**WORK SESSION**

**JANUARY 29, 2026**

At a WORK SESSION of the Town Council of the Town of South Kingstown, County of Washington, in the State of Rhode Island, held at the Town Hall, in and for said Town on the 29th day of January 2026 at 7:03 PM.

PRESENT: Rory H. McEntee, President
Michael K. Marran, Vice President
Patricia A. Alley
Deborah D. Bergner
Jay G. Wegimont

Also present: James Manni, Town Manager; James Gorman, Building Official, Brian Silvia, Finance Director, Wendy Duarte, Town Assessor, Jessica Spence, Executive Assistant, and Erin Vanasse, Assessor Clerk.

**1. A.** The Pledge of Allegiance is given.

**B.** The Land Acknowledgement Statement is read.

**C.** Jim Manni, Town Manager thanks staff for their hard work and presents discussion from the previous Work Session on October 21, 2025, the requirement that legislation be passed to enact a homestead exemption, the enabling legislation passed on April 18, 2025, an explanation of homestead exemptions, the implementation process, proposed qualifications for residents, and enacted homestead exemptions and tiered tax rates in other municipalities.

The Town Manager continues relative to enacting a possible homestead exemption based on the 2025 Certified Tax Roll and notes that property values will continue to change as the Town reconciles the statistical revaluation performed in 2024, the total number of properties listed on the tax roll, the number of single-family owner homes, and the number of non-owner occupied single-family homes and all other properties. He explains that the 80% of single-family homes eligible for the homestead exemption would increase the tax impact to the remaining 20% of single-family homes and commercial properties and reviews the number of parcels per assessed value range of resident owned, non-resident owned, and commercial properties. He continues relative to the total tax levy on all taxable property, the Town's median income, and the Town's median property values.

The Town Manager presents three options for a homestead exemption: Option 1 is a proposed 10% property tax deduction that has already been rejected by the Town Council due to its tax rate impact; Option 2 is a proposed 5% property tax deduction, modified to include an exemption threshold limiting deductions up to the first $600,000, $700,000 or $800,000 of assessed value and additional assessed value be taxed at the standard rate, which in all cases would create a tax revenue deficit that would be passed on to impact commercial and non-resident property owners; or Option 3 is an expansion or increase of personal tax exemptions, such as a flat credit for seniors aged 65 years or older.

Discussion ensues relative to the determining a required length of time for full-time residency and how other municipalities define residency status.

The Town Manager continues relative to existing income-based exemptions for seniors 65 years and older and the projected tax impacts of providing seniors with exemptions ranging from 10% to 50% and reviews a summary of the Option 3 expansion of elderly exemptions, existing accessory-dwelling unit (ADU) exemptions, veterans and family exemptions, and legally blind exemptions, and the fiscal impact of enacting a homestead exemption.

Discussion ensues relative to income-based exemptions, the predictability of income levels, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and cost of living adjustment (COLA) statistics, the basis for the elderly exemption income from COLA, the definition of low to moderate income (LMI), the percentage of resident owner-occupied homes at the assessed value of $600,000 or less, confirmation that an additional Assessor's office staff member will not be needed if increasing existing exemptions and not enacting a homestead exemption, implementing a multi-year residency requirement, increasing income groups eligible for exemptions while keeping the credit amount the same, State regulation of veterans and family exemptions and legally blind exemptions and bringing the Town into compliance with the legally blind exemption, the Town's authority to potentially increase exemptions annually in line with COLA statistics, State exemption regulations setting a floor but no ceiling, the Town's ability to amend exemptions by ordinance without requiring enabling legislation, updates made to the veteran exemption in 2018, 2020, and 2021, the ability for a resident to stack exemptions, and the percentage of commercial properties within the "all other properties" category.

Wendy Duarte, Town Assessor reviews the number and definition of each type of property in the "all other properties" category.

Discussion ensues relative to the resident owner-occupied data presented being based on the tax bill addresses, increasing savings by decreasing the number of eligible homeowners, the Town's newly enacted rental registration and the potential to utilize the data collected to isolate resident homeowners, the number of rental properties registered with the State, ownership listed as trusts or LLCs, the cost of office equipment for a new clerk, the cost to administer the rental registration program, additional staffing costs not being included in the estimate of the tax revenue deficit created by a homestead exemption, workload concerns for Town staff, offsetting the tax revenue deficit by increasing the commercial taxes, and the number of residential condominiums and the potential fiscal impact of including owner-occupied condominiums in the homestead exemption.

The Town Manager suggests that the Council postpone making any decision until the rental registration period has ended to see the rental totals and then expand exemption scenarios to be presented at a later date.

The Town Council reaches consensus to increase eligible income groups and for Town staff to research and expand exemption eligibility scenarios to include residential condominiums, lower exemption thresholds of $400,000 and $500,000 of assessed value, and owner-occupied 2-5 family homes.

The Town Manager will present proposed dates for the next homestead exemption Work Session at the February 9, 2026 Town Council meeting.

## 2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President McEntee invites residents to come forward with comments.

Jim O'Neill comments on elderly tax relief, a tiered tax rate, and costs being higher than benefits at the State level.

Joe Viele comments on the percentage of commercial properties that pay property tax.

Bret Harrington comments against the proposed homestead exemption, noting that the fiscal impact numbers don't benefit the Town, and in support of the elderly exemption increases.

Adjourn at 8:57 PM

ADJOURNED,

Nichole C. Romane
Town Clerk