

TOWN OF JAMESTOWN ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
June 5, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Moderator John Murphy calls the Annual Financial Town Meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in the Lawn Avenue Gymnasium, 55 Lawn Avenue, Jamestown and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Town Council members present:

Nancy A. Beye, President
Mary E. Meagher, Vice President
Michael G. White

Town Council Members absent:

Randy White
Erik G. Brine

Also in attendance:

John A. Murphy, Town Moderator
Edward A. Mello, Interim Town Administrator
Christina D. Collins, Finance Director
Lisa W. Bryer, Town Planner
Angela Denault, Acting Police Chief
Fred F. Pease, Town Sergeant
Howie Tighe, Fire Chief
Molly Conlon, Senior Services Director
Peter D. Ruggiero, Town Solicitor
Roberta J. Fagan, Town Clerk

School Committee members present:

Kristine Lapierre, Chair
Andrew C. Allsopp, Vice Chair
Sally F. Schott
Christian Cowan
Agnes C. Filkins

Also in attendance:

Kenneth Duva, Superintendent
Jane Littlefield, Director of Finance
Nate Edmunds, Lawn School Principal
Peter Anderson, Director of Buildings and Grounds

**II. REVIEW OF BUDGET PROCESS, PROCEDURES, SPEAKING AND VOTING
AT THE FTM: Moderator Murphy**

Town Moderator Murphy reviewed the meeting procedures and voting overview. There were 100 voters present at 7:12 p.m. (103 were recorded at the adjournment of the meeting.)

III. OVERVIEW OF THE BUDGET

A) General Government – Town Council President Beye

Moderator Murphy introduced President Beye, who thanked Moderator Murphy and addressed the assembled voters.

On behalf of the Town Council, I would like to thank you for joining us this evening. In the past, it seemed that these meetings were getting shorter and shorter. I would like to say that even though that may be the case it does not reflect the amount of work that goes into the creation of the budget by our town staff.

The Fiscal year 2023-2024 Town Budget was a year-round process as is every year. The formal structure began back in November. The Town Administrator establishes the timeline for the Departments to begin to review, plan and develop their respective Operating and Capital budgets. Discussions were also held with the Town and School and then a joint public meeting between the two was held in December as per RIGL §16-2-21.

The Town Departments were required to submit a Capital budget in December and the Operating budget requests were submitted in early January. The Town Administrator then met with the Department Directors in January and February to review and discuss the requests. These recommendations are then used in the development of the Town Administrator's Proposed budget. The School Committee passed their budget in February which is then added to the Town's budget to present to the Town Council.

The Town Administrator's Proposed Budget was submitted to the Town Council in late February fulfilling the requirement of the Charter.

Public meetings were held in March for discussion on both the Town and School Budgets.

I would like to thank Ed Mello, Tina Collins, Dr. Ken Duva, Jane Littlefield, the Jamestown School Committee, the residents, and the parents who came to the meetings and shared their input with us.

At a regular town council meeting the council unanimously voted to approve the budget of \$28,719,156.00, of which \$16,117,259.00 is for the school budget and the balance of \$12,601,897.00 is for the town budget.

On behalf of the Town Council, I respectfully request your support for the fiscal year 2033-2024 budget as it is presented. Thank you.

B) School Department – School Committee Chair LaPierre

Moderator Murphy introduced Chairperson Kristine LaPierre, who thanked Moderator Murphy and addressed the assembled voters:

Fellow residents, I stand before you tonight to ask for your vote in favor of the proposed School District budget for Fiscal Year 24 in the amount of \$16,117,259. This budget is vital for the continued growth and success of our schools and, more importantly, our students.

It has been another busy year for the Jamestown Schools and there is so much that our students, their teachers, and our administrators should be proud of.

Perhaps most noticeable to the community is the installation of the solar arrays at Lawn and the solar carport at Melrose.

- These solar panels will make Jamestown the first school district in the state of Rhode Island to generate over 90% of its electricity usage through solar power. It is projected that they will generate as much as 97% of the district's energy.
- Our district's and community's commitment to renewable energy has not gone unnoticed – just a few weeks ago we were the winner of the 2023 **Lead By Example Clean Energy Award** from the RI Office of Energy Resources.
- and the week before we received that award, we were given a 2023 **National Green Ribbon School District Sustainability Award** from the U.S. Department of Education. Jamestown is one of only 11 school districts in the country to receive this award this year. For perspective, there are 39 school districts in the state of RI alone.

In addition to our commitment to renewable energy, there are many other successes from this year:

- The Jamestown Schools are #1 in the state for Math proficiency and #3 for English Language Arts on the RICAS tests – the Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System.
- Melrose implemented classes that focus on the qualities in our Strategic Plan's Portrait of the Graduate – building on the success of such classes at the Lawn School.
- Many STEM initiatives, including 3 grants awarded to teachers to support STEM activities in their classrooms.
- As well as reinstated instruction in coding and technology to all students in grades K-8.
- Math teacher Nick Alfred received the Curriculum Associates 2023 Extraordinary Educator Award (only 30 teachers chosen nationwide) for his innovative in-class use of i-Ready.
- Our district is also exemplary in our commitment to visual and performing arts.
- The Lawn Music Department received a rating of Superior at the Junior Band Festival
 - Several Lawn students received awards at the Solo & Ensemble Festival
 - 4 participated in RIMEA All-State concerts for band, chorus, and orchestra.
- And this year the Melrose Music Department started a 4th-grade chorus.
- Also, at Melrose, art teacher Erica Connolly was able to host the first art show at the school since before COVID – and her monthly art nights saw families come out en masse to marry community and creativity
- We saw the successful production of Beauty & the Beast, Jr – the first play at the schools since before COVID.
- Countless student recognition awards, including National History Day, Foreign Language Poster Contest, Roger Williams Ruth Bader Ginsburg essay contest, and the NOAA art contest.

Our proposed budget for FY24 is a 3.76% increase over last year's budget – and well over half of that money is earmarked for salaries and benefits – one of the most significant budgetary factors for the School Department every year. This year, as in the past, the costs associated with health and dental benefits are higher than it was last year.

Most of our budget as a School Department is legislated – there is virtually no discretionary money in what we proposed to the town. Instead, we need to consider budgetary factors such as our unpredictable student enrollment from our military population – not only do the enrollment numbers impact the budget, but services for special education and multilingual learners can add an additional cost.

Both transportation costs and heating costs are projected to be 50% higher this year. These are costs that we have no control over but are services we clearly need to operate our schools.

It is no secret that a well-funded school district benefits the entire community. Tonight, I ask you to make an investment – an investment not only in the future of our children but in the future of our district and our community by voting in favor of our proposed budget.

Thank you.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE BUDGET

Moderator Murphy stated in a moment I will call for motions on the two budgets, the general budget, and the school committee budget. He reviewed stating "yes" to cast your vote.

A) General Government

Moderator Murphy called for a motion on the general budget.

A motion was made by Councilor M. White with a second by Vice President Meagher to approve the entire Town Budget for \$12,601,897.00.

Moderator Murphy asked if there is any discussion. (No discussion)

Moderator Murphy called for all those in favor of the motion by saying yes.

Moderator Murphy called for all those opposed by saying no.

Motion passes by a majority vote in the affirmative.

B) School Department

Moderator Murphy called for a motion on the school budget.

A motion was made by School Committee Chair LaPierre with a second by School Committee Member Schott to approve the entire School Budget in the amount of \$16,117,259.00.

Moderator Murphy asked if there is any discussion. (No discussion)

Moderator Murphy called for all those in favor of the motion by saying yes.

Moderator Murphy called for all those opposed by saying no.

Motion passes by a majority vote in the affirmative.

V. ADOPTION OF THE BUDGET RESOLUTIONS

Moderator Murphy stated there are three housekeeping Resolutions:

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher to waive the reading of Resolutions 1, 2, and 3 with a second by Councilor M. White.

- A) **Resolution Number 1 – Sewer Line Frontage Tax Rate**
- B) **Resolution Number 2 – Borrowing in Anticipation of Taxes**
- C) **Resolution Number 3 – Disposition of Collected Back Taxes**

Moderator Murphy asks if there is a motion to approve those Resolutions.

A motion was made by Councilor M. White with second by Vice President Meagher to approve Resolutions 1, 2, and 3.

Moderator Murphy asked if there is any discussion. (No discussion)

Moderator Murphy called for all those in favor of the motion to signify by saying yes.

Moderator Murphy called for all those opposed by saying no.

Motion passes by a majority vote in the affirmative.

D) **Resolution Number 4 – Setting the Tax Rate**

Moderator Murphy announced we will now set the tax rate.

A motion was made by President Beye with second by Vice President Meagher to set the Tax Rate and hereby order the assessment and collection of a tax rate on rateable real estate and tangible personal property in the sum of not less than \$6.96 nor more than \$6.98 per \$1,000.00 of assessed valuation.

Moderator Murphy asked if there is any discussion. (No discussion)

Moderator Murphy called for all those in favor please signify by saying yes.

Moderator Murphy called for all those opposed please signify by saying no.

E) **Resolution Number 5 – Up To \$275,000 Borrowing For Police Station Building Improvements / Efficient Building Project Through Issuance Of Bonds**

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with second by Councilor M. White to approve Resolution Number 5 – Up To \$275,000 Borrowing For Police Station Building Improvements / Efficient Building Project Through Issuance Of Bonds

Moderator Murphy asked if there is any discussion.

Moderator Murphy called for all those in favor please signify by saying yes.

Moderator Murphy called for all those opposed please signify by saying no.

Motion passes by a majority vote in the affirmative.

F) Resolution Number 6 - Up To \$985,000 Borrowing For Highway Equipment Through Issuance Of Bonds

A motion was made by Councilor M. White with second by Vice President Meagher to approve Resolution Number 6 - Up To \$985,000 Borrowing For Highway Equipment Through Issuance Of Bonds

Moderator Murphy called for all those in favor please signify by saying yes.

Moderator Murphy called for all those opposed please signify by saying no.

Motion passes by a majority vote in the affirmative.


VI. ADJOURNMENT

Moderator Murphy stated this concludes our business and called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher and seconded by Councilor M. White to adjourn. The motion passes unanimously.

The Financial Town Meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Attest:


Roberta J. Fagan, Town Clerk