

Lunenburg Finance Committee
Bilotta Meeting Room
Lunenburg Town Hall
March 26, 2026

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

1. Call to Order

The meeting opened at 7 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Announcements

There were no announcements.

4. Public Comment

Rhonda Liscio, 181 Reservoir Road, states she hasn't been able to see the warrant articles, making it hard to ask any questions. Chris Menard confirms the articles will officially be heard during this meeting.

Anthony Sculimbrene, 92 Beal Street, spoke to Ana Lockwood and wanted to thank her.

5. Town Manager & Finance Director Reports

There were no reports from the Town Manager or the Finance Director.

6. Public Hearing (Continued)

There was a motion to continue public hearing by Ana Lockwood, seconded by Tanya Dall. Roll Call Vote: Jay Simeone aye, Tom Gray aye, Mike Rupp aye, Ana Lockwood aye, Tanya Dall aye, Jean Russell aye, Chris Menard aye

a. Town Manager Balanced and Override Budget

Town Manager provided the revenue updates below:

- Adjustment in local receipts
 - Additional \$75,000 to Motor Vehicle Excise Tax
 - Additional \$100,000 to Investment Income

Starting Revenue: \$51,611,771.99

Non-Appropriated Expenses: \$1,441,496

Offset Receipts: \$112,147

Assessors Overlay: \$260,000

Cherry Sheet Assessment: \$1,069,349

Less Levy Appropriated to the Capital: \$244,576

Total revenues available for appropriation: \$49,925,699.99

Total “new revenue” FY27: \$1,549,263.89

FY27 Monty Tech assessment totaled \$117,905 leaving \$1,431,358.89.

Distributed proportionally between the Town and School:

School: \$784,814.07

Town: \$646,544.82

Budget Updates:

- Special Assistant to the Assessor position and TCP operations have been removed from the operating budget.
- The new Fire Chief salary was moved out of the operating budget and into the salary reserve.
- The Town Manager Assistant Position has been funded throughout the year.
- Technology admin support position is eliminated.
- The 10-hour position in ConCom has been eliminated.
- A new line was added for Economic Development expenses totaling \$3,100.
- The 19 hour a week Clerk position for the Police Department has been cut.
- Board of Health Administrative Assistant has been reduced.
- Senior Center Meal Site Assistant reduced.

Corrections were made to:

Telephone Charges

Police patrol salaries and K9 expenses

Retiree and Town Health Insurance

Chris Menard inquired if health insurance includes PEC. Town Manager confirms it is for retiree health insurance. PEC is in the process of voting, but it's expected to roughly be a \$200,000 savings across the Town and School budget.

There are 3 options for the FY27 budget including a balanced budget, tier 1 and tier 2 options.

1. Balanced Budget: \$49,925,699.99

2. Tier 1: \$52,280,035.68 override required and is estimated at \$2,400,000.

Total Deficit: \$2,354,551.69

Town Deficit: \$754,551.69

School Deficit: \$1,600,000

3. Tier 2 \$53,171,145.83 requires override

Total Deficit: \$3,245,445.84

Town Deficit: \$1,296,918.84

School Deficit: \$1,948,527

Reductions in the balanced budget (all restored in tier 1):

- Select Board preliminary budget \$13,500 – level funded at \$6,000
- Town Manager Contract Services reduced to \$6,000 from the level fund of \$10,000
- Land Use Meeting/School reduced from \$5,050 to \$3,500
- Economic Development reduced from \$3,100 to \$0
- APDC expenses reduced from \$500 to \$0
- Central Purchasing office equipment reduced from \$7,500 to \$6,500
- Central Purchasing misc equipment reduced from \$7,000 to \$4,000
- Historical Commission office equipment reduced from \$500 to \$0
- Historical Commission office supplies reduced from \$500 to \$0
- Band concerts reduced from \$6,000 to \$0

Police Department

- Admin Clerk position reduced from \$22,485 to \$0
- Uniform fund reduced from \$31,000 to \$29,450
- Police Salary Reserve reduced from \$47,898 to \$22,976

Fire Department:

- Per diem salary reduced from \$291,070.34 to \$225,000
- Grade pay reduced from \$5,000 to \$3,000
- Outside training reduced from \$50,473.12 to \$25,000
- Equipment maintenance and EMS reduced from \$46,000 to \$45,000
- Training reduced from \$21,000 to \$15,000
- Fire recertification reduced from \$3,150 to \$2,000
- Training supplies reduced from \$7,000 to \$5,000
- Firefighter meetings/schools reduced from \$6,565 to \$4,000
- Chief training reduced from \$1,400 to \$800
- Capital protective equipment reduced from \$20,000 to \$18,000
- Capital replacement equipment reduced from \$15,000 to \$11,600
- Equipment maintenance reduced from \$15,000 to \$10,000

DPW

- Drainage work reduced from \$100,000 to \$83,000
- Stormwater management reduced from \$110,000 to \$100,000
- Supplies reduced from \$35,000 to \$25,000
- Pavement management reduced from \$282,000 to \$50,000

Board of Health

- Administrative Assistant position reduced to \$31,182.29
- Purchase of services reduced from \$75 to \$0

Council on Aging

- Assistant meal site position reduced from \$19,825.74 to \$0
- Programs reduced \$8,000 to \$6,000
- Kitchen supplies reduced from \$1,500 to 0

Library

- Staff line reduced from \$269,048.83 to \$226,077.79
- Programs reduced from \$21,000 to \$19,500
- Materials reduced from \$106,937 to \$96,200

Recreation

- Parks Supervisor salary eliminated in balanced budget
- Beach salaries reduced from \$25,000 to \$15,000
- Programming reduced from \$5,000 to \$0

Parks

- Purchase of services reduced from \$80,000 to \$60,000
- Expenses reduced from \$6,400 to \$6,000

Tier 1 Override Increases:

IT/Tech Admin support increased from \$0 to \$35,193

DPW Junior Engineer Project Manager created totaling \$88,000

DPW Part time Admin support increased from \$13,000 to \$24,150.33

Recreations/Park Supervisor salary level funded

Tier 2 Override Increases:

Board/Committee Clerk increased from \$6,000 to \$12,000

IT/Tech Admin support increased from \$35,193 to \$59,459

Police Department Admin Clerk added at \$22,485

Police Department Sergeant salary increases from \$273,771.42 to \$365,028
Police Department Patrol Men increased from \$891,887.30 to \$1,034,612
Animal Control increased from \$45,000 to \$85,000
Recreations/Park Supervisor salary increased to \$75,000
Active health insurance for Town increased by \$125,000

Questions/comments

Tom Gray asked why the stormwater task force removed their warrant. Town Manager states that during the Select Board workshops, there was discussion about fully funding the MS4 compliance within the operating budget to avoid implementing a utility. Upon further discussion it was determined the cost would be too high. They may submit another warrant at a future town meeting.

Mike Rupp believes that the numbers presented in tier 1 and tier 2 are too similar. Both numbers are very large. Town Manager states that the tier 1 override is an \$800,000 increase over the balanced budget that was previously demolished. The cost would keep and maintain the services that are currently being provided.

Ana Lockwood questioned why the police department is looking to add 2 patrol men. Chief Tibodeau states the department was last fully staffed in 2023-2024. There have been retirement and 2 staff have left since last year.

Ana Lockwood inquired about the preschool tuition. Town Manager states the rates are set by the school department.

Ana Lockwood believes the position of Assistant Town Manager isn't necessary at this time especially with all the cuts. Town Manager doesn't believe Lunenburg can make forward progress without having an additional set of competent qualified hands.

Chris Menard believes the library needs to start charging for the programs they offer. Additionally, he suggests cutting the program budget and keeping the recreation director.

Public Comment

Rhonda Liscio, 181 Reservoir Road, questioned the town's contract with John Guilfoil Public Relations. Town Manager states the contract is for crisis communication and costs roughly \$10,000 a year. If there were no contract a single event would cost around \$5,000.

Renee Emkey, 6 Iris Court, shares her support in hiring an Assistant Town Manager. Additionally, Renee Emkey believes the number proposed in tier 1 is too high, but a level service budget isn't enough.

b. School Dept Balanced and Override Budget

Superintendent Dr. Jodi Fortuna, Faculties Director for Schools Christopher McNamara, School Committee Chair Anthony Sculimbrene were present.

Dr Jodi Fortuna states that without an override, there will be substantial impacts.

Necessary additions include:

English Language Teacher: \$106,537

Special Educator (Primary School): \$106,357

Promotion of an employee to Assistant Business Manager: \$10,000

Assistant Principal (Primary and Turkey Hill Elementary): \$133,596

In order to balance the budget, the following positions would need to be eliminated:

1st and 2nd grade Teacher: \$205,019

3rd and 4th grade Teacher: \$171,811

.2 Music teacher (Turkey Hill Elementary) \$9,682

Certified Occupation Therapy Assistant: \$74,147

1 Custodian: \$48,630

There would be a technology reduction totaling \$50,203 and an elementary science curriculum reduction totaling \$40,000. Additionally, the custodial supply line would need to be cut by \$15,000.

Extracurricular

Extracurricular impacts include reducing the athletics training position into a half time position: \$34,259.

The following extracurriculars would be eliminated:

Girls Lacross \$4,170

Golf team \$3,362

Ski team \$2,444

All athletic transportation would be cut saving: \$127,550. The transportation for Middle-High Band would be reduced to \$5,000.

Athletic fees would need to be raised by \$75 per student. This would generate \$120,000.

Questions

Tanya Dall suggests creating data to show student improvement, Dr. Jodi Fortuna is working on a year-over-year document with data. Anthony Sculimbrene states there is a yearly review of assessments and has the past 5 years of data.

Ana Lockwood asks if the teacher salaries include health insurance. Chris McNamara states health insurance is included and reflects the highest option.

Chris Menard believes the schools need to start having discussions with the state about the unfunded but mandated needs.

Dave Rogers, 82 Highland Street, suggests parents work together to raise funds. Fairs have been successful in prior years. Additionally, he suggests reaching out to Fitchburg State for student teachers.

Chris Menard suggests inquiring with National Honor Society to take on projects like previous years.

Laura Barooshian, 389 Mulpus Road, encourages residents show up at Town Meeting on May 2 and vote on May 16.

c. Discussions on prior Department Briefings

There were no discussion about this topic.

d. Draft Warrant Articles

Town Manager states the Select Board will be discussing the warrant articles on March 21st. Once the Select Board votes to finalize the warrant articles on April 7th the warrant will then be available to the public.

Article A. Reports from Committees

Article B. Borrow in Anticipation of Revenue

Article C. Expend in Advance of Chapter 90 Funds

Article D. Economic Development Committee Revolving Fund

Article E. Technology Revolving Fund

Article F. Revolving Fund Spending Limits

Article G. Payment of Prior Fiscal Year Expenses

This article is to pay 2 bills from Aeroseptic from a prior fiscal year. The bills total 1,317.50 & \$577.50 for portapotties. Town Manager recommended deferring at town meeting.

Article H. FY 2026 Budget Adjustments

This article allows adjustments within the current fiscal year outside of the 33b transfer process.

Article I. FY 2026 Closeouts

Article J. FY 206 Capital Program Funding Reauthorization

\$300,000 needs to be reauthorized from a prior vote.

Article K. FY2027 Capital Program

\$991,627 will be used from free cash to support the Capital Program.

Article L. FY 2027 Omnibus Budget

Article is to raise, appropriate, and transfer \$49,963,990.19 from available funds.

Article M. FY 2027 Proposition 2 ½ Override Budgets

Tier 1: \$52,321,641.88

Tier 2: \$53,212,536.03

Article N. Amendments to the Salary Administrative Plan Position Titles/Grades

Article O. OPEB Trust Fund

The Article is to raise and appropriate free cash totaling \$335,437.

Town Manager noted that at the time there were 2 articles not listed.

1. An article to appropriate free cash to the Health Insurance Special Purpose Stabilization Fund totaling \$250,000.

2. An additional article to appropriate free cash in the amount of \$250,000 into the regular purpose stabilization fund.

Article P. Compensated Absences Reserve Fund

The article proposes transferring \$10,000 from free cash to the Compensated Absences Reserve Fund.

Article Q. Appropriation to the 300th Anniversary Committee

Article is to transfer \$15,000 from free cash to fund the 300th Anniversary and related events.

Article R. Establish a 300th Anniversary Gift Fund

Article S. Trust Fund Legal Fees

This article transfers \$14,252.39 from free cash to fund legal services.

Town Manager spoke to town counsel, and they are in the process of completing a document addressing several of the accounts. Chris Menard

believes this warrant should be withdrawn and he does not recommend approval.

Article T. Trust Fund Commission Quorum

Article U. Stormwater Utility (withdrawn)

Article V. Sewer Bylaws

No financial impact.

Article W. Nonexistent Article

Article X. PEG Enterprise Fund

Article Y. Solid Waste Enterprise Fund

Article Z. Water Enterprise Fund

Articles AA, BB, CC. First fund of collective bargaining agreement for Firefighters, Municipal Employee Union, and Teamsters.

Article DD. Vacation System Transition Liability Reduction

Article EE. Amendment to Salary Administrative Plan

Article FF. Mosquito Control Program (withdrawn)

Article GG. Notice of Town Meeting

Article HH. Transfer of Kids Kingdom from School Committee to Select Board

Article II. Open Space Committee Bylaw

Article JJ. Flat Hill Bridge Easement

There was a motion to close public hearing by Jean Russell, seconded by Tanya Dall. Roll Call Vote: Tom Gray aye, Jay Simeone aye, Mike Rupp aye, Ana Lockwood aye, Tanya Dall aye, Jean Russell, Chris Menard.

7. Current Business (order may change)

a. Votes on Articles

April 2, 2026

b. Finance Committee Report

Chris Menard updated the format used last year; Additionally, he provided a detailed document with summaries and department impacts.

Mike Rupp and Jean Russell will take lead at the upcoming meeting.
Chris Menard will post an agenda for Monday April 6th as a placeholder if needed.

8. Old Business

- a. FY27 Prop 2 ½ Override Discussions
- b. TriBoard discussions (Prior and Upcoming)

9. Minutes (2/5, 2/12, 2/19)

There was a motion to approve the minutes of February 5, 2026, February 12, 2026, and February 19, 2026, by Ana Lockwood, seconded by Tanya Dall. Roll Call Vote: Tom Gray aye, Jay Simeone aye, Mike Rupp aye, Ana Lockwood aye, Tanya Dall aye, Jean Russell aye, Chris Menard aye.

10. Committee Reports

There were no Committee reports.

11. Actions and Topics for Future Meetings

Vote on warrant articles and approve Finance Committee reports on April 2, 2026.

12. Important Dates & Upcoming Meetings

- a. Finance Committee – April 2
- b. Finance Committee – April 6 (tentatively scheduled)

13. Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

14. Adjourn

There was a motion to adjourn by Jean Russell, seconded by Mike Rupp. Roll Call Vote: Tom Gray aye, Jay Simeone aye, Mike Rupp aye, Ana Lockwood aye, Tanya Dall aye, Jean Russell aye, Chris Menard aye.

The meeting closed at 11:13 PM.