

2026-01-14 Board of Selectmen Minutes

Town of Canterbury, NH
Board of Selectmen
Date: 2026 January 14
Location: Meeting House

Selectmen: Scott Doherty (Chair), Beth Blair, Calvin Todd

Town Administrator: Ken Folsom

Budget Committee: Jan Stout, Cheryl Gordon, Bob Scarponi, Randi Johnson (via Zoom)

Others Present: Kal McKay (Admin Assistant), Edgar Rivera (Libertad Press NE)

1. Call to Order

- a. The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. 2026 Budget

a. Operating Budget

- i. Ken went over the latest budget draft being presented today. At the last meeting with the Budget Committee the over all operating expenses increase was well over 4%. Today it is at 1.7% (\$60,586 more than 2025). This budget includes a 3.5% COLA. Ken didn't have a chance to calculate what percent of the overall budget the wages were.
- ii. The main change that has occurred is the Police Department wages. The Selectboard decided to do a 3.5% COLA plus retention bonuses and they cut the vacant position. Chief Crotty will get updated information on the needs of the department so the wages and number of positions can be adjusted in the 2027 budget.
- iii. Jan asked how much the retention bonuses would be. Ken explained the bonuses would make up the difference between the 3.5% COLA and what they would have received if the Selectboard had implemented the wage step plan in 2026.
- iv. Ken explained that wages and extended shifts have been the main concern of the Police Department. Officers are regularly doing 16 hour shifts and OT. The retention bonus is to try and keep the officers we have while a comprehensive plan is created for 2027.
- v. Canterbury's contribution to Penacook Rescue Squad only increased \$1,888 (1%). This is because PRS changed the way they determine our share of the costs. It was just using population, now it is using population and call volume. Ken and Beth met with PRS, Merrimack County, and Boscawen to discuss the budget and how the County's facilities are disproportionately affecting Boscawen (40% of Boscawen's calls are to County facilities). The County is considering but has not yet decided if they will contribute to PRS. Boscawen's bill went up ~\$200K from 2025 to 2026.
- vi. The Selectboard told the Library Trustees at the Trustee's meeting on Monday night that they would contribute \$300K to the Library in 2026. This conforms with the Budget Committee's recommendation to only allow a 3% increase (\$265K) while also accommodating the increased healthcare costs that were determined after the 3% was calculated (\$35K). Ken explained that the Library budget will be displayed differently in the Town Report this year. The operating budget will only show the \$300K that the Town will be contributing. The full Library Trustees' budget will be displayed separately.
- vii. Jan asked about the increase in the audit budget (line 4150.4). Ken explained that is due to the cost for the auditors going up a little and the auditors now requiring that the Town use an actuarial. The Selectboard have signed a 5 year contract with the actuarial: \$3,500 for the first year and \$1,500 for subsequent years.

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- viii. Bob asked about the revenues for 2026. Ken explained that currently we estimate \$42K to offset costs in the operating budget. There aren't too many delinquent taxes. The State has given out extra money the last few years, but their budget is not in good shape so in 2026 we are likely to only get the regular money. The State part of the funding is reliant on tourism and driven by the economy.
 - ix. Jan asked about the payout for unused PTO. Scott explained the Selectboard decided to do a one-time payment to employees for PTO that they would have lost in 2026 due to the 2-year accrual maximum. The Board felt it was unfair to have those employees lose money since they weren't able to take the time off due to staffing shortages. This is a one-time payout and is not changing the personnel policy. Going forward, unused PTO will continue to be lost once the 2-year accrual maximum is reached.
 - x. Police Department Wages
 - 1. There was further discussion about the PD wages.
 - 2. At the Selectboard meeting on Monday (1/12) morning, the Selectboard decided to do a 3.5% COLA and retention bonuses that equaled 10% of the officer's annualized 2025 wages plus \$1K. At that meeting Kal miscalculated and stated that those bonuses would be more than the difference between a 3.5% COLA and what the officers would have made had the step program been implemented in 2026. That was only true for half of the officers. Kal discovered their error yesterday (1/13) and updated the budget that was presented tonight to include larger retention bonuses that would make up the difference between a 3.5% COLA and what the officers would have made had the step program been implemented in 2026.
 - 3. Scott and Calvin had each come into the office ahead of this meeting so they were briefed, but Beth was not.
 - 4. Scott and Calvin recall the intention agreed upon at the meeting on Monday was to make the officers "whole" without memorializing raises before the needs of the Dept. and step program could be assessed.
 - 5. Beth recalled the intention was to give retention bonuses that would equal about half of the money saved by not budgeting for the vacancy, not to make the officers "whole".
 - 6. Bob warned the Selectboard that they will need to explain that this bonus is why the Police Chief line looks like it is getting a 14.7% raise.
 - 7. Jan agreed that the retention bonuses were a reasonable stop gap for this year, but was also concerned that this year it looks like a 14.7% raise for the Chief and next year it will look like his pay was cut when the bonus doesn't happen again.
 - 8. Randi spoke about how these significant retention bonuses should only be done if the officers we are trying to keep are stellar and have no complaints. Scott explained that complaints are often filed out of spite; all complaints are thoroughly investigated, but the existence of a complaint doesn't necessarily mean the officer isn't doing their job well. Ken explained how annual personnel evaluations are conducted and that the current officers had no issues.
 - xi. Jan asked about the EMT wages (line 4220.00). This line is used to pay all of the part-timers who fill the regular Monday through Friday shifts. Herb Batchelder does Monday-Wednesday and others fill in per diem Thursday and Friday.
 - xii. Bob asked why the Town switched from Belmont Rescue to Loudon Rescue. Ken explained that Fire Chief Gamache met with both towns and felt Loudon was a better option.
- b. Warrant Articles
- i. No petition warrant articles have been received yet. All of the articles presented tonight are from the Selectboard. The last day to receive a petition is 2/3/26.

- ii. Ken recapped the articles that had already been reviewed by the Budget Committee and elaborated on the new/updated articles.
- iii. Battery Operated Extrication Equipment
 - 1. The current “jaws of life” that the Town has uses a gasoline powered engine and has hoses that hook to the tools. The gas engine must be placed on a level surface in order to run. If the hoses aren’t long enough to reach the nearest level surface and the vehicle, that causes problems.
 - 2. Chief Gamache would like to switch to battery operated equipment because it is easier to use and this type of technology has now been in the market long enough that it has been proven reliable.
 - 3. This would cost \$50K total. \$40K could come from a CRF, and \$10K would need to be raised by taxes.
- iv. Capital Reserve Fund Contributions
 - 1. A total of \$139K of contributions are proposed.
 - 2. \$50K is new this year to begin saving for the next fire truck.
 - 3. Since the Rescue Truck is being replaced with a regular truck, the annual contribution to save for the next one is reduced from \$12K to \$8K.
- v. Copier for Town Office
 - 1. Ken explained that he tried using the copier to print out handouts for this meeting, but it jammed and folded the paper like an accordion (as it often does these days). The copier is old and has outlived its time. This warrant article would budget \$4K for a new one.
- vi. Waste Oil Burner
 - 1. Ken contacted the manufacturer and engineering firm to confirm that DES still allows these to be installed.
 - 2. Currently the Town is getting rid of used waste oil through a Loudon company that takes it for free. In the past, the company has stopped taking oil/refused to take our oil. When they don’t take it, it costs \$10K each time to have Clean Harbors come pump the tank for us.
 - 3. Installing our own waste oil burner for \$20K would prevent that from happening again and provide heat for the Highway Garage.
- vii. Packer Truck
 - 1. Last time the Budget Committee met, they discussed the Aries Engineering Report.
 - 2. The packer truck has reached the end of its life; the hopper is rusted through again, there is an issue with the turbo charger, and ~20K hours on the motor. In 2025 we had to put almost \$15K of repairs into it.
 - 3. Used packer trucks are available from \$120K to \$150K. The Selectboard would also like to retrofit it with an electric hydraulic pump with quick connects so that it wouldn’t need to run all day.
 - 4. There is no CRF for this, so it would be \$170K in tax dollars.
 - 5. This would give the Selectboard more time to look at the options for the overall future of the Transfer Station and get feedback from residents.
 - 6. Bob suggested doing a bond instead, but Ken explained it is too late to notice a bond for this year.
 - 7. The estimated tax impact for this article is \$0.41 per \$1K, which would be \$165.41 for a \$400K home.
- viii. Establish CRF for Salt Shed
 - 1. Our salt shed is in rough shape and needs to be replaced. Based on costs from other towns, it would be anywhere from \$150K to \$250K to replace. This will be needed eventually, so we should begin saving now.

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- ix. Revolving Funds
 - 1. Two articles are to establish revolving funds for off duty details that the Police and Fire Dept. do.
 - x. Community Power Adder Funds
 - 1. If community power customers opt up to the Canterbury Basic plan, they pay an extra 0.2 cents per kWh. That money is called an “adder” and those funds are put into a savings account for the Town.
 - 2. The DRA requires we use a warrant article to put that money in the Renewable Energy CRF that was created last year.
 - xi. Sam Lake House Trust
 - 1. The Town has had a CRF for the Sam Lake House for many years. Both tax dollars and forced distributions from the Sam Lake Trust have been put into that account. The DRA has decided that we need to separate the tax dollars from the trust money and put any trust money into an ETF. We are working with the Trustees of the Trust Funds to determine what amount needs to be moved from the CRF to an ETF.
 - 2. The ETF matches the language of the Sam Lake trust which specifies the money be used for the “for the betterment, improvements, or other purposes that might be brought about on Sam Lake’s home place”. What exactly the limits of this statement are is an open question that would have to be determined by lawyers.
 - 3. Until someone comes forward and takes it to court, the Town is only using the money on infrastructure improvements made to the Sam Lake House and the Sam Lake House Garage.
 - c. The first public hearing for the budget will be at the 2/2/26 Selectboard meeting. If any drastic changes happen before that, they will let the Budget Committee know.
 - d. Ken explained the laddered CD investments the Town has been doing with the excess funds in the Unreserved Fund Balance.
 - e. Beth asked if the Land Use Change Tax money could also be invested. It has ~\$400K in it that won’t be used until the Conservation Commission finds a new property to buy. Ken will look into this to see if the CCC have the interest/authority to invest that money.
 - f. Ken explained that the total expenses for 2025 is greater than the budget for 2025. The budget was actually underspent by about \$400K, but there were ~\$523K in grants and other offsets that were used to fund additional projects. The \$275K of ARPA money was the biggest contributor.
3. Adjournment
- a. Scott made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:58 p.m. Beth seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.

Next Meeting: 2026 January 19, 5:00 p.m. at the Meeting House

Minutes submitted by Kal McKay, Administrative Assistant