

Lunenburg Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Bilotta Meeting Room
Lunenburg Town Hall
March 12, 2026

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

Absent Member: Committee Member Ana Lockwood

1. Call to Order

The meeting opened at 7:00 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Announcements

The Finance Director/Town Accountant, Karen Barrett, states that free cash has been certified. The General Fund total is \$3,354,370.

4. Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

5. Town Manager & Finance Director Reports

Full Budget Restoration Budget for Schools: \$28,456,277

Current Total Deficit: \$3,123,989.01

The deficit would be divided between the town and schools. The town would receive 1.24 million and the schools would receive 1 million.

Town Manager states the warrant article booklet will be sent to the printers on April 8, 2026.

The last day to submit a petition article is March 16, 2026.

6. Current Business (order may change)

a. DPW / Sewer

The DPW Director, Bill Bernard, provided both presentations.

FY27 Budget Request: \$3,178,177.51 (9% increase from prior year)

Tree Removal: \$39,500

General Highway: \$1,375,750

Garage: \$1,100

Highway Overtime: \$17,500

Highway Labor: \$681,496.61

Traffic Signs: \$16,800
DPW Vehicle Maintenance: \$67,750
Police/Fire Vehicle Maintenance: \$117,000
Cemetery: \$123,466.22
Recycling Program: \$363,354
Snow and Ice Budget: \$364,460.67

Bill Bernard states the budget is currently at \$800,000.

Funding Sources

Operational Budget

Chapter 90 Funding: \$718,000

Grants:

Small Bridge Grant to repair Flat Hill Road Bridge: \$600,000
Asset Management Grant from Mass Clean Water Trust for
Stormwater: \$ 60,000

DPW is requesting a part-time clerk to help the executive assistant for DPW and Facilities. Their responsibilities would include assisting with accounts payable, time sheets, filing, and assisting with tracking and spending within contracts.

The trash budget is fully funded with bag/bin revenue totaling \$500,000.

Jay Simeone questions why DPW and Facilities are sharing an admin especially since those facilities were previously separated. Bill Bernard states that when they were separated there was no admin for Facilities so they shared the admin. Town Manager states the clerk would support both office but primarily the DPW.

Bill Bernard is requesting to restore the pavement management funds that were reduced last year. Town Manager does not support the pavement management plan.

A line item totaling \$340,000 has been added to reach the MS4 Stormwater compliance. This includes bi-yearly street sweeping and catch basin cleaning. Upon reviewing the last several years, it was determined that on average 30% of catch basins have been cleaned and 22% of the required street sweeping occurred on a yearly basis. The line item would be used to hire and outsource the work needed.

Chris Menard inquired if the lack of street sweeping is due to staffing or funding issues. Bill Bernard states it is a staffing and funding issue. He

estimated it would cost \$100,000 less if the services were contracted out. Chris Menard inquired into the cost to sweep roads. Bill Bernard estimated around \$240,000. This includes a total of 144 miles to be cleaned yearly.

Jay Simeone questions why stormwater compliance isn't being prioritized but mowing that is not mandated has taken priority.

Chris Menard requests a further metrics breakdown of ongoing and completed work into dollar amounts.

The Sewer budget was presented by Bill Bernard with the assistance of Sewer Business Manager, Andrew Valliere.

FY27 Sewer Budget Request: \$1,981,993.06

Revenues: \$2,008,047

Budget Surplus: \$26,053.94

Funding Sources:

User Charges: 71%

Betterment 18%

Interest: 5%

Fees 4%

Rate Increases

Leominster increased their rate by 16% in FY25. The town did not increase their fee despite the increase. The FY26 rate increase is 3%. Fitchburg has increased their rate to 7% on a yearly basis for the past several years.

Bill Bernard stated that when sewers were installed homes had to pay betterment that they could finance over 20 years. Due to time lapse, betterments are dropping.

Jean Russell inquiries into the number of residents that are in the sewer system. Bill Bernard estimates slightly over 1,000.

b. * Administration, Unclassified, Debt Service

Land Use Department

The Land Use Department budget was presented by the Building Commissioner, Brian Gingras, and the Conservation Commission Administrator, Jaime Herlin, and Director of Planning and Economic Development, Stephen Wallace.

FY27 Budget Request: \$447,963.33 (1.77% Increase)

Funding Sources:

Building Permits: 75%

General Fund: 16%

Special Permits: 4%

Planning Fee: 3%

Sheet Metal: 2%

Mike Rupp questions if there has been a decrease in new construction permits. Brian Gingras believes some contractors are holding back. He sees 5 to 10 new constructions every year but there has been an increase in renovations.

Stephen Wallace states there has been an increase in the cost of building supplies.

General Government

The General Government presentation was provided by the Town Manager, Jennifer Warren-Dyment.

FY27 Preliminary Budget: \$3,205,051.24

Current Budget: \$3,225,721.25

Finance Committee Budget: \$1,575

Covers advertising requirements and membership, attendance at any annual conference or associations.

Select Board proposed operating budget: \$201,895.33 (11.99% Increase)

This covers minute clerks for other boards and committees across town, John Guilfoil Public Relations contract, software, legal ads, office supplies, community event supplies, dues and memberships.

Town Manager Budget: \$442,353.00

Includes funding for Assistant Town Manager position, contracted service line, and legal expenses.

Assistant Town Manager (Request): \$60,000

Town Accountants: \$354,504.68

Treasurer: \$123,886.74

\$4,500 reduction from preliminary budget.

Collector: \$120,662.10

\$8,300 reduction from preliminary budget.

Chris Menard inquired if there is an option to opt out tax bills being mailed and an option for direct withdrawal for payment. Town Manager requested that the Treasurer and Tax Collector, Myleen Mallari, provide an answer to the Committee.

Assessing Budget: \$297,440.69

IT Budget Request: \$476,000 (updated)

Town Clerk: \$147,956.05

Town elections will be moved from TC Passios to the schools due to roof damage.

Elections Budget: \$21,575 – Large increase due to upcoming election.

Registration and Census: \$21,450

APDC Expenses: \$500

Physicals: \$6,000

Economic Development Committee: \$3,100

Town Report: \$16,000

Finance Committee Reserve Fund: \$185,000

Salary Reserve Account: \$210,000

Town Manager is awaiting information from the 3 bargaining units to make any adjustments.

Central Purchasing: \$91,500

Veterans Administration: \$90,750

Band Concerts: \$1,000

Intergovernmental Assessments: \$2,635,339.93

All except for \$111.05 is for the Worcester County retirement.

General Government (Unclassified): \$4,500,424.59

Insurances

Liability Insurance: \$230,000

Workers' Compensation: \$135,000

Group Health Insurance: \$3,695,424.59 (5.69% Increase)

Life Insurance: \$20,000

Unemployment: \$10,000

Medicare: \$410,000

c. Other Monied Articles

John Bowen is requesting a warrant article to appropriate \$14,252.39 for legal investigation of several long neglected municipal trust funds. The purpose is to fund approximately 40 hours of professional legal investigation to determine donor intent, verify legal compliance, and establish whether certain trust funds can be administered under their existing terms. Town council is unable to complete an investigation.

Key Trust Funds: Nathaniel Day Fund, Post 283 Fund, American Legion Poor Fund, Susan Howard Fund, Gazebo Fund

Tanya Dall inquires into the scope of work. John Bowen states it's not just compliance issues but the trusts need to be redone.

Chris Menard would like to hear from an attorney about whether the firm has these investigators. Chris Menard suggests not putting this forward at annual town meeting and pushing it to special town meeting to work on a better estimate and approach.

7. Old Business

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

The Board was in agreement that there should be an override on the ballot.

8. Minutes

The Board will review minutes at the next meeting.

Chris Menard inquired into the AI services available to create minutes for government meetings. Town Manager doesn't think the software is at the point where it would be efficient. The service would require additional fees in order to add users and still requires human intervention and editing.

9. Committee Reports

Jay Simeone states that the Sewer Commission has met. A developer has shown interest in adding housing where the prior driving range is by Lake Whalom.

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 19,26

Town Manager suggested pushing the Public Hearing until March 26, 2026,
and having a Tri board meeting on March 19, 2026.

12. Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

13. Adjourn

There was a motion to adjourn by Jean Russell, seconded by Tanya Dall.

The meeting closed at 10:19 PM.