

TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- MONDAY, April 14, 2025

The council met on Wednesday, April 14, 2025, for the purpose of a Public Hearing on the 2025-2026 Town Budget, in the Town Hall, Council Chambers beginning at 7:00 PM, Council Chairman Calouro presiding:

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

ALSO PRESENT: Treasurer, Carl Carulli

ABSENT: Town Administrator, Steven Contente

1. Public Hearing on Budget 2025-2026

Chairman Calouro opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and expressing appreciation for the efforts of the Town Administrator and department heads in preparing the budget. He acknowledged the Administrator's absence due to vacation and extended thanks to the Town Council for their continued dedication throughout the budget process.

Council Chairman Calouro opened the meeting to the public.

Alan Spen, a resident of 133 Ferry Road, raised questions regarding the budgeting process, specifically how the balance sheet and cash flow are factored into budget planning. Chairman Calouro explained that the budgeting approach is holistic, taking into account both current operational needs and long-term capital projects.

Mr. Spen further inquired about how budget shortfalls are addressed. Treasurer Carulli responded that any deficits are typically covered through the Town's unassigned fund balance. In response to Mr. Spen's question about the income statement and available revenues, Treasurer Carulli clarified that the majority of the Town's revenue is derived from the tax base. Councilman Ley asked for clarification on the unassigned fund balance, to which Treasurer Carulli confirmed that the Town aims to maintain this balance at approximately 12% of the overall budget, in accordance with financial policy.

Chairman Calouro reiterated the Council's commitment to fiscal responsibility, noting efforts to reduce borrowing and increase capital investment, including a recent bond issuance for road and drainage infrastructure improvements.

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Councilman Sweeney noted that a substantial portion of the municipal budget is allocated to education.

Sandra Darling, a resident of 7 Fort Hill Road, expressed concerns regarding the recently enacted Homestead Exemption and its potential impact on property taxes.

Treasurer Carulli explained that the anticipated tax rate is expected to be slightly under 9.94 and emphasized that the tax rate is adjusted based on assessed property values. Chairman Calouro further clarified that although property values have increased, the tax rate itself is not projected to rise.

Treasurer Carulli also noted that the Town is still in the process of finalizing the specific homestead exemption rates

Allison Borges, of 142 Bradford Street, addressed the Council to express her concerns regarding public safety funding for the Fourth of July concert series. She introduced herself as the organizer of the fundraiser that raised \$20,000 to support efforts to return the concert series to Independence Park. Ms. Borges referenced a written statement from the Police Chief, published in the *Bristol Phoenix* on January 30, in which he indicated he would seek an additional \$17,000 to \$19,000 in the FY26 budget to address safety needs related to the event. She noted that, based on her review, it was unclear whether that funding request had been formally submitted or discussed. While acknowledging a modest increase in the police department's budget, she expressed concern that without clearly identified funding, the Fourth of July Committee may again face uncertainty next year when deciding on a concert location. She also emphasized that although the fiscal year ends on June 30, the concert series begins earlier, and some necessary signage and equipment for street closures may need to be purchased in advance. Ms. Borges suggested that such equipment would not only support the concert series but could also enhance safety at other large public events such as the State Street Fair and PorchFest.

Vice Chairwoman Mary Parella strongly emphasized that safety concerns surrounding the Fourth of July concert series have never been about money. She stated that the Town Council has never received a formal request for additional funding related to event safety, and any figures mentioned—such as the \$17,000 to \$20,000—did not come through official channels. Vice Chairwoman Parella suggested the number may have originated from media sources, possibly a radio show, and stressed that the Council has always provided the necessary resources to ensure public safety at all events. She recounted past examples, such as increased federal attention following the Boston Marathon bombing, to illustrate the Town's responsiveness to safety

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needs. Parella acknowledged staffing challenges, including reluctance among law enforcement officers to work extended overtime, and noted that the Town coordinates with multiple outside agencies to staff events. She reiterated that while staffing and logistics can be complex, public safety has never been compromised due to budget constraint.

Vice Chairwoman Parella acknowledged that managing large crowds—such as 5,000 to 10,000 people attending a concert—is a serious concern and may have caught some off guard. However, she firmly stated that no discussion has ever taken place suggesting the Town had to cut back or deny funding for safety measures. She stressed that the Council has always supported the needs of the police and fire departments to ensure the safety of residents and visitors, not only for the Fourth of July but for other events like the Christmas Festival.

Chairman Calouro confirmed that no specific budget request was made by the police department for the Fourth of July concert series. He noted that the only adjustment to the department's budget was a decrease of \$9,000 for vehicle maintenance, and that no funds were allocated specifically for concert safety.

Ms. Borges asked if the Council would consider future funding and budget allocations from the police department specifically for safety and security measures related to the Fourth of July concert series. Chairman Calouro confirmed that if the Police Chief were to request an increase in the budget for public safety related to events, the Council would review it in the same manner as any request from any department. He stated that all such requests are considered if they are appropriate and support the overall needs of the community.

Sweeny/Teixeira-Voted unanimously
to close the public hearing

There being no further business, upon a motion by Councilman Sweney, seconded by Councilman Teixeira and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 7:25 pm

Melissa Cordeiro
Council Clerk