

**TOWN OF BOLTON
FINANCE COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
8:00 A.M. WEDNESDAY, July 16, 2025
*TOWN HALL/ZOOM***

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

Staff Present Via Town Hall/Zoom: Chief Financial Officer Jill Collins, Town Administrator Jim Rupert, Superintendent of Schools David Caruso, First Selectman Rodney Fournier. Absent was Clerk Mary Johnston.

Others Present Via Town Hall/Zoom: Jim Loersch

1. Call to Order: R. Lally called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

2. Public Participation

J Collins asked that nobody talk about her sick time.

J Rupert commented that Mr. Erimita asked to speak with R Lally regarding simplifying budget documents that are available on the town website.

3. Ongoing Business

3a. Discussion on FY2025/FY2026 Revenues & Expenditures

R Morra asked if any additional revenues could be recognized for June 2025. He is against further substantial cuts and would rather seek to carry over unexpended FY25 funds. He asked if the \$35,000 in June interest was considered in setting the last proposed budget. J Collins responded that the interest was included previously.

J Collins said August is going to have many payments for debt service and that our banks account may dip under the \$5 million minimum required to earn interest and avoid fees each month.

R Klein stated that she had heard that with the abolishing of the Federal Department of Education, Bolton may lose \$22,000 in grants. A Phelan noted that the impacts are unknown at this point.

R Lally said that we should avoid shortchanging our future for short-term current gains.

A Gordon shared that the public perception is that we haven't made truly significant cuts; they want to see efficiencies. She would like us to highlight and emphasize the cuts that have been made.

- R Morra stated that subcontracting building department services to four other towns

generates a net positive in revenues. Unfortunately, these revenues do not show up clearly in the budget documents. He also stated that efficiencies between BOS and BOE take time to implement. He said that social media has a lot of mis/disinformation around our budget process. It is important for people to vote on the facts.

- A Gordon mentioned that the Assessor is shared with another town and that the building and grounds manager is shared between BOS and BOE.
- J Rupert explained that Animal Control costs us \$7,000 annually, but could cost \$70k-\$80k if done by ourselves. We are always looking for more efficiencies among Marlborough, Andover, Willington and Ashford
- A Phelan pointed out that the BOE has formally eliminated positions: dean of students, special needs paraprofessional, administrative assistant. These are true long term reductions.
- R Fournier said that if too much is cut, it is hard to implement efficiencies because they have a cost upfront. Lack of funds prevent pursuing grants for projects to bring in more business (sewer/water up Rt 44) or enhance public safety (Lyman Road bridge). Projects like these require the town to put down 20% of the total cost or pay the full amount up front and be reimbursed later.
- J Rupert said that many of these grant-projects have been used to make cost reductions in the past. But we have lost out on many grant matches from budget cuts.
- R Lally pointed out the negative cycle this causes.

T Egner noted that the statutory floor on the BOE budget means more pressure is on BOS and CAPA budgets for cuts.

R Lally said the public doesn't perceive well the work done by the committee and what is driving the budget.

R Klein said it seems some 500 people always vote no, and there's about 100 people to convince

A Phelan thought our four-page budget summary document on the town website is good, but a one-pager would be better.

The committee discussed the town website and ease of use, and an edit was made to show 'Scroll Down' for the budget docs.

A Gordon noted that the public wanted more transparency around budget line item detail. They were particularly interested in salaries, numbers of employees, benefits, and org charts.

R Morra MOVED to reduce the BOS budget by \$5,000 and the BOE budget by \$15,000. A Phelan SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 5:0:0

3b. Consider and possibly act on the Ballot Question

R Morra MOVED "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 \$26,371,962 be adopted?" R Klein SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 5:0:0

3c. Discussion should the budget not pass again

The team decided to postpone this discussion until the next meeting.

A Phelan Left the meeting at 9:12 AM.

3d. Additional Meetings

R Morra MOVED to set a special meeting date on Wednesday July 30th at 8:30 AM. T Egner SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 4:0:0.

4. New Business

4a. Consider and possibly act on a temporary mil rate

R Morra MOVED to set the temporary mil rate at 31.92 T Egner SECONDED the motion.

Discussion:

- J Rupert expressed that he did not want to be in a position to return funds; it is a more costly process and has bad optics. He suggested a temporary mil rate of 31.00.
- R Morra agreed it is better to send out a supplemental tax bill than to return funds.
- R Morra WITHDREW his MOTION. T Egner WITHDREW his SECOND .

R Morra MOVED to set the temporary mil rate at 31.00. A Gordon SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 4:0:0.

4a. Consider and possibly act on mil rate

No action taken.

5. Adjournment

R Morra MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:23 AM. T Egner SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 4:0:0.