

**TOWN OF BOLTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION SUBCOMMITTEE
Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.
Town Hall & Zoom Meeting
MEETING MINUTES**

	ROSTER	IN-PERSON	ZOOM	ABSENT
FIRST SELECTMAN:	Rodney Fournier	X		
SELECTMEN:	Bryce Aaronson		X	
	Mather Clarke	X		
	David Cowles		X	
	Robert DePietro			X
	Gwen Marrion	X		
	Tim Sadler	X		

STAFF:	Andrea Vassallo, Recording Secretary
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Members of the Public: Jim Aldrich

1.0 Call to Order:

Selectwoman Gwen Marrion called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

2.0 Public Comment:

Jim Aldrich presented to the BOS Finance & Administration Subcommittee compensation research he has been compiling for the First Selectman in Bolton, including a review of comparative salary data and roles of first selectmen and town administrative officers in various towns throughout Connecticut.

Some comparable variables when aggregating an average for a first selectman salary included but are not limited to municipal per capita income, population, public services – specifically fire departments, educational facilities – specifically a high school.

Subcommittee members debated the adequacy of the current salary, the methodology for benchmarking compensation, and the challenges of recruiting qualified candidates. Discussion further ensued regarding the lack of contractual details and obligations of the First Selectman position in the Town Charter.

First Selectman Salary & Job Description Review

The discussion focused on the need to increase the salary of the First Selectman based on comparative data from other towns.

- The current salary of the First Selectman is \$17,000, which is considered inadequate.
- The current hours worked by the first selectman is estimated at ~30 hours/week.

- A proposed salary increase to \$36,000 was discussed.
- Comparisons with other towns show that many First Selectmen earn more than the proposed salary, indicating a disparity.
- Previous Efforts include multiple attempts over the last six (6) years to raise the salary with limited progress.
- The need for a more structured approach to defining the role and responsibilities of the First Selectman is highlighted.
- The analysis focused on towns with a per capita income between \$36,000 and \$50,000, excluding outliers.
- The committee members agreed that any proposed increase in the first selectman's salary would not include providing health care benefits.
- Discussion included the consideration of overlapping contract terms between the Town Administrator and the First Selectman so there is no lapse in administration should there be a change in personnel or election.

3.0 Review and discuss data regarding First Selectman's salaries in other towns.

Town Budget and State Educational Cost-Sharing Discrepancies

The discussion highlighted the challenges in town budgeting and the decline in educational funding from the state.

- The state's educational cost-sharing (ECS) funding has decreased from \$3 million in 2008 to \$2.6 million in 2025.
- The state budget has grown from \$18 billion to \$27 billion, suggesting a lack of proportional funding for local education.
- The ECS formula does not account for inflation, leading to financial strain on the town's education system.
- The town's budget is growing at a rate comparable to inflation, but educational funding is not keeping pace. J. Aldrich stated that Bolton would technically have a surplus of \$1.2 million but does not.
- J. Aldrich stated that health care costs grew in surplus of 6-10% and the need for more affordable health care plans suggesting the BOS to consider public/private partnerships.

Critique of Peer Data

Other data compiled by Tim White at the request of the subcommittee was presented in comparison to the data presented by J. Aldrich. Subcommittee members agreed that a combination of both data sets would provide a fuller picture.

G. Marrion stated that the dataset prepared by T. White was initially asked to compare municipalities with similar forms of government as Bolton which yielded a result of nine other municipalities and was not a large enough sample size. The dataset further examined municipalities with populations less than 75K people.

Salary Increase Discussion for First Selectman:

G. Marrion asked J. Aldrich how he arrived that the First Selectman salary should increase to \$36K. J. Aldrich stated he crowd sourced the information from discussions with other municipalities and former first selectman of Bolton. Selectman T. Sadler stated that the BOS had previously discussed a salary range increase of approximately \$30-40K.

Salary Review Timeline

A public information session was held on April 22, 2025, regarding the potential increase in the First Selectman's salary. The public expressed a need for more data and transparency during the initial discussions.

Budget Review

The BOS discussed whether there were adequate monies in the budget to compensate for a potential salary increase. R. Fournier stated that approximately \$20K was carried over from FY 2025 (budget cycle ends June 30, 2026) into FY 2026 but has not been allocated. The committee aims to clarify the town's prior approval of a placeholder salary amount in the budget. J. Aldrich stated that the Town Charter currently makes no references to the salary of the First Selectman.

Selectman Discussion Summary:

J. Alrich was thanked for his time and summary report. The following topics were discussed by the Selectmen:

- Consensus among several Selectman that a salary increase of \$19K (from \$17K to \$36K) is not excessive however, a recent string of budget referenda makes a proposed salary increase politically sensitive.
- Lack of formal job description complicates benchmarking and setting expectations.
- Some Selectmen advocated for a clearer role definition to justify compensation and set performance standards.
- Historically low salary threshold discourages future qualified candidates from applying to the position of First Selectman.
- Members felt the public may not fully understand budget details or the demands of the First Selectman's role.
- Consensus that a public hearing is needed to explain the rationale, present data, and allow community input.

Responsibilities and Workload of the First Selectman

The committee is assessing the workload and responsibilities associated with the First Selectman role to determine appropriate compensation.

- The current workload averages around 30 hours per week, with fluctuations based on project demands.
- The First Selectman is responsible for overseeing various town projects and managing communications with regional and scientific/professional development agencies, which can be time-consuming.
- BOS will clarify with town staff which budget line items contain the salary placeholder and ensure transparency in all communications with the public.

Grant Writing and Project Management Considerations

The conversation among the Selectmen included the potential for hiring a dedicated grant writer to enhance the town's ability to secure funding and project execution.

- Concerns were raised about the financial implications of upfront costs for projects that require matching funds.
- Lack of consensus among the Selectman and the discussion may be premature.
- The committee acknowledges the importance of balancing project management with the town's financial capabilities.

Future Charter Revision

The committee is considering the timing and necessity of a charter revision to address the First Selectman's role, responsibilities, and potential salary increase. G. Marrion stated the Charter is to be reviewed every five (5) years and will inquire with Town Staff when is the next review cycle.

4.0 Discuss and possibly vote on recommendation to Board of Selectmen regarding First Selectman's salary.

Consensus among the BOS Finance & Administration Subcommittee is to hold a public information session and present data submitted by T. White and J. Aldrich and gather resident feedback. G. Marrion to coordinate with Town Administrator James Rupert to schedule the event which should align with existing meetings given proper advance notice to the public.

5.0 Adjourn

T. Sadler **MOVED to ADJOURN** the meeting **at 9:35 AM**. Selectman B. Aaronson **SECONDED**. **MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.**

Yea	Fournier, Aaronson, Clarke, Cowles, Marrion, Sadler
Nay	0
Abstain	0

Respectfully submitted by Andrea Vassallo, Recording Clerk

Andrea Vassallo

Please see minutes of subsequent meetings for corrections to these minutes and any corrections hereto.

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