

City of Bristol
Regular Board of Finance Meeting – Budget Workshop
April 8, 2026

A Budget Workshop was held by the Board of Finance on April 8, 2026 in City Hall Council Chambers, 111 North Main Street, Bristol, Connecticut at 5 p.m. The following were in attendance: Chairman Dave Maikowski, Vice Chairperson Marie O'Brien (entered at 5:10 p.m.) Mayor Ellen Zoppo Sassu, Commissioners Bill Campion, Mike Massarelli, Jon Mace, Jane Murdock, and Mark Peterson. Dante Tagariello 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 5:00 p.m.

2. Public Participation

Mike Reynolds, 957 Farmington Ave, President Bristol Federal of Teachers, spoke in support of fully funding the BOE budget.

Sue Tyler, City Council, 993 Hill Street, spoke regarding maintaining the current mill rate.

LaTanya Farrell, Stafford Elementary School, spoke against Stafford School closing.

Val Zhukov, Teamster 671, spoke regarding the bus drivers and in full support of the budget.

Mary Ann Sirois, 362 Shrub Road, can't rely on property taxes to fund Education.

Tammy Hill spoke on behalf of Tanya Smith, 345 Mix Street, in support of the BOE budget.

Hilary Wright, 37 Morris Ave, spoke in support of Stafford Elementary School.

Mary Ann Sirois, 362 Shrub Road, spoke in support of keeping taxes down.

3. Discussion regarding the 2026-2027 budget.

The Board of Finance discussed the Fire Department's overtime budget with Chief Hart.

Mayor Zoppo Sassu asked the Fire Department to look at reducing overtime. As the Fire Department has to have one to one coverage this does affect overtime but there are areas where overtime can be controlled. Chief Hart explained his request includes additional training this year for live burn training (\$159,000). This is required OSHA training that is mandated and has not been completed in three years. In addition, last year there were several long-term workers compensation claims and illnesses which caused overtime, however Diane noted there were savings in Regular Wages as these employees received Workers' Compensation payment for their wages.

The Board of Finance discussed the Board of Education's budget request.

Chairman Maikowski stated the Board of Education has been structurally underfunded, particularly for Special Education costs. Their proposed budget request for 26/27 was just a \$1,822,560 increase

over the projected expenditures for FY26 which includes a \$3.4 million deficit. That represents only a 3.70% increase. This is well below contractual obligations and historical increases over the past 5+ years and there is the risk the BOE will be coming back next year looking for additional funding for Special Education. While he thought this was figured out last year, the BOE is requesting an additional \$3,400,000 for special ed for the remainder of FY2025/26. After review and analyzing the trends, Dave is proposing a 10% increase over the projected expenditures for Special Education which is \$4,921,070 for a total Special Education budget of \$54,131,773. In addition, he had requested from the BOE what their contractual increases are for their current staffing. The amount provided by Jodi Bond is \$3,443,000 which he is proposing as an increase for the general education side of their budget. This equates to a total increase of \$11,764,070 or an 8.58% increase.

Commissioner O'Brien questioned how this fixes the structural issues as the real issue is not at the local government level, it's at the state and federal level. There was a meeting this afternoon with the Superintendent where this was presented to her. However, the Board of Finance cannot tell the BOE how to spend their money, but they agreed that if approved the \$54,131,773 would be allocated to Special Ed. As SPED funds do not go towards the Municipal Spending cap formula it is important that the BOE adhere to this.

Amy Martino explained what has been spent has been more than budgeted, what is being proposed, is typically what has been spent.

Mayor Zoppo Sassu stated the City of Bristol was ineffectually funding Special Ed over several years, which is what Dave has identified what has been spelled out. In addition, historically they have not requested enough for SpEd and the City has not funded enough, thus creating this hole. Dave stated that with this funding they should not be back here next year requesting additional funds for Special Education.

Mayor Zoppo Sassu is concerned about the tax rate. There have been some interesting conversations with Unions, there may be some opportunities for elimination of positions, and she has engaged Department Heads and Supervisors for suggestions and ideas. Additional oversight in some Departments will also help such as controlling overtime costs.

Mayor Zoppo Sassu presented the idea to eliminate the Marketing Specialist Position in ECD. It was also discussed to use \$25,000 of the Cannabis Funds for the BEST position – Family & Advocate Position in PRYCS. There is opportunity for reorganization of Engineering, as there are currently four vacancies, however for now the City can look at taking a vacancy factor in that budget.

The Board agreed to meet again at 6 pm on April 15.

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:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Diane M. Waldron". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Diane M. Waldron
Board of Finance Clerk