

Hingham Advisory Committee Meeting
Tuesday, January 27, 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. The Chair 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 - The Town Clerk Department budget was presented first with Carol Falvey and Advisory Committee (AdCom) liaison Michael Herde. The department manages state and local elections, Town calendar, vital records, public records requests, and historical research. The salary portion of the budget is \$262,947 with an expense budget of \$20,441. The total budget request is \$283,388, an increase of \$23,032 or 8.85% over last fiscal year. The challenges associated with public records requests were also discussed, emphasizing the growing demand for information. The volume of public records requests has increased significantly, consuming considerable staff time. The department provides two hours of free research time, after which a fee of \$25 per hour is charged. The fee structure is statutory and does not cover the full cost of processing requests.

The Elections budget request, also with Carol Falvey, totaled \$59,235, an increase of \$22,665 or 61.99% over last year. This increase is attributed to having three elections in FY27 compared to only one the previous year. Of note, there were approximately 20,077 total registered Hingham voters in 2025, with 15,849 voting in Town election, and of those 9,688 were made via early voting.

The Community Planning Department budget request was presented by Hingham Community Planning Director Emily Wentworth with AdCom liaison Jerry Seelen. Community Planning is involved with Permitting, the Planning Board / Zoning amendments and Community Preservation Committee (CPC) efforts. The total budget request is \$291,577, with personal services at \$273,927 and expenses at \$17,650. The budget reflects a 6.1% increase in personal services although the department is currently searching for a replacement for the Assistant Planner position and CPC funds a portion of the full-time clerical position salary.

The Historic Preservation Department budget was presented by Heidi Gaul and AdCom liaison Brian Stack. Historic Preservation maintains an inventory of historical assets and supports activities related to historical assets and community engagement. The department also administers the Greenbush preservation grant, providing \$100,000 annually to qualifying residents affected by the MBTA commuter train's impact. The total budget request is \$92,523, with personnel services coming in at \$82,985 and expenses of \$9,538.

The Land Use and Development Department budget was presented by Jennifer Oram and AdCom liaison Jerry Seelen. The Land Use and Development Department focuses on zoning compliance, monitoring Affordable Housing Trust inventory with regard to 40B housing (a MA law allowing developers to bypass some local zoning for affordable housing projects when the Town's

affordable units fall below the required minimum) as well as assisting residents with zoning and planning board applications for variances and permitting processes. The budget request for personnel services is \$188,510, with total expenses of \$7,170, for a total proposed budget of \$195,680.

The Hingham Public Library budget was presented by Library Director Linda Harper Stone with liaison John Germain. The Hingham Public Library serves as a community resource, providing physical and digital materials to all age groups, promoting lifelong learning and community engagement. The library had about 142k visits last year, which continues an upward trend since the covid pandemic. The Hingham Public Library budget request totals \$2,527,284; Note about one third of this budget is funded via the Library Trustees Trust Fund and this budget also includes a 5.3% increase in materials expenditure necessary to meet state aid requirements.

Next, the Building Department Budget was presented by Building Commissioner Michael Clancy with AdCom liaison Michael Herde. The Hingham Building Department is responsible for administration and enforcement of the Massachusetts State Building Code, Electrical, Plumbing and Architectural Access Codes, the Hingham Zoning By-Law and General By-Laws of the town. The Department also issues construction permits, Certificates of Occupancy for new and change of use properties and is responsible for the annual inspection of restaurants, etc. The department's total budget request is \$416,784 (a reduction of \$42,470 or about 9.25% from last fiscal year).

Treasurer / Tax Collector Department budget, presented by Lori-Ann Magner with liaison Michael Herde. The Treasurer / Collector Department manages town finances, including tax collection, tax liens and foreclosures, while maintaining a high collection rate of about 97% to 99%. Also assists Town departments with budget requests. The salary budget is \$452,573, reflecting a 6.16% increase, while expenses are set at \$68,855, a 7.02% increase. The department requests a total FY 2027 budget of \$532,428, an increase of \$22,166 or 4.34%.

3. Hingham Town Administrator Tom Mayo then presented the proposed budget recommendations for various Town departments with the rationale behind those decisions. Striving to live within the parameters of the Memorandum of Understanding (the M.O.U.), which is the Town Financial Management Plan agreed to in March of 2023 by the Hingham Select Board, School and Advisory Committees to run through fiscal years 2024-2028, earmarked expenses are to be capped at a 3.5% annual growth rate. For FY27, the specified budget under the M.O.U would be capped at \$38,507,520, and Tom's proposed budget is \$38,447,617. It was noted a significant number of retirements helped achieve this. Therefore, Tom recommended an increase of \$6,530 to the Assessing Dept. budget, the Accounting Dept. budget to support the hire of a full time payroll clerk, an Article 4 adjustment of \$493, additional money to support expected Police Dept. Overtime, 10k to the Information Technology (I.T.) Dept. for Microsoft Office licenses, 25k to I.T. toward enhanced cybersecurity of Town websites , and \$7,750 for Harbormaster training (the latter would be Hingham's portion, 25%, of the training costs with the majority, 75%, paid for via grants).
4. Liaison Updates – Brenda Black provided an update on the HCAL Building Committee's progress on contractor pre-qualification. Ten general contractors have signed up to receive construction documents for bidding. Also, for each of the fourteen categories of subcontractors who will be needed for this project, 9 to 17 contractors have expressed interest and been pre-qualified. This high level of interest indicates a favorable environment for securing competitive bids for the project.
5. Housekeeping - It was noted a joint public hearing with the Hingham Select Board and AdCom is scheduled for tomorrow night, Wednesday, January 28th beginning at 6:00 p.m. to review a proposed 3% increase in rates by the Weir River Water Company.

A quick review was done of Warrant Articles and AdCom member assignments, and it was noted the additional posting of Thursday evening meetings would begin to ensure thorough discussions on related matters.

6. Motion to Adjourn - A motion was made and seconded to adjourn - the following members of the Advisory Committee voted in favor of the motion: Kevin Freytag, Ted Ciolkosz, Brenda Black, Ben Burnham, Tina Sherwood, John Germain, Jerry Seelen, Steve Pohl, Brian Stack, David Leiphart, Elaine Cusker, Michael Herde (Alan Macdonald - absent).

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