

Minutes of Regular Meeting Town of Windham Board of Finance

April 8th, 2026, at 7:00 pm

Windham Town Hall, Bellingham Auditorium

Present – Kevin Donohue, Garnet McLaughlin, Curtis Ehler, MaryAnn Daily, Peter Hughs, Susan Hunter, Chuck Pennewill and Director of Finance Christian Johnson

1. Call to Order – 7:05
2. Public Comment
 - a. Sara Beth Rowe informed the Board that she has filed an SEEC complaint and FIOA requests regarding her concerns about transparency. She also had questions about town finances. Brian Tarbel spoke about the difficulty of providing services on a restricted budget and the impact on town employees, Tom DeVivo spoke of the need to continue funding town services, Matt Vertefeuille spoke of the need to fund services and of the impact to town employees, and Lynne Ide spoke of the importance of funding education
3. Board of Finance Comment
 - a. Susan spoke of the difficulty of cutting budgets which took considerable effort and discipline to craft, Curtis spoke of the need to not cut the Board of Education. Curtis will also be submitting some emails to be added to the February 11, 2026 minutes regarding the proposal to Town Council regarding capping the percentage of bonding.
4. Approval of Minutes
 - a. Regular Meeting on March 11th, 2026, moved by Chuck and seconded by Susan, passed with Curtis and MaryAnn abstaining
 - b. Special Meeting on March 18th, 2026, moved by Chuck and seconded by MaryAnn, passed with MaryAnn and Curtis abstaining
5. Presentations and/or Reports from Town Staff, elected officials, or other Boards
 - a. None
6. Action Items
 - a. Discussion and possible action on the Town of Windham Budget – Kevin proposed a combined tax increase to the taxpayers of 3.9 percent. This would result in a cut from the proposed budget of the town of \$344,028. This resulted in a discussion of the exact impact which was to be left to the Town Council and Town manager to determine. Curtis said he felt the democratic caucus discussed issues which should have been discussed in a public meeting. The analysis that Christian Johnson prepared illustrating the impact of different levels of cuts to the Town and BOE budgets was mailed out to Board members that morning. Chuck felt that total increase should be 3 percent. Garnet moved to make cuts to result in a combined 3.9 percent increase to the taxpayers with the cut as noted by Christian Johnson, MaryAnn seconded. The motion passed with Chuck and Curtis opposed

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- b. Discussion and possible action on the Board of Education Budget. Christian said that the goal of asking for a 3.9 % increase to the taxpayers would result in a reduction from the presented budget of \$1,376,133. Curtis said this number seemed arbitrary. Garnet moved to decrease the Board of Education budget by \$1,376,133 to result in a tax increase of 3.9% to the taxpayers. MaryAnn seconded this and it passed with Curtis and Chuck in opposition.
 - c. Discussion and possible action on setting the date for the Public Hearing, Town Meeting and Referendum. This resulted in a spirited discussion about why the public hearing date was moved from the proposed April 21 date to April 20. The Town Clerk clarified that this was because Bellingham was taken for another public meeting on April 21. MaryAnn moved and Garnet seconded a motion to set the dates as follows. This passed with Curtis opposing.
 - i. Public Hearing – April 20 at 6:30 PM in Bellingham
 - ii. Special BOF meeting – April 20 at 7:30 PM in Bellingham
 - iii. Town Meeting – May 5 at 6:30 in Bellingham
 - iv. Referendum – May 12 from 6AM to 8 PM
 - d. Discussion and possible action on the proposal for consultation on system maintenance in the High School noted that Tucker Mechanical who currently works with the school agreed to provide the consulting at no cost.
7. Update on Town of Windham Committees and Board Assignments
 - a. Windham High School Building Committee – Curtis had no report
8. Finance Director’s Monthly Report
 - a. Christian had no report but clarified that the Board of Education’s adjusted budget would be \$53,156, 736 and the town’s budget would be \$21,859,185 to result in a combined 3.9% mill rate increase.
9. Old Business - Kevin noted that after the discussion of a proposal for a standing Building and Facilities Maintenance Committee a request was going to be made to the CT Conference of Municipalities for guidance on this issue from other towns
10. New Business -- note
11. Public Comment – Luis Rodríguez, Registrar of Voters noted the difficulty of securing locations and staff for the polls and asked for more lead time in setting referendum dates. Others made comments about the difficulty of the budget year and the complexity of the process.
12. Board of Finance Comment. Susan said that the process of the budget this year was very difficult and regretted having to cut funds when they were needed. Kevin said the goal was to present the voters with a mill rate increase that would pass on the first referendum, and Peter discussed the Board’s strategy of offering a 3.9 percent increase so that should it be rejected the Board could cut and still not do terrible damage to the school or town. Curtis stated that he had hoped that the Board would wait until after the public hearing to decide what to do with the budgets. Maryann stated that the public hearing is after the board votes on the budget. That it’s the board’s

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responsibility to set it and move it forward in the process. Robert Zarnetske clarified that the board can only cut the bottom-line number for the BOE and only has authority to reduce department numbers, not individual line items within departments.

13. Adjournment Moved by Chuck at 8:30