



## **Budget Committee Meeting**

### **Minutes**

**October 16, 2025, 7:00 PM**

#### **Open the Meeting**

Chair Cutting opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

**Roll Call** Budget Committee Members Present: Michael Cutting (Chair), Robert Blake, Rick Bixby, Bill Hanson, and James Sherman. Kelly Lombardi arrived at 7:15 PM. Ray Martin arrived at 7:25 PM.

Select Board Members Present: Alfred Hanson and Harry Seidel

**Harry Seidel made a motion seconded by Alfred Hanson to call to order the October 16, 2025 Select Board meeting. Roll Call Vote Hanson YES Seidel YES.**

**Approval of Minutes:** August 21, 2025 and September 18, 2025

**Bill Hanson made a motion seconded by Rick Bixby to accept the August 21, 2025 Budget Committee meeting minutes. Motion Passed**

**Robert Blake made a motion seconded by Alfred Hanson to accept the September 18, 2025 Budget Committee meeting minutes. Motion Passed**

The Budget Committee received the year to date expenditure report. Mike Cutting explained that he will be forwarding the report that also includes the 2024 expenditures and budget. Elizabeth Labbe presented year to date expense report and revenue reports. The Select Board and Budget Committee thanked Elizabeth for her assistance. James Sherman requested the date of last payroll and other meaningful expenses to be included in the report.

#### **Review Year to Date Expenses**

**Select Board expenditures** \$151,000 leaving \$112,000 (42%)

Robert Blake questioned the telephone, office supplies and postage expenditures being so high.

Judy Newman-Rogers via Zoom explained that the majority of the office supplies is the purchasing of paper. She explained that a system needs to be implemented where town department budgets reflect the supplies they take. Robert Blake explained that office supply vendors (Staples or WB Mason) have software that will charge to each department.

**Election expenditures** \$ 5,200 leaving \$785.

**Finance expenditures:** (Finance, Tax Collector and Town Clerk) \$171,000 leaving \$60,000 (25%)

**Reval expenditures:** \$48,604 leaving \$42,000 (46%) Tax Maps: budget was \$2,500 spent \$2,400  
Utilities/Sam Soucy budgeted \$7,500 spent \$8,000

**Legal expenditures:** Mike Cutting stressed that legal expenses are out of control, the Town cannot continue to spend \$86,000 in three quarters when only \$25,000 was budgeted. Harry Seidel explained that this year has been unusual. He acknowledged that the amount significant. Robert Blake stated that the Town needs to practice risk management. Harry Seidel stated that Primex is a good risk management resource.

**Benefit expenditures:** 45% remaining

1 Land Use expenditures: \$37,000 remaining (56%)  
2 Building expenditures: The Budget Committee discussed the lack of work done on maintenance  
3 and windows. Harry Seidel stated that the Town Hall doors are being updated but windows still  
4 need to be addressed. He agreed that the windows should be started. He explained that the  
5 windows are so large that vinyl is not an option. Bill Hanson asked if it would be worthwhile to  
6 reduce the size of the windows. Mike Cutting stressed that there is \$16,000 for windows unspent.  
7 Elizabeth Labbe suggested contacting Travis for his suggestions on how to prioritize the needs at  
8 the Warner Community Center. Mike Cutting would like the windows to be addressed. Kelly  
9 Lombardi asked for clarification on the usage of the Warner Community Center.  
10 American Legion/Town Cemeteries expenditures: spent \$15,000 from a budget of \$31,000.  
11 Insurance expenditures: budget \$130,000 spent \$130,000  
12 Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission expenditure: fully spent  
13 Other General Government expenditures: fully spent  
14 Police Department expenditures: spent \$179,000 leaving \$244,000 There was a discussion  
15 regarding the new hire of a police officer. Bill Chandler via Zoom explained that a new officer  
16 was hired and will start in November. He stated that there is another candidate being considered.  
17 Ambulance expenditures: The Board discussed the substantial increase going forward for  
18 ambulance services in 2026. Harry Seidel explained that the Town of Hopkinton has informed  
19 Warner that they have been under calculating Warner's share of the ambulance service cost.  
20 Warner budgeted \$89,190 and the actual cost according to the Town of Hopkinton is \$241,000.  
21 Harry Seidel explained that a new contract is needed to be negotiated. Robert Blake explained  
22 that there could be an increase in calls for service and a reduction in insurance reimbursement.  
23 There was a discussion regarding mutual aid and the prospect of contracting with New London.  
24 Fire Department expenditures: spent \$121,000 leaving \$115,000  
25 Forestry expenditures: nothing spent yet of \$2,000 budgeted.  
26 Building inspector expenditures: spent \$12,009 leaving \$15,000  
27 There was a discussion regarding the newly hired Building Inspector Scott LaCroix and  
28 associated wages.  
29 Emergency Management expenditures: spent \$4,352 from a budget of \$10,000  
30 Highway Department expenditures: spent \$612,000 leaving \$365,000 (37%)  
31 There was a discussion regarding payroll accounting of different wages. Alfred Hanson  
32 explained that the department would like to include all full time wages in one line item rather  
33 than breaking out the different shared positions. There was discussion regarding part-time wages.  
34 The Budget Committee discussed the paving line item, previous cuts and the need to address the  
35 paving needs in town.  
36 Street Lighting expenditures: spent \$6,400 from a budget of \$8,000  
37 Transfer Station expenditures: spent \$210,000 leaving \$131,000. The Board discussed various  
38 contract services that the Transfer Station uses for disposal and transportation.  
39 Human Services (welfare) expenditures: spent \$9,991 from a \$30,000 budget. The Select Board  
40 advised the Budget Committee that the current director is in place temporarily and is willing to  
41 train a replacement. There was discussion regarding rising costs throughout the state. Elizabeth  
42 Labbe explained that 2026 proposed budget has a \$10,000 increase to the human service budget.  
43 She explained that the industry has experienced significant federal cuts.  
44 Library: Elizabeth Labbe stated that the Town's value is 652,868,000 of which the Library  
45 receives 1/15 of 1% of the town value. \$442,000  
46 Conservation Commission expenditures: nothing spent yet.

1 Debt Service: James Sherman asked for clarification on this and he would appreciate notes to be  
2 added to the line items.

3  
4 **Review Year to Date Revenue**

5 Budgeted \$1,371,300 Collected \$1,076,000 leaving \$295,000 still to come in.

6 James Sherman stated that he would like clarification and notes to be included in this report.

7 Robert Blake spoke about a grant in the amount of \$226,800 that was received but not budgeted  
8 for. Alfred Hanson suspected that is the reimbursement from the State for their portion of the Red  
9 Chimney Bridge. James Sherman asked about the Rooms and Meals. Mike Cutting stated that  
10 should still be coming. James Sherman inquired about income from other departments,  
11 specifically TS vendor checks. Mike Cutting explained that is checks received from the Transfer  
12 Station for the sale of recyclables. He stated revenue is also received from the Police  
13 Department. James Sherman asked about franchise fees. Mike Cutting explained that the  
14 franchise fees come from TDS and is renegotiated every five years.

15  
16 **Review 2026 Operating Budget**

17 Operating Budget

18 Mike Cutting spoke about the challenges relating to the proposed budget. He explained that the  
19 budget increased \$470,000 (10%). Mike Cutting acknowledged that the Library funding is not  
20 something that can be controlled and the ambulance contract needs to be negotiated. Harry  
21 Seidel stated health insurance is going up 14% and dental is going up 4%. Harry Seidel  
22 explained that it is unfortunate that they wait until mid-October to let municipalities know an  
23 estimation of the increase. Mike Cutting stated that the Town Administrator was working with a  
24 committee to look at other health insurance benefits, he asked for a status update. Kelly  
25 Lombardi agreed that this has been brought up numerous times. She suspects that the Town has  
26 lost its window of opportunity to negotiate and it does not appear that proactive steps have been  
27 taken to look for cost savings. Alfred Hanson explained that they are looking into it. Alfred  
28 Hanson reiterated that Health Trust just announced the rate increase. He explained that there are  
29 two other insurance quotes that they are waiting for. Mike Cutting asked when the two proposals  
30 would be received. Harry Seidel explained that Judy talked about sending follow up letters.

31  
32 Judy Newman-Rogers via Zoom explained that any information she received was forwarded to  
33 Selectman Mike Smith who took over the insurance options for the town. She noted that when  
34 he was asked at a Select Board meeting for an update he became angry and said there was no  
35 update. Robert Blake encouraged the Select Board to focus on the benchmarking because if  
36 there are two or three insurance companies it make it difficult to compare them. Robert Blake  
37 explained that the biggest difference in cost is going to be the design of the plan and what is  
38 covered. Bill Chandler stated that he collected data from surrounding towns and that information  
39 showed that Warner's benefits are consistent with the surrounding communities. Bill Chandler  
40 stated that the deductible for Warner is significantly higher than the surrounding communities.  
41 Bill Chandler explained that in the past the Town paid half of the deductible. He stated that the  
42 deductible was \$15,000 of which the town paid half, but now the town only pays \$1,500. Bill  
43 Chandler stated that there are towns who pay 100% of the health insurance as an attractor or  
44 retention of employment. He acknowledged that there are some towns who require employees to  
45 pay a 10% contribution. Robert Blake noted that the employees have not been asked to  
46 contribute to the premium. He stated that it is a trade-off.

1 Mike Cutting asked if Bill Chandler had any information on the contribution percentage of  
2 surrounding communities. Bill Chandler stated that what he found is an average of 10%. He  
3 stated that if there was a comparable plan, a lower deductible the trade-off would be a 10%  
4 contribution. Bill Hanson stated that his issue is that the people paying for this is the taxpayers  
5 who do not have their health insurance paid 100%. Mike Cutting asked if the Select Board has  
6 considered a 90/10 or 80/20 plan. Kelly Lombardi stated that the employees need to be informed  
7 of a change to their benefits. Robert Blake stated that last year the employees were not involved  
8 in the process. Bill Chandler explained that the high deductible is not affordable for employees.  
9 Judy Newman-Rogers explained that last year the decision was made on the premium price, but  
10 there is much more in the plan that needs to be considered. She agreed that the deductible is  
11 unacceptable. Bill Chandler stated that employees were shocked to find out about the deductible  
12 increasing to \$15,000 two weeks after a staff meeting where they were told that there would not  
13 be a change in their healthcare coverage.

14  
15 Diane Ricciardelli (previous Town Administrator) via Zoom stated that when the town went to  
16 100% coverage there were two Select Board members who rejected the 10% and 15%  
17 contribution plans, they voted for zero in 2022.

18  
19 Harry Seidel explained that he spoke to Theresa Monahan assistant to the Police Chief who  
20 knows a great deal about insurance and she echoed the comments that insurance plans should be  
21 selected on what works for you. Robert Blake stated that there are many different options. Ray  
22 Martin explained that the employee contribution percentage does not change the premium price,  
23 the premium price is changed by the plan selected. He suggested that the HSA could be  
24 increased to help the employees. Mike Cutting stated that the proposed budget is sitting at a 10%  
25 increase before benefits. He stressed the need to get the budget under control. He expressed  
26 concern that at town meeting a drastic cut will be made to the budget. He urged the Select Board  
27 to be ready to explain to the voters what the ramifications of a drastic cut would be. Ray Martin  
28 explained that would impact town services. The Board discussed various town services that  
29 could be considered; reduction Town Hall department hours, transfer station hours, plowing etc.

### 30 31 **Meeting Schedule**

32 October 23, 2025 at 7:00 PM

### 33 34 **Adjournment**

35 **Rick Bixby made a motion seconded by James Sherman to adjourn the meeting.**  
36 **Motion passed.**

37  
38 The meeting adjourned at 9:51 PM  
39 Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty