

Hingham Advisory Committee Meeting
Tuesday, January 13th, 2026 at 7:00 PM
Town Hall, 210 Central Street, Third Floor, South Hearing Room

In Attendance: Carol Tully, Chair, Kevin Freytag, Vice Chair, Ted Ciolkosz, Secretary, Brenda Black, Ben Burnham, Tina Sherwood, John Germain, Jerry Seelen, Steve Pohl, Brian Stack, David Leiphart, Elaine Cusker, Michael Herde, Mary Power

Absent: Alan Macdonald

1. Chair Carol Tully called the Advisory Committee meeting to order and read the following statement. This meeting is being held remotely/or in person as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 and all other applicable laws temporarily amending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L.c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording.

2. Budgets – Budgets (using ClearGov) and Article 6 information is available on the Town of Hingham website at <https://www.hingham-ma.gov/381/Budgets-Reports>

Elaine Cusker presented Town Hall Budget for FY27 (fiscal year 2027) with Assistant Town Administrator for Finance Katie Dugan, which came to a total of \$739,282. That is currently shown as a reduction of about 27.8% from prior fiscal year, however, Town Hall Budget includes Capital Outlay which currently shows a budget of zero. Therefore, the reduction shown in expenses from last year is not going to be as significant once the Capital Outlay Committee make their recommendations. Town Hall Budget supports maintenance, operations and all systems within the 137,000 square feet of the building as well as the maintenance of municipal facilities / properties at 308 Cushing, 8 Short Street, GAR Hall, 30 Summer Street, public meetings/special events, Town Meeting and other public facilities/functions as needed.

The largest portion of the Town Hall Budget is from payroll expenses coming in at \$358,732, which is about a 5.8% increase mainly due to salary step increases, COLA (cost of living adjustments) and longevity bonuses. Natural gas came in as the next highest line item at around 170k, with water, sewer, custodial supplies, vehicle fuel, alarm services, clock repair, etc. accounting for the difference.

Elaine then presented the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) requested budget for FY27 with Katie Dugan, Assistant Town administrator. Presuming ATM runs two nights using the gym and auditorium the total requested budget would be \$113,000 (a 15.54% increase over last year). Expenses include \$2,800 for personnel services about 70k for equipment rental. The equipment rental is a competitively bid contract as required by law. To ensure coverage should the meeting require a second night, the Town contracts for two nights of rental. Other expenses include approximately 35k for printing, 5k for a stenographer, \$200 for advertising (per MA law), etc. There has been no discussion around implementing electronic voting for 2026 ATM. Nor is there consideration for an electronic only Warrant booklet (to save printing cost). A third night, if necessary, could cost around an additional 50k and would be held in the Hingham High School auditorium.

Lastly, Elaine presented the Reserve Fund Budget with Katie Dugan. Under Massachusetts General Law (MGL) the Town is authorized to create a reserve fund, which per the Town of Hingham Financial Policy equals 0.75% of the Operating Budget. For FY27 the requested total budget is \$854,608, about a 6.83% increase over FY26.

3. Warrant Articles – All 2026 ATM Warrant Articles may be found on the Town website at <https://www.hingham-ma.gov/719/Current-Warrant-Articles>

The first Warrant Article to be presented was by Elaine Cusker, the perennial Hannah Lincoln Whiting Fund, Article A. This fund was established in 1915 to be expended in relieving the necessities of the

deserving poor or the unfortunate of South Hingham. Grants from the fund's income are made at the discretion of a committee of three members, one of whom is elected each year. The total assets of the fund, based on a December 2025 date, is \$15,733, of which \$733 is available for distribution. The principal of \$15,000 is held in trust and may not be dispersed. It was recommended that Laura Boyle, 22, Westmoreland Road, be elected a member of the committee to have charge of the income of the Hannah Lincoln Whiting Fund for a term of 3 years. Unanimously approved.

Next was the Building Department Revolving Fund presented by Tina Sherwood, Article I, another perennial Article. Will the town limit the amount that may be spent from the building department revolving fund established under Article 18 of the General Bylaws, to \$265,000 during fiscal year 27. Unanimously approved.

Ben Burnham presented Article B, Assume Liability for DCR on Rivers, Harbors, etc. Ben read a motion that the town, in accordance with, and only to the extent permitted by Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 91, Section 29, as amended, assume liability for all the damages that may be incurred by work to be performed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the improvement, development, maintenance, and protection of tidal and non-tidal waters in streams, tidewaters, foreshores, and shores along the public beach within the town in accordance with Section 11 of Chapter 91 to authorize the select board to execute and deliver a bond of such indemnity to the Commonwealth, assuming such liability. Unanimously approved.

Brenda Black presented Article J, Hingham Center for Active Living Revolving Fund. This is a revolving fund used to collect the fees paid by class participants and then used to pay the instructors of such classes, such as exercise classes, craft classes, etc. Motion made to recommend the Town vote to limit the amount that may be spent from the Center for Active Living Revolving Fund, established under Article 16 of the General Bylaws to 80k for FY27. Unanimously approved.

4. Advisory Committee Liaison Updates – Michael Herde mentioned Hingham Municipal Light Plant would be looking to raise a debt issuance (exclusion paid by ratepayers) of 70mm for work related to bringing in a 3rd transmission line into the Town of Hingham.

Elaine Cusker had a Cleaner Greener Hingham update that they were exploring grants to pay for the Black Earth Company to offer composting services made available to Hingham residents at a subsidized cost of \$99 for six months.

Brenda Black advised that the School Department received a Federal grant for an additional ten electric school buses. That would bring the total number of electric school buses to 13 out of the approximately 19 used by the Town, expected later this year. Additionally, the batteries on the ten buses could serve as a power bank for supplemental energy capacity at peak use times per an agreement with HMLP.

Brenda also advised the HCAL Building Committee asked the Select Board to add the HCAL construction funding request to the Warrant. The cost for construction is expected in time for Annual Town Meeting after the project goes out to bid, bids are reviewed and one is accepted.

Lastly, Brenda mentioned the Select Board added the perennial articles to the Warrant via a vote at their most recent meeting.

5. Housekeeping – The Town received Federal tax credits in the form of cash with regard to utility rebates earned as part of the construction of Foster Elementary School in the total amount of 3.8mm which would go to Fund Balance.

6. Vote previous meeting minutes – 12/16/25 meeting minute vote postponed.

7. Motion to Adjourn – Motion was made to adjourn and seconded, approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Theodore D. Ciolkosz, Jr., Secretary