



Town of Hopkinton office of Select Board

330 Main Street, Hopkinton, NH 03229-2627 - (603) 746-3170 – www.hopkinton-nh.gov

SELECT BOARD PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Hopkinton Town Hall – 330 Main Street,
Monday, November 24, 2025 - Approved

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Whitley called the Public Meeting of the Board to order at 5:34 p.m.

Select Board Members Present: Chair Sabrina Dunlap (arrived at 5:43), Steven Whitley, Victoria Bram, Alyssa McKeon, and Jeffrey Donohoe.

Staff Present: Karen Hambleton, Town Administrator

II. ADMINISTRATIVE (1:40)

i. Approval of Consent Agenda (03)

Ms. McKeon asked for more information about the MS-1 document. Ms. Hambleton indicated that the document represents the Town's total assessed valuation. Ms. Hambleton stated that the MS-1 has been completed and includes all the properties in the Town. She explained that the information on the MS-1 is reported to the Department of Revenue and used in the calculation of the tax rate. Mr. Whitley called for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

TOWN OF HOPKINTON - SELECT BOARD			
CONSENT AGENDA			
24-Nov-25			
ITEM	DATE	ACTION	COMMENT
AP MANIFEST			
PREVIOUSLY APPROVED - NO ACTION NEEDED			
AP MANIFEST DATED 11/12/2025			\$139,370.83
AP MANIFEST DATED 11/20/2025			\$182,055.97
OTHER			
MS-1 Total Assessed Valuation	11/24/2025	APPROVE	
Intent to Cut Map 220 Lot 27	11/24/2025	APPROVE	

Mr. Donohoe made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. McKeon and unanimously approved.

ii. Approval of the Public Meeting Minutes November 3, 2025 (04A)

Ms. Hambleton noted that corrections identified in the previous meeting had been made.

Ms. Bram made a motion to approve the Public Meeting Minutes of November 3, 2025. The motion was seconded by Ms. McKeon and unanimously approved.

iii. Approval of the Public Meeting Minutes November 10, 2025 (04B)

Ms. Bram noted that there was a typo on page 2: the discussion 'insured' should read 'ensured.'

Mr. Donohoe made a motion to approve the Public Meeting Minutes of November 10, 2025. The motion was seconded by Ms. McKeon and unanimously approved.

iv. Approval of the Nonpublic Meeting Minutes, November 3, 2025, Session I

Ms. McKeon made a motion to approve the Non-Public Meeting Minutes of November 3, 2025, Session 1, noting that they were sealed. The motion was seconded by Ms. Bram and was unanimously approved.

III. PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS (9:06)

i. Flood Insurance Study and Flood Insurance Rate Maps – Karen Robertson (05)
Planning Director, Karen Robertson, addressed the Board with a request to sign a resolution adopting the revised Flood Insurance Study and Flood Insurance Rate Maps, which will take effect in January 2026.

She noted the following points in her presentation.

- There is an upcoming meeting on December 1, 2025, at the Concord City Council Chambers to review the maps with the surrounding communities.
- FEMA has been working on these revisions since 2023.
- New elevation and modeling tools were used to develop the maps.
- Updates take effect January 23, 2026.
- The maps provide revisions to the Special Flood Hazard Area Boundary, also known as the 100-year flood maps.
- Hopkinton is impacted only in a small geographic area.
- The base flood elevation impacts where new construction can occur.
- Adoption is required to maintain participation in the National Flood Insurance Program and impacts eligibility for hazard mitigation grants and disaster assistance during flooding.

ii. Mr. Whitley made the following motion:

Pursuant Pursuant to RSA 674:57, by resolution of the Select Board, all lands designated as Special Flood Hazard Areas by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in its “Flood Insurance Study for the County of Merrimack, New Hampshire,” dated January 23, 2026 or as amended, together with the associated Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) panels listed below, all dated, January 23, 2026 or as amended, are declared to be part of the Town of Hopkinton’s Floodplain Management Ordinance and are hereby incorporated by reference:

FIRM Panels:	
33013C0314F	33013C0507F
33013C0318F	33013C0510F
33013C0482F	33013C0511F
33013C0485F	33013C0515F
33013C0492F	33013C0520F
33013C0501F	33013C0530F
33013C0502F	33013C0540F
33013C0503F	
33013C0504F	
33013C0506F	

The motion was seconded by Chair Dunlap and unanimously approved

IV. FINALIZATION OF 2026 SELECT BOARD BUDGET (16:54)

Waste Management Contract

Chair Dunlap asked if there had been any developments on the waste management contract. Ms. Hambleton indicated that she had spoken with both Casella and Waste Management to determine the best price for hauling and disposing of waste. She noted the following points.

- There may be value in separating both the hauling and disposal, but this approach is more difficult to coordinate.
- Waste Management is proposing \$106 per ton in the upcoming year, which is still up \$8 a ton from last year. This represents an increase of approximately \$26,000.
- Waste Management reduced the proposed increase from 13% to ~8.5%.
- Ms. Hambleton explained the terms of a five-year contract with Waste Management. The price per ton would increase in subsequent years: \$106 in the first year, \$111.30 in the second year, \$116.87 in the third year, \$122.71 in the fourth year, and then \$128.84 in the fifth year.
- Casella's alternative proposal was more expensive due to the hauling distance.

The Board discussed the challenges of using the Town’s smaller trailers, which are different from the contractor's trailers, and the potential sale of the Town's trailers.

The Board agreed to proceed with a Waste Management 5-year contract for trash transport and disposal, and to increase the line item from \$312,900 to \$339,200.

Budget Line-Item Considerations.

The Board discussed how merit raises are managed in the Budget. Ms. Bram summarized historical merit pay increases over the past few years. The Board discussed several line-item expenditures, including the following:

- Select Board expenses,
- vital record preservation,
- election expenses,
- fixed asset valuation,
- record storage (Image Silo),

- assessing expenditures,
- legal services,
- Planning Board overtime,
- Planning professional services – the Board requested more information on this item,
- ambulance overtime,
- professional services for Cemetery – considering cuts to fund for radar work that can be deferred to a future date,
- Cemetery tree maintenance/landscaping costs

Recreation

The Board discussed managing milfoil maintenance through the Capital Improvement Fund. Ms. Bram suggested increasing overtime to offset staffing cuts at Kimball Pond. Chair Dunlap commended Ms. Simpkins for developing a solution that keeps Kimball Pond open to the public, despite staffing shortages.

Fire Department and Ambulance Billing Rates

Mr. Donohoe proposed reducing the Fire Department conferences and training to \$2,000. Chair Dunlap raised questions about ambulance billing rates. Ms. Hambleton summarized ambulance billing increases, which will increase from 120% to 325% of Medicare rates, as allowed under the current Senate Bill. Chair Dunlap explained that because the State is banning balanced billing, it means towns like Hopkinton need to make a good-faith effort to enter into a network with commercial insurance companies to be eligible for the 325% rate.

Highway Budget

Mr. Whitley asked whether the Board could ensure that encumbrances were placed on amounts not yet spent so they could be preserved for their intended purpose rather than reverting to the cash balance.

Executive Telephone

Ms. Bram raised questions about executive telephone rates and whether the proposed budget increases reflected actual expenses. Ms. Hambleton indicated that it did.

Payment in Lieu of Taxes PILOT

The Board discussed updating the PILOT program agreements.

Radio Replacement and Maintenance Costs

Ms. McKeon asked for clarification on whether radio repairs are covered in maintenance trusts or in the operating budget. Ms. Hambleton explained that the Maintenance Trust funds radio replacements. Ms. Hambleton indicated that she is unsure why the Highway radios are budgeted in two places, but as a rule, general maintenance should be in the operating budget. Ms. McKeon expressed the need for a standard approach to allocating recurring maintenance costs between the operating budget and the maintenance trust funds.

Cleaning Fees

Ms. Dunlap questioned the high cleaning fee at the Slusser Center, which is \$15,000/year. Ms. Hambleton explained that this results from the frequency of cleaning. Chair Dunlap suggested looking for a lower-cost cleaning service.

Buildings and Grounds

Mr. Whitley suggested encumbering the remaining unspent funds in Buildings and Grounds to pay for equipment requests in 2026. Chair Dunlap indicated that she understood that the unspent money would likely be spent this year.

Overall Request For Next Meeting

Mr. Whitley asked Ms. Hambleton to present the change in dollars and the percentage increase from last year's budget to understand better how to project next year's budget. Ms. McKeon asked that budget reductions decided at the meeting be summarized/highlighted at the next meeting.

Office Supplies

Ms. Bram raised concerns about the high cost of office supplies. She noted that the Police Department has a negative expense rate, suggesting they may have received a refund. She asked if any increase is needed on this item in 2026. The Board discussed office supply budgets of various departments. Ms. Bram suggested moving all the office supply line items closer to actual costs. The Board agreed to review the year-to-date numbers at the next meeting.

Computer Replacements

Ms. Bram asked if it was necessary to increase the line item for computer replacements. Ms. Bram explained that the annual replacement cycle had been accelerated this year and that this line item is overspent as a result. Ms. Hambleton indicated that she would look more closely into the replacement schedule and whether it was townwide in 2025 or just for the Library.

Maintenance Trust Fund

Ms. McKeon addressed the need for a standard budgeting approach to recurring maintenance that consistently manages these items, either in the maintenance trust or in the operating budget. She asserted that it was the role of the Select Board to provide a framework for the Departments on where items should be budgeted and, simultaneously, create more predictability and stability in the budget. Ms. McKeon suggested that planning for high, recurring costs that are not annual could be managed similarly to the library model, which builds up funding over the years and then spends it before starting the cycle again.

Payroll Liability Trust

Ms. McKeon asked that the payroll liability trust line item be maintained at a certain level, funding only what is needed to keep the total fund at \$20,000. Chair Dunlap raised concerns that the auditors might recommend maintaining this fund at a level above \$20,000. Ms. McKeon suggested allocating \$2,000 to this fund annually for the next 6 or 7 years, and adjusting as needed.

Human Services Trust Fund

Ms. McKeon asked Ms. Hambleton to follow up on this fund and the intended purpose and use.

Skate Park Repairs and Signage

Ms. McKeon asked if this was a new item and how the money would be used. Ms. Hambleton noted that there has been no consistent way to track annual expenditures for various CIP projects and that she is proactively tracking what has been raised for specific projects. Mr. Whitley explained that funds are allocated to the maintenance trust for a list of potential projects and that they are spent when the required level for a priority project is reached.

Overall Maintenance Trust

Ms. McKeon noted that she understood the maintenance trust is for maintenance, not replacement. Ms. Bram noted that the many items in the Maintenance Trust are held indefinitely and drive the budget. Mr. Donohoe indicated that this is how the budget is usually managed and that large-ticket items are pushed out to ensure the budget is managed annually. Ms. Hambleton noted that the Maintenance Trust addresses items that need to be planned for, but do not necessarily exceed the \$10,000 threshold for CIP requests.

Mr. Whitley asked for clarification about the total appropriation for the Maintenance Trust. Ms. Hambleton indicated that the total appropriation for 2026 is \$130,000. He asked if the year-over-year difference could be more clearly presented in the final budget. The Board discussed what was driving the increase to \$130,000 and how earmarked unspent funding is rolled over from year to year. The Board discussed the Houston Barn and why this is in the Maintenance Trust rather than the CIP. Ms. McKeon stated that the framework and guidance should be developed to ensure consistency. Ms. McKeon indicated that she believed maintenance trusts should be used for things that “zigzag” and that require savings for larger expenditures that are coming. She stated that items that are spent down every year should not be in the Maintenance Trust. Ms. Bram noted that sufficient funds were not set aside for the Houston Barn.

Ms. McKeon noted the following two takeaways:

- Check with Human Services Director Lisette Cid regarding the Human Services Trust Fund;
- Adjust the Payroll Liability Trust Fund;
- Verify that all the appropriations for the portable radios have been appropriately moved.
- Address the budgeting framework for maintenance vs. operating budget.

Capital Reserve CIP

Mr. Whitley noted that a forestry truck was budgeted for the Fire Department in 2026 for \$95,000.

Town Hall Renovation

Mr. Whitley asked if the Town Hall renovation is still going forward. Ms. Hambleton indicated that some interior work was likely, but that outside work and the Town Hall generator could be deferred as an expenditure and held in the Capital Reserve Fund until final plans are determined. The Board discussed Town Hall renovations. Ms. Hambleton noted that office work in the north side of the building and the provision of conference space are high priorities. The Board discussed potential interior improvements to Town Hall and site improvements that had greater urgency, including the septic tank. Ms. Hambleton indicated that the project should be viewed holistically, with all work contributing to the Town’s ultimate plans and vision for the Town Hall.

Public Works

- Mr. Whitley noted a \$300,000 increase in expenditures for 2026. The Board determined that the funds were for sludge removal and Public Works expenditures.
- A trailer purchase was deferred from 2025 to 2026.
- A new pickup truck costing \$70,000 is identified in 2026 for Public Works.
- \$40,000 has been identified for a heavy equipment trailer in 2026
- Pending a decision on the contract with Waste Management, there is \$116,700 budgeted for a new trailer in 2027.

Road and Bridge

Mr. Whitley noted significant changes in the Road and Bridge Fund. Ms. Hambleton explained that the change was due to the East Penacook Culvert replacement project.

George Park Track

Ms. Hambleton indicated that the George Park Track, funded by the Town, School, and private funds, was pushed to 2041 to keep it active as a project. Chair Dunlap agreed that this should remain in the CIP but be revisited later.

George Park Bathrooms

Ms. Bram asked about George Park bathrooms. Ms. Hambleton indicated that the money for the work had been raised, although the work is not complete.

Appropriating Funding for Long-Term Projects

Ms. McKeon raised concerns about the tax implications of continuing to allocate funds to long-term projects that may lack a firm expenditure plan, citing Town Hall improvements as an example. She suggested that a modest amount could achieve the minor renovations planned for 2026. Mr. Whitley suggested that if the aggregate tax rate is too high, these long-term projects could be revisited at the next meeting, but that, in the long term, a significant amount of money is needed for all the Town Hall renovations. Ms. Hambleton stated that the proposed appropriation for Town Hall renovations at this time would allow for a more stable tax rate in the future. Ms. McKeon stated that she preferred a steady appropriation year over year. Chair Dunlap asked if it would be possible to meet with the CIP Committee to address questions. The Board discussed how to manage long-term projects funded by the Board.

Mr. Whitley made a motion to leave the town hall renovation CRF as is currently indicated in this spreadsheet for budget planning purposes. The motion was seconded by Chair Dunlap and approved by a vote of 3 to 2.

Ms. McKeon asked if the amount dedicated to Town Hall renovations could be reduced to \$50,000 annually and establish a steady, consistent rate of savings. The decision was made to discuss this change at the next meeting.

Ms. Hambleton summarized the total budget, noting that the operating budget is \$10,100,000 (including change for the Transfer Station), \$2,297,000 for the CIP, and \$130,000 in the Maintenance Trusts for a total of \$12,528,000 in appropriations.

Sewer Fund

Ms. Hambleton stated that the request for the sewer fund is \$271,000.

Bond Payments

The Board discussed the bond payments in the Budget. The Board agreed to ask the Finance Director, Kelly Henley, about anticipated bond payments for 2026. Ms. Hambleton stated she would provide more details about bond payments related to the septage lagoons.

East Penacook Road Culvert

Discussion ensued regarding whether there were any options to defer the project, including patching or repairing the culvert as a short-term solution. The Board asked Ms. Hambleton to discuss potential options with the Public Works Director.

Upcoming Scheduling

The Board discussed whether Ms. Bram's presentation to the Budget Committee could be moved. Ms. Bram suggested asking the Budget Committee Chair whether the Budget presentation could take place on December 17th. The Board discussed the process for managing feedback from the Budget Committee on the Budget and the final vote on the Budget that will be placed on the warrant. The Board agreed to meet on December 9, 2025.

Tax Rate Setting and Fund Balance

The Board discussed the schedule for setting the tax rate. Mr. Whitley indicated that the Board had information about the fund balance to determine the tax rate. The fund balance was used to offset taxes. Ms. Hambleton summarized the rules regarding fund balance used based on the Department of Revenue Administration regulations. Ms. Hambleton indicated that, given the upcoming anticipated bond payments, the Town should be cautious about utilizing too much fund balance to offset the tax rate.

Summary Discussion

The Board summarized the following takeaways, including those requiring further discussion.

- Questions in the operating Budget will be more fully addressed at the next meeting.
- Proposed cuts will be updated in documents
- Ms. Hambleton will notify the CIP Committee that \$2,000 will be appropriated to the payroll liability fund annually until it reaches \$20,000.
- The Board will have a follow-up discussion in January regarding a framework for funding items in the maintenance trust versus the operation budget.
- The landfill costs will be more fully addressed in the budget when the cost estimates for repair are available.
- The Board would like to revisit installing a gate at the Transfer Station at a future meeting for inclusion in the CIP.
- The Board will continue to work on the job description for the EDC Director.
- The Board will discuss the effective date of ambulance rate increases at their next meeting.
- Kelly Henley will be asked to attend the December 9th meeting.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Donohoe made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Whitley and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Mesa-Zendt
Executive Assistant/Grant Coordinator