



**WESTBROOK CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2026 AT 6:00 PM
WESTBROOK HIGH SCHOOL (ROOM 114)
125 STROUDWATER ST.**



I. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

Meeting called to order at 6:00pm by City Council President Jennifer Munro. City Clerk Ellis Ledoux read the City Council Land Acknowledgment statement into the record.

II. ROLL CALL

City Councilors Present: Brian McCambridge (Ward 1), Michael Shaughnessy (At-Large, Vice-President) (arrived at 6:27pm), Anna A. Turcotte (Ward 3), Victor Chau (Ward 2), Amy Faulkingham (Ward 4), Jennifer Munro (Ward 5, President), Gary Rairdon (At-Large)

City Councilors Absent: None

Other City Officials Present: Jerre Bryant (Interim Director of Economic & Community Development), Eric Dudley (Director of Engineering & Public Services), Jennie Franceschi (Assistant City Administrator), Laura King (Interim Finance Director), Angela Holmes (City Administrator), Ellis Ledoux (City Clerk), David Morse (Mayor), Greg Post (Director of Community Services), Stephen Sloan (Fire Chief), Monique Cornett (Deputy Director of Economic Development), Brian Langerman (Deputy Chief of EMS & Training), Brett Bissonette (Animal Control/Parking Enforcement Officer), Dean Prindle (Assessor), Cameron Ferrante (Legal Counsel), Michael Corey (Fire Inspector), Rebecca Spitella (Director of Planning & Code Enforcement).

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

City Council President Munro led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

City Council President Munro stated that unless any objections were received, the minutes would stand as presented. No objections received. The following minutes stand as presented:

March 16, 2026 - Finance Committee & Special City Council Meeting

V. MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Mayor Morse read his message into the record. The snippets are included below:

- Mayor Morse gave his FY2027 Budget Address. The statement is included, in full, in these meeting minutes.
- Mayor Morse read his proclamation for Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day 2026. Councilor Turcotte read a statement on behalf of Dr. Gary Zartarain into the record.

- Mayor Morse read his proclamation for the 100th Anniversary of the Westbrook-Gorham Rotary. Mayor Morse invited Eli Small and Christine Johnson, from the Westbrook-Gorham Rotary to the podium. Christine Johnson spoke a few words on behalf of the Rotary.
- Mayor Morse gave the floor to Fire Chief Stephen Sloan to read his press release regarding Fire Department staffing. The following spoke: Councilor Rairdon, Chief Sloan, Councilor Turcotte
- Mayor Morse announced Rebecca Spitella as the newest Director of Planning & Code Enforcement.

VI. CITY COUNCIL MESSAGES

City Council President Munro opened the floor for City Council messages. Councilors provided the following updates:

- Councilor Turcotte congratulated the Winter Guard for winning the State Gold award.
- Councilor Chau thanked the music programs at the middle school and high school for a great show at Merrill Auditorium in Portland, ME. The concert band is playing a show tomorrow evening.

VII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

There was no Student Representative update.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

City Council President Munro opened the floor for the first public comment portion of this meeting. The following individuals spoke: Linda Gain (162 Lyman St.), Joshua Trombley (Gorham Resident), Charlie Hamblen (Gorham Resident), Mark Theriault (Captain, Westbrook Fire Department), Caleb Young (Firefighter with Westbrook Fire Department), Adam Vining (Firefighter/Paramedic of Westbrook Fire Department), Joseph Carroll (Captain, Westbrook Fire Department), Susan Simonson (479 Brook St.), Mayor Morse, Jennie Franceschi (Asst. City Administrator), Councilor Turcotte, Councilor McCambridge, Councilor Shaughnessy,

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business for consideration.

X. ORDERS OF THE DAY (SECOND AND FINAL READING)

Order 2026-34. Authorizing Acceptance and Expenditure of Donation for Community Center Gym Floor Refurbishment

Order 2026-35. Authorizing Task Order No. 8 with Credere Associates for Permitting Assistance & Design Services for Riverwalk North

Order 2026-36. Authorizing Expenditure for Engineering Design Services Relating to the Brown Street Culvert Replacement Project

Motion to approve second and final reading of Orders 2026-34 through 2026-36

Moved by Councilor Rairdon, seconded by Councilor Shaughnessy

City Council President Munro asked if any Councilor would like to consider any item separately. No one spoke

City Council President Munro opened the floor for comments on the motion. The following individuals

spoke: Councilor Chau, Mayor Morse,

Motion carried. Order 2026- 34 through 2026-36 adopted. (Vote 7-0)

Ayes: Shaughnessy, McCambridge, Chau, Turcotte, Faulkingham, Rairdon, Munro

Nays: None

XI. NEW BUSINESS

Resolves (One Reading Required)

Resolve 2026-09. Setting the Hours of Voter Registration & Polls for the June 9, 2026, State Primary & Municipal School Budget Validation Referendum

Motion to approve the first and final reading of the legislation.

Moved by Councilor Rairdon, seconded by Councilor Faulkingham

City Council President Munro opened the floor for comments on the motion. The following individuals spoke: Councilor Rairdon

Motion carried. Resolve 2026-09 adopted. (Vote 7-0)

Ayes: Shaughnessy, McCambridge, Chau, Turcotte, Faulkingham, Rairdon, Munro

Nays: None

Resolve 2026-10. Confirming Reappointment of Stephen Noyes and Warren Lain to the Westbrook Environmental Improvement Corporation (WEIC)

Motion to approve the first and final reading of the legislation.

Moved by Councilor Rairdon, seconded by Councilor Chau

City Council President Munro opened the floor for comments on the motion. The following individuals spoke: Mayor Morse, Councilor Chau

Motion carried. Resolve 2026-10 adopted. (Vote 7-0)

Ayes: Shaughnessy, McCambridge, Chau, Turcotte, Faulkingham, Rairdon, Munro

Nays: None

Orders (One Reading Required)

Order 2026-37. Amending the Code of Ordinances Chapter 110, Article IV, *Fowl and Poultry*

Motion to approve the first and final reading of the legislation.

Moved by Councilor Rairdon, seconded by Councilor Chau

City Council President Munro opened the floor for comments on the motion. The following individuals spoke: Mayor Morse, Jennie Franceschi (Assistant City Administrator), Councilor Chau, Brett Bissonette (Westbrook Police Department), Councilor Turcotte, Councilor Shaughnessy, Mayor Morse, City Clerk Ellis Ledoux, City Administrator Angela Holmes, Councilor Shaughnessy, Councilor Chau

Motion to table by Councilor Rairdon, seconded by Councilor Shaughnessy

Motion withdrawn to allow for additional comment. The following spoke: Brett Bissonette (Westbrook Police Department), Steve Pulsoni (East Bridge St), Councilor Turcotte, City Administrator Angela Holmes, Asst. City Administrator Franceschi, Councilor Turcotte, President Munro, Councilor Shaughnessy

Motion to table moved by Councilor Shaughnessy, Seconded by Councilor Rairdon

Motion carried. Order 2026-37 Tabled. (Vote 6-1)

Ayes: Shaughnessy, McCambridge, Turcotte, Faulkingham, Rairdon, Munro

Nays: Chau

Order 2026-38. Approving Affordable Housing Tax Increment Financing (AHTIF) Annual Reports to Maine State Housing Authority

Motion to approve the first and final reading of the legislation.

Moved by Councilor Faulkingham, seconded by Councilor Rairdon

City Council President Munro opened the floor for comments on the motion. The following individuals spoke: No one spoke.

Motion carried. Order 2026-38 adopted. (Vote 7-0)

Ayes: Shaughnessy, McCambridge, Chau, Turcotte, Faulkingham, Rairdon, Munro

Nays: None

Orders (Two Readings Required)

Order 2026-39. Authorizing Acceptance & Expenditure of Confined Space Rescue Program Donation

Motion to approve the first of two readings of the legislation.

Moved by Councilor Rairdon, seconded by Councilor Shaughnessy

City Council President Munro opened the floor for comments on the motion. The following individuals spoke: President Munro

Motion carried by a show of hands. None opposed.

Order 2026-40. Authorizing Purchase of Stryker Power Load Stretcher for the Fire Department

Motion to approve the first of two readings of the legislation.

Moved by Councilor Faulkingham, seconded by Councilor Rairdon

City Council President Munro opened the floor for comments on the motion. The following individuals spoke: City Administrator Angela Holmes

Motion carried by a show of hands. None opposed.

Order 2026-41. Authorizing Issuance of General Obligation Bonds and Appropriating the Proceeds Thereof (School Revolving Renovation Loan Fund)

Motion to approve the first of two readings of the legislation.

Moved by Councilor Shaughnessy, seconded by Councilor Chau

City Council President Munro opened the floor for comments on the motion. The following individuals spoke: Councilor Chau

Motion carried by a show of hands. None opposed.

Order 2026-42. Amending the Land Use Ordinance Regarding Child Care Uses

Motion to approve the first of two readings of the legislation.

Moved by Councilor Rairdon, seconded by Councilor Shaughnessy

City Council President Munro opened the floor for comments on the motion. The following individuals spoke: Jennie Franceschi (Asst. City Administrator), Councilor Rairdon

Motion carried by a show of hands. None opposed.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENT

City Council President Munro opened the floor for the second and final public comment portion of this meeting. The following individuals spoke: Joseph Carroll (Captain, Westbrook Fire Department), City Clerk Ellis Ledoux, City Administrator Angela Holmes

XIII. REFERRALS

Referring the Proposed Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget to the Finance Committee for Review & Deliberation

Motion to refer this item to the Finance Committee

Moved by Councilor Chau, seconded by Councilor Shaughnessy

Motion carried by a show of hands. None opposed.

XIV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

City Clerk Ellis Ledoux provided the City Council with an overview of the items currently listed for deliberation and provided City Staff recommendations on keeping these items in Committee deliberation.

Facilities & Streets Committee

Establishment of Memorial Area

Friends of Warren Recreational Area Introductions & Updates

Haskell Street Traffic Calming

Policy on Establishing Memorial Areas

Housing & Economic Development Committee

Cannabis Dispensary Zoning Regulations

Motion to remove Residential Landlord Registration, Austin Street Extension and Central Street Traffic Concerns and keep all remaining items in Committee deliberation.

Moved by Councilor Rairdon, seconded by Councilor Chau

Motion carried by a show of hands. None opposed.

XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no requests for an Executive Session.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:04pm

Moved by Councilor Rairdon, seconded by Councilor Chau

Motion carried by a show of hands. None opposed.

Mayor's Budget Message Fiscal Year 2026-2027

Honorable City Council Members,

Tonight, I present for your consideration the proposed FY 2027 budgetary plan for the City of Westbrook, which includes the projected revenues and expenditures for all municipal and school operations.

This has been a year of concerted collaboration across departments and between the City and School to review past procedures, and to think creatively about how we craft our budgets in the future. Starting with the recent creation of our first-ever multi-year Capital Improvement Plan, we have increased our emphasis on project readiness, ensuring that funds are allocated once we have completed our due diligence, we have confirmed the urgency and need, and that the allocation is appropriate based upon the needs and capacity of our community. This involves thoughtful planning, revisiting past assumptions to confirm whether justifications in past years still apply today, and building a financial plan for our community that addresses the most critical needs in a thoughtful way.

The challenges of inflation have not changed. We have seen continued increases in the costs for goods, services, labor, and housing. We continue to face the challenge of providing these essential public services to our community while balancing the property tax burden necessary to fund both municipal and educational operations. I directed all municipal departments to present budgets to me that reflect their most urgent needs while navigating the landscape of inflated costs. Department heads have been asked multiple times over the last several months to provide justification for any increases, and the budget you see presented this evening is the result of what I support as well-substantiated increases necessary for our community. I'd like to thank our department heads for their effort and time to craft a responsible budget for Westbrook.

In addition, our administrative team on the City side has been in regular communication with our partners at the School to ensure that we collectively seek appropriate solutions for our shared needs. Through this process, we have identified several ways in which we can streamline operations and maximize taxpayer funds for the benefit of our students, staff, and community. I'd like to thank our School Committee for the work they are currently undergoing to develop a

responsive budget for Council and voter consideration and look forward to our continued partnership.

Included with the proposed budget is the “Annual Budget & Tax Calculation Projection” document, which summarizes the total tax needs for FY 2027, and projects an estimated valuation and tax rate based upon the information we have now. As a reminder, City Council is tasked with adopting the budget, while the valuation and tax rate are determined later in the year by the City Assessor.

Municipal Budget

Proposed municipal expenditures total \$39,088,502, representing a \$2,379,466 (or 6.48%) increase over FY 26. Proposed non-tax revenues total \$21,888,623, representing a \$752,160 (or 3.56%) increase over FY 26. In total, the municipal tax needs for FY 27 are \$17,199,879, a cumulative increase of 8.41%.

Most of the increases seen in this budget are attributed to the rising costs of good, services, and labor necessary to keep our existing operations and service delivery at their current level. For example, Councilors can anticipate significant increases in the cost of gas, diesel, and electricity across all departments. As noted in previous years, the City is primarily a service-delivery organization, and as such, most municipal department costs relate to labor and an increased projected cost in employee benefits.

I received a request for two additional positions in the upcoming budget, both within the Public Services Department – an Equipment Operator 1 (EO1) and an Operations Supervisor. I took these requests very seriously, understanding that for several years we have deferred a growing need for increased staffing in order to offset the increasing revenue needs associated with education.

The volume of infrastructure to maintain within the City is growing, and I understand that it is becoming more difficult to achieve a basic level of maintenance with existing staffing levels, thus spurring the request for an EO1. Separately, following the retirement of several long-time staff members, we have lost the presence of key experienced personnel within our Highways and Streets crew, highlighting the need for an on-site supervisor for each of our three daily shifts to provide critical safety expertise and supervision. I approved the inclusion of the Operations Supervisor position to fill this gap. However, to mitigate the impact of an additional employee, we have funded this position for 9 months, allowing this position to be filled before the next winter plowing season. While the need for an EO1 position is entirely justifiable, I have denied the request to include this additional position in the FY 27 budget. We will revisit this request next year.

Separately, in January of this year we had two vacancies within our Fire Department due to retirements and advertised for those Firefighter Paramedic/EMT positions accordingly. The

Department received applications from four fully trained and qualified Paramedic-level applicants. It has become increasingly rare to find applicants who have already achieved this level of education. Fire Chief Steve Sloan came to the Administration and noted that there were two additional retirements anticipated within 2026 and requested permission to make offers to all four qualified applicants in anticipation of those additional retirements, which would temporarily increase authorized strength. The Administration confirmed that two TIFs had adequate funding to temporarily cover the cost of salaries and benefits for these two additional positions until such time as the retirements took place. After this review process, I granted permission to temporarily increase the Fire Department's authorized staffing level from 46 positions to 48 positions, noting that the authorized strength would return to 46 upon the two retirements. After review, the Chief informed us that only one of the additional hires came to fruition, thus resulting in a temporary strength of 47 total.

During the Fire Department's budget review process, I informed the Chief that the Administration would explore funding options to make the temporary increased authorized strength permanent. After review, we found that though TIF revenue could cover the temporary increase, eligible TIFs do not generate enough revenue to permanently cover the positions. While the use of TIF funds is not feasible in the long term, I do believe that we should seek to incrementally increase the total authorized strength of our Fire Department personnel in a way that provides dependable security for their team balanced with an understanding of taxpayer capacity. Therefore, I have included in this FY 27 budget the funding difference to make the temporary authorized strength of 47 a permanent reality.

I am pleased to report that in addition to this permanent increase to their authorized strength we have turned the project management of the planned Fire Training Facility over to our Project Manager Robyn Saunders, who is coordinating the further development of this asset. The Fire Training Facility is an important method to connect the Fire Science students at the Westbrook Regional Vocational Center with our Westbrook Fire Department to gain necessary skills for future employment, while simultaneously providing our own staff with a local training option. Our goal is to create a pipeline of future employees from within our own community who come to our Fire Department ready for service, and we are looking forward to seeing growth in this area. Ms. Saunders will continue to provide us with updates on this project in the future and will seek authorization for expenditures when we have reached the appropriate stage in project development.

School Budget

As of Friday, April 3, 2026, proposed school expenditures for Pre-K-12 total \$57,871,667, representing a \$4,521,138 (or 8.47%) increase over FY 26, and proposed expenditures for Adult Education total \$662,508, representing a \$40,552 (or 6.52%) increase. Proposed non-tax revenues for the school total \$23,129,659, representing a \$1,651,158 (or 7.69%) increase over current year. In total, the municipal tax needs for school-related expenses totals \$35,404,516, representing a total increase of \$2,910,532 (or 8.96%) over current year. Please note that these figures are not

final, as the School Finance Committee will meet on April 8, 2026, with first reading of the school budget taking place later that evening. Second and final reading will occur at the School Committee meeting on April 13, 2026.

As in recent years, we have continued our ongoing collaboration with the School Department to maximize the value of each tax dollar allocated toward the upkeep of school facilities. The Community Services Department continues to provide athletic fields maintenance and upkeep at a pro-rated cost of \$121,500 to the School Department. There is no request to the schools to increase this figure from FY 2026 levels, and this is a smaller amount than was allocated in their budget in FY 2025. We have eliminated any common area maintenance charges to the School for their use of space at the Westbrook Community Center, and our Public Services Department will once again resume the responsibility of sweeping the school properties twice per year to ensure lots are clean and in good condition for our students and staff, at no pro-rated charge for labor or service. This allows the School Department to reduce their budget by maximizing the resources we can collectively rely upon. In addition, the City has agreed to share in a pro-rated cost for playground maintenance and chip delivery to offset the cost of maintenance due to community use of these valuable city assets. We are pleased to coordinate these efforts with the School Department, and highlight these examples as areas in which we can continue to collaborate.

I thank the School Committee and School Administration for their hard work. And I thank City Council Finance Committee Chair Brian McCambridge for his attendance at the school's budget review meetings so that he can share with you all his observations from those deliberations.

TIF, Cumberland County & Tax Needs Summary

I want to move now to the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) entry on the Annual Budget & Tax Calculation Projection document. This figure outlines the projected total tax revenue from captured assessed value in all TIF districts, which under State law must be transferred from the general fund to a segregated account. The FY 2027 budget projects a total revenue of \$7,235,128, an increase of \$449,530 (or 6.62%) over current year. This represents the net projected growth in assessed value in TIF districts. I have asked Deputy Economic & Community Development Director Monique Cornett to join our budget review sessions as a resource should any questions arise concerning how TIFs work, how the City maximizes the use of eligible TIF funds, and how we continue to use TIFs as an economic development tool to support growth while offsetting the costs of necessary upgrades to public infrastructure that would otherwise be wholly funded by our taxpayers.

The Cumberland County tax assessment for FY 2027 totals \$2,413,846, representing a \$265,646 (or 12.37%) increase over current year. Cumberland County, like other counties in the State, faces a difficult budget year due to rising costs and declining revenue directly related to the Cumberland County Jail. Federal revenue from the United States Marshal's Service contract can no longer be included in the County budget, and as a result, County taxpayers are now faced with the impact. We continue to urge the State of Maine to increase support for increased county jail

funding. This jaw-dropping increase in our county tax assessment is a direct result of the political gamesmanship playing out across our nation, and local taxpayers (those least able to afford it), are being made to pay for it. Quite literally. We need the power of the state to help solve this crisis.

In sum, this proposed budget reflects a cumulative need for property taxes of \$62,253,369, an increase of \$4,960,698 (or 8.66%). This is the figure that City Council is tasked with reviewing and adopting.

Projected Valuation

The Assessor's preliminary valuation projections show no change in the valuations over FY 2026. Preliminary reports suggest that while growth exists within real estate value, these increases are wholly offset by declines within personal property value. During the City Assessor's budget presentation, he will explain the battle being waged every year as increased real estate value is offset by ever diminishing personal property value due to state exemptions designed to spur economic growth.

While not yet finalized, we are projecting a decline in our Homestead Property Tax Exemption Program for qualified homeowners from \$22,500 to \$20,750, as our certified assessed ratio will be approximately 83%. This number will be finalized when the valuation is established by our City Assessor later this year after budget adoption. While this is disappointing news, we are continuing to see growth in the use of our Senior Property Tax Assistance Program, and continue to encourage eligible homeowners to utilize this resource. We anticipate a return to the maximum Homestead exemption in 2029, following a city-wide revaluation study which is currently slated to occur in 2028.

Estimated Tax Rate

Finally, let's discuss the ultimate impact we expect to see on the tax rate. Based upon the proposed budgets and the current city-wide assessed valuation, the estimated property tax rate for FY 2027 would result in an increase of \$1.30 per \$1,000 of assessed value over the current fiscal year, an 8.63% increase. For the owner of a single-family home in Westbrook valued at the median assessed value of \$355,160, this proposed budget would result in an additional \$463 to their annual tax bill.

As noted above, it is important to emphasize that this is an estimate based on current assessed valuation numbers. The final property tax rate will be determined by the Assessor, following (a) final approval of the budget, and (b) final calculation of the City-wide assessed valuation, assessment ratios, and all tax exemptions, which occur in early July. This also assumes that the voters pass the school budget as presented by the school committee in its current form at the school budget referendum on June 9th.

It has been an honor to work with the city's staff to prepare the budget I present to you today. Thank you all for the opportunity to serve as Mayor of the City of Westbrook, and I invite the public to participate in the City Council's upcoming review and deliberations on the proposed FY 2027 budget, as follows:

- Monday April 6, 2026 (Finance Committee Meeting)
- Thursday April 9, 2026 (Finance Committee Meeting)
- Monday April 13, 2026 (Finance Committee Meeting)
- Wednesday April 15, 2026 (Finance Committee Meeting)
- Friday April 17, 2026 (reserved for a Finance Committee Meeting, if necessary)
- Monday April 27, 2026 (Special City Council Meeting, 1st reading of the budget)
- Monday May 4, 2026 (Regular City Council Meeting, 2nd and final reading of the budget)