

**COTUIT FIRE DISTRICT  
PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
ZOOM and IN PERSON  
Freedom Hall  
COTUIT, MA 02635  
April 13, 2026**

The meeting was called to order by Mark Lynch at 6:03 pm on April 13, 2026.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Lynch led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Lynch did roll call:

Commissioners: Mark Lynch (via Zoom), Seth Burdick and John Havel (in person)

In person: Assistant Treasurer Ryan Ouellette

Also present, via ZOOM: Treasurer Ray Pirrone

**Public Comment:**

Lally Lloyd noted that the bylaws posted on the Fire District website were not up to date and did not reflect changes approved at the most recent Annual District Meeting. She also observed that several annual reports remained labeled as “draft” and suggested this would be a good time to review and update such materials.

Ms. Lloyd asked for confirmation regarding recent enabling legislation changes. Chair Mark Lynch confirmed that two changes had been enacted: one allowing appropriations to the Historical Society, and another permitting the use of taxpayer funds, under certain circumstances, to improve septic systems upstream of water sources.

Ms. Lloyd asked whether these changes should be explained to voters at the upcoming Annual District Meeting. Chair Lynch stated that both items would be addressed during the meeting.

In response to Ms. Lloyd’s comments, Chair Lynch stated that the bylaws matter and the status of draft annual reports would be placed on the next meeting agenda for review and correction, noting that no reports should remain in draft status.

**Meeting Minutes Approval:**

**MOTION: To approve March 27, 2026, Prudential Meeting Minutes.**

**Motion made by: Seth Burdick      Seconded by: Mark Lynch**

**Motion passed unanimously. (Mark Lynch, Seth Burdick John Havel)**

**MOTION: To approve March 23, 2026, Prudential Meeting Minutes with suggested corrections.**

**Motion made by: Seth Burdick      Seconded by: Mark Lynch**

**Motion passed unanimously. (Mark Lynch, Seth Burdick John Havel)**

**Cotuit School Building Demolition Status Update**  
**Community Preservation Act Funds?**

The Committee reported that a contract had been awarded to S&R Construction as the lowest qualified bidder for demolition and site remediation, with a cost of approximately \$1.5 million, within the approved budget. Work is expected to begin around April 24, 2026, following required hazardous materials filings. An informational “abutters meeting” will be scheduled in conjunction with an upcoming meeting to provide information about what is going on with the school; it was clarified that the meeting will be open to all interested parties.

Discussion was also held regarding the potential use of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. It was noted that eligibility is uncertain due to the District’s status as a taxing authority, and that obtaining such funds would likely require a permanent conservation restriction on the property. Members expressed reluctance to pursue this option at this time due to legal ambiguity, procedural hurdles, and a desire to retain flexibility for future use of the site.

**Review of Draft Articles for Annual District Meeting**

*The Committee discussed the location for the upcoming Annual District Meeting, noting that a final decision remains pending. It was reported that inquiry had been made regarding use of the Cotuit Federated Church (Hamilton Hall), though confirmation had not yet been received.*

*Members discussed anticipated attendance and capacity considerations, noting variability in prior years. While some members indicated that Freedom Hall would likely be sufficient, it was agreed to await a response from the church before making a final determination. No action was taken.*

**Article 1 – Acceptance of Reports**

The Committee reviewed Article 1 to accept the reports of the officers and committees of the District for fiscal year 2025, as recommended by the Prudential Committee. During discussion, a member requested clarification on articles that recur annually and asked that any new items be highlighted. It was explained that the annual report is required and is compiled from submissions by the Water Department, Prudential Committee, Fire Department, and other sources, and that it contains a significant amount of information. It was noted that the report had historically been approved routinely, but that prior typographical errors resulted in at least one report being issued as a draft. The importance of careful proofreading prior to approval was emphasized. There were no objections..

**Article 2 – Elected Officials’ Salaries**

The Committee reviewed Article 2 to set the annual salaries of elected officials, including \$1,250 for members of the Prudential Committee, Board of Fire Commissioners, and Board of Water Commissioners, and \$250 for the Moderator, as recommended by the Prudential Committee. During discussion, the article was described as self-explanatory. There were no objections.

**Article 3 – Reserve Fund**

The Committee discussed the establishment of the reserve fund in the amount of \$45,000 pursuant to M.G.L. c. 40, §5C. It was explained that the fund may be used within the fiscal year for unforeseen or emergency expenditures, including addressing budget shortfalls. During later discussion, the Committee briefly returned to this article to confirm its purpose, noting that the reserve fund is limited to use within the year in which it is appropriated. There were no objections, and the article was approved.

#### **Article 4 – Prudential Committee Budget**

*(Treasurer Ray Pirrone joined the meeting during discussion of Article 4, upon the Committee's return to that article.)*

The Committee reviewed Article 4 relating to the Prudential Committee budget. Upon request, the Treasurer explained that the \$350,000 portion of the budget consists of professional services, including payroll, legal, financing, and insurance costs, with insurance representing the most significant component. The Treasurer also explained that increases in financing-related expenses are attributable to prior borrowing exceeding \$1 million, which increased bond counsel costs, as well as anticipated future borrowing, including a June note issuance and a November bond for long-term fire station funding. Additional potential borrowing related to Water Department articles was also noted. There were no objections.

#### **Article 5 – Fire Department Budget**

The Committee reviewed Article 5 and noted that it is a placeholder pending information from the Fire Department. It was stated that the Committee expects to receive this information at a subsequent meeting. No further discussion occurred.

#### **Articles 6–11 – Water Department Capital Articles**

The Committee reviewed Articles 6 through 11 relating to Water Department capital expenditures. It was clarified that these articles were presented separately by the Water Department and not extracted by the Treasurer.

During discussion, members addressed funding methods, including borrowing, appropriation, and transfer, and clarified that borrowing requires a two-thirds vote. Members discussed that the warrant language may include multiple funding options, while the specific funding method is determined through the motion presented at the Annual District Meeting. It was noted that the motion governs the final action taken by voters and may differ from the warrant, provided the amount does not exceed what is advertised.

Members also discussed the timing of decisions regarding funding methods and noted that such determinations may occur closer to the Annual District Meeting. It was further noted that the Fire Department does not anticipate submitting any special articles.

Following discussion, the Committee indicated agreement with Articles 6 through 11.

#### **Article 12 – Freedom Hall Expenses**

The Committee reviewed Article 12 to appropriate \$6,400 for labor and salaries and \$22,489 for remaining expenses for Freedom Hall maintenance, for a total of \$28,889, as recommended by the Prudential Committee. During discussion, a member noted that the amount is consistent with the prior year's budget and appeared comparable based on review of the draft budget. There were no objections.

#### **Article 13 – Streetlights**

The Committee reviewed Article 13 to appropriate \$10,700 for the maintenance of district streetlights, as recommended by the Prudential Committee. During discussion, it was noted that the amount is the same as the prior year. There were no objections, and the article was approved.

#### **Article 14 – Library Funding**

The Committee reviewed Article 14 to appropriate \$28,411 to support the maintenance of the library, as recommended by the Prudential Committee. During discussion, it was noted that the amount reflects an approximate 3% increase each year. There were no objections or concerns, and the article was approved.

### **Article 15 – Debt Service (Principal and Interest)**

The Committee reviewed Article 15 to appropriate \$404,130 for the payment of principal and interest, as recommended by the Prudential Committee. The Treasurer explained that the amount reflects previously established debt obligations, including interest rates set at the time of prior borrowing, and includes a discretionary principal paydown amount.

The Treasurer further explained current and anticipated borrowing activity, including short-term refinancing and a planned transition to long-term debt for fire station construction and related costs. It was noted that the long-term financing is expected to include previously authorized design and construction costs, as well as certain equipment and infrastructure items, and that timing of the conversion to long-term debt impacts amortization. The Treasurer also noted that additional Water Department capital articles may require separate borrowing, which would result in additional financing costs.

Members discussed the Treasurer's explanation and indicated that the approach outlined was understood. The article was approved.

### **Article 16 – Employee Benefits**

The Committee reviewed Article 16 to appropriate \$1,173,300 for employee current and post-employment benefits, as recommended by the Prudential Committee. During discussion, members confirmed the language of the article and discussed how these costs have been allocated in prior years among the Fire Department, Water Department, and Prudential Committee.

Members discussed whether to include detailed allocation information in the warrant article or address it in the script for the Annual District Meeting. It was noted that including such detail in the script may require precise reporting, while an alternative approach would be to present the motion and allow for explanation during discussion at the meeting. Members also discussed the use of approximate figures rather than exact allocations.

Following discussion, the Committee approved Article 16 and indicated that the allocation among departments would be addressed in the script.

### **Article 17 – General Stabilization Fund**

The Committee reviewed Article 17 to appropriate \$35,000 for the stabilization fund, as provided under M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 5B, as recommended by the Prudential Committee. During discussion, the Treasurer explained that the stabilization fund functions as a general reserve or "rainy day" fund, with funds held until the District votes to appropriate them for a specific purpose. It was clarified that, unlike the reserve fund discussed under Article 3, stabilization funds do not expire annually and require a district vote to access.

Members discussed voting requirements for stabilization funds, including that both depositing and withdrawing funds may require a two-thirds vote, and compared the stabilization fund to the annual reserve fund. The Treasurer noted that the District has historically contributed \$35,000 annually to the stabilization fund and that the current balance is substantial.

Members discussed the purpose of maintaining the fund as a financial cushion, while also acknowledging concerns about taxation and whether continued contributions are necessary. Following discussion, there were no further questions, and the Committee approved the article.

### **Article 18 – Water Department Stabilization Fund**

The Committee reviewed Article 18 to appropriate \$46,400 to the Water Department stabilization fund, as recommended by the Prudential Committee. During discussion, the bylaw reference was clarified as Article 9, Section 5. It was confirmed that this fund functions similarly to a stabilization or “rainy day” fund but is specific to the Water Department. The Treasurer noted that the fund was established by the Water Department and that its funding structure distinguishes between a stabilization-related fee and general fund contributions, and that funds are limited to lawful Water Department purposes. There were no further comments or questions, and the article was approved.

### **Article 19 – Bylaw Amendment (Meeting Time)**

The Committee reviewed Article 19 to amend Article 2, Section 1 of the bylaws to change the start time of the Annual District Meeting from 7:30 PM to 6:00 PM. An initial roll call vote was started but was withdrawn to allow for discussion.

During discussion, Mr. Havel stated that he supported the earlier start time, while also noting that a 6:00 PM start could be difficult for some individuals due to work schedules and the potential length of the meeting. Chair Lynch expressed a similar view, indicating support for an earlier start time but stating that he would defer to voters if the Bylaws Committee recommended the change. Mr. Burdick indicated that he had no objection to the proposal.

It was clarified that the change would not apply to the current year’s Annual District Meeting and would take effect only if approved at a future meeting, and that bylaw amendments require a two-thirds vote. Following discussion, the article was recommended by the Prudential Committee.

### **Article 20 – Bylaw Amendment (Publication of Warrant Article Results)**

The Committee reviewed Article 20 to amend the bylaws to require publication of the narrative and voting results of each warrant article on the District website within 30 days of the close of the Annual District Meeting. During discussion, members expressed support for improving transparency and facilitating understanding for those not in attendance.

Members clarified that the requirement refers to publishing the results of each article rather than full meeting minutes and discussed the need to ensure consistency between any published results and the official signed minutes. It was noted that the District Clerk is responsible for both. Members also referenced prior annual reports that include article text and vote outcomes and indicated that current practices would be reviewed.

Members indicated support for the article and it was recommended.

### **Article 21 – Bylaw Amendment (Recall of Elected Officials)**

The Committee reviewed Article 21 to amend the bylaws to establish a procedure for the recall of elected officials, as recommended by the Bylaws Committee. Members discussed concerns that the proposed language was too vague and did not sufficiently define the recall process, including thresholds, procedures, and outcomes. A revised version of the language was read into the record, outlining petition requirements, timelines for a recall election, and procedures in the event of a vacancy. Members discussed whether the revised language provided sufficient detail, with one member continuing to express opposition, stating that the proposal was not necessary and not sufficiently rigorous, while other members indicated support for recommending the article.

During discussion, there was an attempt to proceed with a vote; however, the Committee determined to place the article on a subsequent agenda to ensure that the correct and complete language is incorporated into the written warrant article. It was noted that the article had been recommended

provisionally, subject to confirmation of the final language. Mr. Havel agreed to forward the updated language for further review. It was recommended.

### **Article 22 – Bylaw Amendment (Records Access Officer)**

The Committee reviewed Article 22 to amend the bylaws to provide for the appointment of a Records Access Officer by the Prudential Committee in accordance with M.G.L. .c 66. Discussion focused on the purpose of the designation, noting that it is largely a standardization of terminology and that, in practice, the responsibilities are already performed by the District Clerk. Some members expressed concern that the change may be redundant given existing bylaw language assigning similar responsibilities to the Clerk, while others supported the designation as consistent with state requirements. Following discussion, Mr. Burdick and Mr. Havel indicated support and Chair Lynch opposed the article. It was further noted that recommendations from the Bylaws Committee are to be included in the warrant, though not necessarily recommended by the Prudential Committee.

### **Bylaws Committee Warrant Articles**

The Committee revisited a prior discussion regarding whether recommendations from the Bylaws Committee are to be automatically included in the Annual District Meeting warrant or considered at the discretion of the Prudential Committee. It was noted that, based on consultation with Town Counsel, the interpretation is that such recommendations should be included in the warrant, although the Prudential Committee is not required to recommend them.

It was further noted that all Bylaws Committee recommendations are being included in the warrant this year with one exception relating to 140 Old Oyster Road. It was stated that Town Counsel advised that the proposed amendment would have no legal effect, as the property is already under the management of the Prudential Committee, and could create unintended consequences if not approved. Following discussion with Town Counsel and the Chair of the Bylaws Advisory Committee, the article was withdrawn.

### **Article 23 – Historical Society Funding**

The Committee reviewed Article 23 to appropriate \$14,000 to support the maintenance of the Historical Society of Santuit and Cotuit. It was noted that this article reflects the enabling legislation change referenced earlier in the meeting, which has now been signed into law, and that the proposed language was provided by the Historical Society. Members discussed that the funding decision is optional for voters and would be subject to annual approval. During discussion, Mr. Burdick stated that he did not recommend the article, Mr. Havel indicated that he supported the article, and Mr. Lynch concurred with the position that he did not recommend taxpayer funding.

### **Annual Report Draft**

The Committee discussed the status of the Annual Report, noting that only the Water Department submission has been received and that it refers to enabling legislation as pending, which may need to be updated to reflect that the legislation has since been enacted. It was observed that the Water Department's capital plan does not indicate plans to utilize the enabling legislation in the current fiscal year. The Committee noted that additional submissions are still needed from the Fire Department, Prudential Committee, and Finance Committee, and discussed obtaining those drafts for the next meeting, with one member indicating that a draft of the Prudential Committee report would be prepared and follow-up would be made with the Water Department and Fire Department.

### **Annual Meeting and Election Status Update**

The Committee received an update regarding preparations for the upcoming Annual District Meeting and election. The Clerk and Moderator reported that they have been coordinating their respective responsibilities and duties, and noted that finalizing the meeting location remains an outstanding item. The Clerk reported that voter lists will be obtained from the Town approximately ten days in advance for use at the election and Annual Meeting, and that ballot templates are available pending submission of candidate names to allow for timely printing. The Clerk also reported outreach to prior volunteers to assist with check-in and vote counting and discussed ordering materials, including voting cards, based on prior attendance. No votes were taken.

### **Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer provided a brief update, noting that a formal report has not yet been completed but that review of the ledger indicates tax revenue is currently below expected levels, approximately \$1 million under the budget target for this point in the fiscal year, while expenditures are also lower, resulting in no current operating deficit. The Treasurer reported that the previously identified \$85,000 discrepancy was determined to be a duplicate recording of a principal payment, with entries split between capital and general funds, and that the correction has been submitted to auditors as an audit adjustment and confirmed. The Treasurer also noted that financing remains a primary focus, including planning for borrowing associated with the fire station and other capital needs. It was stated that a more detailed report is expected at a future meeting.

### **Public Comment**

Patty Daley addressed the Committee regarding the scheduling of the upcoming abutters meeting, questioning whether holding the meeting on Patriot's Day may limit participation. It was clarified that the meeting is intended to be open to all interested members of the public, not just abutters. Members discussed potential scheduling conflicts, including travel and availability, as well as quorum considerations. The Committee indicated an inclination to proceed with the scheduled date while continuing to confirm availability.

### **Matters not reasonably anticipated by the Chair**

None Discussed.

### **Adjournment**

**MOTION: To adjourn.**

**Motion made by: Seth Burdick**

**Seconded by: Mark Lynch**

**Motion passed unanimously. (Mark Lynch, Seth Burdick John Havel)**

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:26pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Gina Gonsalves