

TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2026

The council met in a workshop session on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, 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, Carl Carulli

404 TOWN SOLICITOR

Andrew Teitz, Esq., Town Solicitor

Solicitor Teitz reported an overall department increase of approximately 2%, noting that the modest adjustment does not fully offset rising healthcare, malpractice insurance, and related costs, but remains consistent with increases seen across other departments.

In response to a question regarding year-to-date activity within the litigation line, the Treasurer reported expenditures of approximately \$13,000 to date.

Council members characterized the request as reasonable and fair, noting that the Solicitor's Office has historically maintained stable costs and continues to provide reliable and responsive service. It was further clarified that while the overall departmental increase is approximately 2%, the specific solicitor line item (43245) reflects a 3% increase, as all additional funding is allocated to salaries, with no proposed changes to court costs or litigation accounts.

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

603 PUBLIC WORKS

Chris Parella-Public Works Director

Director Parella reported that the Department of Public Works budget reflects an extremely conservative and fiscally cautious plan, with most increases driven by CBA-related personnel costs,

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including salaries, overtime, and longevity. On the revenue side, Director Parella noted a decline in special pickups compared to prior years and adjusted projected revenue downward accordingly. Road cut permit revenue was also reduced (from \$25,000 to \$20,000) based on the expectation that major gas and water utility projects are largely complete, with only smaller vendor work anticipated. Similarly, the metals revenue line was decreased (from \$15,000 to \$10,000) following a prior-year clean-out of accumulated materials and recognizing that future revenue will depend on new inflow and fluctuating market prices.

On the expenditure side, Director Parella highlighted an increase in the tree care and preservation line (603-44600) of approximately \$20,000 (22%), attributed to a higher volume of work, more technical jobs requiring specialized equipment, a temporary vacancy in the Town Arborist position, and a more proactive maintenance approach, including root pruning, drenching, and pest control. Council members discussed maintenance responsibilities for state-owned trees, with DPW noting that while the State is generally responsible, the Town will respond in emergency situations without seeking reimbursement.

The department's performance during the recent blizzard was also discussed, noting that all roads were opened within 48 hours and no emergency calls were missed. DPW credited prior Council-supported capital investments in equipment for enabling this level of service, while also acknowledging operational challenges and resident concerns related to driveway access and snow placement.

Further discussion addressed the snow and ice control line, which reflects an approximate 15% increase (about \$22,500), primarily due to rising salt and sand costs, including a 5.5% increase in salt pricing and seasonal supply constraints. DPW also noted that increased purchasing this year was partially due to rebuilding inventory following prior maintenance-related drawdowns of the salt shed. Council members discussed potential equipment investments, including snow blowers and skid steer attachments, to improve operations during heavy snow events, and the department outlined its current operational approach utilizing coordinated equipment teams to manage narrow streets and maintain service access.

Discussion ensued regarding street repaving. The Council inquired whether a finalized list of roads had been identified

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for the upcoming paving program and whether the work would be included within the capital plan.

It was noted that the paving program is anticipated to be funded through the capital budget, with additional details to be provided as the bidding process proceeds and the plan is finalized.

The transfer station operations line reflects an increase of approximately 24%, primarily associated with electrical upgrades and emergency power improvements. Planned work includes consolidating electrical services, installing a transfer switch, and integrating a trailer-mounted generator acquired through GovDeals. The generator will support continued operations during power outages and may also serve as a mobile backup for other Town facilities, as appropriate.

With respect to staffing, Director Parella noted that while the department initially requested additional personnel, only one position was ultimately funded. Overall full-time staffing levels remain consistent year-over-year when accounting for vacancies and reclassifications, with certain line-item increases reflecting contractual obligations and internal promotions.

Tipping fees were level-funded, as no increases have been received from the disposal facility in recent years. The discussion concluded with brief comments regarding holiday lighting, including recognition of recent infrastructure improvements and a suggestion to evaluate the duration of seasonal displays to balance cost, aesthetics, and community appeal.

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

604 WATER POLLUTION CONTROL

Jose DaSilva- Water Pollution Control Superintendent

Superintendent DaSilva provided an overview of the department budget highlighting that, following completion of a state-mandated blending tank upgrade, the facility no longer requires the level of overtime previously needed to operate and monitor the system. As a result, the overtime line has been reduced by approximately 25% (about \$20,000), with those savings reallocated to other operational needs.

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He identified the odor control system associated with the upgraded blending tank as a new cost driver. The original system experienced design and material issues, resulting in failure and public concern. Additional components and modifications have since been implemented to improve reliability and extend the system's useful life. The budget includes additional funding to address any remaining or potential issues, with the expectation that recent improvements will stabilize performance.

Superintendent DaSilva also noted an increase of approximately \$5,000 in the Warren agreement line. He explained that Bristol continues to send a portion of its wastewater flow to Warren for treatment due to geographic advantages. While this charge remained stable for many years, it has since increased, and the adjustment reflects anticipated cost increases moving forward.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on inflow and infiltration (I&I) and the impact of wet-weather events on system capacity. The Superintendent reported that recent storms and snowmelt events resulted in significantly elevated daily flows, highlighting ongoing challenges associated with aging infrastructure. He noted that portions of the system include pipes over 100 years old, including asbestos cement materials, and that groundwater and stormwater intrusion—particularly in shoreline areas and at the Ferry Road pump station—remain key concerns. It was noted that the Town is evaluating long-term solutions for these areas, including potential relocation or reconfiguration of pump station infrastructure.

In response to questions regarding regulatory compliance, Superintendent DaSilva advised that the Town remains under an existing I&I-related mandate and continues to invest in annual rehabilitation efforts, typically ranging from \$250,000 to \$500,000. He referenced prior overflow events that led to system improvements and emphasized that the Town continues to carefully manage system capacity, including limiting pump upgrades that could increase peak flows. For larger development projects, the Town is requiring on-site storage and flow management measures to prevent additional strain during peak conditions.

Superintendent Dsilva also noted the challenges associated with maintaining and replacing aging asbestos piping, including the high costs of proper handling and disposal.

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

606- COMPOSTING FACILITY

Jose DaSilva- Superintendent

Superintendent DaSilva provided an overview of the composting facility budget, highlighting that overtime costs are decreasing due to operational adjustments, including the elimination of 10-hour workdays, changes to weekend responsibilities (such as Saturday temperature checks), and revised hauling schedules. He noted that these changes have reduced the prior overlap between composting-related overtime and sewer plant truck operations.

Town Administrator Contente added that, from a strategic standpoint, the Town is currently reassessing the long-term future of the composting operation and overall biosolids disposal process. He explained that consulting engineers are evaluating alternative treatment methods and that one additional test run is being conducted at the existing facility to determine whether a revised process is viable.

Given the potential for significant operational changes, the Administration has elected to maintain a level-funded composting operating budget at this time. It is anticipated that these funds may be reallocated in the future as part of a revised biosolids management strategy, pending the outcome of the engineering analysis and recommendations expected in the coming fiscal year.

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

607- ENTERPRISE FUND

Treasurer Carulli provided an overview of the debt service schedule and provided an update on the Enterprise Bond. He explained that several sewer-related loans are nearing completion, resulting in a reduction in principal and interest costs for the upcoming fiscal year. He noted that a line for bond issuance costs is being maintained, as it is anticipated that additional sewer-related borrowing may be required in the near future, consistent with the department's ongoing capital needs.

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He further explained that the item labeled "legacy liabilities" reflects the enterprise fund's share of long-term liabilities and fixed charges as determined through the annual audit. This line shows a decrease based on the updated actuarial allocation between the general fund and the enterprise fund.

Conversely, insurance premiums within the Enterprise Fund are projected to increase by approximately 7%, reflecting the allocation of a fixed percentage of the Town's overall insurance costs to the sewer enterprise.

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

806- MUNICIPAL OBSERVANCES

Fourth of July Committee

Anna Motta, Chairwoman of the Fourth of July Committee, and John Daniels Vice Chairman addressed the Council and presented the Committee's request. They expressed appreciation for the town's ongoing backing, and councilors emphasized how the parade and related events help define Bristol's identity and depend heavily on volunteer effort.

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

Veterans Holiday

Town Administrator Contente noted that the requested funds would support Memorial Day and Veterans Day activities, including parades and the laying of wreaths.

Bristol Veterans Council representative, Karl Antonovich, noted that, despite rising costs, they are managing within that amount; council members highlighted the town's gratitude for their work organizing veterans' ceremonies.

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

Christmas Festival

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Town Administrator Contente noted that the requested funds would support activities for the annual Christmas Festival.

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

Personnel Board

Town Administrator Contente noted that the requested funds would support the need for supplies, materials, and advertising needs for the testing and hiring process.

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

405-Boards & Commissions-

Barbara Palumbo-Bristol Substance Abuse Coordinator

Coordinator Palumbo provided an overview of the department budget, noting that most staff are receiving a 3% cost-of-living adjustment. She explained that several traditional operating expenses, such as education and training, are reflected as zero in the Town budget, as they are currently funded through opioid settlement funds and regional or state grants rather than the general fund.

She outlined current programming supported by these external funding sources, including drug take-back events, Red Ribbon Week, youth CPR and Narcan training, EMS respirators, collaborative movie nights with Parks & Recreation, cannabis and alcohol prevention initiatives, senior programming, pre-prom events, and other community-based prevention efforts.

Coordinator Palumbo noted that while initial opioid settlement payments were significant, recent distributions have declined substantially, with only modest amounts received this year. She explained that Bristol receives a small share of statewide settlement funds, and that much of the region's prevention work is supported through a pooled regional grant serving East Providence, Barrington, Warren, and Bristol.

Treasurer Carulli reported that the local opioid abatement fund currently has a balance of approximately \$69,000; however, incoming funds have slowed considerably. He explained that future reimbursements to the general fund will primarily support the coordinator's salary, which is reflected in corresponding revenue. He also noted that approximately \$19,500 in the Fire

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Department's capital plan is expected to be funded through opioid settlement dollars for overdose-related equipment.

Council members discussed the long-term sustainability of these funding sources and raised questions regarding when these revenues may diminish and require absorption into the Town's operating budget. In response, the Coordinator emphasized that the Town continues to maximize available resources by leveraging regional and state funding opportunities while maintaining a focus on prevention, recovery support, and community education.

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

803-Parks and Recreation
Warren Rensehausen-Director

Director Rensehausen presented the department's budget request, noting that program revenues are projected to increase significantly, from approximately \$125,000 in FY26 to \$150,000 in FY27. He attributed this growth to strong participation across a wide range of offerings, including early childhood programs, fitness classes, arts programming, theater trips, and popular bus trips to events such as Red Sox games. He explained that most programs are structured so that instructor compensation is tied to enrollment, allowing the Town to retain a margin and ensuring that programs remain largely self-supporting while continuing to expand.

On the expenditure side, Director Rensehausen highlighted two primary increases. The front desk line reflects a notable increase to support staffing at the Walling building, similar to operations at the Recreation Center, to assist with walk-in inquiries, direct visitors, and support expanded programming. Additionally, the operating line (45900) has been increased to account for the costs associated with opening and maintaining an additional facility, including supplies and equipment, as well as to address current-year expenses that are trending slightly over budget due to increased program activity and senior services.

The Council also received an update on capital-type improvements, including the new dog park located near the beach and baseball field. The Director reported that fencing has been completed and that the design includes separate areas for small and large dogs. He noted that seeding will need to be redone in

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the spring due to winter conditions and temporary snow storage, and that final amenities, including benches and commemorative bricks, will be installed once site conditions allow.

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 budget. She proposed that all staff be scheduled to receive a 3% cost-of-living adjustment. In addition, two key salary adjustments are proposed: funding the Assistant Director position for a full year, as was previously only partially funded, and a one-time adjustment to the IT Coordinator position to bring compensation in line with the state median, reflecting the critical role the position plays in both library operations and broader municipal technology coordination.

Director Dyer also proposed increasing a part-time Adult Services Librarian position from 31 hours to 37.5 hours per week, transitioning it to full-time status. This adjustment will be offset by reductions within the general part-time line, resulting in a reallocation of staffing rather than a net increase.

With respect to materials and operations, the library is requesting an increase in the print materials budget, along with a moderate increase in electronic resources. The Director noted that, for a community of Bristol's size, the current print collection remains smaller than comparable municipalities, while demand for both physical and digital materials continue to grow. Magazine and newspaper subscriptions have been consolidated into the print materials line, while the subscriptions line now primarily reflects online databases and electronic systems.

Director Dyer further explained that, with the expansion and increased use of library spaces, including the recently completed public areas and upcoming quiet study rooms in the 1877 mezzanine—there is a need for a modest increase in custodial services (approximately \$5,000) and operating expenses to support higher usage levels and general cost increases.

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Lastly, the Director reported an increase in state grant funding, attributed to the Town's higher local appropriation, as the grant formula is based on 25% of the budget from two years prior. She also noted a one-time contribution by the Friends of the Library, which designated \$40,000 as an endowment, leveraging an additional \$10,000 in state matching funds

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

Recap

No items were earmarked for further discussion.

There being no further business, upon a motion by Sweeney, seconded by Vice Chairwoman Parella, and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Melissa Cordeiro, Town Clerk