

Town of Rockland Finance Committee
Meeting February 12, 2025 at 7pm ET - Town Hall, Lower Conference Room

TOWN CLERK, ROCKLAND
FEB 27 '25 AM 8:33

Present: Chairman John Pumphrey, Vice Chairman Linda Sternfelt, Secretary Katherine Dussault, William Stuart

Absent: Robert MacDonald, William Principe

Additional guests: Douglas Lapp - Town Administrator, Scott Curtis - Town Accountant, Judy Hartigan - Town Collector, Kristel Cameron - Water Superintendent

Meeting Notes: Review of FY2026 budgets. General note that union salary contracts are still under negotiation and are expected to continue past town meetings. A total amount will be voted on at the town meeting.

Town Collector: Reviewed "Tax Collector" requested fiscal year 2026 budget document and a sample 'cds' invoice

- Notable changes/areas of focus: An increase of 25%, \$300, for the parking clerk. This is a stipend increase due to an increase in volume as there have been more police tickets issued. The town has approximately \$65k pending and a discussion will be had with the Deputy Collector on opportunities to help with collection. The Deputy Collector has a good relationship with the town collector and helps pay for motor vehicle excise tax mailings as they receive funds, via a deputy fee, when a collection goes to warrant. This relationship helps the town collect on the bills as there is a good response rate when the deputy is involved. The overall tax collection rate in Rockland is approximately 98%. A budget decrease of 60%, by \$3k, for tax lien in FY26 as tax liens are relatively current and a tax lien is not expected.

Water Department: Reviewed "FY 2026 WATER BUDGET" document

- Notable changes/areas of focus: The water revenue covers all water expenses, and the water rate remains flat at \$8/100 cubic ft. Previous increases from \$5 (7-8/2022) to \$6 (9/2022-3/2023) to the current \$8 (4-6/2023) largely due to needs for the PFAS loan. Payments have not yet been made on the PFAS loan but will start in January. There is an approximately \$300-400k lower amount than originally expected based on the loan schedule. The water department was able to acquire the loan interest free and also some loan forgiveness (approximately \$2.7 million). The website ARJWW.org has a breakdown of the project, timeline and payments. The PFAS project and upgrades are utilizing most of the water department resources, unless there is an emergency situation. There is \$2.782 million in retained earnings to fund article projects, expecting to spend approximately \$1 million, and \$200,294 in capital stabilization. Joint expenses have increased \$252k related to salaries, interest, fuel, electricity, and insurance costs are up 8.5%. There are 16 articles being considered for town meeting and costs would be split 50% with Abington. The articles center around preventive measures, replacements, state mandates, contractual requirements, safety, and security.

Accounting: Reviewed "Accounting" requested fiscal year 2026 budget document

- Notable changes/areas of focus: Increase of 4.35% for clerical due to a union step increase. The training budget will be used for the education of the assistant town accountant. For Sundries there is an initiative for each department to enter their own accounts payable and scan documents themselves. The accounting department has been purchasing scanners for this effort with the overall goal to reduce errors, decrease paper usage, assist with auditing, and have data available for historical reference. This will utilize existing software and licenses replacing manually entered spreadsheets today.

Town Administration: Reviewed “Select Board”, “Town Hall”, “Town Reports”, “Utilities General Government”, “Liability Insurance”, and “Legal Services” requested fiscal year 2026 budget documents

- Notable changes/areas of focus: The salary of the town administrator is increasing 2.5% due to a contractual requirement. \$300k has been added for wage adjustment obligations for the town, with the exception of the schools. This will be allocated after the town meeting. The town hall has two new line items for facilities stipends of \$7,500 and \$2,500; these are to be distributed to staff members who are assisting with town hall maintenance and projects outside of their direct responsibilities. This is in lieu of a facilities director dedicated to the town hall. For utilities there is discussion about trying to spend down the town’s solar credits to keep costs level. Liability insurance is up 9% and this covers workers compensation and payroll liability for the full town. Legal services are down 8.7% as union negotiations are occurring in 2025 there will be less legal need in FY26.

Other Documents - “FY26 Capital & Other Free Cash/Enterprise Fund Requests”

- An updated estimated breakdown of FY26 was provided for review. Free cash is certified at \$3,195,256. This is higher than the prior estimate.

Meeting Actions: The meeting was called to order by John Pumphrey at 7:05pm. The meeting minutes for January 22 had a motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Stuart, with unanimous approval including John Pumphrey. The meeting minutes for February 5 had a motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by Katherine Dussault, with unanimous approval including John Pumphrey. The meeting was adjourned with a motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Stuart, with unanimous approval at 9:13pm.

Next Meeting Date: The next meeting date is February 26, 2025.