

**TOWN OF BOLTON
FINANCE COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
7:00 P.M., TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025
TOWN HALL, 222 BOLTON CENTER ROAD, BOLTON
VIA ZOOM: +1 929 205 6099
MEETING ID: 848 5533 2751**

Finance Commission Members Present at Town Hall and Via Zoom: Chair Ross Lally, Member Robert Morra, Member Amanda Gordon, Member Rhea Klein, Member Ashley Phelan (Zoom), Member Tyler Egner. Absent was Member Chris Connelly.

Staff Present Via Town Hall and Zoom: Town Administrator James Rupert, Board of Education Superintendent Kristen Heckt, Board Clerk Mary Johnston, Chief Financial Officer Jill Collins, Selectmen Rodney Fournier, Incoming Board of Education Superintendent David Caruso, Board of Education Business Manager Kusal Huynh, Board of Education Chair Andrew Broneilli

Others Present Via Town Hall and Zoom: Christopher Davey, Benjamin Davies, Ashley Paggioli, Bruce Dixon, Bernice Dixon, Ron Camboni

1. Call to Order

R. Lally called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m.

2. Public Hearing for the Town of Bolton Fiscal Year July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

R. Lally opened the Public Hearing with a presentation on the budget. He summarized the slides while being sure to highlight key points. The amount being presented is bring to referendum is \$27,264,110 with a proposed FY26 Real Estate and Property Tax Mill Rate of 35.27 and proposed FY26 Motor Vehicle Tax Rate of 32.46. R. Lally discussed the primary drivers of the increase in the proposed budget and mil rate that include contractual increases in salaries and wages to employees and vendors; significant increases in utility costs, unavoidable capital needs; and a decrease in revenue other than taxes, largely driven by a \$750,000 reduction in state funding. R. Lally reviewed the Town's Mil Rate History since FY2014 and the proposed tax impact examples on real estate/personal property and assessed motor vehicle value. R. Lally provided the next steps for the Proposed FY26 budget, and it costs the Town an estimated \$5,800 per referendum. A. Gordon clarified the Assessed Motor Vehicle chart which is challenging this year because the State of Connecticut passed a law that allowed towns to assess vehicles based on MRSP's instead of fair market value. R. Lally added that the State periodically talks about eliminating the Motor Vehicle Tax entirely.

J. Rupert reviewed the Board of Selectmen FY26 Budget and shared the 2024-2025 accomplishments. J. Rupert provided the Board of Selectmen's Goals that were created at the Board of Selectmen's Retreat on April 13, 2024. J. Rupert discussed the FY26 Proposed

Expenditures totaling \$7,408,870 which is an increase of 4.68% increase from FY25. J. Rupert displayed a chart on the Board of Selectmen's Budget since FY16 showing even growth. J. Rupert reported on the budget change information sorted by department and increase by dollars and percentage and departments showing a decrease in their proposed budget. J. Rupert stated the biggest drivers of budget increases/decreases are the increase in payroll (48.51%), increase in personnel services (40.18%), increase in maintenance/operation/supplies (10.64%), increase in insurance (5.14%), and reductions (-4.47%) in other categories. J. Rupert reported these are the projected revenues:

Property Taxes \$19,638,553
Motor Vehicle and Supplemental Motor Vehicle \$1,820,411
Prior Year's Taxes \$85,000
Interest and Fees on Property Taxes \$65,000
Other Town Revenue \$2,905,842
State and Federal Grants \$2,749,304
Total \$27,264,110

J. Rupert discussed the Town Capital Proposals totaling \$626,700 that include vehicle replacements, Town Hall door replacement, firehouse roof, grants, and bridge construction. K. Heckt reviewed the Board of Education Capital Proposals totaling \$1,069,016 for HVAC assessment, energy management systems and utility truck with plow. R. Lally pointed out Past Projecton Reallocation of -\$49,684 and J. Rupert added this is unexpended monies in the Capital Budget for other projects and those projects have been completed so these monies have been reallocated which reduces the total request. J. Collins added this amount included ARPA funds.

K. Heckt reported on the Board of Education's Recommended 2025-2026 Budget. K. Heckt stated the FY26 Proposed Expenditures total \$17,312,903 which is an increase of 4.63% from last year. K. Heckt said the distribution of the FY26 Increase is: \$224,725 in salaries, \$324,315 in benefits, \$13,363 in Special Education, \$72,852 for Admin/Business, \$14,082 for regular instruction, and \$117,409 for operations/services. K. Heckt displayed the budget drivers: contractual obligations (71.64% increase), increase in maintenance (26.62% increase), and Special Education increase (1.74%). K. Heckt stated the projected revenues from grants are \$690,679. K. Heckt reminded everyone of potential future referendum items. K. Heckt shared the 2024-2025 accomplishments and student engagement and service.

Mary Tujune, Forest School Road, asked what generated the increase in the Building and Land budget for next year. J. Rupert replied it is due to the increase in salaries.

Sandra Pierog asked for an explanation on the taxation of commercial vehicles for the next fiscal year. S. Pierog said she understands they are no longer taxed as motor vehicles but rather taxed as personal property. A. Gordon replied she believes they will be taxed at the real estate and personal property rate. S. Pierog asked what happens to the owner of a combination plate and whether they are commercial or personal property. R. Lally replied

they will have to ask the assessor. S. Pierog commented on the reduced election budget. A. Gordon asked about a potential National Executive Order which could increase the Registrar's budget. S. Pierog replied that it is correct and could require voters to re-register. R. Lally discussed the process should this happen, and these costs are not covered in future budgets.

Ron Camboni, 15 Ridge Mountain Road, asked about the current ranking of Bolton Center School and Bolton High School and how it compares to twenty years ago. K. Heckt shared that Bolton High School recently received an award from the State of Connecticut based on metrics for students in the top 1 or 2% of high schools in the State of Connecticut. R. Camboni stated he is looking to find out the assessment of education performance.

R. Fournier replied to S. Pierog's question about combination plates and said there is no effect on the plates of a vehicle and all are taxed as motor vehicles.

There being no further comments, R. Lally closed the Public Hearing at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Mary J. Johnston, Board Clerk

Mary J. Johnston

PLEASE SEE THE MINUTES OF SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS FOR CORRECTIONS TO THESE MINUTES AND ANY CORRECTIONS HERETO.

SEE ATTACHMENTS UNDER SEPARATE COVER.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
7:15 P.M., THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2025
*TOWN HALL/ZOOM***

Finance Committee Members Present at Town Hall/Zoom: Chair Ross Lally, Member Robert Morra, Member Amanda Gordon, Member Rhea Klein, Member Tyler Egner, Member Ashley Phelan. Absent was Member Chris Connelly.

Staff Present Via Town Hall/Zoom: Chief Financial Officer Jill Collins, Board Clerk Mary Johnston, Town Administrator Jim Rupert, Selectmen Rodney Fournier, Board of Education Superintendent Kristin Heckt, Incoming Board of Education Superintendent David Caruso,

Others Present Via Town Hall/Zoom: Ashley Paggoli, Jim Loersch, Ann Philaramo, Steve Michaud

1. Call to Order

R. Lally called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

R. Lally advised the Committee he will not vote on agenda items due to a conflict of interest.

2. Public Participation:

Ann Philaramo, Hebron Road, said she would like the Committee to consider the concept of allowing people to pay twice since some residents have concerns with their finances. R. Morra replied this has been an ongoing issue and one of the driving issues that would accommodate that move with the least amount of impact is the reduction in interest rates. R. Lally added the Town would have less money due to loss of interest income. R. Morra stated this is something that can be discussed for a future fiscal year. R. Lally stated this is something the Committee has discussed.

Steve Michaud stated he is having a hard time understanding how the Town is coming to the percent increase for the mil rate. S. Michaud pointed out this is a huge increase of 13.46% from last year, which he will be paying. S. Michaud stated this is somewhat misleading to do the 32.74 mil rate because he thinks it is about a 20% increase from the net amount to be raised by taxation. S. Michaud said he is concerned for the voters that might not realize they are voting for a 13.46% increase and not a 6.87% increase. S. Michaud stated the budget documents should reflect the 13.46% increase for good faith and transparency and asked for this information to be provided to the citizens. After discussion on how to communicate this information, the Committee will add a comment referencing the rate in the budget document that is distributed online and in public buildings. S. Michaud asked when he could approach the Committee for the ability to pay

taxes twice. R. Morra replied citizens can attend meetings to ask the Committee to consider this payment option.

3. Approval of Minutes

3a. April 17, 2025, Regular Meeting

R. Morra MOVED to approve the April 17, 2025, Regular Meeting. A. Gordon SECONDED the motion. A. Gordon stated in Section 6c) to remove the wording that she would complete the presentation and add she will work with town staff. R. Morra MOVED to modify his motion with the modification. A. Gordon SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH THE MODIFICATION 5:0:0.

3b. April 22, 2025, Special Meeting

R. Morra MOVED to approve the April 22, 2025, Special Meeting. A. Phelan SECONDED the motion. J. Collins pointed out that the April 17, 2025, meeting at the end of the Minutes should be removed. R. Morra MOVED to amend his motion to remove the April 17, 2025, meeting at the end. A. Phelan SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY AS AMENDED 5:0:0.

4. Ongoing Business

4a. Discussion on FY2025/2026 Revenues & Expenditures

J. Collins reported the new Education Cost Sharing amount is \$2,683,216.00 and the FY25 Revenues had an additional \$17,000. J. Collins stated the auditor is certain the Liabilities will not change and reported the new surplus is \$85,000 for a total of \$1,840,291.00. J. Collins said this new information changes to mil rate to 34.74 after adjustments. K. Heckt stated there have been no updates on benefits. A lengthy discussion was held on reporting the vacancy rate for the Board of Education in the budget and the possibility of budget cuts.

4b. Discussion on FY2024/2025 Revenues & Expenditures

A. Gordon MOVED to approve the revised FY2025 revenues at \$24,068,661.00. A. Phelan SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 5:0:0.

The Committee discussed the volatility cap of the State of Connecticut's annual budget and the effect on the Board of Education's budget.

4c. Consider and possible action on Finance Committee's Approved budget for FY2026

4d. Consider and possibly action on ballot question

A. Gordon MOVED to approve the FY26 Budget in the amount of \$27,239,518.00. T. Egner SECONDED the motion. It was determined the FY 26 budget is approved through the ballot question. A. Gordon RESCINDED her motion to approve the FY26 Budget. T. Egner RESCINDED his second.

A. Gordon MOVED to approve the referendum question **"Shall the Annual Budget for the Town of Bolton, Connecticut, for the Fiscal Year 2026 as recommended by the Finance**

Committee in the amount of \$27,239,518.00 be adopted?”. T. Egner SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 5:0:0.

4e. Discussion of Public Communication/Outreach

R. Klein shared comments that had been posted on Facebook and NextDoor. Some of the comments were on the reasons for placeholders which are in the budget pending approval by the Selectmen. R. Klein also stated some social media comments were about cutting staff by 5%. The Committee discussed the issue of cutting staff and the impact to town services.

The Committee discussed updates to the Budget Document and adding a brief message from the Finance Committee on the Mil Rate Post Tax adjustment with the percentage. After a lengthy discussion, R. Lally and J. Collins will work on this language to add to the Budget Document.

4f. Budget calendar

A. Gordon MOVED to cancel the May 15, 2025, Regular Meeting. A. Phelan SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 5:0:0.

5. New Business

5a. Discussion on status of FY2024 Audit

R. Lally expressed his concerns about why it took so long for the FY2024 Audit and asked that this discussion be tabled. A. Gordon MOVED to table the discussion on the status of the FY2024 audit to a future meeting to be determined. R. Morra SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 5:0:0.

6. Adjournment

A. Gordon MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:13 P.M. R. Morra SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: 5:0:0.

Respectfully submitted by Mary J. Johnston

Mary J. Johnston

PLEASE SEE THE MINUTES OF SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS FOR CORRECTIONS TO THESE MINUTES AND ANY CORRECTIONS HERETO.

SEE ATTACHMENTS UNDER SEPARATE COVER.

At its May 21, 2025 special meeting, the Finance Committee of the Town of Bolton, Connecticut voted the following:

“Shall the Annual Budget for the Town of Bolton, Connecticut for the fiscal year 2026 as recommended by the Finance Committee in the amount of \$_____ be adopted?”

Ross Lally,
Chair, Finance Committee

NEEDS BUS 4/11/11 FINANCIAL
Comm.
Approval

BUDGET TRANSFER REQUEST
TO
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

BUDGET: _____

Transfer \$ _____ from category _____ to category _____

(within budget) from # _____ - 000000 - 00000

to # _____ - 000000 - 00000

Transfer \$ 300⁰⁰ from Budget Admin to Budget ZBA

from category Prof/Tech to category OFFICIAL Admin Sics

from # 1005-041-4107 000000 - 53300 00000

to # 1005-041-4155 000000 - 53100 00000

Other \$ 300⁰⁰

Explanation: TO COVER board clerk costs.

Administrative Officer

Date

Board of Selectmen

Approved

Comments:

Robert Morra _____
Mike Eremita _____
Robert DePietro _____
Adam Teller _____
Pam Sawyer _____

Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Date 5/6/25

BUDGET TRANSFER REQUEST TO BOARD OF SELECTMEN

BUDGET: ADMINISTRATION

Transfer \$ _____ from category _____ to category _____

(within budget) from # _____ - 000000 - 00000

to # _____ - 000000 - 00000

Transfer \$ 800⁰⁰ from Budget ADMINISTRATION to Budget FIRE COMMISSION

from category PROF/TECH to category PROF/TECH

from # 1005-041-4402 - 000000 - 53300 - 00000

to # 1005-042-4203 - 000000 - 55900 - 00000

Other \$ _____

Explanation: TO COVER \$800⁰⁰ AS BUDGETED BY BOS

Tim Rpt Administrative Officer
5/6/25 Date

Board of Selectmen

Approved

Comments:

Robert Morra

R. Fournier

A. Gordon

C. Marion

P. Smayda

M. Clark

T. Siedler

Yes

No

☒

☐

☒

☐

☐

☒

☒

☐

☒

☐

☒

☐

5/6/25

BUDGET TRANSFER REQUEST TO BOARD OF SELECTMEN

BUDGET: ADMINISTRATION

Transfer \$ _____ from category _____ to category _____

(within budget) from # _____ - 000000 - 00000

to # _____ - 000000 - 00000

Transfer \$ 10,000⁰⁰ from Budget ADMINISTRATION to Budget LAND USE

from category PROFESSION/TECH to category REGULAR PAYROLL

from # 1005-041-4107 - 000000 - 53300 - 00000

to # 1005-041-4151 - 000000 - 51610 - 00000

Other \$ _____

Explanation: TO COVER PAYROLL FOR NEW BUILDING OFFICIAL COVERING MARLBORO AND OTHER COMMUNITIES UNDER SHARED SERVICES AGREEMENTS. THIS COST IS COVERED BY THE REGIONAL PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE GRANT AND OUR PARTNER COMMUNITIES.

Thomas P. [Signature] Administrative Officer
5/6/25 Date

Board of Selectmen

Approved

Comments:

Robert Morra

R. Fournier

A. Gordon

C. Marion

Pam Sawyer

M. Clark

T. Sadtler

Yes

No

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5/6/25

BUDGET TRANSFER REQUEST
TO
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

BUDGET: ADMINISTRATION TO Land USE

Transfer \$ _____ from category _____ to category _____

(within budget) from # _____ - 000000 - 00000

to # _____ - 000000 - 00000

Transfer \$ 9,500⁰⁰ from Budget ADMINISTRATION to Budget LAND USE

from category LEGAL SERVICES to category REGULAR PAYROLL

from # 1005-041-4107 - 000000 - 53020 - 00000

to # 1005-041-4151 - 000000 - 51610 - 00000

Other \$ _____

Explanation: TO COVER PAY ROLL FOR NEW BUILDING OFFICIAL COVERING MARLBOROUGH AND OTHER COMMUNITIES UNDER SHARED SERVICES AGREEMENTS. THIS COST IS COVERED BY THE REGIONAL PERFORMANCE GRANT AND INCOME FROM OUR PARTNER COMMUNITIES.

Thomas Adams Administrative Officer
5/1/25 Date

Board of Selectmen

Approved

Comments:

	Yes	No
<u>R. Farmer</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>B. Morris</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>A. Gordon</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>C. Manton</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>P. Sawyer</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>M. Clark</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>T. Sadler</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5/6/25