

Wednesday, January 21, 2026
Advisory Committee Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
Juliani Room
Town Hall
525 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA

Madison Riley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting was livestreamed on Wellesley Media at www.wellesleymedia.org and broadcast live on local cable channels Comcast 8/Verizon 40.

Those present from Advisory Committee: Madison Riley, Chair; Mark Benjamin, Vice Chair; Jay Prosnitz, Vice Chair; Doug Wilkins, Secretary; Susan Clapham; Rani Elwy; Paul Barnhill, Doug Smith, Mariana Vinacur.

Advisory Committee members participating remotely: Jay Bock, Aaron Williams.

Absent: Phil Jameson, Lucienne Ronco, Penny Rossano, Dan Weinger.

Also present: KC Kato, Town Clerk .

Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

Town Clerk FY27 Budget Request

Town Clerk KC Kato presented the FY27 budget request for the Town Clerk's office and provided an overview of the Town Clerk's office structure, which includes an Assistant Town Clerk, an Elections and Registration Administrator who focuses on election work and census tasks, and a Licensing and Elections Administrator who assists with elections, dog licensing, and vital records work. The office also employs elections and seasonal staff during busy election periods.

The Town Clerk's office serves as a frontline customer service point for Town residents, helping visitors navigate town government. Key responsibilities include:

- Elections and election administration.
- Public records access and management.
- Processing vital records (births, deaths, marriages) dating back to 1881.
- Dog licensing (approximately 3,400 dogs in Wellesley).
- Conflict of interest compliance tracking.
- Town Meeting support.

The Town Clerk's office relies on other departments for help during elections and includes coordination with DPW for ballot deliveries; FMD for setup; and Police for security. There is also extensive community engagement needed to recruit election workers and candidates for Town positions.

Since 2020 there have been significant changes to election administration, particularly with the implementation of vote-by-mail, which has become permanent unless the Select Board opts out. This has created additional costs in terms of labor, equipment, and postage, with Wellesley ranking fourth in the state for percentage of voters who voted by mail in the last presidential election.

Regarding the FY27 budget, elections in FY27 will include the state primary in September, the midterm election in November, and the annual Town election in March, resulting in higher costs compared to single-election years. The main drivers of the budget increase are temporary/seasonal help and postage expenses related to mail-in voting.

The Town Clerk's office receives grant funding after elections to offset some costs, but these grants aren't guaranteed and therefore aren't factored into the initial budget request. Elections now cost between \$30,000-\$40,000 each to administer.

Questions/Discussion

- A question was asked about the potential consolidation of polling locations.
 - Although polling locations have been reduced from 8 to 5 locations, further consolidation would yield limited savings due to statutory staffing requirements at each precinct.
- A comment was made about the Saturday voter registration requirements and whether efforts have been made to change this.
 - It was noted that State law requires staying open on Saturdays before State elections for last-minute registrations, despite minimal usage of this service in Wellesley. Efforts have been made to change this but it is unlikely to be changed.
- A question was asked about election integrity.
 - The system of checks and balances that prevents people from voting both by mail and in person was described.
- A question was asked about voter turnout.
 - Wellesley's turnout for local elections, typically around 25%, exceeds that of many neighboring communities, though the most recent Town election saw a drop to 17%.
- A question was asked about Article 6 regarding the Town Clerk salary.
 - It was noted that the HR director has made a recommendation that the Select Board is still considering, based on comparable positions in other communities.

Minutes Approval

Mariana Vinacur made and Susan Clapham seconded a motion to approve the January 14, 2026 minutes.

Roll Call Vote

Paul Barnhill – yes
Mark Benjamin – yes
Jay Bock – yes
Susan Clapham – yes
Rani Elwy – yes
Phil Jameson – absent
Jay Prosnitz – yes
Lucienne Ronco – absent
Penny Rossano – absent
Doug Smith – abstain
Mariana Vinacur – yes
Dan Weinger – absent
Doug Wilkins – yes
Aaron Williams – abstain

Vote: The motion passed 8 to 0 with 2 abstentions.

Liaison Reports

Select Board/Rani Elwy - the Select Board finalized and signed the warrant but was still debating the budget, which would continue into the following week. Discussions on Article 6 (Town Clerk salary) and Article 20 (feasibility study) are ongoing.

Schools/Mariana Vinacur- the School Committee held a budget hearing the previous night with limited public feedback. After the hearing the WPS administrative team introduced a revised budget with the same bottom-line figure but included some small changes, including the reduction of an additional FTE. The revised document had not yet been posted.

Council on Aging/Susan Clapham - interviews for a new director have been completed and the COA voted to offer the position to Holly Lucht, who has extensive municipal experience in Princeton and Shrewsbury. The kitchen at the senior center will have a final inspection at the end of January and currently staff are completing training underway. A ribbon-cutting ceremony for the kitchen is tentatively scheduled for early March.

Administrative

Guidance was provided on the preparation of write-ups for Town Meeting articles. The importance of using the correct Google Sheets template and formatting was emphasized. The executive summary section was reviewed, and it was explained that "Voting yes will" and "Voting no will" statements should be simple and focused on the immediate impact of the vote rather than reasons or explanations.

It was also noted that for financial articles, writers should clearly explain tax impacts as far into the foreseeable future as possible in an effort to provide Town Meeting with more information on long-term financial impacts beyond just the next fiscal year.

The approach Article 8 (appropriations) write-ups was discussed and it was suggested this might require a different approach given the detailed nature of the budget discussions.

It was asked if potential Consent Agenda items should be noted in the write-up. It was felt this determination would come too late in the process to be included in the write-ups.

Adjourn

Mariana Vinacur made and Jay Bock seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call Vote

Paul Barnhill – yes

Mark Benjamin – yes

Jay Bock – yes

Susan Clapham – yes

Rani Elwy – yes

Phil Jameson – absent

Jay Prosnitz – yes

Lucienne Ronco – absent

Penny Rossano – absent

Doug Smith – yes

Mariana Vinacur – yes

Dan Weinger – absent

Doug Wilkins – yes

Aaron Williams – yes

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m. 10 to 0.

Approved January 28, 2026

151 Meeting video [January 21, 2026](#)

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153 **Meeting Documents**

154 • FY27 Town Clerk Budget

155 • 161 Town Clerk FY27 Op Request – submitted – Advisory

156 • Draft 011426 AC Minutes