BUDGET COMMITTEE

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 13, 2026, Approved

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Scura called the meeting to order at 5:33 PM.

The following Budget Committee Members were Present: Christa Scura, Rob Nadeau, Donald Houston, Victoria Bram, Charles Cummings, Loren Clement, Bryce Petruccelli, and Jonathan Cohen

Staff Present: Karen Hambleton, Town Administrator

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Chair Scura opened the floor to nominations for Chair.

> *Mr. D. Houston made a motion to nominate Christa Scura for Chair. The motion was seconded by Ms. Bram and passed unanimously.*

Chair Scura opened the floor to nominations for Vice-Chair.

> *Mr. D. Houston made a motion to nominate Rob Nadeau for Vice-Chair. The motion was seconded by Mr. Petruccelli and passed unanimously.*

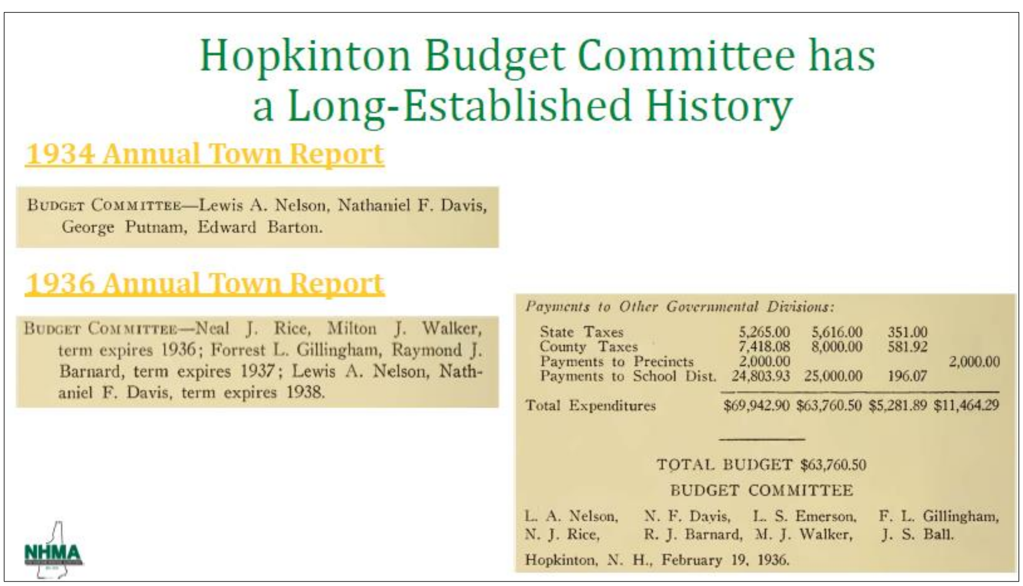
INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Mr. Jonathan Cohen was introduced as the new Hopkinton School District representative.

REVIEW THE ROLE OF THE BUDGET COMMITTEE

The Board reviewed a presentation on the role of the Budget Committee prepared by Katherine Heck and Natch Greyes from the New Hampshire Municipal Association. Mr. Clement asked if Chair Scura knew if an ex-officio member could serve as Chair or Vice Chair. Chair Scura indicated that she understood they could not serve in that role.

Chair Scura drew the Committee's attention to the following slide:



She noted that it was important to acknowledge the long history, the many residents who have served on the Budget Committee since 1934, and the importance of the Committee's work.

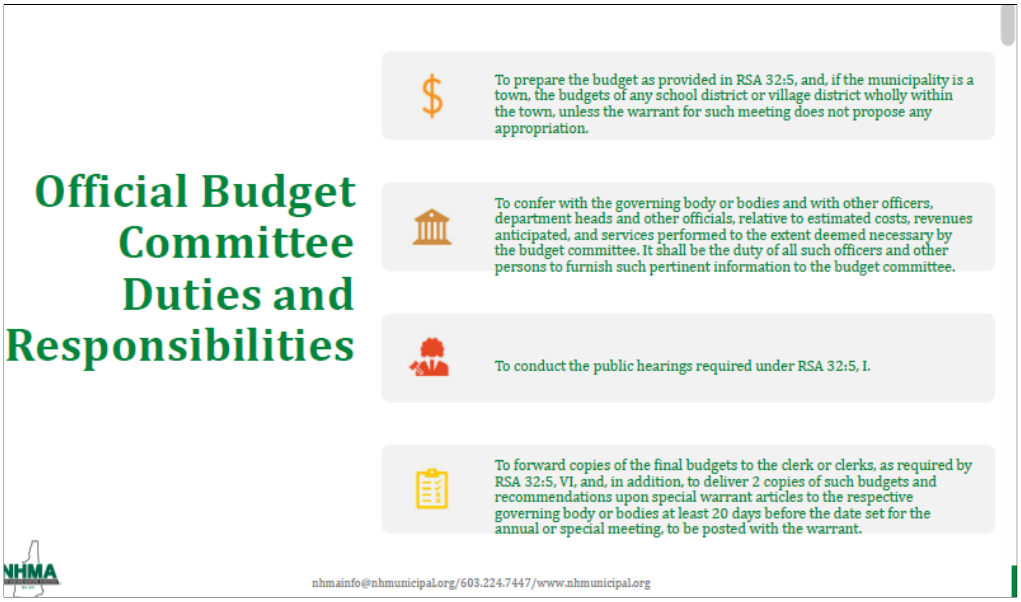
She summarized the following slide, which depicts the benefits of the Budget Committee.

She noted that this slide should be balanced against the Summary of Responsibilities slide, which presents a narrower view of the Budget Committee's role. She asserted that while the general language/prescribed literature was broad in nature, it should be interpreted reasonably and with care. She explained that there were limits to the Budget Committee's powers, noting, for example, that it could not recommend firing an individual teacher.

Mr. Nadeau stated that the Budget Committee should avoid venturing into the role of the Select Board or the School Board and should not try to control spending. He stated that questions should be used to understand the budget decisions and to clarify conflicts or inconsistencies in the budget. Mr. D. Houston stated that the Budget Committee reviews all budgets and helps prioritize spending decisions, but rarely makes spending recommendations.

Chair Scura noted that the Board had a duty of cooperation and that the RSAs are unclear about which types of questions are appropriate. She explained that, in the past, it had been difficult to completely avoid recommendations about acceptable increases and possible alternatives and still request information about pertinent information. She explained that the Committee should not expect to be 100% in agreement. Still, she asked that all members uphold a standard of public decorum for public officials, as they have done in the past, and that disagreement can be good as long as all assume good intentions and are kind.

Mr. Nadeau commented on the Town's long history and referenced the following slide.



He stated that he interpreted the term "confer" to mean engage in a dialogue. He noted that the Budget Committee's role is to recommend budgets that are rational, in the best interests of the Town, and aligned with the Town's needs. He explained that the legislative body has final authority and that disagreements should not be the focus of the Town meetings. He stated that the more technical slides have a great deal of information and are a good reference.

APPROVAL OF PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 4, 2026

Mr. Clement noted that his reference to the lagoon closure was meant to be a reference to the cesspool closure. Ms. Bram noted that Mr. Nadeau's name was spelled wrong in a couple of places. The Committee agreed that no changes were necessary.

> *A motion was made by Mr. Cummings to approve the meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Victoria Bram and unanimously approved 6-0 with Mr. D. Houston and Mr. Cohen abstaining.*

TOWN FINANCIAL UPDATE (REVENUES/EXPENSES)

Ms. Bram noted that it was still early in the year and that certain payments were front-loaded, causing some of the early numbers to look out of balance. She explained that the Select Board was in the process of setting goals and that many of the goals she was focused on were financial. She stated that she hoped to start the budget and CIP processes earlier in the year. She noted that one of her goals was to review the Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs), explaining that there were two TIFs: at Exit 6 and at Hart's Corner. Ms. Bram explained the purpose and function of the TIF districts. She noted that the TIF districts have been on autopilot since their adoption in 2018 and that the tax revenue in the accounts was substantial. She summarized the total deposits.

- Hart's Corner deposit (2025): $10,900,
- Hart's Corner total: $34,850
- Exit 6 deposit (2025): $587,991
- Exit 6 total: $1,580,000

Ms. Bram noted that funding was restricted to specific uses within the district.

Mr. Clement asked how many deposits were made annually and when those deposits were made. Ms. Hambleton responded that the annual deposits were made once, at the end of the year, after the tax rates were set. Discussion ensued regarding the boundaries of the TIF.

Ms. Bram noted that $16,000 was spent on water and sewer extension studies last year. Ms. Bram stated that there was a new focus on the aging sewer system and significant infrastructure spending needs. She stated that her three goals centered around the budget process, the CIP process, and TIF funds. She thanked DPW for all their work on improving the George Park bathrooms.

<u>Cesspools</u>
Ms. Bram explained that the engineering plans are complete and that the consulting engineers were preparing the bid documents. Mr. D. Houston asked about how the Cesspool project relates to the dredging/sludge removal at the sewer plant. Ms. Bram explained that the sludge would be removed, dewatered and applied to the Cesspool monofil. Ms. Hambleton indicated that the project would be bid separately, as the Clean Water State Revolving Fund funds the Cesspool closure.

<u>Landfill Cap and Culvert Repair</u>
Mr. Clement asked about the cracked landfill cap and the East Penacook Road Culvert Repair.

Ms. Bram responded that Nobis Engineering would complete the engineering. Ms. Hambleton explained that the culvert repair would be done by Weaver Brothers and is planned for later in the summer, after the roundabout work on Routes 202/9/127 is complete. Mr. Clement asked whether the current work being undertaken at the roundabout was entirely within the right-of-way. Ms. Hambleton stated that it was.

Ms. Bram noted that the following positions were open and the Town was seeking applicants:

- Heavy Equipment Operator
- Finance Assistant
- Full-time Police Officer

HOPKINTON SCHOOL DISTRICT FINANCIAL UPDATE

Mr. Jonathan Cohen summarized recent budget statements with attention to the following items.

- The projected fund balance, as of the March 31st statement, was $188,519, which was less than expected due to the addition of two new hires. The School District has hired an IA and a Harold Martin Special Education teacher.
- The School District is working to complete the boiler work before school starts.
- Food service is losing less than it did last year, which was less than the year before. The School District is projecting a $77,000 loss this year. There has been some discussion about changing pricing due to rising food costs, but any such discussion needs to be balanced against students' needs.

Ms. Bram asked about the status of the entryway upgrade and the security redesign. Mr. Nadeau indicated that the School District had met with the architects and the construction company four times and that the construction documents were nearly complete.

Ms. Bram asked whether the goal was to make food service pay for itself. Mr. Cohen indicated that he didn’t think this was ever going to happen. He stated that the goal was to minimize losses, but the greater imperative in the program was feeding students and adults who rely on the meals.

Mr. Clement asked for an update on staffing changes. Mr. Cohen responded that there is a new Principal at Maple Street School. Mr. Clement asked about early retirement, and Mr. Cohen indicated that he was not aware of any, as most such decisions must be contractually stated earlier in the year.

CONTOOCOOK VILLAGE PRECINCT (CVP) FINANCIAL UPDATE

Mr. D. Houston provided the CVP update. Mr. D. Houston stated that Bill Chapin Jr. was the new Commissioner, rounding out the requirement for three Commissioners. He provided an update on the eight-vessel purification system improvement project ($300,000-$400,000). He stated that the project would have to be redesigned due to some unexpected findings. He stated that the hope was to complete the project by July 1st to support the large water draw by summer. He summarized the other major project, which was recommended by Mr. Clement, as the transition from old meters to new meters used by Henniker. Mr. Nadeau asked about the cost of a new water meter. Mr. D. Houston stated that the new meter was about $400, and installation was about $200. He noted that there were administrative costs as well, but the meters benefited customers by allowing them to track their usage. Mr. Petrucelli asked whether the new meters will pay for themselves through more accurate readings. Mr. D. Houston stated that there was underestimation with the current broken meters, and that additional revenue will be realized with accurate readings. He indicated that there was no average usage and it was difficult to gauge the lost revenue. Mr. D. Houston stated that meters were often broken during renovation projects. Mr. Clement stated that the Select Board had just voted for a 30% increase in the sewer rate, making it important to install the new meters. Discussion ensued regarding how irrigation usage was discounted in the sewer bill. Ms. Hambleton stated that the sewer bill presumed a 10% discount for irrigation. Mr. Clement urged the use of second meters to improve accuracy.

HOPKINTON VILLAGE PRECINCT FINANCIAL UPDATE

No update was provided.

DISCUSSION OF 2026 BUDGET COMMITTEE SUMMER SCHEDULE

Chair Scura indicated that it was customary not to meet in June or July. She asked the Committee if there was a desire for an August meeting. The Board decided to schedule the next meeting for September 16, 2026.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. R. Houston indicated that he had been participating remotely but had no comments to offer.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

Mr. Cohen indicated that there is proposed legislation in the state legislature to repeal Article 10, which would immediately require the refund of all Article 10 funds to taxpayers. He indicated that he had just received the information and that this change would create a great deal of chaos for the School District, as Article 10 funds a great deal at the school. Mr. Clement indicated that House Bill 564 concerned unassigned fund balance that would have to be returned to taxpayers, but it was specifically limited to multiple SAUs/shared districts. He indicated that he was not sure this was the same legislation. Mr. Clement stated that he believed the open enrollment bill was defeated. Mr. Cohen indicated that he believed there was still pending legislation on this topic.

Chair Scura stated that there was a skate park fundraiser that evening.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Scura called for a motion to adjourn.

> *Mr. Clement made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cummings and unanimously approved.*

The meeting was adjourned at 6:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Mesa-Zendt
Grant Coordinator/Executive Assistant