



Town Of Webster

Massachusetts

Est. 1832

Finance Committee

350 Main Street
Webster, MA 01570

Mat Fitton, Chairman
Wilfrid Cournoyer
Kaitlin Morin, Secretary
Courtney Friedland, Recording Secretary

Michael Stevens
Michael Tocco

FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, April 28, 2025

Michael Makara School Committee Conference Room
77 Poland Street, Webster, MA 01570
6:00 p.m.

The Finance Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman Mat Fitton at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Mat, Fitton, Wilfrid Cournoyer, Kaitlin Morin, Michael Tocco, Michael Stevens, Town Accountant, Timothy Bell, Town Administrator, Richard LaFond, School Superintendent Monique Pierangeli, Business Manager Lisa Kontoes, Christine Aronson, and Finance Committee Secretary Courtney Friedland.

Public Hearing: Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Operating Budget pursuant to Section 6-5 (a) of the Town of Webster Charter

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Michael Stevens, to open the Public Hearing: Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Operating Budget pursuant to Section 6-5 (a) of the Town of Webster Charter. Call Vote: Mat Fitton – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Kaitlin Morin – yes, Michael Tocco –yes, and Michael Stevens – yes.

School Superintendent Monique Pierangeli, Business Manager Lisa Kontoes, and Finance Director Timothy Bell were present for the Public Hearing. Town Administrator LaFond went through the PowerPoint presentation. The proposed budget for FY 2026 is \$67 million, which is \$5 million more than last year. A major impact to the total budget is the debt exclusion for the BHS renovation. The state aid increase is approximately 6.53%. Water and sewer charges help fund the general fund. Including the debt exclusion, 51% of the town's overall revenue is from our tax levy, and 37% of our revenue is from state aid. The use of \$1.3 million of free cash is proposed to fund some operating costs. State mandates take up a significant portion of the budget. The general fund shared costs are up 17.65%, including the debt exclusion. The school to town ratio after fixed costs is 70% to 30%. The police budget is level service, but there are additional expenses. The police and fire departments have collective bargaining agreements. Some expenditures noted are: the fire department transitioned to a full-time department and the

town now absorbs that cost, animal control costs increased, which includes an animal inspector (who performs a different function than the ACO) the library is looking to increase staff, and fireworks will be funded from the Recreation revolving fund. 33% of the school budget is for required special education services. The increase in special education transportation of \$1,238,125.00 exceeds the additional levy and state aid by \$300,000.00. Shared costs include snow and ice removal, Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), Health Insurance, school transportation, and other items noted in the presentation. Webster has a road improvement fund to help supplement Chapter 90 funding. The total shared costs increased \$3,766,586.00. Free cash is proposed to be used for: capital improvement, snow and ice removal, general liability insurance deficit, stabilization fund, Reduce FY26 tax rate, and Webster Lake maintenance. The \$1.3mil in free cash corresponds to the amount of special ed transportation. The school department still had to reduce their budget by around \$500,000.00.

The Town is confident that the \$1.3 million free cash will be replaced next year. Borrowings generate some income. It will be difficult to maintain level services if state mandates continue to grow and are not funded by the state. 40% of the town's revenue is state revenue. Mr. Bell added that the difference between the requested budget vs. the Town Administrator's budget is \$2.6 million, which is proposed to be funded by the \$1.3 million in free cash. He stated that this means that \$1.4 million has already been cut from departmental requests. The management team has been building reserves for situations. Through February of this year, our investment income is already over \$900,000.00, so the free cash should be able to be replenished.

Ms. Pierangeli said thank you for the collaboration from the town. The schools are hoping that the Chapter 70 formula will be reevaluated by the state and the revenue coming in is not enough to maintain our high level of need

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Michael Stevens, to close the Public Hearing and recommend approval of the Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Operating Budget pursuant to Section 6-5 (a) of the Town of Webster Charter. Call Vote: Mat Fitton – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Kaitlin Morin – yes, Michael Tocco –yes, and Michael Stevens – yes.

Request for Finance Reserve Transfer

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Michael Stevens, to approve the Finance Reserve Transfer:

1. Library HVAC system repair: \$7,105.00
2. Police Station HVAC system repair: \$9,203.28

Call Vote: Mat Fitton – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Kaitlin Morin – yes, Michael Tocco –yes, and Michael Stevens – yes.

Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Improvement Program

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Michael Stevens, to approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Improvement Program. Call Vote: Mat Fitton – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Kaitlin Morin – yes, Michael Tocco –yes, and Michael Stevens – yes.

Proposed Future Meeting Dates

Chairman Fitton stated the Finance Committee will hold a remote meeting on May 6, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. to review and make recommendation on the Special and Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Michael Stevens, to meet on May 6, 2025 to 5:00 p.m. to review and make recommendation on the Special and Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles. Call Vote: Mat Fitton – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Kaitlin Morin – yes, Michael Tocco –yes, and Michael Stevens – yes.

Any Other Items Not Available at the Time of Posting

There are no other items available at the time of posting.

Adjournment

Motion by Michael Tocco, seconded by Michael Stevens, to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 7:23 p.m. Call Vote: Mat Fitton – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Kaitlin Morin – yes, Michael Tocco –yes, and Michael Stevens – yes.

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney Friedland