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City Council Ad Hoc Budget Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes
Budget Hearing #4
Wednesday, May 27, 2026
6:00 PM

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Amanda Haggstrom.

Roll call was taken, and present were Councilor Claudel Frederique, Councilor Pam Gilday, Councilor Michael Hogg, Councilor Scott Mandeville, Councilor Jessica Redfern, Councilor Steve Stanganelli, Councilor Kelly Sullivan, Councilor Maryann Welch, and Chair Amanda Haggstrom.

Amesbury Public Schools (Budget Book Pages 98-136)

- Superintendent Elizabeth McAndrews presented the Amesbury Public Schools' proposed FY27 budget to the City Council (**see attached presentation**).
- Councilor Stanganelli asked about what kind of funding and staffing is used for anti-bullying. Ms. McAndrews replied that there is not a quantifiable number, and she detailed the different curriculums and staffing used.
- Councilor Stanganelli asked what fully funded public school system would look like. Ms. McAndrews responded that Amesbury Public Schools would have the staff, resources, equipment, and facilities to meet all student needs.
- Councilor Welch questioned if the budget would fund the contract negotiation results. Ms. McAndrews replied that a reserve amount has been set aside for this purpose, but that if the amount is not sufficient it would result in the loss of staff.
- Councilor Welch asked about heightened legal fees. Ms. McAndrews replied that the costs of attorneys have increased and that the instances that require attorneys are happening more frequently.
- Councilor Welch asked what is projected to happen if the pattern of budgeting for the School Choice and Circuit Breaker accounts continues. Ms. McAndrews stated that they are comfortable with the Circuit Breaker account but that School Choice could be in jeopardy.
- Councilor Sullivan asked if any grants in the system are competitive in nature. Ms. McAndrews replied that the entitlement grants are not competitive, but the Playful Learning, Cell Phone, and smaller grants are competitive.
- Councilor Sullivan asked if anything is being done proactively to raise enrollment at the Innovation High School. Ms. McAndrews shared that the new principal of the school is taking measures to acquire new students.
- Councilor Hogg questioned if the current fire panels are a safety issue. Ms. McAndrews replied that they are working but that she would like to be proactive in replacing them.
- Councilor Hogg asked if physical education teachers could be shared between Cashman and Shea Schools. Ms. McAndrews replied that this was not an option due to maxed out staff.
- Councilor Redfern asked how it was decided which co-curricular offerings were cut at the high school. Ms. McAndrews replied that it was due to lack of interest from students.
- Councilor Stanganelli asked what will happen when government support for free and reduced lunch ends. Ms. McAndrews replied that the schools will have to get creative to provide the funding.

- Councilor Frederique asked how parents can be confident that an IEP is not a financial decision. Ms. McAndrews replied that IEPs are never a financial decision but a team decision.
- Councilors asked various questions and engaged in discussion with Ms. McAndrews

Chair Haggstrom called for a brief recess at 7:20 PM.

The meeting resumed at 7:29 PM.

Police (Budget Book Pages 67-70)

- Police Chief Craig Bailey presented the Police Department's proposed FY27 budget to the City Council (**see attached presentation**).
- Councilor Stanganelli asked about the increase in the consulting budget. Chief Bailey replied that this includes a partnership with Pettengill House and forecasting any potential internal investigations.
- Councilor Stanganelli asked about the increase in the budget for repairs and maintenance. Chief Bailey replied that there is an increase in cost across the board for vehicles.
- Councilor Stanganelli asked about the increase in the budget for communication. Chief Bailey stated that this includes cell phone bills and the camera at the lake and that the cost of the investigation software increases annually.
- Councilor Gilday asked what category gas falls under. Chief Bailey replied that it is included under vehicle supplies.
- Councilor Stanganelli asked if AI can be implemented to aid with writing reports. Chief Bailey replied that the current system does not and cannot use AI and that he is reluctant to move in that direction.
- Councilors asked various questions and engaged in discussion with Chief Bailey.

Harbormaster (Budget Book Page 70)

- Police Chief Craig Bailey presented the Harbormaster's proposed FY27 budget to the City Council (**see attached presentation**).
- Councilors asked various questions and engaged in discussion with Chief Bailey.

Fire (Budget Book Pages 64-66)

- Fire Chief Robert Serino presented the Fire Department's proposed FY27 budget to the City Council (**see attached presentation**).
- Councilor Gilday asked if it is mandatory for the fire department to send an ambulance to another community within the agreement. Chief Serino replied that ambulance service is bound by Massachusetts law if it does not affect the city's own jurisdiction.
- Councilor Frederique asked about the cut in the training budget. Chief Serino replied that it is because only one person is attending paramedic school instead of two people.
- Councilor Sullivan asked if the billing amount for the ambulance is set by the Commonwealth or the city fire department. Chief Serino replied that the city fire department sets the amount by ordinance but that there is a reimbursement for Medicare/Medicaid.
- Councilor Welch asked about the increase in the repairs and maintenance budget. Chief Serino replied that he wants to focus on preventative maintenance which has been lacking in the past.
- Councilor Welch asked if there was still a plan to implement an intern program. Chief Serino stated that the goal is to have an intern program but that there were issues with the curriculum.
- Councilors asked various questions and engaged in discussion with Chief Serino.

Adjourn

Councilor Mandeville offered a motion to adjourn at 9:25 PM. Councilor Redfern seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, 9-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jasmine Looney

The public can view this meeting:

- In person
- ACTV Channel 6
- the ACTV website: <https://www.amesburyctv.org/public-government-access-television>
- or the ACTV Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/AmesburyCommunityTelevision