



Public Statement to the Select Board Chair

From: Jim Hajjar - Chair, Brentwood Municipal Budget Committee

To: Paul Kleinman - Chair, Brentwood Select Board

Date: June 17, 2025

Subject: Collaboration on Development of FY2026 Operating Budget in Tax Cap Environment

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Brentwood Municipal Budget Committee, I am writing to formally highlight the importance of ensuring the FY2026 town operating budget complies with the 4% tax cap approved by the voters at the March 2025 Town Meeting.

This voter mandate reflects the strong desire of residents to balance the need for quality town services with the imperative of property tax relief. As stewards of public funds, it is our collective responsibility to honor this directive through disciplined fiscal planning and collaboration.

To this end, we respectfully recommend the following steps:

1. Set a Clear Budget Target Early

- Direct all town departments and warrant article sponsors to propose budgets that limit tax impact increases to no more than 4% over FY2025.
- Schedule and utilize departmental “walk throughs” that allow department heads to share specific needs that will require appropriation increases in FY2026
- Provide specific budget targets in advance of department head submissions this fall that limit total appropriation increases in each department based on town priorities and long-range planning.

2. Review Cost Drivers and Prioritize Core Services

- Require department heads to provide detailed job descriptions that document roles and responsibilities for every position budgeted
- Analyze year-over-year increases in contractual obligations, staffing, and operating expenses.
- Rank expenditures by necessity and public benefit to avoid across-the-board increases.

3. Coordinate with the Budget Committee Early

- Begin joint review of preliminary departmental budgets and revenue forecasts before the formal budget season.
- Share updated revenue estimates and fund balance projections to clarify the town’s financial position.

4. Limit Use of One-Time Revenues for Recurring Costs

- Ensure sustainable budgeting by avoiding reliance on surplus or non-recurring revenue sources to cover operating expenses.



5. Explore Opportunities for Efficiency and Shared Services

- Identify functions where consolidation, inter-departmental cooperation, or technology investments may reduce costs while maintaining service quality.

6. Engage the Community Transparently

- Explain how proposed expenditures relate to the 4% cap.
- Provide taxpayers with clear, comprehensible justifications for any spending above baseline levels.

Looking Ahead

The Budget Committee remains committed to working closely with the Select Board and department heads throughout the budget process. We are confident that with proactive planning and transparency, we can develop a FY2026 budget that meets our town's needs while respecting the financial constraints set forth by Brentwood voters.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to coordinate early discussions or joint work sessions.

Sincerely,

Jim Hajjar

Chair, Brentwood Municipal Budget Committee

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