

**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.