

Lunenburg Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Bilotta Meeting Room
Lunenburg Town Hall
February 27, 2025

Present Members: Chair Chris Menard, Vice Chair Jean Russell, Clerk Tom Gray
Committee Member Tanya Dall, Committee Member Ana Lockwood,
Committee Member Mike Rupp, Committee Member Jay Simeone

1. Call to Order

The meeting opened at 7:00 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Announcements

Chris Menard shares that the Town Caucus is on March 10th.

Chris Menard learned from the last School Committee meeting that Peter Beardmore will be stepping down leaving 3 openings on the School Committee. Michael-Ray Jeffreys and Tom Alonzo will not be returning when their term runs out on the Select Board

4. Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

5. Town Manager & Finance Director Reports

The FY26 revenues totaled \$48,594,145

There are 4 sources of revenue:

1. 72% of revenue comes from local taxpayers in the form of property tax totaling \$35,005,838.
2. Net State Aid is 20% of the revenue totaling \$9,803,871.
3. Local receipts are 7% of the revenue totaling \$3,360,524.
4. Other funds are 1% of the revenue totaling \$423,900.

FY 26 Property Tax

FY25 Levy Limit: \$31,602,108

Prop 2 1/2: \$790,052.70

Estimated new growth: \$400,000

Excluded Debt: \$2,213,677

Maximum allowable levy: \$35,005,838

FY 2026 capital program \$615,588

Debt service total: actual figure is \$2,547,440.36

Town Manager proposed budgets:

- Maturing Debt: \$2,547,440.36
- General Government Unclassified: \$4,646,870.10
- General Government: \$2,529,486.74
- Central Purchasing: \$84,500
- Police: \$2,456,249.51
- Fire: \$1,724,599.37
- Radio Watch: \$310,763.90
- Other Protection: \$56,425
- Health and Sanitation: \$126,996.30
- DPW: \$1,777,638.01
- Facilities and Buildings: \$1,040,396.30
- Solid Waste and Recycling: \$470,000
- Council on Aging: \$252,267.42
- Veterans: \$90,699
- Schools: \$27,121,995
- Library: \$650,518.04
- Tax Title: \$30,500
- Worcester Regional Retirement: \$2,392,572

6. Scheduled Meetings

a. Department of Public Works

The DPW Director, Bill Bernard, provided the presentation.

In general, he is asking for a level funded budget with the exception of the union negotiated pay raises.

Chris Menard asks Bill Bernard if someone has been hired to complete the comprehensive plan for trees. Bill Bernard states he hasn't had one completed since 2015.

Mike Rupp inquires if Bill Bernard has created a capital plan, and Bill Bernard has completed a 10-year plan at the request of the Capital Planning Committee.

Mike Rupp asks if he is aware of the true budget for snow removal for next year. Bill Bernard is currently asking for \$363,000. Jennifer Warren-Dyment, Town Manager, states snow removal is one of the few items that Mass General Law allows the town to spend in a deficit position. However, if we do not spend the full amount of the budget in 1 year then the following year, we would not be allowed to deficit spend. The Town Manager has recommended an increase of \$110,000 to close the gap.

Ana Lockwood inquires if the truck with the liquid icing solution can only be used for that 1 purpose. Bill Bernard believes it can be added to a 1-ton dump truck or added as a tank to the spreader.

Chris Menard asks if Bill Bernard is aware of how much Chapter 90 funding he will receive this year. Bill Bernard states the funding will be \$418,000 as it has been for the past 12 years.

Jay Simeone suggests hiring a mechanical assistant due to the number of vehicles in the fleet and there being only 1 mechanic.

Chris Menard questions if the DPW is in alignment with the cemetery on their policy requirements. Bill Bernard states their bar is high and they will come close.

b. Facilities Department

The facilities Director, Chris Ruth, provided the presentation.

The facilities department is in charge of maintenance of 11 town buildings, grounds, parks and the town beach.

Updates on previous capital projects:

- Senior center generator project is complete
- Re-roofed newer portion of the senior center
- Re-roofed office portion of DPW building with the use of ARPA funds
- Epoxy floor for DPW garage with the use of ARPA funds
- Memorial waterfall fountain is up and working
- Roof and chimney repair at the Town Hall

Upcoming goals include:

- Create and implement a comprehensive building maintenance plan
- Better utilize building management software
- Catch up on capital projects
- Prepare for future needs of town facilities, grounds and parks

Ana Lockwood asks if there has been discussion about the recreation director moving from part time to full time. Chris Ruth confirms this is a constant conversation and hopes will come to fruition.

Karin Menard, 672 Page Street, member of the Parks Commission, states the grants received for Marshall Park have been returned to the state. Any money being spent on the design process is coming out of ARPA funds, capital expense, and a town meeting vote.

Tanya Dall inquires if the Parks Department has any summer camps or after school programs that generate revenue. Chris Ruth states there is some revenue but most of the revenue comes from the town beach.

Jay Simeone asks if they are still working with the vertex reports. Chris Ruth confirms most of what is being worked on is triage as the buildings weren't well maintained.

Jay Simeone questions if there are any energy efficient updates. Chris Ruth states they are working on upgrading the control system for the public safety building and the library.

Jay Simeone requests regular reports and updates from the department.

Chris Menard is supportive of increasing the hours for the recreation director.

The Committee discussed the TC Passios building. Chris Ruth states the plans are for the school to move out of the building by the end of the school year. 2/3 of the building will then be closed off. Chris Ruth is hopeful that the closed section will be demolished.

Greg Roy, 105 Chestnut Street, thanks Chris Ruth for his work. Also, he agrees that a facilities director working for the town and the school would be ideal.

Dave Passios, formally 56 Whiting Street, says when he was on the Finance Committee, they were approached about releasing some funds from the reserve account to deal with the possible increase in hours for the recreation director. There is a change coming in the type of revolving account that money will move through to be accessible. Jennifer Warren-Dyment says this was approved this week.

c. Sewer Department

The DPW Director, Bill Bernard, provided the presentation.

Bill Bernard reiterates that there will be no rate increase this year. There is a 27% delinquency rate (approximately \$400,000 of revenue).

The FY26 estimated revenue for the sewer department is 1.58 million.

The FY26 estimated expense is 1.88 million. The difference will be coming out of retained earnings.

Jay Simeone questions what the operation and maintenance contract costs yearly. Bill Bernard states it's a little over \$100,000.

Chris Menard questions if there are any potential problems related to the retained earnings. Bill Bernard states there is a graph that shows the earnings going in the opposite direction and doesn't foresee an issue.

Jean Russell inquiries about what percentage of the town is a part of the sewer. Bill Bernard states it's about a quarter of the town

Tom Gray asks how the privilege fee rate is determined. Bill Bernard says the privilege fee is based on the last contract that added the new sewer.

Chris Menard inquiries about the delinquency fees and how they apply if you live in an apartment. Bill Bernard states the bills go to a third party and it gets attached to the rent bill of whoever is residing there.

Greg Roy, 105 Chestnut Street, thanks Bill Bernard and his staff for both of his presentations and their continued work.

Dave Rogers, 82 Highland Street, spoke to a previous committee member years ago and was informed that there are generators that need to be replaced. Bill Bernard confirms they are getting older but some of them barely run during the year. He doesn't believe we are in any danger of them failing.

7. New Business

There is no new business.

8. Old Business

a. FY26 Budget Discussions

b. FY26 Warrant Articles

c. Budget Task Force Recommendations

9. Minutes

The Committee did not review any minutes.

10. Committee Reports

There are no Committee reports.

11. Actions and Topics for Future Meetings

There are no additional topics or actions for future meetings.

12. Important Dates & Upcoming Meetings

a. Thursday 3/6/2025

b. Thursday 3/13/2025 (Public Hearing)

c. Thursday 3/20/2025

d. Thursday 3/27/2025

13. Public Comment

Dave Passios, formally 56 Whiting Street, agrees with cutting down the pavement management plan and relying on Chapter 90 funds.

14. Adjourn

There was a motion to adjourn by Ana Lockwood, seconded by Jay Simeone.

The meeting closed at 12:08 AM.