

Final Minutes

Discussion 2026 Budget for Department Information Technology

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

Dennis Roche- Chief Technology Officer

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 IT discussion began at 7:44.

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.

A reading of the department's responses to the subcommittee's questions, discloses that the IT Department has made much progress in understanding tall town systems, enhancing access and operating controls, and determining new tools/systems. It is clear from the materials the operation of IT Systems and system support will suffer and be at greater risk if there is no override (see responses to questions 2, 5 and 6).

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.

Dennis was asked about the size of department spending line items related to the networks. Must it be what it is? He informed us these budgets are needed to address IT shortcomings.

Dennis informed us he is concerned about cyber risks, and non-school data resources (for application implementation).

Dennis emphasized three themes for the department. They are staffing, infrastructure planning, and capital availability.

Dennis was asked about legacy systems performance. He informed us there are many that need to be retired in the current year. Next steps include network switch replacements and moving or disposing of equipment.

Dennis informed us the town has Cyber Insurance and the policy for the year was reduced in cost by approximately 30%.

Dennis informed us there is no efficiencies or savings to be gained by combining school and non-school systems. The needs of both operations are different.

The committee's discussion with Dennis concluded at 8:14.

Information Technology Responses for 2025 Budget Significant Items and 2026 Budget Specific Questions of Finance Committee General Government Sub Committee

2026 Budgets General Questions

1. 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?

Yes.

2. 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.

If there is no override or the override fails, there will be a significant impact on IT operations on both the Town and School sides:

Impact on Town IT: There remains a high risk on the Town side when it comes to IT. This is due to the lack of documentation and a weak IT infrastructure. While much progress has been made in the last year, a failing override would reduce resources on both the town and school sides of IT. This would be a major setback and harm our efforts to reduce risk and improve the Town's IT infrastructure.

Impact on School IT: As illustrated in the School Department budget book, school IT has already cut a position, Data Specialist, and also reduced its operations budget. If the override fails, at least 2 more staff will be cut, and will have the following impacts on our schools:

- Fewer technicians available
- Delayed resolution of tech issues
- Disruptions to teaching and learning

Reducing the number of technicians who support faculty, staff, and students will have a direct and immediate impact across the district. Fewer technicians will hinder the ability to respond promptly to technical issues, potentially disrupting teaching and learning due to delays in resolving problems. With only six technicians currently supporting eight schools and the central office, a reduction to four will significantly limit the capacity to maintain and repair the technology devices essential to daily operations, further delaying critical repairs and support.

3. Are there any open or pending department legal issues?

No.

Information Technology Department 2025B Significant Items

4. Last year you informed us that no risk assessments had been performed for the Town Administration IT. Has a complete risk assessment analysis been performed and completed for all IT systems and activities (school and administration)?

We have undertaken several assessments this past year as we have discovered more of the inner workings of the Town network.

In early 2024 we partnered with CISA under the Department of Homeland Security to assess and evaluate our Cyber Security Performance Goals. This assessment utilizes both the NIST and CIS Critical Security Controls frameworks and it became clear we have a lot of work ahead of us. This was a free assessment they conducted for local government and schools.

Recently we have partnered with the NorthShore IT Collaborative. It is run by the CIO of Danvers and services the communities of Danvers, Middleton, Topsfield, Wenham, Hamilton, Essex, and Manchester-by-the-Sea. Forming this strategic partnership has given us access to a security scanning tool that continuously monitors our security risks and also the risks of many of our third-party vendors. It has been extremely helpful in identifying areas of potential weakness and offers steps for remediation. This assessment was also done at no cost and provides valuable insights to both the town and schools.

In addition, we have recently established a local working group of towns/districts (Dedham, Westwood, Medway, Holliston, and Natick) to collaborate weekly and evaluate the CIS Critical Security Controls and share best practices.

Creating a culture of continuous improvement is critical in getting us on the right path and inspires others to contribute at a higher level.

5. Are IT operating procedures formally documented, distributed, and employees trained to perform them? How often are the procedures reviewed for updates?

Right now, our focus is on fixing the shortcoming of the Town network. More formal documentation will come as the environment improves. One important document I formalized and received adoption from both the town and the schools is our new Cyber Security Incident Response Plan.

6. For many years we were informed by the school financial team they had significant issues aligning their transaction recording systems with those used by Finance Administration. This caused school reporting summarization of transactions for monthly and year-to-date reporting. Are there now monthly and year-to-date spending reports that align with the Finance Administrations Reporting Schedules and Formats? Does the information contain outstanding encumbrances at the end of the month?

Information provided by the School Business Office: “The Chart of Accounts in MUNIS is not aligned with the DESE Chart of Accounts, so it makes sorting and reporting information more time-consuming and difficult. Salaries are not encumbered, but MUNIS has the capacity to do so.”

In January we established a working group of town and school employees to meet regularly on Munis related issues.

As mentioned in the Town budget book:

Another significant gap we are addressing is expanding the role of Town IT beyond typical break/fix operations and getting into Data Management. Many of our town departments now use online systems to manage their day-to-day operations and become more efficient. We must take an organization-wide approach to managing existing systems and implementing new ones. Does a new system integrate with other existing systems, so it doesn’t create an unnecessary silo? Is a new system up to today’s security standards to protect against cyber risks? How is its data backed up and protected? These are just a few questions we need to ask ourselves before taking on a new implementation. Sometimes just modifying or tweaking a workflow or tasks is required rather than changing systems. A full-service IT Team often addresses all of these areas through a defined vetting process to ensure the decisions made regarding applications and data are the best for the organization.

7. Is there a formal Disaster Recovery Plan documented and distributed to IT and Town Senior Administrators?

We have a new Cyber Security Incident Response Plan. It has been reviewed and approved by all senior leadership team members of the Town and Schools and has also been shared with the technology team members.

8. We previously were informed the town does not have a Data Center. The town relies on cloud service providers. Is this still the practice? Who are our providers. Are all contracts for the service signed and up to date?

The town has taken a hybrid approach; some cloud and some locally hosted infrastructure.

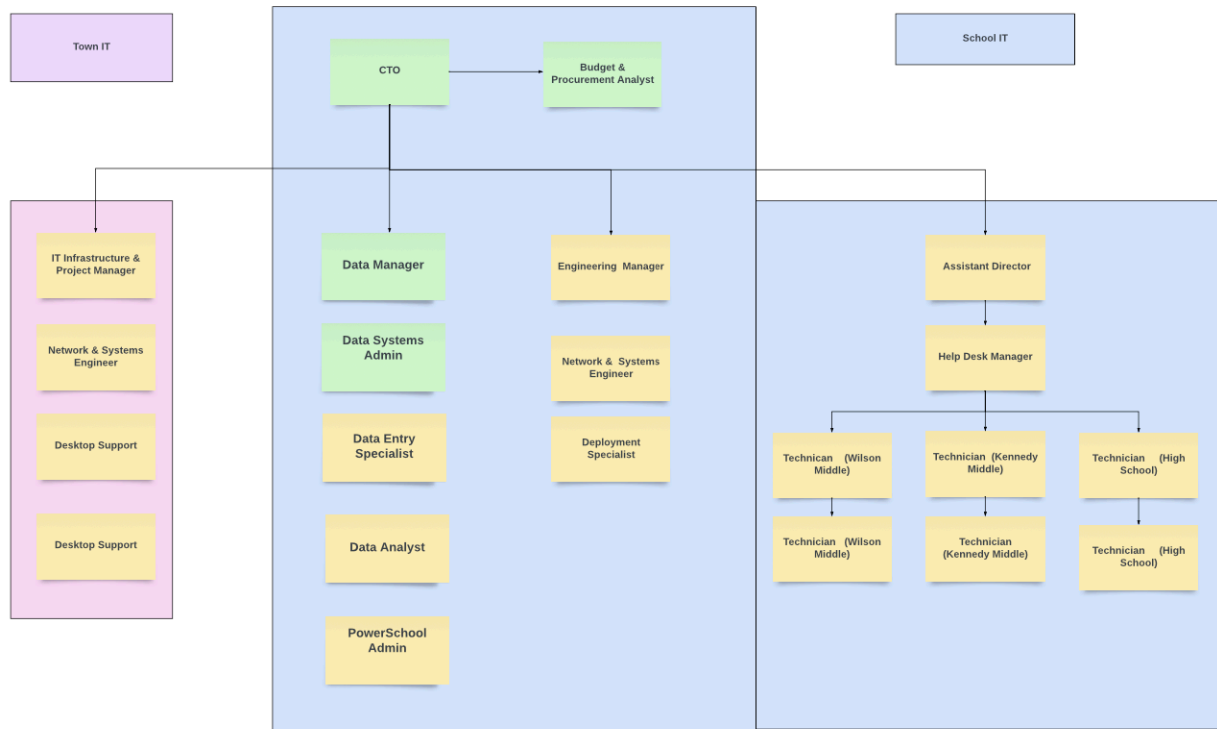
Tyler Technologies hosts our biggest cloud application MUNIS, and its contract is up this spring. I have already initiated discussions with them on renewing. Here is a list of all Town Hosted Applications we are currently aware of.

Most locally installed infrastructure was either failing, misconfigured, unnecessary, or unsupported. We have eliminated most of the unnecessary and unsupported pieces and are aggressively working on our plans to rebuild the network foundation that everyone depends on.

Below is a short list of projects we have either completed or are actively working on:

- **IT Staffing - Complete**

- o Created and filled IT staffing model for town and schools.



- o Staffing model includes 4 shared positions noted in green above:

- CTO
- Budget & Procurement Analyst
- Data Manager
- Data Systems Administrator

- **Phone Project & Ongoing Support - Complete**

- o I inherited this project from prior IT administration in midstream.
- o Completed rollout of new phone system to all Town Buildings
- o Planned and completed the rollout of a new phone system to all schools.

- **Virtual Server Infrastructure - Complete**

- o We had a failing virtual server cluster that housed our Windows Domain, File Sharing, Critical Public Safety applications, and Munis adjacent systems.
- o We scheduled and moved all systems over to the new our new virtual server system.
- o We identified all systems no longer in use. Backed up the images and retired them from use.

- **Network Physical Cleanup - Complete**

- o Multiple Pickups for recycling of UPS/PC/Network Devices
- o All MDF/IDF locations were cleaned up in all Town locations.
- o The Town Hall storage cage was cleaned up and retired systems were removed.

- **WiFi - Complete**

- o About 30% of the Wi-Fi Network was not functional.
- o Identified the issue being a licensing and configuration problem for our main APs
- o We have purchased new APs to retire an onsite controller. APs replaced were unsupported dating back to 2011, 2014, and 2017.
- o We identified dead areas for Wi-Fi. We added new network runs and APs to accommodate.

- **Systems Patching Solution - Complete**

- o No servers, workstations, or laptops were being patched.
- o We implemented an automated patching solution for all end-user and server systems.
- o We have made great strides in getting the environment up to compliance.

- **Managed Detection and Response (MDR) - Complete**

- o We had two security products in place doing very similar things for no obvious reason, so we eliminated one and were able to save 100K of annual reoccurring costs going forward.
- o The current system was not fully configured to monitor systems on the domain.
- o We have now activated all functionality.

- **Windows Active Directory domain. - Complete**

- o Our domain required a complete rebuild utilizing Windows 2022 Server.
- o DNS was not fully functional for local queries.
- o 2 new Domain Controllers added. Previous controllers were removed from AD and retired.
- o Old DNS Servers retired.
- o New redundant DHCP servers added.

- **Backup Solution - Complete**

- o We rebuilt our Backup Server and are now running the latest version of the software.
- o All new backup jobs have been created.
- o All backup jobs are going both locally and to remote offsite storage.
- o We have created a new DR storage box that will be moved to a new DR site when created.

- **UPS and PDU Devices - Complete**

- o All UPS systems were replaced in every location and now have a 10-year battery warranty.
- o All MDF/IDF Locations now have network-addressable PDU devices.
- o All devices are labeled and in DNS for easy resolution.

- **Network Monitoring Solution - Complete**

- o We have implemented a network monitoring solution. This system is taking the place of an older system that was not set up to monitor all devices and networks.
- o During this setup we have identified unknown networks and devices. We have identified devices that will require security changes and full evaluation of function.
- o We included areas not monitored in the past such as Water Treatment and Public Safety.

- **Mobile Devices Management - Complete**

- o Implemented for Town Mobile Devices.

- **Water Treatment - In Process**

- o We have conducted an evaluation of the systems in use for water treatment.
- o We have outlined systems to be upgraded and monitored.
- o We continue to work with DPW and WT on the plan.
- o We will be adding more fiber connections to town water locations.

- **Applications and Operating System Standards - In Process**

- o We have implemented a plan to eliminate Office 2016 and moved to O365.
- o We are evaluating a plan to move all end users from Windows 10 to Windows 11. Support ends in October of 2025.

- **Town Networking (2024/2025) - In Process**

- o We implemented a plan to simplify our firewalls and internet access town wide. We moved these to the public safety building. We now have our two main internet circuits, from diverse vendors, behind one set of firewalls.
- o On all supported switches - Firmware updated, backed up, and using NTP.
- o Switch Monitoring and configuration management installed.
- o We are in the process of acquiring new network switches and routers to replace any unsupported devices remaining at many town locations.
- o All unsupported switches will be retired in the process.
- o We will need to re-ip the entire town network and VLAN and segment by location and function.
- o A long-term goal is to add some redundancy and create a Disaster Recovery Site for the Town, utilizing spare capacity at one of the Data Centers operated by the school department. We recently submitted a state grant requesting funding to help defray the cost of relocating spare fiber to support this initiative.

9. Does your department manage and provide support for our Safety Departments IT and communication systems?

Yes, we work closely with both Police and Fire on all matters of IT. We are currently working with them on rolling out the new police radio system.

2026 Specific Budget Questions Information Technology

10. The Hosted Applications and Software Upgrade Replacements reallocated for the 2026 Budgets will be permanent as conditions now exist. Is our understanding correct? Do you anticipate a need for budgets for this classification in the future?

This alignment was to ensure funds were allocated to achieve the goals of my department and to tighten our estimated costs wherever possible. In both these cases, the above two accounts were overfunded, and the LAN/WAN was significantly underfunded. In the future, my goal is to make smaller adjustments as we progress.

New Added Question Since Original Mailing

Would you please be prepared to discuss the following at our meeting.

1. The formatting of the monthly school and non-school Department Expense Reports the systems maintained by the IT Department generate for the departments to analyze spending versus budget.

My department does not generate these reports. The town Finance team or School Business Office should be able to answer these questions.

2. The date of the month the reports are distributed to the departments.

My department does not generate these reports. The town Finance team or School Business Office should be able to answer these questions.

3. The formatting of the monthly school and non-school Expense Encumbrance Department Reports the systems maintained by the IT Department generate for the departments to understand open financial commitments (expenses for services or materials contracted for and yet to be received or delivered.

My department does not generate these reports. The town Finance team or School Business Office should be able to answer these questions