

Select Board Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2026
7:00 PM
Reed Room

Select Board Members: Daniel Brosgol (absent); Shawn Hanegan; Bopha Malone; Paul Mortenson; Terrence Parker

Attendees: Matt Hanson, Town Manager; Autumn Ledgister-Cummins, Executive Assistant; Amy Fidalgo, Assistant Town Manager; Heidi Ported, Health Department Director; Bridge Rodrigue, Town Clerk; David Manugian, DPW Director; James Bailey, Chief of Fire; Tony Fields, Planning Director; Ron Scaltreto, Facilities Director; David Powell, Town Moderator; Dan Leahy, I.T. Director; Jaclyn Powers, Library Director; Allison Cservenschi, Council on Aging Director; Matt Brown, OARS' Executive Director; Callie Sties, OARS' Program Community Engagement Coordinator; Karen Willson, 6 Bandera Drive; Dan Bostwick, 23 Hartford Street; Lori Etringer, 35 Burlington Road; Joe Piantedosi, Patricia Fabian, Energy & Sustainability Committee Chair; John McClain, 8 Maple Street; Piper Pavelich, Bedford Citizen; Erin Dorr, Municipal Energy and Sustainability Project Manager; Corinne Doud; Jeanie Piantedosi; Mark

1. Public Comment

Karen Willson, 6 Bandera Drive; Dan Bostwick, 23 Hartford Street; and Lori Etringer, 35 Burlington Road, spoke on the Energy and Sustainability Manager position.

2. Board and Committee Interview

a. Bicycle Advisory Committee – Matthew Black; Keith Magnus

Keith Magnus introduced himself to the Board. Mr. Magnus enjoys participating in outdoor activities such as biking, hiking, and walking. Mr. Magnus is keen on improving pedestrian safety in town.

Mr. Mortenson inquired about the number of meetings Mr. Magnus has attended. Mr. Magnus answered he's been to one. Mr. Parker asked for Mr. Magnus' perspective on how to progress the committee, to which Mr. Magnus responded that he would like to further research the committee projects but believes the town would benefit from additional and improved crosswalks. Mr. Hanegan inquired whether there were any responsibilities or actions the committee should be undertaking that are not currently addressed. Mr. Magnus answered that he would like to further research the committee's efforts.

The Board thanked Mr. Magnus for coming forward.

Mr. Parker moved that the Select Board appoint Keith Magnus to the Bicycle Advisory Committee for a term ending June 30, 2026, and authorize the Town Manager to sign letters on behalf of the Select Board to this effect.

Ms. Malone seconded. The motion passed 4-0-0.

Matthew Black introduced himself to the Board. Mr. Black is very fond of Bedford's bike trails. He hopes to improve pedestrian safety as well as enhance connectivity with neighboring communities.

Mr. Parker asked how Mr. Black's scientific skills would be applied to the committee. Mr. Black answered that he would seek evidence to deduce solutions for increasing safety, opposed to abstract ideas. Mr. Hanegan inquired whether there were any responsibilities or actions the committee should be undertaking that are not currently addressed. Mr. Black answered he would like to further research the committee's efforts and further increase the Town's connectivity with the bike path.

The Board thanked Mr. Black for coming forward.

Mr. Parker moved that the Select Board appoint Matthew Black to the Bicycle Advisory Committee for a term ending June 30, 2026, and authorize the Town Manager to sign letters on behalf of the Select Board to this effect. Ms. Malone seconded.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

Materials: Appointments 1.12.26; K. Magnus_Redacted; M. Black_Redacted

3. 2026 Concord River Race – Matt Brown

Matt Brown, OARS' Executive Director, and Callie Sties, OARS' Program Community Engagement Coordinator, presented the Bedford 2026 Concord River Race to the Board. OARS is a scientific organization that works to protect, improve, and preserve the Sudbury, Assabet, Concord rivers, watershed, and wildlife. OARS will host their second annual River Race on May 9, 2026.

Mr. Mortenson inquired about candidates for dam removals. Mr. Brown answered that the organization has a dam prioritization guide. Mr. Hanegan inquired about how participants acquire equipment. Mr. Brown answered that participants are required to bring their personal boats; however, from June to August, free paddles can be obtained through the river rest at their three sites. Ms. Malone inquired about the OARS advertisement methods. Mr. Brown answered that the organization advertises through their website. In addition, the New England Canoe and Kayak Racing Association (NECKRA) distributes flyers in various communities. Ms. Malone also inquired about the annual funds to protect the environment and wildlife. Mr. Brown answered that this year their board will approve a \$700,000 budget. Prior years, OARS typically had a budget under \$500,000. Ms. Malone further inquired if OARS would be able to expand the event. Mr. Brown answered that the event is capped at 60 participants due to the Concord boat ramp being a public space. Mr. Brown hopes to shuttle in participants in the near future.

The Board thanked Mr. Brown and Ms. Sties for the presentation.

Materials: Bedford 2026 Concord River Race Presentation

4. Discuss Hero's Act Aarrant Article- Joe Piantedosi

Joe Piantedosi presented the Hero's Act Warrant Article with the Board.

The Hero Act, enacted by the Massachusetts legislature during the winter of 2024–2025, established two new local options—Clauses 22I and 22J—aimed at enhancing tax relief for disabled veterans. Bedford has already adopted Chapter 59, Section 5C½, which increased eligible exemptions by 100%. Clause 22J is not necessary and cannot be applied concurrently; therefore, the article only pertains to Clause 22I.

The article proposes that the Town adopt Clause 22I, which allows for an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to the statutory real estate tax exemption amounts for qualified disabled veterans. The COLA is determined each year by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue based on the Social Security Consumer Price Index, ensuring that veteran exemptions maintain their value relative to inflation over time. If adopted, the annual COLA would automatically adjust all existing veteran exemptions under Clauses 22(a-f), 22A, 22B, 22C, 22E, and 22F - similar to the mechanism already applied to elderly exemptions. The cost of these adjustments would not be reimbursed by the State and would instead be funded through the Town's overlay account. In fiscal year 2025, approximately 75 veterans and surviving spouses received exemptions totaling under \$90,000, which would be eligible for a COLA beginning in fiscal year 2027 (July 1st, 2026). These exemptions range from \$800 - \$2,000 per veteran or surviving spouse, depending on eligibility criteria. The State's COLA is expected to range from 2% - 4% in the first year, which would increase the total annual exemption by approximately \$1,800 - \$3,600 (using \$90,000). If this article is adopted, the total exemption amount will continue to increase slightly each year. This modest impact is not expected to materially affect the Town's finances while providing important inflation relief to qualifying veterans.

The Board thanked Mr. Piantedosi for coming forward.

Materials: Hero Act Request from Joe P

5. First Review of Proposed FY27 Operating Budget

Matthew Hanson, Town Manager, presented the proposed FY27 Operating Budget to the Board.

The proposed FY27 Select Board discretionary operating budget is \$25,796,980, a 1.9% increase over FY26. The Town Manager's recommended budget is \$150,513 below the Finance Committee's requested guideline amount of \$25,947,494, a 2.5% increase. This year, the Highway Department Street Improvement, funded through Free Cash, is being reduced by \$150k. Without this reduction, the TM budget would increase by 2.5%. Meeting the guideline of 2.5% was possible through thoughtful and detailed revenue optimization, expense reductions, and restructuring certain staff positions. The most notable achievement in this year's budget was the closure of the longstanding Police Overtime deficit, through a \$200k increase, while still meeting the Finance Committee's guidelines. This line increased from \$450k to \$650k.

The budget proposes a 2.5% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for Salary Bylaw staff, supporting a commitment to not "balance the budget" at the expense of the town's ~70 non-union staff. Across all general government departments, approximately 3 FTE positions were eliminated, through a combination of eliminated part-time positions or hour reductions for a small number of part-time and full-time positions. The excess levy capacity for FY27 and estimates for FY28 and FY29. The Town typically supplements the operating budget with the full amount of Road

Improvement (paving) money requested in the Highway budget each year. \$1.6M in FY27. The excess levy is shown both with and without this influx of free cash.

Excess Levy Capacity as shown below:

	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
Unused Levy	\$3,738,484	\$1,856,850	(\$407,510)	(\$2,046,053)
Excluding Use of Free Cash	\$1,988,484	\$256,850	(\$2,007,510)	(\$3,646,053)

Mr. Hanson provided an overview of the adjustments of line items and reviewed department budgets, noting flat or small increases across departments, with notable changes in the Select Board budget. A \$50,000 increase for merit adjustments and a proposal to allocate \$30,000 - \$58,000 for an energy and sustainability consulting line item. There were two reductions to the Fire Department budget to maintain service levels. Chief Bailey explained it would be cost-neutral and improve response times. The Public works Department proposed reducing the budget from 1.75 million to \$1.6 million while maintaining a strong paving condition index. The Health Department requested a small increase to restore in-office therapy services. The I.T. Department's budget added additional funding allocated for a new dedicated fiber ISD for Bedford Public Schools. The elections line increased due to the number of upcoming elections in the fiscal year.

Mr. Mortenson inquired whether the 2.5% increase was presumed for the schools and asked about the use of the free cash line. Mr. Hanson responded that the figure encompasses 3.35% and 3.5% for the next two years. He further explained that the free cash line is included in the operating budget and would be used for road improvements. Mr. Hanegan requested an explanation for the disappearance of the excess levy. Mr. Hanson stated that a combination of factors, including fixed cost increases such as increased health insurance, funding for the new fire station, and other operational needs absorbed the excess levy.

The Board thanked Mr. Hanson for the in-depth FY27 Operating Budget presentation.

Materials: FinCom Budget Projection for FY27; FinCom Scorecard; FY27- Select Board Budget Presentation 1.12.26

6. Review Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant

The Board reviewed the draft for the Annual Town Meeting Warrant as presented below.

Article Warrants
Article 1 - Reports of Town Officers and Committees
Article 2 - Debate Rules
Article 3 - Consent Article
Article 4 - Bills of Prior Year
Article 5 - Revolving Funds Expenditure Limits
Article 6 - Community Preservation Budget—Fiscal Year 2027
Article 7 - Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Projects Plan
Article 8 - PEG Access and Cable Expense Related Budget—Fiscal Year 2027
Article 9 - Salary Administration Plan Bylaw Amendment—Classification & Wage Schedule
Article 10 - Appropriation to the Special Education Reserve Fund

Article 11 - Appropriations from Special Education Reserve Funds for Fiscal Year 2027
Article 12 - Operating Budgets—Fiscal Year 2027
Article 13 - Appropriation to Stabilization Fund
Article 14 - Ambulance Enterprise Budget—Fiscal Year 2027
Article 15 - Supplemental Accrued Leave Fund
Article 16 - General Bylaw Amendment—Article 56 Tax Deferral for Renovated Historic Properties
Article 17 - General Bylaw Amendments
Article 18 - Charter Amendments
Article 19 - General Bylaw Amendment—Article 56 Tax Deferral for Renovated Historic Properties
Article 20 - Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund Appropriation
Article 21 - Appropriate to 300th Anniversary Fund

Materials: ATM 2026 – Warrant Draft 2026.01.07

7. Consent

- a. Sign Permit – BHS Performing Arts Department
- b. Board And Committee Appointment – Steven Wightman, Taxation Aid Committee
- c. Ratify Town Manager Contract
- d. LLA Annual Certification Form

Mr. Hanegan moved that the Select Board appoint Steven Wightman to the Taxation Aid Committee for a 3-year term ending June 30, 2028, and authorize the Town Manager to sign letters on behalf of the Select Board to this effect. Mr. Parker seconded.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

Mr. Hanegan moved to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Malone seconded. The motion passed 4-0-0.

Materials: Appointments 1.5.26; BHS Musical Sign Request_Redacted; LLA Memo & Annual Certification Form; S. Wightman_Redacted; Town Manager Contact Memo

8. Liaison Report

Bopha Malone- Ms. Malone attended a Recreation Commission meeting.

Paul Mortenson- Mr. Mortenson attended a Transportation Advisory Committee and Wilson Park Committee meeting.

Dan Brosgol- Mr. Brosgol was absent.

Shawn Hanegan- Mr. Hanegan attended the Comprehensive Plan open house.

Terrence Parker- Mr. Parker attended a Fire Station Building Committee meeting. In addition, Mr. Parker will attend a Hanscom Field Advisory Commission meeting.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Hanegan moved to adjourn. Ms. Malone seconded.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.