



Warner Budget Committee
November 20, 2025
APPROVED
Meeting Minutes

Open the Meeting and Roll Call

Chair Cutting opened the Budget Committee meeting.

Budget Committee Members Present: Michael Cutting (Chair), Robert Blake, Ray Martin, Rick Bixby and Bill Hanson and Kelly Lombardi arrived at 7:10 PM. James Sherman via Zoom.

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

Approval of Minutes • November 20, 2025

No audio / video when the motion was made and seconded. **The Budget committee voted to approve the November 20, 2025 Budget Committee meeting minutes. Motion Passed unanimously.**

Review of Total Operational Budget

1. Recommendations by Budget Committee

Mike Cutting explained that the operating budget for 2025 was approved at \$4,603,185.64 and the CIP budget was approved at \$755,000 totaling \$5,358,185.64. He explained that the proposed budget from the Select Board is \$5,246,603.06 and the proposed CIP budget is \$407,500 totaling \$5,654,103.06 an increase of \$295,917.42 a 5.52% increase. Bill Hanson asked for the Library total, Mike Cutting stated that the library increase is \$211,364.64. Bill Hanson noted that the subtracting the library increase the proposed operating budget only increased by approximately \$80,000. The CIP decreased by 46.3%. Mike Cutting acknowledged the total budget (operating and capital) increased \$295,000 and of that the Library will receive \$211,000 and \$82,000 will go towards the leased vehicles. Mike Cutting stated that the cost for the ambulance contract of \$241,000 is still being negotiated. Ray Martin stressed that those three items are significant.

Robert Blake spoke of his concern relating to the CIP and lack of proposed funding. He stated that balances are decreasing and the purpose of CIP is to be an alternative to borrowing. He is concerned that Warner will find itself in a deferred maintenance problem in the future. Alfred Hanson stated that purpose of the construction loan was to avoid punishing the road construction CIP. Ray Martin agreed that the purpose of the CIP was to spend on Capital projects. Robert Blake cautioned about adequately funding for the reval.

Mike Cutting explained that from this point forward the budget is the Budget Committee's budget. Alfred Hanson noted that the Select Board could also submit a budget. Mike Cutting clarified that the Select Board could propose a separate budget. Mike Smith stressed that would be a seconded separate budget and it would not change the Budget Committee's budget. Ed Mical asked if COLA is included in the operating budget. Mike Cutting stated that the budget submitted reflects COLA in some department budgets but not all. Alfred Hanson and Harry Seidel stated that their budget does include a 2.8% COLA for all employees.

1 Select Board: budget is \$238,638. COLA is applied to the Administrative Assistant wages. Mike
2 Cutting asked about the Town Administrator wage decrease of \$75,000 for 2026. Alfred Hanson
3 explained that it will take time to hire someone. Mike Cutting questioned the current contract for the
4 Town Administrator. Harry Seidel stated the contract is for one year, but it rolled into a second year
5 for various reason. He stated that he believes there is a clause in the contract that could extend it to a
6 three contract. Mike Smith stated that the Town Administrator's contract is for three years. He stated
7 that the Select Board has already decided what they are going to do. Mike Cutting questioned how
8 the Select Board could sign a multi-year contract without it going to Town Meeting. Robert Blake
9 acknowledged that these matters are sensitive and possibly confidential. He stated that the Budget
10 Committee is trying to understand if the Town has enough money budgeted to cover the Town's
11 obligations for the next year. Mike Smith stated that there is a three year contract in place that cannot
12 be dropped. Mike Cutting reiterated his question regarding the decrease of \$75,000. Alfred Hanson
13 stated that the matter is sensitive in nature but the Budget Committee is free to make an adjustment.
14 Harry Seidel stated that it is not appropriate to discuss this matter in public. Rick Bixby asked if the
15 contract is public information. Harry Seidel stated that the contract is public information. There was
16 a discussion regarding the burden on the Town not having a Town Administrator. Harry Seidel
17 outlined examples. Mike Smith stressed that he (Harry) was the one who put the Town
18 Administrator on leave "over a piece of paper". Mike Cutting explained that in the last year the
19 Town has been without the Administrative Assistant for 4+ months and without the Town
20 Administrator for 6 months. He asked if both those positions need to be filled for 2026. Harry Seidel
21 stressed that it is important to have both positions. Mike Cutting asked if the Town can get by with
22 one position. Kelly Lombardi asked if it is possible to make the positions part-time. Mike Smith
23 explained that is possible. Mike Smith explained that in the past when Judy Newman-Rogers was on
24 the Select Board she dropped the administrative assistant down to 20 hour. There was a discussion
25 regarding the difficulties in finding someone willing to be a part-time Town Administrator. Alfred
26 Hanson explained that state-wide there is struggle finding a Town Administrator.

27
28 The Budget Committee deliberated on the funding of the Town Administrator and the Administrative
29 Assistant positions. Mike Cutting asked if both positions are needed for 2026. Harry Seidel spoke
30 about how the Administrative Assistant has had to taken on added responsibilities in the absence of
31 the Town Administrator. Mike Smith countered that when the Administrative Assistant was out on
32 leave a temp was hired. Mike Smith stated that Harry Seidel and Alfred Hanson do not want a temp
33 and they want to give the Administrative Assistant more money. Robert Blake stated that there
34 might be fixed contractual obligation with the Town Administrator. He stated that the funding needs
35 to be accounted for in the budget. He stated that without a Town Administrator, it makes the position
36 of the Administrative Assistant more crucial. Ray Martin stated that at a minimum the funding as
37 submitted should be left alone.

38
39 Elections: \$9,850.30 No Change

40
41 Tax Collector:

42 Deputy wages: was increased to \$1,792 from \$1,500. Robert Blake suggested increasing that by
43 2.8%. There was discussion regarding the increase of this line item. Harry Seidel explained that
44 throughout the budget there has been a tightening of the belt. Mike Smith asked when the last time
45 the stipend was increased. He explained that James Sherman has really stepped up. Robert Blake
46 explained that there are many other roles like that in town that are not receiving an increase. He

1 noted that those individuals are making a donation of their time and service to the town. Robert
2 Blake agrees with Harry Seidel. James Sherman stated that he submitted his resignation this week.
3 He spoke about the difficulties that the Tax Collector will face filling the position for a \$1,500
4 stipend. James Sherman stated that the stipend should be at least \$2,500. Mike Cutting asked each
5 member to state their position. Rick Bixby would like to leave it \$1,792, Kelly Lombardi is leaning
6 towards \$1,500, Robert Blake \$1,500 to be consistent with other stipends, Bill Hanson agreed on
7 \$1,500, Ray Martin agreed on \$1,500.

8
9 Finance Department: Mike Cutting asked for an update on the outsourcing of payroll. Harry Seidel
10 stated that the Select Board has not discussed it yet. Alfred Hanson noted that it is being looked into.
11 Tax Collector: Kelly Lombardi questioned the wage increase. Robert Blake expressed his concern
12 relating to the Audit Expense line item. He believes that it will significantly higher than what is
13 proposed. He suggested it should be \$35,000 - \$40,000. Harry Seidel and Alfred Hanson agreed that
14 the amount should be increased. Alfred Hanson requested additional time to get more information
15 from the Auditor. The decision was made to increase the line item to \$35,000.

16
17 Town Clerk: COLA is reflected in the budget. No other adjustments were made.

18
19 Trustee of the Trust Funds: Harry Seidel questioned the line item for outside services. Robert Blake
20 explained that there is a cost for Bar Harbor to maintain the trust funds database. Robert Blake
21 stated that it could be reduced to \$1.

22
23 Assessing: \$89,761 decreased by \$1,058 1.2%. Bill Hanson asked for clarification on the length of
24 the Avitar contract. Elizabeth Labbe explained the original contract was for two years with a reval.
25 She stated that the new contract has not been signed yet.

26
27 Legal Expenses: Mike Cutting asked how the Town can better manage the legal fees incurred. Ray
28 Martin asked if that covers RSA 91-a requests. Mike Cutting explained that is a separate line item.
29 Robert Blake asked if the full cost incurred is reflected because the actual spent is \$93,389. Robert
30 Blake questioned if current litigation is projected for next year. Harry Seidel agreed. Mike Cutting
31 asked if the proposed amount of \$40,000 a realistic amount. Alfred Hanson explained the Select
32 Board's rationale.

33
34 Personnel Administration/Benefits: \$676,394 decreased by \$14,998. There was a discussion
35 regarding the discrepancy as previous indications were that benefits would be increasing. Ray
36 Martin explained that who is covered could have changed. The Select Board will double check.

37
38 Land Use: \$50,028 a decrease of \$15,000 (23%). No additional changes.

39
40 General Government buildings (Town Hall, Community Center and the old fire station): \$54,000
41 decreased by \$11,000. Mike Cutting asked if the electricity decrease to \$4,000 is realistic. The
42 Select Board will look into the electricity line item for town hall and community center. Harry Seidel
43 stated that the heating oil is down from \$2.66 per gallon to \$2.59 per gallon. Fire Alarms decreased
44 as a result of changing vendors. Town Hall Maintenance/Repairs: \$6,000 no changes.

45
46 Cemeteries: No additional changes at \$31,000

1 Insurance: No additional changes the budget decreased by \$1,457

2
3 CNHRPC: No change

4
5 CAP: \$5,400 a decreased \$12,100

6
7 Police Department: \$464,424 an increase of \$40,000 (9.6%) attributed to wage line item for filling
8 vacant positions. The Select Board will seek clarification on the secretary position wage increase.

9
10 Ambulance: amount to be determined through ongoing negotiations estimated at \$241,000. Harry
11 Seidel explained that he is working with the surrounding communities (New London, Webster and
12 Henniker). He stated that the fire chief believes the quoted price is a safe estimate. Harry Seidel
13 suggested \$180,000 or spread the increase out over the next few years. John France explained that
14 Warner will receive the 2026 quote in the near future.

15
16 Fire Department: wages \$90,640. John France explained that his budget does not reflect the COLA
17 adjustment. The revised wage line item should be \$93,178 to include COLA.

18
19 Ray Martin suggested the Budget Committee review stop now and pick back up on December 11,
20 2025. Bill Hanson agreed.

21 **Meeting Schedule:**

22 December 11, 2025

23
24 **Adjournment**

25 **Alfred Hanson made a motion seconded by Bill Hanson to adjourn the Budget Committee**
26 **meeting. Motion passed.**

27
28 The meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM

29 Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty