

**Preston Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 15, 2026
Preston Plains Middle School Library**

1. Call to Order

Chairman Sawyer called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

2. Roll Call

Members

Andrew Sawyer, Chairman
Thomas Wright, Vice Chairman
Zachary Maurice, Clerk
Robert Castronova
Mary Gardner
Max Zachem

Alternates

Nathanael Lee
Vacancy

Also Present

1st Selectwoman Allyn-Gauthier
Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director
Amber Lavallee, Library Manager
Mark Simmons, Parks & Recreation Director

3. Public Comment

Andy Depta, 6 Young Court

A. Depta distributed his documents; Preston School District Policy, Non-Lapsing Education Fund Policy 3171.1 and 2024 Connecticut General Statutes, Section 10248a Unexpended education funds account

A. Depta stated that in his opinion, the BoE has established an unofficial non lapsing account. Their policy says the BoE will establish and maintain a non-lapsing account, but CT Statute says they may deposit into a non lapsing account.

The BoE has developed a non lapsing account when State Statute says they may deposit into one, not create an account.

The state Statute doesn't say they can create, so there should be a discussion on this between the BoF and the BoE.

If they're using the Statute to validate developing it, the State Statute says they can't.

Chairman Sawyer stated his concern is the cost of lawyers if the BoF contests and challenges the BoE.

A. Depta stated that he didn't think lawyers would be necessary just a workshop would be needed to iron out some differences.

4. Approval of Minutes

Board of Finance Regular Meeting December 18, 2025

A motion was made by T. Wright and seconded by M. Gardner to approve the Regular Meeting minutes of December 18, 2025 as presented.

All in favor. Motion carries.

5. Correspondence

None

6. First Selectperson Report

- Selectwoman Allyn-Gauthier updated last month's report on the Riverwalk Financial Assistance Proposal, where the State required an amendment to reallocate funding between Phases A and B.
- The Amendment to the Assistance Agreement was signed at last night's Bos Meeting. This now allows Cindy to prepare the modification to the Agreement for signing.
- The \$400,000 funding for the pump station was approved at the Bond Commission meeting and preliminary paperwork has been received
- 1st Selectwoman Allyn-Gauthier discussed key points of the 2026 Draft Legislative Agendas through Connecticut Council of Municipalities and Southeastern Connecticut Council of Government. The following asks;
Early voting – requesting reduction in days and hours
Unfunded mandates – currently 1400. Requested that for every new mandate the removal of 2 Mandates take place in order to reduce financial burden on towns.
State Aid – reduce
Pilot funding
Solid Waste – simplify permit process
Veteran's exemptions
Fiscal notes on every Bill introduced
Education funding, reimbursements and cost sharing
Local revenue stream
Allocation of the Mashantucket Pequot fund
Affordable housing
- Amendment to Assistance Agreement for Preston Riverwalk

7. Board of Finance Financial Policy Subcommittee Report

Board has not met

8. Board of Education Liaison Report

- Discussed what drove the \$400,00 expenditure from last report to this report.
- Increase in Healthcare sign-up
- Encumbrances are coming in now
- Transportation costs
- Discussion on how to track this year on what was over budget last year.
- Budget workshops will start on January 22nd

9. Finance Director Report

C. Varricchio shared 2 articles; The Evolving Finance Office and Steps to Modernize and More Effectively Communicate Your Budget and Preston's 2026/2027 Citizen's Guide to the Budget Process

C. Varricchio noted that the entire budgets will not be posted to the Town's website until submitted to the BoF

a. November YTD Budget Reports

Preston School District

Budget Highlights/Concerns;

C. Varricchio noted that the accounting system auto generates salary and benefit encumbrances based on actuals.

- Teacher Salaries – tracking under budget due to a lack of consistent subs
- Paraeducators – under budget due to vacancies
- Teacher Substitutes – will increase during the year
- Non-Certified Substitutes – impacted by using custodial staffing agency
- PPMS Custodial – under budget; use of agency for custodial staffing; helps offset non-certified substitutes
- System Wide Stipends – under budget because of auto generating
- Transportation Drivers – under budget because of auto generating; continue to rely on contracted services.
- Health Insurance – over budget due to the addition of three family insurance
- Employer FICA and System Wide Annuity Payments – over budget
- System Wide Tuition Reimbursement – contractual obligation; none yet approve for this year
- Utilities/Supplies – under budget
- Special Education – under budget
- Transportation – over budget
- Contracted Services – over budget
- Vehicle Repairs – over budget due to van repairs

Town of Preston

- Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Highlights

Revenue;

- Cell Tower Rental - \$350,000
- Building Permits – 71% collected in first 5 months of FY
- Miscellaneous – exceeded budget due to Public Works equipment sold

Expenditures

- Central Services – over budget due to a Town Hall generator
- Public Works – Sweeper lease paid in March
- Fire/EMS – budget actual will continue to level off
- Parks & Recreation – budget actual will continue to level off
- Annual Expenditures – several expenditure are one time

C. Varricchio noted that the Registrar of Voters received an Early Voting Grant that will be used to offset salaries

b. Audit Update

C. Varricchio stated that she does not yet have a formal commitment from the auditors.

10. New Business

a. Preston Library Financial Report

Amber Lavallee, Library Manager disbursed a Library Update, Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Sheet

- Received quarterly payment from the Town
- Ann Cannon and Hollowell accounts are endowments; principle can not be spent
- Library is now fully staffed so payroll is higher
- Part time hires has eliminated benefits and allowed an increase to hourly rates
- Book purchasing has resumed with the hire of a Library Manager
- Copiers are no longer leased; costs are based on usage
- Mobile shelving purchased with a \$20,000 ALA Grant
- Estimated total for temporary heaters and fuel is \$5,367; the library will contribute \$3,000

C. Varricchio stated that the bill has come in and the total is \$5402.62

A. Sawyer noted that the challenge is that an additional appropriation can't be made unless there is a Town Meeting to get approval for it. The library has sufficient funds and then if they need funds at a later date, it can be dealt with then.

A motion was made by A. Sawyer and seconded by T. Wright to approve deducting the excess out of the \$50,000 April payment to the Library, reducing the payment to the library by \$5,402.62 to reflect the overage from cost of the heater rental and fuel.

All in favor. Motion carries.

b. Eastern Regional Tourist District Grant Match

Mark Simmons, Parks & Recreation Director explained that this \$10,000 grant requires a match. He will present 2 scenarios for the BoF

1. Requesting \$5,500 from the Town with P&R also contributing \$1,500 to be used as the Match, with Voluntown partnering and contributing \$3,000.

2. Requesting \$10,500 from the Town for 5 incentives

- Social Media influencers The New England Couple
- Purchasing banners and road signage
- Producing a promotional video for the Town
- Community Event Rack Card
- Radio advertising for Community Events

The first scenario will provide a Preston event Rack Card, 3 videos with The New England Couple
The second scenario will provide an Event Rack Card and additional social media clips

A motion was made by M. Gardner and seconded by Z. Maurice to approve \$10,500 for a Eastern Regional Tourist District Grant Match.

Discussion:

N. Lee asked if this has to go to a Town Meeting because it is over \$10,000

C. Varricchio answered no and explained that the funds are coming from a specific line item which is #10.5.71.4100.4113.5922, Central Services transferred to the Grant Fund 43.

**Andrew Sawyer abstained. All other members voted in favor.
Motion carries.**

11. Old Business

Board of Finance Budget Requesting

A motion was made by A. Sawyer and seconded by T. Wright to approve BoF budget request, not including wages of \$33,987.00.

All in favor. Motion carries.

12. Public Comment

None

13. Adjournment

A motion was made by A. Sawyer and seconded by M. Zacham to adjourn the meeting at 8:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta Charpentier

RECEIVED
PRESTON, CT.

2026 JAN 20 A 8:29

Cindy Palmer
PRESTON TOWN CLERK

Asst.