ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET SESSION

MARCH 10, 2026

At an ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET 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 10th day of March 2026 at 7:06 PM.

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

Also present: James M. Manni, Town Manager; Lucas Murray, Deputy Town Manager/DOAS; Brian Silvia, Finance Director; Theresa Murphy, Director of Leisure Services; Lance Whaley, Communications Superintendent; Lori-Ann Fox, IT Director; Matthew Moynihan, Police Chief; Craig Stanley, EMS Director; Laurel Clark, Director of Library Services; James Rabbitt, Director of Planning; James Gorman, Building Official; Wendy Duarte, Town Assessor; and Richard Bourbonnais, Director of Public Services.

The Pledge of Allegiance is given. The Land Acknowledgement Statement is read.

James Manni, Town Manager gives a presentation on the municipal budget program, upcoming budget meetings in accordance with Section 4220 of the Town Charter, and also thanks the department directors for scrutinizing their budgets and presenting prioritized budget requests. Highlights of the proposed changes in the FY 2026-2027 budget include a $50,730 increase in the School Operating Budget, a $1,731,038 increase in the Town Operating Budget, a $939,070 increase in the Debt Service Fund due to the debt accruing relating to the construction of the new SK High School, a 0% increase of the tax transfer to the Schools, an increase of $1,706,662 to the property tax levy, a 1.68% increase to the tax rate from $8.94 to $9.09 per thousand of assessed value, and an increase of $43,998,673 in the estimated net assessed value. A summary of personnel cost changes include: cost of living increases for union and non-union staff; and proposed position changes for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Communications.

The Town Manager reviews a summary of the estimated net assessed values, less exemptions which shows a .5% increase in total taxable property.

Council Member Alley enters the meeting at 7:22 PM

Brian Silvia, Finance Director reviews the proposed tax levy need in the amount of $80,886,982 and the net levy to be collected in the amount of $80,837,729. With a collection rate of 99%, it is estimated that the Town will collect a total of $80,029,352 of the tax levy. It is noted that the impact of a $0.01 change on the tax rate equates to $87,765. The current General Fund Operating Revenues for the current year is $93,300,205 and it is proposed to increase by $2,748,909 for FY 2026-2027.

Discussion ensues relative to the General Fund Operating Revenues relation to the proposed tax rate and the amount to be transferred to the Debt Service Fund.

The Finance Director reviews the proposed FY 2026-2027 property tax need breakdown for the Town and the School Department.

Discussion ensues relative to the total property taxes required for the School Department, reimbursement from RI Department of Education (RIDE) for School projects and when reimbursement is received.

The Finance Director continues his presentation relative to the proposed property tax need, what's needed to balance the budget, current year tangible personal property taxes, current year real estate taxes, and total current year taxes.

Discussion ensues relative to potential tax exemptions, the increase in debt service due to Bond Anticipation Notes (BANS) for the South Kingstown High School Project, and the estimated percent increase of the tax rate for the Town versus the School Department.

The Finance Director further reviews the proposed property tax rate allocation, the year-end projections for FY 2025-2026 General Fund Expenditure Budget, the year-end projections for FY 2025-2026 General Fund Revenue Budget, and the proposed FY 2026-2027 Operating Budgets.

Laurel Clark, Library Director presents the budget request of $1,579,958 for the Public Libraries.

Discussion ensues relative to staffing for the upcoming Community Learning Center (CLC) and the timeline for its construction.

Lori-Ann Fox, Director of Information Technology (IT) presents the IT budget request of $671,122 and reviews the Department's main budget drivers.

James Gorman, Building Official presents the Building/Zoning Department budget request of $662,457 and reviews the Department's main budget drivers.

James Rabbitt, Planning Director presents the Planning Department budget request of $710,755.

The Planning Director presents the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) budget request of $187,737.

Wendy Duarte, Town Assessor presents the Town Assessor Department budget request of $546,795. It is noted that the increase is mainly due to the need for additional services relating to storage of archived documents and online sketch verification to maintain accurate property records.

Discussion ensues relative to the uses of the online sketch verification.

Craig Stanley, Chief of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) presents the EMS budget request of $3,489,694. It is noted that budget increases is due to wages, benefits, and the need for medical and lab materials.

Discussion ensues relative to the new Perryville EMS Building, Community Paramedicine Program income, upcoming General Assembly hearing relative to the Community Paramedicine Program, age statistics for EMS calls, and staffing.

Mark Russo, Facilities Director presents the Facilities Department budget request of $1,543,189. It is noted that budget increases is due to wages, benefits, property maintenance services, and various utility accounts for the new EMS Building.

Lance Whaley, Communications Superintendent presents the Communications Department budget request of $406,766 and reviews staffing.

Theresa Murphy, Leisure Services Director presents the Recreation Department Admin budget request of $379,615 due to increases in wages, benefits, printing costs, and implementing a new module in the CivicRec software program; and the Park Maintenance Division budget request of $1,363,942 which shows an increase due to wages, benefits, and outsourcing cleaning park restrooms.

Discussion ensues relative to the retirement of the current Parks Superintendent, Rex Eberly, if there have been any changes in full-time employees (FTE), and the seasonal cleaning of park restrooms.

The Leisure Services Director presents the Athletics budget request of $208,631; and the Aquatics budget request of $339,571.

Discussion ensues relative to the new short-term parking tax implemented by the State.

The Leisure Services Director presents the Leisure Services Program budget request of $190,051 which shows an increase in wages, benefits, and services for Fourth of July fireworks.

The Leisure Services Director presents the budget request of $78,965 for the Creative Activities Program also known as the Stepping Stone Preschool Program; and the Natural Resource Officer budget request of $116,219. It is noted that there was a redistribution of expenses for the Natural Resources Officer position from four departments to two. The position is proposed to be allocated from the Harbor Patrol Division and the Natural Resources Division instead of the Planning Department, Harbor Patrol Division, Public Services Administration, and Natural Resource Officer Division. There is also a proposal to purchase a tank garage for the new Natural Resource Officer boat.

Discussion ensues relative to the allocation pay split and the garage for storing the new boat.

The Leisure Services Director presents the $917,918 in revenue expected from programming fees and other fees in the Peace Dale Office Building budget. The net tax impact is expected to be $1.75 million versus the expense side of the budget which is $2.67 million.

Discussion ensues relative to the net loss requiring the General Fund to make up the difference and shifting mowing at Town buildings to the Facilities Department so that the Parks Division can focus more on parks and nature trails.

The Leisure Services Director presents the Peace Dale Office Building budget request of $115,093.

Discussion ensues relative to the lease income from the Peace Dale Office Building.

The Leisure Services Director presents the budget request of $741,478 for the Senior Services Fund and reviews the increase needed to go towards transportation, food, and other various supplies for the Senior Center. It is proposed that $517,221 be transferred into the Senior Services revenue account from the General Fund.

Discussion ensues relative to Senior Services revenues, decrease in usage fees due to the Memorandum of Understanding with the Town of Narragansett for fair share contributions to the Senior Center Program, and fund balance for Capital Improvement Projects (CIP).

The Director of Leisure Services presents the Neighborhood Guild Fund budget request of $1,117,350 and reviews increases to wages, benefits, and services for the CivicRec system. This is a self-sustaining fund and has shown an increase in revenues.

Discussion ensues relative to costs for recreation event transportation.

The Director of Leisure Services reviews the Community Recreation Center Fund budget request of $890,646 and reviews increases in wages, benefits, and professional services. The Transfer to Other Funds account is proposed to decrease by $25,149.

Richard Bourbonnais, Public Services Director presents the Public Services Administration budget request of $565,738 and reviews changes relative to wages, benefits, and the redistribution of expenses for the Natural Resource Officer.

Discussion ensues relative to the Public Services Administration FTEs.

The Public Services Director reviews the Streets and Highway Division budget request of $3,000,955 and the Tree Warden budget request of $83,247. It is proposed that the Tree Warden receive a 2% salary increase.

Discussion ensues relative to the difference between independent contractors and employees.

The Public Services Director presents the Street Lighting budget of $84,400 which has been level funded from the previous year; and the Water Enterprise Fund budget request of $1,798,757. An increase in the Water Enterprise Fund is requested due to the need to purchase water and notes that this does not have an effect on the water rate. A public meeting will be held by the RI Public Utilities Commission (PUC) at Narragansett Town Hall relative to Veolia’s proposed water rate increase.

Discussion ensues relative to when the last water increase was, issue of water conservation, implementing outreach programs and potential rebates, and what decision PUC may make.

The Town Council requests the Town Solicitor to prepare a resolution in opposition to the water rate increases proposed by Veolia Water, RI Docket No. 25-30-WW and that PUC deny Veolia’s request.

The Public Services Director presents the Wastewater Enterprise Fund budget request of $5,793,941 and reviews increases in the CIP account. It is noted that chemical costs are fairly steady, but are still increasing over each year and revenues continue to increase.

The Public Services Director presents the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund budget request of $1,073,729. It is noted that there has been a reduction in expenditures due to the part-time salaries decreasing by $52,111 and debt service decreasing by $56,722. RI Solid Waste Tipping Fees are expected to increase by $71,627 due to a revision in the contract with Waste Connections.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET SESSION

MARCH 10, 2026

Matthew Moynihan, Police Chief presents the budget request of $11,174,155 for the Police Department Fund. It is noted that increases are due to wages, benefits, computer/software maintenance needs, vehicle needs, and staffing.

The Police Chief reviews the Police Civilians budget request of $657,610 and the Emergency Management budget request of $12,918.

Discussion ensues relative to what police civilian staff entails and the uses for the Emergency Management budget.

The Police Chief presents the Police Dispatchers budget request of $996,354 and the Harbor Patrol budget request of $72,337. It is noted that 50% of this budget is proposed to be allocated to the Natural Resource Office position.

The Police Chief further reviews the Animal Control – Road budget request of $114,144 and the Animal Shelter budget request of $263,707.

Discussion ensues relative to the number of staff members at the Animal Shelter, how many animals are in the shelter, shelter capacity, and giving the Town Council updates on the Animal Shelter.

The Finance Director reviews the Legal budget request of $330,227, a 19.98% increase from last year's budget.

Discussion ensues relative to the Legal budget, interest in a breakdown of the legal expenses, expenses related to any Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights (LEOBOR) filings, how LEOBOR hearings can begin, and litigation best practices.

The Finance Director Town Council and Boards and Commissions Fund budget request of $87,525; Debt Service Fund Expenditures in the amount of $4,406,517; and Debt Service Revenues in the amount of $4,406,517.

The School Department is requesting a $2,500,000 increase in the School Operating Fund budget. It is noted that he Town Manager's Preliminary Budget has proposed to level fund the School Department for FY 2026-2027.

Discussion ensues relative to the FY 2024-2025 School Department data, the FY 2025-2026 data, information from the School Department for the Town audit, obligations to submit audits to the RI Attorney General, need for additional information to consider the School Department's budget request, and potential consequences of level funding the schools.

The Town Manager presents the Town Manager budget request of $610,718.

Lucas Murray, Deputy Town Manager presents the Personnel Administration budget request of $260,299 and notes the increases are due to wages, benefits, and the implementation of new policies and software.

Nichole Romane, Town Clerk presents the Town Clerk Department budget request of $495,633; Canvassing Authority budget request of $150,866; and the Municipal Court budget request of $131,843. It is noted that the Canvassing Authority budget is being increased due to wages, benefits, and the 2026 Primary and General Elections; and the Municipal Court budget is being increased due to wages, benefits, and the need for additional funds for police detail at the court sessions.

Discussion ensues relative to early voting regulations.

The Director of Finance presents the Finance Department budget request of $988,286; the Operating Expenditures budget request of $921,500; the Post-Year Audit budget request of $39,000; Human Services and Outside Agencies budget request of $182,050; the Capital Outlay budget request of $2,057,796; and the Proposed General Property Tax Revenue in the amount of $2,162,621.

Discussion ensues.

The Finance Director reviews the proposed State/Federal Aid in the amount of $7,094,709, proposed Licenses and Permits in the amount of $$1,820,670, proposed Department Revenues/Fines/Charges in the amount of $2,654,849, proposed Revenue from Investments in the amount of $950,000, proposed Fund Balance Applied in the amount of $1,699,923, and Unassigned Fund Balance statistics.

Discussion ensues relative to Fund Balance being used as a one-time expense and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommendation to keep Fund Balance between 10%-17%.

The Finance Director presents the proposed Operating Transfers In budget request of $575,591 and proposed Operating Transfers Out in the amount of $60,294,440.

There are no public comments

Adjourn at 11:07 PM.

Nichole C. Romane
Town Clerk