

## **TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025**

The council met in a workshop session on Monday, March 17, 2025, and called to order at 6:48 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 (arrives at 6:48)  
Councilman, Aaron Ley

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator, Steven Contente  
Town Treasurer, Carl Carulli

### **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR OVERVIEW**

#### **General Budget Discussion**

#### **Steven Contente, Town Administrator**

Town Administrator Contente provided an overview of the year's budget, highlighting a 3.44% increase in the tax levy and key recommendations for replacing essential equipment for the police and fire departments. He detailed several budget highlights, including a \$506,000 increase in debt service and proposed funding for the recreation department playground, as well as a capital appropriation for road paving. Town Administrator Contente also noted the approval of a low-interest loan for watershed improvements on Varnum and Sherry Avenues and mentioned a potential grant award from the U.S. Forestry Service to assist with the purchase of the Brown University property.

During the discussion, the council inquired about the specific roads to be addressed under the proposed \$2.8 million road repaving loan. In response, Town Administrator Contente listed streets requiring DMCRC permitting and water quality improvements, emphasizing the need for underground detention systems and the importance of securing funds before proceeding with advertising and bidding for these projects. He also discussed a 42.3% increase in real estate and property assessment values, which is expected to result in a decrease in the tax rate by \$3.88 per \$1,000. He also highlighted the school district's recommendation for a 2.66% budget increase and reported a sewer use fee increase from \$614 to \$633. Although the overall budget is mostly level-funded, Contente pointed out notable increases in police salaries and fire department stipends. He also reported a decrease in revenues due to the conclusion of a fixed \$583,069 in OPEB funding, as determined by

## **TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025**

actuaries. This loss in revenue necessitated further cuts and additional borrowing for road repair projects.

Town Administrator Contente further expressed his gratitude for the involvement and cooperation of all department heads and thanked the Treasurer's Department for their hard work.

### **701-POLICE DEPARTMENT**

#### **Kevin Lynch, Chief of Police**

Police Chief Lynch presented the police department's FY26 operating budget, emphasizing the department's continued success and recent re-engineering efforts. He highlighted the addition of ranking positions and the training of new officers, which have strengthened the department and contributed to a reduction in overtime through internal promotions. The budget reflects increases in fixed charges, including retiree medical costs and police salary line items.

Chief Lynch also addressed the need for building maintenance and upgrades at the police station, citing issues such as leaking pipes, an aging HVAC system, and necessary improvements to the firing range. In response to council inquiries about energy efficiency, he noted ongoing discussions with the Office of Energy Resources regarding the installation of an electric vehicle charging station.

A discussion followed on motor vehicle expenses, which have reached 86% of the budget year-to-date. Chief Lynch explained that the department maintains its vehicles for 10-12 years through regular maintenance but noted the rising cost of parts has put added pressure on the budget. Last year, interdepartmental funds were transferred to offset these costs.

(\*)The council requested clarification on the amount of that transfer in the previous year(s) in the motor vehicle line item 701-44310 and questioned whether the proposed budget increase was reasonable.

### **702-Animal Control**

#### **Kevin Lynch, Chief of Police**

Chief Lynch praised the efforts of Heather Simmons, Director of Animal Control, noting the exceptional cleanliness and organization of the facility under her leadership. He highlighted the rising costs of veterinary services due to

## **TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025**

inflation but emphasized that adoption fees have successfully helped offset these expenses. From July 2024 to the present, the department has generated \$22,000 in adoption fees, which may allow for a reduction in the veterinary services budget from \$15,000 to \$10,000.

Additionally, there was a noted increase in medical and dental costs due to a new employee enrolling in a family plan.

(\*)The Council acknowledged that an additional \$5,000 in budget line item 702-43341 could be earmarked for reallocation elsewhere in the budget if needed

### **703-HARBOR PATROL**

#### **Greg Marsili, Harbormaster**

Harbor Master Marsili presented his proposed budget, reporting steady revenues from the marine expansion fuel dock and increased demand for reservations. He highlighted the need for roof repairs at the maritime center and rising electrical costs, primarily due to air conditioning and refrigeration on docked vessels.

He also noted that an additional \$5,000 may be needed for line item 703-45300 (telephone and internet expenses). Town Treasurer Carulli confirmed the need, citing increased costs from Ocean internet services, additional devices, and the unique communication needs of the maritime facility.

The Council discussed the overall rise in telephone and internet expenses. Harbor Master Marsili attributed the increase to higher Ocean service costs, prompting a broader discussion on the possibility of negotiating a more favorable town-wide rate. It was noted that each department currently manages its own communication costs, including internet, landlines, mobile devices, and related services. The transition from Cox to Ocean, funded through ARPA, enhanced network security but may have contributed to budget increases across departments.

Concerns were raised about the fragmented approach to communication costs and the lack of centralized oversight. The Council requested exploration of options such as consolidating communication expenses under a single town-wide budget line, renegotiating rates with Ocean, and identifying essential versus non-essential services. Treasurer Carulli cautioned that centralizing these costs could make it harder for departments to

## **TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025**

track their specific usage, though the conversation emphasized the need for a more strategic and coordinated approach moving forward.

A discussion followed regarding fuel pricing and revenue strategies. Harbor Master Marsili noted that current fuel prices are capped between \$0.75 and \$1.00 profit per gallon—among the lowest in neighboring maritime facilities. He proposed removing the cap in favor of a more flexible pricing structure that allows for daily adjustments based on market conditions to better capture revenue opportunities.

The Council recommended that Harbor Master Marsili collaborate with the Harbor Commission to develop a competitive revised pricing range and present a formal proposal to the Council. The Town Administrator will assist in drafting a resolution to support any approved changes.

Landscape improvements around fuel tank were discussed.

The Council discussed the possibility of establishing a restricted fund to allocate excess maritime operations revenue toward future infrastructure and capital projects. The goal would be to generate additional revenue without increasing the town levy. While generally supportive of exploring this option, Council members expressed concerns about fully earmarking surplus revenue for a single department, noting the risk of setting a precedent and the potential pressure to raise prices to sustain the fund. They recommended potentially considering the allocation of only a portion of surplus funds—beyond operational needs—into a dedicated fund to maintain flexibility and fairness across department.

(\*) The Council acknowledged the complexity of managing communication services across various departments and agreed to include a \$5,000 placeholder in the budget while continuing discussions on how to manage these costs more efficiently town-wide.

### **601-COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT** **Diane Williamson, Director**

Director Williamson presented an overview of the department's proposed budget, emphasizing the positive impact of grant funding in advancing various town projects. She highlighted the ongoing Stormwater Phase II project and efforts to implement

## **TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025**

stormwater pollution prevention measures at the Department of Public Works.

Municipal Operations Manager Eric Dickervitz provided the Council with an overview of the tourism and promotion line items, highlighting the collaborative efforts between Explore Bristol, the Bristol Merchants Association, and other local organizations. He praised Explore Bristol for its strong advocacy and noted its positive impact on local tourism. Additionally, discussions included the need to improve accessibility in town buildings, with specific mentions of adding handrails and grab bars to enhance public access.

Alayne White of Explore Bristol provided an overview of the organization's accomplishments and ongoing progress, highlighting increased public relations efforts and community engagement. She discussed the challenges of maintaining the Explore Bristol website and emphasized the value of email blasts in promoting local events. Additionally, she noted the lack of theater space in Bristol as a continuing gap in the town's arts and cultural offerings. Jeff Hirsh, also representing Explore Bristol, highlighted that there are currently 150 active short-term rentals in town, which he noted as a positive contributor to the local economy by supporting small businesses and tourism.

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. He mentioned the possibility of increasing certain building code fees, such as those for missed inspections or work done without a permit. He also noted that the increase in software and licensing costs was due to the addition of zoning applications to the existing digital platform.

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 the line

## **TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025**

item for labor negotiations was increased to account for the negotiation of three labor contracts in the upcoming fiscal year.

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

### **501 FINANCE**

#### **Carl Carulli, Town Treasurer**

Treasurer Carulli provided the Council with an overview of the proposed budget, highlighting increases in IT and departmental software support costs. He also noted an increase in dues and conference expenses to support participation in the URI Municipal Finance Certification program.

Town Administrator Contente recommended a salary increase for the Town Treasurer, explaining that the proposal was based on a salary survey of 13 comparable municipalities. He emphasized that the adjustment is necessary to retain talent and noted that a previous treasurer had been paid \$10,000 more than the amount currently being recommended.

Discussions ensued regarding internet service charges.

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

### **502 Debt Service**

#### **Carl Carulli, Town Treasurer**

Treasurer Carulli provided the Council with an overview of 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**

#### **Carl Carulli, Town Treasurer**

Treasurer Carulli provided the Council with an overview of the proposed budget, highlighting a significant increase in retiree medical and dental expenses. He explained that these costs had been underfunded in recent years, and the current budget aims to catch up to actual costs for 106 retirees, along with accounting

## **TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025**

for a 7% increase. He also noted changes in the town's life insurance policies, explaining that some adjustments and cleanups were made to improve accuracy and alignment with current needs

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

### **504 Town Hall Complex**

#### **Eric Dickervitz, Municipal Operational Manager**

Municipal Operations Manager, Eric Dickervitz, provided an overview of the Town Hall Complex budget, which included details service contracts for security systems and the status of technology replacement. He discussed the completion of technology replacement projects and the focus on maintaining current systems. Mr. Dickervitz also highlighted a new budget line item for security systems, which includes alarm monitoring and security cameras. Additionally, he noted an increase in IT and support costs due to the outcome of recently bid contracts.

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

### **406 BOARD OF CANVASSERS**

#### **Melissa Cordeiro- Town Clerk/Canvassing Clerk**

Clerk Cordeiro provided an overview of the Board of Canvassers budget. She highlighted cost savings achieved by utilizing Town Hall staff for early voting during the Presidential Primary, which reduced the need for poll workers by approximately 15 days. She noted that while no pay increase was requested for Board of Canvassers members, there is ongoing discussion about adding compensation for alternate members for their work on election days. Additionally, she pointed out that \$1,200 was allocated under election supplies to support voter registration efforts and poll worker recruitment drives.

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

### **407 MUNICIPAL COURT**

#### **Melissa Cordeiro- Town Clerk**

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

## **TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025**

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 the Municipal Court budget, noting no substantial changes. She reported that a new online vital records request platform will be implemented, with initial costs totaling \$1,300 (including a \$500 setup fee) and an \$800 annual fee thereafter. She also noted that the current business licensing software, CivicPlus, is being replaced with OpenGov, resulting in an estimated cost increase of approximately \$1,800

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

### **401 TOWN COUNCIL**

The Council reviewed its budget. Town Clerk Cordeiro noted an error in line item 401-43400, which included an additional \$1,600 that was originally earmarked for potential software but was never removed.

The Council confirmed the \$1,600 deduction from line item 401-43400.

### **Recap**

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

### **701-POLICE DEPARTMENT**

(\*) The Council agreed by consensus to place an asterisk at the Police Department budget line for clarification on the amount of that transfer in the previous year(s) in the motor vehicle line item 701-44310 and questioned whether the proposed budget increase was reasonable.

### **702-ANIMAL CONTROL**



**TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025**

(\*) The Council agreed by consensus to place an asterisk at the budget line 702-43341 to acknowledge that an additional \$5,000 could be earmarked for reallocation elsewhere in the budget if needed

**703 HARBOR PATROL**

(\*) The Council agreed by consensus to place an asterisk at budget line 703-45300 as a placeholder to potentially allocate an additional \$5,000 to help manage the cost of internet services.

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 9:36 PM.

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Melissa Cordeiro, Town Clerk