



Medford City Council
Medford, Massachusetts

MEETING DATE

January 6, 2026

SPONSORED BY

Matt Leming, City Councilor, Isaac
Bears, Council President

AGENDA ITEM

26-009 - Resolution to Support SMFA Professors at Tufts Pursuing a Fair Contract

FULL TEXT AND DESCRIPTION

Resolution supporting SMFA professors at Tufts pursuing a fair contract

WHEREAS, The City of Medford recognizes the vital role that artists and educators play in enriching civic life, and affirms the right of all workers to collectively bargain and be treated with dignity and respect; and

WHEREAS, Professors of the Practice (PoPs) at Tufts University's School of the Museum of Fine Arts (SMFA) are dedicated full-time professors and practicing artists whose instruction, mentorship, and creative work are the backbone of the SMFA's academic excellence;

WHEREAS, The SMFA PoPs are currently engaged in contract negotiations seeking a fair agreement that addresses issues including salaries that keep pace with the cost of living, equitable promotion and review processes, manageable workloads, and basic institutional support; and

WHEREAS, Faculty have reported that bargaining has not been going well, and that Tufts has attempted to silence vocal union members while failing to meaningfully address their concerns; and

WHEREAS, While student enrollment at the SMFA has tripled in recent years, the number of full-time PoPs has dropped from 40 to 30, with the university refusing to fill vacancies, overburdening current faculty; and

WHEREAS, Current compensation is unsustainable for faculty who have to cover added costs such as studio space essential for them to perform their job, forcing 11 faculty members to live out of state. PoPs are requesting a 4% cost-of-living increase, but Tufts has offered only 2.75%, alongside salary minimums that fall well below those of peer institutions; and

WHEREAS, BIPOC and international faculty face additional barriers, including inequitable treatment

compared to colleagues on the main campus, and delayed or inconsistent visa support that has left international faculty in precarious legal and employment situations; and

WHEREAS, At a time when institutions of higher education, international students and faculty, and the arts are under threat nationwide, Tufts University’s failure to adequately support its SMFA faculty jeopardizes not only their livelihoods, but also the long-term health and reputation of the university and its contributions to the City of Medford;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Medford City Council stands in solidarity with the SMFA Professors of the Practice at Tufts University in their pursuit of a fair contract, supports the right of all workers to organize without fear of retribution, and urges Tufts to bargain in good faith by addressing faculty concerns regarding salary, equity, and institutional support;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council recognizes SMFA Faculty as essential contributors to the cultural and educational vitality of the City of Medford and calls on Tufts University to uphold its stated values of equity, inclusion, and academic excellence by investing in its faculty accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

FISCAL IMPACT

ATTACHMENTS

None