

## Meeting minutes

### **East Longmeadow Financial Oversight Committee**

May 5, 2025, Zoom meeting

Meeting called to order by Chair Broderick at 4:30

#### **Attendance**

**FOC:** Jim Broderick chair, Richard Freccero, Kathy Hill, Anna Jones

**Town Council:** Kathy Hill, Anna Jones, Jon Torcia

**Attendees:** Tom Christensen Town Manager

#### **Motion to approve the minutes of the April 24 meeting**

Kathy Hill moved

Richard Freccero seconded

Vote 4-0

#### **Motion to approve the minutes of April 30 meeting**

Anna Jones moved

Kathy Hill seconded

Vote 4-0

#### **Motion to approve the Financial Oversight Committee letter to Town Council**

Discussion ensued on updating paragraph four of the letter

#### **Motion to approve the Financial Oversight Committee letter to Town Council**

Richard Freccero moved

Kathy Hill seconded

Vote 4-0

#### **Motion to adjourn at 4:45**

Kathy Hill moved

Anna Jones seconded

Vote 4-0

## **Below is the Financial Oversight Committee Letter to Town Council**

FY26 Financial Oversight Committee Budget Recommendation to Town Council

The East Longmeadow Town Council's Financial Oversight Committee recommends to the Town Council that it approve the 2026 Fiscal Year budget for the Town as submitted by the Town Manager, Tom Christensen, with no changes.

The Financial Oversight Committee met during the month of April to review, on behalf of the Town Council, the FY26 budget submitted to the Town Council by the Town Manager.

Members of the Financial Oversight Committee are as follows: Jim Broderick, Chair, Dawn Starks, Vice Chair, Rich Freccero, Kathleen Hill, Anna Jones, and Connor O'Shea, ex-officio Town Council President. We were fortunate also to have in regular attendance Marilyn Richards and Raph Page, and consequently posted, opened, and adjourned special town council meetings coincidental with our meetings. In addition, Tom Christensen and Director of Finance Kim Collins attended our meetings to answer committee members' questions regarding any assumptions and/or components of the budget. Finally, Superintendent Gordon Smith and Assistant Superintendent for Business Pam Blair attended our 4/24 meeting to provide the committee with additional understanding and insight into the education budget.

The overall general fund budget will increase 3.6%. The town side's 4.7% increase is a combination of a 2.3% increase in town department expenses, a 17.9% decrease in general fund debt, and a 9.6% increase in insurance, health & benefits, and retirement. The 2.5% increase in the education budget is achieved through the elimination of 19 staff positions in order to absorb, among other things, a 39% increase in special education tuition costs. It should be noted that the town's overall budget will increase 9.6%, as a result of a \$4.4 million increase in excluded debt for the new High School.

The FY26 general fund budget as submitted maintains the town's solid financial condition,

projecting taxing at a level \$1.3 million less than the maximum levy amount allowed by the state, although approximately \$300 thousand more than previous years' targets. The budget also protects reserves, which should remain within policy levels at a projected 5% for free cash and 8% in the stabilization fund.

Our compliments to Tom, and to Kim, town department heads, and to the School

Committee and school administration who worked cooperatively to put together a budget that reflects the realities of increased demands on the town's resources, particularly in the areas of contracted salary increases, insurance/health & benefits & retirement contributions, and special education tuition costs. The hard work was done during the discussions and cuts that took place prior to the submission of the Town Manager's final budget.

If the large increases in the area of insurance, health & benefits, and retirement contributions that the town is experiencing continues in the future, the funds available for town departments and the schools will only become more constrained. One thought would be to possibly investigate the existence of a third party resource which might assist the town in devising a plan to reduce the rate of increase in this category of expense.