

Lunenburg Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Bilotta Meeting Room
Lunenburg Town Hall
February 26, 2026

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

1. Call to Order

The meeting opened at 7:00 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Announcements

There is an upcoming Town Caucus scheduled for March 9th.

The next Tri-Board meeting is scheduled for March 11th.

4. Public Comment

Dave Rogers, 82 Highland Street, requests more than a 1-year projected budget. He inquired into the number of new personnel included in the budget.

5. Town Manager & Finance Director Reports

Town Manager confirms that Karen Brochu and Karen Barrett have submitted the Schedule A. Also, the close out for FY25 is complete and is now in consideration by the state.

6. Current Business (order may change)

a. IT Budget

The IT budget was presented by the Communications and IT Manager, Kara McCarthy, and IT Director, Casey Chisholm

Typically there are 800 to 1200 help desk tickets per fiscal year. So far for FY26, there have been over 630 tickets with a current average resolution time of 18 and a half hours.

Total Request for FY27: \$535,459.33

- Salaries: \$59,459.33
- Hardware Maintenance: \$38,500
- Telephone Charges: \$56,500
- Contracted Services: \$141,000

- Purchase of Services: \$240,000

Includes software that is used to support all departments in town.

The IT department will not be renewing the ClearGov license which is a savings of \$21,000.

There has been a reduction and savings of \$18,000 by reducing the number of days Suzor support is physically in-house.

Chris Menard asks if there were any updates for prior year capital items. Town Manager states there was a request for FY27 to purchase additional access points and a server upgrade at the Adult Activity Center. This item did not make it above the cut line, but a community compact grant has been submitted.

Mike Rupp inquired into the salary increase. Kara McCarthy confirms there was a reclassification and regrade. Town Manager states that no colas have been included for any SAP employees.

Mike Rupp inquires if the school dept is covered within the Microsoft licenses. Town Manager states the school is not covered.

Regarding the \$24,000 license fees for Microsoft, Ana Lockwood asks what majority of the town is covered under that license. Kara McCarthy says it includes the town, Boards, and Committees. Majority of users have a basic license but there are a few standard licenses. Ana Lockwood suggests looking into the desktop version of Microsoft.

Jay Simeone questions what code red is. Town Manager states it is a subscription service most municipalities utilize and is primarily used for emergency communications. Town Manager will provide the Committee with the number of subscribers.

Chris Menard inquiries into possible services to ease and streamline workflow and scheduling zoom meetings. He believes that using IT should make everything more efficient if it's used properly. Additionally, there are a lot of boards that are out of open meeting law with their delay in minutes. Town Manager states the town has 5 zoom accounts and 1 of which has a higher capacity.

b. School Department Budget

The School Department budget was presented by Superintendent, Dr. Jodi Fortuna,

Chair of the School Committee, Anthony Sculimbrene, and Business Manager for Lunenburg Schools, Christopher McNamara.

The goals for FY27 are to stabilize staff size, reinstate critical support services, and meet the required standards for students that are not currently being met.

Total FY27 Budget: \$28,454,840

Salaries: \$18,869,757

Expenses: \$9,585,084

The FY26 revenues are as follows:

Federal Entitlement Grants

Title I: FY26 \$209,522

Anticipated: FY27 \$145,565

Title II: FY26 \$35,276

Anticipated: FY27 \$24,693

Title IV: FY26 \$14,616

Anticipated: FY27 \$10,231

240/260 Grant: FY26 \$437,278

Anticipated: FY27 \$437,000

Student Opportunity Act: FY26 \$100,000

FY27: \$0

Special Earmarks

FY26: \$370,000

FY27: Unknown

FY27 School Budget

- Salary Increases

Teachers: 3.5% Increase

Paraprofessionals: 3% Increase

Secretaries: 4% Increase

Cafeteria & Custodial: Unknown as contracts are up for renewal.

- Health insurance

There is an estimated 9% increase from FY26. The FY26 budgeted amount was \$3,701,195 and the FY27 budget is \$4,341,561.

- Utility Costs

The FY26 budget for electricity totaled \$265,000 and the heating budget totaled \$145,000.

The FY27 budget for electricity is \$316, 250 and the heating budget is \$148,320.

Jay Simeone questions the impact of the solar panels. Christopher McNamara will provide those numbers to the Committee.

- Transportation

FY25

General Education Cost: \$907,300

Special Education Transportation: \$434,922

FY26

Budget for General Education Cost: \$965,500

Budget for Special Education Transportation: \$565,734

FY27

Budgeted for General Education: \$1,110,825

Budgeted for Special Education Transportation: \$649,953

Chris Menard suggests the schools work on the contract as it is scheduled to be renewed in 2028.

- Technology

The technology consultants recommended a 3% budget increase and an 8% increase in cost of technical equipment.

Staffing Increase Requests

- Primary School

1 Interventionist to address the early literacy and math gaps: \$72,441

1 Kindergarten Paraprofessional: \$22,205

- Turkey Hill Elementary School

1 Interventionist targeted to support students identified at risk in math and reading: \$72,441

- Middle School

1 Interventionist targeted to support students identified at risk in math and reading: \$72,441

- High School

1 World Language Teacher: \$72,441

Additional hours for the Music Teacher: \$28,976

1 English Teacher: \$72,441

1 Bridge Process Teacher: \$72,441

1 Bridge Process Paraprofessional: \$22,205

The above listed position costs do not include insurance costs.

The high school is looking to restore 1 full-time principal budgeted for \$95,000.

The literacy coach that was previously grant funded has been eliminated.

The Schools are looking to add a Data Reporting Manager and Assistant Business Manager position estimated to cost \$39,000.

Dr. Jodi Fortuna stated that the School Committee did open 24 seats this year for school choice. She further states that only 5 students applied.

Mike Rupp asked how many different languages the school is currently able to teach. Dr. Jodi Fortuna states that a teacher doesn't have to be multilingual to teach a language.

Tanya Dall questions if the school has inquired with Fitchburg State College to see if student teachers would be able to help while getting their service hours. Dr. Jodi Fortuna confirms that is something they are looking into exploring as well as tightening our partnerships with local universities.

Ana Lockwood questions what the athletic trainer tasks are during the day. Dr. Jodi Fortuna states the trainer does offer services to students during the day. Ana Lockwood provided an email with other options. Anthony Sculimbrene has suggested combining the athletic director and trainer position.

Ana Lockwood seeks information about guidance counselors. Dr. Jodi Fortuna states there are only guidance counselors at the high school. Ana Lockwood suggested reaching out to Community Health Link or Seven Hills Charter for possible services. Dr. Jodi Fortuna and the other presenters do not suggest cutting social workers.

Jay Simeone inquiries into the number of maintenance and custodial staff. Dr. Jodi Fortuna confirms there are 12.

7. Old Business

- a. Potential FY27 Prop 2 ½ Override
- b. Discussions on prior Department Briefings
- c. TriBoard discussions (Prior and Upcoming)

8. Minutes

There were no minutes to review.

9. Committee Reports

The current Committee assignments are as follows:

Chris Menard – Capital Planning Committee and previously on the Town
Manager Screening Committee

Tom Gray - Municipal Design Committee and Select Board

Mike Rupp – Master Planning Committee

Jean Russell – School Committee, Police & Fire

Jay Simeone – Personnel Committee

Currently, Facilities and DPW do not have an assigned Committee member.

Chris Menard suggests reviewing and assigning Committees in the near future.

Jay Simeone states most Capital Planning, Municipal Design, Master Planning, Select Board, School Committee, Parks, Council on Aging, Sewer Commission, and Green Communities meetings are available on YouTube. There are some Committees such as Police, Fire, Facilities, and DPW that aren't available to view.

10. Actions and Topics for Future Meetings

There were no additional actions or topics to add to future agendas.

11. Important Dates Upcoming Meetings

a. Finance Committee – March 5,12,19,26

12. Public Comment

John Bowen, 162 Highland Street, suggests the Town look into an increase in the levy limit. Additionally, he states the town should look into investing.

13. Adjourn

There was a motion to adjourn by Jay Simeone, seconded by Tanya Dall. Roll call vote. Tom Gray aye, Mike Rupp aye, Ana Lockwood aye, Tanya Dall aye, Jay Simeone aye, Chris Menard aye.

The meeting closed at 11:05 PM.