

**COTUIT FIRE DISTRICT
PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE MEETING
ZOOM and IN PERSON
Freedom Hall
COTUIT, MA 02635
April 20, 2026**

The meeting was called to order by Mark Lynch at 6:00 pm on April 20, 2026.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Lynch led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Lynch conducted roll call.

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

Absent: Seth Burdick

Also present: Treasurer Ray Pirrone (via Zoom); Assistant Treasurer Ryan Ouellette (in person)

Public Comment:

Patty Daly, 45 Banfield Drive, stated that she had submitted an email regarding the AV upgrade discussion, outlining the Committee's legal responsibilities under the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. She encouraged the Committee to review these requirements with counsel and stated that they should inform any decisions regarding meeting technology in Freedom Hall for both remote and in-person meetings. Ms. Daly referenced a prior proposal presented in April by Carol Zais, which included a professional audio-visual assessment. She noted that funding was not approved at that time due to cost considerations and reliance on the existing ILO speaker system. She stated that consistent use of the system has been difficult in practice, as speakers turn away while talking, and urged the Committee to consider a more reliable solution to ensure meetings can be adequately heard and observed.

Meeting Minutes Approval:

The Chair noted that review of prior meeting minutes had been included on the agenda but stated that revisions were needed. Due to the length of the agenda, the Chair deferred consideration of the minutes to the next meeting.

Cotuit School Building Demolition

Project Manager Presentation on Upcoming Demolition

Representatives from LeftField LLC, including Joe Sullivan, Kevin Sullivan, and Kayla Gallo, presented an update on the Cotuit School demolition and site remediation project. The project manager reported that a general contractor had been selected and was under contract, and that a project schedule had been submitted and was under review. A tentative timeline was outlined, with mobilization anticipated on or about April 27, followed by approximately five weeks of abatement, two weeks of demolition, and subsequent site work, with completion targeted for early July.

The initial phase would focus on interior abatement, with limited exterior activity. Demolition would not occur until hazardous materials were removed, utilities were disconnected, and the required permit was obtained. Site logistics, including access, circulation, and staging areas, were reviewed, with restricted access during construction and fencing primarily at entry points.

It was clarified that the driveway connection between Main Street and Old Oyster Road would not be accessible during construction and would not remain as a through connection after completion. The project manager also reported that a quote from Universal Environmental for third-party abatement monitoring totaled \$26,950, below the \$50,000 budgeted, and would be contracted through LeftField LLC as a pass-through arrangement.

Osprey Nest Discussion

A discussion occurred regarding an active osprey nest on a nearby utility pole. The project manager reported that the nest had been removed by Eversource due to perceived safety concerns but had since been rebuilt by the birds, and clarified that the removal was not related to the demolition project. He stated that communication with Eversource was ongoing to allow the nest to remain during the current nesting season and that options were being explored to install a dedicated nesting pole and platform on the property. He noted that installation of a new pole could occur during construction, with costs and coordination under review, and stated that prior experience indicated demolition activity would not adversely impact active nesting.

Presentation of Fire Department Budget

Fire Commissioner Kevin Conley and Fire Chief Sean Brown presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Fire Department budget.

- Total proposed budget: \$3,199,818.02 (13% increase over FY26)
- Salary and wages: increased 15% (contractual obligations)
- Operations: increased 2% (fuel, utilities, general costs, CMEB fees)

Discussion included a three-year union contract with annual increases of approximately 13%, 6.2%, and 3%, and a compensation structure based on tenure and certifications, with a shift to fixed-dollar incentives. The increases were attributed to maintaining competitiveness with comparable Cape Cod departments and addressing recruitment and retention challenges due to housing costs in Cotuit.

Additional discussion addressed alignment with higher-paying departments, including COMM (Cotuit, Osterville, Marstons Mills), staffing levels and potential increases to reduce call-back reliance, and broader regional trends. Questions were raised regarding line-item increases, step adjustments, holiday pay changes, and reductions in certain categories based on prior usage.

It was noted that retirement and benefit costs are accounted for separately and are expected to increase, and that any budget shortfalls would be addressed through the reserve fund, supplemental appropriation, or a subsequent tax levy.

Continued Review of Draft Articles for Annual District Meeting: Article 21, et al.

- Article 4:
 - Salary line increased from \$159,754 to \$165,754 based on updated payroll tax and stipend adjustments

MOTION: To increase the salary line to \$165,754.

Motion made by: John Havel Seconded by: Mark Lynch

Motion passed unanimously. (Mark Lynch, John Havel)

- Article 5:
 - Fire Department budget to be updated with finalized figures at the next meeting
 - No vote taken (deferred)

- Chair Lynch indicated that he was not in favor the proposed budget because of the significant increase in annual compensation numbers, based on the recently completed union contract negotiations.
- **Articles 6–11, 13–20:**
 - Previously voted and recommended by the Committee at a prior meeting (no vote taken at this meeting)
- **Article 15:**
 - Treasurer Pirrone provided updated debt projections
 - Revised total estimated at \$669,632
 - Identified as a placeholder pending further review
 - No vote taken (held for further review)
- **Articles 21–22:**
 - Previously approved by vote at a prior meeting (not unanimous) and recommended (no vote taken at this meeting)
- **Article 23:**
 - Previously voted and not recommended (no vote taken at this meeting)
- **Article 24 – Proposed Land Acknowledgement Committee**

The Chair introduced a proposed article submitted by Lally Lloyd regarding establishment of an ad hoc committee to develop a land acknowledgement statement. Discussion addressed procedural requirements for placing an article on the warrant, including petition signatures and certification, compliance with District bylaws and enabling legislation, and whether the proposal fell within the scope of the Fire District’s authority. Additional discussion included the role of the Moderator, whether the Committee could establish such a committee without a warrant article, and whether a petitioned article must be included regardless of recommendation.

Ms. Lloyd stated that she had obtained sufficient signatures. Commissioner Havel raised procedural concerns and questioned whether the proposal was within the District’s scope, while expressing general support for the concept. Mr. Pirrone raised concerns regarding consistency with enabling legislation. The Chair stated that the matter required consultation with District Counsel and further bylaw review.

It was agreed that petition signatures would be submitted to the District Clerk, legal counsel would be consulted, and the article would be revisited at the next meeting prior to closure of the warrant.

No vote taken (discussion only)

A/V Update

- **Website:**

Mr. Havel reported that the website update was substantially complete but required additional review, including materials provided by Ms. Daly. He noted that the project was approximately 98% complete but had been delayed due to other commitments and an ongoing RFP process. The Chair suggested that the Committee consider whether professional assistance may be needed, particularly to ensure ADA compliance, and stated that the item would be placed on the next meeting agenda for further review.

- **Audio/Visual in Freedom Hall:**

The Chair noted prior discussion of AV upgrades and a previously received cost estimate that had not been approved. He stated that recent issues have primarily involved audio limitations when speakers turn away from the Owl device while addressing presentations. It was also reported that internet capacity at Freedom

Hall had been increased to improve connectivity. Discussion included potential solutions such as additional Owl devices, repositioning equipment, or use of a monitor or iPad to allow speakers to face forward, as well as reconfiguration of seating or placement of a screen to avoid speakers turning away from the microphone. Limitations of Freedom Hall as a meeting space for more advanced AV systems and the lack of dedicated technical support were also noted. Mr. Havel stated that while improvements should be considered, he did not support a significant financial investment at this time due to space limitations and operational constraints. The Chair requested that staff explore practical solutions following the Annual District Meeting and report back.

Annual Meeting Location

The Chair proposed holding the meeting at Hamilton Hall due to its existing AV capabilities and available staff support. Mr. Havel expressed a preference for Freedom Hall but supported the use of Hamilton Hall given current AV limitations.

Annual Report Draft

The Chair stated that the Annual Report draft was not yet complete and requested that the item be deferred to the next meeting. He noted that the Prudential Committee section remained outstanding and that the Fire Department submission was also pending. The Chair indicated that he would follow up with Chief Brown and complete his portion prior to the next meeting.

Public Comment

Lally Lloyd raised a question regarding whether bylaw amendments require approval by the Attorney General prior to becoming effective. She noted that the bylaws currently posted on the District's website may not reflect the most recent approved version and suggested that the Committee consider timing of any updates until all changes are finalized.

Ms. Lloyd stated that she would follow up with the applicable citation supporting this requirement. Discussion followed regarding updates to District documents, including removal of the "draft" designation from the 2023 Annual Report and updates to the bylaws on the District's website. It was noted that corrections to the posted bylaws had been made, and the Committee agreed to leave the current version in place pending further clarification regarding any Attorney General approval requirement.

Matters not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

None.

Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn.

Motion made by: John Havel

Seconded by: Mark Lynch

Motion passed unanimously. (Mark Lynch, John Havel)

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:11pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Gina Gonsalves

Gina Gonsalves