

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 4-17-25
AT 5:00pm AND RECEIVED BY
Kristen Panzo TOWN CLERK

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Robert F. Parisi Council Chambers
April 10, 2025
6:30 P.M.
RECORD OF VOTES & MINUTES

The Town Council Meeting on Thursday, April 10, 2025, was called to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was said. Councilors in attendance were Thomas Laffin, Christina Tatta on video conference call, Vincent Testa, Christopher Regan, Jesse Reynolds, Craig Fishbein, Autumn Allinson on video conference call and Chairman Joseph A. Marrone. Mayor Vincent Cervoni and Town Clerk Kristen Panzo were also present. Councilor Samuel Carmody was absent.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. FY 2025-2026 Budget Board of Education and Cafeteria

Councilor Regan read aloud a statement he had prepared for tonight's meeting pertaining to the BOE Budget.

Cafeteria Budget

Jim Bondi, Food Service Director of Wallingford Public Schools, went over his budget in detail.

Councilor Fishbein asked what was projected to be the bottom line for last year. Mr. Boni stated he had actual numbers from last year, not projected numbers. Councilor Fishbein stated that last year's projected number was a loss of \$365. He stated the actual loss was \$183,000. Dominic Barrone, Business Manager for the BOE stated that the amount of the \$183,000 was money invested per the State of CT. The State of CT gives the BOE a formula as to how much money they have and how much they can invest. Capital improvement projects were discussed and when the BOE buys equipment for the cafeteria. The way Mr. Bondi can spend money and when it is discussed.

BOE Budget

Danielle Bellizzi, Superintendent of Wallingford Public Schools
Dominic Barrone, Business Manager for BOE
Marlo Roscoe, Chairperson for BOE

Ms. Bellizzi shared the BOE 25-26 FY proposed budget with the Town Council and shared it with the public through a power point presentation. She explained in detail the BOE budget. She explained places in their budget where they can save money and where they are spending more money this FY.

Councilor Reynolds asked the question about the employees who were already at the top step in pay and the employees who would be reaching the top step in pay. He wanted to know out of the 402 at the top step, did the 166 employees who would reach the top step, if they were included in the 402 number. He asked if all students cost the same per year, no matter what services they get. Ms. Bellizzi stated that no, all students do not cost the same. While the student population might decrease, the cost per student might not and in fact the BOE can go up depending on how much it costs per student. Councilor Reynolds asked at any point, are there any elementary schools that do not have enough kids in them to be self-sustainable. Ms. Bellizzi's immediate answer is no. A study that was done back in 2022 on the elementary schools to see that exact thing and it was determined that it was not a problem, and the schools would be self-sustainable. There was a discussion about capital projects.

Councilor Testa stated that the Town Council cannot change anything in the BOE budget. The capital items requests were discussed. He asked if the elevator at Dag Hammarskjold Middle School and the elevator and Sheehan High School were in the BOE budget that Mayor Cervoni reduced. Mr. Barrone stated it is not. Mayor Cervoni stated it is not. Councilor Testa asked where in the budget this money would be if they were to approve the budget. He asked if this was to be in the budget where it would be. Mayor Cervoni stated that it is not in the budget. When the work is done, the town would project to bond it. Those items are capital improvement items. Councilor Testa is pleased with the BOE budget that was presented to them. The pass system for the bathroom passes was discussed.

Councilor Fishbein stated it is the council's responsibility to go through the budget line by line. He asked about the U-Pass system for the hall bathroom passes and wanted to know if it was being paid for through a capital expenditure or through the regular budget. Ms. Bellizzi and Mr. Barrone both stated that it is on the BOE operating budget. Councilor Fishbein asked why this wouldn't be a bonding project. Mr. Barrone stated that the E-Pass system is an annual license. Councilor Fishbein asked how this new hall pass systems works. Ms. Bellizzi stated that the kids will request the pass through the system from the teachers, who will approve it. The passes are timed, she said. Once the student is done with the pass and back in the classroom, the teachers mark the student as returned to the system. Councilor Fishbein asked about the infrastructure of the system. Ms. Bellizzi stated that this system is implemented in the two high schools already. Mr. Barrone stated that it is a subscription to use the service. He said it is a license and not any type of hardware. Councilor Fishbein asked about the absorption of the World Language teacher. He wanted to know is that because there is a decrease in students. Ms. Bellizzi stated that they have one teacher retiring and after looking at the changes to the middle school schedule and looking at the number of students in the classroom they can have one teacher with the number of students wanting to take World Language as a class without having to hire another teacher to replace the teacher retiring. Councilor Fishbein asked the same question about the Art Teacher and Ms. Bellizzi stated that it was the same scenario as the World Language teacher. He asked what Special Areas was in the budget. Ms. Bellizzi stated that Special Areas in the Elementary

Schools are P.E., Art, Music teachers in the schools. She explained why there would be a reduction in any of those teachers. There are not enough Special Area classrooms to stay at full capacity. Councilor Fishbein asked about the one-year contract for middle school. The custodian hire was discussed. The question of how the transition school, Adult Ed and Central Offices handled the custodial work was asked. Transition School has no custodian as of right now, Central Offices have a part time custodian and Adult Ed has the town custodian. The water and sewer service for the BOE was discussed. The Special Ed Contingency was asked about. Mr. Barrone stated that it is money the BOE set aside several years ago because at the time the BOE were going to have a large deficit in the budget. Instead of moving the money to the 2% fund it went into the Special Ed Contingency. Councilor Fishbein discussed different parts of the Boe Budget.

Chairman Marrone asked about the number of positions that were eliminated last year due to budget cuts. Ms. Bellizzi stated that around 39 positions were eliminated over the years. That accounts for everyone not just teachers. He asked if she could give an account of how much money that would have been. He stated that if you take the Water and Sewer budget from the BOE and put it with the Town Budget you will still be spending the same amount of money. There was a discussion on how the town pays for the water and sewer and how the BOE pays for it.

Councilor Reynolds asked how many elevators are at Dag Middle School. Ms. Bellizzi stated that there are three. He asked if the money the council gave approval for to fix an elevator at Dag Middle School, if this was the same elevator. Ms. Bellizzi stated that it is not that elevator that needs to be replaced.

Councilor Regan asked about the revenue funds that are shared with other towns and asked if that would continue because in the presentation that line item did not appear after 2024-2025. Ms. Bellizzi stated that they will have to follow up with that. Their thinking is that the contract will move forward. There was a discussion about possible marketing strategies to get other towns on board with this revenue stream, seeing how now, the BOE has more space.

Paul Ciardullo of Bayberry Drive is very unhappy with the almost 20% increase in taxes this year. He spoke about the demographics of Wallingford and how the town is not doing enough to get new people with children to come to Wallingford. He thinks the government of the town should be shrinking. He mentioned the audit reports. He asked the BOE if within the next four months they will be spending the remaining money from the performance budget. Mr. Barrone stated that they will spend most of the money. There was a discussion about whether the BOE was on budget with their performance budget.

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Panzo
Town Clerk

Meeting digitally recorded

Joseph A. Marrone III, Chairman

Date

Kristen Panzo, Town Clerk

Date