

The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, began at 5:30 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen's Conference Room at the Town Hall.

Members Present: Manuel Silva, William Rosenblum, Anthony Alves and James Gennette

Members Absent:

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Board to discuss and vote on FY26 Budget recommendation (tabled).

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Mr. Gennette: The last meeting you wanted some information from FinCom about what they would do and their recommendations and they sent those over. I don't know if anybody watched the FinCom meeting but they did a great job. They were asking all the tough questions. They worked hard at it and I was really impressed. They covered the entire field of what was going on. They did supply those recommendations. The level 2 budget deficit immediately following announcement that the town's health insurance premium increase is going to 14.84% was more than a million dollars. Since then, the following changes have been made to the budget leaving us with a deficit of \$167,557.00. Note, please understand that these numbers are not exact because in addition to stated changes to the budget, which themselves can be slightly variable, we also make adjustments based on communications with department heads and inaccuracies we find that need to be corrected. Nevertheless, the reduction amounts should be in the ballpark of your calculation. First bullet point, the IAC agreed to an insurance plan design change, which saved the town \$397,382 in its FY26 health insurance premium. That's a 3.84% net savings. The school committee agreed to reduce the department increase from 3% to 2.8%, which saved \$74,057. The town departments voluntarily reduced their budgets by a total of \$155,864. The Board of Selectmen deferred reclassification requests totaling \$32,446 in savings. They increased the estimate trash fee revenue by \$50,000. We currently estimate \$650,000 per \$100 fee and for a \$200 fee we have 1.3 million in revenue in the budget. Just to clarify, going from \$100 fee to \$200 fee went from \$650,000 to 1.3 million dollars in revenue for the budget. With the roll out of the new trash program, the DPW thinks we should have a better feel for how many subscribers the town has and we can adjust the estimate further in FY27. The new estimate based on the Finance Committee's reasonable recommendation would be \$675,000 per \$100 and 1.3 million for \$200. Reduced police OT increase of \$52,000. The Finance Committee would specifically reserve \$50,000 from their FY26 reserve account for the other \$50,000 that would be removed from the operating budget. Defer the public safety HVAC project saving \$73,245 in FY26 bond payments. Removed \$25,000 in health insurance cost related to the Board of Selectmen denial of the Vets Center request to make their PT employee a full-time employee. Reduce the health insurance items by \$100,000 total. The estimated free cash certification amount of \$5,486,596 with a balance of \$3,053,982 remaining after all town meeting appropriations assuming all are approved. The town used \$176,242 in free cash to balance the FY25 budget, much to what Mr. Alves had requested at the last meeting that we come in under what last year was. They asked to let them know. That's from Marc Strange the Town Administrator for what the FinCom has kicked over as far as their recommendations go.

Mr. Silva: First off, I want to thank everybody for all of this. Everybody bent over backwards to try to get us to a budget that we can pass and approve. Not using much of the free cash is a great thing. Thank you all. Great job. The insurance agreement that we proposed and it was approved; I don't think anybody has an issue with that. The school committee agreed to reduce the school department increase, which was very nice of the school committee to do that. Fortunately, there won't be any layoffs, which is great again.

Mr. Gennette: I just want to make a note that the school is still getting a 2.8% increase, which is a lot. A lot of departments are at zero and I worry about further cuts to departments that are already flat. Reducing a request is different than reducing an operating budget. That's a big concern to me. We can tread lightly.

Mr. Rosenblum: I believe there's one thing in here that's incorrect. I think the free cash we used last year, after a certain amount of time, we didn't have to use the free cash. I've talked to Marc about it a couple times. Once all the numbers came in there might have been a little bit more revenue that we didn't have to use. I might be mistaken but I just talked to him about it last week.

He said that he remembered that we didn't have to use it. I just have to confirm that because I had the conversation with him last week. Just so we're not getting into the idea that we're continually using free cash.

Mr. Silva: That might happen again.

Mr. Alves: The email yesterday from Marc, the last bullet says we used \$176,000.

Mr. Rosenblum: I think that was a continuation of the last email. I don't think we used \$176,000 last year. I remember having that conversation.

Mr. Gennette: Maybe at the end of the budget cycle.

Mr. Rosenblum: It may come to a point where we don't have to go to free cash.

Mr. Alves: Plugging it to get up front isn't prudent practice. Budgeting is a best guess and you don't know how it's going to shake out. I think the key is getting away from plugging it in at the forefront.

Mr. Silva: We'll move onto the town departments voluntarily reducing their budgets by a total of \$155,000. Again, that's great. Everybody must have scratched and borrowed and did whatever they had to do. That's awesome teamwork effort.

Mr. Gennette: I think we're in a situation where these departments are trying to adapt to whatever could possibly happen. Hopefully, we don't get hit hard coming down from the state but if we do hopefully we're in a better position because we have no idea what way this could go.

Mr. Rosenblum: We have an exceedingly high amount of free cash this year. Generally, I think it's closer to 4 but we're up at 5.49.

Mr. Gennette: 3.4 is available.

Mr. Rosenblum: Our number is higher than it's usually been and that's because the numbers that have come back from the school department over the last few years has been about 1.2 million. In the explanation it was due to ESSR funding and the unique situation with ESSR funding. I wouldn't be sure that we always have that number to fall back on. We want to make sure that we regenerate free cash to be used.

Mr. Gennette: We also had some solar pilots come on which added to the revenue. The number is closer to 4 because of what came back. Fiscal year 24 has \$610,000 coming back from the school department.

Mr. Silva: The board did defer the reclassification requests that were not contractual. It's an unfortunate thing. We like to support our workers and help out any way we can. Hopefully in the future we'll be able to revisit that and approve those requests. This year is very tough.

Mr. Gennette: That is the same for the Vet's Center, remove \$25,000 in health insurance costs related to the Board of Selectmen denial of the Vet's Center request to make a part time employee a full-time employee. Eric Segundo has a part time employee that he needed to be full time and because we decided to do a freeze and not do any additional, I talked to him today. All the departments understand.

Mr. Silva: We move onto the trash situation which nobody likes.

Ms. Ribeiro: Before we go onto that, can we what clarify what Mr. Gennette just said about a hiring freeze? This keeps coming up with some of the departments and they have been told to move forward with current vacancies they have in their budget now that are funded for this year until they hear otherwise.

Mr. Gennette: Are they funded in 26?

Ms. Ribeiro: Yes. They're in their operating budget.

Mr. Gennette: This \$167,000 is with that consideration?

Ms. Ribeiro: Right.

Mr. Rosenblum: Your question is with those positions in place.

Ms. Ribeiro: Yes. Anything that is currently funded from last year. We're not including anything new that was requested. We understand that there was no new positions approved but there's been some confusion about hiring and having a freeze. We currently have positions that are vacant that have been funded through FY25 that are in departments operating budgets for next year that are not new positions. I want to clarify that for people because we are getting a lot of questions regarding that.

Mr. Silva: Onto trash.

Mr. Gennette: I don't want to do it.

Mr. Silva: I don't either but we have no choice.

Mr. Gennette: We don't have anywhere to make up \$650,000. Hopefully we can remedy this with better planning down the road. It's my goal to get rid of this bill altogether.

Mr. Silva: We did this trash fee years ago because we ran into a budget crunch in a short period of time that we had with the DPW. We had \$300,000 we needed to raise quickly so we implemented this trash fee. I thought it was going to be the fee for the year and now we're going to \$200. The other thing people keep saying is other communities are paying a certain amount of money, yes they are but they also don't have it in their general budget. These people are paying in the general budget already. I tried to figure it out and to me it comes out over \$500 with the \$200 plus what they're paying in their regular tax bill.

Mr. Rosenblum: I would say a lot of communities like Wilbraham or Belchertown, the minimum in most places is \$50/month. Their tax bills are much higher than ours. There's no trash fee in there whatsoever. Our number is \$250-\$300 within our taxes. They're paying about the same, if not more than us, though I know people paying upwards of \$1,000/year on their trash. We're probably paying about \$500 for our trash a year.

Mr. Silva: We have to get this right in our minds because there's so many questions I get. People are telling me it's mandatory that they pay this. I think we should get DPW in here and who is actually implementing these rules for the trash pickup.

Mr. Gennette: For people that don't pay and don't come in and say they don't want trash and provide an alternate because I don't know if anybody saw the news about the Ludlow woman dumping trash in Springfield. We can't run into this kind of situation where our trash is not getting thrown away. If it was still on the taxes, the entirety of their community would be paying their fair share of what waste management would be. As soon as you move into a bill and certain people can pay and certain people don't pay you get into a full-time position for collections, billing and all the other stuff. Now we have 600 people from 2023 that haven't paid. We have 1,200 people in 2024 that haven't paid and I can guarantee you we're going to have people in 2025 that aren't going to pay and if people don't get caught up there's going to be liens put on their property. So now we're adversary, which is not the way we want to go with this. This is part of the reason I'm against the bill altogether. We are a town of services. We are here to provide services to the community and the trash is one of those services. It should not be a bill at all. It should be something the town picks up as part of the tax base. It's a conflict right out of the gate. And we pay a full-time employee just to manage this when she has other stuff she needs to do. We have to do what we have to do for this year but with that strategic team we're going to put together this is going to be one of my targets. This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever seen. Such bad practice.

Mr. Silva: I agree. That's why I'd like to set something up and answer questions. An old lady lives by herself in a duplex and doesn't rent out the other side. She has 1 bag a week. What do you do in those circumstances. You can go to the DPW and get it abated if you show how you're getting rid of your trash. Hopefully we can straighten it out and eliminate it.

Mr. Rosenblum: Hopefully we can find another \$675,000.

Mr. Silva: The police overtime. The Chief is here. Do you understand what's happening here and how it's playing out?

Mr. Gennette: This was a recommendation from the Finance Committee about trying to get the budget down. We haven't made any conversation about this. My assumption is that we're going to take all of the FinCom recommendations so you could be looking at a reduced increase. I think you are going up, right?

Mr. Rosenblum: \$100,000.

Mr. Gennette: I think FinCom is recommending dropping to \$50,000 this year.

Mr. Silva: There is a caveat. They have in reserve \$50,000 in case. They could implement it later.

Mr. Gennette: What is the financial tool we're going to use for this?

Mr. Alves: From my understanding before I joined the board, you were in here and there was a discussion about increasing your overtime budget \$100,000. The first part of this is budgetarily it would go up \$50,000 and that other \$50,000 the Finance Committee would hold in reserve. Once you eclipse that first \$50,000 you would come to them to request the other \$50,000 and they would have that reserved for you.

Chief Valadas: I want to point out that when the board asked for cuts I emailed Mr. Strange that I dropped \$30,000 from the special police line item. So now it's \$30,000 & \$50,000. That's \$80,000 from a department that in no way represents anywhere near the school department. We went over this. \$400,000 is an accurate number. I was going to do my best to stay under the \$400,000. Now I've given \$30,000 and I'm losing \$50,000. It's in reserve and we're all going to work together and I'm still going to do my best to stay under.

Mr. Silva: Technically you're not losing the \$50,000.

Chief Valadas: I didn't have it in existing funding.

Mr. Silva: It's in reserve if you need it.

Chief Valadas: I lost the \$30,000 though. I gave it up willingly as a gesture. I wrote to Mr. Strange saying I take that the agreement on the \$400,000 would remain. I'll work with whatever you give me.

Mr. Gennette: FinCom has \$100,000 in reserve every year. They're allocating \$50,000 of that to say this is for the police if they need it.

Mr. Alves: That is my understanding.

Mr. Gennette: They're not planning on using the \$50,000 and if you need it it's hanging there because it's part of their budget. We appreciate the \$30,000.

Mr. Alves: I think that is one of the largest voluntary reduction.

Mr. Silva: We're looking at deferring the HVAC system. Mr. Gennette has been doing a lot of work checking into this. It went up a tremendous amount of money from when we started.

Chief Pease: That's why we showed up tonight. We saw at the last meeting there was some questions. We're here to provide some background on it for your knowledge. It makes my stomach turn too, the cost of the project; however, after looking into it, it is what it is. The system was installed in 1992. During its installation there was a lawsuit afterwards because it never functioned properly. I don't think it's ever worked properly. We've been in front of you before talking about the system and how it's been broken for so long. I can't control the heat in the fire department without opening up a panel on the roof top unit and finding the thermostat that's buried inside of there because there are no longer parts available. There are dampers throughout the place that are

permanently closed or open and aren't functioning. The temperature is very hard to control. It's been costing a lot to maintain, there's dust throughout the building that comes into the system. The internal parts haven't been maintained. Originally we had a vendor that said they could replace the rooftop units and some of the controls, here's a ballpark estimate. The town agreed to hire Tighe & Bond to do some engineering and design on the project and look into it a little further. They looked at what is in the building that we have, noted all the problems and said if you're going to fix it you might as well do it right, not just Band-Aid the system. They went through the whole system, from the rooftop units through all of the controls, all the duct work in every part of the building. They came up with a scope of work. That scope of work triggered some upgrades to the building code. They were sprinkler system, handicapped requirements for the bathrooms and holding cells. There were a lot of other things that came because of this and that was because of the scope of the HVAC and the building code triggering these upgrades. I couldn't explain them to you as well as an engineer at Tighe & Bond could or a building commissioner; however, we were just looking at doing an HVAC project. We would like to just do that; however, all these other things are triggered. Right now, there's no preventative maintenance plan because they kept saying your system is going to be replaced. To date we've spent \$287,000 on design and engineering. Could it have gone out to bid earlier, I don't know. The longer we kick this can down the road, this isn't just a want. This system is failing. We've seen what happens in Springfield with a bad HVAC system. If these buildings aren't paid attention to, we see it time and time again that they can cause problems. It's only going to cost the town more in the future. You have the responsibility of the town's overall budget and I understand that; however, we've already invested a significant amount of money and we have to do it at some point. Currently contractors are bidding on it so if you're not going to give them a chance to even bid on it you should probably stop it right now. It's not our recommendation that you do that. Originally, we were going to use the Covid money to fix a building our first responders worked in the entire period of Covid. A lot of people don't seem to remember that part. When everybody else went home we were still working in that building. That money came back to the town because of Covid and we fixed other projects around town. I don't envy your position but this will not go away. We've already invested a significant amount of money on it. We've done a lot of planning. This is an easy project to do. We had to phase in this whole project and figure out where we're going to keep equipment. The town is far into this. If it's going to be put off just know that it's going to come back and is probably going to cost more money. I don't like the cost has gone up but I can't tell the building commissioner these codes are triggered in the Mass Building code and that we're not going to do the project because we're not happy we're spending the money.

Mr. Silva: Triggering the Mass codes on these things on projects that I've dealt with, you've got to go to a certain number you're spending to trigger other things.

Chief Pease: That's what happened. I'm not sure you can fix it for less than that. The day the contractors came in to bid on this we were told by the engineers that the town wants to bid it 2 different ways in case we can't do the whole thing and we can do part of it. Some folks don't understand that you're still going to have to do the code upgrades which would require ripping down all the ceiling tiles and not replacing the duct work. It makes no sense to do this piece meal. It is going to come back in the future and at some point we all have to work together and get this done. I don't want to be set off for being greedy because I don't want to spend any more money than we need to right now but it's an HVAC project in a building that we live in 24 hours a day and we are concerned about the health of our employees in the long term.

Mr. Gennette: Would you prefer it piece meal rather than not at all?

Chief Pease: I don't see how you're going to do it. I would prefer it get done one way or the other. It doesn't make a lot of sense.

Mr. Gennette: It's not that we don't want you to have this. The issue is the sheer amount of money that it's going to take to do this. It's going to go out to bond and going to dip into the operating expenses of the town budget. The operating expense for the town budget is going to dip directly into your bottom line. Are you prepared to have your budgets shaved the amount of money it's going to take for that HVAC unit? That's what it comes down to. We have no other money. We did this to the school. The school put up the administration building and the bond money for the administration building was 1.3 million the first year it came out. The school was mad that we had to hit them with a 1.3 million shortfall. One person told me we put a million-dollar noose around the school. I didn't put the noose around the school. They had to have a new administration

building. How do we plan for this better is what the problem is. This didn't go to capital. Capital should have been monitoring this the entire time. We could have been chasing funding for the past 4 years. Originally this project was \$265,000 4-5 years ago and it was approved by capital at that time. Then it came in at \$540,000 during Covid and we said we'd cover it under ARPA. The next year it was 1.5 million. This past year it's 3.8 million and you recently had a walk through and they said it's going to be more like 3.94 million. We don't have the ability to do this at this scale anymore. We don't have the money for it. Our free cash was 5.4 million. We have 3 million leftover. That's most of the way there. If I don't put it on bond then we don't get hit with all of that. If I take that money and put it in a savings account waiting to pay the bill then we make interest on it. If I put it on a bond we're paying for it for 30 years and it has to come out of the budget somewhere. We keep going to bond and keep tying ourselves down. It's not that we don't want to figure out the project we've just got to figure out the funding for it. It sucks that we may have to wait another year. It sucks that we had to do \$270,000 for Tighe & Bond to do engineering. We were going to have to pay that money anyway. I don't think the engineering is going to change between now and next year. We cannot afford it this year. I want to do the project but we have to do it with the money that we have available and that's in free cash. I don't know what financial vehicle we need to hold that money. Maybe it just stays in the general fund. I don't know. I asked Marc about parking it in the building infrastructure fund. At what point do you cross over to where this is a bad idea and just build a new building?

Chief Pease: I think we'd all appreciate a new building. I wanted to be on record letting you know where we are on the project because it seems like there wasn't a lot of information. Whether you do it or not, that's ok. I've said my piece. I understand where you're at.

Mr. Silva: We spent this money. Is it going to wash away because we wait a year?

Chief Pease: Probably not. It's going to probably cost more next year. God knows what's going to happen. As long as the money is not wasted in any sense. I don't want it to be stopped. And to say it's going to come out of our budget, we don't have a budget like the school.

Mr. Gennette: I can't take it from the school department and give it to you guys just like I can't take it from you and give it to the school department. It's not fair. Admittedly, the town needs to do better strategically planning its resources. We have not done good up to this point. We're trying to remedy that. That is no fault of yours.

Chief Valadas: There has to be better capital planning. You don't wait 33 years to fix an HVAC system. Myself and the Chief met with the lead designer and project manager and he said the money spent was the money spent. It's an excellent plan. There is no patching this. It's a fix or not a fix. There's 5 roof units, 3 on the fire side, 2 on the police side but they're putting 3 on the police side and 2 on the fire side so the zones work better. It's a complete overhaul. There's no patching. You don't move roof units without moving ducting, dampers, mini splits, switches and all that. I want to add to the history. Five years ago, I was talking with Ellie. We understand when other buildings in town were closed, one building stayed open. We had to tell our staff they're going to work. We had plans of bunking in the station or renting hotel rooms in case guys didn't want to bring home something to the family. We worked with it not knowing what was going to happen. We had plans of half our staff being gone. We were running half staffed and communally lived so we didn't endanger our families. It was talked about don't worry about it; you're getting your money. You're not going to get bonuses; we're going to put it towards the HVAC that the first responders deserve. I think bonding is the only way to do it. Not one of my people said I can't do this. I heard from other chiefs they had people say that.

Chief Pease: Every time the town hall needed to be fumigated it was somebody from their department. I think nobody remembers anything. We all move on and have short memories. I'm not looking for a big thank you, I'm just saying to consider us when you have 5 million dollars. I don't know why this project hasn't gone out to bid until now.

Mr. Silva: This project is going to get done. We have to do it sensibly. This year we have to hold back a little bit and bring it back later.

Mr. Gennette: We have to figure out the timing too. My biggest concern is putting it out to bond. We keep on tacking on all these expenses and it gets so tight we're pinched into our 2 ½ that we

can't cover it anymore. We keep going back to the community. At some point we have to stop the bleeding and this is a big project.

Mr. Silva: If we do hold off is it able to go to capital?

Mr. Gennette: Yes.

Mr. Silva: I think we should bring it to capital.

Mr. Gennette: I'll have a capital meeting right after Town Meeting and we'll focus strictly on that.

Mr. Rosenblum: Do you know when the bid closes on this?

Chief Pease: May 22.

Mr. Rosenblum: I've been saying for October Town Meeting we have to get it done. We know that when the bid closes by the time they vet all the paperwork through procurement it's going to take time. Then you have to have a preconstruction meeting, then a notice to proceed. Going through this stuff where I am it's extremely slow. It might help us hold the cost to where it's at now. We've been talking about preparing for 2 years down the road. Now we're talking about tariffs. If we get to that point, the \$73,000 bond is going to be an \$80,000 bond. Once Town Meeting is over we have to get that committee together and how are we going to get it on the warrant for October. Waiting a year to come back to May for a Town Meeting. Someone said to me Town Meeting was so against changing the charter and when you look at some of the things you have to kick down the road over 6 months because we have 2 town meetings, maybe we find a way to do town meeting 3-4 times a year so we can close the gap on money being blown out the door. It's going to cost us money to have that town meeting but we need to act in a timely manner on this. If we sit on this for another year it's 4.5-5 million.

Mr. Silva: You could go to town meeting and they say no.

Mr. Gennette: If we left it on the warrant and it got tanked it's over. To go to town meeting and tell them we're going to do a 4-million-dollar HVAC project, I don't want to do it.

Mr. Rosenblum: We're probably going to lean towards deferring this and when we make our recommendation we'd have to reopen the warrant.

Chief Pease: I understand the price is astronomical. It makes my stomach turn. If somebody has a better way of doing this I'm all ears.

Mr. Rosenblum: Once you hit certain thresholds it triggers code. In this building when we did the roof we had to do the bathrooms to be ADA compliant.

Mr. Alves: Financial theory wise, if there's a way to not bond it would just be comparing the bond saving potential vs the escalation over the 6-month period. I would hope that we would break on the better side of that. James, you can convene capital whenever?

Mr. Gennette: I'll call a capital meeting and we'll get to work on it.

Mr. Alves: If we're going to delay this I want to have a plan. I'm looking at this warrant and we have a building infrastructure fund and we're appropriating \$100,000 and we're sitting here talking about how we have excess free cash available and we're in a good spot. One of the purposes you're supposed to use it for is part of this capital planning process and part of that is maintenance of your infrastructure. If there's appetite to move this 6 months, and I don't want it to go longer than 6 months, I'd like to see us increase that with some of that money. I want a maintenance plan in place for these 6 months. Whatever we need to do to maintain it for 6 months.

Chief Pease: All we need is a routine maintenance plan.

Mr. Alves: I have no idea what that costs but if we're in a good spot with free cash, this is a good use of free cash.

Mr. Gennette: I asked Mr. Strange about adding the revenue we could use for the project to the building infrastructure fund and for some reason he thinks we can't do that legally. I don't know where that money sits now or where we have to put it to hold it but we'll work with the Town Administrator and FinCom to try to figure out what that is going to look like. If we can defer the project, it's going to take months for things to pan out here. Pull it from the warrant, start moving on figuring out the financing for this appropriately, get it in the hands of capital and they can do its review of it, make its recommendation to FinCom and the Board of Selectmen and by the October meeting we could be looking at a different ball game.

Mr. Alves: If it's ready before October, can we call a special meeting?

Mr. Gennette: That's up to the Chairman.

Mr. Alves: If James gets running with this on capital right after Town Meeting and we're ready in July or August with this other mechanism can we call another town meeting?

Mr. Silva: At town meeting you don't always get quorum.

Mr. Gennette: The point is if this stays on the warrant, and I'm not happy if it does because I don't want it to be a bond, and it gets tanked at town meeting then it's over. We're in a whole new project altogether after that. I don't think anybody thinks you're trying to be greedy it's just this is a big bite and we have to figure out what it's going to take to get it done.

Chief Pease: If this goes out to bid we have a number, right? Everybody is speculating now. We're potentially putting a number to bond at town meeting and we don't even know what the answer to that is so if we end up with a number and we have a low bid; is there a period of time we have to allocate the money for that or does that disappear and we have to go out to bid again?

Mr. Gennette: The only pitfall I can see in this is we just had our free cash certified so it takes time before the end of the next budget cycle in order for free cash to be certified again to allocate funds. We can get the project started but I don't know that we could fully fund the project with the numbers you're talking about vs what we have with free cash now. I don't know what the timing is for that but it's part of what we need to figure out.

Mr. Rosenblum: Also depending on when the bid closes what the anticipated start date is for the contract.

Mr. Gennette: Maybe we take what we can from free cash, fund the majority of the project and then take that smaller amount and bond it. With some creative financing we could probably figure out a much better way to handle this project than just put everything out on a bond and just tie down 2 ½.

Mr. Silva: I think we have a plan moving forward. The next couple items are insurance that the Finance recommended. I have no issue with it.

Mr. Gennette: I'm fine with everything the Finance Committee set forth. That leaves \$167,000 from free cash and that means you need to make a decision. That seems amicable to me but if you decide you want to get it to zero I hate using free cash.

Mr. Silva: I don't know that we have the time or any way to get it to zero. Maybe by the time we're done it will get to zero. I think we have to move forward.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to approve all of the Finance Committee's recommendations and changes which would leave us using \$170,000 in free cash. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to use up to \$170,000 out of free cash to balance the FY26 budget. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Gennette: I'm going to call a capital meeting and I'm going to call in Tighe & Bond and I'll probably ask one of you guys to come in.

Mr. Alves: Can we get started on some kind of maintenance plan?

Ms. Ribeiro: I made a note.

NEW BUSINESS

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to reopen the annual town meeting warrant. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to remove article 5 that has to do with the public safety HVAC system. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to remove article 25 which would make Millside Drive a public way. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Alves: Back to the building infrastructure.

Mr. Gennette: I didn't know if 40R or building infrastructure funds could house the excess free cash until such time we wanted to use it on a building project. Let's say we end up with the free cash from all of our PILOTs and receipts come in and we could take that then we don't have to bond most things. We could probably pay off some of our bonds or buy some back. There is legalities to that for what the structures are for those accounts. Brian, who is one of our account managers, is going to come in and we're going to sit with him and try to figure out what we can do to figure out what that structure is.

Mr. Alves: That fund can't be used for maintenance?

Mr. Gennette: I think it can be.

Mr. Alves: That was my point. To bulk that up for the maintenance.

Mr. Gennette: I don't know that we can put another \$100,000 in it for whatever reason and where it has to come from to do that. If we can bring in grant money from that project then we can tie it together with that and it would be a win.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to close the annual town meeting warrant. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Alves: Do we need to approve the level 2 budget?

Ms. Ribeiro: You approved it in the motion.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to approve the level 2 budget with the appropriate changes made. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Rosenblum: Reminder May 3rd is clean-up day. Select Board member Gennette and I met today and we went to the Veteran's Center for a state of the veteran's round table where they brought in commanders from all over the state. Congressman Neal was there. With the uncertainty of veteran funding across the board with potential cuts coming down the road. It was informative. The congressman is a staunch supporter of our veteran's and it was a great way for Eric and his staff to be able to showcase our Veteran's Center. State Senator Oliveira was present. It was a good round table.

Mr. Gennette: It was enlightening to hear from Senator Oliveira, Congressman Neal and everyone that was there to talk about Vet's services. I'm glad I attended. I want to go back to FinCom real quick. If you have not watched that meeting, go back and watch it. That is how a board should operate. They did great. They asked great questions. I was very impressed. There was some challenging stuff. We put them under fire by asking them for a recommendation this late in the game and they came through in spades. I just want to say thank you to the Finance Committee. There was an incident in Springfield regarding a Ludlow resident. The mayor of Springfield is hot under the collar and I don't blame him. Dumping is something we do not want to do in our town and I'm going to challenge this board at some point this year to push for that bylaw committee and

we create codes and penalties for such things and I would up littering to \$1,000 and dumping to \$5,000. We have nothing in place to protect our community from dumping. I think with this trash bill we're going to set ourselves up for disaster and I'd like to get ahead of it.


Mr. Alves: Thanks to the Finance Committee. I thought they did a great job. I spent 5 years on that committee. I appreciate their recommendations. The Josh Desforges challenge is this Saturday. I am participating.

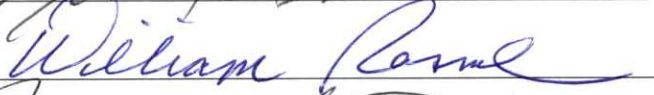
Mr. Rosenblum: The DPW today with the Cub Scouts Pack 1774 planted an American beech tree at Reservoir Cemetery. Thank you to everyone who participated in that.

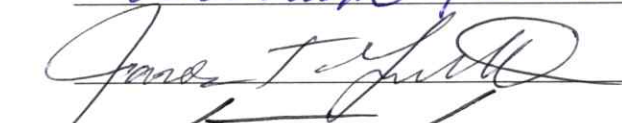
Mr. Gennette: We have to talk to the DPW because that shed that they put at the cemetery, that is the worst place for a shed.


Mr. Silva: Today is Arbor Day. I Manuel Silva, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen in the Town of Ludlow, Massachusetts do hereby proclaim April 22, 2025, as Arbor Day in the Town of Ludlow, Massachusetts and I urge all citizens to celebrate Arbor Day and to support our efforts to protect our trees and woodlands. Further, I urge all citizens to plant trees to gladden the heart and promote the well-being of this and future generations this 22nd day of April 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to close the meeting at 6:42 p.m. Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.









Chairperson