



TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID MEETING – VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON
April 30, 2025
Special Town Council Meeting
Council Chambers

APPROVED MINUTES

1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Black-Burke called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor Nuchette Black-Burke, Deputy Mayor Darleen Klase, Councilor Mary Armstrong, Councilor Ronald Eleveld, Councilor Kristin Gluck Hoffman, Councilor Anthony King, Councilor Ojala Naeem, Councilor William Pelkey and Councilor Walker

2) PUBLIC COMMENT

LeighAnn Tyson, 141 Giddings Avenue, said that we are at that time again where one side is telling us to not vote for our town budget and the other side is telling us that we must vote. She was born and raised in this town. She returned here after living in other areas. She also worked for the high school which she graduated from, bought a little house, raised her daughter here, and she's hoping to be able to remain here in her retirement. Hard times are upon us. Not 7 years ago, \$75 at Geissler's filled the entire trunk of her SUV. My haul the other day was barely 3 bags. She explained what she could pay for 10 years ago as compared to now. Services that we may take for granted now are in jeopardy of being cut if the May 13th budget fails. Road repairs, police presence, fire services, schools, classrooms and other programs are at stake. She explained more services that could be eliminated. Please read the budget yourself at townofwindsorct.com on the town's website. It is bare bones. The majority of increases are due to base costs such as electricity, heating etc. There are no extras.

Dr. Linda Alexander, 155 Fieldstone Drive said we've heard from numerous people that they cannot afford these taxes and yet there was a reluctance to make any reductions to proposed spending the other night. Town schools were given money for positions that were supposed to be temporary, but when the time came to roll back that spending, the schools insisted they could not do it. She would also like to address the issue of class size.

She had a very successful educational career. She did not have low student teacher, ratios. She can remember 32 people in a class, or even more, at university, and even more in medical school. We did not have that very intense teacher to student ratio, and yet we were very successful. We learned we helped each other. So there are alternatives to having very small teacher to student ratios, and that could be helpful.

John Cassarino, 48 Arrowbrook Road, said he is opposed to the current budget proposal. Why does the town need brand new fire trucks? The town should not be in the business of making

money, but to provide for the taxpayers, the homeowners. To the Town Council person that spoke about lowering levels of the Town and Board of Education budgets and them being online. He looked online for 20 minutes last night for the budget. They weren't there. He also called the Town Manager's office and she couldn't find them either. There's nothing there other than topics. He's paying for people's salaries. He wants to see them. He wants to see the salaries. He wants to see the overtime, and he wants to see bonuses for every single person. To the Town Council person that spoke about not getting a stipend for being on the Town Council. He believes that the Town Council should be dissolved, due to the fact that they voted to reevaluate property taxes and pay it within 2 years instead of 5 years. To the callers who spoke about the Board of Education, you need to spend some time at the Catholic schools. Their students are in 3 to 6 grades higher than public students, with a 10th of the budget that the Board of Education has. The Board of Education puts money in a bucket that was not approved with the State of Connecticut. If that is not fraud, I do not know what is.

Aaron Jubrey, 38 Crabapple Road stated he wanted to thank all the volunteers in front of him here and all the volunteers on the Board of Education. He knows that none of them are paid and we may disagree but he thanks them all for their time. As we consider this budget, it is crucial we recognize the undeniable importance of providing sufficient funding to our schools not only to support our students and teachers, but to uplift our entire community. He thanked the volunteer firefighters as well. Educating our children is investing directly into our future. When we provide robust funding to schools, we are empowering our students with the tools they need for success. It's not just about the students, it's about valuing and supporting our teachers, the cornerstone of our educational system. Let's remember that strong schools directly contribute to higher property values. When we invest in education, we foster a reputation of excellence in our communities that attracts new families. This is about collective responsibility and shared prosperity. Investing in our schools is investing in the community as a whole, creating a vibrant, engaged, and educated population that drives social and economic progress. Let's remember that the foundation we lay today through educational funding will echo throughout generations. It is not just a moral obligation, it is a strategic imperative that ensures our community thrives economically, socially and culturally. Let's continue to work together for the betterment of our town and its future.

Sharon Gauthier, 142 Sunnyfield Drive, said she has lived in town for 60 years and it's a wonderful town. It's about the people, the community. Yet, we continue to lack the involvement of our residents throughout the town. We are the people and we have the power. She's been in healthcare for 40 years. People complain to each other and they complain at meetings they go to. They complain to neighbors but do nothing else. We have two senators and two representatives in our town. One is noticeable, the other is not. We have two senators, where are they? Have you called them or met with them? Have you gone to the Capitol or online to see what they are and are not supporting? She has spoken to them. She met with her senator and told him he needs to get involved in our town. You voted for them—they are there for you. It's not Windsor's fault that the economy is the way it is. Health Insurance has increased for the Board of Education and the Town. She met with the leader of the Public Health committee, Dr. Anne Wah, and had a zoom call with her to discuss the failures of our system with the elderly. Because of those meetings, there are now 2 bills that will probably pass this year. She explained who she has spoken to in the legislature and what the outcome was. Make the time to activate

your responsibility as a citizen to do something else but just complain. She stated that we have good services in Town. Her advice to all is to show up and speak up. Only you have the ability to change, and when you don't vote, and you don't go to the people who can help change things, sitting at home and complaining won't help. We have a very angry world right now, and we all know that we can try to be neighbors and help in some way, but be civic minded. Join your community, and you'll feel better about everything in life. Thank you.

Joseph Perry, 347 Rood Avenue, said his taxes for his house in 2022 was at \$3,511. It went up in 2023 to \$3,947. That's a \$326 increase or 12.4%. He now sees that they are projected to go up to \$4,508. That's another \$560 increase or 14.2%. Now that he qualifies as a senior, maybe he can ask that getting help is based on adjusted gross income rather than the gross income. Maybe that would help a lot of the seniors in town.

Ariela Rephone, 28 Spring Street, stated she's a fifth grader at JFK. She's here to talk about something really important to all the kids in Windsor, our school system. Imagine a place where you feel excited to learn every single day. That's what our schools in Windsor are like, and it's all thanks to our amazing teachers. Our teachers in Windsor are not just people who teach us facts. They're like superheroes who can help us discover new things, understand tricky ideas, and even when we're feeling down, they know how to make us smile. But there's something that makes it harder for our amazing teachers to do their best. And that's how many kids are in each classroom. When there are too many students, it's harder for the teachers to help everyone. Imagine trying to answer 23 questions all at the same time. It can be noisy and distracting, and sometimes it's hard to get a chance to ask questions or share our ideas. She's asking them today to please think about the students who don't get a chance to vote when you're making decisions about the budget. Please don't cut the school budget. We kids are the future, and our teachers are helping us get there.

George Slate, 74 Ethan Drive, said he cannot make any comments about expenditures until the town gets back to a decent level on OPEB. If you go back to last year's annual report as audited, the town spent \$2.5 million for post-retirement medical benefits pay as you go. This year you're putting the budget on a \$1.5 million credit card. You know what the problem with credit cards is. It's not the debt, it's the interest. It just keeps accumulating. But you won't touch OPEB, so he can't talk expenditures with you. He sent them out something about senior tax relief. For his clients that are in the senior tax programs, they talk about three meals, two meals, or one meal per day. When can I keep my temperature at 50 degrees? How high do you want me to bring it up? Those are the people that you need to take care of. What he offered to them last night via email was an opportunity to not increase taxes but to decrease it for the 432 people currently on senior tax relief. You can give them all \$850 or you can give those under \$22,700 one thousand dollars or \$1,500. Let's start and do something. Please help the 432 people and help them in a significant way.

Eric Weiner, 130 Palisado Avenue, said he sees that Ariela has left the room, but Windsor's in good hands if that is our future. He apologized that the Town Council were all targets of gross misinformation. The effort they all put in and the job they do is extraordinary. He echoed George Slate's comments. We are a town that values people, whether they are young students through to our elderly. We must look after the low income seniors in town. He would take what George

is proposing and even push it a little higher. Those are the people we need to look out for and at the same time, recognizing the budgetary situation that we are in is likely to continue for the next 10 years. We haven't done a fundamental shift in priorities in budgeting for our services, and I'm afraid going forward, we are going to have to make some significant cuts. Otherwise, we will push people out of town. From a timing point of view, doing a senior tax relief is tricky. If we could push the referendum for a couple of weeks, he would be grateful for that to get that adjustment through prior to going to the residents for a vote on the budget.

Chloe Taylor, 88 Farmstead Lane, stated she is a proud senior of Windsor High School. She's had an incredible experience in Windsor Public schools since kindergarten, from academics to athletics to the arts. She's so grateful for opportunities she's been given. But she's here tonight not just for herself but for the students whose voices often go unheard. Her younger brother is on the autistic spectrum. He's bright, capable, and deserving of the same strong and supportive education she's received. But she's worried that when budget decisions are made, students like him are always considered, their needs are unique, and when funding is cut or resources are stretched, it's often those who need the most support who feel it the hardest. As a student athlete, some town families have to pay to play sports. That leaves many students out of valuable opportunities for growth, teamwork, and leadership. She recently turned 18 acceptances into over 20 colleges and universities. She knows how to make informed decisions. She will be voting for the first time for the budget this year. She plans on voting yes for the town budget with no further cuts to town services or the Board of Education and she hopes everyone else in Windsor will do the same.

Raisha Khan, 25 Colton Street, said she's honored to serve as the current student representative from Windsor High School to the Board of Education this summer as a senior. She's spent most of her educational journey in Windsor Public schools, and she's seen firsthand how decisions made here shape the lives of students and families across our community. She's also the oldest of 3 siblings. So when she speaks tonight, she's not only thinking about her own experience, but also the experiences of every student who walks through the doors of our school every day. While she's not old enough to vote, she's asking the Council to make decisions that reach beyond today. Windsor has always been a place that believes in its youth. That belief shows when you invest in our schools, our families, and our futures. That belief shows when you invest in our schools, our families, and our futures. She asks that they approve a budget that is equitable, one that ensures all students regardless of background or need have access to the resources and support that they deserve. She hopes that her voice and the voices of every student she represents matter in this process. We're not just asking for support for today. We're asking you to help leave something strong and meaningful behind for the Windsor of tomorrow.

Becky Jacobson, 50 Lighthouse Hill Road, said she is here to read letters on behalf of other parents that she has received. From Gregg Lee, 348 Merriman Road, via letter he stated as the son of a teacher that worked in the Windsor public school system for nearly 40 years, and a special education teacher at that, he has a very strong opinion about why these services for these types of teachers and everyday teachers help these students learn how to grow and to become leaders that eventually take care of the senior citizens right now in this town. As a nearly 9 year member of Windsor little league as a volunteer. he knows what it means to need services and avenues for these children to be able to run and play and build leadership skills and team

building skills through the services offered in this town as well as through sports. Also as the parent of 2 neurodivergent children that have needed these services that Windsor has provided to them like 504 plans and IEPs, without such services, the school system and my children would be at a loss for the tools vital to their education.

Jennifer Rodriguez McClintock of 164 Toby Avenue stated via letter she's been a member of the Windsor community since buying her home here in 2002. For the first 16 years she did not have a child in the Windsor public school system, yet always voted yes, in support for the school budget. She's a pediatric physical therapist who values the care and growth of all children. For 27 years, she has worked with children of all abilities who need physical, cognitive, and emotional support. It takes a village to care, nurture, and help the children in our community grow and prosper. She can appreciate the professionals who help support our children cognitively and especially emotionally. SEI teachers and staff were not a part of my education growing up. But she wishes that they had been. Now that my son is in the 6th grade at Sage Park Middle School, and halfway through his educational career in the Windsor public school system, she could not be happier with the education he has encountered. Every principal in our system has been nothing but stellar. Their engagement and excitement with students, educators, and staff is phenomenal. They are present, visible, and show that they care about the students and staff. She is always amazed at the opportunities our children have because of Windsor schools. My son still has 6 more years in the Windsor public school system. She will always support the education system because they have been able to provide fantastic education experiences, emotional support, character building to all children in our community. The schools support not only the education of children, but so much more they help to grow the whole child.

Sarah Thornton, 9146 Poquonock Avenue, said she moved here about a year and a half ago. She has two children, one in 5th grade at Clover Street, and one will be entering Oliver Ellsworth in the fall. She understands, from looking at the budget and speaking to people that the increases that we're seeing are just mostly the cost of inflation. Everything is going up in price. We're all experiencing that in our own budgets at home as well. She understands that even with the increases, we're still not replacing some teachers that are leaving. She feels really strongly that we need to increase the budget at least as much as is on the table right now, in order for the kids to keep receiving the kind of education that they need. I've been a teacher for 20 years. She sees that the kids everywhere need so much. She has never seen a school district offer so much support to children. It goes so far with the principals, the teachers, the social and emotional support. My daughter has needed that, and other children have needed it more than we've ever seen before. She thinks that not everyone who went through school a long time ago understands the impact of our world today on kids and how much support they need just to be healthy and develop in a way that they grow into healthy and productive adults that we really need in our town and in the world. She does want to support voting and she'll be voting yes for the budget.

Sally Grossman, 106 Mack Road, stated so many people are rightfully upset about the rising costs of almost everything coupled with stagnant pay. It has become increasingly difficult to afford the basics like food and housing, but this issue is not specific to Windsor. It is a nationwide issue. People asking for cuts to the budget that would have a meaningful impact on their finances likely don't realize the drastic negative effects that would be felt by the entire town. She doesn't want to pay taxes any more than anyone else, but she's not willing to harm our community

members because our country is in a rough economic situation. People want to cut the budget, but who are we willing to sacrifice? Is it the elderly who are on a fixed income? Is it our children, many who came out today to speak and advocate for themselves, who rely on our education system to be able to become productive members of our society? Are you willing to give up services that benefit you for the betterment of the child? I just want to add that this budget only maintains current services. It's not adding to it.

Pamela Woodruff, 72 Toby Avenue, said she is a teacher herself, not in the district of Windsor, but in another school district, and just wanted to advocate her support of voting yes on this budget. All schools need every dollar that the towns can give them in order to maintain services to support our children. She feels that it's very important that we don't lose any staff members, because as a teacher she can say that she's very happy with how Windsor public schools is supporting her child, who is a child with special needs. She doesn't want other children to not get the same support that her son has gotten so far.

3) FINAL DELIBERATIONS AND VOTE

Mayor Black-Burke called for a recess at 7:17 PM and asked the Councilors to come back by 7:25 PM.

Mayor Black-Burke said that there have been a lot of questions/concerns about Great Pond in regards to this budget being driven because of the Great Pond district. She just wants to add that with Great Pond, yes, there is money that is being collected, but a portion of that comes back to us as agreed upon, but that is not a full driver of our budget.

Town Manager Souza added the town is receiving in total over \$4 million of taxes from the properties that are in the Great Pond Improvement District. Per our agreement, we returned 50% back to the Great Pond Improvement District to pay for their debt service on public infrastructure, meaning roadways, the water and sewer. Just to reiterate the private investment at Great Pond is well over \$200 million of private investment between what has occurred there in the last roughly 7 to 8 years.

Councilor Eleveld said we've heard members of the public, and we received the communication related to the senior tax credit. If there was a decision to do something, what is the process there? Town Manager Souza said there are two elements. Senior Tax relief is via an ordinance and so the ordinance requires a public hearing on the proposed amendments. It's essentially a two step process. The Town Council sets a public hearing date and that has to be noticed appropriately in the newspaper. Then the Council holds that public hearing, and they can choose to consider that same evening the proposed amendments. There are two elements to the senior tax relief. There's one related to the income eligibility threshold/ceilings, then there is the element regarding the level of benefit or financial benefit to those folks that are homeowners that are eligible for that tax credit. If the Town Council chooses to make adjustments to this current budget that's before us, he would suggest that the way to do that would be to adjust the benefit amount, because based upon approximately 450 that are enrolled, we would be able to estimate for you them what that dollar amount would be depending on what the level you would like to increase it. If you want to also include increasing the income ceilings, then that's a little bit harder

of estimating how big that umbrella is broadened. So it's a little bit harder to make that estimate this evening. Second of all from a timing perspective, you can make adjustments to the budget this evening for the estimated improvements and then if you don't change the income eligibility, then you don't have to adjust the application period because applications are due May 15. The simplest and easiest way to provide relief for this coming fiscal year would be through increasing the benefit amount and at a future date the Town Council can consider other options.

Councilor Eleveld said simplistically put, this would have to be brought up at the next Town Council meeting with the public hearing at the following Town Council meeting. If you stayed to the regular schedule, we could possibly do a special meeting if there's enough time for a notice. The effect of this would be to in essence increase everybody else's taxes, based upon the communication we received. Presuming the numbers that we received are accurate, that would be about \$600-\$650,000 of additional expense that would have to be borne by all the rest of the taxpayers. Correct? Town Manager Souza said it depends on the level of benefit increase.

Councilor Eleveld said it is utilizing the communication that we had received. Did you see it? Town Manager Souza said that he did. Councilor Eleveld then stated that he is making a presumption that the calculations are accurate. The person who did it has a tendency to be pretty good with numbers.

Councilor Naeem said she wants to start off by thanking everyone that both came out tonight and came out Monday night. Right now, we are faced with impacts at a level that we have not seen in the decade prior to the last two years, both in terms of revaluation and the impact on the housing market, but also in terms of inflation, and what we might see coming down the road as an impact of changes happening at the Federal level. We are all here collectively. I think I can say this with confidence, to do what is in the best interest of every single person in this town, and that's not always easy, because we all have different needs. I think we've heard strongly that parents and students think education is important, it builds the future. It builds how successful those coming from Windsor are going to be as they continue to grow and mature in their lives. But we've also heard from many seniors to Councilor Eleveld's point, especially those that are on fixed incomes. Impacts of revaluation have been challenging to figure out how to come up with the funds to pay for the drastic increases that we're seeing from housing property changes. She wants to remind everyone that she doesn't think we addressed this tonight, but there was a question on it that the revaluation that happened is State mandated. It is not something that this Town Council chose to do. It is state mandated. We are required to do it every 5 years, and we will be doing it again in about 3 years' time. We've spent the last month looking at the town side of the budget, looking at each department. I've said this before, but she thinks that over the last decade, we were very cautious on increasing our spending and we are playing some catch up right now. Playing catch up with not just the rate of inflation we're seeing this year, but from prior years we're playing catch up on market rates for salaries, as we see vacancies open up or new positions needed. We'll state there are no net new positions in this budget. Our budget and she can speak definitely on the town side, but she sees it on both sides, it's a pretty lean budget. It is bare minimum. She thinks we need to be investing more, but I recognize that we're also dealing with a revaluation. She expects that tonight we will have much discussion on how do we handle this? What do we do about it? But she does want to address something that we didn't discuss during the last month which is the senior tax credit that

Councilor Eleveld was pointing to. Back in December the Finance Committee did meet to discuss it. We were reviewing a handful of different credits, a couple of them that we did bring forward and pass and approve as a Council, including changes to the tax credits for veterans as well as for line of duty deaths. She thinks we heard it best tonight from Eric Weiner, that we are a town that values all people whether you are young students or elderly seniors. It's important that we continue investing in the future of our students. But she also thinks it's important that we recognize there are challenges that many of our seniors on fixed incomes are facing. So tonight she would like to hopefully return to some of the recommendations and discussions that we had as a Finance Committee. She knows we didn't make a formal recommendation to the Council, but as we deliberate, she would like to explore the opportunity to increase the credit match that we currently have from 100% to 150%.

Councilor Pelkey said we heard a lot of different things from some folks tonight. We are genuinely here for everybody in town and we're genuinely concerned. Just the realities of the economics are just not going to be good, you know. We can't all be winners, and that's really unfortunate in this situation. A couple of things he wants to address is the whole thing about our stipends. We really are all volunteers, and to the people out there who defended us in that regard, thank you very much. Just a couple other things that he wants to point out. To my ears, I'm not saying that what's been out there isn't true and hasn't been said, but I don't know any of the 9 of us or any members that are on the Board of Education who have realistically suggested pay to play sports at our public schools. So I don't think that's ever really been an item of discussion. He doubts it would be even on the table. Not that we have line item control. He doesn't see that going there, and even for special education, we can't take away many of the special education services because they're required by law. We would have to fund them in some way, shape or form. We just can't cut those things. He would like to dispel some of those rumors that it didn't matter if every single member of the Board of Education and the Superintendent wanted to get rid of them, we can't.

Councilor Pelkey asked Town Manager Souza in terms of the referendum being delayed, can you speak to what the logistics and what the impact of that is, if we wanted to delay something. If you can provide a general understanding what that does to tax bills going out, what it does to the funds we have and all that, it would be appreciated.

Town Manager Souza stated that we've had referendums not pass on the first attempt. There's a small window in which the Town Council, can readjust the budget. You'd be able to probably have a small window, say, maybe a week or two, to be able to push a referendum out. But what that does is it eliminates the ability to have a second referendum in May if the first referendum did not pass. That would push out the tax bills. According to the *Town Charter* we have a certain period of time prior to the first of July. We usually send the bills out in the third week of June. So, everything gets pushed back at least a minimum of a month. That would be part of the procedure just from a calendar perspective. The impact would potentially be a loss in one month of interest earnings. We receive probably 75% out of tax dollars within July and the first couple of weeks of August. We would lose that opportunity for interest earnings if it were to be delayed.

Councilor Naeem stated she would like to understand what would it look like if we were to cut on the town side about a percent. She believes when she takes out Great Pond and the sewer expenses and a couple of others were at about 5.3% is what you mentioned two nights ago. Town Manager Souza said correct 5.3% percentage wise over Fiscal Year 24. Dollar wise, that's about a \$2.9 million dollar increase year over year.

Councilor Naeem asked Town Manager Souza to share a little bit more about if we were to cut about a percent, what would that look like? Town Manager Souza stated that if you brought that 5.4% down one percentage point, that's in round numbers about \$550,000 would be reduced. It's all about the choices. There are opportunities where we could reduce our pay as you go capital. Town Council did make reductions last year in the FY 25 budget. So there could be possibilities to reduce that for example in the area of paving and sidewalks where the proposed budget includes a \$55,000 increase year over year for those two items. You could reduce that \$55,000 and have that level funded with FY 25 amounts. There are opportunities to look at our debt service allocation. Per the budget parameters we've increased the General Fund contribution for debt service by 3%. That is essentially predicated upon borrowing the budget that you see before you at about \$7.5 million worth of bonds and notes this spring. As we've gone through the spring, that number is reduced down to approximately \$5.5 million in terms of actual new borrowing. We have room within the proposed budget to reduce the debt service allocation if the Council chose to. When you start going beyond that, you're really looking at starting to eliminate levels of service. Particularly when you look at Public Safety, which is an important service that we provide, but that is the largest non-board of education operating budget. Of that, the Police Department is clearly the largest. We have a vacancy within the police dispatch. Our dispatchers do all three emergency services (volunteer fire department, ambulance services) as well as public works during certain times and events. We're looking potentially at a headcount in the Police Department. We could do a partial year police officer vacancy savings. We could go back to contributing funds to OPEB trust. Last year, the Council had to reduce that by approximately \$700,000, but there is still \$135,000 in that account. That is not an immediate reduction to level services. From there, you start getting into some of the other pieces. This budget has \$30,000 for the senior lunch program. To make up some lost revenue from our other partners, that could be reduced and be substituted, at least for the short term with funds from the General Fund Unreserved Fund balance to maintain that service. Looking at 2027 in order to maintain that service, it would be an automatic increase to the general operating budget. Monies from sustainability and renewable energy could be trimmed back. Once you go beyond the \$550,000, you are definitely into reduction of force.

Councilor Neem explained what happened last year when they had to cut services back. She feels that with what the Town Manager explained, that means going back to the same level as this past fiscal year, but those things need to be rebuilt again because if we don't, your car will be hitting more potholes and cracks in the road. That is not something that we want as it impacts the quality of life. About two years ago, they discussed the challenges with response times of ambulance services. We needed to beef up the headcount and dispatch. So cutting back potentially puts us at a threat of not having a rapid enough response time as we need and not having dispatchers available to cover shifts. Regarding OPEB, we heard a speaker say it is

probably one of those things that most people don't think about or care about. But it is significantly impactful and will cost this town a lot if we don't make sure we're continuing to grow into it. She expounded on the need for resource officers during events in town. She does not want to cut lunches at the Senior Center as seniors need that service.

Councilor Pelkey said if someone has a \$400,000 market value home, the assessed value would be 70% of that. With the budget as proposed, if he looks at the 28.92 mill rate, \$1 on the mill rate comes out to \$280 for the year. To move that \$1 mill rate, it's an add or subtract of \$4.5 million. To get to the \$280, that's a tremendous add or reduction one way or the other that you have to do just to shift the pile to have us have anything meaningful. He explained his point of view on the subject. We are in a hard place here with a lot of tough decisions ahead. But we may need to consider what we can do that while it doesn't harm so many, it helps the most vulnerable that we have. He believes that is a true statement. His overriding concern is that we really have to consider the affordability on these numbers. We really have to look at doing some things that may not be popular and things that none of us want to do, but if it lets people stay in their home, it may need to be done especially if people are keeping their heat to 50 degrees or choosing between one, two or three meals per day.

Mayor Black-Burke said that we all share those sentiments and the term that's been shared several times tonight is 'the most vulnerable.' So yes, today is her mom's birthday, but she's sitting here with all the councilors. Her mother bought her home here in Windsor in 1975. We have two vulnerable populations—our wisdom group and then we say the wonderful budding brains and minds of our students right in front of us today. Those are vulnerable populations in our town. So it's a difficult conversation.

EXPENDITURES

Board of Education (Section D of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$89,275,120		89,275,210

MOVED by Councilor King, seconded by Deputy Mayor Klase to accept the proposed budget for the Board of Education of \$89,275,120.

Councilor King stated the Board of Education budget was a lean one. It was the very definition of a maintenance budget. They unfortunately had to eliminate a pre-k program in order to make the money work and keep the headcount where it was. The board already took about a \$1 million reduction in the budget before it was sent to us. When folks talk about supports beyond Special Education, they're also taking about SEL supports. The SEL supports were put in place during ESSER funding, but they have helped the children, both in and outside of a special education program immensely. The Board of Education has seen significant gains in their tests, not just in their test scores, but in how the kids are interacting. Like one of the parents had said tonight, they've never seen this kind of support for their kids.

Councilor King wanted to address the pay to play sports. As someone that was just on the Board of Education, they almost cut that program. It was close. It's something that has been looked at year in and year out. We are one of the few towns that don't charge kids for sports. If we do maintain that funding, or at least at a maintenance level, he would not say with certainty that wouldn't go away. In addition, they've already let us know that to try to cut any large amount of money out of this budget will also reduce headcount as much as to 12 teachers per \$1 million. He thinks we've heard pretty clearly from the parents in town that they don't want to do that. He's hoping everyone will support the motion tonight.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman said when you are talking about pay to play sports, are you talking about in the schools or outside in the community? Councilor King said when he says 'pay to play' sports, we do not charge our students to play sports in our high schools and middle schools. Many high schools you have to pay \$5-\$6,000 every season. We don't charge the students to do that. This allows access to all of the kids, regardless of their family's affordability to participate in sports.

Deputy Mayor Klase stated she would be remiss to not talk about some of the things that were said about the school system and its lack of performance. The Board of Education, actually the Superintendent of Schools, has done a wonderful job in providing a dashboard on how our students are doing in school. They are highly performing. Our students go on to do very successful things, go to very competitive schools or go to into very competitive industries.

Deputy Mayor Klase added that for the town side and the school side, there's been a conscious decision that started way before her to try and bring the salaries to the place where we would maintain and keep/attract talented people to do the work for this town. Some of that budget does go to personnel costs, but we have high quality teachers and instruction.

Mayor Black-Burke stated that she knows that there's been a lot of conversation, especially over the last couple of years as it's related to ARPA dollars or the ESSER funding that came to our school district. Windsor public schools has been looked at across the State as a district who did what they were supposed to do with those dollars which was not to hire a whole bunch of individuals, but to put it towards programs and services at the time that were the need. Our Superintendent, along with his team, have found creative ways to ensure that those services remain even after those dollars have dried up. So I know it was shared that they kept all these people. No, they didn't keep all these people because they didn't hire all of these people with those dollars. They did what the the dollars that were sent from the Federal Government were intended to do, so just wanted to clear that up as well, and the dashboard is wonderful.

Councilor Walker said this is a huge portion of the budget and in his opinion the town has been lean in making their reductions. He has no problem with saying that the Board of Education, how they're performing over there. But he cannot support this portion, this particular item, because he thinks when we sharpen our pencils if we get an opportunity to do that, or if it goes to the public, we need to make sure that our reductions are all around and not just on the town side. He is not going to support this budget motion.

Motion Passed 5-4-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Gluck Hoffman, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

Town Support for Education (Section E of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$6,474,060		6,474,060

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Armstrong to accept the proposed budget for Town Support for Education of \$6,474,060.

Motion Passed 5-4-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Gluck Hoffman, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

Safety Services (Section F of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$14,432,640	(\$10,000)	\$14,422,640

MOVED by Councilor Armstrong, seconded by Councilor Naeem to amend the proposed budget for Safety Services of \$14,432,640 by \$10,000 to \$14,422,640.

This motion reduces funding for equipment replacement in the Police Department.

Councilor Pelkey asked what is the \$10,000? What sort of equipment would we be electing not to budget for? Town Manager Souza stated the Police Department has approximately \$42,000 in an annual replacement plan. This covers items such as replacement of taser radar equipment and other miscellaneous equipment. We have a regular replacement schedule. This would be to reduce that line item by \$10,000, with the expectation that in FY 2027/2028 we would incrementally restore that funding.

Mayor Black-Burke asked about the equipment and our safety services department. The equipment that is currently there, is that dated? Is there enough of the equipment? She's trying to ensure that as we are getting ready to vote on this, that this is something that's being reduced. However, it's not going to be something that is going to create a vast void or a delay of some sort, where they're still able to respond to an emergency. Town Manager Souza said absolutely, they will be able to respond. He does not see an impact in the short term. However, if we're not able to restore the \$10,000 over the course of the next two fiscal years, then we will see an impact in terms of equipment not being replaced on the normal life cycle.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Recreation & Leisure Services (Section G of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$2,720,830		\$2,720,830

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Klase, seconded by Councilor Naeem to accept the proposed budget for Recreation & Leisure Services of \$2,720,830.

Motion Passed 5-4-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Gluck Hoffman, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

Human Services (Section H of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$593,690		\$593,690

MOVED by Councilor Walker, seconded by Councilor King to accept the proposed budget for Human Services of \$593,690.

Motion Passed 5-4-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Gluck Hoffman, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

Health Services (Section I of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$692,880		\$692,880

MOVED by Councilor Gluck Hoffman, seconded by Councilor Armstrong to accept the proposed budget for Health Services of \$692,880.

Motion Passed 5-4-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Gluck Hoffman, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

Library Services (Section J of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$2,064,550		\$2,064,550

MOVED by Councilor Pelkey, seconded by Deputy Mayor Klase to accept the proposed budget for Library Services of \$2,064,550.

Councilor Naeem wanted to clarify that they heard earlier that to drop one mill it takes \$4.4 million. We would be able to move one mill with shutting down our two libraries. She just wanted to put that out there.

Motion Passed 5-4-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Gluck Hoffman, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

Development Services (Section K of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$2,399,360		\$2,399,360

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld, seconded by Councilor Naeem to accept the proposed budget for Development Services of \$2,399,360.

Motion Passed 6-3-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

Community Development (Section L of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$125,550		\$125,550

MOVED by Councilor King, seconded by Councilor Naeem to accept the proposed budget for Community Development of \$125,550.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked that the Town Manager explain Community Development to the community. Town Manager Souza stated Community Development is comprised of one full-time staff member and a part-time administrative aid. They administer our housing rehabilitation program which primarily uses State and Federal funds for rehabilitation of homes that are occupied by income, eligible individuals. They also coordinate a variety of community commissions that are appointed by the Council, including Wilson/Deerfield Advisory Board and Human Relations Commission. That is the essence of the community Development program.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Public Works (Section M of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$7,307,480	(\$10,000)	\$7,297,480

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman to amend the proposed budget for Public Works of \$7,307,480 by \$10,000 to \$7,297,480.

This motion.....

- Reduces funding for materials and supplies in Equipment Repair.

Councilor Pelkey asked what sort of cuts to equipment are we looking at? Town Manager Souza said these are miscellaneous items. But these are towards the area of repair parts and/or replacement. Last year we reduced the Public Works budget and supplies in the area of parks and grounds. So just to be able to achieve a desired level of reduction, we are fortunate that we have been able to replace some of our most aged vehicles within our fleet. This is again

something that we would like to be able to restore to the budget over the course of the next year or two, but we believe this will not have a detrimental effect.

Councilor Pelkey said we are still going to be able to have a plowed street. Town Manager Souza said yes, but we may have a mower that gets down here or there. We may have to unexpectedly use funds from another line item to cover that, but certainly we will do our best to keep more on the road and off-road vehicles in good shape.

Councilor Naeem said it's going to be \$10,000 and again in the grand scheme of things that seems very small. She thinks this is in the spirit of really trying to find where we can make cuts. These small cuts will add up. But these are things that we, thanks to the work that the Town Manager and the staff of these departments have done, we feel like we're in a good place where we can manage them as small or big as they may be, with the goal of being able to hopefully easily rebuild that gap in coming years. She knows \$10,000 seems small and silly, but hopefully we can bring everything together. Our job here is to find every penny we can that does not impact the quality of service that you're getting in the short term and hopefully the long term as well.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Information Services (Section N of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$755,450		\$755,450

MOVED by Councilor Armstrong, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman to accept the proposed budget for Information Services of \$755,450.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Administrative Services (Section O of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$3,146,170		\$3,146,170

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Klase, seconded by Councilor Armstrong to accept the proposed budget for Administrative Services of \$3,146,170.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

General Government (Section P of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$1,338,680	(\$5,000)	\$1,333,680

MOVED by Councilor Walker, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman to amend the proposed budget for General Government of \$1,338,680 by \$5,000 to \$1,333,680.

This motion.....

- Reduces funding for materials and supplies in Equipment Repair for anti-littering and the Drive Wise programs in the Town Manager's office.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

General Services (Section Q of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$20,896,010	(\$185,310)	\$20,710,700

MOVED by Councilor Gluck Hoffman, seconded by Councilor Armstrong to amend the proposed budget for General Services of \$20,896,010 by \$185,310 to \$20,710,700.

This motion...

- Reduces funding for paving management by \$30,000
- Reduces funding for sidewalk replacement by \$25,000
- Reduces funding for debt service by \$55,000
- Reduces funding for Open Space by \$35,000
- Reduces funding for Great Pond Improvement District transfer by \$34,150
- Reduces funding for Windsor Center Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) by \$6,160

Councilor Eleveld stated for the Great Pond Improvement District, he thought we had a contractual obligation to pay them \$34,150 or is that savings based upon the reduced amount of taxes? Town Manager Souza said it's based upon a reduced mill rate.

Councilor Eleveld asked if that would also apply to the Windsor TIF district as we said? Town Manager Souza said that is correct.

Councilor Eleveld stated the agreement we have with them, is that they receive a contractual amount of revenue that's generated. So the mill rate is lower, the revenue generated is lower and the split is lower.

Councilor Eleveld asked about debt service reduction of \$55,000. That's because we haven't issued as many bonds as we expected correct? Town Manager Souza said that was correct.

Councilor Eleveld said the bonds are when we borrow money like a mortgage. The amount of time that you spend just to pay it off relates in part to the interest you pay, but it also relates to the payments you must make.

Deputy Mayor Klase said she's going to say it one more time, but the half that goes back to Great Pond Improvement District goes to public infrastructure. Mayor Black-Burke said yes, that's correct.

Councilor Naeem said she just wanted to reiterate what the Town Manager spoke to earlier when he spoke to what cuts we could possibly make to get to potentially \$550,000. We've included some of those items here. These items must be rebuilt. We recognize that it is a tough year because of revaluation impacts, but these items must be refunded in the coming years. Otherwise, again, it will impact your cars, your tires. Just think about all that vehicle maintenance. If we're not getting our roads done and our sidewalks paved, so same thing can be said for our open space as well. So just please keep that in mind as we make it past this year into coming budget years.

Councilor Pelkey stated regarding the reduced funds in Open Space of \$35,000. The proposed budget, if he's looking at this correctly in the budget book is for Open Space \$100,000 to transfer into the Special Revenue fund of \$250,000. That's \$350,000 as a total for Open Space. His concern is he knows that \$30,000 will pave 15 miles of road but for paving management that's something that everyone in this community uses, benefits from and relies on a daily basis. Could we do a further reduction to Open Space in this budget and just use it to restore that paving management?

Deputy Mayor Klase said she just wants to understand and she's interested on what he's talking about. If she recalls, the Solar Farm that went in over at the farm for River Street, she believes that property owner approached the Open Space fund and there was not the ability to provide an adequate fund. So, they looked for alternatives so that they could stay on their property. Is that incorrect? Town Manager Souza said that is not his understanding on the matter. His understanding is that in years past, the then Windsor Land Trust had some informal conversations with that property owner, but there was never a discussion, to my knowledge with approaching the town for resources.

Deputy Mayor Klase said but we do have that other property, too that has approached us. Town Manager Souza said yes, there certainly are opportunities for agriculture and open space preservation, some by outright purchase by the town and others in partnership with the regional Trap Rock Land Trust potentially.

Deputy Mayor Klase stated her only concern is that we would not have enough in that fund to, if a property were to be available, to make a deal.

Councilor Naeem stated it'd be important to understand where we were two years ago in terms of the funding level because this reduction of \$35,000 brings us back to this current fiscal year's level. She asked the Town Manager for the number as she didn't have it in front of her as she believes it was significant. Would you mind sharing that from what we cut last year? Town Manager Souza said he believes last year we reduced it by \$100,000. Councilor Naeem said so this \$35,000 would get us back to that.

Councilor Naeem asked that the Town Manager clarify that we are putting in \$300,000 because \$200,000 is Special Revenue. Could you just talk about that? Town Manager Souza stated what you see on that page is that there's a General Fund contribution and then we're taking planned expenditures from the fund. So, we're hoping in FY 26 we'll be acquiring or contributing funds towards preservation. And so that's what that \$250,000 reflects.

Councilor Eleveld said the last large purchase we made he believes was the golf course correct? Town Manager Souza said that was the last purchase. Councilor Eleveld stated that we received some money from State grants on that, but did we or do we utilize a little bit of Unreserved Fund balance for that purchase? Town Manager Souza said they did.

Councilor Eleveld said reducing this doesn't necessarily preclude us from being able to make an acquisition should one become available. It's just not money set aside specifically for that purpose at this moment. Town Manager Souza said that was correct.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

TOTAL GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$152,222,470	(\$210,310)	\$152,012,160

MOVED by Councilor Pelkey, seconded by Deputy Mayor Klase to amend the total proposed General Fund expenditures for the FY 2026 budget of \$152,222,470 by \$210,310 to \$152,012,160 based on the motions discussed.

Motion Passed 5-4-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Gluck Hoffman, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

REVENUES

Revenues (Section B of Proposed Budget)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$152,222,470	(\$210,310)	\$152,012,160

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld, seconded by Deputy Mayor Klase to amend the proposed budget for Revenues of \$152,222,470 by \$210,310 to \$152,012,160 to reflect expenditure adjustments.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld, seconded by Councilor Naeem to increase Opening Cash under Miscellaneous Revenues from \$0 to \$2,000,000.

The impact of the above motion requires the current levy to be amended to reflect the combination of the expenditure decrease and the use of opening cash.

Mayor Black-Burke said she is always concerned about us tapping into this fund and just being mindful of how we go about it. She's hoping we will not become reliant on having to do that every single year.

Councilor Naeem said we get a lot of questions about using the 'rainy day' funds. She wants to remind the public that we in the Finance Committee both last year and this year have looked at a sort of progression of we took what we had and applied it towards the budget. What would it take to get out of that hole? Because if we put \$30 million in today, the taxpayers are going to have to pay that \$30 million next year. So this \$2 million is reflective on having a decent level of confidence that over the next 3-5 years we can slowly come off of how much we're putting in without making a significant and drastic impact to our taxpayers and not staying reliant on the 'rainy day' fund because that will not stay there forever.

Motion Passed 6-3-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman to decrease the Current Levy by \$2,210,310 from \$129,569,010 to \$127,358,700.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

TAX COLLECTION RATE

Section B of Proposed Budget

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
98.8%		98.8%

MOVED by Councilor King, seconded by Councilor Pelkey to accept the proposed tax collection rate of 98.8%.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

SENIOR TAX RELIEF

Section B of Proposed Budget

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$434,475	\$130,000	\$564,475

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Walker to amend the proposed budget for senior tax relief of \$434,475 by \$130,000 to \$564,475.

This will increase the benefit from a 100% match to the state level of 150% match qualified individuals.

Councilor Naeem said she appreciated the question earlier that Councilor Eleveld asked about process. We, as a Council, will need to add this to the agenda for our upcoming meeting Monday night. She hopes that we have full support to do so.

Mayor Black-Burke thanked Councilor Naeem and asked the Town Manager if he could once again share the step by step process for the viewing audience and for the folks who are here. Town Manager Souza stated that action Monday night will be just to introduce the ordinance amendment and ask the Council to set a public hearing for the second meeting in May. Then the Council that evening during the second meeting in May holds a public hearing and acts on the ordinance. This will be just for the benefit level. We will not be adjusting the income thresholds or ceilings.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

VETERANS TAX RELIEF

Section B of Proposed Budget

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$38,270		\$38,270

MOVED by Councilor Armstrong, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman to accept the amount proposed for Veterans tax relief of \$38,270.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

EXEMPTIONS FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Section B of Proposed Budget

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Amended Amount
\$118,500		\$118,500

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Klase, seconded by Councilor Armstrong to accept the amount proposed for exemptions for volunteer firefighters of \$118,500.

Councilor Pelkey asked if there was any way they could have increased that amount if they wanted to? Town Manager Souza said he believes we are at the maximum allowed by the State. Councilor Pelkey said he thought so.



Motion Passed 9-0-0

ENTERPRISE FUNDS

Landfill Enterprise Fund (Section S)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Adjusted Amount
\$801,610		\$801,610

MOVED by Councilor Walker, seconded by Councilor Pelkey to accept the proposed budget for the Landfill Enterprise Fund of \$801,610.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Resident Transfer Station Enterprise Fund (Section S)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Adjusted Amount
\$372,300		\$372,300

MOVED by Councilor Gluck Hoffman, seconded by Councilor Naeem to accept the proposed budget for the Resident Transfer Station Enterprise Fund of \$372,300.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Caring Connection Adult Day Care Enterprise Fund (Section S)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Adjusted Amount
\$620,730	Proposed amount accepted	\$620,730

MOVED by Councilor Pelkey, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman to accept the proposed budget for the Caring Connection Adult Day Care Center Enterprise Fund of \$620,730.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Windsor Montessori School Child Development Enterprise Fund (Section S)

FY 2026 Proposed Budget	Town Council Action	Adjusted Amount
\$1,642,070	Proposed amount accepted	\$1,642,070

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld, seconded by Councilor Armstrong to accept the proposed budget for the Windsor Montessori School Child Development Enterprise Fund of \$1,642,070.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

OTHER FINAL MOTIONS

Price Guide:

MOVED by Councilor King, seconded by Councilor Naeem to accept the price guide as proposed (located in Appendix G of the Proposed Budget document).

Motion Passed 9-0-0

4) SET BUDGET REFERENDUM

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman that the annual vote on the budget be held on Tuesday, May 13, 2025 between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. at all 7 polling places.

Councilor Naeem thanked the Finance Committee members, Councilor Eleveld and former Councilor Smith. She'd like to also thank town staff, especially the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager and Jim and Linda who have been sitting here looking ready to go for whatever we throw at them tonight. Thank you so very much for all that you do.

Mayor Black-Burke thanked the Superintendent and Miss Batchelder for all of their questions, asking questions, etc. Thank you so much to everyone that had a hand in making this possible.

Town Manager Souza said this action that the Town Council took tonight, the proposed budget has a 28.45 mill rate. They're on our town's website. As the Council knows, we have what we call our tax calculator for real estate. We've also added this year to be able to look up your car and the impact of that on your taxes. We did that because the State of Connecticut mandated a change in the way that those motor vehicles and valuations are determined. Those are both found on our town budget page. There will also be three different community forums sponsored by the League of Women Voters that Superintendent Hill and he will be answering questions, making a brief presentation and predominantly focusing on answering questions that the community has. Those can also be found on the town's website as well as our update on the Budget in Brief over the course of tomorrow and Friday morning. That will be updated along with a list of all the reductions and adjustments the Town Council made.

Councilor Pelkey asked for a point of information, when do we approve the ballot question? Town Manager Souza stated the Council does not act on the referendum or setting it. The language is already set, so these numbers essentially are plugged in that you adopted this evening, that \$152 million number.

Motion Passed 8-1-0 (Councilor Pelkey opposed)



5) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by, Councilor Naeem seconded by Councilor Pelkey to adjourn the meeting at 8:51 p.m.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Helene Albert
Recording Secretary