



**Warner Budget Committee
December 11, 2025
APPROVED
Meeting Minutes**

Open the Meeting and Roll Call

Chair 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 Kelly Lombardi via Zoom.

Harry Seidel opened the Select Board meeting.

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

Approval of Minutes December 4, 2025

Bill Hanson made a motion seconded by Rick Bixby to approve the December 4, 2025 Budget Committee meeting minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Review of previous Budget Committee questions:

Town Administrator wages / contract:

Ray Martin spoke about an email request for the Town Administrator's contract. He clarified that the Budget Committee did not request the contract it was a request made by the Chairman. Mike Cutting confirmed and after reading the contract he believes that it is a 3 year contract. He stated that the Town Administrator contract was signed on January 23, 2024 for \$95,000 per year with an additional \$5,000 each year and can be terminated for just cause. Mike Cutting explained that the proposed 2026 operating budget reflects \$75,000 however this would be the third year of the Town Administrator contract and that line item would be \$105,000 unless she was terminated for just cause. Harry Seidel stated that he is not able to discuss this matter in public. Ray Martin stated that he understood that the \$75,000 was a new Town Administrator possibly hired later in the year. Robert Blake agreed that the budget should include the possibility that the Town would need to cover the third year of the Town Administrator's contract. Mike Cutting explained that he line item should be \$180,000 (\$75,000 for a new Town Administrator and \$105,000 for the third year of the contract). Ed Mical questioned how the three year contract was executed without approval at Town Meeting. Rick Bixby stated that it should have been pending based on what the tax payers want to pay. There was a conversation regarding COLA increases being effective after Town Meeting. Harry Seidel stated that the contract does state that the Town Administrator would be on probation for one year. He stated that the town's legal counsel reviewed the contract language. He suspects that the clause of a one year probationary period covered the requirement of any contract more than one year be approved at town meeting.

Benefits: Mike Cutting stated that the proposed budget reflects \$332,792 for benefits and that is less than the current budget of \$336,019. Alfred Hanson stated that Clyde will be providing clarification in the near future.

IRS: Mike Cutting noted that he requested information regarding the IRS penalty letter. Harry Seidel read a statement from Clyde Carson explaining the IRS letter.

1 Electricity: Mike Cutting stated that the Budget Committee previously questioned the electricity
2 line item for General Government buildings. Harry Seidel explained that he spoke to Clyde
3 Carson who advised him that electricity is trending down.

4
5 Police Department Secretary: 2025 budget was \$62,212, the proposed budget is \$65,579. Police
6 Chief Bill Chandler explained that when he presented his budget to the Budget Committee the
7 line item was \$64,085. He explain that an adjustment needed to be made to his budget to reflect
8 the correct hourly rate. Bill Chandler reiterated that his proposed budget for wages did not
9 include last year's COLA.

10
11 Ambulance contract: \$241,000 Harry Seidel explained that the Select Board has a meeting
12 scheduled for tomorrow and next Tuesday with Webster and Hopkinton to discuss the situation.

13
14 Fire Department: Wages \$93,178 include COLA, Fire Chief France confirmed. 2025 budget was
15 \$ 237,442 and the proposed budget is \$239,898

16
17 **Continue Review of 2026 Operating Budget**

18 Forest Fire: \$2,000 no change

19
20 Building Inspector: 2025 \$26,510 proposed \$30,600 Alfred Hanson explained that a new and
21 experienced building inspector was hired to be offset by building permit revenues.

22 Compliance Officer: 2025 \$2,000 proposed budget \$7,500

23 Supplies: increased from \$300 to \$1,500 postage and permit cardstock

24 Mileage: increase from \$1,000 to \$2,000

25
26 Emergency Management: 2025 \$10,577 proposed budget is \$17,127 61.9% increase. This includes
27 \$7,000 for grants to update the Emergency Operation plan and the Continuity of Operations plan.

28
29 Highway Department: 2025 budget \$978,044 proposed \$1,172,072 an increase of \$164,000 16.8%
30 Mike Cutting asked if the Select Board has advertised to fill the director position with Tim Allen
31 retiring as of December 31, 2025. Harry Seidel stated that the position has been posted internally
32 until December 15th.

33 Wages: proposed is \$87,412 Mike Cutting stated that the average salary in the State is over
34 \$100,000. He questioned if the proposed amount is reasonable. There was a discussion regarding the
35 shortage of highway employees. Harry Seidel stated that a temporary part-time plow driver was
36 hired recently.

37 Full time wages: proposed to increase 16%

38 Part-time wages: 2025 \$29,400 proposed is \$45,299.50 Alfred Hanson explained that a vacant part-
39 time position was filled. He stated that it was vacant for two years. Mike Cutting stated that wages
40 have increased \$76,000. Harry Seidel stated that the mechanic wages are included in the full time
41 wages. Alfred Hanson explained the budget reflects changes in how it is allocated.

42 Outside professional services: no change

43 Paving: 2025 was \$10,000 proposed \$100,000 The Budget Committee would like to know the
44 balance of the \$2.6 million loan

45 Outside Contract Snow removal: \$1,750 The Budget Committee questioned what this is. Mike
46 Smith explained that a few roads in town are difficult to get to. This line item is pay for other towns
47 to plow those roads.

48 Outside Rental: no change \$25,000

1 Bridge Maintenance: no change \$2,000
2 Mileage: no change \$450
3 Line striping: no change \$7,500
4 Gravel: 2025 \$50,000 decreased to \$30,000
5 Outside Repairs: no change \$17,500
6 Electricity: increased \$500 from \$6,000
7 Supplies: increased by \$5,000 to \$45,000 Mike Cutting questioned what this covers. Alfred Hanson
8 assumes this is a catch all from sidewalks to toilet paper.
9 Parts: no change \$55,000 Mike Smith explained that this covers parts for the older equipment
10 Street Lights: increased by \$700 Ed Mical stated that there are several lights that out along Main
11 Street. Ed Mical stated that if he is given a list of lights that are out he will contact his Community
12 Service representative. Harry Seidel will forward the lost.
13
14 Ray Martin pointed out that \$100,000 for paving was restored and there is \$82,000 for vehicle lease
15 payments, totaling \$182,000 but the budget increased \$164,000.
16
17 Transfer Station: 2025 \$342,275 proposed is \$408,604 increase of \$36,329
18 Alfred Hanson explained that the \$30,000 cut from last year has been restored
19 Hazardous waste: increased by \$7,000
20 Transportation: increased by \$7,000
21 Wheelabrator: increased by \$17,000
22 Equipment Maintenance: decreased 33% from \$15,000 to \$10,000
23
24 Health Administration: no change
25
26 Health Agencies: slight increase \$77.00
27
28 Welfare: increased from \$45,000 to \$52,000 an increase of 16%
29 Direct assistance from \$30,000 to \$40,000
30 Mike Smith explained that the previous Welfare Director passed away and instead of hiring someone
31 from within the Select Board decided to hire someone from outside and the costs are being driven
32 back up. Harry Seidel disputed what Mike Smith said. He explained that the previous director was
33 not doing very much, Elizabeth Labbe agreed. Harry Seidel stated that Warner has the need for these
34 services. Harry Seidel explained that the individual who is filling the position now has experience
35 and has been an asset to the Town. Mike Smith stated that Peter Flynn saved thousands for the town
36 and he did a great job. Mike Smith stated that the Town needs to hire a permanent director. He stated
37 that there were two employees that wanted the job but they did not get the job.
38
39 Mike Cutting and Ray Martin spoke about the budget and expenditures for the last two years.
40 Expenditures have been higher than the budgeted amount. Elizabeth Labbe explained that staff has
41 been encouraged to submit a letter of interest and resume to the Select Board. She stated that the
42 Select Board have not received anything. Judy Newman-Rogers via Zoom agreed, noting that the
43 internal posting was done and next week the public notice will be go out. She stated that if there is
44 someone interested they should apply because no one has applied.
45
46 Library: increased from \$233,000 to \$425,000
47
48 Patriotic Purposes: No change

1 Conservation Administration decreased from \$900 to \$753

2
3 Proposed 2026 budget is \$5,246,979 an increase of \$643,000 13.9%

4
5 **Review of 2026 Capital Budget**

6 2025 Capital budget was \$755,000 2026 Proposed \$407,500

7 Harry Seidel explained that the Select Board was proposing \$407,500 but the Fire Chief is willing to
8 reduce the firefighter equipment by \$5,000 and fire and rescue vehicle can be reduced by \$25,000 a
9 total of \$30,000. The Proposed Capital Budget is \$377,500.

10
11 Mike Cutting stated that the proposed 2026 Town Budget now sits \$5,624,103 an increase of
12 \$265,917.42 (4.96%). The significant increases are the ambulance \$151,800 and the library \$211,364
13 totaling \$363,000. There was discussion regarding the ambulance negotiations.

14
15 Robert Blake spoke about his concern regarding under funding the CIP. Alfred Hanson explained
16 that the original request for CIP funding was \$617,500. Robert Blake stated that the CIP is being
17 spent down. He questioned the cut to the Reval CIP noting that \$52,500 was requested and that was
18 cut by \$20,000. There was a discussion regarding the need to fund the reval. Elizabeth Labbe stated
19 that the contract from Avitar reflects the annual assessing services at \$32,500 with the option of a 5
20 year contract. She explained that the contract reflects in the fifth year the cost would increase for the
21 reval. Harry Seidel explained that the Select Board discussed what they could do this year to reduce
22 the budget and not hurt the taxpayers this year. Robert Blake explained that the two significant
23 increases are uncontrollable and shifting the budget to another level. He is concerned about
24 shortchanging the CIP and it will impact the town in future years. Mike Cutting stated that the road
25 construction CRF has been spent and he is concern about an emergency in 2026. Robert Blake spoke
26 about the \$2.6 million road construction loan and the monies were designated for specific projects.

27
28 Bill Hanson suggested presenting the operating budget and the capital budget separately to the
29 voters. Ray Martin agreed. Judy Newman-Rogers stated that the three components need to be
30 considered together; operating, capital and revenue. There was a discussion on increasing revenue by
31 selling town owned property and logging of town owned property.

32 **Meeting Schedule:**

33 December 18, 2025 Final analysis of the 2026 Town Budget.

34 January 8, 2026 Review of Year to Date expenses

35 Mike Cutting asked Elizabeth Labbe to provide the report showing all the expenses year to date.

36 Ray Martin stressed that is a tremendous amount of work and she has her job to do. He estimated
37 that is 12-15 hours of additional work. He recommended utilizing the systems reports.

38
39 Harry Seidel closed the Select Board meeting.

40
41 **Adjournment**

42 **Ray Martin made a motion seconded by Bill Hanson to adjourn the meeting. Motion**
43 **passed.**

44
45 The meeting adjourned at 9:06 PM

46 Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty