

## **TOWN COUNCIL-SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES- WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10, 2025**

PRESENT: Calouro, Parella, Teixeira, Sweeney, and Ley

ALSO PRESENT: Steven Contente, Town Administrator  
Walter S. Felag, Jr., Senator District 10  
Linda L. Ujifusa, Senator District 11  
June S. Speakman, Representative District 68  
Susan R. Donovan, Representative District 69  
Absent: Pamela J. Lauria, Senator District 32  
*(it is hereby noted for the record that Rep. Lauria was unable to attend)*

The Council met in special session on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, in the Town Hall, Council Chambers, beginning at 6:00 PM, Council Chairman Calouro presiding:

### **Workshop re Legislative Agenda for 2025**

It is hereby noted for the record that no action was taken on this agenda item.

Council Chairman Calouro opened the meeting by thanking members of the general assembly to be part of the open discussion and dialogue of the priorities of the town for the 2023 Legislative agenda.

### **Asylum Road Lighting & Safety**

Members of the Council, Senators, Representatives, and Town Administrator discussed long-standing safety concerns related to the lack of lighting along Asylum Road, which serves as access to Colt State Park, the Quinta-Gamelin Community Center, and surrounding neighborhoods. It was noted that the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) owns the outbound portion of the roadway, where no utility infrastructure exists, making comprehensive lighting improvements cost-prohibitive.

It was noted that Town previously appropriated approximately \$15,000 to install a lighting pole at the community center/Asylum Road intersection. While that work has been completed, it does not provide lighting along the full length of the roadway. Historically, lighting existed when the area functioned as an armory, but those fixtures were damaged over time and not replaced. DEM has expressed environmental and

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wildlife concerns and does not support lighting within park boundaries, noting that the park is closed from sunset to sunrise.

It was noted that the Town has previously met with RIDOT regarding this matter. Although the project had appeared in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at one point, it was later removed. RIDOT indicated the project was not a priority due to cost, environmental considerations, and park operations. The Town currently possesses approximately 75% design plans for Asylum Road lighting (2023 submission).

There was consensus that the Council Chair and Town Administrator will request a joint meeting with RIDOT that includes Town officials and state legislators to elevate the issue. Discussion emphasized focusing on practical and incremental lighting solutions, potentially limited to the Town side of the roadway.

During the workshop, Senator Ujifusa described how other municipalities have advanced roadway projects by formally requesting RIDOT safety studies. She discussed pursuing a similar request for Asylum Road, focusing on pedestrian and lighting safety.

### **State Paving Priorities, TIP, and Municipal Advocacy**

State legislators provided an overview of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), five-year planning cycles, and funding limitations. They explained that safety-critical projects can displace others, contributing to repeated deferrals of Bristol projects. Legislators acknowledged that sustained advocacy and coordination can influence project timing.

Participants agreed on the importance of continued coordination between the Town, utilities, and RIDOT, as well as active participation in TIP public comment periods and regular engagement with state officials.

Town Administrator Contente noted that Towns are increasingly being asked to assume maintenance and cost obligations (e.g., sidewalks, road portions) as conditions for state projects

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Senator Ujifusa discussed draft legislation addressing RIDOT practices that shift infrastructure maintenance or cost obligations to municipalities, intended to clarify and limit when the state can require municipalities to pay these added costs.

Senator Ujifusa noted providing copies of the draft bill to the Council for review and potential support.

### **School Funding, Special Education, and Transportation**

The joint workshop included discussion of the financial impact of high-cost special education placements and limitations of the current state funding formula. Legislators noted that prior bills to lower reimbursement thresholds and improve notification timelines have not advanced due to state budget constraints.

Legislators noted that for now, Bristol- Warren can expect no major predictable formula overhaul, but may see incremental additional aid in good budget years, usually finalized after the May revenue conference.

With respect to transportation, legislators reaffirmed their intent to reintroduce targeted legislation to reduce Bristol Warren's transportation burden.

Senators and Representatives noted they will re-introduce a bill aimed at reducing Bristol-Warren's statewide transportation burden (notably costly private school routes).

It was noted copies of the draft bill would be provided to the Council for review and potential support.

### **Curbside Composting & Waste Diversion**

The Council emphasized the fiscal and environmental benefits of food waste diversion, including reduced tipping fees and long-term tax savings. Legislators reported that several composting-related bills are in development and committed to sharing draft legislation once available for municipal feedback.

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Legislators will share draft bills and updates once ready (expected late January/February) so Bristol can comment and advocate

### **Climate Resilience & Municipal Capacity**

Participants discussed the need for consistent funding and technical assistance for climate resilience initiatives, including coastal flooding and stormwater management. Existing grant programs through the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank and DEM were noted.

Legislators outlined a proposed "climate superfund" concept, beginning with data collection on municipal climate-related expenditures, with the long-term goal of establishing a sustainable statewide funding mechanism.

Council members emphasized it is generally "shovel-ready" and wants early notice of opportunities.

### **AI-Assisted License Plate Readers**

Concerns were raised regarding statewide policy development for AI-assisted license plate reader systems, including limited municipal input and the pace of technological change.

Legislators reported that a new Senate AI Committee is reviewing statewide AI frameworks and that revised legislation addressing these systems is expected to be reintroduced.

### **Jukebox and Pinball Machine Licensing**

Discussions ensued on whether state law requires or merely permits municipal licensing and fees for jukeboxes and pinball machines. Legislative research suggests the statute is permissive. There was disagreement: Town Clerk believed the state might require licensing. It was noted that it would be brought to the Town Solicitor to review the relevant statutes, and legislators expressed openness to clarifying statutory language if necessary.

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The council thanked the members of the general assembly for their time and consideration in attending the workshop.

There being no further business, upon a motion by Councilman Sweeney, seconded by Councilman Teixeira, and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 6:55 PM.

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Melissa Cordeiro  
Council Clerk