

**STAMFORD MUSEUM & NATURE CENTER**  
**MISSION, GOALS & INSTITUTIONAL GROWTH**  
**City of Stamford 2026.27 Operating Funding Request**  
**Mayor Caroline Simmons, January 9, 2026**  
**Board of Representatives, Fiscal Committee March 26, 2026**  
**Board of Finance, April 2, 2026**

**Mission Statement**

**The Stamford Museum & Nature Center is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of art and popular culture, the natural and agricultural sciences, and history. The Museum is a vital cultural and educational resource for the community, and a focal point for family activity and interaction. We seek to inspire creativity, foster self-discovery, steward environmental sustainability, and nurture an appreciation for lifelong learning through exhibits, educational programs, and special events that enhance the visitors' experience of our unique site.**

**SM&NC 2026.27 Operating Budget Request**

Since 1936, the Stamford Museum & Nature Center, a 501 (c) (3) private, non-profit, has served as **Stamford's museum** and by 1955, **Stamford's nature center**, one of the largest nature-based educational institutions in Connecticut and the largest in the City of Stamford. The City of Stamford has been a historic funding partner since 1939.

- We are a highly accomplished City partner. Annually, **we competitively raise over 70% of our \$5.657 million operating budget** through strategic earned income initiatives and contributed sources.
- We are deeply grateful that **Mayor Simmons has recommended a 4% overall increase (\$56,280) in FY26.27 from last year bringing next year's Operating Budget to \$1.463,280** This increase request primarily attributable to increases in healthcare, employee benefits, and insurance.
- **Looking at it another way**, the City invests some \$1.460 million in the SM&NC and we return another \$4 million annually into our City and community with dynamic educational programs and events!
- **We continue to manage to operating cost pressures in the current economy.** In November 2025, we faced a 25% premium increase in employee health care benefits. Utilities, property maintenance and insurance costs have also increased. We continue to explore various ways to minimize or offset these increases.

**Our Key Community Impact, Challenges, and Community Service**

**COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- **Celebrating our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year!** --- The City has been a vital economic partner for the Stamford Museum & Nature Center since our founding in 1936.
- The November 2025 Opening the new **Planetarium & Astronomy Center** is driving our **enhanced science curriculum** which supports state education standards and solidifies our position as the premier destination for astronomy and physical science education, and environmental stewardship -- all signatures of our historic Mission.
- As of January 2026, with only 6 months of Planetarium and science programming in the current FY2025.26, **we will serve 4,550 school students with science and astronomy programs.**
- From our annual Audited Financials, **80% of our operating budget goes directly** to support the delivery of constituent programs and services to Stamford and our shoulder communities creating **Mission-Focused vitality.**

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## CHALLENGES

- Continued economic pressure and escalation in the post-Covid era are challenging. Specifically, we are managing cost **increases for staff costs, health care, insurance, electricity, and property maintenance.**
- Contributed income from **state grant programs supporting operating has disappeared** as significant funding sources (i.e. CT Humanities Operating Grant) putting additional pressure on our ability to cover post-covid cost impacts.
- At the behest of the City, in 2022, the museum divested from historic City support for its IT tech needs (data file migration, 24/7 IT help desk, licensing). The incremental annual operating costs we continue to absorb for this initiative range \$35,000-\$40,000 and will increase further with our pending phone system conversion.

## IN-DEMAND EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

- For 2024.25, our 118-acre nature-based campus offered a vital outdoor destination, welcoming nearly **200,000 adults and children** from Stamford and neighboring communities.
- Our renowned **SM&NC-Aligned-With-Our-Schools** program with school classroom visits and onsite emersions, After School programs, and Camp programs served over **33,500 students this year**. Our highly skilled education team are now serving **131 schools** with a dedicated focus on **34 Title1/Low-income** schools, and **7 community partners** with special needs children. [Pre-Covid we were serving some 47,000 participants in 155.]
- **11,900 arts and culture enthusiasts** reveled in our museum programming, which included artist talks, poetry workshops, masterclasses, and our seasonal exhibitions.
- More than **8,000 attendees** enjoyed our **Family Fest Sundays** celebrating the Spring, Harvest, and Maple Sugaring seasons.
- Nearly **2,150 people** joyfully attended our social fundraising events including our Lobster & Clam Bake, Nights Out adult programs, and our second annual **Farm & Forest 5K Run**.
- Our signature **Sunday Farm Market** – featuring local farmers, artisan products, and our own Heckscher Farm goods – welcomed **7,500 patrons** seeking “homegrown” shopping experiences.
- We have **3,500 Member households** enjoying the benefits of SM&NC Membership, including unlimited access to our grounds year-round. Membership is your Passport to the wonders of the Stamford Museum & Nature Center every day,
- Our flagship **Junior Curator program celebrates 76 monumental years** of providing immersive hands-on farm training and experience to our community’s youth.
- Our **certified Art, Nature & Me Preschool** immersed 96 three and four-year-olds in hands-on experiential learning this year. **In September 2024**, we launched our new **SM&NC Kindergarten --- the “Heckscher FarmerGarten”** school in our original red Heckscher Barn. We have answered the community concern about the school year change. This adds to our Pre-School and our early education portfolio.

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- Our inspired **Animals-For-All** special needs program has aligned with 7 community partners such as **Abilis, K.T. Murphy, Hart Magnet, Julia Stark** schools and others to bring valuable service. Our program welcomes children with disabilities to help with hands-on animal care and innovative “open farms” activities on Heckscher Farm.

Stamford Museum & Nature Center	2024-2025 Participants	2023-2024 Participants	2022-2023 Participants	2021-2022 Participants	2020-2021 Participants
General Admission	123,632	118,756	124,440	121,433	117,927
Regional Camp Visits	1,718	1,167	1,398	-	-
SM&NC Camp Programs	3,596	3,562	3,550	3,372	2,590
Pre-School Programs	15,624	13,609	14,100	10,165	6,386
SM&NC-in-Schools & Onsite	33,462	27,260	25,978	25,110	8,803
After School Programs	3,028	2,629	3,528	3,297	3,339
Facility Rentals	6,152	8,910	8,145	8,165	2,787
Community Events	9,157	10,790	10,136	9,321	13,928
Fund-Raising Events/Adult Programs	1,096	1,025	1,729	1,855	3,834
Volunteer Support	1,749	1,910	1,393	1,352	1,002
<b>Total Visitors/Community Served</b>	<b>199,214</b>	<b>189,618</b>	<b>194,397</b>	<b>184,070</b>	<b>160,596</b>

**As a High-Performance organization, we regularly collect data and benchmark programming to assist with forecasts and inform our year-over-year program budget development and financial performance.**

- **As illustrated in the chart above**, our incremental recovery has come through Stamford Public Schools normalizing their alignment with bus trips and in-school programming that we diligently serve. The new **Planetarium & Astronomy Center** will reflect just six months of operation in FY2024.25.
- Our approach to 2026.27 Budget development is conservative given continued economic pressures. We have anticipated and are managing to pressure on staff costs, **healthcare (expected to rise 30%)**, insurance, utilities, and maintenance cost increases.

**Looking ahead to FY 2026.27**

- We anticipate a 5% budget increase to be driven by a full year of our **Planetarium & Astronomy Center school and public programming** will drive a thoughtful increase in earned income. We are presenting a balanced budget for FY 2026.27 which reflects continued innovative creative work and programming.
- We are deeply grateful for the City’s 90 years of historic support as we continue our diligence of enhancing the Stamford Museum & Nature Center for the educational enrichment and recreational enjoyment of the community for decades to come. **With devotion, Melissa H. Mulrooney, CEO**

**On behalf of the Board of Directors, we respectfully request the City of Stamford’s Board of Finance and Board of Representatives to support the continued investment of \$1,463,000 in Operating Support to the Stamford Museum & Nature Center.**



# Stamford Museum & Nature Center

## City of Stamford FY2026/2027 Operating Budget Request

Operating Fund Results Fiscal Year 2024-2025	Budget	Actual
<b>City of Stamford</b>	<b>1,364,750</b>	<b>1,364,750</b>
<b>Contributions</b>	<b>322,000</b>	<b>452,898</b>
<b>NAA</b>	<b>112,875</b>	<b>15,369</b>
<b>Annual Appeal</b>	<b>70,000</b>	<b>76,364</b>
<b>Fundraising Events</b>	<b>150,000</b>	<b>123,725</b>
<b>Membership</b>	<b>425,000</b>	<b>426,756</b>
<b>Adult Programs</b>	<b>28,000</b>	<b>3,157</b>
<b>Facility Use</b>	<b>344,575</b>	<b>271,731</b>
<b>Classes:</b>		
<b>Pre-School</b>	<b>875,800</b>	<b>902,179</b>
<b>Camp</b>	<b>140,000</b>	<b>151,867</b>
<b>Education Programs</b>	<b>59,000</b>	<b>49,400</b>
<b>Groups</b>	<b>131,000</b>	<b>161,549</b>
<b>General Admission</b>	<b>375,000</b>	<b>362,488</b>
<b>Festival Events</b>	<b>98,500</b>	<b>87,255</b>
<b>Retail Sales</b>	<b>42,300</b>	<b>39,401</b>
<b>Other Income</b>	<b>26,000</b>	<b>31,811</b>
<b>TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>4,564,800</b>	<b>4,520,700</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
<b>Compensation</b>	<b>2,580,000</b>	<b>2,556,649</b>
<b>Payroll Taxes</b>	<b>209,500</b>	<b>196,049</b>
<b>Benefits</b>	<b>280,000</b>	<b>211,615</b>
<b>Professional Fees</b>	<b>196,575</b>	<b>211,845</b>
<b>Supplies &amp; Program Expense</b>	<b>97,950</b>	<b>115,444</b>
<b>Telephone/Cable/Software</b>	<b>105,800</b>	<b>112,663</b>
<b>Exhibitions</b>	<b>113,000</b>	<b>142,443</b>
<b>Property Repairs &amp; Maintenance</b>	<b>262,200</b>	<b>291,649</b>
<b>Farm &amp; Animal Care</b>	<b>144,450</b>	<b>143,193</b>
<b>Utilities</b>	<b>157,200</b>	<b>169,112</b>
<b>Print Publications</b>	<b>42,000</b>	<b>43,124</b>
<b>Postage</b>	<b>13,750</b>	<b>14,930</b>
<b>Marketing &amp; Advertising</b>	<b>35,000</b>	<b>32,282</b>
<b>Meetings/Dues/Subscriptions</b>	<b>21,000</b>	<b>19,600</b>
<b>Insurance</b>	<b>124,000</b>	<b>130,191</b>
<b>Bank Fees</b>	<b>67,000</b>	<b>78,321</b>
<b>Capex &amp; Other Misc. Expense</b>	<b>112,875</b>	<b>48,388</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>4,562,300</b>	<b>4,517,498</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets from Ongoing Operations</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>3,202</b>



# Stamford Museum & Nature Center

## City of Stamford FY2026/2027 Operating Budget Request

Operating Fund Forecast Fiscal Year 2025-2026	YTD Actual February 2026	FY26 Board Approved Budget	Adjustments	FY26 Latest Forecast
<b>PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>				
City of Stamford	938,000	1,407,000	-	1,407,000
Contributions	515,788	442,000	10,000	452,000
NAA	112,875	112,875	-	112,875
Annual Appeal	67,798	75,000	5,000	80,000
Fundraising Events	5,665	150,000	-	150,000
Membership	322,054	492,800	10,000	502,800
Adult Programs	28,487	38,000	-	38,000
Facility Use	217,853	277,800	-	277,800
Planetarium Shows	53,041	283,950	-	283,950
Classes:			-	
Pre-School	666,666	1,000,000	-	1,000,000
Camp	142,788	140,000	-	140,000
Education Programs	69,432	106,360	-	106,360
Groups	51,194	185,000	-	185,000
Admission	253,259	483,750	(8,000)	475,750
Festival Events	22,926	101,250	-	101,250
Retail Sales	30,097	45,300	-	45,300
Other Income	15,222	18,915		18,915
<b>TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>3,513,145</b>	<b>5,360,000</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>5,377,000</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
Compensation	2,058,201	3,001,250	-	3,001,250
Payroll Taxes	120,739	241,823	-	241,823
Benefits	196,497	333,400	15,000	348,400
Professional Services	176,438	214,007	-	214,007
Supplies & Program Expense	65,403	133,500	-	133,500
Telephone/Cable/Software	79,120	116,050	-	116,050
Exhibitions	37,173	88,510	-	88,510
Property Repairs & Maintenance	217,273	360,000	-	360,000
Farm & Animal Care	100,834	138,985	-	138,985
Utilities	140,566	225,800	-	225,800
Print Publications	24,492	45,900	-	45,900
Postage	9,335	14,100	-	14,100
Marketing & Advertising	22,896	40,000	-	40,000
Meetings/Dues/Subscriptions	15,301	25,300	-	25,300
Insurance	107,370	174,000	-	174,000
Bank Fees	58,397	93,000	-	93,000
Capex & Other Misc. Expense	141,172	112,875	-	112,875
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>3,571,207</b>	<b>5,358,500</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>5,373,500</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets from Ongoing Operations</b>	<b>(58,062)</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>3,500</b>

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# Stamford Museum & Nature Center

## City of Stamford FY2026/2027 Operating Budget Request

Proposed Operating Budget Fiscal Year 2026-2027	
<b>PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	
City of Stamford (4%)	1,463,000
Contributions	475,000
NAA	100,000
Annual Appeal	85,000
Fundraising Events	175,000
Membership	500,000
Adult Programs	40,000
Facility Use	285,000
Planetarium Shows	360,000
Pre-School	1,050,000
Camp	145,000
Education Programs	120,000
Group Programs (On/Off Site)	190,000
Admission	485,000
Festival Events	117,000
Retail Sales	47,000
Other Income	20,000
<b>TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>5,657,000</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Compensation	3,137,800
Payroll Taxes	254,030
Benefits	452,920
Professional Fees	217,000
Supplies & Program Expense	135,000
Telephone/Cable/Software	120,000
Exhibitions	105,000
Property Repairs & Maintenance	365,000
Farm & Animal Care	140,000
Utilities	235,000
Print Publications	45,000
Postage	15,000
Marketing & Advertising	43,250
Meetings/Dues/Subscriptions	25,000
Insurance	180,000
Bank Fees	95,500
Capex & Other Misc. Expense	90,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>5,655,500</b>
<b>Change in Operating Net Assets</b>	<b>1,500</b>

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## Stamford Museum & Nature Center 2027-2033 Capital Request

### 133 – CP3343 Site & Infrastructure Improvements New Pavillon for SM&NC Meadow Stamford 2035 Plan Alignment

Melissa H. Mulrooney, Chief Executive Officer

#### Stamford 2035 Priority Area

#### SM&NC Meadow Pavilion

Stamford 2035 identifies SM&NC as part of the **priority open space network**.

#### Strategy 12: Parks, Open Space & Connectivity

The Pavilion improves our outdoor infrastructure and aligns with the Plan goal to ensure “**quality parks within a 10-minute walk**” of residents. Although we are not a public park, our 118-acre campus sees over 200,000 visitors each year. Many of our members are also our neighbors and live within walking distance.

The Plan emphasizes investment in **nature-based community amenities** that promote resident wellbeing and outdoor education.

#### Strategy 17: Recreation, Health & Nature-Based Benefits

The Pavilion enables expansion of SM&NC’s current **environmental education** programming for children and adults by providing additional teaching space as well as protection from weather. Visiting school groups and camps will also have a safe, covered space to enjoy lunch. The Pavilion will serve as a place for respite and shade for all visitors encouraging a more leisurely experience and more time spent outside.

#### Strategy 31: Arts, Culture & Activation

Stamford 2035 encourages cultural activation projects and partnerships, including “**expanded cultural programming**” and “**partnership with institutions like the Stamford Museum & Nature Center**” to deliver community benefit.

As noted above, the Pavillion allows us to expand upon our current offerings and will serve as a **destination for educational programming, events, arts and culture**.

### Public Benefit of the Pavilion Project

- Increases **Publicly Accessible Active Space (PAAS)** in North Stamford
- Creates a **year-round outdoor classroom** and gathering space for programs and events
- Expands **partnerships with Stamford Public Schools** and youth-serving organizations
- Supports **economic vitality through increased visitation** and local spending
- Aligns with **Plan 2035 equity goals** by serving residents citywide

# Capital Project Request FY 2027-2033

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**133 CP3343 SITE & INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

**Agency:** 0680 Non City Agencies: Stamford Museum  
**Contact:** Melissa H. Mulrooney - (203) 977-6565 - mmulrooney@stamfordmuseum.org  
**Location:** 39 Scofieldtown Rd, Stamford, CT 06903  
**Neighborhood:** North Stamford **Voting District:** 20

		<b>Dept Priority</b>	1	<b>Tier</b>	0
<b>Oracle Date</b>	2025-10-01	<b>YTD Balance</b>	255,306.04		
<b>Encumbered</b>	108,757.84	<b>Amount Available</b>	203,759.29		
<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Unfunded</b>	51,546.75		

**Project Description** - 1. Meadow Pavilion- Additional funding request of \$600k to cover lowest bid received for the Meadow pavilion project. In 2024 2. Bendel Mansion - Slate Roof, Stucco and masonry repairs to the Bendel Mansion \$68k

Detailed Project Cost	Justification for Inclusion in Capital Plan
Design Development	\$0
Construction Related	\$668,000
Equipment Acquisition	\$0
Miscellaneous Costs	\$0
Professional Services	\$0
Land Acquisition	\$0
Art Work	\$0
<b>FY 26/27 Total</b>	<b>\$668,000</b>

  

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cost Savings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Life Safety
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continues On-Going Project
<input type="checkbox"/> Leverages Other Funds
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure
<input type="checkbox"/> Quality of Life
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plan Related
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Safety Health
<input type="checkbox"/> Mandated Legal
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive Revenue Impact
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive Operational Impact/Efficiency
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability/ Other

Expenditures by Year			
Fiscal Year	Authorization	Encumbered	Expenditure
2026	0.00	0.00	30,950.00
2025	100,000.00	108,757.84	61,311.32
2024	150,000.00	0.00	20,500.00
2023	0.00	0.00	1,176.89
2022	100,000.00	0.00	594.04
< 2022	300,000.00	0.00	256,076.71

  

<b>Method Used in Estimating Cost:</b>	<b>Estimated change in annual operating cost:</b>
	\$0

Request		FY 26/27					Capital Forecasts						Total
Funding Source	Term	Dept	Planning	Mayor	BOF	Adopted	FY 27/28	FY 28/29	FY 29/30	FY 30/31	FY 31/32	FY 32/33	
Bond (City)	20	668,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	668,000
		<b>668,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>668,000</b>

History		FY 25/26					Capital Forecasts						Total
Funding Source	Term	Dept	Planning	Mayor	BOF	Adopted	FY 26/27	FY 27/28	FY 28/29	FY 29/30	FY 30/31	FY 31/32	
Bond (City)	20	175,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	175,000
		<b>175,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>175,000</b>

