

APPROVED: June 9, 2025

TOWN OF WINCHENDON  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, March 27, 2025 8:00AM  
Town Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Auditorium, 109 Front St., Winchendon, Mass.

Present: Rick Ward, Chair  
Andrew Beauvais, Vice Chair  
Audrey LaBrie  
Erika Eitland

William McKinney, Town Manager  
Debra Dennis, Executive Assistant

Absent: Melissa Blanchard

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List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Draft \$2.9 million dollar proposed ballot question
- Draft \$1.9 million dollar proposed ballot question

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8:00AM Chair Ward called the meeting to order at 6:30P.M. All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Ward asked if anyone would be audio or video recording this meeting tonight to which there was no response heard.

1. SELECTMEN'S COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: Selectwoman LaBrie said the answers are out there. We saw this coming. Mr. McKinney walked into a hornets nest. The top priority of this town is finances. We are doing the best we can do. She said look at the information. If we have to cut, someone is going to be affected.
2. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Barbara Zisk-Pertaining to the override. She thanked everyone for the job they do. She questioned the possibility of cutting the hours of the Library, Senior Center, and Recreation. Put a freeze on raises, and combine jobs. She said for the residents watching she wants to make it clear the Board of Selectmen are responsible for the budget once the Town Manager presents it.

Chair Ward said in April the Town Manager and School Superintendent will hold informational sessions pertaining to the override. Mr. McKinney said the original budgets requested would have been four million dollars short. He said we reduced the original amount and it is now 1.9 million override for level service. Barbara Zisk asked who is watching over spending. Mr. McKinney said the Finance Committee gets monthly reports. Katie Medina, Town Accountant said she reviews to make sure they are acceptable expenses and that there is money in the account to pay for them.

Jane LaPointe-She said she appreciates the work that has gone into this and making it available. It is important to communicate and help people to understand. We need a place to move forward.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

3.1 Discussion and Vote Proposition 21/2 Override Ballot Question(s)

Chair Ward said the question needs to spell out clearly what we are going to fund. Chair Ward read the draft ballot question 1 for the 1.9 million dollar override. He said this will keep us running at level service. This is no one's fault it is just the cost of inflation. Selectman Beauvais asked breakdown of the seven things for the transparency sake. Chair Ward said school bus transportation, debt, property liability insurance, retirement, workers compensation, unemployment, and health insurance. Selectwoman Eitland said we need the minimum to get us through. Chair Ward said we have no control over some increases in the budget.

Liz Latoria, School Business Manager said important to include athletics. The COLA increases in our budget are fixed costs. She recommended taking the COLA out. Selectwoman LaBrie said that is a contractual agreement. Liz Latoria recommended having maintaining current staff, athletics, and current programming. Chair Ward looking at taking out COLA and adding maintaining current staff, athletics, and current programming.

**Selectwoman Eitland moved to approve the 1.9 override ballot question- Shall the Town of Winchendon be allowed to assess an additional \$1,900,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding: Beals' Memorial Library; Winchendon Senior Center (Council On Aging); Winchendon Parks and Recreation; Supplies for Winchendon Fire and Department of Public Works (DPW); School Athletics and funding the current staffing and programming at Winchendon Public Schools, and funding general operating budgets as needed for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025.**  
Selectwoman LaBrie seconded. Vote: All aye.

Chair Ward said at this time he doesn't see a need for the 2.9 million override ballot question. He said he spoke with someone who said they know we need an override but asked to keep it as low as we can. Selectwoman Eitland agreed however there is a need for the town to decide. She said the 2.9 represents a choice for the town. Selectwoman LaBrie agreed with Selectwoman Eitland. She said we need to give a choice to the town. She said the 1.9 million is a band aid. Selectwoman LaBrie stated chances are we will need to come back next year for an override. Selectwoman Eitland this 2.9 gives us a chance to invest. Chair Ward said we need to take out COLA again on this ballot question.

**Selectwoman Eitland moved to approve the 2.9 override ballot question- Shall the Town of Winchendon be allowed to assess an additional \$2,900,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding Beals' Memorial Library; Winchendon Senior Center (Council On Aging); Winchendon Parks and Recreation; Supplies for Winchendon Fire and Department of Public Works (DPW); School Athletics and enhancing the current staffing and programming at Winchendon Public Schools, and, funding general operating budgets as needed for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025. Selectwoman LaBrie seconded. Vote: All aye.**

**Selectwoman Eitland moved to authorize the Chair to agree to any minor non valid changes. Selectman Beauvais seconded. Vote All aye.**

Chair Ward asked what is the plan for the future. We need to get more revenues. We need to look at all contracts, regionalization of the school, and transportation costs. He credited Dr. Gosselin and the staff. We need to show we are going to