



## News Coverage

Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts  
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### [Buckland looking at \\$5.9M budget for FY26](#)

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BUCKLAND — Town officials are eyeing an operating budget of just over \$5.9 million for fiscal year 2026, representing a 6.7% increase from this fiscal year's numbers.

The Selectboard is expected to vote on the proposed budget at its next meeting, after Finance Committee members finish their review. The draft budget is a \$368,140 increase from FY25, and includes a 4.6% increase in school assessments and a 9.4% increase in the town's operational budget. The budget covers increases to insurance costs, public services and the town's assessments for shared services for police, senior services and schools.

"We've received all of our assessments from the school districts, from senior services, from the shared police services, and everybody has done a great job of keeping costs as conservative and as on point as possible," Town Administrator Heather Butler told the Selectboard last week.

The general government budget is set at \$689,774, and covers increases for additional hours for the assistant accountant, public building expenses and maintenance costs. Health insurance and retirement increases are expected to cost the town an additional 8.7%, with the majority of the increase (\$25,544) going to health insurance.

The public works budget is set at \$753,970, a 3.3% increase from FY25, and includes increases to town garage expenses and staff salaries. The Highway Department is also seeking voter approval for a few capital projects, including replacing a \$349,200 truck, with \$80,000 expected to be appropriated from free cash; \$75,000 in free cash for paving; and \$36,000 in Chapter 90 funds for the Conway Street Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Buckland's share of police services is expected to be \$441,462, an 18.7% increase.

In speaking with the Selectboard, Police Chief Gregory Bardwell attributed the change to rising costs for electricity, increasing staff salaries to better match what is offered by other departments in the county, and the addition of a part-time administrative assistant for the station.

In addition to its operating budget, the Police Department is seeking voter approval for a few capital purchases, including a new cruiser estimated to cost \$70,000, with Buckland's share of the expense expected to be \$34,000, and replacing a bulletproof vest that expired last year.

"I'm not a scientist, so I have no explanation as to why a bulletproof vest has an expiration date, but it does," Bardwell said. "I'd rather have my officers wearing vests that aren't expired."

According to Buckland's capital budget, town officials expect Buckland's share of the vests to cost \$6,000, to be appropriated out of free cash. For the cruiser, \$4,000 of Buckland's share is expected to be appropriated from free cash and \$30,000 will come from the Police Stabilization Account.

Buckland's share of the senior services budget will be \$101,863, a 37.7% increase. The increased cost covers new expenses associated with creating a [new West County Senior Services District](#). The new district will need to hire an accountant and bookkeeper, as the town of Shelburne will no longer be acting as the district's fiscal agent.

The budget also includes nearly \$3.33 million for the town's education assessment, a 4.6% increase. This figure accounts for just under \$3 million (a \$76,306 increase) to the Mohawk Trail Regional School District, \$30,000 (a \$10,000 decrease) to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School and \$304,752 (an \$80,000 increase) to Franklin County Technical School.

Voters will be asked to approve the budget at Annual Town Meeting, scheduled for Saturday, May 3, at 10 a.m. The full budget can be viewed at [town.buckland.ma.us/home/events/23501](http://town.buckland.ma.us/home/events/23501).

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*Source:* <https://www.recorder.com/Buckland-looking-at-5-9M-budget-for-FY26-60263238>