

**Needham Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting of September 17, 2025
To view a recording of the meeting on YouTube:**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3PRZZjHC3yFvWuO8IwFGgK3KaPYkTyxK>

The meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by Chair John Connelly at approximately 7:00 pm in the Great Plain Room at Needham Town Hall, also available via Zoom teleconferencing.

Present from the Finance Committee:

John Connelly, Chair and Barry Coffman, Vice Chair

Ali Blauer, Paul O'Connor, Joe Abruzese, Steve Maxwell, Barry Coffman, Carol Smith-Fachetti

Absent from the Finance Committee:

Tina Burgos

Others Present:

David Davison, Deputy Town Manager/Director of Finance

Molly Pollard, Finance Committee Executive Secretary

Cecilia Simchak, Assistant Director of Finance

Kevin Keene, Select Board and Stormwater Bylaw Working Group

Josh Levy, Select Board and Stormwater Bylaw Working Group

Katie King, Town Manager

Debbie Anderson, Stormwater Bylaw Working Group

John Salo, Stormwater Bylaw Working Group

Kimberly Donovan, Stormwater Bylaw Working Group

Thomas Ryder, Stormwater Bylaw Working Group

Sue Barber, Stormwater Bylaw Working Group

Joe Prondak, Stormwater Bylaw Working Group (arrived at 7:08pm)

Citizen Requests to Address the Finance Committee

None

Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings

MOVED: By Mr. Coffman that the minutes of meeting September 3, 2025, be approved, as distributed and subject to technical corrections. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0 at approximately 7:01pm.

Special Town Meeting Warrant Article Discussions

Article 13: AMEND GENERAL BY-LAW – STORMWATER

The Stormwater Bylaw Working Group called a meeting to order.

Mr. Keene explained that Article 13 replaces the town's existing stormwater bylaw to modernize construction permitting standards. The goal is to ensure that the Building and Engineering Departments can better enforce state and EPA requirements for stormwater quality and quantity. The current bylaw has limited scope, weak enforcement, inadequate triggers, and unclear design

guidelines. After recent rainstorms and subsequent neighborhood meetings, many residents questioned why homes had been permitted in flood-prone areas. The new bylaw aims to improve resiliency and compliance with EPA permits but will not eliminate flooding. It includes a clearer structure, expanded coverage of regulated activities, stronger infiltration requirements, and new provisions for illicit discharge detection. All permit applications must include stormwater management and erosion control plans with improved soil testing and construction safeguards. Post-construction measures, such as stormwater control mechanisms (SCMs), must provide recharge for 1.5 inches of rainfall, an increase of half an inch. Each infiltration chamber requires the planting of three 2.5-inch-caliber trees, and operation and maintenance plans must be recorded with property deeds to inform future owners. The bylaw also clarifies infiltration thresholds for impervious surfaces and requires that projects cannot worsen drainage impacts on abutters.

Ms. Smith-Fachetti asked how large the department would need to be to regulate the bylaw. Mr. Keene said enforcement would remain within the Building and Engineering Departments, estimating a 30% increase in permits—about 42 additional permits and roughly 10 extra hours of engineering work per year, plus 16 additional inspection hours. Mr. Connelly confirmed that no new staff positions are needed. Mr. Ryder agreed, and Mr. Prondak noted that although projections are tentative, the workload should be manageable. Mr. Prondak added that the adjustment period will be more challenging at first but should stabilize as builders adapt, emphasizing that outreach and clear communication will help. Mr. O'Connor asked whether builders had been involved in the process, and Mr. Keene said they had and were generally supportive. Mr. Salo, drawing on his experience as an engineer, agreed that clearer and more consistent requirements will lead to better compliance and fewer disputes.

Mr. Abruzese raised concerns about adding responsibilities when inspection staffing was already tight. Mr. Keene acknowledged the issue but noted that the budget includes a new, unfilled full-time position to help address it. Ms. Blauer asked if the bylaw would apply to more types of projects beyond new homes. Mr. Keene confirmed that it would, including earth-moving projects such as tennis or pickleball courts. Mr. Ryder said the workload estimates already account for longer review times. Mr. Coffman asked about potential cost increases for new construction. Mr. Keene said that while costs will vary by site complexity, builders should expect additional infiltration units and maintenance obligations. Mr. Levy explained that the new infiltration standard—1.5 inches instead of 1—adds roughly one chamber per 1,000 square feet of building footprint. Mr. Connelly asked whether any modeling had been done to estimate total cost impact. Mr. Levy said the bylaw was benchmarked against peer towns such as Weston, which have equal or stricter requirements, suggesting Needham's proposal is reasonable. Mr. Keene added that improved engineering data will help prevent future drainage failures and could reduce costly townwide mitigation projects. Mr. Prondak estimated the added cost per new single-family home at approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000, a small increase for million-dollar projects. Ms. Smith-Fachetti asked whether existing homes could trigger the bylaw, and Mr. Keene said yes, if a property undergoes an addition or other qualifying work.

Mr. Ryder explained that connecting to the town's drainage system or building additions over 25% of an existing home would trigger the new bylaw's on-site storage requirements. Ms. Smith-Fachetti asked whether the estimated 10.5 additional staff hours accounted for small additions, noting that such projects are common. Mr. Levy said the estimate primarily reflects new types of projects—like tennis or sport courts—that currently do not require stormwater review. Existing new homes already undergo permitting, so the extra time would come from incremental inspections. Ms. Blauer asked whether additions already go through permitting. Mr. Ryder confirmed they do.

Ms. Blauer then asked about the impact on town capital projects such as Pollard. Mr. Ryder said municipal projects will already need to exceed these standards due to local drainage and phosphorus reduction needs, so the bylaw itself won't add costs beyond what the town is already planning. He noted that the DPW incorporates drainage improvements into most infrastructure projects regardless. Ms. Blauer sought confirmation that planned public projects, such as courts or recreation sites, would not incur related cost increases, Mr. Ryder agreed. Mr. Levy clarified that the bylaw does not address expanding street pipes or flooding mitigation—those remain separate capital projects. Mr. Connelly emphasized that the bylaw deals solely with permitting, not infrastructure upgrades. Mr. Keene agreed, noting its focus is residential construction permitting. Mr. Prondak added that while a few commercial projects would be subject to the bylaw, most local commercial work involves interior renovations, so the bylaw will primarily affect residential construction.

Mr. Connelly asked about the public hearing process. Mr. Ryder said a public listening session occurred on August 5, with a formal Select Board hearing scheduled for the upcoming week. Mr. Keene added that few builders attended; most public questions concerned town drainage systems. Ms. Smith-Fachetti noted the overlap between permitting and drainage. Mr. Keene clarified that the bylaw's goal is infiltration—capturing 1.5 inches of rainfall on-site to reduce strain on the municipal drainage system and phosphorus runoff. Ms. Blauer summarized that the intent is to make property owners responsible for more stormwater capture during construction, reducing town system loads. Mr. Salo said this will have a positive impact since overflow can be contained on-site. Mr. Connelly used the Pollard School as an example, saying its 240,000-square-foot roof will need infiltration basins to retain runoff on-site. Mr. Keene confirmed that the first 1.5 inches of rainfall is the critical threshold, comparable to requirements in other towns. Mr. Ryder noted that large public buildings already must prove post-development runoff does not exceed pre-development levels.

Ms. Smith-Fachetti asked about long-term maintenance enforcement. Mr. Keene said the bylaw includes an Operation and Maintenance Plan recorded with the property deed, ensuring new owners know what systems exist and their upkeep responsibilities. Ms. Smith-Fachetti clarified that there is no formal compliance inspection process after construction. Mr. Keene agreed, saying current enforcement ends at installation, but future regulations could establish follow-up requirements. Mr. Ryder added that future policy could include stormwater credits for homeowners who properly maintain systems. Mr. Prondak said the goal is to alert homeowners

through deed records rather than create an enforcement arm. Mr. Connelly asked whether occupancy certificates would be withheld until documentation is recorded. Mr. Keene confirmed that final approval will require proof of Registry of Deeds recording, providing a built-in compliance checkpoint.

Mr. Prondak explained that builders will upload deed documentation directly into the online permitting system before final inspection, creating an automatic checklist for staff without adding administrative delays. Mr. Maxwell asked whether the new bylaw would extend overall project timelines. Mr. Ryder said the Engineering Department typically completes reviews within 48 hours once received from the Building Department. Mr. Prondak added that his office has 30 days under the building code but usually completes reviews within one week to ten days, except during staff shortages. He said the process will be more detailed but not slower, since clearer standards will reduce back-and-forth confusion over thresholds.

Mr. Coffman asked how many homes this affects annually. Ms. Donovan said about 900 building permits are issued per year, with roughly 100 currently triggering stormwater review. The bylaw would expand that by about 30%, or 42 additional projects. Mr. Ryder noted reviews happen each morning before inspections and that engineering and building will coordinate to handle the increased volume. Ms. Blauer asked if this includes added inspections. Mr. Prondak said yes—his office will add one 15- to 20-minute stormwater inspection to the five to seven already conducted for each new home.

Mr. Abruzese asked about definitions in the bylaw, particularly “qualified soil evaluator.” Mr. Levy said the definition was revised to clarify that qualifications must be demonstrated to the permitting authority. Mr. Prondak added that geotechnical or soil engineers are already qualified, while Title 5 soil evaluators may also qualify. Mr. Ryder noted that stormwater evaluation differs from septic work and focuses on groundwater and soil composition, not sanitation. Mr. Keene said the clarification prevents unqualified individuals from self-certifying.

Mr. Abruzese next asked whether projects under the Dover Amendment are exempt. Mr. Prondak said they are not—the Dover Amendment applies only to zoning, while this bylaw falls under general town bylaws. Stormwater conditions cannot be waived for Dover projects.

Mr. Abruzese then raised concerns about enforcement, asking whether penalties exist for homeowners who fail to maintain stormwater systems or provide documentation. Mr. Prondak said enforcement follows the general bylaw’s fee schedule: initial notice, opportunity to comply, then escalating penalties and potential legal action if necessary. Mr. Ryder added that noncompliant owners may be denied future permits until records are provided. Mr. Abruzese suggested adding financial penalties to strengthen deterrence. Mr. Levy said state law already allows civil fines up to \$5,000 per violation, so the tools exist if the town wishes to apply them. Mr. Abruzese observed that penalties should be explicitly referenced, noting lesser infractions like dog-license violations are listed more clearly.

Mr. Connelly confirmed the Select Board has not yet acted on the article. The Finance Committee will wait for the Select Board’s vote before making its recommendation, likely at the

October 8 meeting. He and Mr. Maxwell encouraged the team to strengthen the enforcement section before presentation, perhaps by referencing the state penalty provision.

The Stormwater Bylaw Working Committee adjourned their meeting.

Article 1: COLLECTIVE BARGAINING – POLICE SUPERIOR OFFICERS

Article 2: COLLECTIVE BARGAINING – NEEDHAM POLICE UNION

Documents: Article 1 and 2: 2025 Special Town Meeting

Mr. Davison reported on Articles 1 and 2 concerning police labor agreements. He said the town reached one-year contracts for FY2026 with both the Police Union and the Police Superior Officers Association. Each provides a 3% base wage increase and an adjustment to private detail rates, with no other compensation or language changes. These settlements align with agreements reached with other town unions. The additional cost for the superior officers' contract is \$18,009 (a 3% increase), and for the police officers' contract, \$156,795 (a 2.9% total budget impact, since only base wages increase). Funding will come from the classification, performance, and settlement line, to be transferred by the Town Manager upon Town Meeting approval.

Mr. Connelly asked about new detail rates of \$68 for private and \$61 for town details. Mr. Davison said the prior rates were \$60 and \$53 respectively, and that town detail rates are always \$7 below private. He explained the increases reflect market adjustments, as Needham's rates were lower than nearby communities. Ms. Blauer asked why the percentage increase was much higher for details than for wages. Mr. Davison said detail rates had not been updated in several years and needed to be made competitive. Ms. Blauer also asked what share of total compensation comes from details. Mr. Davison said it varies widely—some officers earn up to \$100,000 a year from detail work, while others do very few.

Ms. Smith-Fachetti asked whether the new detail rates are temporary. Mr. Davison said they remain in effect indefinitely until renegotiated in a future contract. Ms. Blauer asked whether the wage figures presented include the detail rate change. Mr. Davison said no—private details are paid by outside contractors, and town projects pay the lower town detail rate as part of project budgets.

Mr. Connelly asked why the contracts were limited to one year. Mr. Davison said one union is undergoing leadership changes and the Town has a new Town Manager, so the parties agreed to a short-term deal for FY2026 before negotiating longer multi-year contracts. Negotiations will resume after Town Meeting, with the goal of presenting new multi-year agreements at the Annual Town Meeting. He added that the Select Board has executed the agreements, which are binding except for the wage increases pending Town Meeting funding approval. Once appropriated, the raises will be retroactive to July 1.

Mr. Connelly clarified that funds for the increases are already appropriated within the Town's classification and settlement reserve line, so no new appropriation is required. Ms. Blauer sought confirmation that the new detail rates apply to future projects only, not current ones. Mr. Davison agreed. Mr. Maxwell asked if the wage increases affect other costs such as retirement

contributions. Mr. Davison said they will slightly increase the town's Medicare match and could marginally affect pension calculations, but those impacts are captured in the central benefits budget rather than departmental budgets.

MOVED: By Mr. Coffman that the Finance Committee recommend adoption of Article 1: COLLECTIVE BARGAINING – POLICE SUPERIOR OFFICERS and Article 2: COLLECTIVE BARGAINING – NEEDHAM POLICE UNION. Ms. Smith-Fachetti seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0 at 7:55p.m.

Article 3: INFILTRATION AND INFLOW

Mr. Davison explained that the article involves appropriating a payment the Town has already received from Boston Children's Hospital. The payment was required under state and MWRA regulations addressing inflow and infiltration (I&I)—the leakage of groundwater and stormwater into the sewer system through illegal connections or failing infrastructure. Children's Hospital was obligated, as part of its permit conditions, to contribute to a reduction in I&I. Because its new facility and surrounding infrastructure had no existing I&I to remove, the hospital instead paid the town \$132,000 so the town could perform equivalent I&I reduction work elsewhere in Needham.

Mr. Coffman asked whether this payment functions like a carbon credit. Mr. Davison said the concept is similar but long-standing under MWRA rules. The town receives such payments periodically and uses them for sewer system studies and improvements to reduce I&I. He emphasized that the appropriation is needed because the money cannot be spent until authorized by Town Meeting. The funds will support a DPW-led engineering study identifying areas where infiltration is occurring and where sewer pipes should be replaced or repaired. The study will inform future capital requests but is itself a standalone project, not a funding source for later work.

Mr. Connelly confirmed that the funds are already in the town's possession, not new revenue. Mr. Davison said they are being held until Town Meeting appropriates them for the designated purpose. The money will be expended directly for the study once approved, not transferred to another account. Ms. Smith-Fachetti asked whether any subsequent remediation costs would be borne by the town. Mr. Davison said yes, future repairs will be part of the town's capital program. He explained that maintaining the sewer system reduces MWRA flow assessments, since Needham is charged for all wastewater treated—whether or not it originates from paying customers—so removing infiltration saves ratepayers money over time.

Mr. Coffman sought clarification on how this differs from the stormwater bylaw discussed earlier. Mr. Davison said the stormwater bylaw seeks to promote infiltration to manage runoff, whereas the I&I program seeks to prevent infiltration of groundwater into sewer pipes, which increases treatment costs. He described how illegal hookups are detected using smoke testing, where smoke released into pipes reveals improper connections at homes. Mr. Connelly asked who set the \$8-per-gallon mitigation fee that determined the hospital's payment. Mr. Davison

said it was established through consultation between the Planning Board and the Engineering Department. Mr. Connelly confirmed that Children's Hospital had no onsite I&I to correct, so payment was the only option for compliance. Mr. Davison agreed, emphasizing that while the hospital's project did not worsen conditions, the regulation requires all large developments to help reduce overall system I&I. Ms. Blauer summarized that the payment was not a fine but a mitigation contribution, and Mr. Davison confirmed that the funds will be used exclusively for town-led I&I reduction projects.

MOVED: By Mr. Coffman that the Finance Committee recommend adoption of Article 3: INFILTRATION AND INFLOW. Ms. Blauer seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0 at 8:05p.m.

Article 4: INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT ANALYSES

Mr. Davison said this new \$25,000 payment stems from an amendment to the hospital's special permit requiring a roadway safety audit at the intersection of Kendrick Street and Fourth Avenue. The funds have already been received and will be appropriated for the town to hire engineers to complete the audit.

Ms. Smith-Fachetti asked if the study had already been approved. Mr. Davison clarified that a different project was approved previously—the earlier funding addressed a traffic light over the highway, not this audit. Ms. Blauer asked if the process was similar to the prior project, where a study could later lead to a traffic signal installation funded by the town. Mr. Davison confirmed that this is a preliminary step required before any design or construction can proceed, noting that traffic lights cannot be installed without state approval based on data collected through the study.

Mr. Connelly suggested that, given the evident congestion, it might make sense to move directly to signal design, but Mr. Davison reiterated that the audit is a mandatory prerequisite for state authorization. Ms. Smith-Fachetti asked if the hospital's payment fully covers the cost of the study. Mr. Davison said yes—the \$25,000 is being used specifically for that purpose as a permit condition related to its development's traffic impacts. Ms. Blauer observed that while Children's Hospital is covering the study, it would not be responsible for funding any eventual traffic signal. Mr. Davison agreed, explaining that the payment satisfies its mitigation requirement, while future infrastructure costs would be borne by the town if warranted.

Mr. Connelly and others discussed that other major traffic contributors in the area also drive congestion at Kendrick Street. Mr. Davison concluded that the audit is an essential procedural step: it will provide the data and documentation needed for the state to determine whether a signal or other safety improvements should be implemented.

MOVED: By Mr. Coffman that the Finance Committee recommend adoption of Article 4: INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT ANALYSES. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0 at 8:08p.m.

Article 6: AMEND THE FY2026 OPERATING BUDGET

Mr. Davison presented a request to increase the town clerk's expense budget by \$11,600 to purchase a mail-opening and time-stamping machine. He explained that the town clerk's office currently handles all incoming mail manually, including election ballots that must be time-stamped upon receipt. The requested equipment would automate these functions and improve efficiency. The cost is based on vendor quotes obtained by the clerk's office, and the funding is being requested now so the machine can be installed before the April 2026 town election, which occurs prior to the Annual Town Meeting.

Ms. Smith-Fachetti asked whether the equipment would reduce the need for part-time election workers. Mr. Davison said the town clerk anticipates some labor savings but emphasized the greater benefit will be allowing existing staff to focus on more productive tasks instead of opening and sorting envelopes.

MOVED: By Mr. Coffman that the Finance Committee recommend adoption of Article 6: AMEND THE FY2026 OPERATING BUDGET. Ms. Blauer seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0 at 8:11p.m.

Article 7: AMEND THE FY2026 SEWER ENTERPRISE FUND BUDGET

Article 8: AMEND THE FY2026 WATER ENTERPRISE FUND BUDGET

Mr. Davison explained that both MWRA water and sewer assessments were expected adjustments, and the town planned to amend its budget in October. The FY2026 budget had assumed level funding equal to FY2025, but the actual MWRA assessments came in higher. He said the sewer assessment increased by \$317,676, reflecting overall MWRA cost growth and Needham's share of sewer system use relative to other communities. The water assessment increased by \$563,298 largely because the town used significantly more MWRA-supplied water in calendar year 2024 than in 2023.

Mr. O'Connor noted that the warm summer likely contributed to higher usage, and Mr. Davison agreed, explaining that irrigation is the primary driver when the town draws from the MWRA system. Mr. Coffman asked whether billing rates already reflect these higher assessments. Mr. Davison confirmed that rate increases approved in June were based on the updated assessments, so water and sewer receipts will cover the additional expenses over FY2026.

Ms. Blauer clarified that while the increased usage occurred in 2024, the MWRA bills are received much later. Mr. Davison said there is typically a 12–18-month lag between usage and billing, meaning the town pays later but adjusts future rates to align with those costs.

Mr. O'Connor noted that this adjustment process is standard and was explained to Town Meeting in May. Mr. Davison confirmed, adding that while some years assessments decrease, this year's increases were significant. Mr. Abruzese asked whether next year's budget will level-fund based on the new figures. Mr. Davison said yes—the FY2027 budget will use these updated assessments as its new baseline.

MOVED: By Mr. Coffman that the Finance Committee recommend adoption of Article 7: AMEND THE FY2026 SEWER ENTERPRISE FUND BUDGET and Article 8:

AMEND THE FY2026 WATER ENTERPRISE FUND BUDGET. Mr. Abruzese seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0 at 8:16p.m.

Article 9: PUBLIC, EDUCATIONAL, AND GOVERNMENT (PEG) PROGRAMMING

Mr. Davison reported that the final figure in the warrant for the cable television appropriation will be \$268,200, slightly different from the earlier draft because additional receipts were identified after the article was written. He explained that the funds come from the PEG Access and Cable-Related Fund, which collects required capital contributions from local cable providers to support Needham Channel's equipment and infrastructure upgrades.

Mr. Coffman asked whether cable cord-cutting is affecting revenue. Mr. Davison said yes—annual receipts for Needham cable are now around \$670,000, down from \$800,000–\$900,000 in prior years. He added that national legislation is being discussed to allow fees on streaming services, which could help sustain local public access stations in the future.

Ms. Blauer asked about the current fund balance. Mr. Davison confirmed the total is \$268,200.23, and the article proposes, as it always does, transferring nearly all of it. Mr. Connelly clarified that the money moves from the PEG fund to Needham Channel only after appropriation. Mr. Davison agreed, explaining that once Town Meeting approves the transfer, the town issues a check to Needham Channel for its capital and operational use.

MOVED: By Mr. Coffman that the Finance Committee recommend adoption of Article 9: PUBLIC, EDUCATIONAL, AND GOVERNMENT (PEG) PROGRAMMING. Ms. Smith-Fachetti seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0 at 8:20p.m.

Finance Committee Business

The Finance Committee decided to meet on October 8 to continue to prepare for the Special Town Meeting.

Mr. O'Connor reported that the Envision Needham Downtown project remains in early planning stages, with consultants recently presenting three design options ranging from minimal to significant impact. A public timeline shows construction and funding still two to three years away. He said the Select Board will ultimately determine the direction and it was mentioned in the meeting that the town is stockpiling Chapter 90 funds for possible future requests. Mr. O'Connor questioned how much is currently available and what other projects may be delayed as a result.

Mr. Connelly raised concerns about coordination between Envision and other efforts, such as the Quiet Zone and traffic light synchronization projects along Great Plain Avenue, warning that overlap could lead to inefficiencies. Ms. Blauer and Ms. Smith-Fachetti noted that a separate signal-timing project is already moving forward and may have sparked the Envision discussions. Mr. O'Connor said the town still holds its federal planning grant, but federal requirements for road diets and bike lanes were dropped under the Trump administration.

Ms. Blauer noted that the first meeting of the Stephen Palmer Development Review Committee is October 15.

Mr. Connelly reported that the Pollard Middle School Feasibility Study has moved into the next phase of the MSBA process, where Needham must narrow down one of seven design options. He said he had expected this decision to unfold gradually through December, but was surprised to learn there is now pressure to eliminate options sooner. The primary questions under consideration are: whether the school should remain at the Pollard site or move to DeFazio, whether it should serve grades 6–8 or 7–8, and whether it should be new construction or a renovation/addition. A joint “summit” of the town’s boards has been proposed to identify which options to remove, but Mr. Connelly expressed skepticism about how that could occur without clear criteria or sufficient information. He emphasized that the Finance Committee’s role at the meeting would be to listen and ask questions, not to make or endorse decisions.

Committee members voiced broad concern that the process lacks rigor, transparency, and cost discipline. Mr. Maxwell questioned why decisions were being accelerated without an established evaluation framework, saying the process is missing a “decision-making matrix” or scoring system that assigns weight to key factors such as educational impact, cost to taxpayers, and timing. Ms. Blauer and Ms. Smith-Fachetti warned that eliminating options prematurely could violate MSBA expectations that both renovation and new construction scenarios be analyzed. Mr. Coffman added that the lack of criteria makes it unclear how to distinguish between “must-haves” and “nice-to-haves.”

Several members discussed cost concerns. Mr. Maxwell noted the current range of options runs from a \$130 million base-repair scenario (required for comparison) to options of \$260–\$330 million, with the preferred design among the most expensive. He and Mr. Connelly said the town is effectively looking at a half-billion dollars in school projects once Pollard, Mitchell, and High Rock are considered together. They argued that lower-cost or phased alternatives deserve more study, including whether a \$200 million renovation could meet needs while freeing funds for Mitchell. Ms. Blauer pointed out that the MSBA will not reimburse below its minimum design standards, meaning “watered-down” designs could lose state participation.

Throughout the discussion, members agreed that Finance Committee should press for a transparent, data-driven process that weighs total cost, educational value, and long-term capital planning for all schools. Ms. Smith-Fachetti proposed that the Finance Committee express its preference for a process that evaluates multiple scenarios comprehensively rather than endorsing a single plan. Mr. Connelly agreed, saying the Committee’s focus should be ensuring that Town Meeting and voters are presented with more than one fully vetted option, supported by objective financial analysis, before any override request is made.

Adjournment

MOVED: By Mr. Coffman that the Finance Committee meeting be adjourned, there being no further business. Mr. O’Connor seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0 at 8:58p.m.

Documents: Article 1 and 2: 2025 Special Town Meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Molly Pollard

Executive Secretary, Finance Committee

Article 1
2025 Special Town Meeting
Needham Police Superior Officers Association Union Contract Settlement

		Amount	Percent
Fiscal Year 2026	Base Wage Increase July 1, 2025	\$ 18,009	3.0%
	Step, Education, & Other Changes	\$ 0	0.0%
	Total	\$ 18,009	3.0%

Other Key Components

- Increase basic private detail rate to \$68, Town detail rate to \$61

Article 2
2025 Special Town Meeting
Needham Police Union Contract Settlement

		Amount	Percent
Fiscal Year 2026	Base Wage Increase July 1, 2025	\$156,795	2.9%
	Step, Education, & Other Changes	(\$ 5,356)	(0.1%)
	Total	\$151,439	2.8%

Other Key Components

- Increase basic private detail rate to \$68, Town detail rate to \$61