Joint Meeting with the Hingham Advisory Committee, Capital Outlay Committee, Hingham Select Board and Hingham School Committee
Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026, at 6:00 PM
Town Hall, 210 Central Street, 2nd Floor, Central Meeting Room & 3rd Floor, South Conference Room

In Attendance: Carol Tully, Chair, Kevin Freytag, Vice Chair, Ted Ciolkosz, Secretary, Brenda Black, Ben Burnham, Tina Sherwood, Jerry Seelen, Steve Pohl, Brian Stack, David Leiphart, Elaine Cusker, Michael Herde, Mary Power, Alan Macdonald, John Germain

1. The Advisory Committee Chair called the Advisory Committee (AdCom) meeting to order and adopted the language already read by the Select Board (This meeting is being held remotely/or in person as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 and all other applicable laws temporarily amending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L.c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording.).

2. The Joint Session with the Capital Outlay Committee (COC), Select Board (SB), and School Committee (SC) to discuss the FY27 Capital Outlay Committee recommendations began with a presentation by Michael Donovan, Chair of the Capital Outlay Committee; See attached presentation and note estimates are being used for Hingham High School (HHS) roof and HVAC projects, as well as the Plymouth River Elementary (PRS) and South Elementary (South) school roof projects and do not include any funding from the MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority) which has accepted each of the projects into the Accelerated Repair Program and typically funds 30-40% of costs.

   The Capital Outlay allocation includes $3,600,000 from the tax levy and another $30,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund. Minimum COC funding threshold has increased from $10,000 to $15,000, and any unspent prior year COC allocation is to be turned back from Departments. The FY27 COC process leveraged ClearGov budgeting software, COC met with Department heads to hear requests, followed up and ranked each project from 1-3 with one being the highest priority. Anything not funded in FY27 is deferred to the next fiscal year.

   Projects needing funding in excess of available COC funds, such as repairs of the East Elementary School ERU (Energy Recovery Unit) at an estimated cost of $860k and HHS fire alarm system ("Life Safety") estimated $1.7mm, could be funded from excess fund balance. Mike Donovan recommended the Town better track building systems like this to better plan ahead. This is the second consecutive year the COC is recommending spending in excess of their allocated funds. Also, while substantial future capital projects were noted in their report, several are expected to occur further than five years into the future (e.g. South Fire Station solution, completion of Town Wharf resiliency project).

   Discussion continued around Article S, brought by the School Committee to authorize funding of extraordinary capital maintenance and repair needs for critical school infrastructure. Specifically, the requested funding would address roof system repairs at Plymouth River Elementary School and South Elementary School, as well as both roof and HVAC (heating and air conditioning) system repairs at Hingham High School. These requested funds would supplement the $500,000 previously appropriated to the Schools Emergency Capital Repairs Fund at the 2025 Annual Town Meeting.

   Superintendent Katie Roberts noted PRS Elementary was in the news recently after being evacuated due to concerns about the snow load on the roof (66k spent so far on snow removal, structural evaluation, etc. with more work in progress).

Additionally, the short-term, reactive repair work to the two failing HHS boilers, which are about 27 years old and expected to cost about 350k, were discussed at length. Note, boiler number one of two has been repaired five times in past month. HPS Director of Facilities Matt Meehan has requested 770k to fund future repairs and recommended the Town have emergency boilers (estimated cost of 12k/month for 10 out of 12 months) ready as a backup prior to determining best way to replace. See attached report provided by C.A. Crowley Engineering, Inc.

3. FY27 School Budget Presentation by Superintendent Katie Roberts. Enrollment Projections are increasing per a NESDEC (www.nesdec.org) study using 2025 data factoring in birth rates, students leaving for private school or homeschooling, etc. Superintendent Roberts mentioned last year's projection tracked to within 42 students of actual enrollment and emphasized that kindergarten numbers create the largest source of variance.

   Enrollment declined FY21-26 and school dept. positions have been continuously rightsized by not filling open positions unless mandatory. Between FY24-26 HPS reduced full time employees by 26.2 but at this point couldn't continue cutting positions further without impacting the schools. Other staff and administration positions have also been cut and HPS are now at staffing levels below pre-Covid. As a result we also now have more uneven cohorts between the elementary schools which redistricting could help address.

   Looking forward a net increase of 117 K–12 students is anticipated over the next three years with the majority of the growth expected at the elementary school level. The new Foster Elementary School could provide room for additional capacity, and the district would consider more frequent refreshes of the enrollment study as development or other factors change.

   The FY27 school budget of approximately 72.8mm factored in 3.5% MOU constraints as previously agreed upon, with non-discretionary expenses represented by contracts, services, salaries, utilities, Out of District (OOD) expenses, etc. Available budget levers consisted of retirements, kindergarten tuition, KIA, other fees such as athletic and bus transportation, grants, donations, solar credits, revolving funds and other reductions. Personnel costs account for about 79.7% of the school budget, contracted services another 17.5% and 2.8% are discretionary expenses. The School Dept. needed to use revolving funds heavily this year to close gaps in funding, and the FY27 budget gap, estimated at $431,736, was closed thanks to several retirements, cuts to professional development and tech supplies along with a 0.8 reduction in full time employee Central Office staff. Jen Benham, Chair of the School Committee noted their budget meeting would be held on March 9th.

4. Motion to Adjourn – unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted by Theodore D. Ciolkosz, Jr., Secretary