

Justin Paré, President
John Simmons, Vice President
John Costello
Daniel Donovan
Mark Gould, Jr.



Darius Gregory
Andrew Shanahan
Andrea Slobogan
Patricia St. Pierre

Town of North Attleborough
TOWN COUNCIL
43 South Washington Street, North Attleborough, MA 02760
Phone: (508) 699-0100

4/14/2025 - Minutes

I. Pledge Of Allegiance

. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Pare' called the meeting to order at 7:00P.M. and lead the Town Council and the audience in the pledge of allegiance.

Town Council Members Present:

Members Absent:

Justin Pare'

John Simmons

Andrew Shanahan

Andrea Slobogan

Mark Gould

Dan Donovan

John Costello

Pat St. Pierre

Darius Gregory

Staff Present:

Town Manager Michael Borg

Assistant Town Manager Antonio Morabito

Clerk of the Council Kerrin Billinghoff

Communications Officer Taylor O'Neil
Assistant Assessor Cheryl Smith
Town Accountant Linda Catanzariti
Assistant Town Accountant Tammy Baillargeon
Building Commissioner Bryan Butler
Treasurer/Collector Chris Sweet
HR Director Cheryl Butts
Parks & Recreation Director Steve Carvalho
Acting I.T. Director Amy Sullivan
Library Director Deb Clifton
Senior Center Director Karen Testa
Town Planner Gil Hilario
Conservation Administrator Sandra McCrory
Elections Coordinator Pat Dolan
Health Director & Town Nurse AnneMarie Fleming
Veterans Agent Scott Smith
NAPD Chief McQuade
NAFD Chief Coleman
NAED Director Pete Schiffman
NAED Heather Cabral

Residents Present:

Laura Wagner- Elected Town Councilor to begin her term July 1, 2025
Kevin McCarthy- Elected Town Councilor to begin his term July 1, 2025
John Donohue
Anthony Gonzales- Rodeo
Lily Rodrigues- Representative of the Gonzales Family- Rodeo

Gonzales Family- Rodeo

Guests Present:

Heather Cabral of NAED

Documents Reviewed:

- Town Council Meeting Minutes of March 24, 2025
- Town Council Executive Session Meeting Minutes of March 24, 2025
- Town Manager's Report April 14, 2025
- **Measure 2025-056**- Approval to withdraw, re-purpose, and transfer \$1.8mm from Capital Improvement Stabilization to fund the Health Insurance Account
- **Measure 2025-047**- To authorize the Town Manager to petition the Massachusetts General Court for a special act authorizing a means-tested senior citizen property tax exemption for the proposed new high school building project
- **Measure 2025-054** - Acceptance of M.G.L. c. 59, § 50: Affordable Housing Property Tax Exemption Guidelines for Municipalities in Massachusetts, including acceptance, criteria, and application procedures
- FY2026 BUDGET MESSAGE
- FY2026 FINAL BUDGET PRESENTATION
- **Measure 2025-060**- FY26 General Fund Annual Appropriation
- **Measure 2025-061** - FY26 OPEB Funding
- **Measure 2025-063**- FY26 Ambulance Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Transfer
- **Measure 2025-064**- FY26 Solid Waste Enterprise Fund Annual Appropriation
- **Measure 2025-065**-FY26 Sewer Enterprise Fund Annual Appropriation
- **Measure 2025-066**- FY26 Water Enterprise Fund Annual Appropriation
- **Measure 2025-067**- FY26 Comcast PEG Access Enterprise Fund Annual Appropriation
- **Measure 2025-068**- FY26 Verizon PEG Access Enterprise Fund Annual Appropriation
- **Measure 2025-069**-FY26 Capital Improvement Program Projects to be funded by CIP Stabilization
- **Measure 2025-070**-FY26 Capital Improvement Program Projects to be funded by FY25 Free Cash
- **Measure 2025-071**-FY26 Capital Improvement Program Projects without specified funding
- **Measure 2025-072**- FY26 Capital Improvement Program Projects to be funded by the Fire Alarm Revolving Account
- **Measure 2025-073**- FY26 Water Enterprise Fund Capital Projects to be funded by Borrowing
- **Measure 2025-074**- FY26 Sewer Enterprise Fund Capital Projects to be funded by Borrowing
- **Measure 2025-075**-FY26 Revolving Account Annual Authorization
- **Measure 2025-076**- FY26 Additional Real Estate Property Tax Exemption of One Hundred Percent (100%)
- **Measure 2025-077**-FY26 Local Acceptance of Certain Property Tax Exemptions
- **Measure 2025-078**- FY26 Establish the Amount for Town Manager Line-Item Transfers

- **Measure 2025-057** - Consideration of A Resolution Regarding Question 1 from the November 2024 Ballot
- **Measure 2025-058** - Approval of a Bylaw to create a Standing Confirmations Sub Committee

II. Approval Of Minutes

- Approval of Town Council Minutes of March 24, 2025

Approval of Town Council Minutes of March 24, 2025

Vice President Simmons made a motion to approve the Town Council Minutes of March 24, 2025.

Councilor Donovan seconded the motion.

Motion carried 8-0-1.

- Approval of Town Council Executive Session Minutes of March 25, 2025

Approval of Town Council Executive Session Minutes of March 25, 2025

Vice President Simmons made a motion to approve the Town Council Executive Session Minutes of March 24, 2025, ad there was a scrivener's error and the meeting was on March 24, 2025 and no March 25, 2025.

Councilor Donovan seconded the motion.

Motion carried 8-0-1.

III. Town Councilor Community Updates

1. Councilor Gould reported that he is in support of Seniors that need relief and thank you to the Finance Sub-Committee for looking into this.
2. Town Council thanked Elections Coordinator Pat Dolan for a successful election!
3. Congrats to all who were elected.

IV. Town Manager's Report

Town Manager Michael Borg gave an overview of the Town Manager Report.

- Emergency Management - Updates
- Communications - Updates
- Operations - Updates
- Budget - Updates
- Personnel - Updates

- Recognition of Heather Cabral of NAED

Town Manager Borg recognized Heather Cabral of NAED for all of her hard work creating a

new updated GIS Map of the Town of North Attleborough. Mr. Borg thanked her for all of her continued efforts and assistance with her expertise with GIS

V. Resident And Community Comment

Ms. Lily Rodrigues was in attendance to request that the Town Council consider allowing the Festival Rodeo Event be held in the Town of North Attleborough again. They are requesting to hold this event on June 15, 2025.

President Pare' stated that this request would not be in the prevue of the Town Council.

Town Manager Borg recommended that they submit an application to the Special Events Working Group and present their request to them.

VI. Confirmations

- a. None at this time

VII. Sub-Committee Reports

- a. Finance

- i. Measure 2025-056- Approval to withdraw, re-purpose, and transfer \$1.8mm from Capital Improvement Stabilization to fund the Health Insurance Account

Measure 2025-056- Approval to withdraw, re-purpose, and transfer \$1.8mm from Capital Improvement Stabilization to fund the Health Insurance Account

Purpose:

The purpose of this measure is to address a projected deficit in the Town's Health Insurance Account by voting to withdraw and re-purpose \$1.8 million from the Capital Improvement Stabilization Fund. This transfer will ensure that the Town has sufficient funds to meet its health insurance obligations through the remainder of the fiscal year, thereby maintaining essential health coverage for Town employees and retirees.

Justification:

Projected Deficit - The Town's health insurance budget is currently experiencing a premium-to-claims experience ratio of 110% and climbing, indicating that the costs of claims are exceeding the budgeted amount. Without additional funding, the Town will face a shortfall in meeting its health insurance obligations by late April or early May.

Recognizing this potential deficit, the Town Council previously set aside funds from FY25 Free Cash as part of a proactive funding strategy to address this anticipated shortfall.

Taking action now allows the Town to avoid the risk of a funding shortfall, which could otherwise require emergency measures or disruption in services. This transfer is a measured and responsible approach to maintaining financial stability and operational continuity.

By approving this measure to withdraw and re-purpose these funds, the Town Council will ensure that health insurance claims are fully funded through the fiscal year, thereby protecting employee benefits and upholding the Town's financial integrity.

Vice President Simmons reviewed with the Council the Meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee Meeting of 4/7/2025. Vice President Simmons explained that this measure was voted back to the Full Town Council with a positive recommendation.

Motion carried 6-0.

Vice President Simmons summarized what was discussed at the Finance Meeting:

Town Manager Borg reviewed the 5.54MM FY25 Free Cash Strategy Proposal and reviewed the moving of funds that he is proposing in the New FY25 Free Cash Strategy Proposal. Town Manager Borg explained why the funds needed to be moved to the different buckets and discussed the Insurance Deficit.

1. FY25 Free Cash \$5.54MM Original Proposal

- Pension Liability \$500K
- OPEB Liability \$200K
- Stabilization Fund \$300K
- Health Insurance Stabilization Fund \$1.3MM
- CIP Stabilization Fund Tri-County Vocational HS \$2.2MM
- Capital Improvements \$500K
- Snow & Ice \$500K

1. FY25 Free Cash \$5.54MM Revised Proposal

- Pension Liability \$250K

- OPEB Liability \$750K/\$1.25MM
- Stabilization Fund \$0
- Health Insurance Fund \$1.8MM *Subject to Increase
- CIP Stabilization Fund Tri-County \$1.9MM
- Capital Improvements \$1.05MM
- Snow & Ice \$0

Next, Town Manager Borg reviewed the NFP Handout for Monthly Medical & RX Claims Summary dated February 2025. He explained that insurance is increasing everywhere. Insurance is projected to go even higher than anticipated.

There was discussion about Insurance amongst the Town Manager and the Committee Members. Discussion topics included:

- Very concerned about the increase in Insurance
- High-Deductible Plans
- Opt Out Program
- Average Cost per Plan \$30,000.00
- Currently 25% - 75% Split
- What if we went to a 30% - 70% Split?
- Claims are at a 12% to 14% increase
- Have we explored other carriers?
- Negotiations with Unions?
- At 65 Years Old you go to Medicare
- Claims History
- Will more people jump on to this plan because of the Opt-Out Program?
- Pharmacy Benefits are over \$4MM per year
- Non-Municipal Companies are at a 60%-40% split
- Funds were put into Capital Stabilization to earn interest

Town Accountant Linda Catanzariti gave the following balances:

- General Stabilization \$7.8MM
- Capital Stabilization \$7.4MM
- Free Cash \$2.0MM

Vice President Simmons made a motion to approve Measure 2025-056- Approval to withdraw, re-purpose, and transfer \$1.8mm from Capital Improvement Stabilization to fund the Health Insurance Account

Councilor Donovan seconded the motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken for this measure as a 2/3 vote is needed for repurposing:

President Pare'	Yes
Vice President Simmons	Yes
Councilor Donovan	Yes
Councilor Gould	Yes
Councilor Costello	Yes
Councilor St. Pierre	Yes
Councilor Slobogan	Yes
Councilor Shanahan	Yes
Councilor Gregory	Yes

Motion carried 9-0.

- ii. UPDATE of Measure 2025-047- To authorize the Town Manager to petition the Massachusetts General Court for a special act authorizing a means-tested senior citizen property tax exemption for the proposed new high school building project

UPDATE of Measure 2025-047- To authorize the Town Manager to petition the Massachusetts General Court for a special act authorizing a means-tested senior citizen property tax exemption for the proposed new high school building project

Vice President reviewed the discussions from the April 7, 2025 Finance Sub-Committee Meeting regarding this measure.

Vice-President Simmons asked the Committee if they wanted to tie the Senior Tax Exemption to the High School or should the two not be tied together at all?

The Committee didn't want to add additional funds to burden other residents, but they would like to help out the Seniors as best they can. The Committee is in favor of Senior Tax Relief, and ultimately decided on not tying the vote for the new High School.

Town Manager Borg stated that there are two options to fund the Tax Exemption:

1. Tax Exemption to be funded by the Overlay and include a list of qualifiers
2. Tax Exemption to be funded by the Tax Classification Hearing
 1. Residential Exemption
 2. Funded by other Taxpayers in that category

Town Manager Borg explained that Assistant Assessor Cheryl Smith was in attendance to explain the Personal Real Estate Tax Exemptions Effective FY2025 (41C & 41D) and reviewed the handout.

There was discussion amongst the Finance Sub-Committee, the Town Manager, and Assistant Assessor Cheryl Smith. Discussions included:

1. Senior Circuit Breaker Qualification
2. Senior Work-Off Program
3. Designation of someone to work for a disabled for a senior
4. 41C to 41D is a good starting point for this discussion
5. Need a starting point
6. Are we hitting our target audience?
7. We do not want to see people forced out of their homes because they can't afford it because of the tax increase
8. Home Rule Petition
9. Inviting Senator Feeney and Representative Scanlon to the next meeting so they can talk about legislation.

The Finance Committee would like to invite Senator Feeney and State Representative Scanlon to the April 22, 2025 Finance Meeting to discuss. They would like to discuss the circuit breaker and updates on the various bills related to senior tax freezes and/or exemptions (either bill amounts or assessments) and to see if there is anything they are missing with the circuit breaker or other tax exemptions they are not utilizing.

Town Manager Borg ran through an example related to the Senior Tax Exemption Proposal handout. Town Manager Borg did an example on the White Board to demonstrate different scenarios.

Mr. Cameron has concerns and wants to ensure that this is need based. He stressed helping the needy and establishing criteria for the Seniors truly in need, is the ultimate goal.

It was again agreed upon to disconnect this idea from the Debt Exclusion for the new

High School and un-tie this vote. This will need to be done before the next Tax Classification Hearing.

Councilor Donovan made a motion to report back to the Full Town Council to move from 41C to 41D in the Personal Real Estate Tax Exemptions Effective FY2025.

This discussion was continued to the April 22, 2025 Finance Sub-Committee Meeting.

The Finance Sub-Committee will invite Senator Feeney and Representative Scanlon to the April 22, 2025 Meeting.

- iii. **UPDATE of Measure 2025-054 – Acceptance of M.G.L. c. 59, § 50: Affordable Housing Property Tax Exemption Guidelines for Municipalities in Massachusetts, including acceptance, criteria, and application procedures**

UPDATE of Measure 2025-054 – Acceptance of M.G.L. c. 59, § 50:
Affordable Housing Property Tax Exemption Guidelines for Municipalities in Massachusetts, including acceptance, criteria, and application procedures

SUMMARY

- The exemption was created by St. 2023 c. 50, signed into law on October 4, 2023.
- It applies to residential unit owners renting to income-qualifying persons at affordable rates.
- Municipalities must vote to accept the exemption, with the first available fiscal year being 2025.
- Acceptance can be revoked after three years, also by vote.
- The exemption applies only to class one residential units, with no domicile requirement unless locally specified.

SCOPE OF ABATEMENT

- Exemption amount is locally determined, not exceeding the tax due based on assessed value.
- Residential unit owners must rent to income-qualifying persons at rates set by the municipality.
- Occupants' income must not exceed 200% of area median income, as defined by HUD.

- Units must be rented annually to qualifying persons for the entire fiscal year.

APPLICATIONS TO ASSESSORS

- Applicants must submit STF 50 annually to local assessors, including signed leases and proof of income.
- Applications are due by the first actual tax bill's due date.
- Abatements granted will be charged against the overlay account, impacting annual overlay needs.

Vice President Simmons summarized this discussion from the April 14, 2025 Finance Meeting:

This measure was brought forth to the Town Council by Councilor Donovan. Councilor Donovan reviewed this measure with the Sub-Committee.

There was discussion amongst the Town Manager, Assistant Assessor, and the Committee. Discussion topics included:

- This would cause additional pressure on the Overlay.
- Would we be ready to absorb this in the Overlay?
- We need to be cautious about overloading the Overlay
- Overlay balance is currently \$1.2MM
- This year we will need to put in \$700,000

- \$300,000 in Exemptions
- \$80,000 for Senior Work-Off Program
- \$300,000 in Abatements
 - Line Item in budget that pays for Appellate Tax Board Decisions
 - Funding cap could be put on this.
 - Criteria for renters
 - All of the criteria would need to be figured out
 - Possibly add criteria for 65 and older
 - Do Sober Homes qualify?
 - Can administration put together a potential proposal?
 - Owner occupied is advantageous.
 - **Safe Harbor**
 - 40R

Councilor Donovan summarized his proposal for the residents.

The Committee all agreed that they would like Senator Feeney and Representative Scanlon to be in attendance at the April 22, 2025 Meeting so they can weigh in on this discussion.

A motion was made to continue the discussion on this topic to the April 22, 2025 Finance Sub-Committee Meeting.

b. Economic Growth & Sustainability

Nothing to report at this time.

c. By-Law

Nothing to report at this time.

d. Rules

Will be meeting shortly.

e. School Committee Representative

Councilor Costello reported that NAHS Principal Haviland has been appointed as the Assistant Superintendent for the Town of North Attleborough

f. School Building Committee (MSBA)

Two Community Forums will be held:

- May 8, 2025 at 7:00PM
- May 29, 2025 time TBA

Two Tours will be held:

- May 3, 2025 at 9:00AM-12:00PM
- May 10, 2025 at 9:00AM-12:00PM

g. Communication, Public Participation & Engagement

Nothing to report at this time.

h. Local Emergency Planning

Nothing to report at this time.

- i. RFP Town Auditor Ad Hoc Committee

Nothing to report at this time.

VIII. Old Business

- a. None at this time

IX. New Business

- a. FINAL FY2026 BUDGET SUBMITTAL

Town Manager Borg presented the FY26 Final Budget Presentation Power Point to the Town Council. Town Manager Borg stated that all Department Heads were in attendance this evening to answer any questions the Councilor's may have had.

Town Manager Borg reviewed the FY26 Budget Presentation PowerPoint:

1. Recognition

Town Manager Borg recognized DPW Director Mark Hollowell for all of his hard work & dedication! Mr. Hollowell is an outstanding Director and the Town of North Attleborough is lucky to have him. Congratulations to Mr. Hollowell!

- 2. Charter Requirements
- 3. FY26 Budget Objectives
- 4. Budget Drivers
- 5. FY26 Revenue Estimates
- 6. FY26 Fund Balances
- 7. Cherry Sheet Analysis
- 8. FY26 Expense Forecast
- 9. Enterprise Funds
- 10. 5-Year Financial Forecast
- 11. Capital Improvement Program
- 12. Budget Summary

There was discussion amongst the Town Manager and the Town Councilors.

Discussions included:

- Insurance forecasted to go up 17.5%
- Employees will remain with Blue Cross
- Home sales are down
- Mixed Use Zoning is being looked at
- Thank you to NAED for the Pilot Payment of \$346,000.00
- Beach Lifeguards-Hockomock YMCA can no longer afford insurance for "Large Open Bodies of Water"- Will be covered in depth in Finance Meetings
- Tri-County- North Attleborough has the largest enrollment, so we pay 26% of

the bill which will be paid for through Free Cash. Is there a cap on the number of students? Lottery?

- New Growth for the Town is low at this time. Need to increase.
- Webster Mill- Is it in the 5 year plan?
- High Street Fields Completion date?

- i. Measure 2025-060- FY26 General Fund Annual Appropriation
 - ii. Measure 2025-061- FY26 OPEB Funding
 - iii. Measure 2025-063- FY26 Ambulance Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Transfer
 - iv. Measure 2025-064- FY26 Solid Waste Enterprise Fund Annual Appropriation
 - v. Measure 2025-065- FY26 Sewer Enterprise Fund Annual Appropriation
 - vi. Measure 2025-066- FY26 Water Enterprise Fund Annual Appropriation
 - vii. Measure 2025-067- FY26 Comcast PEG Access Enterprise Fund Annual Appropriation
 - viii. Measure 2025-068- FY26 Verizon PEG Access Enterprise Fund Annual Appropriation
 - ix. Measure 2025-069- FY26 Capital Improvement Program Projects to be funded by CIP Stabilization
 - x. Measure 2025-070- FY26 Capital Improvement Program Projects to be funded by FY25 Free Cash
 - xi. Measure 2025-071- FY26 Capital Improvement Program Projects without specified funding
 - xii. Measure 2025-072- FY26 Capital Improvement Program Projects to be funded by the Fire Alarm Revolving Account
 - xiii. Measure 2025-073- FY26 Water Enterprise Fund Capital Projects to be funded by Borrowing
 - xiv. Measure 2025-074- FY26 Sewer Enterprise Fund Capital Projects to be funded by Borrowing
 - xv. Measure 2025-075- FY26 Revolving Account Annual Authorization
 - xvi. Measure 2025-076- FY26 Additional Real Estate Property Tax Exemption of One Hundred Percent (100%)
 - xvii. Measure 2025-077- FY26 Local Acceptance of Certain Property Tax Exemptions
 - xviii. Measure 2025-078- FY26 Establish the Amount for Town Manager Line-Item Transfers
- b. Measure 2025-057- Consideration of a Resolution Regarding Question 1 from the November 2024 Ballot

President Pare' stated that this measure will be withdrawn at the request of Councilor

Gould had submitted the measure.

- c. Measure 2025-058-Approval of Bylaw to Create Standing Confirmations of Sub Committees

Purpose:

The Town Manager has the power under Section 4-3 of the Charter to make appointments of Department Heads as well as members of Multiple-member bodies subject to confirmation by the Town Council. In order to better prepare the Town Council to vote on those confirmation, it is proposed that the Town Council form a Standing **Confirmations Subcommittee**.

Justification:

The roll of the Standing Confirmations Subcommittee will be to review the resume' and/or applications for any persons whose appointment is referred to the Town Council under Section 4-3 of the Charter. Measures for appointment will be brought to Town Council with sufficient time to allow referral to the sub-committee, deliberation by the sub-committee, and referral back to Town Council with the twenty-one (21) day period allowed by the Charter.

Councilor Donovan made a motion to refer Measure 2025-085- Approval of a Bylaw to create a Standing Confirmations Sub Committee to the Bylaw Sub-**Committee**.

Councilor Gould seconded the motion.

Motion carried 9-0

X. Adjournment

Vice President Simmons made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Councilor Donovan seconded the motion.

Motion carried 9-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55PM.

XI. Town Council Meeting Schedule

- a. Monday, April 28, 2025
- b. Monday, May 12, 2025