

REGULAR SESSION

APRIL 15, 2026

At a REGULAR SESSION of the Town Council of the Town of South Kingstown, County of Washington, in the State of Rhode Island held at the South Kingstown High School, in and for said Town on the 15th day of April 2026 at 7:08 PM.

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

1. REGULAR SESSION

Council President McEntee opens the meeting and reviews the Budget schedule.

A. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance is given.

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT STATEMENT

The Land Acknowledgement Statement is read.

2. ROLL CALL

Roll Call of the Town Council is taken and all members are present.

Roll Call of the School Committee is taken and all members are present.

Also present: James M. Manni, Town Manager; Brian Silvia, Finance Director; Michael Podraza, School Superintendent; Daniel Seger, Assistant School Superintendent; and Patricia Proctor, School Chief Financial Officer.

3. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Notice having been duly given, a Public Hearing, with School Committee participation is held relative to the Town Council's Preliminary Budget for FY 2026-2027 as adopted on March 18, 2026. This Public Hearing will address all funds contained within the Town Council's Preliminary Budget.

James Manni, Town Manager, presents an overview of the budget hearing and adoption process in accordance with the Town Charter. The Town Charter requires two Public Hearings with the School Committee and the Town Council will consider any petitions filed for revisions to the Preliminary Budget prior to the adoption of the Final Budget at a Public Hearing on Monday, April 27, 2026.

Brian Silvia, Finance Director, reviews the preliminary adopted operating budget highlights and the proposed tax levy, the impact of the tax levy up to the State cap of 4%, the median assessed values for single-family properties, and notes that the Town cannot increase the tax levy past the State cap of 4%.

The Finance Director continues to review the property tax need to support School and Town operations, the proposed tax levy breakdown and allocation summary, year-end projections for FY 2025-26, the debt obligations of the Town including the School Debt Service and projected Future

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School Debt, General Fund Revenues and Expenditures, the Preliminary Adopted Budget School Operating Fund, Special Revenue Funds, and Enterprise Funds.

Michael Podraza, School Superintendent, begins the School Department presentation and thanks the Town Council, School Committee, Town Manager, and residents. He reviews funding challenges including the reduced Governor's Budget and rising costs of healthcare, tuition rates, student transportation, and new supplies and equipment. He outlines the goal to continue all school programs without making any cuts and notes that the School District is committing \$1.0 million of the Fund Balance to Operations. The School Department has prioritized Capital Improvement Projects reimbursable through RIDE to ensure financial stability.

Discussion ensues relative to whether debt service obligations and BANS fall under the School Operating budget.

Council President McEntee reviews discussion from the Public Hearing held on April 14, 2026 relating to a Budget surplus. He notes that the School Department has stated that a budget surplus may be realized by the end of Fiscal Year 2025-26, which will be transferred to the Unassigned Fund Balance. The Unassigned Fund Balance is kept at 1 to 2% of Operating Budget.

He continues to review discussion relative to Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) and the use of Town OPEB funds in the amount of approximately \$580,000 and School OPEB contributions in the amount of approximately \$760,000 to transfer to the School Operating Budget, totaling approximately \$1.3 million. The OPEB fund transfers plus \$1.0 million promised to the School Department during the Preliminary Budget Hearing and \$1.0 million from the School Department will meet the funding goals.

Carol Vetter, School Committee Chair, thanks the Town Council for their efforts and notes that this solution will allow School programs to continue without any cuts.

Discussion ensues relative to the potential School Budget surplus and the ability to apply the surplus to the following year's budget, the importance of preserving a budget percentage for emergencies, clarification of the OPEB system and the Town's contributions on behalf of the School, the need for a more stable long-term funding plan, and expanding the number of Work Sessions between the Town Council and School Committee during the next budget season.

4. Public Comments

Council President McEntee invites residents to come forward with comments.

The following residents comment in opposition to School program budget cuts:

Jennifer Krueger
Brunilda Velez Diaz
Mya Robinson
Kaiya Hathaway
Gisselle Boisclair
Isla Miller
Liam LeBlanc
Ryan Sisson
Sophie Cox
Aubrey Bowers

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Lucia Hubbard
Becky Mulholland
Scott Kushner
Mary Kutcher
Nadia Mignanelli
Nicole Mulanaphy
Julie Geary
Quinn Myszak
Jen Dunphy
Ari Roman-Velez
Noah Greichen
Rachel Chiartas
Mia Rhoads
Maria Hunter
Addie Holt
Maggie Mulanaphy
Mya Robinson
Katie Garvin
Owen Stamp
Jacob Mook
Michelle Peach
Matt Robinson
Mark Kravatz
Gretchen Macht
Pam Harley
Samantha Harley

Bob Trager commends the student speakers.

Roberta Mulholland comments on the decision to contribute OPEB funds to the School Department Budget, maintaining transparency, and the rescheduled Public Hearing on April 6, 2026.

Bret Harrington comments on the School Bond, taxpayer contribution to School Department funding, declining student enrollment, and renegotiating Collective Bargaining Agreements for school staff.

Dorald Beasley comments on senior resident taxpayers living on fixed incomes, the rising costs of living, tuition costs per student, and School personnel costs.

Jim O'Neill comments on historical School Budget increases, student enrollment decline, and State aid provided, the School Bond, and Town Council support for elderly residents and small business owners.

Town Council and School Committee Members offer their closing remarks.

Council President McEntee reviews Final Budget Adoption schedule.

Adjourn 9:15 pm.

Emily R. Houle
Town Clerk