



TOWN OF KINGSTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
OPEN SESSION MINUTES
TOWN HOUSE-26 EVERGREEN ST. ROOM 200 & VIA ZOOM
September 18, 2025

5:30 p.m. – CALL TO ORDER – ROOM 200

Chairman Eric Crone called to order the meeting with a roll call vote of the Board of Selectmen at 5:30 p.m.—selectmen in attendance: Kimberley Emberg (arrived late), Melissa Bateman, Donald Alcombright (virtual) and Carl Pike

The Finance Committee and School Committee opened their meeting.

Staff Present: Keith Hickey, Town Administrator and Kathleen Barrette, Finance Director.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. This meeting is being recorded by the Local Seen. Anyone who intends to make an audio or video recording of this meeting should notify us at this time.
2. Financial Assistance Applications are available on the town's website or by calling the Selectmen's Office.
3. There are several Boards and Commissions with vacancies. Including the School Committee and Finance Committee. To see a complete list of the openings, please visit our website at kingstonma.gov.

OPEN FORUM:

APPOINTMENTS:

Joint Meeting with Kingston School Committee and Finance Committee

- Initial budget expectation discussion
- Discussion regarding possible override
- Annual Town Meeting Timeline

Mr. Hickey presented the following.

- A five-year financial forecast was presented based on conservative estimates for new growth, state aid, and local receipts.
- New growth: Expected to rise following the end of the water moratorium, with projections of \$1 million in FY28, gradually decreasing thereafter.
- State revenues: Projected to increase 4.5% annually.
- Local receipts: Estimated 2.75% annual growth, excluding any fee increases.
- Wages and expenses:
 - Wages: 2% increase for FY27–FY28; 3% for FY29–FY31.
 - Operating expenses: 1.5% annual increase, with higher rates for retirement and health insurance.

Discussion of School Budget Impacts

- The Kingston School Department faces the expiration of one-time state and federal aid (including shelter and ESSER funds).
- Approximately \$800,000 in shelter funds will not recur in FY27, creating a structural deficit.
- Combined with the end of other one-time funds (END), the district anticipates significant budgetary challenges.
- Preliminary forecasts indicate that a Proposition 2½ override may be required to maintain level services.

Discussion Points

- Mr. Hickey emphasized early communication about potential overrides and meeting bylaw timelines.
- School Committee members expressed concern about unrealistic budget deadlines and requested a warrant article to amend the budget submission bylaw to align with state aid release schedules.
- Finance Committee members stressed the importance of realistic, verifiable figures to avoid public confusion.
- Consensus emerged that early collaboration is necessary to ensure transparency and build community support if an override becomes necessary.

Override Considerations

- Discussion included lessons learned from neighboring communities where override votes failed (e.g., Duxbury, Norwell, Hanover).
- Members agreed that any future override must be clearly justified and well-communicated to the public.
- The need for multiple budget scenarios was identified:
 1. Level Service Budget
 2. Reduced/Within-Levy Budget
 3. Override Budget Scenario

Bylaw Discussion – Budget Timeline

- Current town bylaw requires early submission deadlines that conflict with the timing of state funding notifications.
- Members agreed that Kingston is the only district town with this restriction; Halifax and Plympton follow state-aligned timelines.
- Consensus: Consider revisiting the bylaw in the spring, after the impact of the revised internal schedule is evaluated.

Additional Departmental Notes

- The Police Department continues to seek additional staffing and related funding.
- A PowerPoint presentation and financial forecast documents will be made available on the Town website.

Next Steps

- School administration to continue refining early budget estimates using updated enrollment and revenue data.

- Finance and Board of Selectmen to monitor projections and prepare for potential override communication strategy.
- Possible follow-up joint meeting in early 2026 to review updated figures.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS:

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

SELECTMEN COMMENTS:

Motion by Mr. Pike, seconded by Ms. Bateman and a 5-0-0 vote, by roll call.

VOTE: I move to adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Tucker

Assistant to the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen

Documents used at the meeting:

Agenda

Budget Presentation