

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING BUDGET WORKSHOP

Robert F. Parisi Council Chambers

April 6, 2026

6:30 P.M.

RECORD OF VOTES AND MINUTES

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

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

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AT 4:54 pm AND RECEIVED BY
Kristen Panzo TOWN CLERK

Board of Assessment Appeals

Board of Ethics

Capital Appropriations

Finance Department

Debt Service

Contingency

Pension Contributions

Economic Development

Government Access TV

Human Resources

Risk Management

Employee Insurance & Benefits

Insurance-Property & Casualty

Information Technology

Law Department

Mayor

Probate Court

Program Planning

Registrar of Voters

Town Clerk

Town Council

4. Public Comment

Board of Assessment Appeals

Tim Sena, Comptroller talked about the BOAA Budget. The three members get a stipend; they have office expenses in the budget and continuing education expenses if they choose to use it.

Councilor Tatta asked why the expended number for FY 6/30/2025 was higher than in recent years. She wanted to know if that was due to more re-evaluations that were done due to the revaluation year. Mr. Sena said they add more money into the account when it is a revaluation year because it is more work they have to do. Councilor Tatta asked about the stipends and how that came to be. Mr. Sena said he does not know who to address this question. He said he will look into it.

Board of Ethics

Councilor Tatta mentioned that three of the members of the Board of Ethics receive town funds in this budget. She feels that people on the Board of Ethics should not be receiving town funds for their own organization. She thinks this is something to look into.

Capital Appropriations

Mr. Sena explained this is the capital appropriations that have not been spent this year and instead of the funds lapsing because the departments have not spent the money, they are asking for more time. If the departments spend the money by June 30, 2026, then the funds will not be carried over into the next FY budget.

Councilor Allinson asked about the line items that the Fire Department has for capital appropriations. Mr. Sena said she can ask the Fire Department when it is their night to speak why they have the items they do on this list.

Councilor Rivard wanted to know as a rule of thumb when determining capital expense versus bonding. Mr. Sena explained that you have to match the bonding with the useful life of the assets. Major construction projects is usually what gets bonded. The threshold for a capital expense was \$1,000 or higher. If it is an asset or a one time purchase it goes into capital. Councilor Rivard was asking about the capital non-recurring funds. Mr. Sena said that will be discussed at Thursday's Budget Workshop meeting. There was a discussion about the items on this page and the money amount.

Finance Department

Tim Sena, Comptroller spoke about his department and staff. There are four divisions of Finance. Assessor, Tax, Purchasing and Finance. They also handle all of the expenses for the mail room. He went over his budget.

Councilor Allinson asked about the shift in staffing and why it went down. Mr. Sena said he had someone who retired in the Finance Division. They have been evaluating the position, and they are putting in some part time hours because he does not think they will have to fill that position.

Councilor Tatta asked about the microfilming line item in the budget. Mr. Sena said that is digital archiving. Councilor Tatta asked about the software line item in the budget. Mr. Sena said that number went up because the Purchasing Department was buying a new software and that is the maintenance fee.

Debt Service

Tim Sena, Comptroller explained what the debt service is. It is the required payments on the town's bonds, principal and interest. He said this year the town is required to pay back \$4,510,000 in principal and \$2,252,593 in interest. The new debt financing line is used if the town bonds anything this year and he needs money; he can transfer it from this account. He can also use this money to finish bonding projects with out having to bond the project again.

Councilor Allinson asked what were the school projects that were bonded that are on the list. Mr. Sena said that the BOE renovated all 11 schools. It was a district wide renovation. There was a discussion of the type of work that was done to the schools.

Councilor Tatta discussed the pages included in the debt service proposed budget. She said out of the 16 projects that the town still owes money on, nine of the projects are BOE projects. The principal retirements line was discussed.

Councilor Allinson discussed how BOE is such a large part of the town budget with being 60% of the budget. There was a discussion about how much the schools gets used daily and yearly.

Councilor Reynolds asked Mr. Sena if he knew what the debt would be for the Community Pool Project. Mr. Sena said the project is about \$11 million dollars. There was a discussion about the debt payback for the Police Station bonding project.

Councilor Rossacci discussed the bonding projects for the schools and how they were necessary.

Contingency

Tim Sena, Comptroller said they are asking for \$400,000 for general and \$200,000 for contractual wages. Contingency gets contracted out. It does not get spent on a contingency. There is \$300,000 but he mentioned that the money will be coming to the council soon to be spent for the contracted retro wages that were just paid. He mentioned that the contingency fund might be down to \$50,000.

Chair Testa asked if the increase from last year is due to anticipation of a settlement of a contract. Mr. Sena explained that the \$200,000 they are asking for the for the settlement. There was a discussion as to why the general side increased to \$400,000 and Mr. Sena said that for a \$200 million dollar budget that is where the town needs to be.

Councilor Tatta asked why the numbers for the FY ended 2025 expended and then through this expended is left blank. There was a discussion as to what the contingency number was before the money got transferred out. Mr. Sena will have to get the information on the amount and where the money was transferred to. There was a discussion about what contingency can be used for.

Councilor Rivard wanted to know the process of the contingency fund and what is an appropriate balance. Mr. Sena said there is no set policy of number to have. For a \$200 million dollar budget, \$200,000 is a tenth of a percent. There was a discussion on what to carry as a contingency fund.

Economic Development

Don Crouch, Economic Development Specialist, discussed the Economic Development Commission.

Councilor Rivard talked about growth in town and how that needs to continue to happen. There was a discussion about how this can happen with only one person. The economics to bring in a business were discussed and sometimes how difficult that can be. Marketing and digital assets were discussed and how they can be a useful tool once the new website is up and running.

Chair Testa asked about the transportation reimbursement line item. There was a discussion whether the EDC goes to trade shows to get their name out there and get new businesses to come to Wallingford.

Councilor Rossacci wanted to know about the relationship with Wallingford Center Inc and the EDC. The EDC is in conversation with the WCI yearly audit. Some of the board members are also on the EDC. The EDC helps out with strategy and the big picture for the WCI. Mr. Crouch discussed meeting with the Town Planner and Liz Davis of WCI to discuss signage and building facade. There was a discussion about meeting with the Town Planner and taking daily about projects and ideas that can better the town of Wallingford.

Councilor Allinson asked about the promotional expenses. Mr. Crouch explained that it can be print cards, pins, sponsorship of events re just some examples. There was a discussion about paid advertising.

Government Access TV

Tom Caneschi, Supervisor for Wallingford Government Television discussed what his department does.

Councilor Laffin wanted to know how the department was handling not having the manager they had requested in last year's budget that did not get filled. Mr. Caneschi said that things are ok and that he excepted the manager position to be in the budget for this FY. His department will still be performing just like they are no with no manager, that will not change.

Mayor Cervoni wanted to praise the part time staff in this department for all of the hard work they are doing.

Councilor Reynolds asked about the staffing. Mr. Caneschi said that they have 3 staff members at the moment and are waiting on a new hire to come on with will make 4 staff members including him. There is potential for 7 staff members. There was a discussion if more staff is needed in the future to keep up with everything.

Councilor Laffin asked about the hours the crew Mr. Caneschi has can work. Mr. Caneschi said they can work 19.5 hours per week. Sometimes they will hit that number and sometimes they won't. It depends on how much work there is to be done at any given time.

Human Resources & Risk Management

Jim Hutt, Human Resource Director and Kurt Treiber, Risk Manger talked about what their departments do.

Councilor Rivard wanted to thank them for thinking about succession planning for the future. He believes that transition planning is very important.

Councilor Allinson wanted to know about the exam budget line item and why the number is going down. Mr. Hutt explained that they looked at the current budget and the money they have there and looked at the Neo Gov, the online applicant tracking. He said looking at the positions they will need to fill, they expect to do less for Police and Fire, which are expensive, he felt that it would be less expensive for the upcoming budget. There was a discussion about software support and how that number is going down due to having some of that support going to the Information Technology budget.

Councilor Tatta asked about the budget being \$230,000 less than the current year's budget. She said looking at the bottom line does not reflect that. There was a discussion as to why the numbers are the way they are. Chair Testa talked about how the Human Resources page in the budget book is just for personnel and expenses. There was a discussion about the number of employees. There was a discussion about the position being created for succession planning in the future.

Mr. Treiber talked about the new position that will be created through the succession planning when they retire at some point. There was a discussion about what they person would actually be doing. They would not just be sitting behind a desk all day, they would be out in the field.

Councilor Rossacci wanted to discuss if the town manager per say position in the future would be in charge of overseeing town projects. Mr. Treiber explained that not knowing some of the skill sets of the projects, they could possibly help with them. This person being hired can be someone who can work with the other departments in collaboration.

Chair Testa wanted to know about purchasing services for the town. Mr. Hutt explained that they just replaced the insurance consultant that was working for the Town of Wallingford. They went with the number two bidder for the health and life insurance bidding. They are in the process of bringing them onboard. They may have to go out to bid or maybe be able to extend the contract as long as the vendor was to keep their price the same as it is now.

Insurance- Property & Casualty

Councilor Tatta asked about the property insurance & casualty for the BOE. She assumes it is in the general government budget because all of the insurance runs through the HR Office. Mr. Treiber said that is correct.

Councilor Reynolds wanted to know about the employee insurance & other benefits and why the health insurance went from \$7.8 million to an ask of \$9.1 million with the mayor approving \$8.3 million. He asked about the unfilled positions that the town carries each year and asked how many there is and how much money there is in this insurance. Mr. Hutt explained the number of employees who do not take the employee insurance and what that number is. Out of approximately 425 employees that work full time for the town and the sewer and the electric division, approximately 70 employees do not take the employee health insurance. If they were to take the insurance it would add 16% more to the number it would add about \$2.3 million dollars more to the health insurance line item for the entire town. There was a discussion about the cost of health insurance for a single person, a 2 person family and a family.

Councilor Rivard asked if they feel that we have the most competitive rates and policies. Mr. Hutt explained that our insurance is good. They have made several changes to the health insurance plan over the past few years, going from a PO plan to a high deductible plan which brought savings to the town. If there is high dollar claims then the town pays more for insurance. Over the years, there have been many high dollar claims. There was a discussion about looking at the coverage each year to see if they can save on coverage anywhere.

Mayor Cervoni said that if they have a better claims experience then they will have a better re quote. When they were looking at the insurance for this FY they were looking at a 10% increase and as the consultant looked over the numbers the closer we got to the final budget it dropped down to about 7.5%.

Councilor Tatta asked about the general government page in the budget and asked if it is just for town employees and not including the BOE. There was a discussion as to whether the BOE was included in these numbers for employee insurance & other benefits. Mr. Hutt explained that what she was looking at in the budget book was for general government only and not for BOE of Utilities. There was a discussion about workman's comp and who that covers. It covers town employees and BOE but not Utilities.

Chair Testa asked for clarification on the health insurance numbers. Mr. Hutt explained the jump in the numbers compared to what the mayor approved in his budget was due to the number in new positions that are being asked for by different departments.

Pension Contributions

Mr. Hutt explained that pension contributions are going down from 25.3% of pay to 22.7%. They are asking for less this year than last year.

Councilor Carmody asked why the length of service wards program for the volunteer firefighters was reduced by \$42,000. Mr. Hutt explained that when the LOSAP agreement was revised, there was a question as to who was covered in that new LOSAP agreement. After the evaluation was done and began to implement it they found out that it was only for a specific group of individuals who were active volunteers. When the LOSAP agreement was approved by the Town Council, HR realized it did not apply to as many people as they originally thought and scaled back. Mr. Sena explained that the actuaries provide that number.

Councilor Tatta talked about the pension contributions and how they are a large part of the town's budget. It is \$11.3 million dollars.

Information Technology

Mayor Cervoni said this budget just reflects an increase in the general cost of doing business and in supporting the use for technology for town employees.

Councilor Tatta asked about the purchasing and software support. Mayor Cervoni said as the town takes on software packages they will involve the other departments. There was a discussion about there being no capital for this department. Mayor Cervoni said there is about \$146,000 allocated to continue replacing desktop computers and replace with laptop machines.

Mr. Sena explained that the \$400,000 will be used somewhat by the IT Department because of multiple users for software. He said that Munis used to be in the Finance budget and now it is in the IT budget and is about 4176,000. Microsoft 365 licenses for the town is about \$97,000.

Councilor Reynolds asked about the purchases of the licenses and if they are a one time purchase or not. Mr. Sena said most of these are continuing agreements. If a department was buying new software the initial installation purchase would be in their capital line item and then the annual fees would wind up in this account.

Law Department

Janis Small, Corporation Counsel and Geoffrey Einhorn, Town Attorney. Mr. Einhorn talked about what the department does. There are no changes in personnel or their budget to discuss.

Mayor

Vincent Cervoni, Mayor explained what his office does and talked about the staffing in his office. He explained the capital item in his budget. It is the copier that is 10 years old and they cannot get people out to fix it anymore.

Councilor Allinson talked about the mayor's salary and how it is low in comparison to other towns. She would like to see that salary line increased. Mayor Cervoni said that the charter said if the compensation is to change for an elected official that it has to change during an election year.

Councilor Laffin asked if the machine they are buying is a lease or is the department outright buying it. Mayor Cervoni said they will be buying the machine. There was a discussion about who will be managing the new machine,

Councilor Tatta asked about the employees' line in the budget. She asked about the part time new position. Mayor Cervoni said it is their part time secretary that they have already been working in the office, and it should not state that it is a new position because it is not. She asked about purchase services negotiations and what that is. Mayor Cervoni explained that it allows them to deal with collective bargaining whether that is assigning some of those funds to the Law Department budget for legal support. They have an outside contract attorney who handles the HR and collective bargaining issues. There was a discussion about what department this line item should go to.

Chair Testa spoke about the staff in the mayor's office have been very helpful when it comes to him and moving into the role of Chair. They are very professional and kind.

Probate Court

Patrick Birney, Probate Judge spoke about the history of the Probate Court and what his office does. He discussed his budget.

Councilor Rivard thanked Judge Birney for talking about the mission of the Probate Court.

Councilor Carmody asked about the capital item in the budget and if it is for security purposes. Judge Birney explained the need for the capital item and how other probate courts and including children's probate courts and how they all have past key entries which facilitate quick exit.

Councilor Tatta talked about the advances to the court itself that Judge Birney did and how impressive it is to see that. She said the staff there is wonderful.

Program Planning

Don Crouch, economic Development Specialist talked about the department and their budget.

Councilor Carmody asked about the staffing in the office and how one position was not granted. There was a discussion about a work study position in the office. It is a college internship who work summer hours. There was a question as to whether that position would be useful this FY. Mayor Cervoni said it is a question of someone's ability to supervise a program. If you take in a college intern you have to have a program for them to help with. They earn college credits for working in the town.

Councilor Tatta asked if in fact the work study program position is still in play or not. Mayor Cervoni said the budget reflects that they are funding the position. They can find someone to fill the position but whether they have the staff to supervise the college intern or not would be the question. There was a discussion as to if the position should remain if there is no one to fill the position in the next FY.

Registrar of Voters

Joan Ives-Parisi talked about what their department does and she discussed the budget.

Councilor Carmody thanked her and her staff for the job they do and for ho much they do. He asked about the maintenance of equipment line item and how it went up. Mrs. Ives-Parisi explained that the state bought all registrar of voters in Ct new voting machines and the new company that they have to use to maintain these machines is what the increase is for. There was a discussion as to the increase in budget. The new scanners have a lot of pieces to maintain and that cost more money because the old scanner machines did not have so many pieces.

Councilor Tatta asked about the early voting and talked about the cost of early voting. She asked if the state gives them any money towards that. Mrs. Ives-Parisi explained that yes

they do get money from the state. The first year they received \$10,000 and this FY they received a little over \$17,000. It goes by how many people are in each town, how many people voted last election, etc.

Councilor Rivard asked about the pay rate for the poll workers and if that is a state standard of how much they get paid. Mrs. Ives-Parisi explained that minimum wage went up and that they set the rates for their workers. She tries to increase it every two to three years. There was a discussion about the poll workers and how people in town want to help out.

Councilor Laffin wanted to thank the registrar of voters for their service for the town and all they do for the elections.

Town Clerk

Kristen Panzo, Town Clerk talked about what her department does and she discussed her budget.

Councilor Tatta asked about the maintenance fees for the recording company Cott that the Town Clerk's Office uses and asked why it went up so much. Ms. Panzo explained that they company got bought out by Valsoft sometime last year and have just increased fees over the years. Councilor Tatta asked if she could get a copy of the contract to see why the fees went up so much.

Town Council

Chair Testa said that he did not make any changes to their budget. He brought up the line item for the secretary position that has not been filled.

Councilor Tatta talked about the \$3,100 for the secretary position would not fund an actual secretary but would fund a recording secretary like they had talked about prior.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen Panzo
Town Clerk

Meeting digitally recorded

Vincent F. Testa, Jr. Chairman

Date

Kristen Panzo, Town Clerk

Date