

LOCAL NEWS

Methuen teachers say 80 educators will be laid off due to proposed budget



Methuen City Hall (Stuart Cahill/Boston Herald, File)

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Methuen teachers turned out at a City Council meeting Monday night, saying the mayor's proposed cuts to the educator workforce would mean an entire school's worth of educators will have been laid off within two years.

The Methuen Education Association said the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget represents a continuing trend of "steadily reduced" support for public education. The mayor's office has pushed back on the claim, stating while teachers may face layoffs the budget actually includes a \$5.8 million year-over-year increase for education.

"120 positions cut in two years is an entire grammar school wiped out," said Kara Blatt, a Methuen special education teacher and union co-president, citing the 40 layoffs last year. "We must stop balancing budgets on the backs of Methuen's children and their teachers."

Schools across Massachusetts have faced budget crunches in recent years, hit by the loss of pandemic-era federal funding, enrollment declines and inflation.

The teachers union stated the cuts target positions including reading specialists, English Learner teachers, and wellness staff and argued the city has "more than \$25 million in available resources this year."

"While the School Department has warned that 43 teachers may face layoffs, it's important to look at how existing resources are being spent," the Mayor's office said, citing the "nearly \$800,000 in IT personnel costs alone."

Mayor David Beauregard's statement suggested tactics to avoid teacher layoff like "freezing contractual Unit A raises in FY26 to avoid layoffs and preserve as many classroom positions as possible," as well as generating revenue through steps like selling unused school-owned buildings.

The teachers contend that spending on education has dropped since before the pandemic.

“In FY2019, Methuen spent \$6 million above the state’s minimum required funding level,” the MEA said. “By FY2024, that figure had dropped to just \$1.6 million.”

The union members, along with community supporters, called on the City Council to reject the budget Monday night.

“The City Council has to reject the mayor’s proposal and support a budget that invests in students and teachers, not surplus accounts,” said Methuen High School theater teacher Joanie Walsh.

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2025 > June > 3