

AMENDED
Town of Norwich
Finance Committee Meeting
April 20, 2026, 7:30 – 9:00 pm
Multi-purpose Room, Tracy Hall

Committee Members Present: Nicolas Wood, Steven Hepburn, Cheryl Lindberg, and Christie James

Committee Members Missing: Tricia Spellman and Russell North

1. Call meeting to order
 - a. At 7:38 pm, Hepburn called the Finance Committee meeting to order.
2. Election of Officers – discussion/motion
 - a. Chair – Lindberg nominated Hepburn and James seconded. The motion passed with unanimous consent.
 - b. Vice Chair – Wood nominated James and Lindberg seconded. The motion passed with unanimous consent.
 - c. Secretary – James nominated Spellman and Lindberg seconded. The motion passed with unanimous consent.
3. Approve Agenda – discussion/motion
 - a. James moved to approve the agenda and Lindberg seconded. The motion passed with unanimous consent.
4. Approve Previous Minutes – discussion/motion
 - a. Minutes from February 9, 2026. James moved to approve, Wood seconded. The motion passed with unanimous consent.
5. Selectboard Task – Working Collaboratively with Town Manager & Finance Director – discussion
 - a. There was a discussion about working collaboratively with the Town Manager and the Finance Director.
 - b. Hepburn provided an update from his March 26 meeting
 - i. Dialogue was great to get started
 - ii. Big picture-do we see places where we can collaborate and overlap
 - iii. Questions about value of the Finance Committee “not sold on the benefits of a Finance Committee” – but open to ongoing dialogue between Chair and town Finance Director.
 - iv. Hepburn sent follow up questions and considerations.
 - c. Hepburn noted that the Finance Director was very open and approachable and is working hard to implement better processes in the town Finance Office.
 - d. Details:
 - i. Audit questions- unbudgeted transfer funds, asking for clarity. Perhaps looking at how the information is shared creates more questions.
 - ii. Comment about Police budget regarding adding another officer in the future.
 - iii. Looking for some areas of agreement as a starting point. These were offered:

1. Resident engagement in town finances and budgeting is a net positive
 2. Town financial information is considered public records and should be clear and accessible
 3. The Selectboard should be fully informed on trade-offs in budget decisions within and across departments
 4. Budget requests should be explainable and justified in relation to department and town goals and priorities
 5. A timely budgeting process with no late surprises enables better review and governance
 - iv. Asked about the 6% target and where that came from? Town Manager believes that 6% is a reasonable target for departments to work towards. It's starting point for the departments and it's a constraint for them.
 - v. Mention the school process – claim that next starting budget will be 6%.
 - e. Asked about information that could be available.
 - f. Action: Hepburn will follow up with the Finance Director and Town Manager.
 - g. Action: Selectboard agenda for the three open tasks
6. Selectboard Task – Working Collaboratively with Norwich School Board – discussion
- a. Collaboration with the Norwich school board (Garett) – Hepburn update: emails exchanged.
 - b. Short discussion re state of Vermont changes
 - c. Main objective – discussion about the process that Finance Committee contributes to Norwich School Board and how we work with the School Board. Hoping to meet the next few weeks to discuss how the overlap happens.
7. Summary of Comparable Towns
- a. Norwich is on the upper end of the services and therefore the upper end of the budget. It's grown over the last 3 or 4 years including the benefits. Short term, looked better comparably, but over 4 years significant growth
8. Other Selectboard Task Requests – discussion/possible motions
- a. Audit discussion – best practices say we should have an Audit Committee.
 - b. Audit committee might be a Selectboard member, Finance Committee member, and another individual that should be working with auditors and the Selectboard. Role is to promote corrections to material deficiencies encourage them to be cured. (gfoa.org comments on the audit committees).
 - c. Discussion on elected budget committee
 - d. Action
 - i. Based on the auditor's comment- might be worth having the Finance Committee having input on the explainability of the audit
 1. Could be a combination Q&A – purpose to make it clearer for general consumption
 2. Not oversight for the audit, but rounding out the presentation
 - ii. Conversation about asking select board to task the FC with something around the audit
 - iii. Discussion about fiscal policy involvement

9. Public Comments for Items Not on the Agenda

- a. There was no public comment.

10. Adjourn

- a. Lindberg motioned and James seconded at 9:03 pm. The motion passed with unanimous consent.