



SELECT BOARD MEETING
Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2026
Town Hall – Grange Room (Hybrid)
29 Middle Road, Boxborough, MA
7:00 P.M.

APPROVED: January 26, 2026

PRESENT: Kristin Hilberg, Chair; Bob Stemple, Clerk; Wes Fowlks, Member; Priya Sundaram, Member; Sam Anderson, Member

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator Mike Johns; Assistant Town Administrator Rajon Hudson; Administrative Assistant Kelley Price

The documents discussed herein have been included with the file copy of the agenda packet for the above referenced date and are hereby incorporated by reference.

1. Call the meeting to order

Chair Hilberg called the regular session meeting to order at 7:02pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Input

None at this time.

4. Resignation

- a. Recreation Commission – Stacey O’Connell

Member Stemple moved to accept with regret the resignation of Stacey O’Connell from the Recreation Commission, effective January 4, 2026, with appreciation for her services to the Town. Seconded by Member Sundaram.

Vote: Approved 4-0-0.

Member Anderson joined the meeting at 7:05pm.

5. Board Business

- a. Action: Approval of Amended ABCC Application – Thinking Flower Coffee Shop (Administrative Change)

Stefano Caprara, representing the applicant, explained that the original application was sent to the ABCC and it was determined that there is a requirement for 50% of the directors of the corporation to be U.S. citizens. The corporation has since added a new director who is a U.S. citizen. The applicant now meets the standard of 50% of the directors being U.S. citizens. This has been updated with the Mass Secretary of the Commonwealth. The new director is 0% ownership; it is simply to support the corporation.

Chair Hilberg moved to approve the amended ABCC application for Thinking Flower Coffee Shop, located at 629 Massachusetts Ave Unit C, Boxborough, MA 01719, as an administrative change, as presented. Seconded by Member Stemple.

Roll Call Vote: Anderson – aye; Fowlks – aye; Sundaram – aye; Stemple – aye; and Hilberg – aye; Approved 5-0-0.

- b. Action: Vote to Authorize Resubmission to the ABCC

Chair Hilberg moved to authorize the Administration Office to resubmit the amended ABCC application for Thinking Flower Coffee Shop, located at 629 Massachusetts Ave Unit C, Boxborough, MA 01719, to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission. Seconded by Member Stemple.

Roll Call Vote: Anderson – aye; Fowlks – aye; Sundaram – aye; Stemple – aye; and Hilberg – aye; Approved 5-0-0.

c. Action: Vote to Delegate Authority to Hire Police Officers and/or Constables for Election Days to the Police Chief or Town Clerk, as Appropriate

Chair Hilberg moved to delegate the authority to hire police officers and/or constables for election days to the Police Chief or the Town Clerk as appropriate, pursuant to Chapter 92 Section 72 of the Acts of 2022. Seconded by Member Stemple.

Roll Call Vote: Anderson – aye; Fowlks – aye; Sundaram – aye; Stemple – aye; and Hilberg – aye; Approved 5-0-0.

d. Action: Review and Approve the Spring 2026 Election Calendar

The Board reviewed the Spring 2026 Election Calendar. Special Town Meeting will be held March 9th. The ballot election will be held on March 17th.

Diana Lipari asked for additional information regarding mail-in ballots. Chair Hilberg stated that clarification will be sought from the Town Clerk.

Becky Harris, Town Clerk, reviewed the process for obtaining a vote-by-mail ballot.

Chair Hilberg moved to approve the Spring 2026 Election Calendar. Seconded by Member Stemple.

Roll Call Vote: Anderson – aye; Fowlks – aye; Sundaram – aye; Stemple – aye; and Hilberg – aye; Approved 5-0-0.

e. Discussion: Property Tax Billing Concerns

Emily Roux, Treasurer/Collector, explained that the Quarter 3 bills were created prior to her arrival. The bills went out with a due date on the first Monday in February. After bills went out to residents, staff started to receive concerned calls from residents regarding the bills showing a past due balance when they had been previously paid. Cashed checks that were brought in were endorsed at the Town's depository account/lock box. The lock box has a remittance address to Reading, MA. This is a third-party payment processing system. The system that sends a file which the Town then uploads into a software system and posts the payments to all of the accounts. The payments were made but, due to a clerical error in the office, the payments were not credited to these accounts. The only people affected by this were those that chose to mail their payments to the lock box.

Chair Hilberg asked about the path between the Tax Collector and the Town Accountant. Town Administrator Johns explained that there has been a lag problem in getting money posted from the Treasurer Collector's Office to the Accounting Office for reconciliation. This lag did not allow an opportunity for this to be caught. The offices are now working to create a process to make sure there is no lag. A check and balance process will be put in place.

Member Sundaram asked if the process allows for redundancy. Ms. Roux stated that either she or her assistant will be involved in the process. Member Sundaram stated that this occurred in October and should have been caught in the accounting process between October and now. Town Administrator Johns stated that there will now be a daily reconciliation. The reconciliation was sometimes taking months previously. A consultant has been brought in to do an audit of the cash books.

Maria Neyland noted that FinCom is aware of this item. The FinCom was unaware that the consultant went back to last year to reconcile the books. She asked if that has any impact on the State's certification on the Free Cash. Town Administrator Johns stated that it does not have any impact on the Free Cash, and would confirm with the CPA consultant.

Diana Lipari noted the sticker shock which many had when opening their tax bills. She stated that she checked some commercial properties in Town which were not reassessed. She asked if the Assessor is paying attention to these commercial properties. Chair Hilberg stated that this would be broached with the Assessor.

f. Discussion and Action: Review of the Draft 2026 Special Town Meeting Warrant

Town Administrator Johns explained that Article 1 is for the purchase of land at 984 Mass Ave. This includes the purchase price of the land and \$15,000 estimated for closing costs. The language includes the Fire Station Building Committee's unanimous recommendation. The FinCom has not yet taken a vote on this Article. The 984 Mass Ave site is three contiguous parcels, with the entryway for site at 38 Sara's Way. The property is just over 4.2 acres of land. Environmental studies were conducted which found that the lot is in good shape to be purchased and developed as a fire station. The lot contains two existing buildings which should be fairly easily taken down. Geotechnical work was also completed on the site, and all studies look positive so far. The site will not need clearing for the most part. A letter of intent has been signed between the town and the landowner, with conditions including legal

review and the necessary votes at Special Town Meeting and at the ballot on March 17th. The Fire Station Building Committee asked that this be placed on the ballot first in order to determine if the Town is willing to purchase the land prior to requesting design funding. In terms of a potential traffic light, a traffic study showed that the proposed located did not warrant this. The process for this building construction, if approved, will be the same as any other developer coming before the Town, aside from payment of fees.

Diana Lipari asked if the Article language has been run by Town Counsel. Town Administrator Johns stated that it has not yet. Ms. Lipari stated that debt exclusion votes generally need to have specific language that should be included.

There was discussion regarding amendments to the Article 1, including a purchase price of \$2.4M.

Chair Hilberg moved to approve Warrant Article 1, as amended. Seconded by Member Fowlks.

Roll Call Vote: Anderson – aye; Fowlks – aye; Sundaram – aye; Stemple – aye; and Hilberg – aye; Approved 5-0-0.

The Board reviewed the draft recommendation for Article 1 and made relevant amendments.

Chair Hilberg moved to approve the recommendation for Warrant Article 1, as written. Seconded by Member Stemple.

Roll Call Vote: Anderson – aye; Fowlks – aye; Sundaram – aye; Stemple – aye; and Hilberg – aye; Approved 5-0-0.

The Board reviewed Article 2. If Warrant Article 1, to purchase the land passes, Warrant Article 2 is for the design and to bid the design. If this funding is approved, it would be enough for the architect, the OPM, and the design team of consultants to design the building on 984 Mass Ave., including two construction drawings, bid the project with pre-qualified bidders, and come back next year with the bid in hand, including the exact price for the construction funding. This amount of approximately \$2.7M would be bonded.

Chair Hilberg moved to approve Warrant Article 2, as presented. Seconded by Member Stemple.

Discussion:

Diana Lipari stated that this project has moved forward with only one architect. There has been no attempt to put out to bid for another architect for this very expensive project. It would be fiscally responsible for the Town to seek a potentially less expensive option. Context's billing lacks detail. Town Administrator Johns stated that Context is a highly qualified architect which specializes in municipal projects. The pricing is in line with other firms. The billing has been sufficient. The invoices are reviewed and voted by the Committee once a month. If there were concerns, the Town could move forward with designer selection, which would potentially lead to a six month delay at \$4,000/day. This would be a waste of taxpayer money. Member Sundaram stated that the Committee has been satisfied with Context and feels there has been good collaboration with the Town.

Roll Call Vote: Anderson – aye; Fowlks – aye; Sundaram – aye; Stemple – aye; and Hilberg – aye; Approved 5-0-0.

The Board reviewed the draft recommendation for Article 2 and made relevant amendments.

Chair Hilberg moved to approve the recommendation for Warrant Article 2, as written. Seconded by Member Stemple.

Roll Call Vote: Anderson – aye; Fowlks – aye; Sundaram – aye; Stemple – aye; and Hilberg – aye; Approved 5-0-0.

The Board reviewed Article 3, to vote to pay \$7,000 for the October 2025 Special Town Meeting at The Regency.

Chair Hilberg moved to approve Warrant Article 3, to be amended to show the exact amount of the invoice. Seconded by Member Stemple.

Roll Call Vote: Anderson – aye; Fowlks – aye; Sundaram – aye; Stemple – aye; and Hilberg – aye; Approved 5-0-0.

The Board discussed what will be drafted for Article 4, to approve \$20,000 in Free Cash to cover the closing costs for 984 Mass Ave.

g. Discussion: Fire Station Building Committee Update

Member Sundaram noted that there will be hybrid listening sessions/public forums on January 28th at 11am and 7pm. The Committee also has a table at Winter Fest on January 31st.

6. Reports and Announcements

Assistant Town Administrator Hudson stated that there is an upcoming project/strategy that staff has been working on. He, the Land Use & Permitting Director, the Police Chief, and the Library Director have been attending Leadership Matters courses hosted by the Public Sector Consortium. This includes a community innovations project where staff is responsible for creating a project to

implement in Town. Staff plans to bring forward a community engagement project focused on improving communications in Town this spring. This will be a multi-phase process, including focus groups and announcements. The goal is to improve communication channels and obtain feedback from residents to create a unified strategy that can be implemented in Town. Feedback will be sought from the Select Board, and various boards and committees in Town. Staff is also working on a redesign of the Town website. He is seeking volunteers for a working group to work with the redesign team. Finally, there has been an initial set of communications for beginning the ADA Transition Plan, which is being completed through a community compact grant. A transition plan will help the Town work towards becoming in compliance in terms of all municipal buildings and facilities. In terms of a staffing update, the Town is still actively accepting applications for police officers.

Town Administrator Johns shared information from the Mass Moderators Association regarding the clickers. The Town Moderator received replies from 11 moderators and one attorney, the majority of which commented that there was no change in attendance due to use of clickers. Several commented that attendance is more directly related to voter interest in the articles and not the use of clickers. There were mixed comments regarding time savings and some comments regarding the need to manage glitches and logistics. Some noted that clickers are faster than standing counts and helpful for 2/3 counts. It was noted that the Town averages about one standing count per meeting and that the standing count averages less than five minutes to complete. There was discussion at Budget Saturday about funding for the Annual Town meeting in FY27. Some believe it will be important to host this at The Regency and set aside funding in the budget to do so. He explained that Chair Hilberg, who has been a strong advocate for clickers, stated that she would give up clickers in order to put the funding toward The Regency, if necessary.

Town Administrator Johns explained that three large grants were awarded to condominium associations with regards to the water line extension coming into Boxborough. \$1.46M was awarded from the State to the Harvard Ridge Condominium Association; \$1.534M was awarded to the Brook Village Condominium Association; and \$930,000 was awarded to the Codman Hill Condominium Association. The grants were applied equally across those communities, depending on the number of units. For example, the Codman Hill Condominium Association betterment fees were in excess of \$1.4M and this will reduce that by \$930,000. The fees will then be divided amongst all the owners. These will be included in those residents' tax bills.

Town Administrator Johns stated that he recently became the Chair of the Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch District. There are nine towns in the district. The capacity is not yet maxed-out. The two additional towns added to the district this year has help keep each towns assessment down.

Chair Hilberg stated that she attended the Housing Board meeting and there was discussion regarding a vacant unit at Summerfields. There was also discussion regarding forming a group to consider an Affordable Housing Production Plan. There was an AB Forward meeting to discuss how students will be allocated to each school.

Member Stemple stated that the Rec Com is seeking new members. The group is struggling to keep a quorum and conduct its programs.

Member Sundaram stated that the Sustainability Committee is changing its meeting days to Wednesdays.

7. Approval of Meeting Minutes December 22, 2025

Member Fowlks moved to approve the meeting minutes of December 22, 2025, as presented. Seconded by Member Stemple.

Roll Call Vote: Anderson – aye; Fowlks – aye; Sundaram – aye; Stemple – aye; and Hilberg – aye; Approved 5-0-0.

8. Adjourn

Member Anderson moved to adjourn at 9:24pm. Seconded by Member Stemple.

Roll Call Vote: Anderson – aye; Fowlks – aye; Sundaram – aye; Stemple – aye; and Hilberg – aye; Approved 5-0-0.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*

Exhibits

Agenda January 12, 2026

Memo, re: Cost per night for the Regency and AV Equipment (2 screens and 2 projectors)

Draft Minutes December 22, 2025

Memo, re: S. O'Connell resignation

20260112

Memo from R. Harris, Town Clerk, re: Town voting
ABCC Application – Thinking Flower Coffee Shop
Draft Warrant