

**Finance Committee Minutes**

**DRAFT**

Date: November 10, 2025

Start Time: 6:00pm

Location: Town Hall

Members Present:

X	Jonathan Moore		Rohit Arora
X	Ken Earley (commencing 6:08pm)	X	Jack Walsh
X	Edward P. Hart	X	Chantal Kokaram
X	Anton Tikhomirov		

Guests Present:

Stephanie Pemberton, Michael Herbert (commencing 6:26 pm)

Call to Order - Open Session:

1. J. Moore called meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Public Comment: None.

Approval of Minutes:

**Motion to approve the draft minutes of the 10/28 Meeting.**

- Motion: J. Walsh
- Second: A. Tikhomirov
- Vote: 5-0
- Motion Approved

Town Meeting Warrant Articles: The Finance Committee proceeded to discuss and vote on the warrant articles for the November 19, 2025 Special Town Meetings as follows. Finance committee noted that motions are to be conformed with customary form included in final town meeting warrant articles.

- Article 1 - Free Cash Transfer: The Committee discussed the pending certification of Free Cash. The Town Manager advised that the balance sheet had been submitted but not yet certified by the Department of Revenue and that the final amount could change. Article tabled by the Chair pending certification of free cash.
- Article 2 - Budget Amendment: The Committee initially deferred action pending the arrival of the Town Manager. Upon discussion, the Town Manager explained that the adjustments reflected updated state aid, a reduction in the Keefe Tech assessment, and departmental budget needs consistent with policy.
  - **Motion to recommend that the Town vote to raise and appropriate funds as outlined in Article 2 of the Special Town Meeting warrant to make adjustments to the FY 2026 annual budget.**
  - Motion: J. Moore
  - Second: C. Kokaram
  - Vote: 5-0
  - Motion Approved
- Article 3 - Property Tax Exemptions: The Committee reviewed the annual adjustment to the senior property tax exemption under M.G.L. c. 59, §5 Clause 41C½. The Town Manager noted that the adjustment maintains the exemption at approximately \$1,100 and reflects changes in property assessments.
  - **Motion to recommend that the Town vote to adjust the senior property tax exemption under M.G.L. c. 59, §5 Clause 41C½ to 12%, effective for exemptions granted for any fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025.**
  - Motion: C. Kokaram
  - Second: A. Tikhomirov
  - Vote: 5-0
- K. Earley joined meeting at 6:08pm
- Article 4 - CPC Funding: Creation of Nature's Edge at Metrowest YMCA: The Committee was advised that the article had been withdrawn by the sponsor due to financing and development considerations related to the project.
- Article 5 - CPC Funding: Town Forest Survey Work and Property Appraisal: The Committee discussed the proposed appropriation for survey and appraisal work for parcels bordering the Town Forest. Members sought clarification on the scope of the work, the location of the parcels, and the use of Community Preservation Act funds. It was noted that the funding would support due diligence for potential future land acquisitions.
  - **Motion to recommend that the Town vote to appropriate up to \$40,000 from the Community Preservation Fund for survey work and property appraisals for potential land acquisition of parcels bordering the Town Forest, with unexpended funds to be returned to their funding source.**
  - Motion: C. Kokaram
  - Second: E. Hart
  - Vote 6-0
  - Motion Approved

- Article 6 - CPC Funding: Town Forest Acquisition and Improvements: The Committee was advised that the article had been withdrawn due to legal and procedural issues related to the underlying property transaction.
- Article 7 - CPC Funding: Beaverdam Brook Conservation Area: The Committee discussed the proposed funding for invasive vegetation management and field data collection at the Beaverdam Brook Conservation Area. Members noted that the work would address long-term conservation needs and that funds would be drawn from CPA sources.
  - **Motion to recommend that the Town vote to appropriate up to \$50,000 from the Community Preservation Fund for field data collection and invasive vegetation management at the Beaverdam Brook Conservation Area, with unexpended funds to be returned to their funding source.**
  - Motion: C. Kokaram
  - Second: E. Hart
  - Vote 6-0
  - Motion Approved
- Article 8 - CPC Funding: High School Softball Field Playing Surface Replacement: The Committee discussed the condition of the high school softball field and the need to replace the playing surface dirt. Members expressed general support for maintaining Town recreational facilities and noted that CPA funding was an appropriate source.
  - **Motion to recommend that the Town vote to appropriate up to \$25,000 from the Community Preservation Fund for replacement of the high school softball field playing surface dirt, with unexpended funds to be returned to their funding source.**
  - Motion: A. Tikhomirov
  - Second: K. Earley
  - Vote: 6-0
  - Motion Approved
- Article 9 - Acceptance of M.G.L. C. 272 Section 73A: The Committee discussed the statute allowing for the temporary removal of gravestones or memorial structures for repair by qualified, professionally directed teams. Given the limited financial impact, the Committee determined that it was appropriate to defer to Town Meeting.
  - **Motion to defer the Finance Committee's recommendation on Article 9 to Town Meeting.**
  - Motion: C. Kokaram
  - Second: E. Hart
  - Vote 6-0
  - Motion Approved
- Article 10 - Acceptance of M.G.L. 138 Section 12D: The Committee discussed the provision allowing on-premises wine and malt licenses to be converted to non-transferable all-alcohol licenses. Discussion included the limited fiscal impact, the retail-only nature of the provision, and that it does not increase the total number of licenses.
  - **Motion to recommend that the Town vote to accept the provisions of M.G.L. c. 138, §12D, allowing the conversion of an on-premises wine and malt**

**beverage license to a non-transferable on-premises all-alcohol beverage license.**

- Motion: C. Kokaram
- Second: A. Tikhomirov
- Vote 6-0
- Motion Approved
- M. Herbert joins at 6:26pm
- Article 11 - Bylaw Update: In-Law Apartments: The Committee reviewed the proposed zoning bylaw changes related to in-law apartments. Members agreed that the policy considerations were best addressed directly by Town Meeting.
  - **Motion to defer the Finance Committee's recommendation on Article 11 to Town Meeting.**
  - Motion: J. Moore
  - Second: C. Kokaram
  - Vote: 6-0
  - Motion Approved
- Article 12 - Bylaw Update Dog Kennel Bylaw: The Committee reviewed the proposed administrative updates to the Dog Kennel Bylaw and noted that the changes clarified licensing and enforcement provisions.
  - **Motion to recommend that the Town vote to approve the amendments to the Dog Kennel Bylaw as set forth in Article 12 of the warrant.**
  - Motion: J. Moore
  - Second: E. Hart
  - Vote 6-0
  - Motion Approved
- Article 13 - Municipal Tax Payment Agreement Bylaw: The Committee discussed the proposed updates to Chapter 26-7 of the Town Bylaws and noted that the changes would improve administrative clarity and benefit the Town.
  - **Motion to recommend that the Town vote to approve the updates to the Municipal Tax Payment Agreement as set forth in Article 13 of the warrant.**
  - Motion: K. Earley
  - Second: J. Moore
  - Vote 6-0
  - Motion Approved
- Article 14 - Accept Donnelly Gift Parcel: The Committee noted that this article was withdrawn and corrected under a subsequent Special Town Meeting article.
- Article 1 - (7:01 Special Town Meeting): The Committee discussed that the article includes "purchase" language even though the parcel is a gift, in order to preserve flexibility.
  - **Motion to recommend that the Town vote to approve the article and authorize the Town to acquire 0 Oregon Road, Ashland, Massachusetts.**
  - Motion. C. Kokaram
  - Second: J. Moore
  - Vote 6-0

- Motion Approved
- Article 15 - Acceptance of Conservation Restriction: The Committee reviewed the article and noted that it did not present material financial concerns.
  - **Motion to recommend that the Town vote to approve the acceptance of the conservation restriction as set forth in Article 15 of the warrant.**
  - Motion: A. Tikhomirov
  - Second: C. Kokaram
  - Vote 6-0
  - Motion Approved
- Article 16 - Endorsement of Comprehensive Plan: The Committee discussed the Comprehensive Plan and emphasized that endorsement does not constitute an appropriation. Members discussed the need for future financial planning and revenue strategies to support implementation. The Finance Committee elected to provide its recommendation at Town Meeting.
- Article 17 - Citizen Petition: Elon Musk Resolution: The Committee discussed the proposal and determined that it was not feasible or practicable for the Town to implement.
  - Motion: J. Walsh
  - Second: K. Earley
  - Vote 6-0
  - Motion Approved

Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by Chair: None.

Scheduling Following Meetings: Committee agreed to meet at 6:30 prior to Town Meeting at the Ashland High School Library.

Motion to Adjourn:

- **Motion to adjourn meeting 7:52 pm.**
- Motion: J. Moore
- Second: K. Earley
- Vote: 6-0