



## Select Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 09, 2026, at 6:30 PM

Town Offices, Select Board Room

36 Bartlet Street, Andover, MA 01810

Meetings are televised on Comcast Channel 22 and Verizon Channel 45

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### I. Call to Order – 6:30 P.M.

Chair Vispoli called the meeting of February 9, 2026, to order at 6:32 PM in the Select Board Meeting Room at the Town Offices. Members present: Alex Vispoli, Chair, Ellen Townson, Vice Chair, Melissa Danish, Clerk, Laura Gregory and Kevin Coffey.

Also Present: Town Manager Andrew Flanagan, Deputy Town Manager Mike Lindstrom, and Town Counsel Doug Heim.

Mr. Vispoli announced the following:

### II. Opening Ceremonies

#### A. Moment of Silence/Pledge of Allegiance

A moment of silence was observed, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

### III. Town Manager Report

Mr. Flanagan reported that the eleven projects funded by the FY 25 Participatory Capital Budget have been announced and include initiatives such as traffic and lighting improvements and community gardens. The portal for the FY26 round of funding is open until March 13, 2026, for new ideas/opportunities.

The deadline for nominating a recipient of the Virginia Cole award which recognizes an individual who has performed outstanding service in the community is March 30, 2026, and more information will be available in the weeks ahead.

The DPW is to be commended for weathering another snow event and there were no building issues. The PSA for shoveling out fire hydrants will continue during snow- storms.

The Winter Fest has been postponed until this Sunday weather permitting at Pomp's Pond.

Community forums/discussions on a proposal for synthetic turf field proposed for the Chandler Road property and other projects will start March 12th at 6 p.m. A public health consulting firm will be available for questions about both the turf and proposed rodenticide discussed at the last Select Board meeting. Mr. Lindstrom added that residents' concerns will be addressed at these forums with questions and discussions.

The recommended budget and financial plan for FY 27 has officially been released.

Mr. Vispoli welcomed Joel Blumstein, Chair of the School Building Committee, to present an update on the West El and Shawsheen schools. Mr. Blumstein said construction is complete for both schools, and the close-out process is underway. MSBA indicates we will be \$10M under budget, and MSBA reimbursed \$41M or 27% of the budget. Janet Nicosia and Keith Taverna were recognized for their work along with the team, and the Gilbane construction company.

Mr. Viscosi thanked all who were involved in this project and Mr. Flanagan added his thanks to Mr. Blumstein.

Mr. Coffey and Mr. Flanagan briefly discussed the net effect of coming in under \$10M citing an instance of previous town authorized additional spending and state funding.

Mr. Flanagan, Ms. Nicosia, Mr. Akalski, and Mr. Simko's presentation on the AHS project is on the website.

#### **IV. Communications/Announcements/Liaison Reports**

Mr. Lindstrom and Mr. Connelly will give an update with a preferred concept and cost estimates on the Chandler Road property on February 23, 2026, at the Select Board meeting. Improvements to the outside area include increased playground space, adding security gates, moving parking further away from abutters, adding a cross-county loop and improvements to the natural landscape.

Mr. Vispoli thanked all who participated in last week's Select Board Coffee event.

Ms. Danisch said the Select Board Community Coffee at the Robb Center on Saturday had a good turnout and thanked those who attended as well as those who took out nomination papers last week--candidates are running for every seat in town

Mr. Coffey has heard concerns about the proposed Chandler Road turf proposal and would like all sides to be heard at the upcoming forums. He asked about the role of the Select Board in this process. Mr. Flanagan said this would be a capital project and the intent is to answer all questions and concerns. The Select Board will take a position when the warrant article is prepared.

Ms. Townson talked about two events which require RSVPs. The first is an introduction to Andover Forests to be held March 11, 2026, at Memorial Hall Library and the other is a public hike starting at the trailhead to the Pustell Reservation on March 20, 2026.

In answer to a question, Mr. Lindström said that information from the transcript on the turf forum including mitigating factors would be on the project page of the web page.

Ms. Gregory commended DPW on keeping the streets open and functional during the last snowfall and added the Select Board Coffee brought in a good turnout and questions despite the cold day.

Mr. Vispoli praised the Chinese New Year Celebration held at the Robb Center and said the staff did a great job. He also thanked those involved in the School Building project.

#### **V. Public Comment**

Tom Boshar, 159 Holt Street, introduced himself and read a statement signed by concerned citizens regarding the turf issue using synthetic fields at both the Bancroft School and Chandler Road. He stated that the public, and especially the parents whose children play sports and other activities on artificial turf, should be involved in the Chandler Road process. He cited a peer review by the Horsely Witten group covering drinking water and comprehensive chemical testing on ground and drinking water and an assessment of risks with PFAS. He stressed the public should be able to participate.

## **VI. Regular Business**

### A. Coffee with the Select Board

Mr. Vispoli discussed continuing this coffee hour starting with the schedule below. Mr. Coffey raised the April 4 date as perhaps being changed as it falls on Easter week, but it will remain on the schedule at this time.

Mr. Coffey moved to approve the following Coffee with Select Board dates at the Robb Center as follows. Ms. Danisch seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

1. March 7, 2026
2. April 4, 2026
3. May 2, 2026
4. June 6, 2026

### B. Zero Emission First Vehicle Policy - 1<sup>st</sup> Reading

Melissa Eusden, Sustainability and Energy Director presented a Zero Emission First Vehicle (ZEV) Policy for the Board's consideration and vote.

Ms. Eusden said the ZEV policy is being proposed as Andover has been a Department of Energy Resources green community for several years receiving millions of dollars in grant funds. Adoption of this policy is a next step toward becoming a Climate Leader Community which would provide additional grant monies. The goal of adopting both the policy and finalizing the Decarbonization Roadmap is to have zero emissions by 2050 as well as reducing energy costs and emissions.

A system of priorities would be followed when vehicles need to be replaced with exemptions for certain emergency response, public works and weight rated vehicles. The procurement/ purchasing process was explained as well as department responsibilities.

Currently there is 1 EV and one Hybrid vehicle in the town fleet and the plan would involve the purchase of more, as well as additional public charging stations in town and at schools.

Mr. Flanagan said there has been internal review of this proposed policy in answer to a question. Mr. Vispoli said he was glad to see certain vehicles related to fire and safety are exempt and added that electric vehicles don't always perform well in colder climates and there have issues with batteries in the past.

Mr. Coffey raised concerns about having a policy without more information on costs to the town such as installing charging stations and buying the right type of vehicles. He suggested having a cost road map in place before any policy mandates. Further concerns are the decline of the electric car industry in this country and potential technology issues with the electric cars manufactured in China. He suggested taking a more measured approach based on additional information prior to enacting a policy on this issue.

Ms. Euden responded that the policy would involve each department looking at a prioritization list when vehicles need to be replaced as a first option, rather than requiring purchase of an electric vehicle. Further, technology has evolved especially concerning batteries. Cost savings would be in maintenance and fuel costs over time.

A brief discussion on managing vehicle inventory and researching options within each department followed. There is some State oversight of vehicles.

Ms. Gregory asked if there were more grant opportunities as a Climate Leader if the decarbonization roadmap and this policy are approved, and the answer was yes.

Further questions should be sent to Mr. Flanagan.

C. FY 2027 Town Manager's Recommended Budget and Financial Plan Update

Mr. Flanagan gave an update on the Fiscal Year 2027 Recommended Budget and Financial Plan.

Mr. Flanagan described the budget model as having a revenue foundation consisting of property taxes (80-85% of revenue), state aid and local revenue/receipts. These flow to the CIP appropriations and major obligations and then to school and town departments.

Team collaboration has been essential especially this year as cities and towns are struggling with higher costs and preparing for tough times. Key is balancing stability and investment. A review of staffing in each department to build capacity within funding constraints and a financial plan heading into FY27 is also essential.

The recommended budget for total revenue is \$245,201,138 exclusive of water and sewer enterprise funds, a 3.6% increase without free cash and exempt revenue increases.

The budget is developed within the limitations of Proposition 2 1/2. Excess levy capacity is increased by 2.5% to \$307,500.

Per the Governor's Budget state aid will increase 2.7%.

Exempt revenue is increased by \$1.3M to offset debt issuance from West El/ Shawsheen building project.

Free cash reserved for capital expenditures and offset by expense budget and remaining revenues in the bond stabilization fund have been used.

Expenditure

Health Insurance, increasing by 12%, is the most significant cost driver in the FY27 budget. The funding schedule for the remaining unfunded pension liability has been accelerated from what was anticipated in FY 26. The Pension Fund will be fully funded in 2032, shifted from 2029.

The CIP met funding target of 7% of the operating budget and is a 3.18% increase from FY26. The School Department budget increases by 3.74%.

The increase to the School Department budget represents 33.8% over the overall budget increase. Town Departments represent 10.6%. A breakdown of each department's percentage of overall budget and the total FY 27 increase was explained as well as COLA and Personnel adjustments. A brief discussion of health care funding/allocation ensued, and Water and Sewer employees now show up in the budget analysis.

Mr. Flanagan talked about the Operating Budget and Personnel Adjustments noting the General Fund impact is partially offset by personnel adjustments. Andover Fire Rescue and ambulances were discussed, and a new ambulance will run out of Ballardvale in addition to regular town coverage for a total of 3 ambulances. Brief discussion about the revenue raised from the ambulances and personnel in the fire department. Mr. Coffey asked about Andover's rates.

A proposed Transportation Program Manager/Engineer to be funded by paid parking, would be added to the DPW, who would also work with internal departments to make recommendations to the Select Board and other Boards. Parking fees and the revolving fund discussed.

At 8:00 PM the meeting was paused due to a building test alarm.

Mr. Vispoli welcomed members back to the meeting at 8:04 PM.

Mr. Flanagan noted the need for a Capital Project Manager who is an engineer within DPW, and Mr. Vispoli agreed, especially with the water main issue coming up, and asked about funding. It would be funded through Water Enterprise Fund.

A proposed Part Time (.4 FTE) Assistant Town Counsel to assist Mr. Heim with some of the day-to-day operations of the department was also discussed. Litigation matters for hearings or cases require another lawyer. Mr. Heim said it was good to have a counsel available for quality and consistency, rather than paying a law firm for these matters.

A proposed A Civic Media Division to assume oversight of Andover TV functions and improve access to cable agreements and revenue was discussed. Funding would not be affected and there would be additional resources for the community. There would be more flexibility with staff and possibly greater Board and committee media coverage going forward.

In summary Mr. Flanagan said the FY27 Recommended Budget is balanced using conservative revenue estimates and long-range financial plan commitments will be met. It fully absorbs increases in health insurance costs. With debt exclusion, we are below the five-year average for taxes.

A timeline was presented. Mr. Flanagan thanked all divisions and Ms. Lavoie for their help with putting together the budget.

#### D. [Department of Public Works - Presentation on Capital Improvements](#)

Director of Public Works to provide overview of Capital Improvement Program for sidewalks and water mains.

Mr. Carlos Jaquez introduced himself and Art Martineau Assistant Director for Capital Projects and Jeff Crane, Assistant Director for Operations, and gave an overview of the goals and Objectives of the Accelerated Water Main Replacement and Sidewalk Improvement Plan.

The Town will seek a borrowing authorization (approx. \$10M) from the 2026 Town Meeting to fund and complete the Sidewalk Master Plan by FY 2029. Also, the Town will plan to replace approximately 4 miles of water main per year beginning FY27.

Town Manager recommends \$12M for FY27 CIP water main replacement, \$10M for sidewalk replacement over next 2 years, including \$5M in FY 27.

Water main replacement for 40 miles of water mains over the next decade or so, broken down by priority. A six-year look-back was presented during which the Town replaced about 2.2 miles of water main a year. The proposed \$12M would double the annual investment over each of the past 6 years. . A map of planned water projects over the next 3 years was presented and the intent is to combine water main and paving work where it makes sense such as in the Pine Street/Washington Avenue area, and in the Ballardvale Road area.

Mr. Coffey asked how costs line up with work done, noting preauthorized money of about \$2M which would be used going forward. He suggested the charts should include reducing brown water as a goal in the town as well.

The water main process was briefly described.

The sidewalk restoration process started in 2019, and new and reconstructed sidewalks from 2020-25 described.

Mr. Coffey asked about the status of Canterbury Street and the response was National Grid has utility work planned for that street.

The goal is to complete sidewalk projects listed in the 2026 masterplan and planned projects over the next 3 years. Communication with residents during this construction activity was discussed. Ms. Danisch noted the challenges ahead and the importance of keeping residents informed.

Mr. Vispoli praised the presentation.

E. Annual Town Meeting Articles

Board to consider voting to take a position on the following articles:

P10	Bylaw Amendment – Registry of Deeds E-Recording Revolving Fund
P13	General Housekeeping Articles (A through E)
P15	Chapter 90 Authorizations
P16	Granting Easements
P17	Stabilization Fund Bond Premium
P30	Authorize Lease of Land/Rooftop Space at Public Safety Center for Solar Photovoltaic Facilities

P10 Mr. Simko described the current recording process and how the proposed e- filing would be helpful to residents. The \$6M of “seed money” is paid to the Registry.

Ms. Danisch moved to recommend Town Meeting Approval of Article P10 “Bylaw Amendment-Registry of Deeds E-Recording Revolving Fund.” Mr. Coffey seconded. The motion passed 5-0

P13 Mr. Flanagan said these A-E articles concern grant monies, property tax exemptions, contracts, street easements, grants and the like.

Ms. Danisch moved to recommend Town Meeting Approval of Article P13 “General Housekeeping Articles (A through E) Mr. Coffey seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

P15 Mr. Flanagan said this standing article involves town purchases for C. 90 projects.

Ms. Danisch moved to recommend Town Meeting Approval of Article P15 Chapter 90 Authorizations. Mr. Coffey seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

P16 Mr. Flanagan said this article would allow certain Town Officials to grant or release easements. Mr. Heim explained the reason for adding the word “release” of easements.

Ms. Townson moved to recommend Town Meeting Approval of Article P16 “Granting Easements.” Mr. Coffey seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

P17 Mr. Flanagan talked about using this bond premium with balance to be used as revenue.

Mr. Coffey moved to recommend Town Meeting Approval of Article P17 “Stabilization Fund Bond Premium.” Ms. Danisch seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

P30 Mr. Heim said Ms. Nicosia, and he planned to talk more about this Power Purchase Agreement of solar panels and roof placement, and this information is in Board member packets. He said we would be piggybacking on a state contract which would allow for cost savings. Mr. Coffey asked about the cost of leasing arrangements vs. purchasing solar panels and Mr. Heim said the cost of

buying and maintaining solar panels is a large up- front investment we wouldn't have to pay for out of the capital fund. Town Meeting will weigh in on this issue.

Ms. Danisch moved to recommend Town Meeting Approval of Article P30 "Authorizing Lease of Rooftop Space at Public Safety Center for Solar Photovoltaic Facilities." Ms. Townson seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

#### Policy Handbook Update and Prioritization Schedule

Board to receive a review from Town Counsel and discuss next policies for development

Mr. Vispoli began the discussion by saying Mr. Heim put together a scorecard for the Board as an overview. Mr. Heim said the scorecard includes current and next steps, as well as cross references to the old policy. Policies on land use, alcohol licensing and town fees should be included, and other policies should be eliminated or updated. After readings of these issues, the policy handbook should be ready prior to Town Meeting. The proposed land use policy is scheduled for a first reading at February 23, 2026, Select Board Meeting.

#### F. Town Manager Evaluation Process Policy & Instrument

Board to discuss and consider voting to approve evaluation process policy and instrument.

Mr. Vispoli said this is a continuation of a review by a subcommittee and others of the Town Manager evaluation instrument previously discussed.

Ms. Lavoie began by saying one of the main focusses in revising the Town Manager Evaluation tool was to be fair and consistent, while taking into account the Board's feedback.

Ms. Lavoie and Mr. Vispoli agreed current goals, which may be ongoing, should not be changed at this point in the year. Ms. Lavoie then presented a proposed on-line form evaluation with goals to be ranked between 1-5 (without weighting each goal) and a composite response for the narrative section. Edits could be made within a certain time. Mr. Coffey proposed putting individual comments in the section and allowing for the release of individual Board comments. Ms. Danisch and Ms. Gregory disagreed, saying the composite section should reflect the Board's responses as a group and that release of individual Board comments could be viewed as using the evaluation tool for political purposes and not in line with a unified or composite Board response.

Mr. Coffey agreed to HR editing but said he was in favor of preserving the voice of individual Board members.

Mr. Coffey moved to adopt the revised Town Manager Evaluation & Instrument without weighting, including the public release of a composite evaluation document with the Chair and Director of HR authorized to make edits to the composite for duplicative content or content which implicates the privacy interests of the town or other town employees. Ms. Danisch seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

After the motion passed, Mr. Coffey proposed an addendum to the motion to allow comments in the composite responses to be attributed to individual members to ensure transparency. Mr. Vispoli said this would be confusing, especially when different members had competing responses within each goal--there would not be a consistent position which is one of the goals of the evaluation. Discussion followed and Ms. Gregory and Ms. Danisch disagreed with disclosing this information citing division among Board members, and confidentiality issues. Ms. Gregory said it is important to follow Best Practices in the Board's role as an employer to the Town Manager. Mr. Coffey asked about sharing

input in PDF form to be transparent. Ms. Danisch suggested involving labor counsel to address any liability issues. Mr. Heim said Board could have an independent opinion on this matter and though elected officials can disclose their own information most towns do not disclose this type of information. It could also have a chilling effect on attracting future Town Managers.

Ms. Danisch moved to approve an addendum to the Town Manager Evaluation Process Policy & Instrument which would prohibit the release of individual member evaluations. Ms. Gregory seconded. Mr. Coffey opposed. The motion passed 4-1.

#### **VII. Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Danisch moved to approve the following meeting minutes as printed in the agenda. Ms. Townson seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

1. January 20, 2026
2. January 26, 2026

#### **VIII. Select Board Meetings**

Ms. Townson moved to approve the Select Board Dates listed in the agenda. Ms. Danisch seconded. The vote passed 5-0.

1. Monday, March 16, 2026
2. Thursday, April 9, 2026

#### **IX. Adjourn**

Mr. Coffey to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Danisch seconded. It was passed 5-0 to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 PM