



Budget Committee Meeting

Minutes

November 6, 2025, 7:00 PM

Open the Meeting and Roll Call

Chair Mike Cutting opened the Budget Committee meeting at 7:00 PM.

Budget Committee Members Present: Michael Cutting (Chair), Robert Blake, Ray Martin, Rick Bixby, Bill Hanson and James Sherman. Kelly Lombardi was absent.

Select Board: Alfred Hanson, Harry Seidel and Mike Smith via Zoom.

Chair Harry Seidel called the Select Board meeting to order at 6:59 PM.

Approval of Minutes • October 23, 2025

James Sherman made a motion seconded by Robert Blake to accept the October 23, 2025 Budget Committee meeting minutes as presented. Motion Passed

Health Insurance update:

Harry Seidel explained that the Select Board met with employees to discuss the health insurance plan from Health Trust. He spoke about the issues with the current plan (high deductibles). He stated that the Select Board was looking for something with a lower premium. Harry Seidel stated that general insurance is increasing by 14% and dental insurance by 4%.

Harry Seidel explained that Health Trust is a non-profit organization and they offer insurance with lower premiums and lower annual increases. He noted that many of the for-profit companies are increasing by 30%. Harry Seidel explained that there is only one other plan that Health Trust could offer but it did not meet the needs of the Town. He stated that Health Trust is the best option for Warner. Harry Seidel stated that the Select Board voted on a plan at a cost of \$357,575. Mike Cutting noted that the current plan cost was \$286,000. Alfred Hanson and Ray Martin recapped the break down of plans including the three vacant positions. Mike Cutting recapped the change in dental insurance cost from \$23,185 to \$25,557.

Presentation of the 2026 Transfer Station and Highway Budgets

Highway Department presented by Tim Allen

Mike Cutting explained that the Highway Department budget in 2024 was \$1,107,516, the budget for 2025 was \$978,034 and the 2026 proposed budget is \$1,156,984 a 15.2% increase.

Tim Allen explained that the bulk of the budget is less than last year but he restored \$100,000 for paving and he added \$82,000 for the lease payments. Mike Cutting asked what would happen if the paving was pushed out another year. Tim Allen does not support kicking it down the road.

He believes the money needs to be spent to protect the town's roads. Tim Allen explained that he has two roads that need to be protected with a top coat. Tim Allen explained that he had to address Denny Hill Road, Melvin Road and Stagecoach Loop last year and the funds came from the operating budget in gravel line item. He explained that he was not able to make gravel which will cause a shortage of gravel materials this year. Tim Allen stated there is a possibility that he will need to purchase gravel and the cost is 2 ½ times more than if he made the gravel. He stressed there will be additional costs if the paving is kicked down the road.

1 Harry Seidel asked Tim to outline the most vulnerable roads. Tim Allen stated that Burn Hill
2 Road, Pumpkin Hill, and Kearsarge Mountain Road come to mind but there are many other roads
3 that need attention. Tim Allen explained that he focuses on the most porous roads. Tim Allen
4 stated that hot topping roads is very important.

5
6 Mike Cutting stated that he is very concerned that at Town Meeting a drastic cut will be made to
7 the Town budget and what an impact that would have. Alfred Hanson stressed that the highway
8 budget is less than last year minus the paving and lease payments. James Sherman explained
9 that he has been looking at the Town budget and he has a pretty good idea of where cuts can be
10 made to avoid the Highway budget. He recapped a few options such as reducing hours at Town
11 Hall and the Transfer Station, out sourcing payroll, eliminating the Town Administrator position
12 or the Administrative Assistant and snow plowing sidewalks. James Sherman explained these are
13 the types of tough decisions that will need to be made. He spoke of the free services that the
14 Town provides the library such as mowing. He mentioned increasing fees at the transfer station.
15 James Sherman stressed these are the cuts that could be made if a drastic cut of \$300,000 to
16 \$500,000 is made at town meeting. James Sherman stated that reducing the Highway paving line
17 item will negatively impact the town. He hopes to have suggested cuts ready to consider next
18 week.

19
20 Tim Allen explained that the Highway Department averages \$4,800 to \$5,800 per round in a
21 snow storm. He stated that lately the storms have required 2-3 rounds at approximately \$12,000
22 - \$15,000 per snow storm. Tim Allen estimated that by revising the procedure to begin plowing
23 at 3-4 inches (instead of 2 inches) there could be a significant savings.

24
25 Alfred Hanson asked for clarification on the outside professional service line item. Tim Allen
26 explained that covers engineering costs and tree removal. Alfred Hanson inquired about Outside
27 Rentals. Tim Allen explained that he will need to rent an excavator and bulldozer for the pit for a
28 minimum of one week. Mike Cutting how to avoid the ups and downs (\$30,000 to \$50,000) in
29 the gravel line item. Tim Allen suggested maintaining the gravel funding at \$40,000 each year.

30
31 Alfred Hanson asked if the new equipment could reduce the funding needed in the outside repair
32 line item. Tim Allen estimated next year to be between \$10,000 and \$12,000. He stated that he
33 would be comfortable with reducing it to \$15,000.

34
35 Mike Cutting asked if Tim Allen could take another look at the Highway Budget and come back
36 with a number he could live with. Alfred Hanson reiterated that the increases are for restoring
37 the paving \$100,000, lease payments of \$82,000 and wages of \$30,000 and without those items
38 the proposed operating Highway Budget is less than then this year. Ray Martin explained that
39 the overall proposed Town Budget is up \$585,000 and \$287,000 of that is for the library. Ray
40 Martin explained that other town services are being cut to make up the library increase. Robert
41 Blake noted that the proposed budget does not include any wage adjustment.

42
43 Tim Allen stated that the Town has the best highway department staff it has ever had. He
44 stressed that if drastic cuts are made that would reduce the work that could be done and the staff
45 would not be needed and that would be a disappointing consequence. Harry Seidel spoke about
46 the importance of the Highway Department and its role in maintaining the Town's infrastructure.

1 He appreciates Tim Allen's willingness to make adjustments here and there but the overall
2 highway department budget is modest. James Sherman agreed and he cautioned about allowing
3 the roads to deteriorate. Alfred Hanson stated that the voters last year approved the purchase of
4 highway equipment.

5
6 The Budget Committee discussed the need to be prepared to educate the voters at town meeting
7 about the impact that a drastic cut would mean to Town departments. James Sherman stressed
8 that the library increase and the ambulance increase must be explained to the voters. There was a
9 brief discussion relating to the ambulance service increase. There was discussion regarding tax
10 rate increase. Mike Cutting reiterated that the budget committee needs to be prepared to explain
11 the budget and increases. Tim Allen gave a status update on the \$265,000 state grant. He stated
12 that the state is still holding \$40,000 because the permitting for the remaining two crossings has
13 not been completed, he hopes to have that complete by the end of the year. There was a
14 discussion regarding where the \$225,000 should go. Tim Allen explained that the money went to
15 the general fund because the language of grant did not stipulate that the funds where to go into
16 the capital reserve fund. Alfred Hanson stated that the Finance Director Clyde Carson would be
17 the best person to explain this. Bill Hanson questioned why it would be Clyde when the
18 responsibility is that of the Select Board. He stated that one person is making the finance
19 decisions. Alfred Hanson and Harry Seidel disagreed. Tim Allen explained that it was his hope
20 that the money would go back to the Capital Reserve Fund. Harry Seidel explained that can only
21 be done by a vote at town meeting.

22
23 **Transfer Station** presented by Tim Allen

24 Mike Cutting explained that the 2024 budget was \$319,722, 2025 was \$342,275 and the
25 proposed 2026 budget is \$403,823 a 9.2% increase. James Sherman clarified that the 2025
26 budget was cut by \$30,000. Harry Seidel explained that the Wheelabrator: increase to \$95/ton
27 plus and demo tipping fees increased to \$14,000 and transportation increased by 13.73%.
28 Tim Allen explained that closing the transfer station a few additional days will not decrease the
29 volume that is taken in. Tim Allen spoke about a possible savings of approximately \$30,000 for
30 part time wages if the transfer station was closed two additional days. Rick Bixby stated that
31 once the Police Department is fully staffed he would like to see an officer at the facility on the
32 weekends to deter out of town users. Tim Allen agreed. There was a discussion regarding the
33 possibility of closing the transfer station additional days. There was discussion regarding the
34 discrepancy in part time wage amounts. Mike Cutting urged staff to provide the most up to date
35 information. Harry Seidel explained that the budget does reflect a 5% reduction.

36
37 Alfred Hanson asserted that throughout the town budget it is the outside services that have
38 increased. He stated that the Budget Committee will need to take another look at the end of the
39 budget review process for additional areas to cut. There was another discussion regarding the
40 need to enforce sticker uses at the transfer station. Tim Allen stated that without the manpower
41 there is no way to enforce it. James Sherman stressed that anyone who uses the transfer station
42 must have a sticker.

43
44 Alfred Hanson asked Tim Allen to provide information regarding the reduction of \$30,000 for
45 part time wages/closing two additional days. Mike Cutting asked for an update on the
46 renovations at the transfer station. Tim Allen explained that he is waiting for Capital Well to

1 provide their analysis of the water at the transfer station and the highway department. He
2 explained that the hard and acidic water is ruining fixtures. Tim stated that work is being done on
3 the heating system at the transfer station and roof repairs are being done. Tim Allen stated that
4 the doors have been fixed and he would like to get the overhangs reinstalled.

5
6 Tim Allen explained that the water and air system at highway department facility has been
7 challenging to fine anyone to upgrade the system.
8

9 **Other Business**

10 There was a discussion regarding the possibility of a cell tower at the transfer station that would
11 improve communications for emergency services. Mike Smith explained that the town received
12 a very low rental price from the cell tower company. He explained that the company wants the
13 town to sign the agreement before they begin. Harry Seidel stated that he spoke the
14 representative and informed him that the price is too low. He stated that the negotiations are
15 ongoing. Mike Smith explained that he is working with three different companies for three
16 separate towers.
17

18 **Meeting Schedule:**

19 November 13, 2025 General Government building, Warner Town Hall, Warner Community
20 Center, Building Inspector, Health/Human Services, Conservation Commission and Elections.

21 22 **Adjournment**

23 **Alfred Hanson made a motion seconded by Rick Bixby to adjourn the meeting. Motion**
24 **passed.**

25
26 **Harry Seidel made a motion seconded by Alfred Hanson to adjourn the Select Board**
27 **meeting. Roll Call Vote Hanson YES Smith YES Seidel YES**

28
29 The meeting adjourned at 8:53 PM
30 Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty