



**Town of Ashfield
Annual Town Meeting**

Saturday, May 3, 2025 - 10:00 am

Pursuant to a Warrant signed by the Select Board on April 22, 2025, and posted by Constable Warren Kirkpatrick on April 28, 2025, Town Moderator Stewart “Buz” Eisenberg called the Annual Town Meeting to order at 10:00 am on Saturday, May 3, 2025, in Upper Hall at Ashfield Town Hall. The Moderator asked if there was a motion to take up Article 1 before other matters so that the polls could be opened downstairs.

ARTICLE 1: Election of Officers

A **MOTION** was made by Steven Gougeon and seconded by Todd Olanyk: That the Town choose the following officers by ballot: 1 Moderator for one (1) year; 1 Tree Warden for one (1) year; 1 Assessor for three (3) years; 1 Board of Health Member for three (3) years; 1 Board of Health Member to fill an unexpired term for one (1) year; 1 Constable for three (3) years; 1 Finance Committee Member for three (3) years; 1 Finance Committee Member for three (3) years; 1 Finance Committee Member to fill an unexpired term for two (2) years; 1 Park Commissioner for three (3) years; 1 Park Commissioner for three (3) years; 1 School Committee Member to fill an unexpired term for one (1) year; 1 Select Board Member for three (3) years; 1 Sewer Commissioner for three (3) years; 1 Library Trustee for five (5) years; 1 Planning Board Member for five (5) years; 1 Planning Board Member to fill an unexpired term for two (2) years; AND To vote on the following question(s): Shall the Town of Ashfield be allowed to exempt from the provisions of proposition two and one-half, so-called, the amounts required to pay for the bond issued in order to fund the repair of a town-owned retaining wall on Bronson Avenue? **Yes** **No**; Shall the town vote to have its elected Tree Warden become an appointed Tree Warden of the town? **Yes** **No**; (Non-binding Public Opinion Advisory Question) Do you support the Town of Ashfield taking action to combat aquatic invasive weed growth in Ashfield Lake, at an estimated cost between \$100,000-\$150,000 over the next ten years, or an average of \$15,000 per year? **Yes** **No**; (Non-binding Public Opinion Advisory Question) Should the Town of Ashfield, if taking action to combat aquatic invasive weed growth in Ashfield Lake, consider all methods of weed control including herbicide? [A Yes vote means all methods will be considered. A No vote means only non-herbicide methods will be considered.] **Yes** **No**; (Non-binding Public Opinion Advisory Question) Shall the town vote to support stabilizing costs, improve fiscal sustainability of the MTRSD, and increase resources for education even if it could mean closing Sanderson Academy? **Yes** **No**; **Polls to be closed at 4:00 PM.**

Constable Kirkpatrick reported on the condition of the ballot box, stating that it was empty, set to zero, and ready to accept ballots.

The Moderator explained that under state statute and regulations, a person may not do anything within 150 feet of a voting location to aid or defeat a candidate or question being voted on in that location. As such, during Town Meeting he would be allowing factual questions and answers but no opinion statements about the five ballot questions in the election downstairs.

David Kulp, Phillips Road, asked when the Tree Warden being appointed would go into effect if it passes. Mr. Gougeon answered that it would go into effect next year.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 1 PASSED unanimously.**

Moderator Eisenberg introduced town staff and members of the Select Board and Finance Committee: Paul McLatchy III, Town Administrator; Alexis Fedorjaczenko, Town Clerk; Steve Gougeon, Select Board Chair; Tom Carter and Todd Olanyk, Select Board members; Bennett Markens, Finance Committee Chair; Ayala Carter, Paul Lacinski, and Laura Pitter (and Mark Burton, not present), Finance Committee members. The Moderator read the names of the deceased and Town Meeting paused for a moment of silence. He then read the Code of Conduct for Town Meeting.

Ben Markens presented an overview of the budget. Mr. Markens asked anyone who is a volunteer for the Town, or who receives a stipend, to stand; Town Meeting recognized them with applause. Mr. Markens explained several municipal budget terms and provided an overview of the budget.

Select Board member Tom Carter made further remarks. He pointed to the Town Accountant's section of the Annual Town report (page 100) as a useful place to learn more about the budget.

Town Clerk Alexis Fedorjaczenko read the service of the warrant.

ARTICLE 2: Reports of Officers

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Carter and seconded by Mr. Gougeon: That the Town act on the reports of the town officers.

The Moderator noted that the 2024 Annual Town Report is dedicated to Rick Chandler. There was applause and thanks to Mr. Chandler for his many years of service to Ashfield.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 2 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 3: Authorization for Compensating Balance Agreements

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Olanyk and seconded by Mr. Gougeon: That the Town vote to authorize the Town Treasurer to enter into compensating balance agreements for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025, in accordance M.G.L. c.44, §53F.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 3 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 4: Authorization to Accept/Expend Grants/Gifts to Town

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Gougeon and seconded by Mr. Olanyk: That the Town vote to authorize the Select Board to apply for, accept, and expend any grants and/or gifts that may become available.

Wayne Farrell, Whitney Acres, asked if there are gifts dedicated to specific purposes. Mr. Gougeon explained that many gifts go into specific accounts with limitations on how they can be used. Mr. Carter added that page 107 of the Town Report shows trust funds that include gifts for specific purposes.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 4 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 5: Disposal of Surplus Property

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Carter and seconded by Mr. Gougeon: That the Town vote to authorize the Select Board to dispose of any unused town-owned equipment and/or property.

Rona Leventhal, West Road, asked about the method of disposal. Mr. Carter gave the examples of the old fire truck that is currently out for bid and old office equipment that is advertised to the public and if no one takes them are recycled or disposed of.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 5 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 6: Elected Officials Compensation

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Olanyk and seconded by Mr. Gougeon: That the Town vote to set the stipends and compensation for all elected officials of the Town (Moderator, Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Constable, Select Board, School Committee, and Tree Warden) as provided by the M.G.L., c.41, §108, to be made effective as of July 1, 2025, as contained within the budget.

Position	Stipend
Moderator	\$150
Board of Assessors Chair	\$1,500
Board of Assessors Members (2 @ \$1,250 each)	\$2,500
Board of Health Members (3 @ \$750 each)	\$2,250
Constable (3 elected positions, hours vary)	\$15.00 per hour
Select Board Chair	\$1,500
Select Board Members (2 @ \$1,250 each)	\$2,500
School Committee (2 @ \$500 each)	\$1,000
Tree Warden	\$300

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 6 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 7: Authorize Non-Resident Officials to Speak

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Gougeon and seconded by Mr. Olanyk: That the Town vote to authorize the following non-resident officers to address the 2025 Annual Town Meeting without further meeting approval after being recognized by the moderator: Town Administrator, Police Chief, School Superintendent and/or administration representative, School Committee Chairperson, Representative from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Wastewater Chief Operator, Librarian, and Senior Center/District Director.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 7 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 8: Revolving Funds

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Carter and seconded by Mr. Gougeon: That the Town vote to approve the following spending limits for the revolving funds noted below pursuant to the Ashfield Revolving Fund Bylaw and pursuant to the M.G.L. c.44, §53E½ for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025.

Revolving Fund	FY2025 Spending Limit
Dog License and Control	\$5,000.00
Park	\$5,000.00
Library	\$2,500.00
Police Cruiser	\$3,000.00
Conservation Commission	\$3,000.00
Fire Department	\$3,000.00
Town Hall Rental	\$5,000.00

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 8 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 9: School Expenses

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Olanyk and seconded by Mr. Gougeon: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the following sums to fund **EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025.

School Committee Stipends	\$1,000
MTRSD Regional School Expense	\$2,803,412
MTRSD Capital Expense	\$58,061
Vocation Education Expense	\$450,000
Total	\$3,312,473

Mohawk Trails School District Superintendent Sheryl Stanton spoke about advocacy work the district is doing at the state level for rural school budgets; about the work of the 2 District 8 Town Steering Committee studying and making recommendations on the future of the schools; and about the school budget.

Phil Pless, Cape Street, said the schools have improved a lot but he cannot support this budget because the Mohawk District costs more per student than any other district in the area and we are still losing students because families don't think the education is adequate. Mr. Pless said we need a revolution in our school budget and dramatic solutions including less administration.

The Moderator said Representative Blais is doing a lot of work on this issue.

The Superintendent thanked Mr. Pless for sharing his concerns. She said they are starting to see improvement in students using school choice, and she believes that the revolution needed is in the school payment formula for rural districts.

Mr. Farrell noted the informative handout on the school budget and asked how many students from Ashfield are attending vocational schools. Mr. Carter said the budgeted number is an estimate based on prior years; Mr. Markens shared the formula.

Mary Gravel, Watson Spruce Corner Road, said that building another campus at Mohawk makes no sense to her. The Moderator reiterated that we may not discuss a question or candidate on the ballot within 150-feet of the polling location. She asked if voting for the school budget is voting on the steering Committee recommendations; the Moderator responded that it is not.

Tiertza-leah Schwartz, West Road, asked about the per-student cost. The Superintendent said the per-pupil cost includes costs that are distributed across all district towns and is difficult to calculate; that number is calculated when closing out the year and is posted on the district's website and on the Department of Education website, she does not have the number with her today. Ms. Schwartz commented that this is an extreme situation. The Superintendent spoke to fixed cost increases in transportation, contractual salary, benefits, and special education. Mr. Schwartz asked about cuts to the budget. The Superintendent listed some of the reductions and said the specific decreases can be viewed on the district website.

Glenda Spurling, Bronson Avenue, asked what the "choicing out" includes. The Superintendent said school choice is different than when students choose to attend a vocational school, and that a survey of families indicates that reasons for school choice are proximity to a parents' workplace or daycare and the perception that the high school is not providing a rigorous education; she said families within the school report high satisfaction with the academic program but there is a disconnect within the community about what's actually happening in the classrooms. Ms. Spurling asked about transportation for a student who chooses out with an Individual Education Plan 504. The Superintendent said the 504 can be more temporary than other IEP, and the district is responsible for transportation and gets reimbursed.

Mary Link, Buckland Road, said she had previously been on the School Committee and was chair of the budget subcommittee. She thinks the increase this year is reasonable and asked about the reasons for certain increases. The Superintendent spoke about the cost of prescriptions and substance abuse treatment. Ms. Link added that it's important to reach out to Representative Blais about the state's proportion of the increases. Ms. Link asked about capital expenses and debt service. The superintendent said Sanderson is paid off and the debt is for omnibus facility improvement repairs to MTRS and Sanderson.

The Moderator reiterated that contacting Representative Blais on these issues is important.

Ricki Carroll, Main Street, asked for clarification about the formula for each town. The Superintendent said the formula is complicated and based on enrollment; she also spoke to state's required minimum and "above-minimum" required contributions. The district website has a MTRSD FY 26 budget book, with tabs along the bottom providing detailed information.

Wendy Keyser, Hawley Road, said she objects to the use of the term "public perception" and the framing of coursework rigor, because her kids were not challenged enough. She thinks this is a true concern and wants to hear that steps will be taken to work on rigor for grades 7-12 including allowing children to take classes in other grades. The Superintendent clarified her remarks about the survey of existing school families and spoke about research on accelerating students in math; she invites people to speak with parents of current students.

Jennifer Markens, Bellus Road, said she served on the School Committee for six years and has been involved in education for a 25-year period of her career in addition to being a parent. She identified real-time data about student performance and changes in math instruction as very positive recent changes in the local schools.

Mr. Pless said that the Town has been waiting for about 30 years for the state to be right with us and spoke about historical issues with how state payments to local schools were based on zip codes.

Mr. Carter said he supports the changes happening at the school and this budget, and he observed that this is a longstanding conversation.

Nina Coler, Bailey Road, said she agreed with Mr. Carter. She said her children had a joyous and fulfilling education at Mohawk and her son was a Merrit Scholar.

Daegan Miller, Stonewall Drive, said he is the parent of two current students in the district who had a fantastic time at Sanderson, and he is thrilled with the quality of education his children are getting. He said thanks to everyone who has kept the schools vital for decades.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 9 PASSED by a majority vote** (one no).

ARTICLE 10: Franklin Regional Council of Governments Charter Amendments

A MOTION was made by Mr. Gougeon and seconded by Mr. Olanyk: That the Town vote to adopt and enact the amendments to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) Charter, said amendment(s) having been proposed by a two-thirds majority of the weighted vote of the full membership of the FRCOG Council and a majority vote of the FRCOG Executive Committee, with said amendment(s) taking full effect immediately upon adoption by two-thirds of the member towns unless a later effective date is otherwise specified.

Paul McLatchy III, Ashfield Town Administrator, provided an overview of the proposed changes. He participated in the charter review along with Bill Perlman.

Mollie Babize, Bear River Road, asked about the reasons for the provision allowing towns outside of Franklin County to join. Mr. McLatchy said several programs are already open to other towns. He explained that FRCOG is unique because it is a planning organization in addition to being a regional council of governments, and that other towns may be looking for planning services. Ms. Babize also asked why towns might choose to withdraw. Mr. McLatchy said he thinks FRCOG is pretty cost efficient, but that there may be other reasons towns feel they do not want or need the services.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 10 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 11: General Government Expenses

A MOTION was made by Mr. Carter and seconded by Mr. Gougeon: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the following sums to fund **GENERAL GOVERNMENT** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025.

Moderator Stipend	\$150
Select Board Stipend	\$4,000
Select Board Expense	\$2,000
Town Administrator Salary	\$89,877
Town Administrator Expense	\$2,300
Assessors Stipend	\$4,000
Assistant Assessor	\$37,102
Assessors' Expense	\$5,100
Treasurer's Office Salary & Wages	\$63,456
Certified Treasurer Bonus – MGL C.41 §108P	\$1,000
Treasurer Expense	\$3,250
Collector Salary/Admin. Support	\$68,516
Certified Collector Bonus – MGL C.41 §108P	\$1,000
Collector Expense	\$8,220

Accounts Payable Wages	\$3,000
Accounting Services	\$35,000
Accountant Expense	\$550
Town Clerk Wages	\$41,892
Certified Town Clerk Bonus – MGL C.41 §19K	\$1,000
Town Clerk Expense	\$7,300
Elections Expense	\$2,700
Conservation Commission Expense	\$795
Shared Conservation Agent (Total)	\$45,000
Town Hall Administrative Support	\$6,200
Planning Board Expense	\$12,650
Zoning Board of Appeals Expense	\$900
Energy Committee Expense	\$21,000
Reserve Fund	\$7,500
Legal Expense	\$7,500
Contracted Services	\$83,695
Town Hall Expense	\$5,000
General Insurance	\$90,000
Public Official Bonds	\$1,200
Town Hall Custodian Wages	\$8,017
Town Hall Utilities	\$20,800
Facilities Manager	\$20,000
Town Common Maintenance	\$9,800
Total General Government	\$721,470

Ms. Carroll asked about the Facilities Manager role and what this person will do. Mr. Carter said the town has a long history of qualified people volunteering in this role, and that the town now needs someone to fill this in a professional capacity. Ms. Carroll said she is trying to understand what “minor repairs” covers and how much work this person will do, and how it will affect the Park Commission. Mr. Carter explained that it depends on the person hired. Mr. Olanyk provided some examples: replacing a door in a public building requires a construction license in addition to the proper permits and plumbing and electrical work are similar; he said the person would be responsible to manage how this work gets done. Mr. Markens said the number is based on Mary Quigley’s estimate of how much time she spends as Town Hall Steward. Mr. Gougeon added that the person will maintain a list of work needed in all public buildings and will coordinate such work.

Mary Quigley, Bear River Road and current Town Hall Steward, provided examples of the work she has done in this role, and said she thinks money can be saved with someone in this position. Mr. Olanyk said this will not take away the autonomy of the Parks Commission, though they can call on this person to help out if needed.

Mr. Farrell said the previous discussion helped him understand the new position; he then asked what “contracted services” covers. Mr. Gougeon said it’s a list of things including IT, copier, some sewer support, and many other services.

Judy Haupt, Watson Spruce Corner Road, said several years ago a Park Manager position was requested for \$10,000 and there were no applicants; she said she is definitely in favor of this \$20,000 allocation. Ms. Haupt also asked about why Town Common Maintenance is so high. Ms. Gougeon said that this line includes snow removal for Town Hall.

Ron Coler, Bailey Road, thanked Mary Quigley for all she has done for this town; he said she was always there to help in a way very few people would be able to do. There was a round of applause.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 11 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 12: Public Safety Expenses

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Olanyk and seconded by Mr. Carter: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the following sums to fund **PUBLIC SAFETY** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025.

Police Chief Salary	\$93,775
Police Chief Holiday Pay	\$1,080
Police Department Wages	\$56,813
Police Department Expense	\$30,800
Fire Chief Salary	\$77,202
Fire Chief Holiday Pay	\$888
Fire Department Wages	\$40,000
Fire Department Expense	\$67,300
Highland Ambulance EMS Assessment	\$120,387
Highland Ambulance EMS Radio Assessment	\$2,500
Emergency Management Stipends	\$5,100
Emergency Management Expense	\$5,500
Animal Control Officer Stipend	\$4,400
Animal Control Expense	\$2,800
Animal Inspector Stipend	\$930
Animal Inspector Expense	\$55
Tree Warden Stipend	\$300
Tree Warden Expense	\$12,000
Total Public Safety	\$521,830

Ms. Schwartz asked for clarification about the Tree Warden expenses. Mr. Olanyk said that covers is if an arborist is needed to come in with specialized skill and equipment that the Highway Department does not have. He added that the Tree Warden also coordinates with utilities to have this work done at the utilities' expense.

Ms. Leventhal asked if there is a discretionary line item in case someone was found to fill a part-time officer position. Mr. Olanyk said it's not but if that situation came up it could be addressed.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 12 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 13: Public Works Expenses

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Gougeon and seconded by Mr. Olanyk: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the following sums to fund **PUBLIC WORKS** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025.

Highway Superintendent Salary	\$89,689
Highway Labor	\$300,126
General Highway Expense	\$179,100
Highway Department Fuel	\$61,500
Winter Roads Expense (Snow/Ice)	\$156,500
HRMC Expense	\$10,350
Transfer Station Expense	\$169,168
Winter Sidewalk Expense	\$5,000
Streetlights	\$3,500

Total Public Works	\$974,933
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Ms. Gravel said she hopes we're not double paying the fire hydrants clearing as the Water District pays for that. Mr. McLatchy said there are other hydrants in town. Tom Poissant, Highway Superintendent, explained the Water District pays for the hydrants connected to the water system, and other hydrants in town include dry hydrants that go into the lake,

Peyton Fleming, Smith Road asked about changes at the Transfer Station and whether there have been savings. Mr. Gougeon said we have better tracking and are running more efficiently.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 13 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 14: Health & Human Services Expenses

A MOTION was made by Mr. Carter and seconded by Mr. Gougeon: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the following sums to fund **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025.

Board of Health Stipends	\$2,250
Board of Health Expense	\$1,650
Health Agents	\$8,000
Senior Center/District Expense	\$60,640
Local Council on Aging Expense	\$1,200
Veterans Services District	\$5,348
Veterans Benefits – Local	\$0
Veterans Graves	\$1,800
Total Health & Human Services	\$80,888

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 14 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 15: Culture & Recreation Expenses

A MOTION was made by Mr. Olanyk and seconded by Adam Bright: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the following sums to fund **CULTURE AND RECREATION** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025.

Belding Memorial Library Salary & Wages	\$72,117
Belding Memorial Library Expense	\$15,125
Belding Memorial Park Expense	\$48,890
Historical Commission Expense	\$1,500
Cultural Council Expense	\$2,000
Total Culture and Recreation	\$139,632

Sandy Carter, Main Street, and a member of the Library Trustees, said she thinks everyone would agree we have an exceptional librarian in this town who is worth every penny.

David Kulp, Phillips Road, spoke in support of the article with a suggestion to increase Cultural Council expenses beyond the grant funds received from the state. Mr. Gougeon explained that this appropriation is on top of the grant money received from the state.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 15 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 16: Debt Services Expenses

A MOTION was made by Mr. Gougeon and seconded by Ms. Carroll: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the following sums to fund **DEBT SERVICES** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025.

Highway Garage Debt	\$63,552
Short-Term Borrowing Expense	\$10,000
Total Debt Services	\$73,552

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 16 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 17: Intergovernmental Assessment Expenses

A MOTION was made by Mr. Carter and seconded by Alan Rice: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the following sums to fund **INTERGOVERNMENTAL ASSESSMENTS** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025.

FRCOG Statutory Assessment	\$695
FRCOG Procurement Services	\$2,990
FRCOG Radio Maintenance	\$5,000
FRCOG Inspections Program	\$7,873
FRCOG REPC Assessment	\$150
FRCOG Regional Services	\$13,284
FRCOG Community Health Program	\$11,810
Total Intergovernmental Assessments	\$41,802

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 17 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 18: Employee Benefit Expenses

A MOTION was made by Mr. Olanyk and seconded by Mr. Carter: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the following sums to fund **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025:

Franklin Regional Retirement System	\$164,390
Workers Compensation/Unemployment	\$2,500
Insurance Benefits (Active & Retiree)	\$172,100
Medicare/FICA	\$21,000
Total Employee Benefits	\$359,990

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 18 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 19: OPEB Funding

A MOTION was made by Mr. Gougeon and seconded by Mr. Olanyk: That the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$30,000 from the General Stabilization Fund to the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 19 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 20: Sewer/WWTP Enterprise Fund

A MOTION was made by Nancy Hoff and seconded by Mr. Rice: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from retained earnings, or otherwise provide the following sums of money to operate the **Sewer/Wastewater Treatment Plant Enterprise Fund** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025.

Revenues

Departmental Receipts	\$178,460
Retained Earnings	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$188,460

Expenses

Salaries & Benefit Costs	\$93,000
Abatements	\$500
Operational Expenses	\$84,960
Emergency Fund Costs	\$10,000
Capital Costs	\$0
TOTAL	\$188,460

Ms. Hoff spoke well of the new Chief Operator, Patrick Murphy and provided an overview.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 20 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 21: Broadband Enterprise Fund

A MOTION was made by David Kulp and seconded by Mr. Olanyk: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from retained earnings, or otherwise provide the following sums of money to fund the **Broadband Enterprise Fund** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025, to provide Broadband telecommunication services.

Revenues

Subscriber Fee Revenues	\$535,487
Anticipated Grant Revenues	\$103,061
Retained Earnings	\$80,000
TOTAL	\$718,548

Expenses

Salaries & Indirect Costs	\$2,000
Operational Costs	\$420,124
Capital Costs	\$0
Depreciation Costs	\$296,424
TOTAL	\$718,548

Mr. Kulp provided an overview and noted that expenses to subscribers would be going down.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 21 PASSED unanimously**.

At 1:05 PM Town Meeting agreed to SUSPEND for lunch and to reconvene at 1:45 PM

ARTICLE 22: Continuing Appropriations

A MOTION was made by Mr. Gougeon and seconded by Mr. Carter: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the following sums to fund the following **CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025:

ADMIN - Tax Title – Collector	\$0
ADMIN - Tax Title – Treasurer	\$15,000
ADMIN - Town Audit/OPEB Audit	\$10,350
TOWN HALL – Building Committee Expenses	\$10,000
LAKE – Lake Dam Inspection	\$0
LAKE – Invasive Species Management	\$7,000
LAKE – Lake Dam Maintenance	\$12,750
LAKE – Lake Dam Burning Treatment	\$10,000
BENEFITS – Parental Leave	\$7,500
PLANNING – Open Space Plan	\$5,000
TOTAL	\$77,600

Mr. Farrell asked about the \$0 for Tax Collector. Mr. Carter explained that these are multi-year funds and the Tax Collector didn't need extra money this year.

Ken Kipen, John Ford Road, asked about the Lake Dam and whether herbicide or pesticide is being considered. Mr. Olanyk explained that the "burning treatment" line addresses the weeds on the dam, and that there is a planned study by Tighe & Bond to analyze four different methods of treatment. Mr. Olanyk clarified that this has nothing to do with the ballot question for weeds in the water.

Ms. Carroll asked where and when the testing will occur including how close to the water.

Mr. Coler, Dam Keeper, explained that there is a proposal for a study but because of the fiscal constraints of the town there is no proposed effort this year. If money from grants can be obtained Mr. Coler will bring this back to the Select Board for authorization.

Ms. Link asked whether the "invasive species management" line is related. Mr. Olanyk said that money is there for any survey work or mapping of the existing weeds.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 22 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 23: Capital Projects

A MOTION was made by Mr. Carter and seconded by Mr. Gougeon: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$35,000 and transfer from free cash the sum of \$316,941, for a total appropriation of \$351,941, to fund the following **CAPITAL EXPENDITURES** for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025:

HIGHWAY – Bridge Work	\$100,000
HIGHWAY – Pickup Truck Replacement	\$40,000
PUBLIC WORKS – Retaining Wall	\$50,000
TOWN HALL – Chair Lift Replacement	\$70,000
ALL DEPARTMENTS – PC Replacements	\$12,500
LIBRARY – Paving Project	\$20,000
TOWN HALL – Building Design & Improvements	\$50,000
TOWN HALL – Outdoor Water Fountain	\$5,000
SCHOOL – Water Heater Replacement	\$4,441
Total	\$351,941

Ms. Haupt asked about the Town Hall building design & improvements and whether this would cover the costs of moving town offices to Sanderson. Mr. Gougeon explained that the timeline for moving the school is a longer-term project and these funds are planned to be spent sooner to address more immediate needs.

Ms. Haupt asked where the water fountain would be. Mr. Gougeon explained that it would be on the side of the firehouse near Town Common.

Mr. Fleming asked about the bridge work. Highway Superintendent Poissant said he put in a funding application for Smith Road, Creamery Road, and Williamsburg Road bridge work, and the town funds would supplement that work and would be used for other bridges that are ineligible for other funding. Mr. Fleming thanked Mr. Poissant for his team's ability to clear the roads quickly.

Cindy "Delta" Carney, Main Street, asked on behalf of the Water District who will pay the water bills for the water fountain. Mr. Gougeon said that will be determined.

Mr. Pless asked about the water heater replacement, and how expensive is it if that is just Ashfield's share. Mr. McLatchy said the total project cost is about \$30,000 with Ashfield's share about 12% of the total.

Ms. Leventhal asked about the need for the lift replacement. Mr. Carter explained that this is a current need, and that the lifts need a lot of maintenance.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 23 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 24: Solar Arrays Appropriation

A MOTION was made by Mr. Olanyk and seconded by Renee Rastorfer: That the Town vote to appropriate from the Grant Match Stabilization Fund the sum of \$100,000 for the purpose of engineering, constructing, and connecting two solar arrays, at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Highway Garage, including any other costs incidental thereto and contingent on receiving a Climate Leaders program matching grant, to be expended under the supervision of the Select Board.

Alex Osterman of the Energy Committee announced that Ashfield has been designated a Climate Leader Community and is now eligible to apply for grants to support this project. She said that the payback time for the Town is less than one year.

Manfred Gabriel, Brier Hill Road, said thank you to Alex and the entire Energy Committee for this great work.

Mr. Coler added his thanks to the Energy Committee.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 24 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 25: Retaining Wall Debt Authorization

A MOTION was made by Mr. Gougeon and seconded by Mr. Carter: That the Town vote to borrow or otherwise provide the sum of \$500,000 for the repair of the town-owned retaining wall on Bronson Avenue (plot numbers 7-2-0-86 and 7-2-0-51A) including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto, such project to be carried out by the Town of Ashfield Select Board, contingent on a Proposition Two and One-Half, so called, debt exclusion override vote.

Note: This article is contingent on the approval of a debt exclusion on the annual election ballot.

Mr. Markens clarified that this will not affect the tax rate until the money is borrowed.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 25 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 26: Town Meeting Bylaw

A MOTION was made by Mr. Carter and seconded by Ms. Carroll: That the Town vote to adopt the following bylaw related to the conduct of town meeting:

“Non-resident department heads and other officials serving the town may address Town Meeting after being recognized by the moderator without additional approval of town meeting. Other non-residents must still have leave of the meeting to be allowed to speak. Town meeting may suspend this bylaw for the duration of any town meeting by a majority vote. Only registered voters of the Town of Ashfield may vote on any article before town meeting.”

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 26 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 27: Tree Warden Bylaw Change

A MOTION was made by Mr. Olanyk and seconded by Mr. Keramidas: That the Town vote to amend the bylaws to change the position of Tree Warden from an elected position to an appointed position.

Tadea Klein, Conway Road, asked for clarification whether it would be an automatic appointment of the Highway Superintendent. My Olanyk said it could potentially be anyone.

Ms. Babize asked about the distinction between positions being elected or appointed. Mr. Carter said it often originates in statute and can be changed with town bylaws.

Ms. Leventhal asked for an outline of the responsibilities of the Tree Warden. Mr. Carter said it relates to town trees just off the road. Superintendent Poissant said the responsibilities include care of the town-owned trees and explained that the positions work together.

Harry Keramidas, Tatro Road, asked what the determination is for what’s a town tree. Mr. Carter said it has to do with the layout of the road, and Mr. Poissant confirmed.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 27 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 28: Planning Board Term Change

A MOTION was made by Mr. Gougeon and seconded by Mr. Olanyk: That the Town vote to amend the bylaws to reduce the term of Planning Board members from five (5) years to three (3) years, with one member being elected in 2026, one in 2027, one in 2028, and two members being elected in each of two consecutive years and one being elected every third year thereafter.

Rick Chandler, Meadow Lane, and current chair of the Planning Board, said that recruitment has been challenging due to the term length. He added that this budget includes money for a professional planner for who can advise the board on technical matters.

Ms. Haupt said as a veteran ten-year member of the Planning Board she can attest to the work being technical.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 28 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 29: Flood Hazard District Bylaw Change

A MOTION was made by Mr. Carter and seconded by Ms. Carroll: That the Town vote to amend Section V: District, subsection B: Flood Hazard District of the Zoning Bylaws by deleting the existing wording:

A flood hazard district is hereby created as an overlay district comprising all areas designated as Zone A on the Town of Ashfield Flood Insurance Rate Maps, dated September 7, 1985, and on file with the Town Clerk. These maps are incorporated by reference. The following requirements apply in the Flood Hazard District:

- 1. Within Zone A, the applicant for a building permit shall obtain any existing base flood elevation data and submit it to the Building Inspector.*
- 2. The Building Inspector shall determine whether the proposed project is within a Flood Hazard Zone.*
- 3. The Building Inspector shall determine whether the proposed project meets elevation or flood proofing requirements of the State Building Code.*
- 4. The Building Inspector shall inform the Conservation Commission of the proposed building activity within the overlay district.*

And replacing it with: (changes noted in **bold/underline**)

*A flood hazard district is hereby created as an overlay district comprising all areas designated as Zone A on the Town of Ashfield Flood Insurance Rate Maps, dated **September 27, 1985**, and on file with the Town Clerk. These maps **and any subsequent amendments or revisions** are incorporated by reference. The following requirements apply in the Flood Hazard District:*

- 1. Within Zone A, the applicant for a building permit shall obtain any existing base flood elevation data and submit it to the Building Inspector.*
- 2. The Building Inspector shall determine whether the proposed project is within a Flood Hazard Zone.*
- 3. The Building Inspector shall determine whether the proposed project meets elevation or flood proofing requirements of the State Building Code.*
- 4. The Building Inspector shall inform the Conservation Commission of the proposed building activity within the overlay district.*

Alan Rice, South Street, and a current member of the Planning Board, explained that this is a simple change to ensure the most up-to-date maps are being used.

A VOTE was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 29 PASSED unanimously**.

ARTICLE 30: Special Permit Bylaw Change

A MOTION was made by Mr. Olanyk and seconded by Mr. Gougeon: That the Town vote to amend Section VII: Special Permit of the Zoning Bylaws by adding a new paragraph “J”:

J. Pre-Application Conference

- 1. The Applicant is strongly encouraged to meet with the Special Permit Granting Authority, as well as relevant staff or municipal officials of the Town, to determine the procedural*

steps and requirements of the Application. The intent of this process is for the Applicant to obtain necessary information and guidance before entering into any commitments or incurring substantial expenses with regard to the site and Application.

2. *The pre-application conference is advisory only and shall not bind the Town of Ashfield.*

Mr. Rice explained that the pre-application conference helps the permitting process move along as efficiently as possible.

Ms. Babize, current chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals, said this is a practice that the Zoning Board uses and it is very helpful.

A **VOTE** was taken; the Moderator declared that **Article 30 PASSED unanimously**.

Moderator Eisenberg said every year he is more grateful for this purest form of democracy, for every one of the people sitting at the front of the room, and for Ashfield's voters.

The Moderator acknowledged Sandy Carter who is retiring from the Library Trustees.

A **MOTION** to adjourn town meeting was made by Mr. Coler and seconded by many.

A **VOTE** was taken; the motion to adjourn **PASSED unanimously** at 2:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Alexis Fedorjaczenko
Town Clerk

Check-in: Sandy Carter & Delta Carney

ATTENDANCE: 125 registered voters