

**TOWN OF BOLTON
FINANCE COMMITTEE
Special Meeting
Town Hall/ZOOM*
July 30, 2025 – 10:00 am**

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 at Town Hall/Zoom: Chief Financial Officer Jill Collins, Town Administrator Jim Rupert, Board of Education Superintendent David Caruso, Selectman Rodney Fournier. Absent was Clerk Mary Johnston.

Others Present Via Town Hall/Zoom: None

Call to Order

1) Public Participation

None

2) Ongoing Business

a. Discussion on FY2025/FY2026 Revenues & Expenditures

R Lally said the referendum passed by a margin of 12 votes, substantially fewer than the 200-250 deciding the previous referenda. Under 6 votes triggers an automatic recount. He said that public feedback he's received has been people want change in the town charter, and more efficiencies. They also asked about the referendum timing and more accurate budget projections.

R Klein said that our last budget cut has been effectively offset by the cost of 5 referenda. She noted that only 1200 of over 3000 registered voters turned out this time, and we need to increase voter turnout. Over 2000 people are on Everbridge. May referenda are tough because there are still many unknowns. Suggested to revise the charter. She then discussed comparable home values and mil rates in surrounding towns and discussed how to present an example tax increase to voters.

R Morra said feedback has been about declining student population and we are just starting with our new superintendent. He said we can cut anything from CAPA budget, and thought a reduction of \$50K would get the budget passed, and that anything near or over \$100k reduction would be irresponsible.

R Lally noted that getting back to the FY25 effective mil rate would require cuts of \$895,000 and affect the schools, roads, police, trash, etc. Because of state law, only \$200,000 of this reduction would come from the BOE. The remaining \$695,000 would have to come from the BOS.

T Egner said that feedback has been people want more cuts and efficiencies, but large cuts now would cost taxpayers much more later.

A Phelan said feedback has been this past referendum was not even worth voting for a \$20K cut. More efficiencies and emphasized better contract negotiations.

A Gordon said feedback received asking if contracts can go to referendum. Discussed staff retention and how Bolton salaries are very much in line with surrounding towns. The vote was very close, we agreed we are done making cuts.

R Lally proposed that we should really cut \$1. We can reduce our voting hours to save ~\$1200 per referenda per State Law and Town Ordinance. He said we should have another public meeting since the last one was well received.

R Klein asked if any new revenues had come in since we met last. J Collins confirmed that the answer is no.

J Collins noted that FY26 revenues are going to be down since we have not been receiving tax payments. Confirmed Real Estate tax bills are going out, balances under \$5MM incur fees, and Q1 is the most expensive quarter so FY 26 is already behind on revenues.

Town Tax Collector, Lori Bushnell, noted that ideally we set a budget before 6/15 so there is no delay in getting bills out for 7/1 each year. Try to schedule 4 referenda before 6/15.

The board discussed the continuously changing variables in the budget like givebacks and interest. The team concluded better voter turnout will yield better results.

R Morra MOVED to reduce the budget by \$20,000 with \$15,000 from the BOE and \$5,000K from BOS. R Klein SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0.

- b. Consider and possibly act on: Ballot Question
R Morra MOVED to use the amount of \$26,331,982 for the Ballot Question.
R Klein SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0.
- c. Discussion should the budget not pass again
-Tabled
- d. Additional meetings
- Referendum 8/12, Meeting 8/13 at 10:00 AM

- Another public meeting 8/7 5:00 - 7:00 PM
- A Gordon asked when the absentee ballots will be available, R Lally said within 1-2 days.
- e. Consider and possibly act on mil rate
 - Tabled

3) Adjournment

R Morra MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 10:54 AM. R Klein SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0.