

Town of Rockland Finance Committee
Meeting March 5, 2025 at 7pm ET - Town Hall, Lower Conference Room

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

Absent: Robert MacDonald

Additional guests: Douglas Lapp - Town Administrator, Scott Curtis - Town Accountant, Julie Burke - Council on Aging Director, Elizabeth MacNeil - Library Director, Tim White - Veterans Agent, - Information Technology

Meeting Notes: Review of FY2026 budgets.

Council on Aging: Reviewed "Council on Aging" requested fiscal year 2026 budget document

- Notable changes/areas of focus: Increase of 11.11% from \$36k to \$40k for maintenance of the building. The COA building is 11 years old and is encountering increased maintenance needs. (Last year they had an HVAC issue costing \$3,600 and a plumbing issue of \$1,200). The increase in the budget for FY26 is to better prepare for building needs, including appliances. There is also a 15% increase of \$2k to \$2,300 for professional development. This is to provide further training for the outreach coordinator and kitchen ServeSafe requirements. There was a highlighted risk related to the outreach coordinator being funded by a state grant which will be monitored. The COA does have an enterprise fund to help pay towards activities and programs which generally have a suggested donation for participation. There are approximately 150 seniors who attend the center a day with 50 hot lunches served.

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

- Notable changes/areas of focus: There was a -4.58% decrease for the custodian position as a new employee started at a lower rate than the prior tenured custodian. A 4.74% increase of \$3,320 for operating expenses was related to anticipated building maintenance. There was also a 10% \$1k increase for supplies and a 2.39% increase of \$2,500 for books and related materials. The library board had recommended a change in the library technicians role to offer a full time position. Currently there are four library technicians working part time. These are typically younger employees who assist with keeping up with technical skills offered at the library. This position sees a high turnover as they are unable to offer health benefits. The library has a donations fund with specified spending allowances such as magazines and newspapers. The library can spend the interest out of this fund but not the principal. The library is not pursuing the repair of the front stairs at this time as there are additional considerations such as staffing the entrance to be considered.

Veterans: Reviewed "Veterans Agent" and "Celebrations" requested fiscal year 2026 budget documents, and a "Veteran Exemption Totals" chart

- Notable changes/areas of focus: There were no changes to the requested line item budgets. There is an expectation the veterans agent will be below the initial projected budget for FY25. The Veterans Benefits is

on track for approximately \$250-260k compared to the budgeted \$290k. When a burial occurs that is reimbursable up to \$4k and there is some variance of reimbursement for medical and hospital related expenses. Currently there are 36 veterans receiving direct benefits in Rockland although the veteran's agent performs outreach in the community to help spread awareness. There are 3-4 additional veterans that are believed eligible for benefits but have not submitted the required paperwork. There are 850+ veterans in town with an additional 200-250 widows of veterans. The veteran's agent office is located in the senior centre which helps provide access to the senior population in town but would benefit from more office space that is noise controlled. There is a state guideline for a part time assistant to the veterans agent but Rockland does not currently have this role. There are four articles being considered related to the Hero Act. Two are related to tax abatements for disabled veterans, one for National Guardsman and military reservists property tax exemption, and one to offer town employees on leave for military service salary to maintain their regular pay (minus the amount paid by the military). A "Veteran Exemption Totals" chart showed an impact to tax dollars with the proposed articles. To help increase the veterans support fund there is a proposal to add a voluntary donation box to the excise tax mailings. There is a 'Rockland Veteran Group' which is also performing fundraising.

Data Processing: Reviewed "Data Processing" and "155 Department Budget" requested fiscal year 2026 documents

- Notable changes/areas of focus: There is a 48.14% increase in computer services and a 3% increase in computer and telephone supplies. The town IT department has several cost increases to bring our systems up to the standards for security risks. There is a \$60,110 increase for 'managed services and security', a \$37,551.79 increase for software licensing costs largely related to a Microsoft licensing structure change to provide everyone the same tier of security. A \$294.87 increase for internet services. A \$19,264 increase for website and related services to add enhanced functionality and meet ADA federal requirements. A \$1,719.88 increase for phones and phone services. There is also a new 'multifunction copier leases' request of \$52,875.22. Leasing copiers was identified as the best long term solution as it would include maintenance and security functionality with new equipment replacement on a determined schedule. There is an article for a network switch replacement.

Other Discussion:

- The school department is requesting an additional \$250-300k increase to mitigate impacted budget cuts. They will also be speaking with the town selectman regarding how the town revenue is forecasted.
- It was noted that there is a need for a town facilities manager that could help oversee work that is currently handled by the individual departments. This centralized approach would be expected to reduce overall costs and time spent by the departments on these projects.

Meeting Actions: The meeting was called to order by John Pumphrey at 7:01pm. The meeting minutes for February 26 had a motion by William Stuart, seconded by Linda Sternfelt, with unanimous approval. The meeting was adjourned with a motion by William Stuart, seconded by Linda Sternfelt, with unanimous approval at 9:20pm.

Next Meeting Date: The next meeting date is March 12, 2025.