

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Robert F. Parisi Council Chambers

April 13, 2026

6:30 P.M.

RECORD OF VOTES AND MINUTES

The Town Council Meeting on Monday, April 13, 2026, was called to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was said. Councilors in attendance were Autumn Allinson, Thomas Laffin, Jesse Reynolds, Bryan Rivard on video call, Melanie Rossacci, Christina Tatta and Chairman Vincent F. Testa Jr. Mayor Vincent Cervoni and Town Clerk Kristen Panzo were also present. Councilors Craig Fishbein and Samuel Carmody were absent.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. FY 2026-2027 Budget

Animal Control
Civil Preparedness
Police Department
Fire Department

4. Public Comment

Animal Control

Mitch Gibbs, Animal Control Officer was present to take any questions.

Councilor Laffin asked about the \$75,000 cattery. Mr. Gibbs explained that the upgrading of the cat cages have already taken place. They will be upgrading the ventilation system. Right now, it is a passive ventilation system and by state statute they need a system that they can flip a switch and mechanically remove the air and cycle it in with fresh air. There was a discussion about the two cat areas that they have, general population and isolation.

Councilor Tatta asked about the staffing. The budget looks like the department is going from four staff to five staff members even though the request was for six staff members. Mr. Gibbs explained that the department has always been just shy of what they need for staffing. He thought the department could benefit from another full time position and then a part time kennel worker to help out on the weekends. The part time position was approved but the full time assistant was not approved. There was a discussion about a 27% increase from the last fiscal year ending 6/30/25 till now. He explained that it reflects on

how many animals they are getting in and how much money they are spending on the animals. Most of the money spent on the animals is veterinary care. Most of the animals they get have behavioral issues or medical issues that have not been addressed. There was a discussion about the gift funds. He explained that so far this fiscal year they have used a total of \$22,747. They have another \$5,727 for him to sign off on and submit. This money is strictly for medical care, except for one item. They bought two new washers for laundry. It is used for surgeries, cancer treatments medical care and things like that. He mentioned that so far this fiscal year they have deposited \$17,742. They almost take in what they spend. There was a discussion about what capital projects he has if any of what they town council can do if he needs things for the animal shelter. He mentioned that there is a ventilation project that the trust fund money will be used for. He wants to look into sound buffering for the kennels. He mentioned at some point they will be using the trust fund money for built in cages into the vans which is a lot safer for the animals to be transported and it will be easier to clean.

Councilor Reynolds wanted to discuss the full time position Mr. Gibbs did not get. Mr. Gibbs explained that weekends have always been tough because of staffing issues. He and his long time full time person are on Monday-Friday hours. In the past they have had part time positions filling that, but the turnover was so great that they could not do it anymore. They created the second assistant position to work Tuesday-Saturday. Sundays they have their part timer who works by themselves. The new part time position would help with Sundays and give them more backup during the week. There was a question as to whether more people reach out to animal control on the weekends more often than they can handle versus during the week. Mr. Gibbs explained that typically they do not go out for calls on the weekend unless it is an emergency. He mentioned that it would be nice if when they calls came in they can handle them as they come in instead of waiting till the business week. It also allows them to have adoption appointments on the weekends because that is when everyone wants to come in.

Chair Testa asked what the process is for using the trust fund money. Mr. Gibbs explained that is usually has been himself and the mayor that discuss what to use the trust fund money for. Mayor Cervoni explained that when they are presented with veterinary care, it is a few thousand dollars. There was a memo generated either by council vote or the Law Department. They typically approve those costs. A larger item like the ventilation for the cat condos would be something that would come before the council to approve.

Councilor Tatta wanted to know if they can get a copy of that memo. Mayor Cervoni said he will get it for them.

Police Department

John Ventura, Chief of Police, Anthony Demaio Deputy Chief and Beth Dighello, Executive Secretary were all present at the meeting. Chief Ventura spoke about his budget and what his department does.

Councilor Rivard asked about the Axon systems and their need to go with the police cruisers. Chief Ventura explained per the police accountability bill, any marked police cruiser needs to be outfitted with an in cruiser dashboard system. There was a discussion about the \$175,000 line item for the data systems. Chief Ventura explained that the systems Wallingford currently has was the same as the vendors they used in the past. The difference is that the maintenance fees have gone up so much for those contracts. Some of the increases were as much as 20% from years past. There was a discussion about when officers give people tickets. It is an e-ticket system.

Councilor Tatta wanted to know more about the line item for outside contractor pay. Chief Ventura explained officers that work extra duty or private duty the department pays them upfront and then they bill contractors, so the officers get immediately for what they worked. It is budgeted based on what they think will be reimbursed through the contractor. There was a discussion about what types of programs the money is getting reimbursed for. There was a discussion about the utilities line item in the budget. There was a discussion about the school resource officers. Chief Ventura explained that they are not certified police officers that are sworn with them. They are retired officers that he hires. His department pays them, but they are not amount the 78 sworn officers in Wallingford. They report to the Captain of Special Services. There was a discussion about the new police station and the outside landscaping and safety.

Councilor Reynolds asked about the gas and diesel line item. Chief Ventura explained that they used to fill up at the old police department, and they maintain that pump and they had readouts inside the police department, so they knew exactly what they were using. Now they have gotten that report from Public Works and according to the last report that they got they are on track and ok. The ford explorers they use are better on gas milage so that helps.

Councilor Rossacci asked for an explanation between the ASO' and the SRO's and how the police department works with the board of education. Chief Ventura explained that the SRO's, school resource officers is an actual officer that is employed at the Wallingford Police Department. Their purpose is an in-between, a friendship between the police department and the school. The ASO's are not able to carry weapons like the SRO's can. They can call the police department when an incident happens at school.

Chair Testa wanted to know about the HVAC system. Deputy Chief Demaio explained that the whole system was warranted up to June 30 of this year. They are going to fund it from that point forward. It is a very complex system. There was a discussion about contractor pay and where the reimbursement is in the budget. Mayor Cervoni explained that it goes into the general fund.

Civil Preparedness

Chief James Buck, Deputy Fire Chief Mike Shaw and Deputy Fire Chief Keith Schaefer were present to answer any questions.

Chief Buck spoke about the budget and what they do.

Councilor Rivard asked if the \$25,000 for the kitchen is approved in the mayor's budget. The department requested the item, and it was removed from the mayor's budget. There was a discussion as to how often the kitchen gets used and for what. Chief Buck explained that the condo fire last year was a good example of bringing individuals together to a location where they can get the assistance they need.

Fire Department

Chief James Buck, Deputy Fire Chief Mike Shaw and Deputy Fire Chief Keith Schaefer were present to answer any questions.

Chief Buck gave a power point presentation about the department and their budget.

There was a brief discussion about the capital item projects. There was a brief discussion about the positions they need to be able to run their department efficiently. There was a discussion about the volunteer fire fighters. The council thanked the fire department for everything they do and how professional they all are and for all of the hard work that they do.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen Panzo
Town Clerk

Meeting digitally recorded

Vincent F. Testa, Jr. Chairman

Date

Kristen Panzo, Town Clerk

Date

