LONDONDERRY BUDGET COMMITTEE
Minutes for January 20, 2026

Sunnycrest Conference Room, 268B Mammoth Road, Londonderry, NH 03053

Present: Joseph Gagnon - Chair, Kate Burbidge – Vice Chair, Nicole Dery – Secretary, Patrick El Azem- Member at large, Rebecca Roe - Member at large, Sara Meier - Member at large, Ryan Cronin - Member at large)

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by J. Gagnon.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** J. Gagnon led the Pledge of Allegiance

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT**
   - Motion to open public comment K. Burbidge, second N. Dery, all in favor (7-0).

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Jan. 13 minute approval – motion to approve, K. Burbidge; second, R. Roe. (all in favor 7-0)

5. **SCHOOL WARRANT ARTICLE RECOMMENDATIONS:** The chair outlines a clear method: read the warrant article in full (when necessary), open for discussion, and then proceed to motion to "recommend" the article, with seconding and voting.

   a. Article 2: General Fund Operating Budget: Discussion centers on process and clarity for motions. The committee ultimately moves to recommend the article, voting affirmatively.

   b. Article 3: Full Day Kindergarten (special article): Acknowledged as a "no-brainer" and supported; motion to recommend passes.

   c. Article 4: Custodians AFS CME Local 18011 bargaining agreement - discussion leads to a motion to recommend; vote passes.

   d. Article 5: Authorization of special meeting on cost items - A brief discussion; gains approval.

   e. Article 6: School lunch programs and federal funds - Agreement to accept funds; motion to recommend approved.

   f. Article 7: District/town leases of offices - Noted as a "collaboration" and "creative" solution; recommendation passes.

   g. Article 8 Buildings and Grounds Capital reserve funds – recommended by BC

   h. Article 9 Technology Infrastructure Capital reserve funds - recommended by BC

   i. Article 10 Equipment Capital reserve funds – recommended by BC

   j. Article 11 Vehicle & Machinery reserve funds – recommended by BC

   k. Article 12: Employees benefits capital reserve fund - A brief exchange about future funding strategies and potential growth of the reserve; motion to recommend passes with affirmations.

   l. Article 13: Acceptance of donations - Positive commentary on leveraging donations for community projects; motion to recommend passes.

   m. Article 14: Citizens petition warrant article (tax cap discussion) - A lengthy debate unfolds about whether the budget committee should record a vote, consistency with past practice, and the conceptual fit of a state-level tax cap with local budgeting.

*VOTE to decide if BC will give recommendations for this article: Motion - K. Burbidge, second – N. Dery (all in favor – 2; opposed – 5). Decision is BC will not make official recommendation on citizen petitions articles 14.

n. Article 15: Citizen's petition Education Freedom Accounts – BC decides it is not within their scope to officially recommend articles that do not have direct local tax implications.

*VOTE to decide if BC will give recommendations for this article: Motion - K. Burbidge, second – N. Dery (all in favor – 3; opposed – 4). Decision is BC will not make official recommendation on citizen petitions articles 15.

6. **TOWN WARRANT ARTICLE RECOMMENDATIONS:** The chair explains we will proceed in the same format as we did with school recommendations.

a. Article 4: Bond Issue for Morrison Meeting House

- Members acknowledged the cost estimate is accurate/legitimate for the work required but debated if it is a "need" versus a "want."
- Concerns were raised regarding more pressing town needs (Water System, future DPW building).
- Members expressed frustration over the lack of a plan for revenue generation, grant seeking, or covenants to sell the property while preserving history.
- Significant concern regarding adding future operating costs (heating, cleaning) after the committee worked hard to cut the current operating budget.
  - Vote**:** (0 Yes, 5 No, 2 Abstentions).

b. Article 6: Fiscal Year 2027 Town Operating Budget
- The committee praised the collaborative effort to provide detailed, justified cuts rather than arbitrary percentage reductions.
  - Vote: Recommended (Unanimous / All in favor).

c. Article 7: Construction of School District Office - Minimal discussion. Members comment this is a no-brainer.
  - Vote: Recommended **(**All in favor).

d. Article 8: Expendable Maintenance Trust Fund - Vote: Recommended (All in favor).

e. Article 9: Roadway Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund - Vote: Recommended (All in favor).

f. Article 10: Fire Department Truck Capital Reserve Fund
- Identified as a critical need.
- Noted that only three companies still make these trucks and wait times are up to two years, so the order needs to be placed soon.
  - Vote: Recommended (All in favor).

g. Article 11: Fire Department Equipment Capital Reserve Fund
- Identified as a need, specifically regarding Personal Safety equipment and defibrillators.
- It was clarified that proper financing of the Fire Truck (Article 10) frees up appropriation money to fund the equipment, allowing the department to equip everyone at once rather than a phased rollout.
- Financial Strategy: The committee discussed a strategy ("arbitrage") where the town will utilize a 0% interest offer from a vendor to pay for equipment over time, while keeping the appropriated money in the account to earn interest. This interest will help offset future costs, specifically the SCBA (breathing apparatus) replacement needed in 4-5 years.
  - Vote: Recommended **(**Unanimous)

h. Article 12: Information Technology Capital Reserve Fund
- Purpose: **To replace the town's ERP system (Finance, HR, Payroll).**

- Urgency: **The** current vendor is no longer selling the software and will eventually stop supporting it. The town risks losing security patches and the ability to format reports for the NH Retirement System (NHRS).
- Timeline: It takes ~18 months to implement a new system, so the town is already "behind the eight ball."
    - Vote: Recommended (All in favor).

i. Article 13: Recreation Capital Reserve Fund
    - Vote: Recommended (All in favor).

j. Article 14: Pillsbury Cemetery Expansion Capital Reserve Fund
- Current Status: **The fund currently has roughly $524,000.**
- Need: **The cemetery is running tight on space; residency limits were previously imposed.**
- Plan: The expansion will include columbariums to increase density and reduce the physical space needed for burials.
    - Vote: Recommended (All in favor).

k. Article 15: Cable Equipment Capital Reserve Fund
    - Vote: Recommended (6 Yes, 1 Abstention)

l. Article 16: Fire Department Add One Full-Time Executive Assistant
- Chief's Input: The incoming Fire Chief confirmed this position is a priority; you cannot add "boots on the ground" without administrative support to manage them.
- Standardization**:** A committee member noted that after researching surrounding towns, an executive assistant is standard for a department of this size.
- Growth**:** Necessary to keep up with the town's growth and the previous addition of 5 firefighters a year and a half ago.
    - Vote: Recommended (All in favor).

m. Article 17: Fire Department Add One Full-Time Fire Training Officer
- Role Clarity: Discussion revolved around whether this officer acts as "boots on the ground" or strictly a trainer.
- Skepticism: One member expressed hesitation, noting that in other towns, the training officer is often a uniformed firefighter integrated into the standard rotation, rather than a separate full-time position.
- Members discussed need for training for young or less experienced staff
    - Vote: (Split vote: 5 Yes, 2 No).

n. Article 18: Human Resources Department Part-Time Human Resources Assistant
- Priority**:** The HR Director previously identified this position (Assistant) as the higher priority over the Specialist (Article 19).
- Workload**:** The HR department is small but managing a growing workforce, onboarding, benefits, and retiree benefits.
- Concerns**:** One member expressed concern about "hiring part-time, retaining part-time" and the potential for this to slip into a full-time budget item next year without voter oversight.
- Counterpoint**:** Others viewed HR as "risk managers" for the town and argued that phasing out a part-time role if unnecessary is easier than a full-time one.
    - Vote: (6 Yes, 1 No).

o. Article 19: Human Resources Department Part-Time Human Resources Specialist
- Purpose**:** Position viewed as risk reduction (preventing wrongful termination/harassment lawsuits).
- Cost Savings: The Town Manager explained that recent internal investigations cost tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees ($256/hr for attorneys vs. ~$40/hr for this specialist).
- Precedent**:** The Manager cited previous experience where a part-time specialist (a retired police chief) successfully handled investigations, significantly reducing legal costs.
- Current Situation: Several investigations are currently underway, expected to cost another $30k-$40k, blowing the legal budget.
    - Vote: Recommended (Split vote: 4 Yes, 2 No, 1 Abstention).

p. Article 20: Establish and Fund a Revolving Fund for Senior Affairs in the Senior Center
- Vote: Recommended (All in favor).

q. Article 21: Establish and Fund a Capital Reserve Fund for Transportation
- Traffic Issues: Members agreed this is a necessary step to start resolving known traffic issues in town and to have funds ready for projects identified by traffic committees.
  - Vote: Recommended (All in favor).

r. Article 22: Municipal & Transportation Fund (mechanism is $5 on motor registrations)
- Member driving initiative speaks on behalf of the article, explaining why he does not want any amendments, referencing BC member J. Gagnon's statement at recent town council meeting with his intention to modify language to more narrowly fit the original intention of improving CART transport services in town.
- Other members state why they prefer to keep the broad language in the warrant so that extra fund may be used for other transportation improvements.
  - Vote: (3 yes, 3 no, 1 abstain)

s. Article 23: Reallocation of Remaining Funds Appropriated for the High Range Road Water Supply Project
- Vote: Recommended (All in favor).

t. Article 24: Establish and Fund Water System Capital Reserve Fund
- Necessity: Members noted it is necessary because there are residents with polluted water in town, and there is no way around addressing it.
  - Vote: Recommended **(**All in favor).

u. Article 25: Fund Water Special Assessment District
- Town as Lender: One member expressed concern about the town essentially handing out low/no-interest private loans to homeowners.
- Clarification**:** It was clarified that this fund covers the cost of connection from the "curb to the house" (street lines are covered by grants).
- Context**:** This addresses a specific inequity where the state drew an "arbitrary line" regarding water contamination (St. Gobain). Residents on one side got free hookups; those on the other side didn't, despite having contaminated water through no fault of their own.
- Mechanism**:** This allows residents to hook up now and pay the cost over time. If they move, the remaining cost stays with the property/next owner.
  - Vote: (6 Yes, 1 No).

v. Article 26: Citizens Petition - Establish Capital Reserve Fund, Reverend Morrison Meeting House (Lions Hall)
- Funding Source: Strong opposition to using the "undesignated fund balance" for this purpose, with members calling it a "slippery slope."
- Feasibility**:** Members argued the amount requested is insufficient to do anything meaningful, given the building needs ~$3.3 million in repairs (referenced in Article 4).
- Logic**:** It makes no sense to set aside small funds now; if the bond (Article 4) passes, maintenance should be budgeted later as an operating cost.
  - Vote: Not Recommended (0 Yes, 7 No - Unanimous disapproval).

w. Articles 27 & 28: Citizens Petitions

- **Discussion:** These articles were noted as Citizens Petitions with no budgetary impact. The Budget Committee determined they had no role in voting on them.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Motion to open public comment K. Burbidge, second N. Dery, (all in favor 7-0)

Paul Skudlarek speaks about Article 27: State and Federal government are taking back some of the $$ sent to the town, which does and will impact town revenues & taxes. It's important to trim costs, but just as important to monitor and protect revenue coming into the town. Asks that the Budget Committee engage with state reps on the topic of revenues sent to the town.

8. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- **Review Quarterly report with Finance dept:** On track. Some lines may show a lot of spend or lack there of based on when exactly that particular service or line items is billed or used.
- **Budget Committee Annual Report:** BC will have content in town annual report starting this year. Due to time constraints, K. Burbidge offers to draft it for the next meeting.

9. **PUBLIC COMMENT.** Motion to open public comment K. Burbidge, second N. Dery, (all in favor 7-0)

John Wilson: Wants to confirm that budget committee members will not try to amend the article at the deliberative session. J. Gagnon clarifies that he would still like to adjust the language at deliberative and the committee will need to then vote again.

10. ADJOURNMENT

- Motion to adjourn K. Burbidge; second N. Dery, all in favor (7-0)

11. MEETING SCHEDULE:

Jan 29 Strategic Planning and the Annual Report
Feb 19: regular meeting

Warrant Article #	Title	Patrick el azem	Joseph Gagnon	Kate Burbidge	Nicole Dery	Rebecca Roe	Sarah Meier	Ryan Cronin	Total Y	Total N	Total A	First motion to open recommendation for article, second motion (KB = Burbidge, ND = Dery, PE = El-Azem, RR = R. Roe, SM = Meier)
2	Charter Ammendment: remove outdated info								0	0	0	
3	Charter Ammendment: reorganize information								0	0	0	
4	Bond for Morrison Meeting House	N	N	A	N	N	N	A	0	5	2	KB, ND
5	Town Clerk position benefits								0	0	0	N/A
6	Town Operating Budget	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	0	0	KB, RR
7	Construction of school district office	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	0	0	KB, RR
8	Expendable maintenance trust fund	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	0	0	KB, PE
9	Roadway maintenance expendable trust fund	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7	0	0	KB, ND
10	Fire Dept truck capital reserve fund	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7	0	0	KB, PE
11	Fire Dept. Equipment capital reserve fund	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7	0	0	KB, RR
12	IT capital reserve fund	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7	0	0	KB, RR
13	Recreation capital reserve fund	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7	0	0	KB, ND
14	Pillsbury cemetery expansion capital reserve fund	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7	0	0	KB, SM
15	Cable Equipment Capital reserve fund	A	y	y	y	y	y	y	6	0	1	KB, ND
16	Fire Dept - add 1 FTE Executive Assistant	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7	0	0	KB, PE
17	Fire Dept - add 1 FTE Training Officer	y	y	y	y	N	y	N	5	2	0	KB, ND
18	HR Dept - 1 part time HR Assistant	y	N	y	y	y	y	y	6	1	0	KB, ND
19	HR Dept - 1 part time HR Specialist	y	n	y	y	y	a	n	4	2	1	KB, ND
20	Senior fund	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7	0	0	KB, RR
21	capital reserve fund for transportation	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7	0	0	KB, RR
22	Municipal transportation & Improvement fund	a	n	y	y	n	n	y	3	3	1	KB, ND
23	Reallocation of fund for high range road water supply	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7	0	0	kb, RR
24	Establish water system capital reserve fund	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7	0	0	KB, ND
25	Fund water Special Assessment	N	y	y	y	y	y	y	6	1	0	KB, RR
26	Petition warrant: Morrison Metting House	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	0	7	0	KB, RR
27	NA								0	0	0	open public comment, KB/RR; Paul speaking
28	NA								0	0	0	
											0	

*Based on average price of Londonderry, NH home as of January 2025 ($575k)
** Tax impact calculated for FY26 only