

**TOWN OF BOLTON
FINANCE COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
7:15 P.M., THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2025
TOWN HALL/ZOOM**

Inland Wetlands Commission Members Present Via Zoom: Chair Ross Lally, Member Rodney Fournier, Member Ashley Phelan, Member Tyler Egner, Member Melissa Wielandt, Member David Cowles.

Staff Present Via Zoom: Chief Financial Officer Jill Collins, Town Administrator Jim Rupert, Board Clerk Mary Johnston, Tax Collector Lori Bushnell, Registrar Sandra Pierog

Others Present Via Zoom: None

1. Call to Order

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

2. Public Participation

None.

3. Election of Officers

R. Fournier MOVED to nominate Tyler Egner as Chair and Ross Lally as Vice Chair. A. Phelan SECONDED the motion. M. Wielandt MOVED to nominate Ross Lally as Chair and Tyler Egner as Vice Chair. D. Cowles SECONDED the motion. After discussion, MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0 to elect Ross Lally as Chair and Tyler Egner as Vice Chair.

4. Approval of Minutes

3a. October 16, 2025, Regular Meeting

T. Egner MOVED to approve the October 16, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes. R. Fournier SECONDED the motion. R. Lally, A. Phelan, M. Wielandt and D. Cowles ABSTAINED. MOTION CARRIED 2:0:4

4b. November 20, 2025, Regular Meeting

D. Cowles MOVED to approve November 20, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes. R. Fournier SECONDED the motion. D. Caruso made a correction in Section 4c, BOE Update "D. Caruso expressed concerns for the remaining budget year with increases in the amount of 14-16% 'for health insurance costs'". D. Cowles AMENDED his motion to include the amendment. R. Fournier AMENDED his second. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0 as amended.

5. Elected Official and Town Staff Reports

5a. Tax Collection Summary

J. Collins reported that tax collected at the end of November was at 100.62%. J. Collins pointed out that the 100.62% is 98% of 100 and explained how this is used during the budget process. L. Bushnell explained the difference between refunds and overpayments to the Committee. J. Collins provided more information about refunds and overpayments.

5b. Town Update

J. Collins reported on the revenues received through November that was on course for this time of year. J. Collins then reported on the expenditures for the current fiscal year. M. Wielandt had several questions on the Fire Commission budget which J. Collins will send the breakdown to the Committee. M. Wielandt felt there could be cost sharing opportunities for Police and Fire. J. Rupert explained the Town picks up 80% of salary and fringe benefits. R. Fournier explained the Committee will review the breakdown of each department during the budget process. M. Wielandt expressed concerns with a \$300,000 budget for Police when there are two officers. The Committee discussed sharing the number of calls of Police and Fire to the residents. M. Wielandt asked about the Finance, Administration and Fringe Benefits budgets. J. Collins and J. Rupert explained each department's budget. J. Collins reported on interest received through November. R. Lally pointed out monthly interest received is lower due to the delay in getting the budget passed. D. Caruso added it would be beneficial to report the loss of interest for not passing the referendum this next budget. J. Collins presented the Month End Balances. R. Lally said a copy of the Charter provided to the Committee.

5c. BOE Update

D. Caruso reported the Board of Education has expended 31% of their budget which is the same as last year at this time. D. Caruso reported on some savings and anticipated no major expenses. D. Caruso said grant funding will be received in January. D. Caruso stated they are anticipating health insurance costs increasing 17% and increases for utilities.

5d. Other

The Committee discussed the audit process. R. Lally stated the Auditor is willing to meet with the Committee to make better use of their services. J. Rupert provided additional information on the Auditor and their experience with the Town. A. Phelan said she met with the Auditor and was extremely impressed when she met with him. A. Phelan said it is up to the Committee to become more engaged with the Auditor. R. Lally stated he will ask the Auditor to attend the March meeting to answer questions from the Committee.

6. Ongoing Business

6a. Communication

T. Egner suggested reporting to the public the interest lost and cost due to the referendum being pushed back. M. Wielandt asked about a student taking notes at the Coffee and Conversation meeting. D. Caruso replied he did have someone to do the Minutes at the next one. After discussion on scheduling and content/topics, the next Coffee and Conversation is scheduled for Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. in the Senior Center. D. Caruso suggested having a standing Coffee and Conversation session quarterly about general happenings in Bolton. The Committee agreed with D. Caruso's suggestion. Save the Date's will be advertised as soon as possible.

7. New Business

7a. Discussion with Tax Collector regarding timing of budget referendum

L. Bushnell discussed how the tax bills and budget go hand in hand. L. Bushnell requested the Committee intentionally consider the tax billing process as part of the budget planning. L. Bushnell said the goal is to have tax bills mailed by July 1, the Mil Rate needs to be adopted by June 15 and realistically the earlier the better. L. Bushnell explained the tax bill process after the Mil Rate is passed. L. Bushnell suggested starting the budget voting the first week in May means if a fourth referendum is needed, it would still be in time for June 15 deadline. L. Bushnell's recommendation is that this Committee plans the upcoming and future budget schedules with the tax billing in mind aiming for earlier referendums the first week in May whenever possible to allow for the four referendums by or close to June 15 deadline to adopt the Mil Rate. This supports prompt billing, steady revenue flow, and strong operational efficiency for the Town. S. Pierog explained the seven days between each referendum is too short and struggle with fourteen days. S. Pierog added they are receiving new voter and ballot building systems and explained the requirements for machine testing.

S. Pierog suggested, since the Selectmen set the referendum dates, to have a conversation with them. J. Collins shared the draft budget calendar with the Committee. J. Collins will send a copy to the Committee and will be on the January agenda for consideration.

7b. CAPA Meeting Dates

D. Cowles MOVED to set the CAPA meeting dates for January 13, 2026, and January 20, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. M. Wielandt SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0.

7c. Discussion on budget calendar dates

The Committee discussed this earlier in the meeting and will be considered at the January meeting.

7d. Discussion on bank information

R. Lally reported on whether the Town had a signed agreement with Chelsea Groton Bank for financial services and keeping a \$5 million account balance for a higher interest rate. J. Collins said the agreements on file does not provide all information. J. Collins invited the Committee to come to her office to review the documents. A. Phelan suggested the Auditor review the documents as well.

7e. Discussion on grant information

J. Collins explained that the grants the Town has received requires the Town to spend the money upfront and then the Town is reimbursed. R. Lally said there is a cost for these grants and has an impact to the budget.

8. Adjournment: R. Fournier MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:34 p.m. D. Cowles 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.