

Town of Dover – Warrant Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: January 22, 2026

Time: 7:00 PM – 7:58 PM

Place: Remote via Zoom, pursuant to the Commonwealth's Open Meeting Law guidance

Attendance

Members Present:

Woodrow Weiss, Chair

Gavin Koo, Vice-Chair

Martin Howard

Sara Cadena Kinney

Nina Green

Kevin Bauman

Micheline Boudreau

Dick Malcom

Guests:

Robyn Hunter – Board of Selectmen's Liaison to the Warrant Committee

Michael Blanchard – Town Administrator

Chris Costello – Assistant Town Administrator / Finance Director

A quorum was present.

7:00 PM – Call to Order and Approval of Prior Minutes

Chair Weiss called the meeting to order at **7:00 PM**.

Prior to roll call, the Committee addressed approval of the minutes from the previous meeting.

- **Motion:** Dick Malcom moved to approve the prior meeting minutes.
- **Second:** Martin Howard.

Vote:

Approved unanimously.

Action Taken:

Prior meeting minutes approved.

7:03 PM – Roll Call

Chair Weiss conducted a roll call of members present. A quorum was confirmed.

7:04 PM – FY27 Preliminary Budget Presentation

Town Administrator Michael Blanchard presented the FY27 Preliminary Budget Outlook, accompanied by Assistant Town Administrator / Finance Director Chris Costello. Robyn Hunter participated in the presentation and discussion on behalf of the Select Board.

Mr. Blanchard stated that the purpose of the presentation was to provide a first-pass overview of the FY27 operating and capital budget to frame the Warrant Committee's upcoming review process.

Key points included:

- The budget reflects an effort to preserve town services, retain employees, support schools, and remain within Proposition 2½, while facing fiscal headwinds including rising personnel costs, capital needs, and grant uncertainty.
- Revenue assumptions include a 2.5% levy increase, conservative new growth estimates, projected state aid, and averaged local receipts.
- The preliminary budget includes the use of free cash for specific purposes, including debt service and special warrant articles, but does not yet include free cash for capital.
- The operating budget reflects a target of 2.5% growth, with certain departments exceeding that target due to structural or regulatory factors.
- A salary adjustment set-aside was included to account for pending union negotiations and an ongoing compensation and classification study.
- Capital requests total approximately \$5.9 million, with the largest item being the DPW fuel island project. Portions of the capital request may be offset by grants.

7:12 PM – Discussion of Budget Pressures and Levers

Committee members and presenters discussed:

- Personnel cost pressures, including health insurance and contract settlements.
- Capital funding strategies, including borrowing, use of free cash, and grant opportunities.
- The importance of maintaining excess levy capacity to protect long-term financial stability.
- Potential adjustments to new growth estimates and reserve fund contributions.
- The need to balance capital replacement with affordability and long-term planning.

Ms. Hunter emphasized that the preliminary deficit reflected capital timing and policy choices rather than an operating imbalance, and that subsequent budget versions would refine assumptions.

7:38 PM – Questions and Committee Discussion

Committee members asked clarifying questions regarding:

- The relationship between projected revenues, operating expenses, and capital requests.
- Treatment of discretionary requests and sequencing of decisions.
- Timing of future budget iterations and availability of updated reserve and free cash estimates.

The discussion emphasized that budget trade-offs had begun and would continue through departmental presentations and subsequent reviews.

7:54 PM – Upcoming Schedule

Chair Weiss reviewed the anticipated FY27 budget review schedule:

Date	Meeting / Topic	Note
January 28, 2026	Regular WC Meeting	7:00 PM start
February 9, 2026	Departmental FY27 Budget Reviews	6:00 PM start
February 11, 2026	Budget Meeting with School Committees (joint meeting with Sherborn Advisory)	6:30 PM start - In-person <i>Dover-Sherborn Middle School Library</i>
February 23, 2026	Departmental FY27 Budget Reviews	6:00 PM start
February 25, 2026	Departmental FY27 Budget Reviews	6:00 PM start
March 4, 2026	Final Budget Review	
March 9, 2026	Open Budget Hearing	
May 4, 2026	Annual Town Meeting	

Dates were noted as subject to confirmation.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded.
The Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:58 PM.

Documents Used

- FY27 Preliminary Budget Presentation to the Warrant Committee
- FY27 Budget Summary Spreadsheet
- Warrant Committee Meeting Agenda – January 22, 2026