



Regular Meeting Board of Finance (BOF) March 24th 2026 Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM

Present: Kip Finch, Mark Johnson, Rob Schapp, Michael Gacek and Michael Schwarzchild. In addition, Tom Weik and Rick Nicoletti (remote). Department presenters were Laura Halloran (Town Clerk), Carrie Kepler (Remote, Registrar of Voters), Larry Sweeney (Remote, Registrar of Voters), Ed Ryle (Sandy Beach), Kathleen Vanomer (Sandy Beach), and Kristen Davila (Beach & Rec and Senior Center).

Agenda:

1. Call to Order
2. Budget Review
 - a. Town Clerk
 - b. Registrar of Voters
 - c. Sandy Beach
 - d. Beach & Rec and Senior Center
3. Selectman's Update
4. 250th Anniversary Update
5. Approve Minutes
6. Public Comment
7. Other New Business
8. Adjourn

Motions:

- Motion by Kip Finch to seat alternate Michael Gacek for Scott Pottbecker, seconded by Mark Johnson and passed unanimously.
- Motion by Kip Finch to seat alternate Michael Schwarzchild for Hunter Weik, seconded by Rob Schapp and passed unanimously.
- Motion by Kip Finch to discuss Tracy Martin's resignation, seconded by Mark Johnson and passed unanimously.
- Motion by Michael Schwarzchild to seat Michael Gacek permanently for Tracy Martin's seat, seconded by Rob Schapp and passed unanimously.
- Motion by Michael Schwarzchild to approve the March 10th 2026 Board of Finance Meeting Minutes, seconded by Rob Schapp and passed unanimously.

There was one member of the public in attendance and a few remote.

The meeting was motioned to adjourn at 8:48 PM by Kip Finch, seconded by Michael Gacek and passed unanimously.

Key Points

Sandy Beach Commission Budget Overview (Ed Ryle & Kathleen Vanomer)

- Ed and Kathleen presented a budget increase request due to financial challenges with less than \$3,000 remaining in their bank account
- Operating costs have increased significantly due to minimum wage increases, general cost inflation, and new equipment requirements that the commission has absorbed over the years
- The beach manager resigned about a month ago after nine years of service, creating uncertainty about staffing costs for the upcoming season
- Revenue streams include beach passes, swim lessons, Bantam Lake Ski Club profit sharing, and snack shack concessions that basically cover costs
- Payroll represents the largest budget component including the beach manager position at \$10,000 seasonally, multiple lifeguards, swim instructors, and gate/snack shack employees
- Swim lessons served approximately 250 participants last year at \$20 for two-week sessions with a family maximum to keep costs affordable
- Capital improvements are handled separately from operating expenses, with the commission seeking grants from Northwest Community Foundation and other sources
- Workers compensation insurance costs were clarified as appearing lower in previous years due to a company miscalculation and subsequent credit
- The commission maintains the beach property including buildings as required by their lease agreement with White Memorial
- Litchfield's Board of Selectmen agreed to cover salary and insurance cost increases but recommended increasing non-resident and annual pass fees
- Morris's contribution is calculated at approximately one-third of the total funding based on population, requesting \$14,600 for the upcoming year

Town Clerk Budget Overview (Laura Halloran)

- Laura presented a flat budget with no significant increases

- Computer costs of \$7,200 cover software systems and maintenance for handling land records
- Legal notices costs vary year to year depending on ordinances, elections, and state-mandated publications, with newspapers potentially ending this requirement
- Office supplies include more expensive archival-quality paper and materials required for official record keeping
- Revenue from various fees like dog licenses, fishing licenses, and marriage licenses mostly goes to the state with only small portions retained by the town

Board of Registrars Budget Overview (Carrie Kepler & Larry Sweeney)

- Larry and Carrie presented their budget amid significant statewide changes to election systems and procedures
- New voting software and hardware vendors are requiring registrars to perform work previously done by vendors, increasing costs and time requirements
- Early voting has been mandated by the state, requiring offices to be open for extended periods with Republican, Democrat, and moderator coverage
- Presidential primaries require four days of early voting, regular primaries require seven days, and general elections require fourteen days of coverage
- Certification requirements for registrars now include continuing education through convention attendance as the only approved method
- Equipment programming costs have increased substantially with a \$700 minimum charge regardless of election complexity
- Supply costs per election now range from \$3,100 for referendums to \$3,700 for regular elections due to new equipment requirements
- The potential federal SAVE Act could require re-registration of all voters with proof of citizenship, though this legislation has not yet passed
- Salary projections were reduced from previous estimates to be more realistic given the uncertainty of new requirements

Senior Center Budget Overview (Kristen Davila)

- Kristen presented a modest \$769 increase in her \$128,000 budget, representing approximately 1% growth
- Programming includes weekly bingo and exercise classes, movie matinees, sewing groups, holiday parties, and bi-monthly newsletters for community outreach

- The facility serves the broader community beyond seniors, with rental availability for birthday parties, showers, and other events at \$75 for residents
- Building maintenance represents the majority of budget costs including snow removal, lawn care, electricity, heating, and interior maintenance
- Snow removal costs exceeded budget projections this year due to heavy snowfall, with the center seeking new contractors for better pricing
- Rental income of approximately \$350 annually was discussed as potentially underpriced, especially for non-resident rentals at \$150
- Internet costs may decrease significantly when the town runs fiber optic lines from the senior center to town hall through a grant program.

Beach and Recreation Department Budget (Kristen Davila)

- Kristen presented a relatively flat budget increase of \$1,033 on a \$57,000 total, representing about 2% growth
- Concert programming increased while telephone costs decreased, with most other line items showing minimal changes
- Revenue streams include pavilion rentals, athletic field rentals to soccer and lacrosse leagues, and the renovated Lakeside Lodge facility
- The pavilion rents for \$75 and is popular for family events, while the Lakeside Lodge commands \$200 due to recent renovations and lake views
- Athletic field rentals generate \$500 per season from various sports leagues including over-60 men's soccer
- Goose control measures include vegetative barriers and gates to prevent geese from accessing beach areas, with plans for additional plantings through conservation district grants
- Concert series runs seven events starting Memorial Day, typically drawing 300-350 attendees plus boaters, with food truck partnerships

Selectman's Update (Tom Weik)

- Tom reported applying for a \$2 million federal grant through Congresswoman Johanna Hayes's office for alum treatment of Bantam Lake to address algae issues
- The Regional Emergency Planning Team for Region 5 secured \$20,800 in equipment funding for the dive team that serves multiple towns
- Emergency Management Performance Grant of \$3,162 was secured through collaborative efforts of town staff

- Superintendent Jeffrey Villar from Region 20 schools proposed meeting with the board to discuss the education budget increase
- Union negotiations have begun with healthcare and health insurance being primary cost drivers
- Health insurance broker meetings are scheduled to explore different coverage options for town employees
- 250th Anniversary celebrations are being planned in coordination with multiple town organizations for events throughout the summer

Board Membership Changes

- Michael Gacek was appointed to fill Tracy Martin's permanent position on the Board of Finance following her resignation, which is up for re-election in 2027. Kip will create a new Secretary position that Michael will fill.
- The board now needs to recruit a new alternate member to fill the vacancy

Action Items:

- The board will continue meeting with department heads including the school superintendent, assessor, and wetlands commission to review their budget requests.
- Sandy Beach Commission's funding request will be evaluated in coordination with Litchfield's decision on their portion of the budget. Potential payroll processing assistance for Sandy Beach will be explored to reduce their operational costs.
- The 250th anniversary celebration planning will continue with budget implications to be determined for the upcoming fiscal year.