

FINANCE COMMITTEE
7:15 PM WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2024
Special Meeting
BOLTON TOWN HALL, 222 BOLTON CENTER ROAD
In-Person and Virtual (Hybrid Format)

MINUTES

Finance Committee Members Present In-Person: Chairman Ross Lally , Vice Chairman Robert Munroe, Rhea Klein, Ashley Phalen, Robert Morra, Amanda Gordon

Finance Committee Members Absent: Christopher Connelly

Board of Selectmen Members Present In-Person: First Selectman Rodney Fournier (arrived 7:19 p.m.)

Staff Present Via Zoom: Town Administrator James Rupert, Superintendent of Schools Kristin Heckt, Recording Secretary Linda H. McDonald

1. **Call to Order:** R. Lally called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.
2. **Public Comment:** No one came forth to speak.
3. **Ongoing Business:**
- 3.a **Discussion on FY2024/2025 Revenues and Expenditures:**

R. Lally said the budget failed with 453 voting yes and 502 voting no and that approximately 2/3 of the “no” votes were from District 2. He said the members now have to look at the 2024/2025 revenues and expenditures and make a guess at what the committee needs to consider and act on with the ballot question. He noted, under the Town Charter, the committee has to find a way to reduce the budget ask overall.

Members shared feedback they heard at the polls and from constituents. R. Lally said budget information is not getting out to the people who are interested and want to know the facts. He said there were others, who he did not recognize as having attended any meetings or the public hearing, who stated they knew for sure that the town was squandering the grand list increase in unnecessary expenses. R. Lally said, in reality, the spending went up a tiny fraction of the increase of the grand list.

A. Gordon said she shared the budget the day before and day of the referendum on social media. She said there were many comments about the school and when the leaking roof at Bolton Center School was going to be fixed and that the estimated cost of the roof was too much.

A. Phalen said, from the feedback she heard, she believes people are having a hard time wrapping their head around the significant increase in the budget last year, the surplus, and the revaluation. She believes they view it as not transparent. She said other feedback focused on people not willing to support the little over 3% increase in the BOE budget with the declining enrollment in the schools.

R. Klein said last year the Board of Finance asked the superintendent to provide the cuts that would be required to reduce the budget ahead of time and she believes that galvanized the parents to come out and vote.

R. Lally said he believes people do not understand that both the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education are doing the right thing by returning surplus money at the end of each fiscal year and that money goes to reducing taxes the next year.

The committee members discussed suggestions on how much and where to reduce the budget ask with consensus on the following motion:

R. Morra MOVED that the Finance Committee reduce the FY2024/2025 budget by \$350,000 with \$100,000 from the Board of Education budget, \$25,000 from the Board of Selectmen budget, \$50,000 from the Contingency fund, and \$175,000 from the capital budget. R. Munroe SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

3.b Consider and possibly Act on Ballot Question:

A. Gordon MOVED that the Finance Committee adopt the following ballot question:

“Shall the Annual Budget for the Town of Bolton, Connecticut for the fiscal year 2025 as recommended by the Finance Committee in the amount of \$25,873,099 be adopted?”

R. Munroe SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

4. New Business:

4.a Consider and possibly Act on Setting the Real Estate and Personal Property Mil Rate for FY2025: No action.

4.b Consider and possibly Act on Setting the Motor Vehicle Mil Rate for FY2025: No action.

4.c Consider and possibly Act on Setting an Additional Meeting Date: R. Morra MOVED to schedule a special meeting date for June 5, 2024 at 7:15 p.m., location to be determined. R. Munroe SECONDED. Motion carried 6:0:0.

The next budget referendum will be held on Tuesday, June 4th.

5. Adjournment: A. Gordon MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 p.m. A. Phalen SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

Respectfully submitted by Linda H. McDonald

Linda H. McDonald

Please see the minutes of subsequent meetings for the approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.