



FINANCE WARRANT & COMMISSION - ONBOARDING

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Finance Warrant and Commission Members 2023-2024

GEORGE HERTZ - Term 2024 - **CHAIR**

CHRISTOPHER POREDA – Term 2026 - **VICE CHAIR**

WILLIAM BRUCE - Term 2025

JOHN CAREY - Term 2025

JAMES FERRARO - Term 2024

LAUREN FITZPATRICK – Term 2024

MICHAEL GAY - Term 2026

SETH FREDERICKSON - Term 2026

ANGEILA HUGHES - Term 2026

CAITLYN JURCZAK - Term 2025

GEORGE LAHAM - Term 2026

GEORGE MAROUN - Term 2025

KRISTINA PATYJEWICZ - Term 2024

SEAN WELLER - Term 2025

ALEXANDER YALE – Term 2024

**Members are appointed by the Town Moderator for a 3 year term; represent the demographic composition of the Town; may not hold any other elective/appointive town position during the member's term of office.

Background

1. Function of Finance and Warrant Commission (“FWC”) in Westwood’s Town Government

The Town of Westwood uses a “select board - open town meeting - town administrator” form of town government. In that form of government, the Town Meeting serves as the legislative body for the Town. The Westwood Charter provides that at least once per year (the first Monday in May and again, if necessary, the second Monday in November) all registered voters gather together and, as a group, take action on those items of business that are put before the Town Meeting. Collectively those items before Town Meeting are referred to as the Town Meeting “warrant.”

The FWC serves an integral function in putting items before Town Meeting for action. Each individual item is referred to as an “article” on the warrant. One of the main items of business for Town Meeting is to approve an operating budget for the upcoming “fiscal year.” Fiscal Years may not coincide with “calendar years” and are conventionally referred to using the calendar year in which the fiscal year ends – for example, “FY 25” means the fiscal year ending in calendar year 2025. Westwood’s fiscal year runs from July 1 of a calendar year through the following June 30 of the next calendar year – thus, FY 25 runs from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. Town Meeting must also address the use of Town funds for “capital projects” (purchases, repairs, improvements, etc., not part of the normal operating expenses), Town borrowing for major projects, proposals to buy or sell land owned by the Town, and changes to the Town By-Laws, most often Zoning By-Law changes proposed by the Planning Board. Town Meeting might also take up requests for action based on a petition from a resident or some other policy issue on which the Select Board might want input (such as open space planning, etc.) This list is not exhaustive so there may be other types of articles the FWC might review.

The Town Charter requires that the FWC consider all articles on the warrant before Town Meeting and provide a recommendation to the registered voters as to whether to approve that article or to “indefinitely postpone” that article from further consideration. The FWC holds public meetings throughout the year as it develops recommendations to Town Meeting. The Select Board, School Committee, Planning Board, along with other town officials are invited to attend FWC meetings and hearings.

Each year, the FWC establishes a set of subcommittees to do an in depth review of specific budgets and warrant articles. In the past year, the FWC organized the following five subcommittees: Education, Public Safety (covering Police, Fire, DPW), Community and Economic Development (covering Planning Board and all building and land use related departments), Municipal Administration (covering all non-land use related departments), and Capital & Long Range Planning (covering a deeper analysis on the operating budgets of the Town departments and the proposed capital projects). These subcommittees meet with their respective Town/School officials and present their reports in front of FWC during the mid-March meeting. Written subcommittee reports are included in the FWC annual report book for town residents to review.

The FWC does not have any authority to change the wording on any particular article or to recommend against any particular line item contained in a list of funding projects, either in the operating budget article or in capital articles. A recommendation to approve an article means that the FWC recommends that Town Meeting authorize the spending or action described in the

entire article. A recommendation to indefinitely postpone an article means that the FWC recommends that Town Meeting not discuss that article until a later date, usually the next year. At the last FWC meeting and public hearing before the Town Meeting (typically in last weeks of March), the FWC will vote on each of the articles in the proposed Town Meeting Warrant and those votes, along with a brief explanation of the FWC's discussion, will be reflected in the printed materials made available to each Town resident at least a week prior to Town Meeting.

At Town Meeting, the FWC's recommendation on each article becomes the motion on the floor. The Town Moderator will entertain discussion on the FWC's recommendation and will subsequently call for a vote on that motion. If the FWC recommends approval of the article, and Town Meeting votes in favor of that recommendation, then the Town is authorized to spend that money or take that action. If the FWC recommends indefinite postponement of the article, then Town Meeting either votes in favor of that recommendation and discussion of the article ends, or votes against that recommendation in which case the Town Moderator will invite a motion from the floor of Town Meeting to approve the article. Unlike during FWC discussions on an article, however, at Town Meeting changes can be made to the language of an article, subject to Town Counsel review.

Therefore, the FWC's main objective each year is to provide input to the Town Meeting through its annual report that contains the FWC's written recommendation of each article and a brief description of the FWC's discussion of that article and basis for its recommendation. Since the report must be available in advance of Town Meeting that means February through March are typically the busiest months for the FWC.

2. State requirements

Two State laws apply directly to the work of the FWC and to each of its members. The State Ethics Law applies to each FWC member because the law defines volunteer members of Town Commissions and Boards to be Town "employees" for purposes of the law. The Town Clerk will send to each new member a link to an on-line training course that describes the Ethics Law and how it applies. You will be required to complete that on-line course within 30 days of your appointment as an FWC member. Upon completion of that course, a course completion certificate is available to you to print (highly recommended), and also automatically forwarded to the Town Clerk.

If you have any questions about the content of the course or the application of the Ethics Law, in addition to the contacts provided in the course itself, you can contact Town Counsel, the Town Moderator (your appointing authority), or the FWC Chairperson.

The other State law that applies directly to the work of the FWC is the Open Meeting Law. Each fall, the Town Clerk will provide an overview of the Open Meeting Law to the FWC and explain its practical implications. You are encouraged to ask questions during this presentation and periodically review the materials the Town Clerk will provide. Again, if you have any questions, Town Counsel or the FWC Chairperson are available as additional contacts for information and guidance.

3. Chairperson's requests

Apart from the requirements of State law and the Town Charter, the FWC Chairperson may ask you, as a member of the FWC, to adhere to some additional, common sense, rules of conduct while serving. As explained above, since the FWC's role is to make recommendations on each warrant article for Town Meeting, and since any resident can petition the Select Board to put an article on the Warrant, it makes sense that as a member of the FWC you refrain from yourself sponsoring an article. To do so blurs the distinction between your role as article sponsor and FWC member in FWC discussions. As a FWC member we owe the public to review each article fairly and impartially without regard to our personal view of whether Town Meeting should adopt that article. As a sponsor of an article, it is difficult to imagine that you would be totally impartial. And, since each petition article needs a number of supporters to meet the requirements of the Town By-Laws in order to be placed on the warrant, it is unnecessary for an FWC member to take on the role of a petitioner when another supporter could easily serve in that capacity.

Also, in keeping with the Open Meeting law's requirements, we must be mindful that we do not use "reply all" when answering any of the emails that the FWC Administrator might send out. Many reminders and other communications by email are sent to all FWC members. If a member replies to all other addressees on the email, then the FWC itself might run afoul of the Open Meeting Law's requirement to give public notice to all discussions and meetings among more than a quorum of members (in Westwood, the FWC quorum is 7 members). Therefore, it is a "best practice" to turn off the "reply all" function when responding to any FWC email and make sure you address the email to just the person you intend.

In addition, as a member of the FWC you will be exposed to aspects of the Town budget and Town operations that you might not have previously had any exposure. Naturally, you will have questions. And, some of your neighbors might have questions. Yes, you should have those questions answered. But, before you bring up something in an open FWC meeting (which are all recorded and available for watching by anyone at any time), you might first consider asking the FWC Administrator to reach out to the appropriate division within Town Government for the answer. The FWC should not be in a position to surprise a Town employee or Elected official with a question that could have been either answered previously or at least posed previously so that the employee or official can have a chance to prepare an answer.

Lastly, since the role of the FWC is to provide input to Town Meeting, and since the Town Moderator strives to provide a balance of views and backgrounds among the members, please do not hesitate to ask questions, participate in discussions, and have a basis for yourself.

Finance & Warrant Commission Meeting Schedule

September 2023 – May 2024

All IN-PERSON Meetings will begin at 7:00 PM.

All ZOOM Meetings will begin at 7:00 PM

Note: Dates are subject to change depending if the Select Board decides to have a Special/Fall Town Meeting

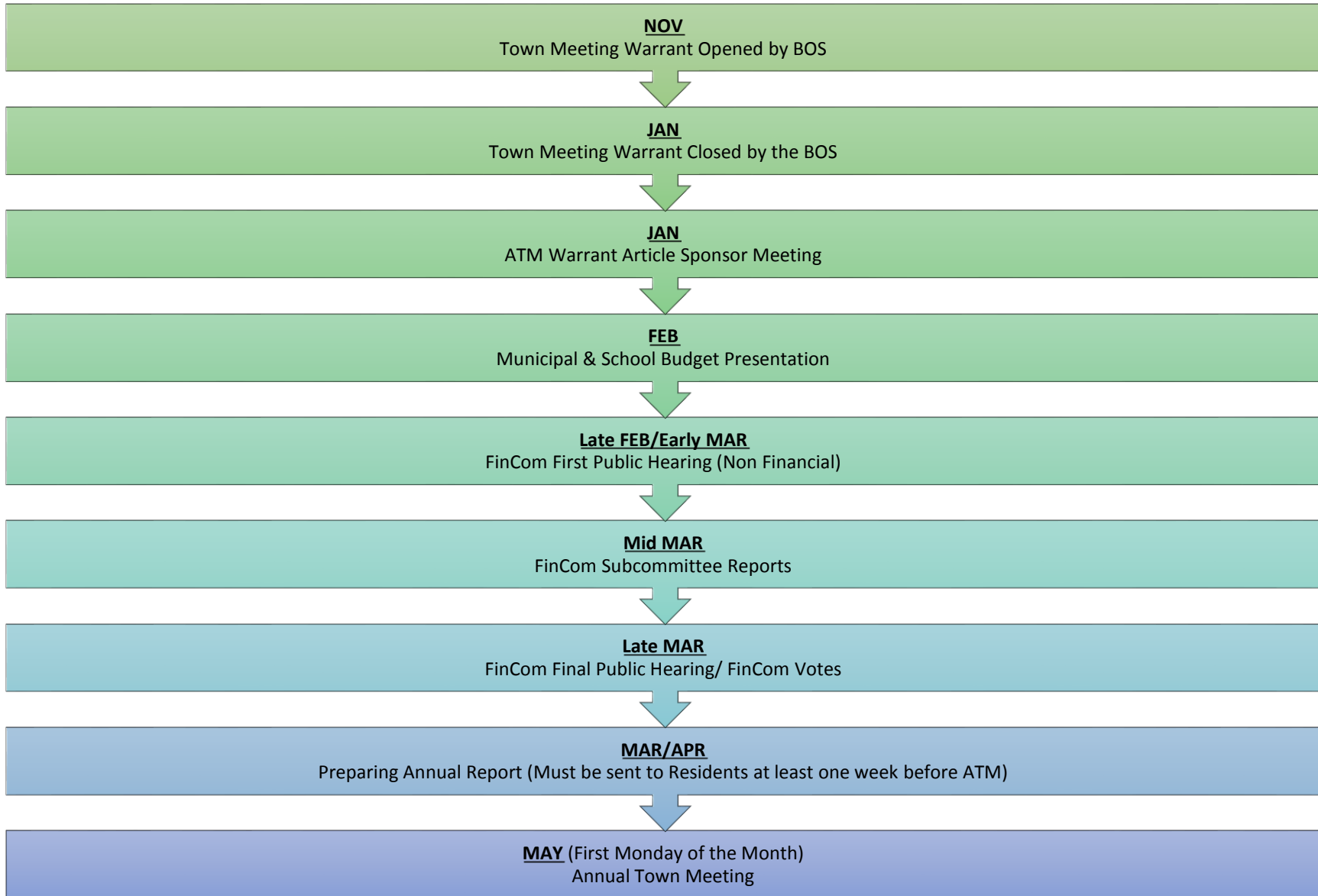
2023 Dates:	Location:	Topic and/or Presenters:
September 6 (Wednesday)	IN-PERSON Main Library - Community Mtg. Room	*FinCom 2023-24 Kick-off Meeting (Possibly attending: Town Clerk)
October 10 (Tuesday)	Main Library - Community Mtg. Room OR Zoom Webinar	FinCom October Meeting (Possibly attending: Select Board/Staff and Westwood Public Schools/Staff)
November 15 (Wednesday)	Main Library - Community Mtg. Room OR Zoom Webinar	FinCom November Meeting (Possibly attending: Planning Board & C&ED, Town Planner, Long Range Financial Planning Committee)
December 6 (Wednesday)	Main Library - Community Mtg. Room OR Zoom Webinar	FinCom December Meeting (Discussion of 2024 Sub-Committee Process & Assignments)
2024 Dates:	Location:	Topics and/or Presenters:
January 16 (Tuesday)	Main Library - Community Mtg. Room OR Zoom Webinar	ATM 2024 Warrant Article Sponsors - Initial Review
January 17 (Wednesday)		(IF NEEDED ONLY)
January 30 (Tuesday)	Main Library - Community Mtg. Room OR Zoom Webinar	ATM Warrant Article Sponsors – Review Continues
January 31 (Wednesday)		(IF NEEDED ONLY)

February 12 (Monday)	Main Library - Community Mtg. Room OR Zoom Webinar	Municipal, Overall Budget & School Budget Presentations
February 13 (Tuesday)		(IF NEEDED ONLY)
February 27 (Tuesday)	Main Library - Community Mtg. Room OR Zoom Webinar	First Public Hearing – 2024 ATM
February 28 (Wednesday)		Public Hearing – (CONTINUED IF NEEDED)
March 12 (Tuesday)	Main Library - Community Mtg. Room OR Zoom Webinar	FinCom Subcommittee Reports
March 13 (Wednesday)		<i>SNOW DAY</i>
March 26 (Tuesday)	Main Library - Community Mtg. Room OR Zoom Webinar	Final Public Hearing – 2024 ATM
March 27 (Wednesday)		Final Public Hearing – (CONT. IF NEEDED)
May 6 (Monday)	Westwood High School	2024 Annual Town Meeting

***These meetings LOCATIONS are subject to change depending on current CDC, State and Local RECOMMENDATIONS.**

TOWN MEETING PROCESS

Timeline: From Opening The Town Meeting Warrant to the Annual Spring Town Meeting



ARTICLE I
Finance and Warrant Commission¹
[Adopted as Art. 7 of the General Bylaws]

§ 30-1. Membership and composition. [Amended 1994 ATM by Art. 14; 5-6-2013 ATM by Art. 18]

There shall be a Finance and Warrant Commission of 15 voters, appointed subject to the provisions of the Town Charter. Five members shall be appointed annually, following the business session of the Annual Town Meeting, and shall serve three-year terms and until their successors have been appointed. The position of a member of the Finance and Warrant Commission shall be vacated whenever a member is certified by the Registrars of Voters as a candidate for elected office in the Town.

§ 30-2. Organization. [Amended 11-19-1979 STM by Art. 2]

The first meeting of the Finance and Warrant Commission, after the Annual Town Meeting and after the annual appointment of new members, shall be called by the Finance and Warrant Commission Secretary within 45 days of the final adjournment of the business session of the Annual Town Meeting. At this meeting the Commission shall organize by the choice of a Chairperson and Secretary. The Finance and Warrant Commission may employ a Secretary, not a member of the Commission.

§ 30-3. Quorum.

Seven members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum.

§ 30-4. Attendance.

If any member is absent from five consecutive meetings of said Commission without reason acceptable to the Moderator, the Chairperson of the Commission shall give notice thereof to the Town Clerk, and upon the giving of such notice the position shall become vacant and the Moderator shall fill said vacancy to complete the unexpired term.

§ 30-5. Vacancies.

Whenever a vacancy occurs in the appointed membership of the Commission, notice thereof shall be given in accordance with Chapter 80, § 80-16 of these bylaws. The Moderator shall fill the vacancy as soon as practicable after having been notified by the Town Clerk.

§ 30-6. Duties. [Amended 5-6-2013 ATM by Art. 18]

It shall be the duty of the Finance and Warrant Commission to study the financial and other affairs of the Town and to advise with all officers of the Town as to expenditures and recommendations for appropriations to be made by them. All officers of the Town shall on request of the Commission furnish it with all facts, figures, and all other information pertaining to their several departments. Transfers from any sum appropriated by the Town as a reserve fund shall be made by this Commission as authorized by law.

§ 30-7. Town Meeting warrants. [Amended 5-6-2013 ATM by Art. 18]

The Finance and Warrant Commission shall consider all articles in the warrants for every Town Meeting

1. Editor's Note: Article 18, adopted at the 5-6-2013 Annual Town Meeting, changed the name of this commission from the Finance Commission to the Finance and Warrant Commission.

§ 30-7
and shall report in writing before each Town Meeting in a manner provided by bylaw, its advice, estimates, and recommendations for consideration by the Town Meeting, in accordance with the provision of the Town Charter. § 30-10

§ 30-8. Public meetings.

The Commission shall hold a public meeting with respect to the warrant at least 14 days prior to any Town Meeting and conduct one or more such meetings on the proposed annual budget in accordance with provisions of the Town Charter.

§ 30-9. Voting record. [Amended 5-6-2013 ATM by Art. 18]

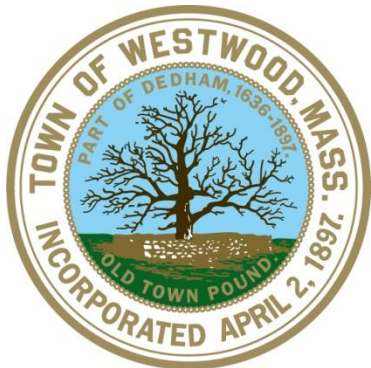
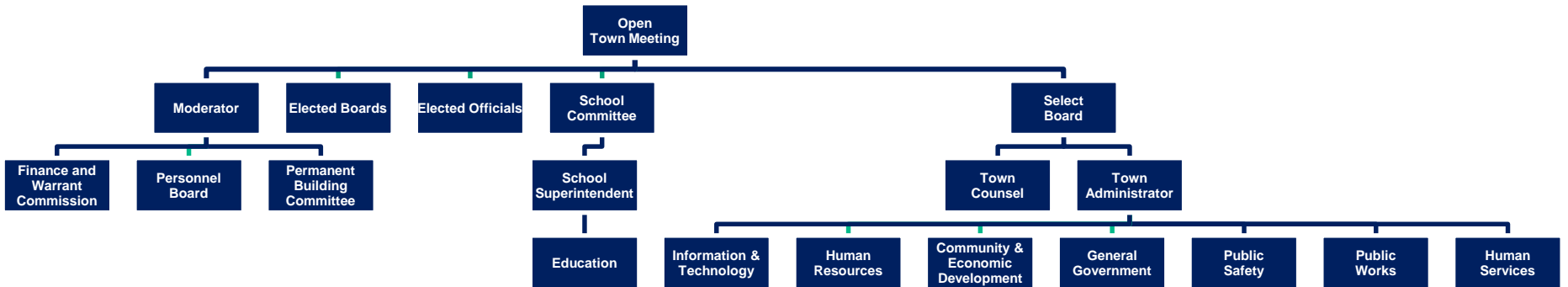
The recommendation of the Finance and Warrant Commission with reference to the various articles of the Town warrants shall include a poll of the votes taken at the meetings of the Finance and Warrant Commission, said poll to show only the number of Commission members voting in favor or against the actions recommended by the Commission.

§ 30-10. Delivery deadline for annual report of Finance and Warrant Commission. [Amended 5-6-2013 ATM by Art. 18]

The Finance and Warrant Commission shall cause to be distributed, no later than seven days before the business session of the Annual Town Meeting, a copy of its annual report to the listed residence of each voter of the Town.

Said annual report shall be published on the Town's website and copies made available at the Town Clerk's office; provided, however, that while it is the intent of this bylaw that every effort shall be made to distribute and post the report as set forth herein, failure to do so shall not invalidate the actions of the Annual Town Meeting.

The Town of Westwood



Elected Boards

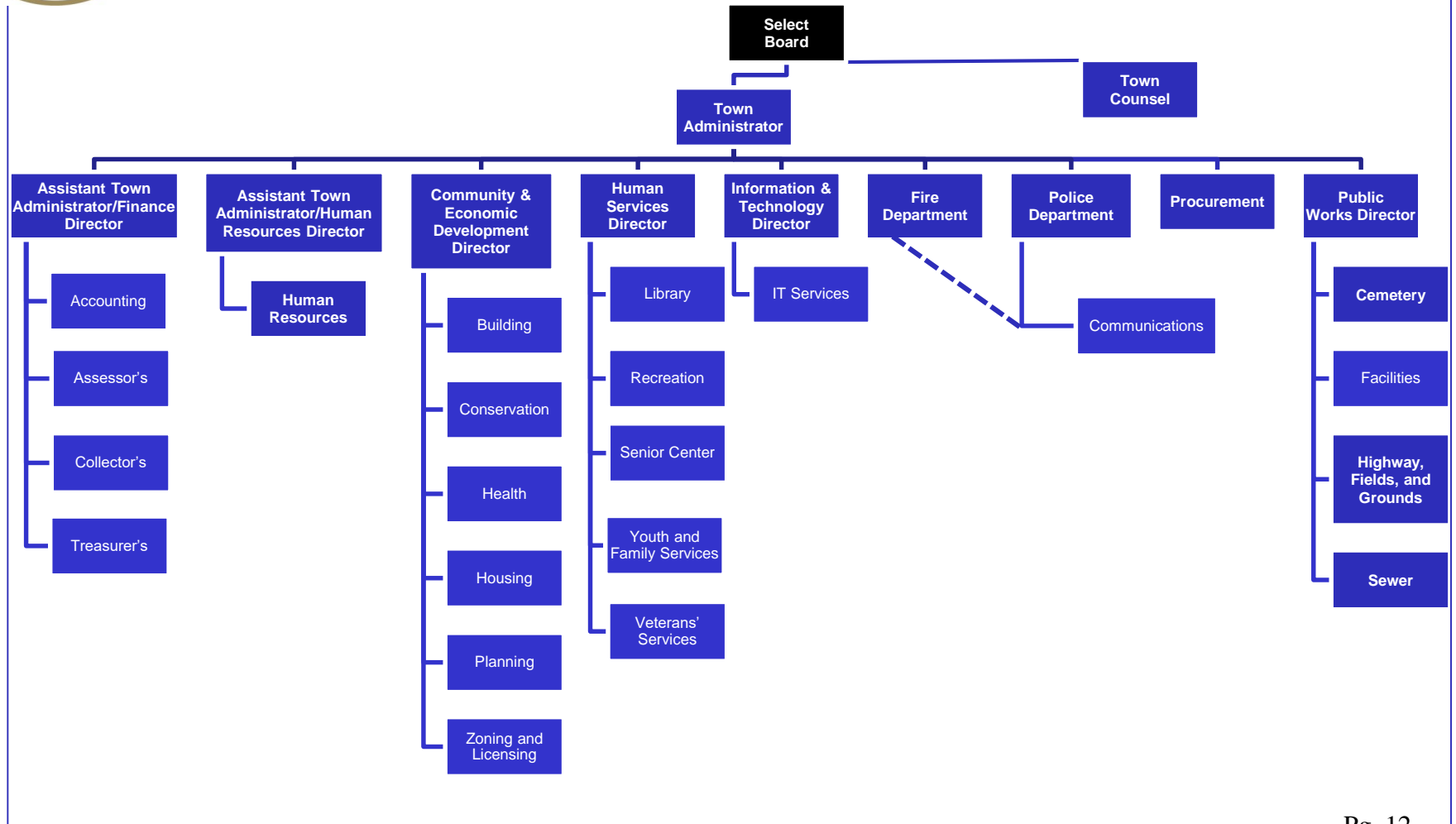
- Select Board
- Regional Vocational School Representative
- Housing Authority
- Library Trustees
- Planning Board
- Board of Assessors
- Sewer Commissioners
- School Committee

Elected Officials

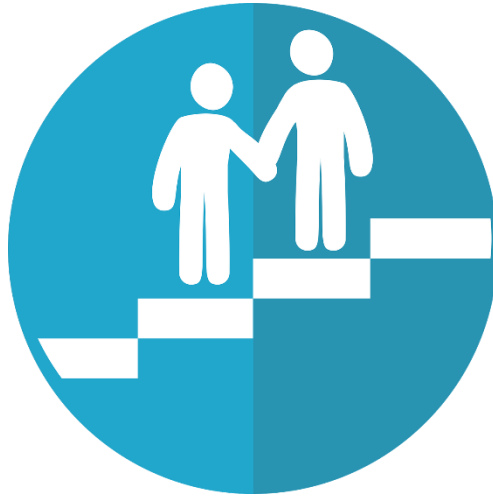
- Moderator
- Town Clerk
- Town Collector
- Town Treasurer



The Town of Westwood



Learning About The Town & FWC



Mentorship Program:

The Chairperson organizes a mentorship volunteer program for the Commission. Members may volunteer or be assigned by the Chair to mentor new members of FWC. The goal of this program is to guide new members in getting acquainted with the roles of the FWC. As the mentor, they may help educate the new member based on their past experiences, boost their engagement in meetings and discussions and also help to build connections with the Town & School officials.

Ways to Gain Awareness of Town Business (Outside of Scheduled FWC Meetings):

- Attending Other Board/School Committee Meetings
 - Select Board
 - Planning Board
 - School Committee
 - Long Range Financial Planning Committee

Please note: If a member can't watch any of these meetings real time (via TV/Online) or attend the in-person/Zoom meeting, they may view it on [Westwood Media Center \(WMC\)](#).

- Participating in Subcommittee Meetings
 - Municipal Administration
 - Public Safety (Police, Fire, DPW)
 - Capital Long Range Planning
 - Education
 - Community & Economic Development