

TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2024

The council met in a workshop session on Monday, March 18, 2024, and called to order at 6:30 p.m. This meeting was held in person at the Town Council Chambers.

PRESENT: Council Chairman, Nathan Calouro
Vice-Chairwoman, Mary Parella,
Councilman, Antonio "Tony" Teixeira
Councilman, Timothy Sweeney
Councilman, Aaron Ley

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator, Steven Contente
Town Treasurer, Sara Hassell

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR OVERVIEW

General Budget Discussion

Steven Contente, Town Administrator

Town Administrator Contente provided an overview of his budget recommendations, noting that he reviewed every budget line with the departments and considered it to be a solid budget. He highlighted the issues concerning increased costs and the necessity to raise wages to remain a competitive employer. He discussed the robust capital budget, focusing on operating and facility upgrades.

Town Administrator Contente mentioned a reduction in workers' compensation costs attributed to truck automation and noted an increase in the senior exemptions budget due to an anticipated \$94,000 increase for the additional \$50 senior exemption. He also discussed the town's strong AA+ bond rating and a surplus of \$850,360.

Administrator Contente stated that his recommended budget anticipates an increase in the tax rate by \$0.47 per thousand, from \$13.36 to \$13.83, a 3.52% increase. The Bristol Warren Regional School District (BWRSD) requested an increase of \$704,000, totaling a 2.41% increase.

It was noted that the current sewer use fee listed in his initial recommendation letter should be corrected from \$605.79 to \$508. A revised recommendation was provided as a "received at meeting document". Discussions ensued regarding stormwater overflow and the ongoing requirements for infrastructure upgrades. Town Administrator Contente further expressed his

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gratitude for the involvement and cooperation of all department heads and thanked the Treasurer's Department for their hard work.

Town Administrator Contente stated that he was confident it was a fair budget for taxpayers, the council, and the town. He described it as reasonable and rational.

Town Treasure Hassell provided an overview of the new accounting software used for the budget and its benefits.

701-POLICE DEPARTMENT

Kevin Lynch, Chief of Police

Police Chief Lynch provided an overview of the police department's budget.

Chief Lynch provided an organizational chart proposed for 2025- this was a "received at meeting" document.

Chief Lynch provided an overview of his proposed organizational chart. He explained that this would be the largest change in the department. The plan is projected to have a net zero impact for FY 2025. It aims to increase management rights, control overtime, provide additional and/or appropriate supervision on each shift, and create more opportunities for growth. He noted that this model has been successfully implemented in other local municipalities. It was noted that overtime and special events overtime were categorized separately, with special event overtime listed under detailed wage. This categorization was not part of the organizational changes and would remain separate.

He explained that he removed a new vehicle from his operating budget to fund the first year of this plan. The goal would be to have the revenue generated from vehicle rentals to offset that cost.

Chief Lynch provided an overview of the department's annual report highlighting the positive effects of recently adopted traffic control devices and maintaining the safest community and college town. He highlighted receiving National accreditation, State accreditation, and National recognition for the school resource officer. He discussed challenges with police recruiting and retention, noting that many officers are reaching their 25-30-year mark, and recent retirements.

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Discussions ensued regarding recruitment.

Chief Lynch discussed police programs and community events.

Chief Lynch provides an overview of the department's operating budget noting the removal of rental fee costs, vehicle maintenance, upgrades to software systems, and control of overtime.

The council recognized many of the proud accomplishments of the Bristol Police Department.

Discussions ensued regarding the state pension plans and penalties that apply, noting that proposed changes were being recommended to legislation.

Discussions ensued regarding police training and new approaches.

It was noted that official documentation would need to be presented to the town council for formal approval of the proposed organizational chart changes.

Clarity was provided in line item 42302 noting the decrease in state pension contributions was a reflection of the state requirements for employer contribution.

The electricity increase was due to rate increases and underfunding based on anticipated assessments.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

702-Animal Control

Kevin Lynch, Chief of Police

Chief Lynch provided an overview of the Animal Control budget, noting minimal changes except for salary increases. These increases reflect comparative adjustments within the municipality.

703-HARBOR PATROL

Greg Marsili, Harbormaster

Harbor Master Marsili provided an overview of his proposed budget, highlighting the impact of increased costs and

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maintenance. He recommended changes in the salaries line item, specifically noting the need to increase the part-time Deputy Harbor Master position to full-time. He explained that the addition of the Deputy Harbor Master has significantly helped with the maintenance of boats, trailers, the marina, and facilities. The Deputy's skill set has allowed for more work and repairs to be done in-house, reducing the need to contract outside contractors and saving money. Additionally, he noted that making this a full-time position would cut back on the need for seasonal employees.

It was noted that the department's initial request of \$68,000 reflected the cost to date on seasonal employees and incorporated minimum wages due to increase.

Clarification was requested regarding how increasing the Deputy Harbor Master's position to full-time reflects a cost saving in time and maintenance in the proposed budget.

The Harbor Master explained that part-time salaries were reduced to offset the cost of the Assistant Harbor Master position, allowing more projects to be completed in-house rather than outsourced. However, concerns were raised regarding the increased costs of medical coverage, and the Council expressed difficulty in clearly understanding how the proposed budget demonstrated sufficient cost savings to justify the new position

(*) The Council agreed by consensus to place an asterisk at the Harbor Patrol budget line to enable the Council to review the justifications for the Deputy Harbor Master position. Requesting the Harbor Master to illustrate the cost-effectiveness of hiring a full-time deputy emphasizing the savings in both construction and patrol expense.

601-COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Diane Williamson, Director

Director Williamson provided an overview of department proposed budget, noting that the increase in application fee revenue was attributed to permits related to the Robin Rug redevelopment. She explained that the department is conducting a comprehensive

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review of comparable fee schedules from neighboring communities and will make adjustments to their fees based on the findings.

Municipal Operations Manager, Eric Dickervitz provided the council with an overview of the Tourism/ promotion line items. He explained that there was a \$3000 increase for BMA to assist with defraying costs of local events throughout the year. An additional was \$1000 what was requested for advertising local events.

Discussions took place regarding Explore Bristol and its impact on local tourism and promotions. It was noted that there was a lack of clarity on how the granted funds were being utilized.

(*) The Council agreed by consensus to place an asterisk at the budget line 601-43220 Tourism/Promotion for Explore Bristol to provide the council with an update on the services provided, an overview of the strategic plan for 2024/2025, and provide supporting data on advertisements and events.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

602-Building Inspection **Stephen Greenleaf- Building Official**

Building Official Greenleaf provided an overview of the Building Inspections budget.

It was noted that the Sealer of Weights and Measures is compensated based on the revenue generated. Previously, the Sealer collected funds directly from businesses, but now the town bills the businesses, and the revenue generated offsets the Sealer's salary.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

402 TOWN ADMINISTRATOR **Steven Contente, Town Administrator**

Town Administrator Contente provided an overview of his budget, noting a minimal overall increase. He explained that salaries

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for non-union employees were determined based on personnel evaluations.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

501 FINANCE

Sara Hassell, Town Treasurer

Treasurer Hassell provided the Council with an overview of the proposed budget, highlighting changes in tax software programs and staffing adjustments.

She explained that funds had been set aside for upcoming property revaluations, with a full revaluation scheduled for 2027.

Medical costs across all departments increased by 6.5%, while dental costs saw no increase due to changes in the medical policy. State pension contributions decreased in all departments except for the police and fire departments.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

502 Debt Service

Sara Hassell, Town Treasurer

Treasurer Hassell provided the Council with Debt services highlighting general obligations and interest payments on bonds.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

503 Fixed Charges

Sara Hassell, Town Treasurer

Treasurer Hassell provided an overview of the factors contributing to the increase in insurance costs, citing industry trends and policy changes as key drivers. Questions were raised regarding the \$65,000 increase in general liability insurance and the need for enhanced policies to better protect the town against potential lawsuits. A recent lawsuit in a neighboring

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municipality, which caused unexpected financial strain, was highlighted as an example of the importance of such protections.

(* The Council agreed by consensus to place an asterisk at budget line 5503-45201 to allow the treasurer to research costs associated with an increase in general liability insurance policies to research the costs associated with the increase in general liability insurance and evaluate the financial impact of expanding the town's coverage.

504 Town Hall Complex

Municipal Operations Manager, Eric Dickervitz, provided an overview of the Town Hall Complex budget, which included details on software licenses, technology replacement, and alarm monitoring. He discussed the rising costs of software licenses and emphasized the importance of ongoing updates and subscriptions, particularly for cybersecurity and other essential software. He also inquired about the current alarm monitoring system and suggested exploring more efficient options, such as direct connections to the dispatch center. Additionally, concerns were raised about increasing postage costs and the need for a plan to reduce mailings.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

406 BOARD OF CANVASSERS

Board of Canvassers

Clerk Cordeiro provided an overview of the Board of Canvassers budget highlighting that this was an election year, and they were preparing for the Primary Elections to be held on September 10th and the General election to be held on November 5th. She noted that there was a change in line items to include overtime salaries. She explained that overtime being paid to employees to assist with elections was being separated from election salaries to ensure compliance with payroll reporting and transparency in fund allocations.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

407 MUNICIPAL COURT

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Melissa Cordeiro- Town Clerk

Clerk Cordeiro provided an overview of the municipal court budget noting that there were no substantial changes.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

403 TOWN CLERK

Melissa Cordeiro- Town Clerk

Clerk Cordeiro provided an overview of her proposed budget. She noted for the record that the itemized salary budget sheet incorrectly listed two Deputy Town Clerks. She clarified that there is only one Deputy Town Clerk. She also noted an increase of \$200 in the printing line item to allocate funds for citation and proclamation certificate covers used for presentation ceremonies.

The council asked to explore different methods of signature authorizations for ceremonial documents such as proclamations and citations.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

401 TOWN COUNCIL

The Council reviewed its budget and discussed the proposal to maintain a \$10,000 contingency fund for the Town Council.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

Recap

Chairman Calouro recapped the following question items to be discussed for consideration at a later time (asterisk items)

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There being no further business, upon a motion by Sweeney, seconded by Councilman Teixeira, and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 9:14 PM.

Melissa Cordeiro, Town Clerk