Decreased service quality and public safety

- Loss of revenue and grant opportunities
- Greater financial strain in future years due to diminished capacity and deferred responsibilities

This is not a course I would choose under better circumstances, but it represents a pragmatic approach to sustaining core services amid mounting financial pressure. It's important to recognize that any short-term savings—such as those from reduced health insurance costs—are likely to be offset by increased unemployment claims and the gradual erosion of our service infrastructure.

We must also remain cautious about relying too heavily on Free Cash. Revenues and collections may fall short of projections, and preserving some Free Cash may be essential to weather unforeseen challenges. For example, if unemployment claims exceed the savings from health insurance reductions, the Town could face a compounded financial burden. Any decision to inject additional Free Cash to preserve services must be made with full awareness of these risks.

While this letter may read as bleak, it is written with candor and conviction. The Town deserves a clear understanding of what is at stake should the override fail. Yes, it may keep the tax rate lower—but the marginal savings will come at the cost of reduced services, strained operations, and lowered expectations for what our community can deliver.

With regards,

Matthew Fortier
Town Administrator