

TOWN HALL 3 EAST MAIN ROAD PERU, MA 01235

SELECT BOARD / FINANCE COMMITTEE JOINT MEETING MINUTES:

Tuesday, February 17, 2026 @ 6:00 P.M.

Town Hall Meeting Room

Verne Leach, Chair Selectman
Samuel Haupt, Selectman
Edward Munch, Selectman
Terry Walker, Recording Secretary
Justin Russell, Highway Superintendent
Bruce Cullett, Police Chief/Finance Committee Chairman
Brandon Mascolo, Finance Committee
Doug Haskins, Finance Committee
Paul Hickling, Finance Committee
Bonny DiTomasso, COA Director
Valerie Bird, Health Agent
Jonathon Mejias, Assessor

Public Attendees: James Kenney

Item 1: Call to order: 6:00 P.M.

Item 2: Selectboard Roll Call: Chairman Leach present, Selectman Haupt present, Selectman Munch present

Item 3: State Recording status: TA Walker recording, Selectman Leach recording for personal reasons under exemption E

Item 4: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag: Led by Selectman Leach

Item 5: Review and Approve BOS meeting Minutes for 2/2/2026: Selectman Munch motion to approve minutes pending changes, Selectman Haupt second, 2-0

Item 6: Update from Departments:

Police Department:

Chief Cullett mentioned that the water pump is being fixed on the new cruiser and it is still under warranty.

Emergency Management Director:

Bruce Cullett, EMD, mentioned that he does not have any updates on the EMPG grant.

Highway Department:

Superintendent Russell mentioned that Tim Davis passed his CDL test and Hoisting License tests. Superintendent Russell also mentioned that he is having problems with the 2019 International Truck. Justin mentioned that after reviewing the new personnel policy- it needs to include time and a half after 40 hours.

Board of Health Agent:

Valerie Bird, Health Agent mentioned that the housing case on North Road will be continued in March and the owner is making progress at his residence.

Assessor:

Assessor Mejias mentioned that 33% of the parcels in town do not have house numbers and that is one of the projects he is working on. Assessor Mejias will draft a letter notifying every one in town of the adjustments to their addresses. The draft letter will be brought before the BOS to be approved at the next meeting.

CAI Technologies' invoice was negotiated because the town did not receive a contract for FY26. The increase was \$850.00 and the town's portion is now \$400.00. The Assessors will submit a Reserve Fund transfer for \$400.00 to be discussed at the Finance Committee meeting next week.

Patriots software may need to be upgraded and converted to AP5 in the upcoming years. In the future, the Assessors may eliminate Patriots/Catalis and complete the work in house.

Chief Cullett asked Assessor Mejias if E911 will be notified of the renumbered lots on Curtin Road. Assessor Mejias mentioned that he will certainly notify E911. Chief Cullett mentioned that if the numbers change the owners need to be notified. Superintendent Russell mentioned that house numbers are not issued until a new construction project is underway. Assessor Mejias suggested the Highway Superintendent come to the Assessor's office to get house numbers. Health Agent Valerie Bird had questions on how vacant lots are given a number. Assessor Mejias mentioned that renumbering addresses is a directive from the Department of Local Services.

COA:

Bonny DiTomasso COA Director has received questionnaires with contact information from 60 seniors. These questionnaires were mailed out with tax bills. In addition, Bonny has distributed 20 pairs of ice cleats to the elderly which was funded by the COA formula grant. She is very pleased with the positive results received when interacting with our seniors.

Maintenance:

Ed Munch mentioned that the electrician is finishing still wiring the meeting room offices and Ed has been working on painting walls.

Town Administrator:

TA Walker mentioned that she is completing the MIIA grant close out letter. The grant funded the town hall septic line, Bluevoice for the police department and safety equipment for the highway department.

Final invoice for Guardian Energy in on tonight's warrant. TA Walker is working with Green Communities to close out the grant.

The Fire Department has an invoice for Fire Technologies in the amount of \$8,396.71. This invoice has been outstanding since October 2025. TA Walker placed on tonight's warrant to be paid. The balance in the Fire Department Expense account will be \$564.31 for the remainder of the fiscal year once this invoice is paid.

Item 7: Discussion on changing the name of South Road Extension with James Kenney: James Kenney questioned the procedure on changing the name of a town roadway. Highway Superintendent referred Mr. Kenney to the Massachusetts guidelines on how to change the name of a road in Massachusetts.

The BOS suggested a public hearing, a majority vote at ATM and drafting a letter to the residence on South Road Extension for their feedback. Mr. Kenney's proposal is to change South Road Extension to "Geer Farm Road". The name change is to honor a Revolutionary War Veteran that fought in the Revolutionary War. Mr. Kenney mentioned that South Road Extension had been Zigler Road and Smith Road before it was changed to South Road Extension. This was placed on hold.

Item 8: Discussion on Town of Peru Assessor position: Placed on hold. Applicant will be asked to take 101 course before he is hired.

Item 9: 7:00 Finance Committee Joint Meeting: Finance Committee joined the joint meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Item 10: Finance Committee roll call: Chairman Bruce Cullett present and called the joint meeting to order, Doug Haskins second, 4-0 --Paul Hickling present, Branden Mascolo present, Doug Haskins present,

Item 11: Discussion of Fiscal Year 2026 and Fiscal Year 2027 Budget:

Chairman Cullett mentioned that the Fire Department invoice for FY26 was an issue and asked why the invoice was not handled until February since the invoice was dated October 2025. Chairman Cullett mentioned that the Fire Chief should not have put the vendor in this position. Selectman Haupt mentioned that the fire chief did not notify him of the purchase and mentioned that this puts the association in a tough spot. Selectman Haupt will talk to the fire chief. Chairman Cullett mentioned that the Fire Chief needs to come to the next meeting because the town does not need to be put in a position where vendors are not paid for months. Fin Com member Haskins asked if the fire department members voted on the large purchase. Sam Haupt mentioned that the department did not have a board meeting. Chairman Cullett stated that if the fire chief cannot make the next meeting, he needs to delegate a person to be present.

Budget received for FY27:

Assessors expense level funded	\$ 1,000.00
Conservation Comm level funded	\$ 500.00
BRPC	\$ 746.26
Peru Library level funded	\$23,256.00
Council on Aging Exp level funded	\$ 1,000.00
Elderly Outreach level funded	\$ 650.00
Cemeteries level funded	\$ 500.00
Town Building Maint increased	\$ 15,000.00 increase of \$3,000.00
Partridge Field Playground level funded	\$ 1,500.00
Retirement Assessment	\$93,240.00 increase of \$29,440.00
Animal Control Exp level funded	\$ 1,000.00

FY27:

Tax Map (Assessors) \$2,200.00

Health Department- placed on hold

Building Maintenance increased by \$3,000 - additional projects at town and this includes maintenance at highway garage. Possibly a new water heater at town hall. Highway Superintendent mentioned the chimney at town hall needs repairs. Quotes will be needed to repair chimney.

TA Walker mentioned funding an audit since the last audit was completed in 2018. Not having an updated audit, was one of the reasons why our Accountant has resigned. Fin Com member Hickling asked TA Walker how often other towns have audits. She mentioned every one to two years.

TA Walker and Treasurer Wendling will contact Berkshire Retirement on the substantial increase. They feel this is an error.

The next scheduled Finance Committee meeting will be March 4, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. This will not be a joint meeting. The next joint meeting with the BOS will be on March 18th.

Chairman Cullett motion to adjourn at 7:50 p.m. Fin Com member Haskins second, 4-0. Fin Com meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Item 12: Discussion on Accounting Department: Placed on hold. TA Walker will revise the job description she presented to the BOS.

Item 13: Set date and time for the Annual Town Meeting: Selectman Leach motion to set the date and time for the ATM as June 6, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. Selectman Munch second, 3-0.

Item 14: Set date and time for Petition Deadline for the Annual Town Meeting Warrant: Selectman Leach motion to set the date as April 6, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. as the deadline for petitions, Selectman Munch second, 3-0.

Item 15: Review and Approve accounts payable, Treasury Warrants, Payroll Warrants: V16-2026

Item 16: Public Input: Bruce Cullett asked the BOS if they had made any progress on choosing a website. BOS will place on next agenda.

Item 17: Adjourn: Selectman Leach made a motion to adjourn 2/17/2026 BOS Meeting, Selectman Haupt second, vote 3-0. The 2/17/2026 BOS Meeting adjourned at 8:16 P.M.

Articles used:

- 2/2/2026 minutes
- Accountant job descriptions
- FY27 Spreadsheet

Terry Walker
Recording Secretary

Verne Leach, BOS Chairman _____

Samuel Haupt, Selectman _____


Edward Munch, Selectman _____

Date Approved: _____

Bruce Cullett, Chairman Finance Committee  _____

Paul Hickling, Fin Com  _____

Doug Haskins, Fin Com _____

Brandon Mascolo, Fin Com  _____

Samuel Haupt, Fin Com _____

Date Approved: 3/4/2026