

**SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 3, 2026 – 7 P.M.
HYBRID ON ZOOM AND SOUTH HADLEY SENIOR CENTER**

Present in person were Chair Jeff Cyr, Vice Chair Nicole Casolari, Clerk Carol Constant, members Andrea Miles and Renee Sweeney, Town Administrator Lisa Wong and Assistant Town Administrator Chuck Romboletti.

CALL TO ORDER

Cyr called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Miles thanked folks who attended Town Meeting last week.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Constant motioned to approve the draft minutes of Feb. 17, 2026. Miles seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

CONSENT AGENDA

Sweeney motioned to accept the consent agenda as presented. Miles seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS

SEASONAL ALCOHOL LICENSE APPROVAL

Constant motioned to approve The Boathouse seasonal license renewal upon completion of all applications, submittal of all fees, completing all required inspections, and any other laws, bylaws or regulations required for issuance. Sweeney seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

ABCC SEASONAL POPULATION INCREASE ESTIMATION

Miles moved to certify South Hadley will have a temporary increased population of 18,150 as of July 1, 2026 and to authorize digital signatures from the Selectboard. Constant seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

FY27 BUDGET HEARING

Wong presented a proposed FY27 budget of \$59.9 million in appropriations, supported by revenues including \$35 million in taxation, \$3.5 million in local receipts, approximately \$16 million in state aid, and other sources, noting several figures remain subject to change. Significant cost pressures include a more than \$2 million increase in health insurance and ongoing school funding needs, with the schools proposed to receive a 2% increase despite higher estimated requirements to maintain services.

The budget requires reductions across multiple departments, including staffing decreases in finance, public health, human services, public works, and public safety, while also relying more heavily on one-time funds and reducing OPEB contributions to balance the budget. She said overall staffing remains below peer communities, with South Hadley operating at 80% of levels of the other area communities.

The proposed library budget falls below the state certification threshold, which may result in reduced hours, closure of a branch library, and the need to seek a temporary waiver while evaluating long-term funding sustainability.

Selectboard members raised concerns about service impacts, particularly related to library certification, inspection delays, and the use of stabilization funds. They noted that the budget reflects difficult trade-offs in a constrained financial environment.

The budget PowerPoint is located on the town website and the meeting packet for the public to review: <https://www.southhadley.org/679/Budget-Town-Meeting-Documents>

Eric Freisner of 4 Glenn Dr., Christine Phillips of 32 Boynton Ave., Larry Dixon of 89 Amherst Rd., David King of 6 Oakley Dr., Ira Brezinsky of 93 Woodbridge St., Katie Debeer of 11 Lois Ave, Hector Lomelin of 26 Ranger St., Bonnie Gauthier of 327 River Rd, Ryan Robert of 14 Prospect, Miretta Campbell of 32 Noel St., and Kelly Woods of 48 College View Heights spoke during the public comment period of the budget presentation about staffing, employee pay increases and health insurance costs, limited opportunities for new revenue, a proposition 2.5 override and library impacts.

VOTE ON OVERRIDE QUESTIONS TO BE SUBMITTED TO TOWN CLERK FOR APRIL 14 ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION

Miles noted she was in favor of Option 1 presented in the packet. Sweeney expressed concern of not getting any funding for an override if only one figure is offered as in Option 1. Constant said Selectboard members heard from Town Meeting Members who voted in favor of \$11 million but noted she was concerned of residents being able to support that, adding she would like to see three options from which to choose on the ballot. Cyr said he feels more than one option should be put on the ballot. Casolari expressed interest in options 2 and 3. She also expressed concern about the accountability of Selectboard members - whose terms are only three years long - by members of the public who are impacted by their vote.

At 9:59 p.m., Casolari motioned to extend the meeting until 10:15 p.m. Miles seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

At 10:08 p.m., Casolari motioned to extend the meeting to 10:50 p.m. Miles seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

Nick Gingras of 20 Carriage Lane, Kevin McAllister of 8 LeBlanc Dr., Katie DeBeer of 11 Lois Lane, Emily Young of 124 College St., Ken LeBlanc of 88 Park St., Mark Gosselin of 6 Laurie Ave, Dani Thomas of 24 Virginia Dr., Tracy Kennedy of 16 Berwyn St., Christine Phillips of 32 Boynton Ave., Eric Freisner of 4 Glenn St., Ira Brezinsky of 93 Woodbridge St., Robert Murphy of 89 Woodbridge St., Quentin Amrani of 21 Yale St., Mark Cavanaugh of 300 Pearl St., and Larry Dixon of 89 Amherst Rd. expressed their opinions on a Proposition 2.5 override in town.

Of Option 1, four members were against (Cyr, Casolari, Constant and Sweeney) and one in favor (Miles). All agreed Option 4 shouldn't be considered. Members debated Options 2 and 3.

Constant liked the \$6 million and \$11 million options. Sweeney liked the \$9 million and \$11 million options. Miles said she would vote no on \$6 million and \$11million if there was a question with two amounts. Casolari said having two options is helpful. Cyr liked \$5 million and \$10 million. Wong said she and Superintendent Voyik agreed if there was hesitancy on the \$6 million they would do as some folks have said and raise more of the \$6 million initially than staggering \$2 million over three years so they could make the needed investments right away.

Constant motioned to provide two options on the ballot for the Proposition 2.5 override. Sweeney seconded. Four in favor, one against (Miles). The motion carried.

Miles, Casolari and Sweeney said they were in favor of \$9 million and \$11 million. Casolari motioned that the following question(s) be forwarded to the Town Clerk for insertion on the ballot for the Annual Town Election of April 14, 2026:

1a. Shall the Town of South Hadley be allowed to assess an additional \$9,000,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of operating the Municipal Government and Public Schools for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026?

1b. Shall the Town of South Hadley be allowed to assess an additional \$11,000,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of operating the Municipal Government and Public Schools for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026?

Sweeney seconded. Three in favor (Sweeney, Miles, Casolari) and two against (Cyr and Constant). The motion carried.

Constant expressed she was in favor of an override but is concerned of the impact on residents with low incomes. Miles emphasized questions 1a and 1 b in Option 2 are separate questions and residents can vote for or against each question independently.

EXEMPTIONS

Wong said there will be a tentative joint meeting with the Board of Assessors planned for April at which exemptions can be discussed.

OLD BUSINESS

HEALTH INSURANCE

Members tabled this discussion to their next meeting.

PILOT POLICY

Cyr and Casolari said they would like to get moving on the policy. Constant motioned to accept the Town of South Hadley Payment In Lieu of Tax (PILOT) Policy as presented. Miles seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

ADJOURN

Miles motioned to adjourn. Sweeney seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,
Kristin Maher
Executive Assistant to Administration**