

**COTUIT FIRE DISTRICT
PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE MEETING
ZOOM and IN PERSON
Freedom Hall
COTUIT, MA 02635
April 27, 2026**

The meeting was called to order by Mark Lynch at 6:00 pm on April 27, 2026.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Lynch led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Lynch conducted roll call.

Commissioners present: Mark Lynch; John Havel (via Zoom)

Commissioner Seth Burdick arrived late after attending another meeting.

Absent: Treasurer Ray Pirrone

Also present: Assistant Treasurer Ryan Ouellette (in person)

Public Comment:

Lee Connelly-Weill asked for an update on the osprey nest and prior discussions with Eversource.

Chair Lynch reported that the District remained in contact with Eversource and was now communicating by phone. He stated that Eversource had initially agreed to install a replacement pole but later withdrew that commitment, and that an alternative option to install a pole independently had been identified at relatively low cost. He further stated that Eversource had previously removed the nest and installed a deterrent, but the ospreys rebuilt the nest. It was noted that Eversource cannot remove an active nest, defined as one containing eggs or chicks, and that the nest was likely now active. The Committee requested that Eversource refrain from further disturbance until demolition is complete, although no guarantee was provided. Ms. Connelly-Weill asked whether a location for a new osprey pole had been identified on fire district property. Chair Lynch responded that a location had not yet been determined but confirmed that installation would need to occur before completion of the contractor's work. She also asked whether the revised fire district budget would be available at the fire station. Chair Lynch stated that detailed budgets are typically distributed shortly before the annual meeting but indicated that the budget would likely be posted on the CFD website in advance.

Lally Lloyd stated for the record that the article regarding a potential land acknowledgment had been withdrawn and would not appear on the warrant for the upcoming annual district meeting. It was clarified that this was Article 24.

Carol Zais referenced outreach to Stephanie Ellis of Wild Care, Inc., who had contacted Eversource and a local contractor regarding installation of an osprey platform. It was noted that efforts were ongoing and that communication with Eversource was being coordinated through a single point of contact.

Meeting Minutes Approval – 2 Meetings:

The Committee reviewed prior meeting minutes. It was stated that the April 13, 2026, minutes would be returned to the transcriber, as they were missing a significant portion of the discussion related to multiple warrant articles.

The Committee then reviewed the April 20, 2026, minutes and indicated that they were ready for approval with one correction. It was noted that the following should be added: “Chair Lynch indicated that he was not in favor of the proposed budget because of the significant increase in annual compensation numbers based on the recently completed union contract negotiations.”

MOTION: To approve the meeting minutes of April 20, 2026, with amendment.

Motion made by: John Havel Seconded by: Mark Lynch

Motion passed unanimously. (Mark Lynch, John Havel)

Presentation of Revised Fire Department Budget

Chief Brown presented the revised Fire Department budget and stated that, following questions raised by Treasurer Ray Pirrone, the Department reviewed the spreadsheet and identified a flaw in the formula that had inadvertently included a base salary for an additional employee, accounting for the difference in the previously presented figures.

Chief Brown stated that, based on input from the Treasurer, adjustments were made, including:

- Sick coverage decreased to \$100,000 from \$115,000 and then level funded
- Holiday pay was reviewed and contract language providing for overtime was pointed out
- Full-time injury was increased from \$60,000 to \$90,000, representing a 50 percent increase

He stated that the total difference from what had been presented the prior week, which was a 15 percent increase, was now a 10.89 percent increase. He further reported that the Department was notified that COMM dispatch fees would increase from \$37,500 to \$60,000, a 60 percent increase not anticipated until fiscal year 28, which raised the operating budget increase from 2 percent to 7.52 percent.

Chief Brown stated that the total operating budget for salary, wages, and operations for FY27 was a 10.41 percent increase, compared to 13 percent previously presented, representing a reduction of \$81,585.52.

Chair Lynch stated that he had no comments or objections with regard to operations and understood that the dispatch increase was outside of the District’s control. He stated that the reduction in the compensation increase was driven by the fact that the original budget had contemplated 13 firefighters, which was in error, as there would be 12 firefighters employed. He further stated that, while the numbers were computed accurately, the change in methodology for calculating maximum forecasted base salary made year-to-year comparisons difficult, and he believed the increase may be closer to 13 percent when compared on a consistent basis.

Chief Brown acknowledged these observations and stated that the budgeting process relied on Excel spreadsheets that require formulas and links to be recreated each year and do not carry forward consistently, contributing to the error. He requested that the Prudential Committee consider exploring an enterprise resource planning system or other financial management platform.

Commissioner Burdick entered the meeting at this time.

Final Review of Draft Articles for Annual District Meeting: Article 24 et al.

The Committee reviewed the warrant articles sequentially.

- Article 1 – Agreed
- Article 2 – Agreed
- Article 3 – Agreed
- Article 4 – Agreed

Article 5 – Fire Department Budget

The article was read into the record as follows:

- \$2,687,993.65 for labor and salaries
- \$430,238.85 for remaining expenses
- Total appropriation of \$3,118,232.50
- Requested by the Board of Fire Commissioners

A correction was made to clarify the labor and salaries figure.

During discussion, a member stated he was in favor of recommending the article but noted the increase was significant year over year and that, as the Fire District is not governed by Proposition 2½, the impact of rising taxation should be considered, including whether to establish a baseline for annual increases. Chair Lynch stated he would vote not to recommend the article, noting that an 11% or 13% increase was significant and that the impact would extend to benefits, including pension obligations, which would not be fully reflected until the following year, and that approval would approve the negotiated three-year contract, while rejection would result in mediation and continuation under the prior contract. It was further stated that the Prudential Committee's role is advisory, that voters may act independently, and that rejection would result in arbitration, and a member stated he would vote to recommend the article. Vote: The Prudential Committee voted to recommend Article 5 by a vote of 2–1.

Article 6 – Agreed

Article 7 – Water Main Funding

It was stated that the amount would be increased from \$400,000 to \$500,000 based on updated cost information.

Vote:

- Mr. Havel voted to recommend
- Mr. Burdick voted to recommend
- Chair Lynch voted to recommend

Result: Article 7 was recommended.

Article 8 – Previously approved

Article 9 – Previously approved

Article 10 – Previously approved

Article 11 – Previously approved

Article 12 – Voted to recommend

Article 13 – Voted to recommend

Article 14 – Voted to recommend

Article 15 – Voted to recommend

Article 16 – Voted to recommend

Article 17 – Voted to recommend

Article 18 – Voted to recommend

Article 19 – Voted to recommend

Article 20 – Voted to recommend

Article 21

It was noted that the recommendation was not unanimous and that language had been added at a prior meeting.

Vote:

- Mr. Havel voted to recommend
- Mr. Burdick voted to recommend
- Chair Lynch voted not to recommend

Result: Article 21 was recommended by a 2–1 vote.

Article 22 – Recommended (2–1)

Article 23

Discussion occurred regarding whether a Massachusetts Act required ratification by district voters. It was stated that:

- A prior example from 2011 required ratification
- Counsel was consulted and did not identify a ratification requirement for this article

Result: The Prudential Committee did **not** recommend Article 23.

Article 24 - Removed

A discussion occurred regarding the funding plan for the warrant articles. It was stated that, in the absence of the Treasurer, the Committee was not equipped to finalize the funding plan, and that the language used in the articles (“borrow,” “raise and appropriate,” and “transfer and appropriate”) reflects the mechanism by which funds would be obtained, allowing flexibility where borrowing is contemplated. It was stated that the warrant could be closed in this form, as the language leaves all funding options open, and that final determinations are typically made during a script review.

The Committee reviewed the articles to confirm appropriate funding language, noting that Articles 5 and 6 were not relevant; Articles 7 through 11 included the appropriate language; Articles 12 through 15 were not pertinent; Article 16 included the appropriate language; and Articles 17 through 23 were not relevant. It was further stated that smaller amounts would not involve borrowing, while larger amounts would retain language allowing for borrowing. Based on this review, it was stated that the language was sufficient and that the warrant could be closed in this form.

MOTION: To close the Article.

Motion made by: Seth Burdick Seconded by: John Havel

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

Annual Report Review

The next agenda item was the Annual Report. It was stated that the Prudential Committee’s submission had been provided, specifically the verbal portion, and that Mr. Pirrone had already included the numerical information. It was stated that the report would be proofread, and that, as understood, it did not need to be approved that evening, but needed to be completed before the Annual District Meeting. It was suggested that all members proofread the report closely as soon as possible.

Moderator's Expenses

A discussion occurred regarding reimbursement of moderator expenses. It was stated that funds could be found within a Prudential Committee category, but that the moderator is outside of the Finance Department and there had previously been no budget line item. It was stated that there was a desire to resolve the matter without further expenditure, that auditors would likely approve the expense, and that the District's legal authority to expend funds should be confirmed. It was further stated that Annual District Meeting and election cost lines exist within the Finance Department, and that there was agreement in principle with reimbursing the moderator's expenses.

MOTION: To reimburse the moderator's expenses.

Motion made by: Seth Burdick No second was recorded.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT ON MODERATOR'S EXPENSES

Lally Lloyd provided public comment, stating that the moderator is considered an officer of the Fire District and that reimbursement of professional expenses should be considered in that context. It was stated in response that expenses must be requested and approved in advance, and Ms. Lloyd stated that she would seek approval prior to incurring future expenses.

CFD Website

A discussion occurred regarding the Fire District website and ADA compliance. Mr. Havel stated that accessibility guidelines are a federal mandate and that compliance can be addressed using WordPress plugins and standard practices, and was not believed to be an issue moving forward. He stated that the ADA deadline has been extended to April 2028 and that existing documents are not compliant, but that the archive does not need to be updated, as future documents must follow a stricter template and only active documents would require updates. He stated that compliance can be handled in-house through a standardized template, and that the website requires improvement and coordination across departments, and would remain on future agendas. He also addressed ADA compliance at Freedom Hall, stating that sound and audio/video capabilities are concerns and may require investment, that short-term adjustments can be made, and that assisted listening systems are required and not currently in place, with a portable FM system estimated at \$500 to \$1,500 as a compliant alternative.

Public Comment

None.

Matters not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

None.

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 7:12pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Gina Gonsalves

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