

Wallingford Selectboard
Annual Informational Meeting Minutes
Wallingford Elementary School

March 2, 2026

Selectboard Members Present: Anne Awad, Rob Barker, Carolyn Behrendt, Glenn Mayer and Kathy Luzader.

Others present: Town Administrator Sandi Switzer, Town Clerk and Treasurer Jill Stone-Teer, Tammy Heffernan (moderator), Peg Soule, Robert Soule, Mark Tessier, Eileen Tessier, John Rauch, Rob Carey, Carol Tashie, Steve Rawlings, Eric Davenport and about 30 people were in attendance. Only Town officials and those who addressed the Board were listed as present.

Selectboard Chair Kathy Luzader called the meeting to order at the Wallingford Elementary School at 7:00 p.m.

Moderator Tammy Heffernan welcomed everyone to the annual Informational Meeting. K. Luzader introduced Board members. Ms. Heffernan asked if anyone new to Town Meeting would like to introduce themselves. John Rauch introduced himself.

Article I. Ms. Heffernan read Article I related to elective offices. No public input.

Article II. Ms. Heffernan read Article II related to scholarships. No public input.

Article III. Ms. Heffernan read Article III regarding property tax payments. No public input.

ARTICLE IV. Ms. Heffernan read Article IV - Shall the voters of the Town of Wallingford appropriate a sum not to exceed \$1,609,903.00 for the General Operation of the Town, with an amount not to exceed \$1,184,804 to be raised in Property Taxes for fiscal year 2027?

K. Luzader provided a detailed overview of the municipal budget as follows: The Selectboard has proposed a fiscal year 2027 budget that will balance the needs of the community with the pocketbooks of taxpayers. Part of this process includes long overdue Capital planning to replace the sand shed this summer and several older Highway Department vehicles requiring costly repairs in the coming years. The total proposed municipal budget of \$1,609,903 is up 8 percent or \$120,234. The amount to be raised in taxes is \$1,184,804.

For a closer look at budget numbers, the Administration section of the budget is \$599,375. This represents a 3 percent or \$19,125 increase. Three percent cost of living raises were given to employees and there's an anticipated \$5,650 increase on line 5025 for all insurances - unemployment, liability, health, dental, etc. - from \$107,550 to \$113,200.

The Town Government section of the proposed budget is \$257,114, up \$67,194 from the current \$189,920. The increase is due to Grant Expenses line 5027 in the amount of \$68,670. These funds will be used for required local matches for two grants: the Town was awarded \$800,000 to replace School Street sidewalks and after setting aside Asset Fund (formerly ARPA) for the local match, the Town needed to budget \$57,350 for the balance. Sidewalk construction will begin this spring. The Town was also awarded \$13,187 to update the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan as required by FEMA. FEMA cut funding for this program last April, so the Town obtained a grant for this \$13,000 expense requiring a 10 percent local match.

The Appropriations' budget of \$84,764 is up \$189. Nearly every line was level funded. Unfortunately, that means the Town had to turn down Gilbert Hart Library's request for a \$5,000 increase.

The Highway Budget of \$435,915 increased just \$1,355 from the current \$434,560. Most lines were level funded.

The Public Safety budget of \$84,535 is up slightly. The Board hoped to increase weekly police patrols, However, with unavoidable adjustments in other areas of the budget, the decision was made to increase line 5406 Special Police Officer Contract to reflect the anticipated 5 percent increase in Rutland County Sheriff services.

The Capital Budget of \$101,500 is up \$20,000 from the current \$81,500. The Board has diligently worked on a multiyear Capital plan to replace the dilapidated sand shed as well as outdated Highway Department equipment –including the 2016 Kenworth dump truck and the 2011 Caterpillar backhoe – both of which are costing the Town significant dollars in ongoing repairs. For this year, the Board opted not to put the usual \$40,000 into the Bridge Fund line 5712 in order to increase the Highway Reserve Fund line 5716 from \$20,000 to \$80,000. The plan is to use the reserve fund in this next fiscal year to help pay for the cost to replace the sand shed and in future years to replace the 2016 Kenworth dump truck and eventually replace the 2011 Backhoe.

The Recreation budget of \$46,700 is up \$8,400 from the current \$38,300. We need to resurface and repair the tennis court at a cost of \$8,328, so line 5805 Maintenance was increased from \$4,000 to \$12,400. Resurfacing is needed every five years or so.

As you review the proposed fiscal year 2027 budget, you will see many line items were level funded or reduced. Of the \$120,234 increase - \$68,670 will be used for local matches for important grants; \$5,650 for insurance increases; cost of living adjustments of \$12,000 for employees; \$8,400 for needed tennis court resurfacing and repairs; \$2,900 added for three elections in the fiscal year; and we've increased the overall Capital budget by \$20,000 for much needed future planning.

Finally, Capital Planning for the Town of Wallingford is overdue. By comparison, here is what some of our neighbors set aside annually in their budgets:

Annual appropriations to highway equipment reserve funds

- Plymouth - \$130K
- Clarendon - \$100K
- Shrewsbury - \$85K
- West Rutland - \$80K
- Danby - \$70K (50 for equipment, 20 for highway structures)
- Ira - \$60K
- Wells - \$50K
- Pawlet - \$50K
- Middletown Springs - \$40K (20 for equipment, 20 for highway buildings)
- Proctor - \$30K
- Wallingford - \$20K (fiscal year 2026).

G. Mayer provided a detailed overview of Capital Planning and establishing a Reserve Fund for replacement of the sand shed and future Highway Department vehicle purchases and expenses within the next five and ten years.

Mark Tessier asked whether the solar panels installed at the town garage had reduced utility bills. G. Mayer said the panels went online at the end of 2025 and the Town was starting to see offsets in utility bills at all municipal buildings, He said officials were still gathering data.

John Rauch asked why anticipated state Highway Aid revenue was lower in FY'27 than the Actual for FY'25? The town administrator said the municipality had received unanticipated revenue in the 2024-25 fiscal cycle as part of final state ARPA transportation aid payments.

Peg Soule said she was dismayed the library had not received the requested \$5,000 increase and suggested adding those requests as separate ballot items in the future. John Rauch asked about Revenue item 4532. Jill Stone-Teer replied it was a transfer from the Highway Reserve Fund to the general account for the purchase of the Volvo dump truck. John Rauch asked about item 5406 Special Officer contract increases from FY'25 to the proposed in FY'27. K. Luzader said the Board wanted more patrols hours. John Rauch asked why more hours were needed. K. Luzader said due to vandalism, break-ins and other challenges. She said previously police patrols were limited to 20 hours per week and now deputies patrol 28 hours per week. John Rauch asked what were the events of concern. The town administrator said there had been numerous incidents of vandalism and attempted break-ins, including a break-in and vandalism at the ballfield shed, the iconic Boy With the Boot was nearly destroyed, and there were eight or nine break-ins and vandalism at the public beach concession stand.

Peg Soule asked about item 5348 related to FEMA. The town administrator said those were the remaining expenses for the July 2023 flood event. There was a discussion about local matches budgeted for grants, including the five-year update of the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Carol Tashie asked why the Rutland County Humane Society appropriation had been reduced from \$300 to \$100. The town administrator said they had not requested funds this year. John Rauch asked why the Town would appropriate money to an organization that had not requested funds. The town administrator said the Selectboard thought it may have simply been an oversight on the organization's part and the Town utilized their services whenever the Animal Control Officer finds a stray and cannot locate the owner, so the \$100 was an appropriate amount. There was a discussion between John Rauch and the Board regarding ways to increase revenues with long-term planning.

Mark Tessier asked if a new furnace had been installed at Town Hall. K. Luzader said no. Mr. Tessier said a previous Selectboard had determined a new furnace was priority. G. Mayer said the Board made the decision as a matter of triage. Carol Tashie asked if the two and a half tons of plastic diverted from the landfill was part of the reason transfer station expenses were down on line 5150. G. Mayer said the Board reduced that line item based on projected expenses over the first six months of FY'26. John Rauch asked about revenue line 4522 interest income. The town clerk and treasure said that was interest earned on the general account. Mr. Rauch offered several suggestions for increased return on investments. G. Mayer said investments must be stable and accessible so as not to risk taxpayers' money. Moderator Tammy Heffernan said the conversation may be more suitable for a Selectboard meeting. She added state regulations limited what could be done with taxpayers' funds.

ARTICLE V. Ms. Heffernan read Article V - Shall the voters of the Town of Wallingford authorize replacement of the Highway Department sand shed by securing a loan in an amount not to exceed \$110,000 to be financed over a period not to exceed 10 years?

G. Mayer provide an overview of the current condition of the sand shed assessed by two engineers and the recent history of the Town's efforts to replace the structure. He said a year ago, the Town received estimates of about \$1 million for replacement. After extensive research, G. Mayer said the Board selected a contractor with very good references for a fraction of the cost. He noted the Town considered a state/federal grant but requirements of those funds increased the cost substantially. Rob Carey said he hoped the article passed as neighboring Tinmouth had experienced the strains of similar grant requirements.

ARTICLE VI. Ms. Heffernan read Article VI - Shall the voters of the Town of Wallingford approve raising a sum of \$5,000 in property taxes for creation of a 3D replica of the Boy With the Boot statue for the Main Street fountain (balance to be funded by donations)?

Robert Soule asked what would prevent the replica from being stolen from the fountain since it was notably lighter than the original. The town administrator said the contractor was fortifying the replica with bolts/attachments to secure it to the fountain. Mr. Soule asked if it would have a water feature. K. Luzader confirmed it would. Eileen Tessier asked about surveillance cameras. K. Luzader said the Town was looking into it. Steve Rawlings said a security camera would reduce the likelihood of vandalism. Mark Tessier said VTrans would be working on an intersection project this summer and suggested the Town request cameras at the intersection.

Article VIII. Ms. Heffernan read Article VIII related to Other Business.

Rob Carey asked why the town clerk and treasurer's name was omitted from the list of officers on page 4 of the annual Town Report. The town administrator responded the town clerk and treasurer's name was listed on page 3 with all elected officials and page 4 was reserved for appointed officials.

Carol Tashie thanked Officer Sweet for his assistance on a recent matter. Eric Davenport said he had copies of the Wallingford Rescue budget for anyone interested. Peg Soule thanked the town clerk and treasurer for a good job on the annual Town Report. Jill Stone-Teer clarified the town administrator had produced the report. It was noted Ms. Stone-Teer had taken the cover photo. Ms. Soule thanked them both.

Mark Tessier thanked the Selectboard for a job well done on the proposed budget and he said the municipal budget was not the issue burdening taxpayers.

By consensus, the meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Submitted By: Sandi Switzer/Town Administrator

APPROVED THIS 16th Day of March, 2026

WALLINGFORD SELECTBOARD

Anne Awad_____

Rob Barker_____

Carolyn Behrendt _____

Kathy Luzader _____

Glenn Mayer _____