Minutes of the Finance Subcommittee Meeting
February 26, 2025 / 10:00–11:30 AM / WebEx
Attendees: Anna Lin Mitchell / Jake Foster / Michelle Cresta / Pam Beaudoin / Ben Buttrick / Jodi Harris / Brendhan Zubrick / Ann Harrison / Sarah Mellish / Greg Federspiel

Call to Order 10:00 AM

Purpose of Meeting
• Discuss multi-year school funding strategies.
• Assess FY26 budget pressures, particularly health insurance costs.
• Explore collaborative approaches between the School Committee and town representatives.

FY26 Budget Discussion
• Projected 26.94% increase in health insurance identified as key budget driver.
• Reviewed multi-year projection models A, B, and C for FY26–FY30.
• Health insurance mitigation options discussed including shifting deductible costs, negotiating plan design, and exploring the GIC.
• Concern shared over contractually guaranteed benefits and tight bargaining timelines.

Town Capital Planning and Budget Constraints
• Manchester highlighted infrastructure needs (DPW, PFAS, sewer) and long-term capital stress.
• Essex cited fire department professionalization, water line upgrades, and Essex Elementary project costs.
• Both towns emphasized school budget growth targets around 3.0–3.5% to remain under Proposition 2½ limits.

Revenue and Grants
• Limited opportunities to offset recurring costs like healthcare and salaries via grants.
• Ongoing efforts by towns and district to maximize capital project grants and one-time funding.

Budget Detail Requests
• Essex Finance Committee requested additional clarity and documentation:

- FY24 budget-to-actuals
- FY25 YTD reports
- Detailed pre-K program revenue and staffing details
  • District agreed to improve reporting and provide documentation.

Action Items
• Post multi-year models A, B, and C.
• Continue health insurance exploration for short- and long-term savings.
• Expand programmatic and financial reporting.
• Coordinate continued joint modeling and collaboration between the district and town officials.

Adjourn 11:30 AM