



## Budget Committee Meeting

### Draft Minutes

January 22, 2026 7:00 PM

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, James Sherman, Rick Bixby, Bill Hanson and Kelly Lombardi arrived at 7:10 PM.

Select Board present: Harry Seidel and Alfred Hanson. Mike Smith was absent. Harry Seidel opened the Select Board meeting at 7:01 PM.

#### **Approval of Minutes** January 8, 2026

Robert Blake made a motion seconded by James Sherman to accept the January 8, 2026 Budget Committee meeting as presented. Motion passed.

#### **Final Budget Review**

##### 2026 Warner Village Water District (WVWD) Operational Budget:

Ray Martin explained that the WVWD operating budget has increased slightly from the original proposed budget submitted in November 2025. He stated that at the request of the State \$10,000 has been added for a standby back up operator. He provided a spreadsheet to the Budget Committee that reflects that the WVWD operating budget is up 1.71%. Ray Martin explained that the proposed budget is \$549,604, last year was \$540,215. He stated that there was a 3% wage increase for himself, the commissioner and treasurer. He stated that there is a \$3,000 increase in office expenses (computer and tablet). Ray Martin noted that healthcare is up 6.55%. Property/casualty and workman's comp insurance is also up from \$16,482 last year, this year the proposed amount is \$17,017. A 4% wage increase for the two full time employees. Ray Martin recapped a few cuts that were made to outside service contractors, repairs and replacement and sludge removal. Ray Martin reviewed the Water System budget: outside services increased by \$10,000 for new meters.

WVWD Capital Outlay is relatively unchanged with the exception of the payoff of a truck.

WVWD Revenue: Ray Martin explained that this year was the first time in a long time that there was an over budget collection of water and sewer users. He spoke about the savings from the solar panels.

He estimated a 5 cent increase on the tax rate from \$1.66 to \$1.71

#### **2026 Operating Budget**

Mike Cutting explained that the proposed 2026 Town Operating budget has an increase of \$533,958 (11.6%). Clyde Carson stated that expenditures year to date is \$4,278,709 leaving a budget surplus balance of \$339,475.

Kelly Lombardi asked for a recap of legal fees: Clyde Carson explained that legal fees for general matters is at \$96,000, Eversource \$14,400 and RTK 91-a requests \$1,800 totaling \$112,200.

Select Board: \$273,608. No change

Elections: \$9,850.30 no change

Finance, Treasurer, Town Clerk, Tax Collector and Trustee of Trust funds: \$265,355.60

Clyde Carson explained that the auditors are wrapping up the 2024 audit and the year to date expense is \$27,000. Alfred Hanson explained that the Select Board is receiving bids for next year. He would like to

1 review the bids with Robert Blake. Kelly Lombardi asked how a reduction could be made to the  
2 \$265,355. Mike Cutting explained that a bottom line cut can be made but that does not give anyone  
3 direction about where to cut. Robert Blake stated that the public has always spoken out about the surplus  
4 balance which is usually due to vacant positions. He stated that the Budget Committee could review all  
5 vacant positions and not budget them for the entire year. Kelly Lombardi spoke about asking the  
6 departments to absorb the increases on salary by decreasing other spending. James Sherman stated that  
7 some budgets are so tight that it would difficult for the department. He stated that he is nervous to make  
8 cuts considering what is rumored to happen at town meeting. The Budget Committee discussed how  
9 budget adjustments can be made to the budget based on the input from the public at the public hearing.  
10 No change made to the \$265,355.60.

11  
12 Reval (assessing): \$89,261 No change  
13 Legal Expenses: \$57,000 No change

14 Personnel Administration benefits: \$700,727 The Budget Committee discussed how benefits were  
15 calculated. Rick Bixby noted that employees do contribute to the retirement plan and it is matched by the  
16 Town. James Sherman noted that the budgeted amount for health benefits is down from \$336,000 to  
17 \$322,000 which should be pointed out at Town Meeting. Mike Cutting questioned why the WVWD health  
18 insurance increased by 6.5% and the Town is expecting a 14% increase. Ray Martin explained that the  
19 WVWD only has two single plans. No change

20  
21 Land Use: \$50,028 No Change

22 Repairs General Government/ Town Hall/ Community Center and OFS: \$55,316 No Change.

23 Cemetery: \$31,000 No Change.

24 Insurance: liability, unemployment and workman's comp: \$129,080 No Change

25 General Government CAP: \$5,401

26 Police Department: Mike Cutting requested an update on the hiring of a second police officer. Police  
27 Chief Bill Chandler stated that he is in the early stages of discussions with a potential applicant. He  
28 suggested reducing the salary line item for the months of January, February and March. He will need to  
29 confer with the Finance Director, but he estimated the payroll reduction could be around \$17,750.

30  
31 Ambulance: \$121,000 to be encumbered. The total estimated cost of \$266,000 on the high end. Robert  
32 Blake analyzed Hopkinton's published ambulance costs. He expressed skepticism regarding the estimated  
33 cost for Warner. He hopes that negotiations will continue with Hopkinton to lower Warner's share. Bill  
34 Hanson stated that the voters must be made aware of the actual cost and that \$121,000 will encumbered  
35 towards the total cost. The Budget Committee discussed the need to pressure Hopkinton to provide  
36 accurate numbers regarding the increase cost for ambulance services. The Budget Committee agreed not  
37 to adjust the proposed amount of \$120,000.

38  
39 Fire Department: \$237,360 No Change

40 Forest Fire: \$2,200 No Change

41 Building Inspector: \$30,600 No Change

42 Emergency Management: \$17,127 No Change

43 Highway Department: \$1,172,072 Full time Salaries: proposed at \$421,256 The Budget Committee  
44 discussed reducing the full time salaries by 25% to reflect the two vacant positions.

45 Street Lights: \$9,500 No Change

46 Transfer Station: \$408,604 No Change

47 Welfare: \$52,404 No Change

48 Parks & Rec: The Budget Committee discussed the reallocation of \$700 to the highway department for  
49 the repair/maintenance of Parks & Rec equipment. The Budget Committee discussed the importance of  
50 charging expenditures to the appropriate department. They discussed the seasonal maintenance wages.

51 Library: \$435,169 No Change

1     Conservation Commission: \$753 No Change

2  
3     Mike Cutting stated that the operating budget stands at \$5,197,143.66 (11.66%). He noted that there will  
4     be a few modifications relating to wage reductions and other associated costs for the Police Department  
5     and the Highway Department. Kelly Lombardi questioned if the budget could be reduced to \$5,000,000  
6     or under. James Sherman cautioned that the budget is tight and further cuts could be a problem.  
7

8     **Revenue and Capital Budget**

9     Ray Martin stated that the revenue budget is always underfunded by \$200,000 to \$300,000. Mike Cutting  
10    stated that in 2025 revenue was estimated at \$1,346,000 but the actual was \$1,671,031. He explained that  
11    the Select Board has put forward a revenue estimate for 2026 at \$1,344,000. Clyde Carson explained that  
12    in 2025 a grant was received in the amount of \$225,000 for the work done on Red Chimney Road and an  
13    additional \$100,000 in Rooms and Meal Tax. Mike Cutting stated that the Rooms and Meals Tax amount  
14    is unknown  
15

16    Alfred Hanson left the meeting at this time. Harry Seidel closed the Select Board meeting at 9:12 PM.  
17

18    Harry Seidel acknowledged the revenue estimate is conservative and he is hesitant to increase it. Kelly  
19    Lombardi suggested increasing it by \$100,000. Clyde Carson advised that revenue can be revised at  
20    midyear. Kelly Lombardi explained that in researching the Rooms and Meals tax it averages at  
21    approximately \$100 per person.  
22

23    Mike Cutting explained that the CIP is at \$377,500 (50% decrease). He stated that accounting for the  
24    operating and capital budgets; the total budget stands at \$216,458 a 4.04% increase. Ray Martin noted  
25    that includes the significant increases for the Library and the ambulance service. Harry reiterated that the  
26    revenue estimate is conservative and it is possible to increase it. Mike Cutting would like the Select  
27    Board to consider selling town owned property. Robert Blake would like to look into more grant  
28    opportunities.  
29

30     **Meeting Schedule:**

31     Public Hearing February 10, 2026, Continuation of Public Hearing February 12, 2026  
32     and February 19, 2026  
33

34     **Adjournment**

35     **Ray Martin made a motion seconded by Kelly Lombardi to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed.**

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37     The meeting adjourned at 9:32 PM  
38     Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty