

Budget Task Force - Meeting Minutes			
December 1, 2025, Senior Center/Hybrid, 6:00 p.m.			
<u>ATTENDANCE</u>			
Voting Members	Present	Non-Voting Members	Present
Andrea Miles	Virt.	Lisa Wong, Town Administrator	yes
Kevin Mcallister	Yes	Chuck Romboletti, Assistant Town Administrator	yes
Dan Luis	Yes		
Gena Lomelin	Virt.		
Emily Young	Yes	Guests	
Hector Lomelin	Virt.	Jen Voyik, Superintendent of Schools	
Forrest Bowlick	yes	Lyn Jacques, Asst. Superintendent	
Nicholas Gingras	No		
Nicholas Prentis	Yes		
John McCarthy	Yes		
Charles Miles	Virt.		

1. Call to Order:

Kevin McAllister called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

2. Meeting Minutes

Nick Prentis made a motion to approve the minutes of November 17, 2025. Seconded by John McCarthy. Motion carried unanimously (abstention by none).

3. Project Update

a. School Department - Education, History, Benchmarking

Superintendent Jen Voyik and Assistant Superintendent Lyn Jacques presented information regarding the Schools budget, supported by a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation responded to requests from the previous meeting for additional comparative data.

- Jen reviewed comparable district data obtained from DART. DESE identifies ten comparable districts; the School Department selected three primary comparables for deeper review: Amesbury, Millbury, and Oxford.
- Emily asked whether the slides would be made available; Jen confirmed they would be shared.
- There was discussion regarding salary comparisons, including concerns that South Hadley salaries appear lower than comparables and questions about calculation methods.
- Kevin noted that it was interesting that South Hadley landed in the 2nd largest FTEs per school staff, but also near the highest student class sizes. Jen clarified that other factors,

such as IEP requirements and other subsets of classes could lead to having more staff but also higher average class sizes.

- Hector asked how many teachers near top step are anticipated retirements, and how step movement occurs generally and if its dictated by union contract. Jen explained that retirement is up to the employee and always unknown, and explained the annual step progression is union-dictated. Emily asked why pay isn't the same across all districts across the State. It was explained that union environment, community ability to pay and various other factors lead to different pay within different districts. Hector asked if different teacher subjects get paid differently, Jen explained teacher union contract has the same pay scale for teachers of various subjects, unless there are different department hears.
- Emily asked who the Town competes with for staffing. Jen indicated that additional comparison data used during bargaining could be gathered and shared following the meeting.
- There was discussion regarding MCAS as a limited but commonly used comparative measure, and clarification that it was being used here strictly for comparison purposes.
- Budget drivers were discussed, with Jen noting consistent themes across similar districts experiencing similar budget cost drivers.
- Emily raised concerns about the number of students attending out-of-district schools and choosing out, and that number being less than those students from out-of-district choosing to attend within district. Jen noted challenges associated with the number of charter schools in close proximity.
- Andrea asked if it was possible to determine if certain dollar funding cuts happened, what programs would be cut and what impacts that would have on education or service delivery within schools. Jen responded that it is difficult to assess at this time, particularly given ongoing negotiations with the unions and where that will land, and also given the value placed on retaining teachers. Kevin emphasized the importance of understanding the impacts and implications of potential cuts.
- Emily asked questions about Student Opportunity Act, Title Funds and Circuit Breaker calculations, and how grants are displayed within the various budget documents, which Jen and Lisa explained.

FY27 Budget Timeline

Town Administrator Lisa Wong noted that she would follow up and emphasized that the Budget Task Force's role is to focus on long-term planning, rather than year-to-year decision-making.

Community Survey

A draft community budget survey was presented.

- Members provided edits and feedback throughout the discussion.
- The survey will be released at the upcoming community meeting.
- Questions were raised regarding communication strategies and translation needs.

- Members were asked to send any additional comments or suggested revisions to the group.
- There was discussion about allowing residents to break down and prioritize budget areas independently.

7. Adjourn

- a. At 8:10pm, Dan Luis made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Nick Prentis. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Budget Task Force Clerk