

**TOWN OF BOLTON
FINANCE COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
7:15 P.M., TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2025
*TOWN HALL/ZOOM**

Finance Committee Members Present at Town Hall/Zoom: Chair Ross Lally, Member Chris Connelly, Member Amanda Gordon, Member Rhea Klein, Member Tyler Egner, Member Ashley Phelan, Member Robert Morra (Zoom-8:45 p.m.).

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

Others Present Via Town Hall/Zoom: Jessica Saffron, Sarah LaRoche

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:

Jessica Szafran, 19 Rocco Road, thanked the Committee Members for the preparation of the budget and how we can move forward. J. Szafran stated she knows the Town and School District will do the best balancing the needs of the Town as a whole knowing cuts have to come somewhere.

R. Lally shared some of the comments he received regarding the Town's budget. Those comments include this is a balanced budget and the best that we can do; the Town is hiding money somewhere, what happens to the leftover funds at the end of the fiscal year, the size of the school budget relative to the Town budget and possible elimination of the high school. R. Lally discussed the consequences of closing the high school. A. Phelan added K. Heckt conducted a detailed analysis of the cost of having students education elsewhere and the results showed it would cost more. R. Lally stated this issue is something to monitor. A. Gordon added there have been the same concerns on the Board of Selectmen side on increases to personnel, outside services costs and ability to obtain grants to help offset costs. R. Lally encouraged residents to attend meetings and participate if they have concerns with the budget process.

Sarah LaRoche, 15 French Road, inquired if there was a grant finding position with the Town. A. Gordon explained these duties are usually handled by the Town Administrator. K Heckt stated she or other Directors handle these duties for the Board of Education. S.

LaRoche asked if special certifications are needed for this position. R. Lally asked S. LaRoche to contact Town Administrator Jim Rupert or Selectmen Rodney Fournier to see if there are opportunities to assist the Town.

3. Approval of Minutes

3a. April 22, 2025 Public Hearing

A.Gordon MOVED to approve the April 22, 2025 Public Hearing. T. Egner SECONDED the motion. R. Klein stated on Page 2 to correct "Terhune" and remove "Forest" from the address of Mary Terhune. A. Gordon AMENDED her MOTION to include the correction. T. Egner SECONDED the amended motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 5:0:0 AS AMENDED.

3b. May 1, 2025 Special Meeting

A.Gordon MOVED to approve the May 1, 2025 Special Meeting. R. Klein SECONDED the motion. A. Gordon stated under Item #2 "Philaramo" should be "Silaramo" and "Steve" should be "Scott". A. Gordon AMENDED her MOTION to include the two corrections. R. Klein SECONDED the amended motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 5:0:0 AS AMENDED.

4. Ongoing Business

4a. Discussion on FY2024/2025 Revenues & Expenditures

J. Collins reported there were no substantial changes to Revenues only \$15,000 total. A. Gordon asked if there were additional givebacks. K. Heckt replied none for the Board of Education. J. Rupert stated he expects \$50,000 for Board of Selectmen.

4b. Discussion on FY2025/2026 Revenues & Expenditures

K. Heckt reported the Board of Education will be able to cut \$230,000 from the budget due to decrease in insurance costs and hiring for two positions. This cut will have no impact to programs, services for children or current staff.

J. Rupert reported there are no changes to the expenditures and revenues. J. Rupert stated he has been looking at ways to reduce to Capital budget and there could be some savings from the roofing project and Town Hall Door project by funding part of the costs from Entitlement Funds and Town Aid Road. J. Rupert stated these changes would be reductions in the Capital Budget for a total \$158,000. R. Lally stated the total savings to the budget would be in the amount of \$453,000.

The Committee discussed how to communicate the new changes to the FY26 Budget and the new Mil rate. R. Lally displayed a spreadsheet that provided an analysis on previous/current budgets and Mil rates and the potential cuts to the budget.

K. Heckt asked about additional referendum signage for the next election and thought it would be helpful for the voters. A. Gordon stated another possibility is using Everbridge to encourage residents to vote and K. Heckt agreed. Discussion was held on sign locations to

reach most voters. After discussion, J. Rupert will send out referendum notifications through the Town Bulletin and Everbridge on the Tuesday one week before the election and on the Monday the day before the election. The Committee discussed placing signs on Notch Road, sign board at the Senior Center and signs at schools.

J. Collins reviewed the changes to the FY2026 Budget: \$150,000 givebacks to Board of Selectmen; \$16,288 revenues to Board of Selectmen; \$230,000 reduction to Board of Education; \$100,000 reduction to Board of Selectmen; and \$58,000 reduction to Capital Budget. J. Collins stated the new amount would be \$26,851,518 for expenditures and the new potential Mil rate is 33.77. J. Rupert stated there will be no reduction in Town services. K. Heckt reported there could be potential reductions in positions and programs for the Board of Education. A. Gordon stated it is 3.8% increase from FY25 Budget to FY26 Budget and a 9.5% increase in the Mil rate. R. Lally pointed out there is nothing new in the FY26 Budget and explained the consequences for voting yes or no on the Town's budget. A. Phelan stated she likes the Tier Structured approach and feels the residents are looking for drastic cuts. Discussion was held on additional cuts to the budget and how to communicate the potential cuts to services if the referendum does not pass on June 10, 2025. Discussion continued on shared services for budget savings and efficiencies.

4c. Consider and possibly act on: ballot question

A.Gordon MOVED to approve the Ballot 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 \$26,851,518 be adopted?"** R. Klein SECONDED the motion.

R. Klein stated this budget would not cut services, but if the budget goes to another referendum, services will be cut. A. Phelan added there should be some good effort made to calculate an efficiency gain with a \$200,000 target. The Committee discussed the process of possible budget cuts early in the budget process and how to communicate to the residents. R. Morra suggested increasing the cuts to \$500,000 with the additional amount coming out of Capital Budget. After discussion on where the additional amount would come from, R. Morra withdrew his proposal.

A.Gordon AMENDED her motion to **say that we are getting to that budget that she already read off by reducing the Board of Education budget by \$230,000, reducing the Capital Budget by \$58,000 and reducing the Board of Selectmen Budget by \$100,000 for a total of \$388,000 decrease in expenses for FY26 proposed.** R. Klein SECONDED the amendment. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0 AS AMENDED.

A.Gordon MOVED to revise the FY25 Revenues to \$23,884,889. A. Phelan SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0.

5. New Business

5a. Transfers

A.Gordon MOVED to transfer \$300 from Budget Admin to Budget ZBA from category Prof/Tech to Official/Admin Svcs to cover board clerk costs. A. Phelan SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0.

A.Gordon MOVED to transfer \$800 from Budget Administration to Budget Fire Commission from Category Prof/Tech to category Proficiency Fund to cover \$800 as budgeted by the Board of Selectmen. A. Phelan SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0.

A.Gordon MOVED to transfer \$10,000 from Budget Administration to Budget Land Use from category Profession/Tech to category Regular Payroll 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. R. Klein SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0.

A.Gordon MOVED to transfer \$9,500 from Budget Administration to Budget Land Use from category Legal Services to category Regular Payroll to cover payroll for new building official covering Marlboro and other communities under Shared Services Agreements. This cost is covered by the Regional Performance Grant and Income from our partner communities. R. Klein SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0.

6b. Consider and possibly act on: Setting the real estate and personal property mil rate for FY 2026.

No action was taken.

6c. Consider and possibly act on: Setting the motor vehicle mil rate for FY 2026.

No action was taken.

6d. Consider and possibly act on: Additional meeting date

A.Gordon MOVED to set a Special Meeting on Wednesday, June 11, 2026 at 7:15 p.m. T. Egner SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0.

6. Adjournment

A. Gordon MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:31 P.M. R. Morra SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: 6:0:0.

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 June 11, 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