

Town of Brentwood Municipal Budget Committee
Minutes of December 22, 2025 Meeting held at Town Office

Members Present: Jim Hajjar (Chair), Alina Arida, Gabbie Kelly, Letty Bedard (Selectboard rep), Kat Niemiroski

Attending remote: Dan Hebert (Swasey rep)

Absent: Michelle Siudut (excused)

Hajjar called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Motion by Niemiroski, seconded by Kelly to accept the December 15 2025 meeting minutes as amended; approved 5-0

Motion by Bedard, seconded by Arida to allow Dan Hebert to attend remotely; passed 5-0.

Selectboard Report - Letty Bedard

Discussions have included Elderly Exemption criteria amounts, warrant articles and approval of budgets to be presented tonight.

Swasey School Report - Dan Hebert

No update. The Swasey budget will be discussed before this Committee at the January 12 meeting.

Budgets

Fire (4220-19). Chief Roy Olson presented. He worked hard to present a budget within the tax cap and came in at 2.57%, even with inflation and increased equipment prices.

Currently we give more mutual aid than we receive. A previous chief established the mutual aid agreement; there is no exchange of funds, but we do pay into the mutual aid compact. Ambulance calls to the county are billable.

Hajjar is working with the county to see what can be provided by them for mutual aid, to ease some of the burden on the town, especially since the town responds to county calls at the nursing home, jail, etc. The department no longer has call firefighters; they are full-time with per diems. The proposed budget includes 24 hour rotating shift of 4 groups with 2 per group, which provides 24/7 coverage. Chief would prefer 4 groups of 3 firefighters, which is what he feels is needed. Chief identified the cost to add an additional full-time person: as a per diem for \$300K for year or as a full-time hire with benefits for \$392K for year. If the per diem position was added to this proposed budget it would be a 26% increase. Chief will recommend a warrant article to fund 3 persons on each shift.

Calls increase 5-10% per year. Construction is also increasing.

Hajjar asked about the increase in some salaries being higher than 2.8%. Chief said the inspector was severely underpaid; that person will be taking a full-time position, so Chief is increasing this position by

9.5%. Some of the firefighter salaries are also higher than 2.8% due to certifications. Chief has established a pay scale.

Bunker gear is \$7-8K. A new hire could cost \$15K to bring in.

Decrease in Administrative salary is a result of eliminating the deputy position.

Increase in Training line due to certification needs.

Public comment:

Ched Miller. *Asked about salary increase 47% but retirement going down 15%. It was explained that per diem are not eligible for benefits; also deputy position was eliminated.

*Questioning why we don't collect when we respond to county calls. Hajjar said he and Chief are looking into this.

*Would like to see the revenue side of things. Hajjar and Chief are both working on obtaining the revolving account status; this has been an on-going request of the Chief and this Committee for years. The revolving account does bill for county services. The revolving account also funds \$90-100K for ambulance service; and pays for EMS captain and expenditures.

*If we are never going to have enough people, Ched suggests we pool resources with other towns. Hajjar and Chief have already started the conversation with the county, exploring exchange of services.

Olson said 2 previous chiefs were unable to obtain reporting for the revolving account. He said amounts are paid at random, with no identifiable costs. He would like to see incoming and outgoing billables. He is concerned that he is unable to obtain information about this account, yet he is responsible for it.

Hajjar said revolving accounts are of concern in that we need to know what is in them, how they flow. This will be a priority for 2026.

Appreciation for Chief's effort to stay in budget was noted. Motion by Kelly, seconded by Arida to approve \$1,288,790, an increase of \$32,249 or 2.57% over the 2025 budget; Hebert- aye, Kelly- aye, Niemiroski- nay, Bedard- aye, Arida- aye, Hajjar- aye; approved 5-1 (Niemiroski voting nay)

Recreation (4520-40). Bob Mantegari and Jason Gagnon presented. Mantegari said they increased the salary line to accommodate for a new Rec Director; as well as increasing the Coordinator line (previously seasonal) as a result of vote at Town Meeting.

Kelly asked what programming was put on hold and what may be picked up in 2026. Mantegari said things are on hold until the new Director is hired (on Jan 5) and does analysis. Kelly questioned if any programming runs through revolving account - Gagnon said primarily yes most of it.

Bedard said this year the furnaces and windows were replaced. These were paid out of the building maintenance capital reserve fund, not the Rec budget.

Public comment:

Ched Miller asked if we can charge fees at an amount to offset expenses. Gagnon said the revolving account netted \$18K this year; some events were free, but fees do cover most costs. Hajjar said there will be a focus to have the Commission solicit sponsorships to assist in covering costs.

Gagnon stated they try to make programs affordable alternatives for those who cannot afford other structured opportunities in the area.

Hajjar and the Committee thanked Gagnon for stepping up since the former Director resigned. Motion by Kelly, seconded by Arida to approve \$141,250, an increase of \$24,767 or 21.26% over 2025; Hebert-aye, Kelly-aye, Niemiroski- nay, Bedard- aye, Arida- aye, Hajjar- aye; approved 5-1 (Niemiroski voting nay)

Animal Control (4414-30). Bedard said the Town does not currently have an animal control officer and is not planning to hire one. These lines are funded at \$1 to keep them open.

Motion by Bedard, seconded by Kelly, to approve \$10, which is level funded from last year; Hebert- aye, Kelly- aye, Niemiroski- aye, Bedard- aye, Arida- aye, Hajjar- aye; approved 6-0

Mosquito Control (4299-24).

Kelly asked if there the Town has received comparison rates; Bedard said we are in either a 3 or 5 year contract. Motion by Kelly, seconded by Bedard to approve \$29,200; which is level funded; Hebert- aye, Kelly- aye, Niemiroski- aye, Bedard- aye, Arida- aye, Hajjar- aye; approved 6-0

Street Lighting (4316-23). Motion by Bedard, seconded by Kelly to approve \$1, which is level funded from last year. Hebert- aye, Kelly- aye, Niemiroski- aye, Bedard- aye, Arida- aye, Hajjar- aye; approved 6-0

Other Business

Hajjar shared the MS-434 documents. He confirmed the revenue amount of \$2,169,260 for 2025, which is what was used to set the tax rate. Bedard noted the revolving fund page in the document is incomplete; perhaps this will be adjusted once the audit has been completed.

Arida wanted clarification if 2024 may change, or it may just make the following year look weird. Arida suggests we clearly identify to the public that the books were very inaccurate and still in progress to reconcile and get us at a good place.

Bedard noted this year's unassigned fund balance is very low compared to the last 10 years; is this due to better budgeting?

Hajjar said the last real number we had from the state was \$900K, \$600K of which was unexpended funds.

Kelly wondered how close our estimated revenues are/if we are calculating estimates well.

Hajjar said some good questions have been raised; ultimately the 434 number will be used to set the tax rate. This will be tabled until the Town Administrator is available to assist; hopefully at the Jan 7 meeting.

Kelly looks at this as an opportunity to ensure we are doing things in an accurate manner; and projecting in an accurate manner. Bedard suggested talking with the Tax Collector.

Kelly suggests we review the 434-R each year, in September.

Bedard indicated we are on pace to fall within the tax cap; she estimates \$7.56M with known warrants.

Hajjar said the SAU incorrectly posted their deliberative session date. That date is actually Feb 4, which is the date we had chosen for our Budget Hearing. Hajjar agreed to change our Budget Public Hearing date to Feb 5. Our second hearing date will move to Feb 13 (from Feb 12), if necessary.

Arida left at 8:16 pm.

Bedard obtained bond information at various interest rates. Hajjar explained if a bond was taken out in 2026, it likely would have no impact on the 2026 budget (first payment would likely not be due until 2027). Payment on a bond would likely exceed the tax cap - so either the tax cap would need an override, or other expenditures within the operating budget would need to be reduced by a large amount.

Motion by Niemiroski, seconded by Bedard to adjourn; meeting adjourned at 8:29 pm.

Upcoming Meetings - All meetings are open to the public and livestreamed on Brentwood's YouTube channel. (*dates added or changed since previous meeting)

Wed, Jan 7 at 6pm: Budget Committee meeting

Mon, Jan 12 at 6pm: Budget Committee meeting

*Mon, Jan 26 at 6pm: Budget Committee meeting

*Feb 5 at 6pm: Budget Committee Public Hearing - Brentwood Rec

*Feb 13 at 6pm: Budget Committee Hearing (if needed) - Brentwood Rec

Mar 2 at 6pm: Swasey School District Meeting at Swasey School

Mar 14: (potential) Town Meeting at Swasey School

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Siudut, Secretary