

## **TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2024**

The council met in a workshop session on Tuesday, March 19, 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

### **404 TOWN SOLICITOR**

**Michael A. Ursillo, Esq., Town Solicitor**

Town Solicitor Ursillo, who has served since 1995, highlighted the town's low litigation rate, attributing it to proactive measures and effective management. He emphasized the non-litigation aspects of his role, including work on planning, zoning, and collaboration with department heads. The Solicitor also confirmed that he represents five towns and works with a team of six lawyers. The Council discussed the need for a litigation review and agreed to request a status report.

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

### **603 PUBLIC WORKS**

**Chris Parella-Public Works Director**

DPW Director Parella presented an overview of the department's conservative budget, noting significant increases related to the collective bargaining agreement (CBA). He highlighted the need for increased road materials and drainage improvements due to extensive road work. Director Parella also addressed infrastructure issues with holiday lighting, emphasizing the need for rewiring and LED lighting upgrades.

The discussion included transfer station operations, where Director Parella detailed the need for new compactor boxes and explained the rise in tipping fees. He clarified inquiries about the clothing allowance, noting that it is a combined line item for clothing and protective gear. Questions about the state

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pension decrease were addressed, attributing the trend to market conditions.

Director Parella also addressed concerns about handicap accessibility in Bristol, leading to discussions about the challenges and potential solutions. Additionally, he provided an update on tipping fees, noting the likelihood of future increases due to rising costs at Rhode Island Resource and Recovery

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

### **604 WATER POLLUTION CONTROL**

#### **Jose DaSilva- Water Pollution Control Superintendent**

Director DaSilva outlined key budget updates, including the rising costs of chemicals and the need for additional testing related to PFAs. He noted an increase in pump station costs and explained the renaming of the utility line to natural gas. DaSilva also addressed the higher uniform costs, attributing them to a new contract and the transition to providing their own uniforms.

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

### **606- COMPOSTING FACILITY**

Director DaSilva provided an overview of the composting facility budget, highlighting increases in heat and water costs and changes to the naming of utility-related line items.

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

### **607- ENTERPRISE FUND**

Treasurer Hassell provided an overview of the debt service schedule and discussed the impact of the sewer use fee increase on the budget. It was noted that the \$100,000 allocated in last year's budget to reduce sewer use fees was not included this

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year, resulting in an increase in the sewer use fee from \$580 to \$621.98

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

### **806- MUNICIPAL OBSERVANCES**

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

### **Fourth of July Committee**

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

### **Veterans Holiday**

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

### **Christmas Festival**

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

### **803-Parks and Recreation**

#### **Warren Rensehausen-Director**

Director Rensehausen presented his budget request, highlighting several key points. He discussed the Parks and Recreation Department's need to address the increasing demand for police details at events and emphasized the importance of offering competitive rates to attract staff. He also explained the rise in fees for non-residents, citing the challenges of managing large groups and their impact on the department's budget. Additionally, he provided an update on a grant received for new trash bins and outlined a long-term plan to replace all bins throughout the town. The discussion ensued regarding pickleball courts. Finally, he stressed the significance of the part-time

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program, currently funded through the HEZ program from state funding as a placeholder, noting that due to cuts in the state budget, the town may struggle to generate program revenue if state funding is not received.

Director Rensehausen explained that the Walley School Building requires additional staffing to accommodate extended hours in the newly renovated building. Additionally, a \$20,000 increase in utility costs is anticipated for the new Walley Senior and Community Center.

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

### **802-ROGERS FREE LIBRARY**

#### **Eileen Dyer- Library Director**

Library Director Dyer presented an overview of the department's priorities and challenges. She emphasized the need for increased funding to support the custodian and maintain the library facility. The underpayment of library staff was highlighted, along with the necessity for salary adjustments to align with minimum wage increases and retain staff with competitive compensation. Director Dyer stressed the importance of adding a teen librarian to bolster youth services, particularly in light of the upcoming construction of a new high school. She also addressed the difficulty of maintaining full-time librarian coverage given current staffing levels.

A major highlight was the new maker space, funded by a \$1.75 million grant from federal and state sources, which will have a Bristol-specific focus. The teen librarian will serve as the primary point person for the maker space, working afternoons and evenings to engage with youth. Additionally, she noted that state law requires at least one librarian to preserve eligibility for the state grant, and the team is actively working to meet this requirement. Director Dyer acknowledged the legislative support for libraries, mentioning a legislative grant from Senator Linda and ongoing backing from state representatives, with Bristol recognized as a leader in library advocacy.

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### **Recap**

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

### **703-HARBOR PATROL**

(\*) 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**

(\*) The Council agreed by consensus to place an asterisk at the budget line 601-43220 Tourism/Promotion to 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.

It was noted that a Representative from Explore Bristol would be present during tomorrow evening's council meeting (March 20, 2024) to provide further information.

### **503 Fixed Charges**

(\*) 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.

Treasurer Hassel provided an overview of a \$76,000 increase in insurance costs, attributing it to property and auto inflation as well as the town's location within coastal wind and flood zones. The council raised questions about the necessity of increasing the liability limit from \$3 million to \$5 million, prompting a discussion on the risks

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and benefits of higher coverage limits. It was suggested that the solicitor and the trust be consulted for further guidance. The council agreed to gather more information and carefully weigh the risks before making any decisions regarding adjustments to the insurance policy

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

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 8:14 PM.

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Melissa Cordeiro, Town Clerk