

Town of Rockland Finance Committee
Meeting March 19, 2025 at 7pm ET - Town Hall, Lower Conference Room

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

Additional guests: Douglas Lapp - Town Administrator, Scott Curtis - Town Accountant, Richard Harris - Chair Capital Planning Committee, Dr. Alan Cron - Superintendent Schools, Jane Hackett - Assistant Superintendent Schools, Jill Maroney - School Committee

Meeting Notes: Review of FY2026 budgets.

Capital Planning: Reviewed "Town of Rockland Five Year Capital Plan Project Requests by Department" fiscal year 2026-2030 documents

- Notable changes/areas of focus: The Town Hall HVAC and lighting was originally proposed for FY26 but will be moved to FY27. The School 'Ice Removal Sidewalk plow and sander' was discussed at capital planning but will be deferred based on the Select board's recommendation. Capital planning has added an additional letter distinction on the ranking when there is a tie weight voted. For example, '2 and 2A'. The town council will advise when purchases should be brought to capital planning if there is a question on meeting the \$50k and 5 year lifetime threshold. The lease of the copiers for the town was not considered as it will be an operating budget expense. The Esten building daycare will be brought forward to a future capital planning meeting.

School Department: Reviewed "Rockland Public Schools Budget Presentation to the Rockland Finance Committee" presentation

- Notable changes/areas of focus: There are 2,150 students with 462 staff and faculty. Enrollment is down 6%. The percentage of students considered low income is up 33%. The town is seeing an increase of students having a diverse need, including 269 English learners up 45%, and 424 students with an IEP up 9%. Of the total enrollment 19% of students have an IEP and the school provides services where they are required. The school is proud of their student's academic successes with a high participation by their students in AP courses. The school department budget request is a 3.9% increase from FY25 to FY26. There is a decrease in the year to year percentage increase for out of district, foster, and homeless transportation (increasing 13% rather than 28% last year). There are 44 less staff positions as of 3/13/2025 than compared to 2020. To help serve the English learners 4 additional EL teachers and 5 tutors have been added. The Bridges program has added 3 teachers and 1 counselor to help students in grades 7-12 to reduce dropout rates and students being moved out of the district. This program helps keep student retention, reducing out of district costs, and students can receive a Rockland diploma. Teacher retention rate remains high and there was an 11% decrease in substitute teachers with less teachers on maternity leave. There is a revolving account for out of district costs with approximately \$1.1 million coming in, and plans to use \$1.2 million. The revolving account is expected to have a \$280k balance. The town performs audits of the fund

and there is close monitoring of grant spending which remains in compliance with the grant intent. To stabilize the budget it was requested the town appropriate 4.39% (from the 70/30 split, and \$374k of health insurance costs were moved to the town) and 1% of free cash for \$300k was requested for a total of 5.36% to the school department. It was discussed that there is a goal to reduce the school department's reliance on free cash. The Chapter 70 threshold for foundation vs minimum aid is based on October 1 enrollment. The town has lost 6 students from October 1-March 1 so there is a concern Ch. 70 funding will decrease next year but is expected to then stabilize.

Other Discussion: There is a need to reopen the budget for a 2.5% increase for the tree warden. There was a motion to reopen the highway budget by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. This was approved with 4 in favor and 1 opposed.

Special Town Meeting Articles:

1. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
2. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
3. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. 3 in favor and 2 opposed, with John Pumphrey abstained
4. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
5. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. 4 in favor, 1 opposed

Annual Town Meeting Articles:

2. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
4. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
5. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
6. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
7. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. 4 in favor, 1 opposed
8. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. 4 in favor, 1 opposed
9. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
10. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
11. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
12. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
13. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
14. Motion by Robert MacDonald, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval. Linda Sternfelt abstained
15. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
16. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
17. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
18. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval

19. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. 3 in favor and 2 opposed, with John Pumphrey abstained
20. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe for article as amended "Infrastructure improvements and engineering review". Unanimous approval
21. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
22. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
23. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
24. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
26. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
27. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
28. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
29. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
30. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
31. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe for article as amended for Finance Committee to vote in favor, and not defer. Unanimous approval
32. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. 3 in favor and 2 opposed
33. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
34. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval
35. Motion by Linda Sternfelt, seconded by William Principe. Unanimous approval

Meeting Actions: The meeting was called to order by John Pumphrey at 7:01pm. The meeting minutes for March 12 had a motion by William Principe, seconded by Katherine Dussault, with unanimous approval. The meeting was adjourned with a motion by Robert MacDonald, seconded by Linda Sternfelt, with unanimous approval at 9:55pm.

Next Meeting Date: The next meeting date is May 5 at 6:30pm, before town meeting.

