

FAIRHAVEN BUDGET WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

September 8, 2026

Meeting Location: Town Hall, 40 Center Street, Fairhaven, MA and remotely via Zoom

Organizational Meeting Note

Note: This organizational meeting of the Fairhaven Budget Group was called by voting members Kenneth Blanchard and Daniel Lopes in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised. Because the Fairhaven Board of Selectmen did not designate a Chair at time of appointment, leadership had not been established.

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 Reese

Non-Voting Members in Attendance:

Keith Hickey, Richard Trapillo

Guest: Anne Carreiro, Town Accountant

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all in attendance.

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

Election of Temporary Chair

Mr. Blanchard stated that as the Fairhaven Board of Selectmen did not designate a Chair during their Budget Working Group selection process, the first order of business is required to be the establishment of Budget Working Group leadership. Mr. Blanchard suggested the election of a Temporary Chair and a Temporary Clerk in order to facilitate the election of permanent officers.

Mr. Blanchard opened the floor to nominations for the position of Budget Working Group Chair. Mr. Lopes nominated Mr. Blanchard with Mr. Gallagher seconding. No other nominations were made and Mr. Blanchard closed nominations. Mr. Blanchard called for a vote. Mr. Kenneth Blanchard was elected as Chair unanimously.

The Chair opened the floor to nominations for the position of Budget Working Group Clerk. Mr. Hexum nominated Mr. Gallagher with several members seconding. No other nominations were made and the Chair closed nominations and called for a vote. Mr. Kevin Gallagher was elected as Clerk unanimously.

Election of Permanent Officers

The Chair then moved to the election of permanent officers.

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Budget Working Group Chair. Mr. Lopes nominated Mr. Blanchard with several members seconding. No other nominations were made and the Chair closed nominations. The Chair then called for a vote. Mr. Kenneth Blanchard was elected as Chair unanimously.

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Budget Working Group Vice Chair. Mr. Blanchard nominated Mr. Lopes with several members seconding. No other nominations were made and the Chair closed nominations. The Chair then called for a vote. Mr. Daniel Lopes was elected as Vice Chair unanimously.

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Budget Working Group Clerk. Mr. Lopes nominated Mr. Gallagher with several members seconding. No other nominations were made and the Chair closed nominations. The Chair then called for a vote. Mr. Kevin Gallagher was elected as Clerk unanimously.

New Business

Town Administrator Keith Hickey provided the Budget Work Group with a detailed presentation on the three-year budget projection for the Town of Fairhaven. Several questions were asked by Group members with Mr. Hickey addressing each.

The Chair read the official charge for the Fairhaven Budget Working Group: The Fairhaven Budget Working Group shall be a temporary task force appointed by the Select Board for the purpose of reviewing municipal and school-related cost drivers, identify opportunities for operational savings, improved service delivery, regionalization, shared services, outsourcing where appropriate, revenue enhancements, asset management, and long term fiscal stability. Protect services. Respect employees. Defend Taxpayers. Modernize town government.

The Chair emphasized the need to respect town employees throughout the Budget Working Groups activities. The Chair and several members stated the importance of fairness and transparency.

The Chair opened a general discussion on how to structure the workings of the Budget Working Group.

Mr. Lopes proposed the creation of a written framework that achieves the goals laid out in the official charge, detailed above. Mr. Lopes suggested a framework that establishes goals for Year #1, Years 2-3, Years 3-5 and beyond. Toward that end, Mr. Baldwin inquired of Mr. Reese how the focus should be established; reviewing inputs from the Town Administrator or brainstorming as a group and offering them to the Town Administrator. Mr. Reese commented on the need to hear from the Town Administrator as he sits at the crossroads of all budgetary information as well as all department heads for their input and expertise.

The Chair identified the need for a written framework for all budgetary reviews and for the Group to then working collaboratively with the Town Administrator to finalize a document to be utilized moving forward. The Chair asked Mr. Lopes if he would take on the task of drafting such a framework. Mr. Lopes agreed. The Budget Working Group was in agreement with comments made that the current town operating budget is the purview of the Fairhaven Finance Committee.

Meeting Schedule

Mr. Hexum advocated for the establishment of an every two-week schedule. The Chair agreed and determined that this schedule was the consensus of the Budget Working Group. The Chair will work on meeting logistics.

Committee Member Items

The Chair asked each member of the Budget Working Group to introduce themselves to not only each other but to the town residents as well. Members individually introduced themselves and spoke of their interest in assisting the town meet the challenging budget issues it confronts.

Mr. Gallagher stated that he would like to confer with the Town Clerk on obtaining and sharing with all Budget Working Group members information on ethics and open meeting law requirements. The Chair agreed and Mr. Gallagher stated he would report back at the next meeting.

Public Comment: The Chair inquired as to comments from the public. None were offered.

Adjournment

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