

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Jessica Bourque 271-2104

HB 1137, relative to municipal budget committee membership.

Hearing Date: March 24, 2026

Time Opened: 10:36 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:51 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gray, Lang, Perkins Kwoka and Long

Members of the Committee Absent: Senator Rochefort

Bill Analysis: This bill changes the municipal budget committee's appointed members from the governing body, school board, and village district to be members serving in an ex-officio, non-voting capacity.

Sponsors:

Rep. Pauer

Rep. Alexander Jr.

Rep. Aylward

Rep. Cambrils

Rep. Girard

Rep. Granger

Rep. Rung

Rep. See

Rep. Spilsbury

Rep. Bryer

Sen. Murphy

Sen. Watters

Who supports the bill: Rep. Diane Pauer, Eric Pauer, Julie Smith, Pierre DuPont, Brad Louth

Who opposes the bill: Brodie Deshaies, Shawn Jasper, Cory Stone, Janet Robertson, B Widger, Linda Burnap, Amy Erickson, Deborah Fexis, Debra Merrick, Abigail Mather, Richard DeMark, Priscilla Dube, Susan Fanburg, Cassandra Curtis, James Michaud, Lois Cote, Rebecca Wilson, Ruth O'Neal, Katherine Pawley, Melanie Levesque, Darlene Mann, Tom Gehan, Peter Torosian

Summary of testimony presented:

Rep. Diane Pauer, Hillsborough-District 36, Prime Sponsor

- This bill is about clarity regarding municipal budget committee membership.
- Currently, members of governing bodies and village districts are appointed to the budget committee as voting members. This change designates that position to ex-officio, non-voting members while maintaining their participation and ability to discuss matters.
- These members should not vote a second time on the same budget.

- Extends the same consistent framework that is already in law to municipal budget committees.
- This does not remove anyone from the table, only the vote, not the voice.
- This bill explicitly defines the role as non-voting.
- Promotes consistency, transparency, and confidence in the budget process.

Shawn Jasper

- Here representing himself.
- Opposed to this bill.
- The current statute has been in law since 1939 and has operated well.
- He has served in both roles. Currently, he is in his 13th year on the budget committee, and previously, he served 17 years as a selectman. He is also a third-generation member of the budget committee.
- He is a member of several committees, serving both as an ex-officio participant and as a voting member.
- There isn't a lot of incentive for him to participate on committees where he doesn't have a vote, and he believes the same is true here.
- Changing this from a voting member to a non-voting member could affect quorums.
- This only passed the House by about 30 votes.

Senator Lang stated that the role of a selectboard member would be to defend the selectman's budget, so there is a reason for them to show up.

Mr. Jasper said there is something to be said for the idea that a very good reason is needed to change something that has been around for 90 years.

Senator Lang said that what he meant was you could be counting the same person twice.

Mr. Jasper said that although he has been frustrated at times, he sees great value in keeping it as it is.

Eric Pauer, Brookline

- In favor of this bill.
- This bill would have these ex-officio members be non-voting. They continue to have their voice throughout the whole process.
- Currently, we have a problem with the one-man-one-vote principle.
- It remains a challenge for cooperative school districts.
- This doesn't eliminate the voice, just the vote.

Brodie Deshaies, NH Municipal Association

- NHMA opposes HB 1137.

- These members are expected to attend, so why wouldn't they be allowed to participate?
- Cooperative school districts are different because they are made up of many towns.

Senator Lang asked if NHMA would be okay with adding an amendment to this bill stating that, in the case of ties, it would be acceptable for the ex-officio member to vote to break ties or to meet a quorum.

Mr. Deshaies said that is getting into the minutiae of how municipalities are governing themselves, and it could depend on the bylaws of different boards.