

**Town of Hill**  
**Budget Committee**  
**2026 Budget**

**Meeting Minutes 12/17/2025**

**Members Present:** Bruce Blazon (Chair), Harold Knott, MaryAnne Moses (Ex-Officio), Karen Sylvestre, Lexi White (Ex-Officio), Frank Simeone and Tom Scribner

**Members Absent:** Tom Angeley and Bill Machado, Jr.

**Public:** Paula McDonough, Chief Casey Brennan, Brian Connelly, Carol Snow Asher

**First Order of Business:**

**Review Minutes:**

No correction requested. MB motioned to except minutes.

Seconded: LW

All In Favor: Yes

Chair Vote: Affirmative

**Overview:**

- Committee reviewed and accepted prior minutes; quorum and attendance issues noted (multiple absences).
- Major focus on school budget: 2.73% overall increase driven by tuition and special-education costs (big drivers: HS tuition +\$57,973, special ed +9.93%).
- Questions about water commission not submitting a budget — committee can rely on Government/Select Board to insert a line-item potential enforcement/authority issues discussed.
- Facilities assessment / capital reserve funding and warrant article (town-wide facilities assessment) remain outstanding; concerns about using last year's values vs. current expenditures (notably repair & maintenance swings).
- Police vehicle financing proposal: 5-year loan option presented (approx. \$8,661.47/yr., APR 4.65%) — committee accepted police budget with that understanding.

**Attendance, Rules & Minutes:**

- Rules allow dismissal after more than three missed meetings.
- Tom Angeley missed 4 of 5 meetings.
- No motion is made to dismiss; matter is recorded as a meeting note.

**Budget Committee Authority & Water Budget:**

- Budget Committee represents the town budget and provides the first-column recommendations. Select Board provides the second-column recommendations.
- Cemetery Committee submitted an unsolicited budget identical to the prior year; Budget Committee forwarded it to the Select Board and will postpone review if Cemetery does not attend.
- Cemetery proposal will remove the Mowing section and absorb it into the Highway Department, resulting in a lower line amount.
- Water Commission and government sections were not ready to present. Budget Committee may omit a Water Commission line if the commission refuses to submit, while the Select Board/Government can still include a line item. Budget Committee has no enforcement power.
- Tonight's agenda revisited one police budget line.
- School Board attended.
- Parks & Rec initially indicated non-presentation though representatives were present.

**School Budget Presentation:**

- Presenter asked to hold questions until end and requested a meeting in January to verify tuition calculations after budget change from 0.7% to 2.7%.
- Regular education increased 2.3% (+\$32,292) driven by high school tuition rise \$57,973 and middle school tuition decrease \$37,372; 26–27 tuition: middle \$18,488, high \$17,739 (prior year: middle \$17,726, high \$14,750).
- Special education increased 9.93% due to higher needs and new IEPs requiring paraprofessionals; extended school year demand rose; speech +\$822, occupational therapy up 7.79% (to \$1,488), behavior services +\$3,642 for RBT oversight.

- Staffing and operations changes: guidance up 24.5% to restore two-day/week position; nursing up 4.4%; operations of buildings +\$8,216 for waste removal (~\$6,000/yr.); care of equipment down \$20,000 (deferred building assessment); vehicle operation up 9% (external transport costs).
- Food service transfer up \$4,144; food service budget ~\$77,000 with general fund covering shortfalls; overall budget increase \$69,194.63 (2.73%).

### **Facilities Assessment & Capital Reserves:**

- Warrant article intended to fund an encompassing facilities assessment for all town buildings; budget committee supported it and the select board did not participate; amendment increased amount from \$10,000 to \$20,000 to include town participation.
- Unused warrant funds revert to the general fund and risk being lost if not expended by year-end.
- Special education costs rose from \$145,000 to \$245,000 over two years; district served 14 special-ed students; individual high-need placements can cost up to \$250,000; tuition covers regular-education operational costs while the district funds transportation and special-ed services.
- Food service operates as a separate enterprise; meal payments and state reimbursements fund it and any shortfalls must be funded by the district; food service is self-managed (not contracted to vendors like Sodexo).
- Budget committee deferred issuing an opinion pending a return presentation with more solid budget materials; Parks & Rec did not provide current budget copies at the meeting.

### **Police Vehicle Financing & EMS Discussion:**

- Loan structured as tax-exempt leasing product but functions as a town-owned 5-year loan (vehicle remains town property at term end).
- Payment terms: five annual payments of \$8,661.47 (\$722/month); APR 4.65% through Franklin Savings Bank (next-best 6.2%).
- Projected fiscal impact: chief presented a new budget total \$192,712 and noted ~25% increase to the police budget.
- Capital reserve strategy: plan to apply \$39,516 from capital reserve to reduce annual cost; chief recommended delaying use for 1 year to keep annual payment under \$10,000.
- Old cruiser to be retained as backup/town vehicle after removing lights/radio; radar/radio to be salvaged; existing lights are out of warranty.

New Business: None

BB Motioned to adjourn.

HK Seconded

Chair Votes Affirmative

Respectfully Submitted

MaryAnne Moses, Secretary

AI Generated:

Minutes Approved 1/21/2026