

**TOWN OF BOLTON
FINANCE COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
7:15 P.M., THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026
TOWN HALL/ZOOM**

Finance Committee Members Present Via Town Hall/ Zoom: Chair Ross Lally, Member Tyler Egner, Member Melissa Wielandt, Member Rodney Fournier, Member David Cowles, Member Denay Johnston. Absent Member Benjamin Davies

Staff Present Via Zoom: Board Clerk Mary Johnston, Chief Financial Officer Jill Collins, Board of Education Superintendent David Caruso

Others Present Via Zoom: Andrew Broneill

1. Call to Order

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

2. Public Participation

None.

3. Approval of Minutes

3a. February 19, 2026, Regular Meeting

R. Fournier MOVED to approve the February 19, 2026, Meeting Minutes as presented. D. Cowles SECONDED the motion. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6:0:0.

4. Presentation of Budgets

R. Fournier presented the 2026-2027 Board of Selectmen Proposed Budget. R. Fournier discussed the commitment to Bolton residents, the 2025-2026 accomplishments and the Board of Selectmen Objectives. R. Fournier said the FY2027b Proposed Board of Selectmen Budget is \$9.77 million which is a 3.06% increase from FY2026 that focuses on reliable services, financial stewardship, and community quality of life. R. Fournier reviewed how the FY2027 Board of Selectmen budget is allocated. The significant budget drivers are:

<u>Source</u>	<u>Dollar Change</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>	<u>Details</u>
Payroll	\$200,022	64.17%	Increase in cost of living
Personnel Services	\$128,287	41.16%	Increase in premiums
Office Operating	\$32,110	10.30%	Software expenditures
Shared Service	\$30,000	9.62%	Increase resident trooper
Office/Adm Services	(\$25,000)	(8.02%)	Reduction out of state clerk
Separation Fund	(\$25,000)	(8.02%)	Reduction in request
Property/Liability	(\$54,363)	(17.44%)	Shift BLRWPCA Insurance

R. Fournier reviewed the budget increases/decreases by department and shared Bolton's paid positions. R. Fournier said, when adjusted for inflation, the FY2016 budget of \$6.8M equals about \$9.2M in 2026 dollars. The proposed FY2027 budget of \$9.8M is modestly above that level, reflecting rising costs and the Town's commitment to maintaining services. The Board of Selectmen and Board of Education capital proposals are as follows: Board of Education total, \$176,500; Board of Selectmen total, \$875,015; Past Projection Reallocation, (\$287,067); Grant Total \$764,448. R. Fournier discussed the Board of Selectmen Capital Proposals: FY2027 Totals \$875,015 with a total cost of \$2,358,149. The Board of Education Capital Proposals: FY2027 Totals \$176,500 with a total cost of \$309,766.

D. Caruso reviewed the 2026-2027 Bolton Board of Education's Recommended Budget. D. Caruso discussed the Strategic Plan, the Budget Process, Enrollment/Accomplishments, Review of Expenditures and Final Thoughts. The Bolton Public Schools 2020-2025 Strategic Plan consists of four goals: 1) Student Success; 2) Caring Culture; 3) Talent Development; and 4) Resource Stewardship. D. Caruso said the following economic factors played a part in the process: rate of inflation for the past 12 months in CT is 3.3%; health insurance is projected 13-15% increase; transportation cost will increase by at least 15%; and CT minimum wage increased to \$16.94 per hour. D. Caruso reported the Bolton Center School enrollment was 448 in FY25/FY26 and FY26/FY27 is projected to be 454. D. Caruso said the Columbia Enrollment for FY25/FY26 was 16 and FY26/FY27 is projected to be 15. The 2026-27 Columbia tuition is \$15,214.88. D. Caruso reviewed the accomplishments and student engagement and service. D. Caruso said the Budget Drivers are: Contractual Obligations-\$761,941; Increased costs in Maintenance and Services-\$110,901; Special Education-\$7,699; Regular Instruction-(\$2,771) and Administration and Business-(\$9,704). D. Caruso reported the FY27 Proposed increase is \$866,066 or 5.17% increase and \$761,941 of the increase is salary and health insurance or 4.54%.

R. Lally said the takeaways from the Committee discussion was the Board of Selectmen's number of payroll/insurance increases by departments and Board of Education's number of classes for AP that derives the number for Columbia. R. Lally discussed the FY27 revenues that the Committee will discuss at next week's meeting.

5. Elected Official and Town Staff Reports

5a. Tax Collection Summary

J. Collins had nothing to add to the report.

5b. Town Update

J. Collins had nothing to add to the report.

5c. Board of Education Update

D. Caruso had nothing to add to the report.

5d. Other

No report.

6. Ongoing Business

6a. Communication

The Committee discussed on how to communicate the budget calendar to the residents. It was felt the calendar can be placed in the Town Bulletin, posted at Town Hall, Senior Center, and Library. Copies of the calendar can also be made available. D. Johnston asked that a date stamp be added to the meeting packet information, so the Committee knows they have the most current information. R. Lally said he will work with staff on a simplified version of the budget documents. The Committee will review the budget presentations and projected revenues at the next meeting. The Committee thought a Coffee and Conversation session in April would be beneficial to discuss the proposed budget. D. Johnston suggested having drop boxes available at town locations for residents to place comments on the proposed budget. The Committee then discussed providing a town email for residents to submit comments. R. Lally said he will draft a message for the Committee to review next week for advertising in the Town Bulletin.

6b. Budget Calendar

The Committee reviewed the budget calendar, and the Committee will meet on Thursday, March 26, 2026, then review if future meetings are necessary.

7. New Business

7a. Discussion of fiscal planning of grants

R. Lally said he and J. Collins met to discuss the fiscal planning of grants and that the responsibility goes to the Board of Selectmen. R. Lally said whoever is managing the grant needs to work with the Town Administrator/CEO. R. Lally discussed the risks involved with managing town grants such as move them up or stretch them out, pay ourselves first than paying more down the road. R. Lally asked the Committee to think about this and be prepared to discuss at the next meeting. R. Lally said he will work with J. Collins to gather General Fund information.

8. Adjournment: D. Cowles MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 p.m. M. Wielandt 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.