

Select Board Receives Update on FY 2024 Budget Recommendation, Town DEI Efforts, and Continues Review of Town Meeting Articles

ANDOVER, MA - The Town of Andover's ongoing efforts around diversity, equity and inclusion, and the Fiscal Year 2024 budget proposal were among the topics of discussion as the Select Board gaveled-in on Monday, February 27 at the Robb Center's Lifelong Learning Room. The meeting also saw the continuation of the Board's review of warrant articles for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting, as recommendations were issued on eleven articles.

-
- **Select Board presented with an update on DEI Survey of Town Employees and work of DEI Commission working group;**
-
- **Receives overview of Town Manager's FY 2024 Budget Recommendation; and**
-
- **Continues its review of warrant articles for 2023 Annual Town Meeting.**
-

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Director of Community Services Jemma Lambert presented the Select Board with an update on the Town's ongoing efforts around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), highlighting the results of a survey conducted of Town employees in June 2022.

Thirty-eight percent of employees completed the survey, with a majority of respondents rating the Town's working environment positively across eleven categories. Sixty-eight percent of survey participants agreed that the environment reflects the Town's mission of serving employees and citizens in a manner that reflects the Town's core values and diverse culture.

A high percentage of respondents indicated that they would be more active in advancing DEI if they received related training and if they had more information on what to do, barriers that the Town is actively working to address through "DEI 101" trainings being offered to all employees starting this week, according to Lambert. These sessions, which are being offered at various locations across Town, will inform what additional trainings are needed for employees going forward.

Lisa Cascio and Kavita Goyal, co-chairs of the DEI Commission, which has guided much of the Town's work in this area, provided the Board with an update on the Commission's working groups. Of note, the Leadership Development and Diversity in Hiring working groups are set to merge, and are anticipated to provide a set of recommendations to the Town Manager on recruitment and retention of a diverse employee base in the coming months. Likewise, the Community Events and Supporting out Youth groups are merging given the overlap in their responsibilities, and intend to hold a series of community events this spring, including a "women and business" celebration scheduled for March 29.

The co-chairs emphasized the importance of creating a process for community members to report



instances of racial issues, a goal which they intend to advance by relaunching a racial climate and reporting working group.

Lambert extended a call to all individuals who live or work in Andover and are willing to volunteer in these efforts or serve on a working group to get involved by e-mailing her at: Jemma.lambert@andoverma.us.

“It takes a village to make this kind of change,” said Lambert. “Please consider joining us, we’ll put you to work with some wonderful people who are extremely talented and motivated.”

FY 2024 Budget Recommendation

Town Manager Andrew Flanagan provided the Select Board with an overview of his FY 2024 budget proposal, initially released on February 1, 2023. The recommendation totals \$234,752,077, representing a \$8,169,340, or 3.6 percent, increase over the current fiscal year budget.

In his presentation to the Board, Flanagan outlined the goals that were prioritized throughout the budget process, including ensuring that the plan is within the limitations of Proposition 2 ½ and in compliance with the financial policies, goals, and objectives of the Select Board. According to Flanagan, the recommendation seeks to maintain Town service levels, while identifying opportunities to improve services through efficiency and innovation.

Flanagan provided an overview of significant changes in the budget proposal, with a particular emphasis on the Town’s plan to enhance public safety staffing levels by adding 9 full-time equivalents (FTEs) to the Fire Rescue Department, and 3 FTEs to the Police Department. He noted that these new positions will be fully offset through increased ambulance billing fees, downtown parking revenue, and reduced overtime budgets in both the Police and Fire Rescue Departments.

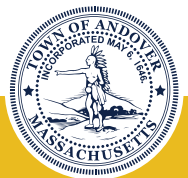
The proposal will be examined in greater detail at a joint meeting of the Finance Committee and Select Board on Saturday, March 4. Both panels will have the opportunity to ask the Town Manager and department heads questions about the budget prior to voting on their respective recommendations on the Town Meeting warrant article. The Saturday meeting will be held at 9:00 AM at Memorial Hall Library.

The full budget can be viewed online at: andoverma.gov/fy2024budget.

Warrant Article Recommendations

The Select Board made recommendations on eleven articles that will appear on the 2023 Annual Town Meeting warrant. Articles considered at this week’s meeting are, generally, recurring items, providing authorization for minor financial appropriations and certain administrative functions.

- **Minor Financial Articles:** Authorizing the transfer or appropriation of funds for the valuation of personal property accounts of gas distribution companies, Elderly/Disabled Transportation Program, Andover Day and other civic events, and maintenance of Spring Grove Cemetery.



- **General House Keeping Articles:** Providing authorization for the Town to apply, accept, and expend grants; enter into road contracts; act upon the report of Town officers; allow for property tax exemptions for qualifying individuals in FY24; enter into contracts in excess of three years; and accept easements.
- **Chapter 90 Authorizations:** Authorizing the Town to acquire easements necessary for road and sidewalk improvements.
- **Grating Easements:** Authorizing the Town to grant easements for water, drainage, sewer, and utility projects.
- **Stabilization Fund Bond Premium:** Transfers \$100,000 from the Bond Premium Stabilization Fund to the General Fund to offset non-exempt debt interest payments.
- **Sewer Collection System Maintenance:** Appropriates \$300,000 in the Sewer Enterprise fund for maintenance costs related to the 12 sewer stations located in Andover.
- **Transportation Network Company Funding:** Appropriates Transportation Network Company fees (generated by Ride Sharing Service fees) to pay for the development of an Active Transportation Plan.
- **Jerry Silverman Fireworks:** Appropriating \$14,000 to fund the Jerry Silverman Fireworks as part of the Fourth of July festivities.
- **MOU – Foster Care Transportation:** Allowing the Superintendent of Andover Public Schools to enter into MOU(s) with state and federal agencies to seek reimbursements for foster care transportation costs.
- **Shawsheen School:** Authorizing the Town to petition the legislature to change the use of the land at the Shawsheen School from school purposes to general municipal purposes.
- **Salt Storage at Commercial and Industrial Properties:** Amends Article XII of the Town's General Bylaws to add regulations pertaining to the storage salt used for treatment of roadways.

The Select Board unanimously endorsed all eleven articles considered during Monday's meeting. The Board's review of articles will continue during its next several meetings.

Other Actions

- The Selected Board considered a 5% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for retirees for FY 2023 in a first reading. A special act passed by the Massachusetts Legislature in 2022 authorized local retirement boards to increase benefits for retirees by 5%, with approval required by the Retirement Board and the Select Board. The increase was previously approved by the Retirement Board in a 3-2 vote in December. The Select Board will revisit this item at its next meeting.



- The Board voted to amend the Town's Traffic Rules and Regulations to account for the decision reached last year to reduce the townwide speed limit to 25 miles per hour in thickly settled and commercial districts. At the 2022 Annual Town Meeting, voters opted-in to Chapter 90, Section 17C, authorizing the reduced speed limit. The Andover Select Board voted to implement the measure on a townwide basis in late 2022. Monday's vote represented a final step to formally adopt the measure.
- The Board re-appointed the incumbent tenant representative on the Andover Housing Authority Board to a five-year term. The position was created in 2021 when a provision of a state economic development bill established an appointment process for a tenant-member seat on towns' housing authority boards.
- The Board voted to establish a process to fill upcoming vacancies on the Zoning Board of Appeals and Retirement Boards. Following a public solicitation period, applications for the ZBA will be reviewed by Select Board Members Melissa Danisch and Chris Huntress, and the full Board will review applications for the Retirement Board.

The full meeting can be viewed online through [AndoverTV](#).

The Andover Select Board's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 13.

