



Town of Ridgefield
BOF Approved Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 25, 2026
Final Approved

I. Call to order

Mike Rettger called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 25, 2026 in the Town Hall Large Conference Room. BOF members Mike Rettger, Dave Ulmer, Greg Kabasakalian, Andrew Okrongly, Joe Shapiro present.

Others Present: Rudy Marconi, First Selectperson; BOS members Sean Connelly, Geoffrey Morris, Maureen Kozlark; Dr. Susie Da Silva, Superintendent of Schools; Cory Gillette, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Elizabeth Hannaway, Assistant Superintendent of Special Services; Jill Browne, RPS Director of Finance; Karen Dewing, RPS Director of Personnel; Dr. Wes DeSantis, Director of Educational Technology; Joseph Morits, RPS Director of Facilities (by telephone); Tina Malhotra, BOE Chair; John Paradiso, BOE Vice Chair; Christine More, BOE Secretary; and BOE members Kathryn Graf, Rachel Marino, Robert Martire, Angela Rice, Scott Sigel.

II. Budget Deliberations – BOE Operating and Capital Budgets

Dr. Da Silva, along with Mr. Morits and Dr. DeSantis, presented the details of the proposed RPS Capital Budget. Items of discussion included LED lighting upgrades, visual and performing arts improvements, ventilator/heat pump replacements (part of a longer-term plan of replacing 10 ventilators per year), network technology and security, security surveillance/equipment replacement, school safety/security, and classroom furniture and case goods. Dr. Da Silva, Mr. Morits and Dr. DeSantis responded to questions from BOF members.

Mr. Rettger then turned to the operating budget. He noted that the BOE-adopted budget represented a 4.62% increase and said that based on comments by the members of the Board of Finance, he did not think that any of the BOF members supported a 4.6% budget increase. Thus, it appeared that the usual practice of reviewing detailed item-level questions would not be productive.

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There followed questions by BOF members on various higher-level concerns about the proposed budget changes, including the rate and magnitude of growth, questions about proposed budget additions relative to consideration of changes in existing programs, and the key cost drivers for Special Education, to which Dr. Da Silva and other members of the school district administration responded. Dr. Da Silva also commented on and explained various parts of the proposed budget in detail and the reasons for inclusion of items in the budget.

III. Discussion of BOS non-binding recommendation regarding proposed BOE Operating Budget

Mr. Rettger asked the BOS members present how the BOS arrived at the recommendation of a 3.45% increase in the BOE operating budget. Mr. Marconi stated that the BOS looked at the mill rate and what increase the BOS thought the public would accept. He said that anything above a 4% increase in the mill rate would probably not be supported by the public, and that was the collective opinion of the BOS.

Mr. Marconi explained the assumptions used at the time in some models that Mr. Redmond prepared for the BOS, at Mr. Marconi's request. Mr. Marconi said that the BOS arrived at the 3.45% increase figure to keep the increase in the mill rate below 4%. Ms. Kozlark, Mr. Morris and Mr. Connell added comments regarding their respective decisions to arrive at that recommendation. BOF members commented on some of the considerations as well.

Mr. Rettger then asked Dr. Da Silva and Ms. Browne if they were able to provide an estimate of the expected RPS surplus in the current fiscal year, as had been requested at the regular BOF March meeting, so this information could be incorporated into the BOF's calculations for the coming budget. Dr. Da Silva noted that it is difficult to estimate the budget surplus because one-third of the school year remains and there is much volatility. Ms. Browne stated that her best estimate is a surplus between \$150,000 and \$400,000, while also noting the potential uncertainty of this estimate.

BOE members Ms. Malhotra, Mr. Paradiso, Ms. More and Ms. Rice then offered comments.

Mr. Rettger asked whether the BOE was having any discussion of creating a rollover of some portion of their budget surplus as is permitted by state statute. Ms. Malhotra and Paradiso stated that while the BOE was reviewing its internal policy documentation relative to this issue, there was no active discussion under way regarding use of this capability for the current budget year.

IV. Cancellation of the BOF Meeting Scheduled for March 27, 2027

Motion by Mr. Ulmer, seconded by Mr. Okrongly to cancel the Board of Finance meeting scheduled for March 27, 2026. All in favor.

V. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 9:15 p.m. by Mr. Ulmer, seconded by Mr. Okrongly. All in favor.

Next meeting March 26, 2026.

Respectfully Submitted by
Mia Belanger