

TOWN HALL 3 EAST MAIN ROAD PERU, MA 01235

SELECT BOARD / FINANCE COMMITTEE JOINT MEETING MINUTES:

Monday, March 16, 2026 @ 6:00 P.M.

Town Hall Meeting Room

Verne Leach, Chair Selectman
Samuel Haupt, Selectman/Fin Com
Edward Munch, Selectman
Terry Walker, Recording Secretary
Justin Russell, Highway Superintendent
Bruce Cullett, Police Chief/Finance Committee Chairman
Brandon Mascolo, Finance Committee
Paul Hickling, Finance Committee
Jonathon Mejias, Assessor
Valerie Bird, Board of Health

Public Attendees: N/A

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 3/2/2026: Selectman Leach motion to approve minutes as written, Selectman Haupt second, 3-0, & Selectboard/Finance Committee joint meeting minutes 2/17/2026. TA Walker mentioned that the 2/17/2026 minutes were approved.

Item 6: Update from Departments:

Emergency Management Director:

EMD Cullett informed BOS that he would be attending the next quarterly EMD Meeting at MEMA and would be provided with more information about the EMPG grant. Cullett indicated that the EMPG guidelines were going to be more restrictive this year.

Highway Department:

Highway Superintendent Russell presented the BOS with a Memorandum of Understanding from CMR, Inc and the Town of Peru. CMRK Inc will be responsible for:

- Placing clothing donation bins on agreed upon locations
- Servicing bins on a regular scheduled basis will increase the frequency of pickups as needed
- Responding within one business day for any instance of dumping
- Paying \$250 per year, collected from bins placed on agreed-upon locations

- Sending annual checks from clothing donation bins
- Sending quarterly tonnage reports
- Annual report of collections from to the Town of Peru
- Providing monthly marketing materials that showcases our partnership

Selectman Haupt motion to ago with CRMK, Selectman Leach second, 3-0.

Justin will begin getting quotes for the paving project on South Road and Hickingbotham Road. Chapter 90 funds will be used for the paving project.

Justin mentioned that Tim Davis will be returning to work when he obtains a doctor’s note without any restrictions. The Board agreed that next week the three highway employees should take the recertification for their hoisting license.

Assessors:

Jonathon Mejias, Lead Assessor, mentioned that the assessors have been answering taxpayers’ questions, and scheduling visits for abatements. Assessor Mascolo has contacted Linda Bradley from DLS and he will be completing the 101 course. ATB Hearings are going well, and the assessors have drafted a letter for the BOS to review. Once BOS accepts the Assessor’s letter regarding reassigning house numbers the letter will be included in the tax bills.

Town Administrator:

TA Walker mentioned that the balance in Green Communities grant needs to be utilized by September 2026. A narrative with goals and energy reduction needs to be submitted and approved. The total grant was \$128,820 and the remaining balance to be used by September 2026 is \$17,020.

Vocational Transportation bid opening will be at the BOS meeting on March 30, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

TA Walker contacted 3 auditing firms to complete an audit of the town’s finances. Eric Kinsherf’s Accounting firm recommended an audit since the last audit was in 2017.

Roselli, Clark and Associates	\$22,000
Abelson & Company	no response
Tom Scanlon and Associates	no response

TA Walker mentioned that the Systems Award Management, SAM # has been certified for another year. This is a mandatory requirement when receiving federal and state grants.

Trash issue: TA Walker brought contractor bags from home and doubled bagged all the trash in the town hall entrance. The bags were torn and trash was all over the floor. Ed Munch agreed to remove the trash from town hall.

Selectman Leach distributed 3 citizens petitions to the Selectman Haupt and Selectman Munch. Selectman Leach stated that the petitions were hand delivered to the Town Clerk by Bonny Tomasso and TA Walker. Selectman Leach mentioned that citizens’ petitions should be delivered to the Selectboard and not the Town Clerk. Selectman Leach mentioned that the BOS will discuss the citizens’ petitions at the next meeting.

Transfer Station Attendant:

Verne Leach mentioned that the Wednesday hours at the Transfer Station will be increased by half an hour.

Item 7: Discussion on MGL C.40 sec. 21 (D), non-criminal citation fee with Valerie Bird:

Valerie Bird, Board of Health Agent, mentioned that the Planning Board is updating the town by laws regarding camping in Peru. If the landowner does not comply with regulations, we do not have any way to enforce it. If MGL C.40 Sec. 21D non-criminal citation is passed, then the fine is enforceable in district court. If MGL C.40 sec. 21D is not passed, the town must go to housing court and utilize town council. Selectman Haupt stated that this needs to be approved at Annual Town Meeting. Chief Cullett mentioned that the unregistered vehicle by law does not have a mechanism to enforce it, therefore, no money has been recouped. The BOS agreed to place MGL C.40 sec. 21D on the Annual Town Meeting warrant for approval by the residents.

Item 8: Discussion and possible vote on "Street Address Letter from the Board of Assessors to Residents:

Police Chief Cullett asked if the Assessors would be assigning numbers to vacant lots and why 11 Curtin Road was changed to 9 Curtin Road. Assessor Mejias mentioned that if numbers are already assigned, they will not change. Chief Cullett mentioned that this is a potential issue when residents have had the same house number for 25 years and this will mean changing their mortgages, bank accounts, etc.

The BOS will go forward with assigning house numbers and accepting the letter presented by the Assessors. Unanimous yes vote by the BOS.

Item 9: 6:30 p.m. Finance Committee Joint Meeting: Finance Committee joined the joint meeting at 7:00 p.m.

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

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

Free Cash is Certification for FY 2026 is \$227,423.

Fin Com Chairman Cullett mentioned that the Unreserved Undesignated Fund Balance is \$775,940 with Real Estate Tax Receivables of \$489,077 - once this is factored in the Free Cash is reduced drastically. It has been a recommendation to place the uncollected RE tax receivables in tax title. Other accounts that were an issue were Green Communities Grant where a journal entry was not made by June 30th.

Fin Com Chairman Cullett emailed the Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief with an invitation to the Fin Com meeting regarding submission of the Fire Department budget. The Budget requests were due in January, and several have not been received. Fin Com member Hickling noted the importance of presenting the fire department budget to the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen.

Fin Com Chairman motion to place Town Clerk Budget request was place on hold, Fin com member Haupt second, 4-0. Emergency Management and Police Department:

Fin Com member Hickling motion to approve police and emergency management budgets, Fin Com member Haupt second, 3-0. Bruce Cullett recused himself.

Selectman Leach motion to approve Police and Emergency management budgets excluding wages, Selectman Munch second, 2-0.

Fin Com Chairman Cullett explained to the BOS the Highway budget was reviewed at the last Fin Com meeting. The Highway Budget was level funded except for Maintenance of vehicles, Private Roads account was removed and building maintenance account was added. Salaries were increased by 3%.

FREE CASH WISH LIST:

Highway:

Blower for tractor \$7,209.00

Floor drains \$4,524.82

Plows sandblasted and painted. \$10,609.25

Highway Superintendent requested a \$1,200.00 Reserve Fund Transfer to he could schedule to have the salt shed roof resurfaced. \$26,700 was voted from Free Cash at the June 2025 ATM. This year the cost was increased by \$1,200- due to weather conditions the roof could not be resurfaced last summer. Selectman Leach motion to approve \$1,200 quote for salt shed roof, Selectman Munch 2-0.

Assessors:

Jonathon Mejias, head assessor, is proposing 3% for assessors 2 and 3 and proposing 3 additional hours per week from 12-15 hours per week. This would increase the head assessor’s salary by \$5,000. Fin Com Chairman Cullett asked Jonathon what he would be pulling back from vendors and what will he be absorbing when he is completing Patriots duties. Jonathon stated that his responsibilities need to be increased in preparing for the possible elimination of Patriot’s properties. Fin Com Chairman Cullett mentioned that Jonathon could utilize the other two assessors. Fin com member Haupt felt that all three assessors he should utilize Patriots and salaries will be deliberated at a different meeting.

COA Director will be asked to clarify her budget and the next meeting.

Library Budget **\$23,256** which was level funded. Fin Com Chairman Cullett motion to approve the library budget, Fin Com member Haupt second, 3-0. Fin Com member Mascolo recused himself since he is employed at the library. Selectman Leach motion to approve Library budget of \$23,256 which was level funded, Selectman Munch second, 2-0.

Board of Health Expenses		\$14,000 increased
Public Health Nursing		<u>\$2,402 increased</u>
	Total	\$16,402

Water Testing removed	\$425.00
Hog Weed removed	\$1,500.00
Postage removed	\$100.00 town has postage account
Full Circle removed	\$1,390

Fin Com Chairman Cullett motion to approve Board of Health’s revised budget, Selectman Haupt second, 4-0
Selectman Leach motion to approve Board of Health’s revised budget, Selectman Munch second,2-0

Fin Com Chairman Cullett motion to approve MIIA Renewal of **\$43,553.00** which was a 2.3 % decrease from last year.
Fin Com member Haupt second, 4-0.
Selectman Munch motion to approve MIIA Renewal of \$43,553.00, Selectman Leach second, 2-0.

CRBSD budget placed on hold. Greg Boino and Superintendent will be invited to next joint meeting.

Fin Com member Haupt motion to approve Assessor’s Reserve Fund Transfer for \$400.00 to the Tax Map account, Fin Com Chairman Cullett second, 4-0. The contract for CAI Technonogies was increased after ATM.

Chairman Cullett motion to adjourn at 7:33 p.m. Fin Com member Haupt second, 4-0. Finance Committee meeting was adjourned at 733 p.m.

Item 12: Discussion on description of Accounting Department: Selectman Haupt mentioned that the financial team has a meeting at the end of the month and Eric may not resign as our Accountant. The updated job description needs an annual salary range before it can be advertised. Job description was placed on hold.

Item 13: Discussion and possible vote on “Town Web” Website Company to host Peru’s website: TA Walker mentioned that the contract for Town Web expired on February 28, 2026. She was able to reactivate the contract if she signed the new contract that day. Since the BOS had already voted on accepting Town Web as the town website, TA Walker signed the new proposal. Town Web extended the contract from 4 years to 5 years and kept the annual cost of \$1,500.00 per year. Town Web is ready to begin switching over from CivicPlus .

Item 14: Discussion and possible vote to Re-Appoint Tina Barrington as Board of Registrar: Selectman Munch motion to re-appoint Tina Barrington, Selectman Haupt second, 3-0.

Item 15: Discussion and possible vote to Re-Appointment Sharon Greule as Assistant Board of Registrar: Selectman Haupt motion to re-appoint Sharon Greule, Selectman Leach second, 3-0.

Item 16: Review and Approve accounts payable, Treasury Warrants, Payroll Warrants: V19-2026

Item 17: Public Input: N/A

Item 18: Adjourn: Selectman Leach made a motion to adjourn 3/16/2026 BOS Meeting, Selectman Haupt second, vote 3-0. The 3/16/2026 BOS Meeting adjourned at 7:55 P.M.

Articles used:

- 3/2/2026 minutes
- Warrant V19-2026
- MGL C.40, Sec 21(D)
- Letter from Assessors
- Budget requests
- Town Web contract
- Re-appointment letters for Tina Barrington and Sharon Greule
- FY27 Spreadsheet
- Titan Roofing, Inc new quote
- CMRK Inc, MOU
- FREE CASH Certification

Terry Walker
Recording Secretary

Verne Leach, BOS Chairman

Samuel Haupt, Selectman

Edward Munch, Selectman

Date Approved: 4/1

Bruce Cullett, Chairman Finance Committee

Paul Hickling, Fin Com

Doug Haskins, Fin Com

Brandon Mascolo, Fin Com

Samuel Haupt, Fin Com

Date Approved: 4/1/26