FAIRHAVEN TOWN CLERK
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# FAIRHAVEN BUDGET WORKING GROUP

## MEETING MINUTES

**September 29, 2026**

Meeting Location: BPW Meeting Room, 5 Arsene Street, Fairhaven, MA

### Call to Order and Attendance

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Ken Blanchard at 6:00 p.m. Attendance was taken by roll call and noted below:

**Voting Members in Attendance:**

Robert Baldwin, Kenneth Blanchard, Kevin Gallagher, Gunnar Hexum, Jason Lanagan, Daniel Lopes, Mark Rees

**Non-Voting Members in Attendance:**

Keith Hickey, Richard Trapillo

**Guest**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all in attendance.

Media Notification: The established media notification was read by Mr. Blanchard.

### New Business:

**1. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The Budget Working Group reviewed the minutes of the September 8 meeting. Corrections were made to spelling and content.

**Action:** The September 8 minutes were approved unanimously as corrected.

**2. Project Plan and Review Framework**

The Budget Working Group reviewed a project plan and review framework developed by Mr. Lopes and Mr. Reese. The framework provides a structured approach for reviewing the Town's finances and evaluating potential restructuring options.

The Budget Working Group agreed to use the framework as a guide for identifying and evaluating specific initiatives.

The Chair also emphasized the importance of maintaining appropriate decorum during future meetings with all questions or comments going through the Chair prior to discussion.

**3. Budget and Operational Considerations**

Mr. Trapilo presented a list of potential budget and operational considerations for review by the Budget Working Group. Topics included:

- Personnel and staffing
- Town building assets
- Privatization of services
- Regionalization of services

- Centralized procurement
- Revenue development
- Technology implementation
- Asset management
- Investment returns

The Budget Working Group discussed the need to evaluate these topics based on their potential impact on long-term financial stability, service delivery, and operational efficiency.

**4. Long-Term Financial Stability and Core Services**

The Budget Working Group discussed its overall role and scope in addressing the Town's financial challenges. Members emphasized that the Budget Working Group is not intended to function as a second Finance Committee, but rather to examine larger-scale initiatives that could help place the Town on a stable financial footing over the next 10–15 years.

Members agreed that an important first step is identifying the essential services that the Town must provide.

The following areas were identified as core Town services:

1. Education
2. Public Safety, including Police and Fire
3. Public Works
4. Economic Development/Growth

The Budget Working Group agreed that these services should be delivered as efficiently, effectively, and responsibly as possible.

**5. Service Efficiency and Regionalization**

The Budget Working Group discussed several opportunities for improving the efficiency of Town services, including:

- Centralized purchasing
- Regionalization of services
- Better utilization of Town-owned buildings and property
- Privatization or contracting of selected services
- Development of underutilized Town properties and waterfront areas

Members also discussed the potential for regionalization involving Police and Fire services, while recognizing that additional information would be needed regarding the interest of neighboring communities in such arrangements.

The Budget Working Group agreed that **regionalization should be considered as a broad topic**, encompassing potential collaboration across multiple Town services.

**6. Centralized Procurement**

The Budget Working Group discussed the Town's existing centralized purchasing structure, including the Chief Procurement Officer position and the requirements of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30B.

Members recognized that the Town currently has limitations in its capacity to fully implement centralized purchasing.

The discussion included the potential development of additional policies governing bidding, purchasing, and supervision structures. Previous Department of Revenue reports containing recommendations for streamlining Town operations were also discussed.

**7. Capital Planning and Revenue Development**

The Budget Working Group discussed the need to review the Town's capital planning process with the goal of improving long-term infrastructure planning.

Members also discussed opportunities to use Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds more strategically, including potential applications related to private economic development rather than focusing solely on maintenance of public property.

The Budget Working Group further discussed opportunities to generate additional revenue through development or improved utilization of underused Town properties and waterfront areas.

Existing consulting studies were identified as potential resources that could be reviewed and implemented where appropriate.

**8. Comparative Municipal Data**

The Budget Working Group discussed the importance of obtaining meaningful comparisons with similarly situated communities in order to evaluate Fairhaven's performance and costs across departments.

Gunnar offered to provide data on comparable communities that had been used in recent collective bargaining analysis.

**9. Wastewater Treatment Plant**

The wastewater treatment plant was identified as the **first priority initiative** for the Budget Working Group.

Members discussed the potential privatization of wastewater treatment operations and the need to understand the costs, potential savings, and operational implications of public versus contracted operation.

The Budget Working Group recognized that meaningful comparisons will require clearly defined research questions and reliable data. Members also acknowledged the need to avoid interfering with any current bidding processes.

The Budget Working Group agreed to invite Mr. Vinnie Furtado to a future meeting to assist in identifying the information and comparisons necessary to evaluate the issue.

**10. Other Privatization and Contracting Opportunities**

The Budget Working Group discussed additional services that could potentially be evaluated for privatization or contracting, including:

- Ambulance services
- Maintenance of smaller parks
- Cemetery maintenance

These items will be considered as part of the broader review of service delivery options.

**11. Boards, Committees, and Operational Efficiency**

The Budget Working Group discussed the efficiency and effectiveness of existing Town boards and committees.

Members noted that the Select Board had recently disbanded inactive committees. The Budget Working Group discussed whether similar evaluations of other Town boards and functions could identify opportunities for improved efficiency.

The Board of Public Works was specifically identified as an area that could be evaluated.

**12. Economic Development**

The Budget Working Group briefly discussed the potential hiring of an Economic Development Director and the implementation of pre-permitting meetings for developers.

These issues were identified as potential future initiatives but were not prioritized as immediate next steps.

**13. Priorities and Next Steps**

After discussion, the Budget Working Group agreed to focus on approximately ten specific initiatives for further review and analysis.

The **wastewater treatment plant privatization/operation analysis** was selected as the first initiative because of the timing associated with the new plant coming online and the opportunity to use the issue as a framework for learning how the Budget Working Group can evaluate major operational decisions.

Members agreed to conduct independent research regarding wastewater treatment operations and privatization in advance of the next discussion.

**14. Next Meeting**

The Budget Working Group plans to invite **Mr. Vinnie Furtado** to the next meeting, scheduled for **October 6**, to discuss the potential advantages, disadvantages, costs, and other considerations associated with privatization of wastewater treatment operations.

**Action Items**

| Action Item | Responsible Party |
|---|---|
| Conduct independent research regarding wastewater treatment operations and privatization | Budget Working Group Members |
| Identify data and comparisons necessary to evaluate wastewater treatment operations | Budget Working Group / Mr. Furtado |
| Invite Mr. Vinnie Furtado to the October 6 meeting | Budget Working Group |

| | |
|---|---|
| Provide comparable-community data used in collective bargaining analysis | Gunnar |
| Continue development and prioritization of approximately ten initiatives | Budget Working Group |

**Public Comment**: No member of the public utilizing the on-line platform indicated an interest in offering comment. No audience members indicated an interest in offering comment.

**Committee Member Items**

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, October 6, 2026, at the BPW Meeting Room beginning at 6:00PM

**Adjournment**

The Chair inquired as to any further business. Seeing none, the meeting was adjourned.