

Town of Lunenburg
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Town Hall, 17 Main Street and via Zoom
Tuesday, March 19, 2025

Members Present: Chair Caesar Nuzzolo, Vice-Chair Michael-Ray Jeffreys, Clerk Amanda Moore, Member Tom Alonzo, and Member Renee Emkey

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Town Manager Jennifer Warren-Dyment, Finance Director/Town Accountant Ezequiel Ayala Jr.

Public Comment Participants are listed in the minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Caesar Nuzzolo called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Nuzzolo informed attendees that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live and would be uploaded to YouTube after the meeting. He explained that the agenda listed topics that may be discussed, but not all items may be addressed and other items not listed could be brought up as permitted by open meeting law.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Board Comment

None.

Public Comment

Public Comment occurred later in the meeting due to a Zoom technical difficulty.

DISCUSSION ON FY2025 BUDGET, FY2026 BUDGET, CAPITAL PLAN AND TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES

Pavement Management Program

Town Manager Jennifer Warren-Dyment stated that the budget became unbalanced, and there is now additional funding because there was a decrease of \$175,000 for the Assessor Overlay.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment presented two different budget proposals to the Board: one with the Pavement Management Program (PMP) restored to \$279,000 and the second budget proposal where the PMP is not restored.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment described how the PMP could be restored by modifying the existing budget. Town Manager Warren-Dyment proposed an increase to the snow and ice budget over the past fiscal year so that there would not have to be a large restoration after the winter season. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that \$50,000 for the grant writer position and \$10,000 in Police overtime could be removed. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that she spoke with the Police Chief to confirm a small reduction in the police training funds due to a new

MILO system that would allow training to occur during shifts. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that the Reserve Fund was proposed to be decreased from \$200,000 to \$185,000, and Information Technology Purchase Services was decreased by \$5,000. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that the Police Department's motorcycle is proposed to be eliminated. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that the \$15,000 in training under the insurance line was reduced. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that the historic commission equipment, APDC, and funds offsetting the Capital Plan were proposed to be reduced.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that if the PMP was restored to the full \$550,000, she stated that layoffs would occur.

Member Renee Emkey asked Town Manager Warren-Dyment what the proposed reduction of the Capital Plan was to restore the PMP to \$279,000. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that it is a reduction of \$39,000, however, there is no impact to the Plan, it would shift the funds from taxation to Free Cash.

Clerk Amanda Moore asked Town Manager Warren-Dyment, with these proposed reductions, if the Police Chief was confident that these cuts would not affect service. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that the Chief is confident that it would not affect services, and that the Department would be able to fund overtime pay even with a reduction because some employees who were at the higher end of the pay scale no longer work for the Department.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that there will be no longer adjustments for the payment plan under the salary reserve. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said that the proposed budget includes just 2.5% COLA. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that a part-time Council on Aging Outreach position was eliminated to support two part-time kitchen staff who can no longer be funded through the formula grant.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that if an override was approved, she would recommend that the Grant Writer position be reinstated and bolstered due to the need for contracts and grant management across departments. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that there would not be a noticeable decline in the overall PMP if the amount was reduced by one year. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that there would be a noticeable decline in PMP impact if the program were not funded for multiple years. Chair Nuzzolo and Vice-Chair Michael Ray Jeffreys stated that they did not have an issue with the proposed restoration of the PMP to \$279,000.

FY2026 Budget

Vice-Chair Jeffreys stated that at the upcoming Town Manager's budget presentation, it would be helpful to have an explanation of what was approved in the budget for FY24 pre-override. Vice-Chair Jeffreys stated that this explanation would be helpful to describe the budget increase with the override year over year. Vice-Chair Jeffreys stated that the format of the budget is different from prior fiscal years, and he believes it is important to show the growth over time. Vice-Chair Jeffreys said that any budget formatting changes should be discouraged. Town Manager Warren-

Dyment said that the consolidation of budgetary lines was from recommendations of the Budget Task Force. Vice-Chair Jeffreys stated that he understands what Town Manager Warren-Dyment said and that he recommends that a year-over-year level of analysis occur so that Town Meeting voters can view percentage and dollar increases. Member Tom Alonzo stated that he agrees with Vice-Chair Jeffreys, and he stated that he understands the shifts in budgetary lines that are being made.

Finance Director/Town Accountant Ezequiel Ayala Jr. stated that the budgetary shifts were made to follow best practices from the Uniform Massachusetts Accounting System.

Member Emkey stated that there may be a discrepancy between the School FY25 final revised budget and the additional Chapter 70 funds that were approved at the Special Town Meeting. Town Manager Warren-Dyment and Finance Director/Town Accountant Ayala Jr. agreed that there was a discrepancy in the spreadsheet and that it would be updated.

Member Emkey asked Town Manager Warren-Dyment if the FY2026 budget includes combining two part-time Council on Aging meal coordinators into one full-time position, and funding two part-time meal assistants in the budget, instead of formula grant funding. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that it was correct.

Clerk Moore asked Town Manager Warren-Dyment what is included in the reduction of Information Technology Purchase Services for FY2026. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said that there was a small reduction available to be made in the internet services line that will not impact services that are being provided.

Vice-Chair Jeffreys asked Town Manager Warren-Dyment if there were additional reductions that occurred, he asked where the funding would come from. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said that any additional reductions would come from the Capital Plan offset to balance the budget. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said that if there was a departmental reduction, it would come from a reduction in taxation that's offsetting capital.

Member Alonzo stated that the Town staff did well in the task of restoring a portion of the PMP while not significantly impacting the services of other departments. All the Board members agreed that they are in support of restoring the PMP as presented by the Town Manager.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that, based upon the FY2026 expenditure lines alone, there is minimal room in the budget, and she believes there will not be the same level of Free Cash compared to FY2025. Clerk Moore asked Town Manager Warren-Dyment if the Town will be able to cover the snow and ice budget line through Free Cash in FY2026. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said that she expects to have sufficient free cash to cover the snow and ice budget line. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said that the FY27 Capital Plan may not be covered by Free Cash based on current FY26 expenditures.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that now that the Board is comfortable with the balanced budget, including the restoration of the PMP, she will work with town staff to make the budget digestible for residents and town meeting voters. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said that she appreciates and welcomes all feedback from the Board regarding making the information digestible.

Town Meeting Warrant Articles & Override Discussion

Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that she met with department heads this morning and asked them to each create a list of needs if the override occurred. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said that she provided the Board with the emails of each department head. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said that a holistic approach needs to occur in the future to make sure critical needs are not being left behind. Town Manager Warren-Dyment suggested that in the future, quotes from vendors should occur in advance, staffing structure and wage rates should be considered in comparison to the market.

Member Emkey asked Town Manager Warren-Dyment how much Free Cash can be given to the Schools for FY26. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said she believes \$150,000 could be given to the schools. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said that the schools will determine what may be covered by their existing budget.

Member Emkey asked Town Manager Warren-Dyment if the two proposed new DPW trucks could be paid for using Chapter 90 funds. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that based on the reduction of the PMP that she would not recommend using Chapter 90 funds for the DPW trucks to make additional funding available for the schools using Free Cash. Member Alonzo said that the Capital Planning Committee makes recommendations for projects and does not consider allocating funding for the projects. Member Alonzo stated that the Town will not know if the Chapter 90 bond fund will be passed and if it will be maintained for FY2027 at the same rate before the May Town Meeting. The Board discussed prior purchases of DPW trucks using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and the delivery and production delays that occurred.

Chair Nuzzolo asked the Board for their opinions on putting forward a municipal override. Vice-Chair Jeffreys said that he is not in favor of a municipal override due to the school district's significant need for additional funding so that layoffs do not occur. Vice-Chair Jeffreys said that he does not believe the public will consider the municipal override a necessity. Vice-Chair Jeffreys said that the Town should consider future long-term budgetary planning before considering a municipal override. Vice-Chair Jeffreys said that he believes that the School Committee should have had more foresight regarding substantial budget shortfalls.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment said that capital projects are being underfunded because consulting and design services have not been funded. Town Manager Warren-Dyment said there is a significant need in the Fire Department for design and consulting services for a new building/facility.

Clerk Moore stated that she would not support a School-only override. Member Alonzo stated that proper planning is needed when justifying an override. Member Alonzo stated that long-term budgetary projections and long-term override projections are important to stabilize the budgets and to justify overrides as preventative rather than ‘band-aid’ fixes. Member Alonzo stated that he does not support a School and municipal override for FY2026. Member Alonzo stated that there is no time for the School and the Town to justify an additional override. Member Alonzo stated that data and narrative are important for budgetary considerations and projections. Member Alonzo said that he supports education and needs projections from the school district.

Member Emkey stated that there has been significant turnover and resignations regarding volunteers and finance staff at the school district. Member Emkey said that she appreciates the work that School staff and elected officials have done. Member Emkey stated that she would not support a School or Municipal override.

Clerk Moore stated that more joint meetings with the School Committee would be beneficial. Member Emkey agreed with Clerk Moore. Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that she recommends the Town work to project for FY2027 in the Summer of 2025 to be prepared for next year. Member Alonzo described the 2008 recession and significant budgetary cuts.

Chair Nuzzolo said that he has not decided on supporting the school citizens’ petition override. Chair Nuzzolo said that signatures were compiled quickly, and he said that there may be an appetite for an override by voters. Chair Nuzzolo said that he is comfortable supporting what the majority of the Board decides. Vice-Chair Jeffreys said that the Board should support what other elected boards and committees are doing. Vice-Chair Jeffreys said that the Board has a majority that will not support a School and Municipal override, and he stated that the School Committee has the same opinion for this year. Vice-Chair Jeffreys says that he respects the Board’s preferences; he said his preference is to pursue a School-only override. Vice-Chair Jeffreys said that the community will decide on a School-only override. Chair Nuzzolo stated that he would like the Board to formally vote at the next meeting not to have a municipal override as a town meeting warrant article. Board members praised the Town Manager and the Finance Director/Town Accountant for providing the Board with a presentable and readable budget.

MINUTES/WARRANTS/ACTION ITEMS

Warrants

Accounts Payable warrant in the amount of \$239,384.27. Payroll warrant in the amount of \$948,580.71. Accounts Payable warrant in the amount of \$1,169,135.29.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Bowen, 162 Highland Street (via Zoom): thanked the Finance Director/Town Accountant for making himself available to members of the public. Mr. Bowen commented that he disagrees

with the expansion of North Cemetery because he believes there are already enough plots available.

Dave Passios, Jefferson New Hampshire Presidential Highway (via Zoom): commented on the previous speaker and stated that there is more information regarding the expansion proposal of North Cemetery. Mr. Passios stated that the prior Town Manager did not provide a procedure in place for grants for boards/committees to access.

TJ Loughlin, 207 Rolling Acres Road: stated that he believes the Board's opinion is incorrect regarding the override. Mr. Loughlin stated that he asked the Finance Committee to create a holistic plan last year, and he believes that it has not yet occurred. Mr. Loughlin said that he believes there will be better planning next year by the Town Manager.

Rhonda Lisio, 181 Reservoir Road: asked if the revised budget proposal includes a contribution to OPEB. Town Manager Warren-Dymont said yes.

Board Comment

Clerk Moore thanked Mr. Loughlin for his efforts in supporting the School district. Clerk Moore stated that the budgetary conversations are similar to last year, but there are new staff because of turnover.

Member Alonzo thanked Mr. Loughlin for his efforts, and he believes that Mr. Loughlin has the best intentions.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Alonzo moved to adjourn. Seconded by Vice Chair Jeffreys. Roll Call Vote: Vice-Chair Jeffreys-Aye; Clerk Moore-Aye; Member Alonzo-Aye; Member Emkey-Aye; Chair Nuzzolo-Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Meeting adjourned at 8:36 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anthony Senesi,
Minute Clerk

These Minutes were reviewed and approved by the Select Board on:
Tuesday June 17, 2025

Chair Nuzzolo made the Motion to Approve the minutes from March 19, 2025. Seconded by Vice-Chair Moore. Call for the vote: Four-aye. One-abstain (McLeod). Motion passed (4-0-1).