

Final Minutes

Discussion 2026 Budget for Departments Town Clerk and Board of Registrars

Thursday February 20, 2025

Attended by:

Phil Rooney – Chairperson of Sub Committee

Hossan Behery – Member of Sub Committee

Julian Munnich – Member of Sub Committee

Kat Monahan – Member of Sub Committee

Patricia Demeo – Member of Sub Committee

Andrew Ghobrial – Town Clerk

Gloria Huang – Finance Administration

Tien Nguyen – Finance Administration

Todd Gillenwater – Chair Natick Finance Committee

John Townsend – Deputy Town Administrator/Finance Director

The meeting was called to order at 7:00. The Motion to open the meeting was made by Kat Monahan and seconded by Hossan Behery. Our Town Clerk and Board of Registrars discussion began at 7:18.

The discussions in these minutes are a summary of our meeting. The discussions were influenced by the written responses to questions previously submitted prior to the meeting by subcommittee members. We have attached the written responses from department leadership at the end of meeting minutes.

The General Government Subcommittee voted 5-0 to recommend favorable action on the 2026 Budget with no override. The guidance from the Finance Committee Chair was to discuss and vote on the 2026 Budget information with no Override.

Andrew is new to Natick. He has previously worked in the Secretary of States Office and the city of Melrose.

Andrew informed us he needs to follow up concerning the status of converting old paper records into microfiche. He has been busy getting up to speed on the department operations.

Andrew responded to a question about when we receive reimbursement for the costs incurred for State mandated issues from the State. He informed us we must perform the task and submit a request for re-imbursement.

A committee member asked what the security was for the Town Seal and Date Stamp. We were informed these items were left out and not locked securely overnight. This is a security issue. Andrew will address.

The committee's discussion with Andrew concluded at 7:18.

Town Clerk and Board of Registrars Responses for 2025 Budget Significant Items and 2026 Budget Specific
Questions of Finance Committee General Government Sub Committee

2026 Budgets General Questions Town Clerk

The 2026 Budgets (with and without override) as presented by the Town Administration; did you actively participate in the preparation? Do you agree with the data?

As Town Clerk, I actively participated in the FY26 budget cycle process. The FY26 budget as proposed does have some cuts that will have a minimal impact on this office. While there is an impact, FY26 will see only one election, and as such this will not have as big an impact as it would during mid-term or presidential elections.

Can you represent to the public that your ability to safely perform the department duties and service all departments with adequate risk protection can be done without an override? If not, please give detailed reasons.

The Office of the Town Clerk can operate smoothly with the FY26 budget as proposed. While this budget cuts the salary for an Assistant Town Clerk, FY26 will not be hugely impacted by this. This impact may be greater in future fiscal years beyond FY26, however.

Are there any open or pending department legal issues?

No, currently there are no legal issues associated with the Town Clerk's Office.

Please provide the subcommittee with a brief description of your prior work experience and education.

I graduated from the University of Massachusetts with a bachelor's in criminal justice and a minor in sociology.

I began my career in government in 2019 working for the Secretary's office in the Division of Public Records. I later transitioned to the City of Melrose and worked for the City Council in conjunction with the City Clerk's Office. After three years with Melrose, I joined the Town of Natick as Town Clerk.

2026 Budgets General Questions Board of Registrars

The 2026 Budgets (with and without override) as presented by the Town Administration; did you actively participate in the preparation? Do you agree with the data?

The FY26 Board of Registrar's budget is in good standing and the data looks great.

Can you represent to the public that your ability to safely perform the department duties and service all departments with adequate risk protection can be done without an override? If not, please give detailed reasons.

With one election in FY26, the Board of Registrars will be able to carry out its mission. This budget will not see in impact from the override.

Are there any open or pending department legal issues?

No, currently there are no legal issues associated with the Board of Registrars.

Town Clerk and Board of Registrars Department 2025 Budget Significant Items

Is your office still managing the conversion of old paper records to microfiche/digitizing? Please provide details of the status. We were informed the original estimate for this project was \$750,000 to \$1,000,000. What is the status of this project estimate?

It is my understanding that an estimate was had before my time for the digitization of records within the town. I am not sure that any funds were awarded for this estimate. The Office of the Town Clerk did some work to preserve vital records in our vault by placing said records in acid free plastic sleeves.

What is the condition of polling machines? Are all the machines new in the past two years? Do we still lease machines for the elections?

My predecessor acquired the ES&S polling equipment in 2024. Accordingly, the machines are in very good condition and used in every election. We do lease a high-speed tabulator for big elections such as the mid-term and presidential election cycles.

2026 Specific Budget Questions Town Clerk and Board of Registrars

What is the status of interviewing for the Assistant Town Clerk?

The interviewing process is currently on hold as the Town has a hiring freeze in place. Once that is lifted and the Assistant Town Clerk salary is restored, we will post the job and begin the interview process.

Why are Telephone Expenses zero?

As I never opted for a work cell phone, the telephone line item has zero expenses.

Why are Dues & Memberships decreasing by approximately 49%?

Due to my onboarding, this line item needed additional funds to allow me to be added to professional organizations such as the Massachusetts Town Clerk's Association and to attend mentoring sessions and conferences.

You make a statement concerning a modest reduction of \$5K impacts essential services. The reduction is approximately 7K to be restored if override passes. Please explain \$5K comment.

As the Town must comply with state and federal statutes, a decrease in this line item would require my office to shift funds around requiring Town Meeting approval. Things like dog licenses, the annual Town census, Town Meeting electronic voting are all very costly undertakings. With a budget reduction at a time when costs have doubled, this can cause delays and problems for carrying out our required work. While there are fewer elections planned in FY26, this line item should be increased to combat inflation and rising costs of paper, mailings and contracts.

Are Office Supplies decreasing due to fewer elections?

Yes, as we only anticipate one election, we will not need nearly as many office supplies as we did in this fiscal year. Due to the need to have three labels on each mail-in-ballot we spent a couple thousand on labels and toner. Additionally, there are other election related supplies that are not needed during non-election years.

Are Salaries Management and Salaries Operational OT decreasing solely because of fewer elections? Your notes for Registrar spending refer to an account the is flat year-on-year.

Yes, with fewer elections there is less need for overtime for staff. While fewer elections may cut overtime spending for staff, the Board of Registrars is on a fixed schedule and thus fewer elections will not impact their stipends. Accordingly, this budget line item remains flat year to year.

Are all other Registrar expenses decreasing solely due to fewer elections?

Yes, due to fewer elections the Registrar expenses have been decreased for FY26.