

Town of Concord
Concord Finance Committee
AGENDA

March 27, 2025, at 6:30 PM

Town House, 22 Monument Sq., 2nd Fl. Select Board Conference Room

Notice of public meeting as required by M.G.L. Chpt.30A §18-28

HYBRID IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

Join the meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82192873727?pwd=aEwSfhwy51FSxZZSkkCOEun29EGUU1.1>

Meeting ID: 821 9287 3727 Passcode: 879975 Dial in Toll-Free: 833-548-0282

Please be advised that this open meeting is being broadcast live via Zoom and MMN and recorded for playback online, video-on-demand viewing at <https://concordma.gov/2409/Government>. The listings of matters are reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours before said meeting, which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may be addressed. Items may be taken out of order and at times differ from those listed below. Other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law. **Video or call will be muted upon joining meeting please use the "raise your hand" feature in the zoom meeting to ask to speak. ATTENDEES ARE REMINDED THAT BY ATTENDING THIS MEETING THAT YOU CONSENT TO YOUR LIKENESS AND AUDIO BEING USED AND REBROADCAST BY MMN.**

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 6:30 PM | 1. Call to Order |
| 6:30 PM | 2. Public Comment
Public Comment is limited to up to 10 minutes, with no more than 2 minutes allocated to any one speaker. Public Comment is limited to items that are not on the agenda. |
| 6:40 PM | 3. Liaison Report |
| 6:50 PM | 4. Correspondence |
| 6:55 PM | 5. Minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss and potentially approve the minutes of February 27, 2025, Finance Committee meeting (as available). |
| 7:00 PM | 6. June 2025 Annual Town Meeting Warrant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and Discuss Town Meeting Warrant Articles Review and Discuss Finance Committee ATM Public Hearing Schedule and Preparation |
| 7:40 PM | 7. Finance Committee Report for Fiscal Year 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of section drafts/outlines and assignment of warrant article recommendation write-ups. |
| 8:20 PM | 8. Finance Committee Milestones and Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Goals and Milestones |
| 8:30 PM | 9. Recap of Action Items/ Adjournment |

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Next Meeting: *Thursday, April 10, 2025 @ 7:00 pm (FC ATM Public Hearing #1)*
Tuesday, April 15, 2025 @ 7:00 pm (FC ATM Public Hearing #2)
Thursday, April 24, 2025 @ 6:30 pm (if needed)
Thursday, May 1, 2025 @ 7:00 pm (FC ATM Public Hearing #3)



Concord Finance Committee
AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

March 27, 2025

1

Call to Order

Requested by: FC Chair

Action Sought: Open Meeting

Proposed Motion(s)

None anticipated.

Additional Information

Board Action

<i>Motion</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>In favor</i>	<i>Opposed</i>	<i>Disposition</i>



Concord Finance Committee
AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

March 27, 2025

3

Liaison Updates

Finance Committee liaisons to provide updates

Requested by: FC Chair

Action Sought: to provide update

Proposed Motion(s)

None anticipated.

Additional Information

Attached is the Concord Finance Committee Liaison Report for the meeting on Thursday, March 27, 2025.

Board Action

<i>Motion</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>In favor</i>	<i>Opposed</i>	<i>Disposition</i>

Concord Finance Committee Liaison Report

For meeting on Thursday, March 27, 2025 | Last updated: 3/25/25 8:36 PM

Board/Committee	Liaison	Updates
Select Board and General Updates	Eric	<p>Recapping 3/24 Select Board meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select Board reviewed and approved revisions to ATM public hearings schedule (those changes are reflected in the materials in our packets for 3/27). • Town Manager presented FY26 budget, with details by department. More to come at our public hearing on the town budget (scheduled for 4/15). • Lyndsey, Don, and I presented initial thoughts on refresh of town’s reserves policy – to discuss further with the full Finance Committee at our 3/27 meeting. <p>Other updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don, Select Board member Wendy Rovelli, Select Board member Mark Howell, EVC Chair Mike Lawson, Economic Vitality Manager Mimi Graney, and I met with Littleton town officials on 3/25 to discuss “The Point” and other developments in Littleton. Good lessons learned for Concord. • Thanks to Karlen for representing the FinCom at the Wed 3/19 Chairs’ breakfast – her recap is attached to this liaison report.
Schools	Dee and Pat	<p>Recapping 3/25 School Committee meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Thoreau School playground private fund-raising has successfully received commitments of \$596,000 from our community --so the entire playground will be funded privately! That’s the most important financial matter. • The School Committee approved the purchase of yellow school buses--that’s already in the Schools’ budget. • Middle School completion is still 9 months away--primarily take down of Sanborn and landscaping. No comment on Peabody transfer. • Anticipated Grand Opening of the retail store in the Crosby’s shopping area this Friday! I’m hoping sales pay the rental costs + extras. • We have a new police dog--a puppy named Thor--who will be a semi-permanent resident of CCHS and maybe visit CPS...but right now, the puppy is working with our school police officer. • On the Schools’ agenda later in the year is phone use in school (should we collect phones at the door?) as well as the intelligent, constructive use of AI for students (ex: to make 10 practice problems for math on a concept). <p>Recapping 3/11 School Committee meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meeting last night focused on superintendent goals, school committee goals and superintendent evaluation. No \$\$\$ were discussed at all. A couple of highlights follow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cellphone usage at school, while not discussed, is a hot topic. 25-30 messages have been received to date, and counting. This topic will be highlighted at the 3/21 meeting. ○ Sanborn starts coming down next week. ○ Policy for AI will be prepared by the end of school year. ○ Shelter: a consolidation with Waltham has increased numbers at Concord’s shelter(the hotel), which sounded like a surprise?! The admin. is currently working with the state as new students will be arriving even though Concord continues to work on phasing out. ○ Evaluation of performance was generalized (not really discussed) and will focus on academics and meeting financial guidelines (at future meetings?)

Board/Committee	Liaison	Updates
Municipal Light Board	Karlen	<p>Recapping 3/12 meeting (materials here):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair Warren Leon reported that Chris Schaffner has joined the Board as its newest member. Mr. Schaffner is a mechanical engineer and works in Concord on green energy projects. Previously, he served on the Acton planning board. • Director Jason Bulger noted several staff changes and a notice of rate impacts from tariffs being imposed on Canadian electricity. Also, the state's MassSave program will be reduced, and Light Plant is looking to see if those reductions should be reflected in Concord's rebate programs. The Town's tree-trimming program is 50% done for the year, and the Light Plant staff is undergoing a staff-wide CPR safety program. The Light Plant staff is preparing for its role in the 250th event and was busy with high wind repairs. The Light Plant is also working to bring broadband to the Concord Housing Authority, and they have wired the new Middle School with fiber. • The Board considered aspects related to Time Of Use (TOU) rates, which go into effect January 2026: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bill print updates – Director Bulger spoke on framing the customer bill to reflect the TOU data. ○ Communication plan and outreach – The plan is broad and uses different ways that focus on educating the customers. Some tools are side-by-side examples, bill calculators, and load management programs. The plan uses bill inserts, message alerts, emails, workshops, website, and word of mouth. One of the challenges is starting the message plan too early; six months is the sweet spot. • Then the Board talked about the cost-of-service study process. Finally, the Board went into executive session to examine a proposed power supply contract extension.
Public Works Commission	Karlen	<p>Recapping 3/12 meeting (agenda here):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PWC reviewed a request for the town's Public Works department to plow a new private way (driveway) at Rothermel Place, the new 5-unit affordable housing development located at 406 Old Marlboro Road. The PWC took the request under advisement. • The Concord Public Works (CPW) engineering division described changes in the guardrail standards that the CPW department wants to use – using galvanized steel rather than wood as the guardrail posts. This will be a visual change in how the guardrails look and is a safer design than wood. It is unknown whether these guardrails will be accepted in the Historic Districts by the Historic Districts Commission and the National Park Service. Powder coating the galvanized steel increases the cost of the guardrail by 2 ½ times. The engineering division will come back to the PWC with design standards. • The PWC heard an update on the 2025 Roads Program, which would have a \$2.1M budget, added to \$678K in state Chapter 90 funding. The Town's current pavement condition index (PCI) is 73, and the 2025 Roads Program would address about 8 miles of roads in Concord. The \$27.5M Tier III warrant article would cover a 5-year period and bring the roads up to 85 PCI starting FY26, which is about \$5M/year. • Next, the PWC considered and approved an opt-out policy for the AMI water meters and battery replacement schedule. 36 households have asked for an opt-out policy. • Finally, the Facilities Director (Russ Karlstad) updated the PWC on its staffing levels -- 10 employees (10 FTE) -- and its initiatives. Those initiatives include sound quality at Town House and Harvey Wheeler auditorium, a work order system, and reimbursement from various enterprise funds for services. The Facilities Division is part of the CPW.
Warner's Pond Task Force	Karlen	<p>Recapping 3/21 Dam Removal Subcommittee meeting (agenda here):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dam Removal Subcommittee reviewed its proposal to the Task Force and planned its presentation at the April 3 public forum. The Task Force posted its March 2025 Alternatives Report on the NRC website. The Report will be the basis for the Task Force's recommendation to the Natural Resources Commission regarding actions for Warner's Pond. Three alternatives have

Board/Committee	Liaison	Updates
		<p>been explored for more than a year: 1) basic pond management, 2) dredging, and 3) dam removal and restoration of Nashoba Brook.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This 76-page Report will be the focus of a public forum on April 3, 2025, 7:00 p.m. at the Hearing Room, Town House, and via Zoom. The Report contains appendices with criteria and cost estimates, which range from \$106K to \$12M. The Town has appropriated \$1.69M for dredging and \$960K for other improvements, derived from CPA funds and other capital funds. Warner’s Pond management has cost the Town almost \$600K since 2010. • In this Alternatives Report, the Task Force examined five criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Will this alternative support and preserve the historical character and cultural heritage of the area? ○ Will this alternative enhance Concord’s desirability as a place to live? ○ Will this alternative maintain / increase connectivity to Town centers and access to services by vulnerable residents? ○ Will this alternative enhance the ecology / biodiversity of the water body and adjacent land? ○ Will this alternative support fiscal sustainability? • The Task Force will take public feedback into account, attempt to reach a consensus opinion on one recommendation, and then submit the recommendation for action to the Natural Resources Commission. The NRC’s process thereafter has not been determined, though several possibilities exist.
2229 Main Street Oversight Committee	Karlen	<p>Recapping 3/21 meeting (agenda here):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee, led by chair Ray Bruttomesso, reviewed the revised version of the Institutional Controls document and expressed a desire to add maps to the documents. The Committee also reviewed the 100% Remedial Design document on site-wide sediment and soils and discussed the level of soil testing needed. They also noted that the Select Board has sent a letter to the Environmental Protection Agency that says, in essence, Concord is ready and willing to negotiate for the property at 2229 Main Street. Their next meeting is May 16, 2025 at 10:30 a.m.
PEG Access Advisory Committee	Karlen	<p>Recapping 3/20 meeting (agenda here):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee, led by chair Vince Carlson, focused on the pending Comcast – Concord contract for PEG services, media plans for the April 19 Concord250 celebration, and how the Committee should proceed after the Comcast contract is approved and signed by the Select Board. • The Committee voted to recommend that the Select Board approve the pending Comcast contract. The Select Board is the deciding authority on the Comcast contract. Procedurally, the Select Board would incorporate a public hearing on the Comcast contract as part of the Select Board meeting, after which the Select Board would vote on approval of this 10-year agreement. The Committee members hope to get on the Select Board’s agenda before their current negotiation time extension expires on April 19. • The Committee also spoke about whether the PAAC should fold after the contract signing, or whether the members could change their committee charge and explore the possibility of forming a private non-profit corporation that would take over the Minuteman Media Network operations, which is currently a Town department. Possible concerns with this change include the non-profit structure, reporting to the Town, and oversight of the PEG Fund that come to the Town for Minuteman’s video services. • The PEG Fund, which is a special revolving account, now stands at \$1,704,247 per the 2025 Warrant Article # 54. The PEG budget and an update on the Comcast contract negotiations will come before the FinCom on May 1 as part of the Enterprise Fund Public Hearing.

Chairs Breakfast Recap

Wednesday, March 19, 2025 | Prepared by Karlen Reed

Committee	Name	Notes
Select Board	Mary Hartman	Ms. Hartman announced that the Select Board approved the new Land Use Matrix and charge; she wants committees to fill the working group slots. The SB is reviewing its APP10 policy. The MCI advisory board will conduct public outreach efforts April 28/29 and May, and Ms. Hartman asked committees to not plan public events that will overlap MCI. She reminded all about the upcoming 5 public hearings, Town Meeting, and the Town Election. Also, committee terms that end in 2025 will end when Town Meeting finishes.
Select Board	Mark Howell	Mr. Howell asked committees to check the MCI web page first if they need to schedule a public forum. He also mentioned that he expects the state legislature to allow continuation of remote participation in committee meetings.
Select Board	Andrea Fountain	Ms. Fountain urged the chairs to see her for committee volunteer names.
2229 Main Street Task Force & Advisory Committee	Paul Boehm	Mr. Boehm said the Task Force is in limbo right now. He said the Article 29 is place-holder to reserve funds for legal counsel fees to move the 2229 project forward (Ms. Hartman noted that Article 29 does not have a specified dollar amount).
Ag Committee	Dan Schmid	Mr. Schmid announced that the Ag Committee's Spring Forum is set for May 15, 6 p.m. at the Library, focused on farming for the next 250 years. His committee is looking at inexpensive housing for farm workers and will work with Keith Bergman of CMAHT.
Board of Health	Dottie Bernard	Ms. Bernard handed out copies of the Board's new 2024 Concord Community Health Needs Assessment Summary Report, which will also be posted on the Town's website. This is a new survey that garnered 539 Concord responses and contains demographic data and findings about the health condition and concerns of Concord. The Board has been screening food truck applications for Concord250, and there will be 3 areas where food trucks will be found.
Climate Action Committee	Brad Hubbard-Nelson	Mr. Hubbard-Nelson announced that his committee held a Green Homes Tour. He reported the position of Sustainability Director will be discontinued due to budget constraints. Ms. Hartman assured him that the CAC will continue to have support going forward.
Concord 250	Gary Clayton	Mr. Clayton described some safety measures, temporary cell service, programs, cultural activities, food trucks, portable bathrooms, water fountains, maps, Concord250 website, transportation, public information meetings, and benches for April 19 celebrations.
Concord Housing Authority	Stephan Bader	Mr. Bader stated that the CHA signed a \$1.13M contract with the state to install heat pumps in the oldest CHA units for heating and cooling. This project is out to bid now.
Concord Housing Development Corporation	Peter Lowitt	Mr. Lowitt reported on progress at the Assabet River Bluffs 5-unit affordable housing project, 2 units of which will be transferred to the Concord Housing Authority and the other 3 being built and retained by Habitat for Humanity.
Concord MCI Advisory	Dan Gainsboro	Mr. Gainsboro reported that his committee met with the new consultant and did a site walk of MCI-Concord. Their next meeting is April 7 with the consultant to hear preliminary findings and timeline. Yesterday an MCI subcommittee met with representatives from the state Department of Transportation to discuss the Route 2 rotary redesign.

Committee	Name	Notes
CPS & Regional School Committees	Carrie Rankin	Ms. Rankin reported that the school committee met in Boston with the METCO families, is discussing in-school cell phone policies, and will hold a spring ribbon cutting at the new Middle School.
DEIB commission	Nancy Brown	Ms. Brown noted that the committee will hold a DEI community meeting on March 26, 5-7:30 p.m. at the Library.
Disability Commission	Jean Goldsberry	Ms. Goldsberry's commission has been looking to update Concord's 15-year-old accessibility plan, which does not deal with services. She noted concerns about accessibility at the proposed Thoreau elementary school playground and will follow-up.
Economic Development Committee	Mike Lawson	Mr. Lawson and his committee are presenting to the Planning Board on April 9th on their zoning bylaws on parking and accessory uses in commercial areas. His committee is working with the FinCom and Select Board to prepare a position paper on economic development.
FinCom	Karlen Reed	Sitting in for Chair Dahlberg, Ms. Reed noted the March 27 FinCom meeting will include a preview of Town Warrant Articles and is working on the draft Finance Committee Report. She noted that several Articles either state or imply the need for Free Cash, which may impact Town reserves and funding the stabilization accounts.
Historic Districts Commission	Kate Chartener	Ms Chartener said her committee continues to review applications.
Hugh Cargill Trust	Jill Block	Ms. Block reported that the Trust is about to launch its annual Appeal effort for funds. She noted the Trust gave away \$4K in January to pay rent, electricity, and car payments on behalf of low income residents.
Light Board	Warren Leon	Mr. Warren informed the chairs about the Light Board's efforts towards transition to Time-of-use (TOU) rates (rates to be set by August) with billing notices and a cost-of-service study. Also, the Light Plant has been trimming trees to reduce power outages.
Middle School Building Committee	Pat Nelson	Ms. Nelson said the committee will continue until the last bill for the new Middle School is paid, and the old Sanborn school demolition will start by next week.
Municipal Affordable Housing Trust	Keith Bergman	Mr. Bergman reported that the housing groups are engaged with the MCI process. The MAHT is working with the Mass. Housing Partnership on some technical matters, such as affordable housing financing. He is concerned that the 201 units at the NOVO housing project may not be completed by April 16 to count towards the Town's SHI (subsidized housing index).
Natural Resources Commission	Sarah Grimwood	Ms. Grimwood announced that the Natural Resource Division's annual cleanup program is March 22-30, and she encouraged folks to sign up and get trash bags at the Division office.
Personnel Board	Bill Mrachek	Mr. Mrachek reported the Select Board presented a new Personnel Board charge, and his board reviewed the recommendations of the Personnel Study Task Force.
Pollinator Committee	Mark Hanson	Mr. Hanson said his committee is looking for more habitat for native pollinators, so they will provide native plants this spring for people to put in their yards.
Public Ceremonies and Celebrations Committee	Holly Legault	Ms. Legault announced that Sandy Smith will be honored March 30th, 2:00 p.m., as Concord's newest Honored Citizen
Public Works Commimssion	Sven Weber	Mr. Weber reported that the Public Works Department is updating the guardrail specifications to use a more cost-effective and safer design. The Departments is also updating its "zero read" water meter policy to detect and collect on un-billed water use. Water meter batteries are failing and need to be replaced. The FY25 Roads Program has been prioritized. The FY26 Roads Article is in the Warrant.
Recreation Commission	Paul Boehm	Mr. Boehm reported that the Rec Commission is holding a public information tonight (3/19) on the use of the Doug White Fields and replacing the existing field with artificial turf.

Committee	Name	Notes
Town Meeting Study committee	Eric Moore	Mr. Moore and his committee are working on a report, and he observed that the Town Meeting public hearings are designed to serve the public and as a dress rehearsal for the Article sponsors.
Town Moderator	Carmin Reiss	Ms. Reiss said all materials for the Town Briefing Book are due April 30, and the FinCom's report will not be due til May 6 because the last FinCom hearing is May 1. She noted the Warrant is now posted, has 58 Articles, and will be in the March 28 Concord Bridge. Motions are due March 28, and she encouraged all who want to provide recommendations or materials for Town Meeting to turn in the material by April 30, rather than present them as separate hand-outs.
Transportation Advisory Committee	Mark Gailus	Mr. Gailus said his committee is working to support the Public Works Department, the Roads Warrant Article, the new Community Development Director, and to enhance local transportation options. The TAC is interested in working with the CAC on the transportation portion of the Climate Action Plan to make it safer to walk and bicycle around town.
Warner's Pond Task Force	Christine Denaro	Ms. Denaro announced that there would be a community meeting on April 3 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town House Hearing Room and on Zoom to hear and discuss the Warner's Pond Task Force report on restoration alternatives (dredging, dam removal, and short-term actions). Zoom link and alternatives are here: https://concordma.gov/3520/Warners-Pond-Task-Force .
West Concord Advisory Committee	Susan Mlodozienec	Ms. Mlodozienec and her committee completed an evaluation of the 2010 West Concord Village master plan to help the MCI committee understand how MCI connects to West Concord.



Concord Finance Committee
AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

March 27, 2025

4

Correspondence

Mail, letters, emails, presentation, etc.

Requested by: FC Chair

Action Sought: to provide update

Proposed Motion(s)

None anticipated.

Additional Information

Attached are all the emails that have been sent to the Finance Committee email (finance@concordma.gov), since the meeting on February 27, 2025.

Board Action

<i>Motion</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>In favor</i>	<i>Opposed</i>	<i>Disposition</i>

From: [Miguel Echavarri](#)
To: ["Celeste Katz Marston"](#); ["Dakota Antelman"](#)
Cc: ["Paul"](#); [finance mail](#); [Wendy Rovelli](#); [Mark Howell](#); [Mary Hartman](#); [Terri Ackerman](#); cameronmckennitt@gmail.com
Subject: My Opinion - Bridge reporting often softens criticism of town, doesn't adequately inform readership of important issues
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2025 10:41:00 AM

Caution: This is an external email and has a suspicious subject or content. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments. When in doubt, contact the IT Department (support@concordma.gov).

Celeste,

I had meant to send this earlier but I had a family medical emergency. Please note that I changed the subject line and included others in this response because it brings up important **questions** about the Bridge's reporting which (I believe) seeks to soften criticism of Town government over fully informing the public. This is my opinion and I use the Mattison land theft as an example. I'm glad to provide other examples upon request. I don't seek or expect an answer to this email though I'm happy to respond should one be provided – ME.

Dear Celeste,

I'm fully aware that the Concord Bridge is an independent organization but at times it's **hard to reconcile** that fact with how and when the paper reports stories that are potentially damaging to the Town. For example, Concord taxpayers invested \$5M in Gerow Park yet it took the Bridge three months to publish a story on why the contractor left the job site which (as a reminder) was due to mismanagement that ultimately lead to an investigation by the Attorney General's Office.

Then there's the **timing** and reporting of the **Mattison Drive** land theft. The Bridge waited almost two months after CBS and British tabloids covered the story, hardly a timely piece for a local newspaper reporting on (and providing news to) the very community where the land was stolen from. Especially when you consider the **Town's role** in granting an NRC application to the developer, that then allowed the fraudulent sale to proceed, despite a specific warning from the victim's husband that the land was "*absolutely*" not for sale.

Upon reading the two stories from CBS and the Bridge, I was struck by how each outlet framed the story.

- For example, **CBS** started with a quote from the Mattison Drive couple stating, "**They stole our dream**" and noted that the couple planned to build a family home on the land once they retired. The CBS story invoked empathy for the couple because the story was about title theft and the impact it had on this couple. CBS did an excellent job discussing the rising problem of

land theft and provided a good synopsis of red flags in this particular case. They ended the story by stating that the FBI had opened a criminal investigation into the fraudulent sale.

- Compare and contrast that to how the **Concord Bridge** handled the story. It dedicated ~200 words (out of a ~900-word article) to arguably disparaging the victim's husband and dedicated an entire section to his "**lengthy criminal history**" and "**misconduct allegations**" which cost him his medical licenses. The paper then brought forth past charges that "**include a 2008 arrest for battery**" resulting from female patients alleging that he "**touched them inappropriately**". The article continued with how "**he once stole a home theater projector and video game from a South Carolina Sam's Club**" and that "**he pleaded guilty to stealing a rocking chair from a Cracker Barrel in 2010**". The reporting never mentioned the FBI investigation or criminal investigation and glossed over the Town's role in approving the NRC application.

By **delaying** release of this story and focusing your reporting on (arguably) **disparaging** the victim's husband, the Bridge **softened** the Town's role in the theft. Off-hand, I have to wonder how the paper would've handled the Tamir Rice shooting? Ignore the police's role in killing a 14-year-old boy to instead focus on the victim's mother? That's essentially what the paper did here.

In an **incredible twist of irony**, the town wouldn't take the husband's word that the land wasn't for sale because he wasn't the owner; so while the developer had standing with the Town, the husband didn't. But the Bridge ignored this and focused much of its reporting on the husband, the guy who tried to stop the sale but was ignored. Take a moment to **digest that**, the Town ignored the husband's accurate representation that the land wasn't for sale, as a result the application was approved and the land stolen, the couple lost their million-dollar property and their dream; because the Bridge focused its article on the husband, his questionable past was delivered to mailboxes across Concord possibly damaging his reputation while the Town largely escaped scrutiny.

The Bridge article also stated that the paper had **submitted** a public records request on the theft. I also submitted a request and immediately noticed an email that **showed** the developer had requested and was granted a change of address for the Mattison land but this was done four months **prior** to the fraudulent sale; and the developer was listed as the property owner. To repeat, this was four months prior to the sale and the developer was listed as the property owner. **Why** wasn't this included in the article? Was it an oversight or did the Bridge intentionally exclude it? Again, it seems the reporting softened potential criticism of the Town.

With regard to what started this discussion – even though the **Bridge knew** about the disparity between Concord administrative budgets and other towns (e.g. ~\$700K difference with Danvers) it ran a headline on its February 14th edition on cutting library hours and omitted any mention of these budgets. Let's be clear, **closing** the library on Sunday's results in a paltry savings of \$44K, cuts to our administration budgets could save hundreds of thousands of dollars. Why not cover these larger budgets or even ask Town administrators about them? After all, **isn't** that the job of an

“independent” newspaper?

By the way, when Dakota **invited** Mr. Macone and myself to the Bridge, I thought it was to ask questions about the administration budgets and benchmarks to help inform on the reporting. But he didn't ask a single question and after 15 minutes of us faltering about, trying to determine why we'd been invited, he told us he had a deadline and we left. Nothing important was discussed. Respectfully, this was a waste of our time – please don't ask me to come back.

Sincerely,

Miguel Echavarri

Homeowner – 255 Commonwealth Ave

From: Celeste Katz Marston <Celeste@concordbridge.org>

Sent: Friday, February 21, 2025 2:33 PM

To: Miguel Echavarri <miguele@intelimapinc.com>; Dakota Antelman <Dakota@concordbridge.org>

Cc: 'Paul' <mac.one@comcast.net>

Subject: Re: Why close the Library on Sundays without (first) discussing expansive administrative budgets?

Miguel,

You are always most welcome to forward any information, but to be very clear, The Concord Bridge does not work "with" the town manager's office or any branch of town government. We do not "prepare responses" with any branch of government. I'm in fact not sure what you mean by that, but I hope you understand that we are an independent non-profit newspaper that is not affiliated with the Town of Concord.

Best,

Celeste Katz Marston

Managing Editor

[The Concord Bridge](https://www.concordbridge.org)

The non-profit, non-partisan newspaper of record of historic Concord, Massachusetts

Celeste@concordbridge.org

(978) 505-2776

From: Miguel Echavarri <miguele@intelimapinc.com>
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2025 2:27 PM
To: Celeste Katz Marston <Celeste@concordbridge.org>; Dakota Antelman <Dakota@concordbridge.org>
Cc: 'Paul' <mac.one@comcast.net>
Subject: FW: Why close the Library on Sundays without (first) discussing expansive administrative budgets?

Dear Celeste, Dakota,

I'm forwarding the below email as a courtesy so the Bridge can work with the Town Manager's Office to prepare a response.

Have a good day...

Miguel

From: Miguel Echavarri <miguele@intelimapinc.com>
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2025 7:34 AM
To: 'Mary Hartman' <mhartman@concordma.gov>; 'Terri Ackerman' <tackerman@concordma.gov>; 'Cameron McKennitt' <cmckennitt@concordma.gov>; 'Wendy Rovelli' <wrovelli@concordma.gov>; 'finance mail' <finance@concordma.gov>; 'Mark Howell' <markhowell@concordma.gov>
Subject: Why close the Library on Sundays without (first) discussing expansive administrative budgets?

Dear Members of FinCom and the Select Board,

At the February 10th SB budget presentation it was suggested that, due to FinCom guidelines, the town should **close the library** on Sundays. This prompted an **immediate** response and made the front page of the Concord Bridge. At the end of the presentation, the SB Chair referred to the guidelines as “aggressive” and “assertive”.

I can only imagine that **FinCom is feeling pressed** over their supposedly “aggressive” guideline because (gasp) the Town wants to cut library hours as well as 2.5 FTEs. But before we give into **hysteria**, let's look at what actually was said and, more importantly, what wasn't said.

- **For example**, not discussed was that the Town Manager's Office and Human Resources (HR) have a combined FTE of 13.00 with a FY25 budget of ~\$1.4M(1)(2). Compare and contrast that to Danvers, who has 6.00 FTEs and a combined budget of \$697(3). That's a **difference of \$683K**, an amount worthy of **scrutiny and discussion**. This disparity will only grow because Concord HR is scheduled to grow another \$142K. And Concord's TMO budget has already

grown \$186K since FY24.

So **why** does TMO immediately proposed closing the library on Sundays to save a paltry \$44K, without first discussing the \$683K premium taxpayers are footing to support town administration?

To that end, let's add **context** to what was presented and (more importantly) highlight what **wasn't discussed**.

WHAT WAS DISCUSSED – ADDING CONTEXT TO FTE REDUCTIONS

[A] Reduction: 1.00 HR Temp Services Management Specialist/Consultant (HR Specialist). To put this position in context, it makes **\$175K** per year, is **unbudgeted** and was supposed to **expire** by July 1, 2024. Its salary is among the top seven in town, on par with the Chief of Police and the Public Works Director. By extending it beyond its termination date, taxpayers were required to fund two senior HR administrators concurrently, each making over \$160K/year. **Conversely**, the highest paid HR employee in Danvers only makes \$118K.

- Arguably, this position should never have been extended beyond its termination date, especially with such a high salary and under dubious circumstances. **Cutting** this position is not the result of an “aggressive” FinCom guideline (as suggested by the SB Chair) but rather prudent business practice.

[B] Reduction: 2.00 FTEs for Parks and Playgrounds. 2.00 FTEs from this office were identified for reduction which sounds significant until you realize it only saves **\$54,530(4)**. This begs the question, are these really full-time employees and if so, are they only making \$27K per year? I searched the payroll data provided by HR and the lowest paid FTE is an intern within Public Works who makes \$34K/year. I was unable to find any references for Parks & Playgrounds so I was unable to research their positions further. But **why** are we focusing on small amounts and not larger administrative departments? More clarity is warranted.

[C] Reduction: 2.70 within IT and Senior Servies. the Town proposes cutting 1.70 FTEs from IT which reduces their count to 8.00 FTEs. Danvers budget book shows 5.00 FTEs which is a difference of 3.00. While unpleasant, these reductions bring IT staffing more in line with other towns, though still higher. The presentation also highlighted an FTE reduction in Senior Services.

MORE IMPORTANTLY – WHAT WASN'T DISCUSSED:

[D] Human Resources - Benchmarking: Omitting the HR Specialist, Concord HR still has 6.00 FTEs on a FY25 budget of \$481K. Compare this to Danvers, with 3.00 FTEs on a budget of \$278K, and it's evident there's a major disparity between towns. This **disparity** of \$203K will increase significantly because Concord's HR is proposed to **increase** by 29% to \$623K. As a reminder, Danvers is a larger town with 10,000 more residents and like Concord has a light and water plant. It also has the same number of FTEs. **Why** the disparity between towns, **why** the 29% increase and

why aren't we having discussions about the department's size?

[E] Town Manager's Office - Benchmarking: Concord's TMO has 7.00 FTEs and a FY25 budget of \$864K compared to Danvers 3.00 FTEs on a budget of \$419K(1). That's a significant **difference of \$445K**. That's a lot of money, **why** isn't it part of FTE reduction talks?

[F] Town Manager's Office - 2-year growth: In FY24 the TMO had 5.00 FTEs on a budget of \$625K(5). However, two years later the proposed FY26 budget supports 7.00 FTEs on a budget of \$811K, an **increase of \$186K**. This growth should be noted in discussions related to budget cuts.

[G] Town Manager's Office - Benchmarking Leadership: Concord TMO has a town manager, a deputy town manager and an assistant town manager whose combined salary is \$560K. Danvers only has a town manager and an assistant town manager with a combined salary of \$329K. That's a **difference of \$231K** that Concord taxpayers are required to subsidize so TMO can do its job. **Why** does our TMO need an extra senior administrator and **why** are they paid more than Danvers and **why** are we proposing cuts to library hours before discussing this spending?

[H] Town Manager's Office – Expiring 1.00 FTE: In an email exchange last fall, I was informed by TMO that, "*Presently, we are **running +1.00 FTE** in the Town Manager's Office to support the 250th Executive Committee and the Town Meeting Study Committee.*" Both these committees will expire by FY26. Since this FTE was temporary to support these committees', **shouldn't** there be a reduction of 1.00 FTE within TMO for FY26? **Why** talk about closing the library on Sundays to save \$44K but preserve this FTE (likely making ~\$85K) in the Town Managers Office? This should have been discussed, to my knowledge it wasn't.

TAKEAWAYS:

Instead of entertaining paltry cuts of \$44K to shut down the library on Sunday's, **why not ask** more detailed questions, such as - **why** does Concord HR have an administrative specialist, 2 HR generalists, and a management analysis while Danver's only has a benefits coordinator? **Or why** do we need three senior town managers versus Danver's two? **Or ask** for details about the +1.00 FTE dedicated to the 250th and Town Meeting committees? **Or ask** why we need both a deputy and assistant town manager at the same time?

I'm urging SB members to ask more pointed questions publicly and not in one-on-one conversations with the TMO. The latter leads to a lack of transparency and that (in my opinion) is a growing problem with this administration and this Select Board. And **I'm urging FinCom to stay strong** on their guidelines because it appears that Concord is no longer a tightly run ship and we need their continued oversight.

One final note, the Finance Department has **prepared a 22 page document** of recommended adjustments which I hope will address these questions. Until these adjustments are made public, I urge you to question all budget cuts, especially those related to popular services like the library which

(in my opinion) was just a **scare tactic** to pressure FinCom to back off its guidelines.

Sincerely,

Miguel Echavarri

Homeowner – 255 Commonwealth Ave

978-333-0385

Footnotes

1. With Economic Vitality Manager and Sustainability Manager pulled out of TMO's headcount, the FTEs = 7. Please note pulling the Vitality Manager out of headcount doesn't correlate with payroll data.
2. HR FTE and FY25 budget doesn't include the HR Specialist, that position wasn't funded to the best of my knowledge and if it was it didn't come out of the 5111 Regular Full Time account
3. The Danvers TMO numbers don't reflect a Procurement Specialist in the office. Please note that Concord hasn't had a procurement manager for many months.
4. This number was obtained from the SB presentation. The FY25 Revised budget (however) shows this amount at \$63,856. This would make individual salaries of the two FTEs at ~\$32K. However, to reiterate, I was not able to find these individuals within payroll.
5. It should be noted the TMO stated in emails that FTEs were actually 7 and not 5 as presented in the budget book. It should also be noted that while the FY24 budget was \$625K, actual spending exceeded \$905K. The only explanation for this differential provided to me was that the TMO has power to shift funds around and thus no explanation was warranted.

From: [MA Municipal Assoc.](#)
To: [finance_mail](#)
Subject: MMA Action Alert: Call Your Legislators to Make Remote Public Meeting Options Permanent
Date: Monday, March 3, 2025 9:58:09 AM



Dear Eric,

Current authorizations for remote options for public meetings are set to expire this month, on March 31. This includes allowances for remote or hybrid public meetings under the state's Open Meeting Law, as well as remote options for representative town meetings. These authorizations have been extended several times since the start of the pandemic, where these provisions were first created. It's time to permanently codify these options for local government in Massachusetts.

Several proposals have been filed this session that would do just that, making provisions permanent that have been overwhelmingly successful over the past five years. This includes the Municipal Empowerment Act, **HD.4360**, recently filed by Governor Healey. Additionally, [HD.2863](#) and [SD.1850](#), filed by Rep. Danielle Gregoire and Sen. Jacob Oliveira, respectively, would also make these options permanent, including for representative town meetings.

With these provisions set to expire, we need your help to call your legislators about the **importance of making these provisions permanent, while opposing any unworkable hybrid meeting mandate across all boards and commissions in local government.**

How You Can Help

- **Call Your State Legislators** and their staff to discuss the importance of making these current options permanent. Please describe the importance for municipal operations, and oppose any hybrid meeting mandate.
- **Urge them to co-sponsor** [HD.2863](#) and [SD.1850](#), *An Act to modernize municipal meetings, town meetings, and local elections*.
- **Talking Points:**
 - We are asking them to codify the existing flexibilities already authorized in state law – which have been an overwhelming success. This has been functioning for almost five years, and flexibility has been core to its success.
 - The current provisions are set to expire at the end of March, and the MMA and local officials proudly join the Governor, regional planning agencies, legislators, and other stakeholders in supporting the existing authorizations. Many other COVID-era allowances have already been made permanent (outdoor dining, to-go cocktails).
 - As a volunteer and primarily "night-time" government, a hybrid meeting mandate

would undermine progress on this issue, and would be both financially and practically infeasible.

- Every city and town in the Commonwealth has dozens of councils, boards, and commissions, which hold numerous public meetings a year. Any legislation mandating hybrid meetings would **impact thousands of local public bodies across the Commonwealth.**
- Costs to a municipality are unknown, and it would require technology, equipment, staff and necessary space to run all of these public meetings in a hybrid fashion – many of which occur at the same time.
- (If you utilize remote representative town meetings) Remote options for representative town meetings have also been important for municipal decision making, and it would be incredibly disruptive if this authorization were to lapse right in the middle of the spring town meeting season.

Additional Resources

- See this recent [joint press release](#) from the MMA, who partnered with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA), Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), and Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) to support codifying the current provisions in law.
- Feel free to use [this template](#) re: OML codification, in case it's helpful as you follow-up with your legislators and their staff.

Please reach out if you have any questions, thank you!!



Massachusetts Municipal Association
3 Center Plaza
Suite 610
Boston, MA 02108

(617) 426-7272 | [Email Us](#) | [View our website](#)

[Manage your email preferences](#) or [unsubscribe](#) from all MMA emails.



From: [Miguel Echavarri](#)
To: [Mary Hartman](#); [Terri Ackerman](#); [Cameron McKennitt](#); [Wendy Rovelli](#); [finance mail](#); [Mark Howell](#)
Subject: Clarification - Parks & Playgrounds - Reduction of 2.00 FTEs for a savings of \$54K
Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025 10:08:10 AM

Dear Kerry,

During the 02/10/2025 budget presentation to the Select Board (SB), your office recommended a reduction of 2.50 FTEs across Town departments. As part of these reductions, it identified 2.00 FTEs to be cut from **Parks & Playgrounds**; this would only save us \$54,530. I've looked into this department and was **confused** on where they fit within the Town's hierarchy. I'm hoping you'll provide the public with **clarity** on this department and these reductions. I believe this clarity is needed for us to understand the bigger picture, which includes additional cuts that were mentioned at the last SB meeting.

Questions related to Parks & Playgrounds – 2.00 FTE Reductions

[A] Are the 2.00 FTEs actual full-time positions? **[B]** Do these reductions only save the Town \$54,530? **[C]** Can targeting the lowest paid employees impact our bottom-line in a meaningful manner? Yes, on paper it shows a reduction of 2.00 FTEs but that only saves us \$54,530. Does that make sense?

Consider the following.

- At the 02/10/2025 SB presentation, your office listed a reduction of 2.00 FTEs from Parks & Playgrounds. That would reduce their FY25 budget from \$110,848 down to \$56,318 for a savings of \$54,530(1). Since the \$54,530 savings is likely related to salaries, does that mean each FTE only made \$27,265?
- Based on payroll salary information, the lowest paid Town employee (where FTE = 1.00) is an intern within Public Works who makes \$34,560. That's \$7K more than each of the FTEs from Parks & Playgrounds. Again, are these full-time employees?
- A search of the payroll salary table doesn't show Parks & Playground within either the Business Unit or Home Department fields. **[D]** Is this a current department or has it been merged? If so, where does it fall now? Are there any details you can share about it? What exactly are we losing by cutting these FTEs?

Sincerely,

Miguel Echavarri

Homeowner – 255 Commonwealth Ave

Footnotes:

1. Source: 02/10/2025 TMO presentation to SB. Please note that numbers shown within the presentation don't match budget numbers shown by the FY25 account budgets for 01650000, PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS. FY25 account information was received via public records request.

From: [Miguel Echavarri](#)
To: [finance mail](#)
Cc: [Mary Hartman](#); [Terri Ackerman](#); [Cameron McKennitt](#); [Wendy Rovelli](#); [Mark Howell](#)
Subject: Expanded Benchmarks - Sr. Administrators drive up costs and the TM is incorrect, options do exist to meet guidelines
Date: Thursday, March 13, 2025 4:37:24 PM
Attachments: [Miguel Echavarri Letter to FinCom 03-13-25 Benchmarks and positions.pdf](#)

Some people who received this message don't often get email from echavarrib17@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

To



finance mail

Cc



Mary Hartman



Terri Ackerman



Cameron McKennitt



Wendy Rovelli



Mark Howell

Bcc

Dear FinCom,

It was my intention to address this committee at your 02/27/25 meeting but I was (and am) traveling outside the country and unable to attend. I just reviewed the meeting on YouTube and want to address certain points that were discussed (refer to attached letter). Also note the change of email address..

Please note that previous provided **benchmarks** have been **expanded** to encompass additional

towns including Sudbury, Acton and Lincoln (in addition to Danvers). They also **include** comparisons based on per capita spending. In addition to the Town Manager's Office (TMO) and HR, I've included our Natural Resources Division (NRD).

Recap of Letter - **TMO spending** is almost equal to the combined spending of other towns and our per capita spending is 3x greater than Danvers. **HR spending** (not including the HR Specialist) far exceeds other towns and its per capita spending is 2x to 3x greater. **NRD spending** is double that of Acton/Lincoln and \$170K more than Sudbury (Danvers was not included). NRD's cost to manage a single acre of conservation land is much higher than other towns, over 3x more expensive than Acton.

A **common denominator** is Concord's practice of top-loading departments with senior administrators who then drive up spending. It begs the question, **how can** the Town Manager claim she has "*limited options*" to meet guidelines when these disparities exist? And **why** suggest cuts to a valued town service like the library, before considering cuts to these budgets? It creates a **perception** that town administrators value **their large budgets** over important town services. As a 31 year Concord taxpayer, I find this concerning.

Besides top loading senior administrators, staffing across the board is high and there are **two positions** outlined in the letter that require further scrutiny.

1. **HR Generalist - \$79K**: HR has two generalists but one is leaving. TMO has rewritten the position and already posted it internally with similar grade, salary and responsibilities but falling under Human Services instead of Human Resources. However, the position will continue to report to the Assistant Town Manager, who's also the Interim HR Director. This is confusing. Is TMO trying to shield this position, keeping the job while (on paper) reducing HR's FTE count? **Why** not let the position lapse and realize the savings?
2. **TMO Management Specialist - \$77K**: As represented by the Town Manager, this position was a temporary, plus-1.00 FTE within TMO to support the 250th Executive and Town Meeting Study Committees. It should be retired when these committees dissolve, reducing TMO by 1.00 FTE and saving taxpayers \$77K. **Why** hasn't this been done? As with the HR Specialist, **does** TMO plan to keep this plus 1.00 FTE beyond its agreed upon term?

Please note that **savings** from these positions could save **\$157K** without laying off staff. Combined with the **\$176K**, associated with the reduction of the HR Specialist, and savings could reach **~\$333K**. **So why** again did the Town Manager suggest we close the library on Sundays for a paltry \$44K?

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding my attached letter and benchmarks. Details of what was discussed above are in the letter.

Sincerely,
Miguel Echavarri
Homeowner 255 Commonwealth Ave
978-333-0385

From: [Miguel Echavarri](#)
To: [finance mail](#)
Subject: FW: Suggested Corrections to FTE Table Before Meeting
Date: Sunday, March 23, 2025 10:02:49 AM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[A-1 FY26 Budget Slide 03-24-25 Revised with Corrections.png](#)

Dear FinCom,

Below is an email that I just sent to the Select Board regarding the upcoming budget presentation. It points out **inaccuracies** in their FTE counts – I respectfully suggested that they correct these inaccuracies prior to the meeting.

But I would like to note the **shifting FTE narrative** and provide my opinion on it. The Parks & Playgrounds (PP) positions are now being reassigned instead of reduced. Until recently, these -2.00 FTE **reductions played** a key role in meeting the Town's previously stated goal of -2.50 FTE reductions. What changed?

In **my humble opinion** (and until TMO provides answers to outstanding questions related to PP) these **may not** have been serious cuts but rather reductions on paper to placate the public's growing concern over staffing levels. Please remember, I couldn't find any positions allocated to PP within the payroll salary table – this makes me wonder whether they were already reassigned. And don't forget that their reduction only saved ~\$54K which doesn't add up to 2.00 FTEs. It doesn't make sense and deserves an explanation.

Also, I want to draw your attention to how TMO used the **reassignment** of their Management Analyst position as a -1.00 FTE reduction. But since this is a reassignment, and not a reduction, it means the position **should be** reflected elsewhere in the budget as a +1.00 FTE, resulting in a net zero change. To my knowledge that didn't happen and they used this reassignment to reduce total staff by -1.00 FTE. That should be corrected or addressed.

By-the-way, **how could** they forget to include the -1.00 FTE (related to the Sustainability Director) to their FTE count? That's just odd.

Let me end with – **does any of this** (to include previously provided information) **suggest** that our taxpayer funds are being well managed and safeguarded? Do these action instill confidence in our local government and its ability to steer the ship through difficult times? BTW, please note that I only had time to review a single slide, what else would a deeper dive reveal?

Pura Vida,
Miguel Echavarri
255 Commonwealth Ave
978-333-0385

From: Miguel Echavarri <miguele@intelimapinc.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 23, 2025 8:40 AM
To: 'Mary Hartman' <mhartman@concordma.gov>; 'Terri Ackerman' <tackerman@concordma.gov>; 'Cameron McKennitt' <cmckennitt@concordma.gov>; 'Wendy Rovelli' <wrovelli@concordma.gov>; 'Kerry Lafleur' <klafleur@concordma.gov>; 'Mark Howell' <markhowell@concordma.gov>
Cc: 'Anthony Ansaldi' <aansaldi@concordma.gov>
Subject: Suggested Corrections to FTE Table Before Meeting

Dear Kerry and members of the Select Board (SB),

I reviewed the slides for Monday's SB budget presentation and I believe several **corrections** should be made prior to the meeting. I'm only focusing on the FY26 Net Reductions slide related to FTEs.

For example, the **Director of Sustainability** is scheduled to be reduced but the FTE table below doesn't reflect a -1.00 FTE change in the Town Managers Office (TMO), nor does it show the \$110,292 salary savings realized by reducing this position. These should be added. Refer to [1] below.

Further, the FY26 budget reassigns a **TMO Deputy/Management Analysis** for a -1.00 FTE. But this is a reassignment and not a reduction, that reassignment should show as a corresponding +1.00 FTE within another department. Which department was this position assigned to, and do they show a +1.00 FTE? If not, that should be corrected. Refer to [2] below.

Human Services (HS) shows the reassignment of an Admin Position from Senior Services to a Dept-Wide, Admin Support role under HS. The slides accurately show a net zero FTE change. However, HS is seeking to hire an HS Generalist and that would add +1.00 FTEs to their FTE count. That should be corrected or explained. Refer to [3] below.

At this point, I would like to express my surprise that the 2.00 FTEs in **Parks & Playgrounds** are being reassigned rather than reduced. I'm surprised because they were a vital component of the -2.50 FTE reductions presented at the February 10th SB presentation. Can the TMO tell the public why this decision was reversed and also provide us with their Job Title Descriptions? Refer to [4] below.

These corrections change the FY26 net reductions from -4.74 FTEs to -3.74. Please note A-1 attached, it shows the **below table updated** with the above corrections. The slide also refers to the impact of service reductions. I would like to point out that, even with the reductions of the HR Generalist and the reassignment of the Management Analyst, Concord's TMO & HR budgets are still significantly higher than Danvers, Sudbury and Acton. If town leadership wishes to avoid these impacts, they need to look even further into their own budgets. Also, don't forget Natural Resources and the disparity between their budget and those of similar towns.

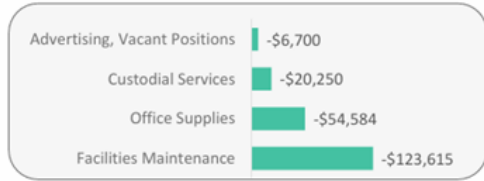
Personally, I don't understand why in recent years, Concord appears to have become **addicted** to hiring senior administrators and I ask, are we better off for it? TMO has an Assistant Town Manager, a Deputy Town Manger and a Town Manager at a FY25 base salary cost of ~\$559K. Until recently, HR had both the HR Project Manager and HR Director (also the Assistant TM) at ~\$336K. And for some reason, Natural Resources has both a Director and Assistant Director at a cost of \$213K, their salaries alone are more than Acton and Lincoln and on par with Sudbury's total salary budget. And this growth occurred without adequate public transparency because TMO failed to produce a FY25 budget book and purposefully stopped producing detailed FTE tables. Thankfully, it appears they've restarted generating that information.

FY26: Net Reductions

PERSONNEL: -\$400,000

EXPENSES: -\$200,000

Cost Center	Position Change	FTE
General Government		
Town Manager's Office	Reassignment of Duties (Deputy/Mgmt. Analyst)	-1.00 [2]
Human Resources	Eliminate Position	-1.00
Human Resources	Reallocation of Director's Activity	-0.25
Information Technology	Business Analyst Role Review	-1.00
Information Technology	GIS Temp Hours Reduction	-0.70
Total General Government:		-3.95
Human Services		
Senior Services	Transfer Admin Position to Dept-Wide	[3] -1.00
Human Services	Dept-Wide Admin Support	[3] 1.00
Human Services	Reallocation of Director's Activity	0.25
Total Human Services:		0.25
Public Safety		
Fire	Eliminate Fractional PT Hours	-0.04
Total Public Safety:		-0.04
Public Works		
Public Works Administration	Reassign Duties to Enterprise	-1.00
Park & Tree	Reassign from Parks & Playgrounds	1.00
Facilities	Reassign from Parks & Playgrounds	1.00
Parks & Playgrounds	Reassign Staff [4]	-2.00
Total Public Works:		-1.00
Total General Fund Adjustment:		-4.74



Personnel Changes

- No Director of Sustainability, [1]
- Fire shift coverage may be reduced.

Service Reductions

- Facilities Maintenance & Custodial reductions may be too aggressive.
- IT staffing adjustments could impact efficiency.

Future Planning Considerations

- Reductions made in anticipation of software/policy updates.
- APP #27 Vehicle Policy: Still under review

Can you please post this to SB correspondence?

Respectfully,

Miguel Echavarri

Homeowner – 255 Commonwealth Ave

Excess and Deficiency Calculation

Fiscal Year 2025

Begin:	
Unreserved Undesignated Fund Balance	1,930,797.00
Subtract:	
Other Receivables, Overdrawn Accounts, Deficits	
Gen Fund AR	2,400.00
Gen Fund Due From Town of Concord	12,709.00
Gen Fund NSF Checks	13,424.00
SR SPED Improvement	600.00
SR Title I	121.00
SR METCO Special Ed	9,004.00
AF Off Duty Detail/Field Trips	70,494.00
AF Academic Bowl	41.00
AF Concord-Carlisle Tennis Club (CCTC)	83.00
AF Cheerleaders	5.00
AF China Trip Expenses	4,869.00
AF Chorus Scholarship	464.00
AF National Latin Exam	2.00
AF MFA Field Trip	209.00
AF Environmental Field Studies Group	169.00
AF PSAT	9,754.00
AF AP	4,727.00
AF Sci Fi Japan Trip	2,403.00
AF Spectrum	168.00
AF London Theater Tour	50.00
AF Ultimate	1,770.00
AF Volleyball	4.00
AF Basketball	5.00
AF Earth Science	141.00
Cash Variance	168,955.00
Total	302,571.00
Add:	
Circuit Breaker, Other Closed Accounts, Adjustments:	
	0.00

Excess and Deficiency Calculation

Fiscal Year 2025

Total	<i>0.00</i>
Total Certified Unencumbered Excess & Deficiency	<i>1,628,226.00</i>
Unencumbered Excess & Deficiency in excess of 5 % calculation	
Operating and Capital Budget	<i>38,974,907.00</i>
5% of Budget	<i>1,948,745.35</i>
Total in Excess	<i>0.00</i>
Reviewed By:	Amy Handfield
Certified On:	

Signatures

No signatures to display.

Comments

No comments to display.

Documents

No documents have been uploaded.



Concord Finance Committee
AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

March 27, 2025

5

Minutes

Requested by: Don Kupka, Clerk

Action Sought: Seek Approval

Proposed Motion(s)

MOVE to approve the Finance Committee minutes for the on February 27, 2025.

Additional Information

Attached are the minutes from the February 27, 2025, meeting for review and potential approval.

Board Action

<i>Motion</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>In favor</i>	<i>Opposed</i>	<i>Disposition</i>

**Town of Concord
Minutes of the February 27, 2025
Meeting of Finance Committee
Hybrid Meeting**

Members Present: Suresh Bhatia (online), Peggy Briggs (online), Eric Dahlberg (online), John Garofalo, Pat Geyer, Don Kupka, Lyndsey Lis, Dee Ortner, Karlen Reed, Sri Tupil (online), Lois Wasoff.

Members Absent: Kathy Cuocolo, Greg Guarriello, Paul Rodriguez, Quazi Sadruzzaman.

Others Attending: Anthony Ansaldi (CFO); Mary Hartman (Select Board), Kerry Lafleur (Town Manager); Heidi Driscoll (Superintendent), Nikkie Andrade (Business Manager), and Steve Ledoux (Concord representative) of Minuteman Tech; Sven Weber (Public Works Commission) and Alan Cathcart (Director, Public Works); and members of the public.

1: Call to Order of the Finance Committee Meeting at 6:30 p.m. by Vice Chair Wasoff, who presided as Chair Dahlberg was online.

2: Public Comment: None.

3: Liaison Report: Ms. Geyer added that the School Committee adjusted its regional OPEB and technology fund contributions to smooth out a \$90K overage due to a shift in enrollments to meet the FinCom guidelines.

4: Correspondence: Mr. Garofalo asked about looking at Town performance metrics, Town base expenditure level, and other towns' approaches. Vice Chair Wasoff reminded us that FinCom does not tell the Town where to make budget changes. Clerk Kupka noted that he will present information on the Town's expenditure per capita later relative to other towns later in tonight's meeting.
Action Item: Chair Dahlberg and Ms. Reed will look into questions raised by residents' letters.

5: Minutes: Ms. Ortner moved and Vice Chair Wasoff seconded approval of the minutes as presented for the February 13, 2025, Finance Committee meeting Vote: 9 aye, 0 nay, 2 abstained.

6: FY26 Town Budget Update:

- **FY26 Minuteman Regional Technical High School:** Superintendent Driscoll, Ms. Andrade and Mr. Ledoux led a review of Minuteman's budget, student highlights, cooperative programs, priorities, drivers, and capital requests. Of the 669 students enrolled, 37 are from Concord, and 15 applicants have applied from Concord to enter next year's class. Minuteman's overall budget for FY26 is \$32,461,056, and Concord's assessment is \$1,772,373, which is 2.28% higher than last year. Based on this, the per-pupil expenditure is \$47,901. Committee members questioned the non-assessment revenue level, future assessments, most popular programs, and transportation costs. Mr. Ledoux announced that he would be stepping down in June as Concord's representative and said Concord should look for his replacement.
- **FY26 Town:** Mr. Ansaldi presented his update of the Town's FY26 budget. He noted that not much has changed, the final will be presented to the Select Board on March 24, and the Town

remains within guideline. He announced that there no longer appears to be the need for a budget override in the near future. He projected an unused levy capacity at 3.35%, and he recommended the FinCom set aside \$1M from free cash, \$1M from the Middle School Stabilization Account, and \$325K from the parking meter account to create and fund a new capital stabilization account. Committee members asked why only \$1M of the \$5M middle school stabilization fund was going to be used this year and whether past projections of the borrowing impact curve are still valid. Members also inquired about the non-guidelines spending increase, the level of certified free cash (about \$9.5M last year, not yet finalized), and the calibration of free cash to be retained -- i.e., based on the year's projected expenses (5% of \$140M = \$7M) or on the levy limit (5% of \$120M = \$6M) – with the balance being available for appropriation at Town Meeting or placed in one or more stabilization funds. Members requested the detail information supporting the Town's estimate of expected total local receipts for FY26 and an explanation for the delay in presenting the budget.

- FY26 CCRSD: Chair Dahlberg noted the absence of School Committee members and echoed Ms. Geyer's report about the School Committee's efforts to cover a \$90K shortfall at the high school and still stay within FinCom guidelines. The per pupil expenditure for FY23 for Concord-Carlisle High School is \$26,663 and for Concord Public Schools is \$26,176.

7: June 2025 Annual Town Meeting Warrant:

- Warrant Articles -- The Finance Committee has been assigned 39 Warrant Articles for hearing (and possible recommendations). Committee members noted additional non-FinCom warrant articles on which FinCom may want to offer a recommendation to Town Meeting, as those additional articles may impact growth and the commercial tax base. We will get the full text of the articles after March 4.
- Stabilization Accounts – CFO Ansaldi recommended creating capital and debt stabilization accounts and adding to the existing general stabilization accounts through Town Meeting Warrant Articles. He recommends ultimately having three months of expenses (which would be \$35M) in stabilization accounts to weather unexpected storms and to offset the cost of new public works and public safety buildings. Members agreed that we should develop a policy on the holding levels of free cash and stabilization accounts. Clerk Kupka gave information on neighboring towns' 2023 levels of free cash, stabilization funds, and excess levy capacity and urged the FinCom to establish target numbers for Concord. He noted the median figure was 15% of the levy limit (Concord's levy limit is \$120M) and Concord is well below that level.

CFO Ansaldi noted that the Select Board would like to appropriate \$250K of free cash at Town Meeting to support their MCI-Concord Warrant Article. Members discussed how to balance free cash requests with enhancing our stabilization accounts. CFO Ansaldi observed that releasing funds from a stabilization account requires a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting, while releasing funds from free cash requires a simple majority vote of Town Meeting. Town Manager Lafleur said we typically look at the prior year's budget in setting a free cash policy, but we have taken out the exempt debt service. AAA rated communities, she noted, are following a 10% standard of stabilization funds and free cash. She also encouraged the FinCom to consider, when making comparisons, all of a town's reserves and how they fund long-term liabilities. Vice Chair Wasoff said the committee will continue this discussion at the next meeting.

- Public Works Articles on Roads and Stormwater Utility – Mr. Weber and Mr. Cathcart presented the Public Works Commission’s \$27.5M Tier III Warrant Article for road work, sidewalks, and pedestrian safety. They encouraged the FinCom to look at the Article as a bundle of safety improvements that will be improve pavement management that will be cheaper now than later. They discussed the \$1M stormwater enterprise fund budget, and said 49% of the fee would be assessed on non-residential properties and 51% on residential properties. The fees will be set at a public hearing in May, and the average residential property assessment is expected to start at \$41.30/year based on impervious area. There will be a credit policy of up to 25% of the stormwater fee for implementing best management practices.

Committee members inquired about the impact that the new stormwater enterprise fund would have on the road repair budget, and why the Town let the roads fall into disrepair in the first place. Members also asked about utility coordination, the senior/low income discount, staffing, and budget level.

8: Finance Committee Report for Fiscal Year 2026: Clerk Kupka presented information on the planning process for the FinCom report, which is due to the Town Moderator by May 5, 2025. He agreed that FinCom should establish targets for free cash and stabilization funds, noting that Concord has among the lowest free cash and stabilization fund balances among a group of peer communities, based on data from the Department of Revenue’s Division of Local Services. He proposed to add an Executive Summary to the FinCom Report this year and presented examples from other towns. Members discussed whether our executive summary should resemble these two examples, whether our summary could be a separate handout at Town Meeting, and whether the full Finance Report will be contained in the bundled Town Meeting Briefing Book. Members agreed that a two-page summary is needed. Ms. Lis asked that the summary include metrics of how we determine the health of the Town’s finances. This will be discussed further. Clerk Kupka walked through the Report outline and obtained volunteers who will write various parts of the Finance Report.

9: Recap of Action Items / Adjournment of Finance Committee meeting: Chair Dahlberg and Ms. Reed will review the metrics questions raised in citizens’ letters. Ms. Reed will post the minutes. Mr. Ansaldi will prepare a chart showing the impact of the uses of the Middle School Debt Stabilization Fund on taxes, and he will work with Clerk Kupka to prepare a presentation on setting targets for the free cash and stabilization funds. FinCom members will prepare outlines of their assigned sections from the Finance Report, and they will express their preference for moving the March 20 meeting to either March 13 or March 27. The other FinCom meetings are April 10 (Town and Schools hearing), April 15 (CPC and Minuteman hearing), April 24 (regular meeting), May 1 (Enterprise funds hearing) and May 5, 2025 (regular meeting). Chair Wasoff adjourned this meeting at 9:10 p.m.

YouTube: Ctrl+Click to follow link: [February 27, 2025 Finance Committee meeting video](#)

Meeting Documents Link: [February 27, 2025 Finance Committee meeting packet](#)



Concord Finance Committee
AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

March 27, 2025

6

2025 Annual Town Meeting

Review and Discuss Town Meeting Warrant Articles

Review and Discuss Fin Com ATM Public Hearing Schedule

Requested by: FC Chair

Action Sought: Seek Approval

Proposed Motion(s)

Discussion Dependent

Additional Information

The Finance Committee will discuss Warrant Articles for the June 2025 Annual Town Meeting. The review of articles will include those articles that the Finance Committee regularly sponsors, and potential new articles for the creation of Debt and Capital Stabilization Funds, fund the General Stabilization, and the first year of withdrawing from the Middle School Stabilization Fund. In addition, they will also be discussing the ATM Fin Com Public Hearings scheduled for April 10, 15 and May 1, 2025.

Board Action

<i>Motion</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>In favor</i>	<i>Opposed</i>	<i>Disposition</i>

2025 Warrant Articles

	Article Name	Article Sponsor	Public Hearing
1	Choose Town Officers	Select Board	
2	Hear Reports	Select Board	
3	Meeting Procedure	Finance Committee	Finance Committee
4	Ratify Personnel Board Actions	Personnel Board	Select Board
5	Ratify Personnel Board Classification & Compensation Plan	Personnel Board	Select Board
6	FY25 Budget Line-Item Adjustments	Chief Financial Officer	Finance Committee
7	FY26 Budget	Town Manager	Finance Committee
8	Debt Exclusion for Road Maintenance	Select Board	Finance Committee
9	FY26 Capital Improvement and Debt Plan	Town Manager	Finance Committee
10	Concord Public Schools Operating Budget	Concord School Committee	Finance Committee
11	Concord Public Schools Capital Budget	Concord School Committee	Finance Committee
12	Concord-Carlisle Regional School District Budget	Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee	Finance Committee
13	Amenities Building	Town Manager or Chief Financial Officer	Finance Committee
14	Non-Resident Tuition Revolving Fund	Concord School Committee	Finance Committee
15	Facilities Rental Revolving Fund	Concord School Committee	Finance Committee
16	Authority to Contract for up to Five Years for Selected Items	Concord School Committee	Finance Committee
17	Minuteman Regional Technical School District Budget	Minuteman Regional School Committee Representative	Finance Committee
18	Creation of Capital and Debt Stabilization Funds	Finance Committee	Finance Committee
19	Appropriation to General Stabilization Fund	Finance Committee	Finance Committee
20	OPEB Trust Fund Appropriation	Chief Financial Officer	Finance Committee
21	OPEB Trust Fund Expense	Chief Financial Officer	Finance Committee
22	Retirement Board Stipends	Select Board	Finance Committee
23	Acceptance of the HERO Act	Board of Assessors	Finance Committee
24	Transfer from Middle School Stabilization Fund	Finance Committee	Finance Committee
25	Transfer of Peabody School and Appropriate Funds	Select Board	Finance Committee
26	General Bylaw Amendment: Leasing of Land by Select Board and Town Manager	Select Board	Select Board
27	Remote Participation at Annual and Special Town Meetings	Select Board	Select Board
28	Citizen Petition: Ranked Choice Voting	Stephan Bader	Select Board
29	Feasibility of Acquiring 2229 Main Street (NMI Starmet Site)	Select Board	Finance Committee
30	Authorize Grant of Easement to Verizon - 835-923 Old Marlboro Road (Concord Middle School)	Select Board	Select Board
31	Select Board to Accept Easements	Select Board	Select Board
32	Betterments for Temporary Improvements to a Private Way - Darton and Dover Streets	Select Board	Finance Committee
33	MCI Concord - Planning	Select Board	Finance Committee
34	Stormwater Enterprise Fund Expenditures	Public Works Commission	Finance Committee
35	Citizen Petition: Protect Orchard House from Stormwater Runoff	John Althouse	Select Board
36	Citizen Petition: Ban Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs)	Meaghan Sinclair and Gwen Shipley	Select Board
37	Zoning Bylaw Amendment: Joint Parking Bylaw	Planning Board	Planning Board
38	Zoning Bylaw Amendment: General Housekeeping - Multiple Sections	Planning Board	Planning Board
39	Zoning Bylaw Amendment: ADU Bylaw	Planning Board	Planning Board
40	Zoning Bylaw Amendment: Floodplain Conservancy District Bylaw	Planning Board	Planning Board
41	Citizen Petition: Zoning Bylaw Amendment: Personal Wireless Communications Facility	Henry Dane	Planning Board
42	General Bylaw Amendment: Sign Bylaw	Planning Board	Planning Board
43	Zoning Bylaw Amendment: Accessory Retail in Industrial	Economic Vitality Committee	Planning Board
44	Zoning Bylaw Amendment: Commercial Parking	Economic Vitality Committee	Planning Board

45	Zoning Bylaw Amendment: Planned Residential Development (PRD) Bylaw	Concord Housing Foundation	Planning Board
46	Citizen Petition: Zoning Bylaw Amendment: Continuing Care Retirement Community Overlay District	New England Deaconess Assoc.	Planning Board
47	Community Preservation Appropriation Recommendations	Community Preservation Committee	Finance Committee
48	Authorize Expenditure of Revolving Funds under Mass. Gen. Laws 44 § 53 E1/2	Town Manager	Finance Committee
49	Light Fund Budget and PILOT Payment	Town Manager	Finance Committee
50	Solid Waste Fund Budget	Town Manager	Finance Committee
51	Sewer Fund Budget	Town Manager	Finance Committee
52	Sewer Improvement Fund Budget	Town Manager	Finance Committee
53	Water System Expenditures	Town Manager	Finance Committee
54	PEG Fund Budget	Town Manager	Finance Committee
55	Beede Swim and Fitness Center Enterprise Fund Budget	Town Manager	Finance Committee
56	Appropriate and Transfer Balance of Parking Meter Fund	Town Manager	Finance Committee
57	Unpaid Bills	Chief Financial Officer	Finance Committee
58	Debt Recission	Chief Financial Officer	Finance Committee

Concord Finance Committee | 2025 Annual Town Meeting**FinCom Public Hearings Schedule and Proposed Article Rationale Owners (for FinCom report)***Last updated: Eric Dahlberg 3/25/25***FinCom Public Hearing 1 | Thursday, April 10 | 7:00 PM**

Article	Proposed owner
Article 17. Minuteman Regional Technical School District Budget	Paul
Article 22. Retirement Board Stipends	Karlen
Article 23. Acceptance of the HERO Act	Paul
Article 25. Transfer of Peabody School and Appropriate Funds	Don
Article 29. Feasibility of Acquiring 2229 Main Street (NMI Starmet Site)	Kathy
Article 32. Betterments for Temporary Improvements to a Private Way - Darton and Dover Streets	Sri
Article 33. MCI Concord - Planning	Don
Article 47. Community Preservation Appropriation Recommendations	Kathy

FinCom Public Hearing 2 | Tuesday, April 15 | 7:00 PM

Article	Proposed owner
Article 3. Meeting Procedure	Sri
Article 6. FY25 Budget Line-Item Adjustments	Eric
Article 7. FY26 Budget	Eric
Article 8. Debt Exclusion for Road Maintenance	Karlen
Article 9. FY26 Capital Improvement and Debt Plan	Eric
Article 10. Concord Public Schools Operating Budget	Dee & Pat
Article 11. Concord Public Schools Capital Budget	Dee & Pat
Article 12. Concord-Carlisle Regional School District Budget	Dee & Pat
Article 13. Amenities Building	Dee & Pat
Article 14. Non-Resident Tuition Revolving Fund	Dee & Pat
Article 15. Facilities Rental Revolving Fund	John
Article 16. Authority to Contract for up to Five Years for Selected Items	Paul
Article 18. Creation of Capital and Debt Stabilization Funds	Lyndsey
Article 19. Appropriation to General Stabilization Fund	Lyndsey
Article 20. OPEB Trust Fund Appropriation	Suresh
Article 21. OPEB Trust Fund Expense	Suresh
Article 24. Transfer from Middle School Stabilization Fund	Lyndsey

FinCom Public Hearing 3 | Thursday, May 1 | 7:00 PM

Article	Proposed owner
Article 34. Stormwater Enterprise Fund Expenditures	Karlen
Article 48. Authorize Expenditure of Revolving Funds under Mass. Gen. Laws 44 § 53 E1/2	Greg
Article 49. Light Fund Budget and PILOT Payment	Greg
Article 50. Solid Waste Fund Budget	Lois
Article 51. Sewer Fund Budget	Quazi
Article 52. Sewer Improvement Fund Budget	Quazi
Article 53. Water System Expenditures	John
Article 54. PEG Fund Budget	Don
Article 55. Beede Swim and Fitness Center Enterprise Fund Budget	Peggy
Article 56. Appropriate and Transfer Balance of Parking Meter Fund	Lois
Article 57. Unpaid Bills	Sri
Article 58. Debt Recission	Peggy



Concord Finance Committee
AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

March 27, 2025

7

Reserve Policy and Stabilization Funds

Discuss the Town's reserve Policy

Requested by: FC Chair

Action Sought: Seek Approval

Proposed Motion(s)

Discussion Dependent

Additional Information

The Chief Financial Officer created three warrant articles for 2025 Annual Town Meeting; they are for:

- Article 18 – Creation of Capital and debt Stabilization Funds
- Article 19 – Appropriation to general Stabilization Fund
- Article 24 – Transfer from Middle School Stabilization Fund

The Finance Committee will discuss these three articles and the need for a reserve policy.

Board Action

<i>Motion</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>In favor</i>	<i>Opposed</i>	<i>Disposition</i>

A photograph of a wooden bridge over a stream. The bridge has a stone abutment on the right side with a statue on top. The bridge is made of light-colored wood and has a curved railing. The background shows trees with green and yellow leaves, suggesting autumn. A group of people is visible on the bridge in the distance.

Finance Committee: Reserves Policy Discussion

For Concord Select Board Meeting

Monday, March 24, 2025

Background and Rationale

Background

- Several articles on the 2025 ATM warrant related to reserves:
 - 18. Creation of Capital and Debt Stabilization Funds | 19. Appropriation to General Stabilization Fund | 24. Transfer from Middle School Stabilization Fund
- Finance Committee had an initial discussion on these articles at our February 27th meeting – prompted a bigger picture conversation about setting targets for reserves.
- Select Board invited Finance Committee to have a joint discussion at its March 27th meeting to consider reserves policy.

Rationale

- Review and refresh of reserves policy is appropriate at this time because:
 - Current policy is dated (2017), vague, and insufficient to address present circumstances.
 - Mounting economic uncertainty – “rainy days” may be coming.
 - Moody’s, in affirming Concord’s AAA bond rating, points to reserves as a soft spot in its 2024 rating action:

The Aaa issuer rating reflects a very strong economy bolstered by significant property wealth, a stable financial position with below-average reserves for the rating category mitigated by conservative fiscal management, and manageable leverage that is expected to rise because of an increase in debt issuance while fixed costs remain very manageable.

[Factor that could lead to a rating downgrade] *Decline in available reserves and liquidity*

- The Collins Center for Public Management, in its 2024 report on town policies, had two findings and recommendations specific to reserves and/or reserves policy:

Finding	Recommendation
Finding 2.5 The Town does not prioritize maintaining adequate cash reserves, which puts the Town’s bond rating at risk of a downgrade.	Recommendation 2.5 The Town should develop a strategy to build permanent reserves to maintain its strong bond rating.
Finding 2.6 The Town’s financial policies are vague, incomplete, and contribute to a relatively chaotic budget cycle.	Recommendation 2.6 The Town should undergo a thorough review of its policies with particular attention paid to the issues outlined in section 2 of this report.

Sources: Moody’s 2024 Rating Outlook [here](#) / Edward J. Collins Center for Public Management: Review of Policies, Procedures, and Structure for the Town of Concord, August 2024

Definitions: Reserves can take the form of **Free Cash** or **Stabilization Funds**

Definitions of Free Cash and Stabilization Funds

- **Free Cash**
 - Free cash is a revenue source that results from the calculation, as of July 1, of a **community's remaining, unrestricted, available funds from its operations of the previous fiscal year** based on the balance sheet as of June 30. Free Cash is certified annually by the state.
 - **Source of funds:** Actual receipts exceeding budgeted revenues, Unspent appropriations in departmental budgets, Unexpended free cash from the previous year.
 - **Uses:** Funding supplemental appropriations, Reducing property taxes, Funding capital projects, Placing funds into a stabilization fund. Not intended for recurring operating expense.
- **Stabilization Funds – Special purpose and General**
 - In Massachusetts, a stabilization fund is a special reserve account, established under M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 5B, where **municipalities can set aside money for future spending purposes, including emergencies or capital projects**, and can be appropriated for any lawful municipal purpose.
 - There are **special purpose** and **general** stabilization funds. Special purpose funds are funds set aside for a specific project, e.g., Middle School, while general funds are "rainy day" funds, money set aside for unforeseen circumstances or capital projects. Both require a two-thirds vote of town meeting and, in the case of **special purpose** funds, this vote must clearly define the purpose of the fund being established.
 - Stabilization fund helps a community to: (1) **Think long term**; (2) **Save money that would be expended on interest if funds are borrowed**; (3) **Manage debt**; (4) Provide residents **assurance that money appropriated for a particular purpose will be used for that purpose** and not be diverted.

Key Similarities and Differences: Free Cash versus Stabilization Funds

Similarities:

- 1 Can be used to reduce property taxes
- 2 Can be used to fund capital projects
- 3 Are not to be used for recurring operating expenses or to balance the budget

Differences:

- 1 Unlike Free Cash, **Stabilization Fund balances carry forward from one fiscal year to the next**. Any interest earned on the investment of the balance stays with the Stabilization Fund.
- 2 **Free Cash is unrestricted for any use** that is lawful and non-recurring operating, whereas **Stabilization Funds that are special purpose are restricted to their defined use**.
- 3 **Stabilization fund appropriations require a 2/3 majority vote of town meeting**, while **free cash is appropriated by a majority vote annually**.

Current policy is dated (2017), vague, and insufficient to address present circumstances.

Town of Concord Financial Policies for Free Cash and Stabilization Funds, Section 7, Dated February 2, 2017

7. Reserves

A. General Fund

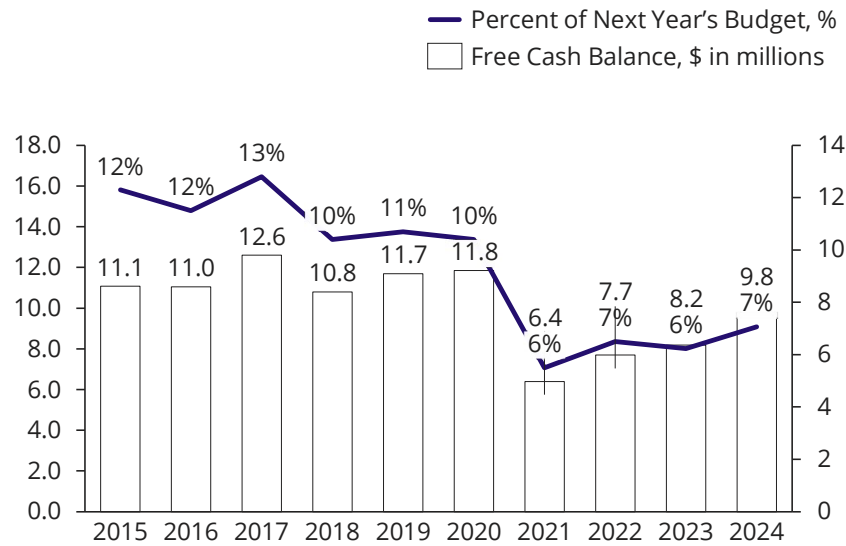
1. It is Town policy to maintain Free Cash, the General Fund's unassigned fund balance as certified by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), at a level between 5% and 10% of the ensuing General Fund Budget with the following stipulations:
 - a. Free Cash shall be used only to the extent that it can be replenished within a one-year period.
 - b. Free Cash can be used to provide relief to Town taxpayers by allocating a portion of Free Cash that is not more than 1% of the ensuing General Fund Budget to reduce the tax levy, if that allocation is expected to be replenished in the ensuing year.
 - c. If Free Cash falls below 5% of the ensuing General Fund Budget, Town Manager and the Finance Director shall develop a plan to bring Free Cash back up to the 5% level.
 - d. If Free Cash rises above 10% of the ensuing General Fund Budget, the Town Manager shall consider recommending using the excess Free Cash in the following ways:
 - i. Appropriate a portion of the excess Free Cash for a special non-recurring expenditure that would include a capital item that would otherwise be eligible to be funded through borrowing, and
 - ii. Appropriate a portion of the excess Free Cash to a General Fund Stabilization Fund.

C. Stabilization Funds

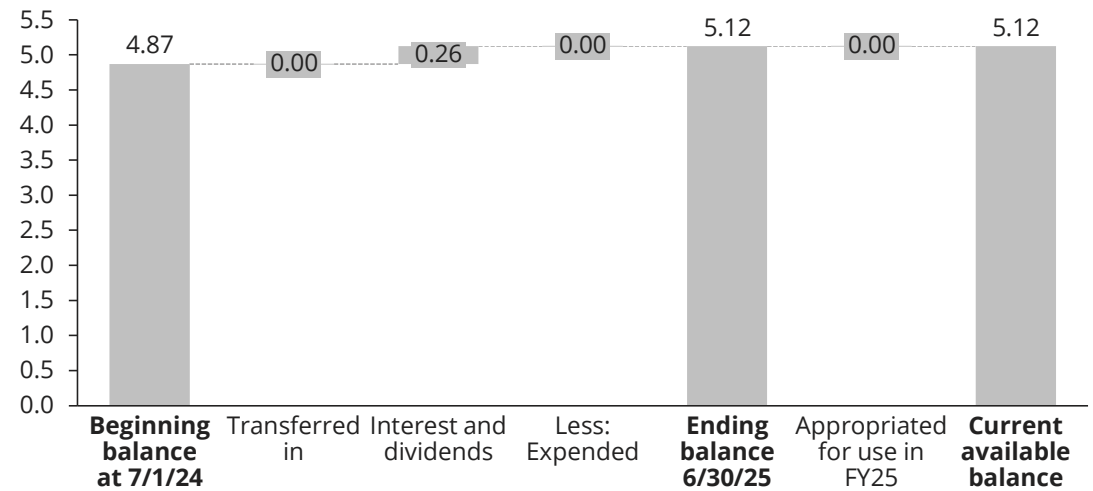
1. It is Town policy that stabilization funds can be created to set aside funds to be used for a specific purpose at some later date.

Concord Free cash and Stabilization funds

Free Cash balance and share of next year's budget, \$M and %

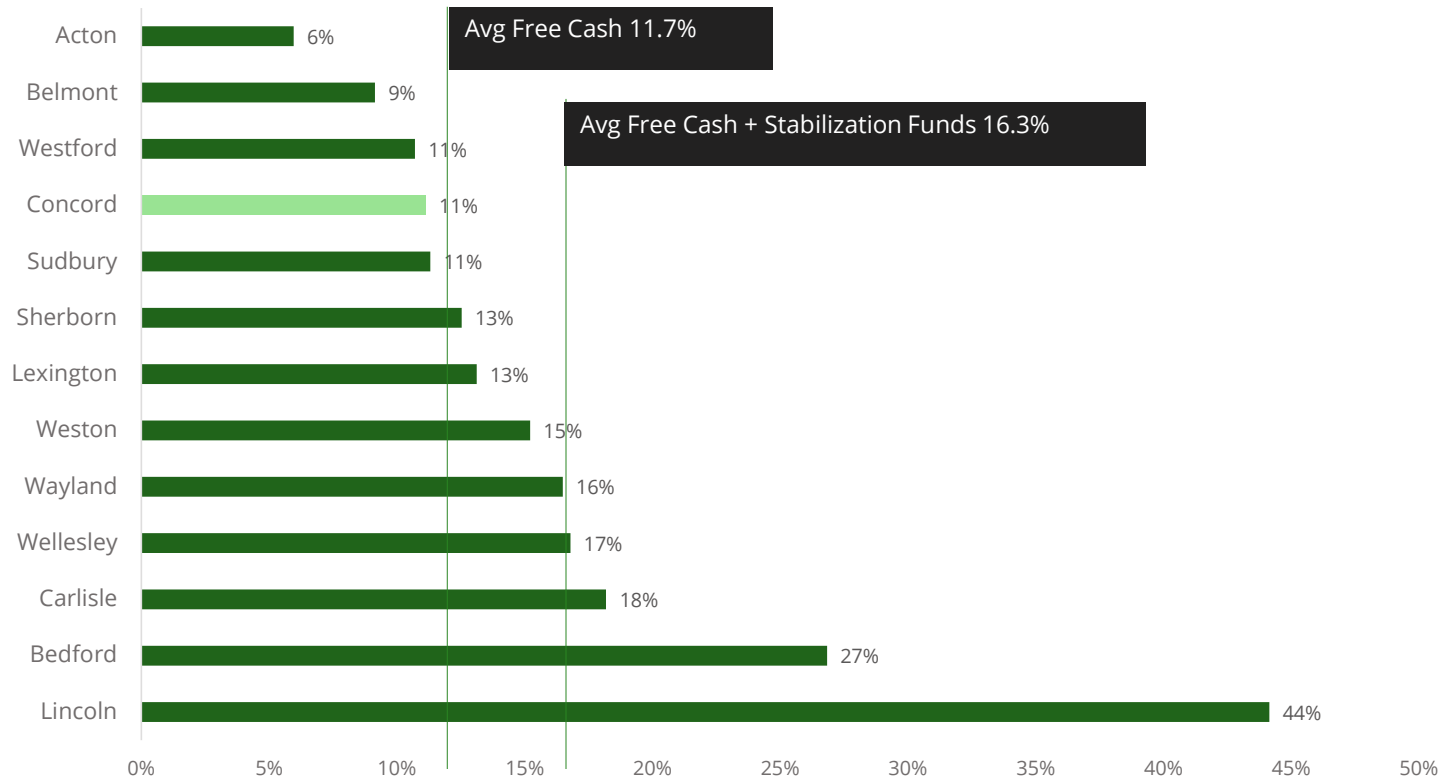


Middle School Stabilization Fund balance, FY24 to FY25 and Current available, \$M



How Concord compares to other area towns

Reserves as % of 2024 Budget



What should Concord do? We consulted the town's CFO and conducted research of neighboring towns to arrive at an initial recommendation for discussion

Finance Committee's Initial Recommendation for Discussion

- **Aim for a Reserve balance—i.e., Free Cash and Stabilization funds combined—of 15% to 25% of the town's annual budget.**
- This is like maintaining 3-months of salary in savings in case of emergency.
- Reduces the impact of the Town's capital projects on the tax rate.
- Supports our AAA bond rating
- **Reserve breakdown:**
 - **Free Cash:** Maintain free cash balance at 7.5% of proposed next year total budget and provides a cushion above the 5% minimum.
 - **Stabilization Funds:** Annually allocate funds above the 7.5% threshold to establish and build balances in Stabilization Funds based on Town's medium-term, i.e., 5-10 years, capital spending priorities.



Concord Finance Committee
AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

March 27, 2025

8

2025 Annual Town Meeting

Discuss the FY26 Finance Committee Report

Requested by: FC Chair

Action Sought: Discussion

Proposed Motion(s)

Discussion Dependent

Additional Information

The Finance Committee will be reviewing section drafts/outlines and assignment of warrant article recommendation write-ups.

Board Action

<i>Motion</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>In favor</i>	<i>Opposed</i>	<i>Disposition</i>

Concord Finance Committee | FY2026 Report

Section Outlines – Version 1.0

Compiled by: Eric Dahlberg 3/25/25

CHAIR'S LETTER (ERIC)

Introductory paragraph

- One sentence on who the Finance Committee is and what our role is.
- Purpose of this report
- Acknowledge stakeholders who assisted.

Main Body

- Summarize trends and challenges (one paragraph each – see section outline below)

Call to Action

- It's up to you as residents: how you vote at Town Meeting, how you vote at the ballot box, and how you communicate your priorities to our elected and appointed officials.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION (DON)

TBD

FINANCE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES (PAT)

The Concord Finance Committee was established by Town bylaw in 1921. By tradition, members serve no more than two terms. By this arrangement, there is always a mix of new and experienced members and a mix of new points of view and institutional memory. Given that the members are appointed by the Moderator, the Finance Committee is independent of the Town's administrative structure and elected boards.

The Finance Committee has the following responsibilities:

- Establishing fiscal guidelines for the three major budgeting entities in the Town (the Town Manager, the Concord Public School Committee, and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee) in preparing their budgets. The Town's enterprise fund budgets (i.e., the Town Light Plant and the Beede Center) are not part of the guidelines process.
- Conducting public hearings on the budgets and other financial matters expected to come before annual and special Town Meetings.
- Preparing this report for distribution to all residents before the Annual Town Meeting, including recommendations on finance-related warrant articles and a summary of the Town's financial status.
- Managing a Reserve Fund account to meet extraordinary and unforeseen expenditures (proposed at **\$TBD** for FY25).

It is important to emphasize that the role of the Finance Committee is limited to making recommendations. The Finance Committee regularly makes recommendations to Town Meeting, the Town Manager, the Select Board, the school committees, the Superintendent of Schools, other boards and committees, and the citizens of the Town. Responsibility for making decisions is reserved to the citizens through Town Meeting and Town elections and to staff members, boards, and committees to whom specific responsibilities have been delegated by Town by-law and/or State Law.

CONCORD'S BUDGETING APPROACH (PAT)

Concord has traditionally taken a conservative approach to budgeting. The Finance Committee seeks to maintain operating cost increases within certain criteria to meet a goal of financial sustainability over the long term. In addition, it is important for the Town to maintain flexibility in dealing with future infrastructure needs, unanticipated expenses, other contingencies, and variations in revenue. These criteria include:

- Setting modest expectations for revenue growth, with estimates of property tax growth from new construction and renovations based only on known development activity for which there is a high likelihood of completion in the upcoming fiscal year.

- Keeping tax increases from depleting excess levy limit capacity so that general overrides are not required.
- Maintaining the uncommitted General Fund Balance (“Free Cash”) at levels at between 5% and 10% of the subsequent year’s total Town Budget.
- Supporting capital needs by routinely dedicating 7-8% of total budget resources for capital improvements—
 - Roughly 1/3rd of capital financing is derived from current resources and 2/3rd is derived from debt financing through the issuance of long-term bonds,
 - Principal repayment is structured so that most (60%) bonded debt is retired within five years, and 90% is retired within 10 years; and
 - Taxpayers are not burdened beyond what typical expectations of income growth can accommodate.

The Town’s Free Cash position and debt policies are key factors in maintaining the Town’s credit rating of Aaa, which it has held since 1987.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES (ERIC)

- We have outstanding services (public safety, public works, schools), the best bond rating you can have (since 1987), dedicated elected/appointed leaders and employees, and a very engaged, educated citizenry.
- We are nudging closer our levy limit, which will necessitate very difficult choices (override, stark cuts, or chasing down other sources of revenue)
- Our property taxes continue to increase at an unsustainable rate.
- Our tax base continues to be overwhelmingly residential – need to diversify.
- Our debt burden continues to grow – and we have large capital projects looming.
- We seem challenged as a community to say “no.”

FORECASTED REVENUE & EXPENSES (ANTHONY)

TBD

PROPOSED BUDGET APPROPRIATION (ANTHONY)

TBD

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS (LOIS)

TBD

FIVE-YEAR TAX PROJECTION AND FINCOM GUIDELINES (LYNDSEY)

TBD

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ON FINANCE RELATED ARTICLES

Article	Recommendation and Rationale
Article 3. Meeting Procedure	Sri
Article 6. FY25 Budget Line-Item Adjustments	Eric
Article 7. FY26 Budget	Eric
Article 8. Debt Exclusion for Road Maintenance	Karlen
Article 9. FY26 Capital Improvement and Debt Plan	Eric
Article 10. Concord Public Schools Operating Budget	Dee & Pat
Article 11. Concord Public Schools Capital Budget	Dee & Pat
Article 12. Concord-Carlisle Regional School District Budget	Dee & Pat
Article 13. Amenities Building	Dee & Pat
Article 14. Non-Resident Tuition Revolving Fund	Dee & Pat
Article 15. Facilities Rental Revolving Fund	John

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Article 25. Transfer of Peabody School and Appropriate Funds	Don
Article 29. Feasibility of Acquiring 2229 Main Street (NMI Starmet Site)	Kathy
Article 32. Betterments for Temporary Improvements to a Private Way - Darton and Dover Streets	Sri
Article 33. MCI Concord - Planning	Don
Article 34. Stormwater Enterprise Fund Expenditures	Karlen
Article 47. Community Preservation Appropriation Recommendations	Kathy
Article 48. Authorize Expenditure of Revolving Funds under Mass. Gen. Laws 44 § 53 E1/2	Greg
Article 49. Light Fund Budget and PILOT Payment	Greg
Article 50. Solid Waste Fund Budget	Lois
Article 51. Sewer Fund Budget	Quazi
Article 52. Sewer Improvement Fund Budget	Quazi
Article 53. Water System Expenditures	John
Article 54. PEG Fund Budget	Don
Article 55. Beede Swim and Fitness Center Enterprise Fund Budget	Peggy
Article 56. Appropriate and Transfer Balance of Parking Meter Fund	Lois
Article 57. Unpaid Bills	Sri
Article 58. Debt Recission	Peggy



Concord Finance Committee
AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

March 27, 2025

9

Finance Committee FY25 Goals and Milestones/Schedule

Progress check on Finance Committee schedule and goals

Requested by: FC Chair

Action Sought: to hear update

Proposed Motion(s)

None anticipated.

Additional Information

The Finance Committee Chair Eric Dahlberg has requested this agenda item. The Finance Committee will be reviewing their schedule for FY25 leading up to the 2025 Annual Town Meeting. There will also be a progress check about goals, including Operations, Capital Budget, Revenue, Financial Policies, Liaisons, Communicating with Taxpayers, and any other item(s).

Board Action

<i>Motion</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>In favor</i>	<i>Opposed</i>	<i>Disposition</i>

FY25 Schedule and Milestones | Version 15 (1 of 2)

May 2024

Priorities:

- Kick-off FY25
- ATM debrief
- Review mission, roles and responsibilities
- Make liaison assignment picks
- Start goals and key issues discussion

Meeting date(s):
Thu 5/23

Jun 2024

Priorities:

- Finalize liaison assignments
- Finalize goals and key issues to monitor
- Recap FY25 guidelines process and preview FY26

Meeting date(s):
Thu 6/20

Jul 2024

Priorities:

- Draft FY26 informational request letters to Town, CPS, CCRSD, and Minuteman to be sent in Sept.
- Notify Town, CPS, CCRSD, and Minuteman that FY26 requests are coming in Aug.

Meeting date(s):
Mon 7/8 w/SB
Thu 7/18

Aug 2024

Priorities:

- Review and approve FY26 guideline inputs/metrics
- Finalize and send FY26 request letters (request responses in Oct).

Meeting date(s):
Mon 8/19 w/SB
Mon 8/19
Thu 8/22 (visits)

Sep 2024

Priorities:

- Q&A with Town, Schools, and Minuteman on FY26 request letters
- Progress check on milestones and goals.

Meeting date(s):
Wed 9/4 (2229)
Thu 9/26

Oct 2024

Priorities:

- Review CPS, CCRSD (with Carlisle FinCom), and Minuteman FY26 budget info
- Kick-off planning for annual report

Meeting date(s):
Thu 10/24

Nov 2024

Priorities:

- 11/7: Review Town FY26 budget info
- 11/7: Review estimated tax impact of preliminary FY26 guidelines
- 11/18: Continue capital planning
- **11/21: Approve FY26 preliminary guidelines**

Meeting date(s):
Thu 11/7
Mon 11/18 w/SB
Thu 11/21

Note: For planning purposes only. All dates are tentative at this time.

FY25 Schedule and Milestones | Version 15 (2 of 2)

Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Apr 2025	May 2025	Jun 2025
<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12/16: Continue capital planning 12/19: Review revised five-year revenue and cost projections 12/19: Approve final FY26 guidelines 	<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review property tax impact of final FY26 guidelines Public hearing on capital plan [FYI: Deadline for issuing guidelines: 1/15] 	<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2/13: Review FY26 budgets 2/27: Review FinCom-relevant warrant articles (warrant closes 2/19) Draft annual report: Align on sections, section owners, and key dates. 	<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue drafting annual report Prepare for public hearings on budget articles 	<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold public hearings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hearing 1 of 3 (4/10): MM, CPC Hearing 2 of 3 (4/15): Town, CPS, CCRSD Continue drafting annual report 4/24: Vote on FinCom-relevant warrant articles 	<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold public hearings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hearing 3 of 3 (5/1): Enterprise Funds 5/1: Vote on FinCom-relevant warrant articles and finalize annual report (due 5/5) 5/22: Final preparations for ATM 	<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in ATM
<p>Meeting date(s): Mon 12/16 w/SB Thu 12/19</p>	<p>Meeting date(s): Thu 1/9</p>	<p>Meeting date(s): Thu 2/13 Thu 2/27</p>	<p>Meeting date(s): Thu 3/27</p>	<p>Meeting date(s): Thu 4/10 (PH1) Tue 4/15 (PH2) Thu 4/24</p>	<p>Meeting date(s): Thu 5/1 (PH3) Thu 5/1 Thu 5/22</p>	<p>Meeting date(s): Mon 6/2 (ATM begins)</p>

Note: For planning purposes only. All dates are tentative at this time.

FY25 Goals | Progress Check

(Last reviewed in December 2024)

Operations

- Hit all target dates for key Finance Committee milestones detailed in big picture schedule (preliminary and final guidelines, 5-year tax projection, annual report, etc.)

Capital

- Develop unified long-term capital plan (Town and Schools)
- Treat capital similarly across budget units

Revenue

- Work with key stakeholders (Select Board, Economic Vitality, 2229 Task Force, MCI Task Force, etc) to identify and prioritize opportunities for revenue generation (outside of the property tax).

Financial Policies

- Support staff initiative to update and document financial policies

Liaisons

- Prioritize areas we flagged for additional attention in FY25 (Minuteman Tech, 2229 Main Street, CPC, etc)

Communications

- Continue focus on communications (with Dee as our liaison)
- Collaborate with Carlisle Finance Committee (especially on CCRSD)
- Make 5-year tax projection and annual report more interactive – allow taxpayers to adjust/estimate impacts

Others?

- Others?