

Finance Committee Meeting

September 9, 2025

7:30pm

Acton Town Hall, Room 204

Present: Scott Sullivan (Chair), Steve Noone, Roland Bourdon, Allison Jones, Greg Jarboe (remote), Jason Cole, Corinne Hogseth

Mr. Sullivan called the meeting to order at 7:30pm

Public Comment: None

Open roundtable discussion on Finance Committee point of view

Mr. Sullivan opened up conversation among committee members regarding the FY2027 Finance Committee Point of View (POV).

Mr. Noone noted that last year's POV focused on long-term planning and cost reduction, items which should continue on in the FY2027 POV. Mr. Noone is concerned that costs in the ALG plan are understated.

Mr. Cole noted that while it might not be feasible that a decision regarding the DPW project will be made by the end of the October, he feels that conversations regarding the project should start early. Concerned about economic impacts of a potential recession, unemployment, housing turnover, and changes in town revenue. Does not feel that FinCom guidance of a 3% spending increase will be possible.

Mr. Bourdon discussed his concerns regarding the police and fire department budgets and operations, the potential for regionalized dispatch, and the transfer station facilities. More long-range planning is needed. Concerned about the impact of housing turnover on school enrollment, tax increases on seniors, and future facility and equipment needs.

Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Cole, and Mr. Bourdon discussed a DPW fleet and equipment inventory. Mr. Sullivan confirmed that he did receive the information he requested from the Town Manager, but noted that he does have additional questions. Interested in gathering equipment lifecycles, condition, frequency of use, and the expected extended life of a garaged vehicle versus one which is stored outside.

Ms. Jones stated her opinion that FinCom does not need to spend any additional time discussing the DPW project as they have made their position clear. Further discussion would pose an opportunity cost, leaving FinCom with no time or resources to address other issues. Would like to look into potential impacts of a recession, increased unemployment rates, and housing turnover.

Ms. Hogseth agreed with Ms. Jones statement regarding the DPW project. Stated that the school budget should be given the same level of scrutiny that is given to the town budget. Concerned

about historical and forecasted decreases in school enrollment and increasing school costs, as well as how increases in the school budget will impact the town's budget.

Mr. Bourdon noted the trend of more ADUs being built and changes in Acton's demographics.

Mr. Jarboe noted that the ABRSD school committee is confronted with declining enrollment and is having to look at reorganizations to reduce costs. Attended the most recent meeting of the DPW Building Committee and reported that the committee and consultant are reviewing numerous approaches. The next meeting will be 9/24 and those approaches will be discussed. Suggested that FinCom should provide budget guidance as soon as possible.

Mr. Noone estimated that future town budget increases would need to be 5.4% annually, a similar figure to what the schools stated earlier in the year. Noted that impacts from a recession would likely not be felt by the town until a couple of years after the fact, would first be noticed in state aid revenues.

Ms. Jones questioned whether there are additional sources of revenue which might be available to the town.

Mr. Sullivan questioned the accuracy of the town's census data post-2020 and the pandemic. Suggested that there has been a large demographical shift after the pandemic.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the POV is the FinCom's opportunity to give financial guidance to the town and distinguished between agenda items and POV items for the committee. Mr. Sullivan discussed spending bands/targets in relation to tax exemptions, general spending, capital spending, consultants, and land acquisitions.

Mr. Bourdon questioned estimated increases in revenue related to the Powder Mill housing project, as well as impacts on town services.

Mr. Sullivan noted that there are resulting operating and maintenance costs whenever the town acquires a property or builds anything. Though compensation makes up 75-80% of the town's costs, the POV is FinCom's opportunity to discuss everything outside of that. Agrees with Ms. Jones regarding the DPW project, but believes that the town would benefit from a conversation regarding the various options and their pros and cons—project comes down to what the town can afford.

Ms. Jones noted that affordability comes from the taxpayers and that funding for this project would need to come from the taxpayers.

Mr. Cole recalled that at the most recent DPW Building Committee meeting, the consultant from Arrowstreet said that the current DPW building has 10 to 15 years of usable life remaining.

Mr. Jarboe affirmed Mr. Cole's recollection. Recommended that the FinCom consider taking the POV presentation on the road. The FinCom does not receive news coverage of their meetings. Mr. Bourdon agreed and noted that the FinCom used to take the POV on the road and present it to other boards and committees and the public.

Ms. Hogseth asked Mr. Cole to clarify previous statement regarding 3% budget growth guidance. Mr. Cole noted that in years past the FinCom could recommend a 3% increase, but that this is no longer feasible since health insurance costs have been increasing by 15% annually.

Ms. Hogseth noted that the town is estimating an expense turnback of almost \$1M, primarily from vacancies. Suggested that there is room in the budget for cuts and that members pay attention to the school budget and kindergarten class sizes.

Mr. Noone noted that the town can accurately predict its annual revenues. There are too many good things to spend money on and scarce revenues. Noted that data points from residents about what they are willing to spend money on are rare, but there are recent votes from the operating override and DPW building. Noted that if an override will be needed in the future, that need should be quantified and shown on a long-range plan.

Liaison Reports

Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Hogseth reported on the 9/8 Select Board meeting. There is expected to be a meeting including select boards and finance committee for both Acton and Boxborough, as well as the ABRSD school committee on 10/22. The first ALG meeting is expected to occur the last week of September.

Mr. Cole reported on the Economic Development Committee meeting which occurred this week and announced the upcoming Senior Night and Restaurant Week.,

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Cole recommended grammatical corrections to the meeting minutes from May 5th, July 8th, and July 22nd.

Mr. Cole made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from May 5th, July 8th, and July 22nd as amended, and the meeting minutes from August 12th and August 26th as presented. Mr. Noone seconded. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote. (7-0-0)

Final Corrections as needed on Intern Presentations: Plan to discuss at the next meeting.

The next Finance Committee meeting will be on September 23rd at 7:30pm

Ms. Hogseth made a motion to adjourn, Mr. Bourdon seconded. Motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote at 9:10pm. (7-0-0)

Documents used:

- September 9, 2025 Agenda
- Finance Committee Meeting Presentation September 9, 2025