City of Bristol
Regular Board of Finance Meeting – Budget Workshop
April 1, 2026

A Budget Workshop was held by the Board of Finance on April 1, 2026 in City Hall Council Chambers, 111 North Main Street, Bristol, Connecticut at 5 p.m. The following were in attendance: Chairman Dave Maikowski, Mayor Ellen Zoppo Sassu, Commissioners Bill Campion, Mike Massarelli Jon Mace, Jane Murdock, and Mark Peterson. Dante Tagariello was absent. Marie O'Brien was on Zoom. Also present from the Comptroller's Office: Diane Waldron, Robin Manuele and Jessica Pilgrim.

1. Call to order

Chairperson Maikowski called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Public Participation

Shelby Pons, BOE Chairperson, 143 Larkspur Lane, spoke in support of funding the BOE budget, the process of setting the BOE budget, and how much money is required to run the BOE.

Kara Ledger, 159 Brewster Road, spoke in support of increasing funding for the BOE budget.

Maria Simmons, 70 Ipswitch Road, spoke in support of funding the BOE budget and identifying structural deficits

Mike Reynolds, President Bristol Federal of Teachers, spoke in support of funding the BOE budget.

3. Presentation and discussion regarding the 2026-2027 budget.

Comptroller Diane Waldron gave a presentation on the proposed 2026-2027 budget reviewing the following: Budget Challenges, City Expenditures, Capital Outlay, Debt Service and Capital Expenditures, Education Expenditures, Revenues, Fund Balance and Use of Reserves, Grand List, the Mill Rate calculation, the Capital Budget, and any Open Items.

FY2027 Budget challenges included:

- Department Requests which totaled $25.3 million, or a 10.32% over the current FY26 budget.
- Contractual obligations for both the City and BOE
- Modest health insurance increase
- Statutory spending cap
- Significant increases in Special Education Costs
- Maintaining City reserve levels.

Diane reviewed the proposed budget for the General City totaling $92,168,170, whereas the initial requests totaled $95,602,455 or a 6.79% increase. Proposed changes are presented tonight totaling $1,457,835 and removal of $1,976,440 in Capital Outlay requests which traditionally are funded through the Equipment Building Sinking Fund at the end of the fiscal year.

Diane highlighted the following proposed city expenditure reductions (excluding capital outlay) that exceeded $50,000:

- Police Department's budget reduced $568,920 with an overtime reduction of $250,000 and $50,000 reduction for the Flock Drone System
- A vacancy factor was applied to Police Patrol (2 positions), and Public Works Streets Division (1 position).
- Fire Department was reduced by all of the associated costs with the request to hire twelve new firefighter positions.
- Public Works was reduced by the request for 2 additional maintainers ($122,065)
- PRYCS requested two maintainers and one is remaining in the budget
- Contingency increased $1,000,000 to remain at current year funding levels
- Health Benefits – total reductions of $297,990 which includes the use of Health Insurance reserves of $225,000 and the allocation of health benefits to other funds

Capital Outlay requests for City Departments totaled $2,476,440 and $1,219,585 is proposed to be funded, $679,585 of this amount for City Departments to be funded from the Equipment Building Sinking Fund. The Public Works Fleet Capital Outlay account stays in the General Fund. The request of $1,138,700 is proposed to be funded at $500,000 General Fund and $540,000 Equipment Building Sinking Fund. However, the City is considering a leasing option that will allow the Department to receive more vehicles with the funding allotted.

The Debt Service and Capital Transfers proposed budget totals $17,667,875, an increase of $1,593,530 or 9.9%.

The Board of Education recommendation of $144,074,445 represents a proposed reduction from their request of $10,575,000.

The total General Fund proposed budget is $253,910,500 which increases 4.64%, with the General City at 2.95%, Debt Service and Capital Transfers 9.91% and Education 5.12%.

Diane reviewed the statutory Municipal Spending Cap which established a cap of 2.5% over the previous year. This is adjusted for inflation for FY27 the cap is set at 2.64%. There is a penalty for non-compliance in a grant reduction the revenue sharing grant equal to 50 cents for every dollar that exceeds the 2.64%.

Requested revenues totaled $61,597,820 and after minor adjustments of $12,060, proposed revenues total $61,609,880.

Diane explained the proposed budget does not recommend the use of Fund Balance. The Board of Finance policy is to have Unassigned Fun Balance between 12-15% of budgeted revenues. The FY2027 proposed level is 12.5% on a budget basis, but Diane wanted to clarify that if you look at unassigned fund balance on a Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (GAAP) basis, which is stated in the audit and which the rating agencies use, the projected fund balance level is 11.2%. this compares to 11.6% at June 30, 2025.

It is proposed to use $500,000 of the Mill Rate Stabilization Fund leaving a balance of $500,000 and $500,0000 of Health Insurance Reserves. The Health Insurance allocation is split $275,000 BOE and $225,000 City. An additional $484,000 was used of Debt Service Reserves to help offset the increase.

The Grand List grew 1.62%. The current FY24-25 mill rate is 33.75 for Real Estate and Personal Property and 32.46 for Motor Vehicle. With the proposed reductions the budget totals $253,910,500 and would require a mill rate of 35.60 mills to balance the budget. The recommendation is to use the statutory motor vehicle mill rate cap of 32.46, and a mill rate of 35.60 for Real Estate and Personal Property.

At this point the Board needs to decide if there are any other adjustments, and to monitor if there will be any other adjustments to State revenues. There is another workshop scheduled for April 8, if needed. The Board of Finance is set to adopt the budget on April 28 and a Joint Meeting of City Council and Board of Finance to adopt on May 18.

The Board of Finance held discussion on the proposed budget.

4. Adjournment

Commissioner Massarelli made a motion seconded by Commissioner Mace

"To adjourn at 6:45 p.m."

Following a voice vote in which there was no opposition, the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

Attest:

Diane M. Waldron

Diane M. Waldron
Board of Finance Clerk