

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
MONDAY, JUNE 2, 2025

Moderator: George Miller  
Attendance: 324

Town Clerk: Heather Almy

Called to order: 7:27 PM

Moderator started the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance

Moderator, George Miller made a motion and it was seconded to read the warrant as printed in its entirety, so moved

**Article 1** Selectman McCrohan made a motion and it was seconded to hear the report of the Finance Committee.

Report was read by Eric Wu, Chairman of Finance Committee

**Finance Committee**

**Town of Berkley FY26 Annual Report**

**Good Evening,**

Tonight, the Berkley Finance Committee presents the Fiscal Year 2026 budget. This budget represents the collective work of the Finance Committee, the Board of Selectmen, our Town Administrator, and department heads throughout the community. This year's process was again marked by difficult decisions and difficult trends. We especially wish to thank Town department heads for their willingness to engage in extensive hearings this spring and to welcome our new members to the Finance Committee, who contributed meaningfully to the process.

In the year since our last report, the Town has seen further reductions in staff on both the school and municipal sides of government. For the second straight year, Berkley Public Schools will reduce staffing despite an increase in allocation. On the Town side, personnel reductions and unfilled vacancies continue to shape our municipal services. These trends reflect ongoing financial stress and a growing structural imbalance that the Town must soon confront.

This year's budget is again reliant on the use of cash reserves—\$985,432 in FY2026, a marked increase from the \$865,342 used in FY2025. These funds are not sustainable and represent a stopgap solution. If accepted tonight, Berkley's General Stabilization balance would drop from \$1.9 million to roughly \$1.2 million. This type of reserve drawdown is necessary, but not repeatable. There is no capital plan proposed for FY2026, and deferring capital maintenance and equipment replacement only compounds future risk. Should this trend continue, we would be looking at significant reduction of services town-wide in order to balance future budgets.

On paper, revenue growth appears robust at \$1,847,313 or 7.71%. However, nearly 56% of that growth stems from sources that are either restricted or backcharged: new excluded debt for the Bristol-Plymouth and Berkley Community School projects, school choice backcharges, and high school stabilization transfers. When controlling for these items, true revenue growth is closer to \$808,596.15 or 3.38%—growth over which the

Town has discretionary control.

## Revenue Composition

- **Proposition 2½ Levy Limit Growth**

This remains the dominant driver of discretionary revenue. The FY2026 increase was \$467,729 (3.85%).

- **State Aid (Chapter 70 and General Government Aid)**

The Town saw modest growth in state aid, totaling \$118,973 (2.33%). Chapter 70 remains at minimum per-pupil levels for Berkley.

- **Local Receipts**

Local receipts grew by \$186,894 (13.28%), largely from interest income and transfer station fees. However, these increases are not expected to recur and should be viewed as one-time gains.

Cost growth has largely tracked revenue, rising by \$1,967,404 or 7.93%. After applying similar controls, the cost increase aligns more closely to \$928,687 or 3.74%. Fixed costs continue to be the primary driver of this growth, as detailed below.

The Town continues to feel the growing burden of excluded debt. In FY2026, the full debt service for the Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School project begins to appear in the budget. The bond was issued in February 2025, and costs will continue to escalate until FY2029. Likewise, the Berkley Community School project is currently financed through a \$6.5 million bond anticipation note and is expected to go to full bond in winter/spring 2026. Though tax impacts are modest for now, they will rise significantly over the next few years as debt service increases.

**Budget impact: Bristol-Plymouth: \$562,071 | Berkley Community School: \$245,839**

The Berkley K–8 School District remains a major component of the Town’s operating budget. In FY2026, the Town increased its allocation by \$464,376 or 5.33%. Despite this increase, the district anticipates staff reductions and continued strain on service. State aid through the Chapter 70 formula remains minimal, and the district continues to operate without sufficient relief from the Commonwealth. Transportation cost increases were partially offset by a decrease in out-of-district special education costs.

**Budget impact: \$464,376**

Regional school assessments saw varied changes in FY2026. Somerset-Berkley’s operating assessment increased due to enrollment shifts, reversing the decline seen in FY2025. These costs are being managed through the Special Purpose Stabilization Fund, which is expected to grow in the coming fiscal year. In a shift from prior years, out-of-district costs are now being paid from the High School Stabilization Fund rather than directly from taxation. Bristol-Plymouth saw a small decrease in enrollment and a modest increase in assessment, while Bristol Agricultural was the only regional district to report an enrollment increase from Berkley.

**Budget impact: \$245,671**

Pension obligations under the Bristol County Retirement System increased substantially in FY2026, with an annual jump of \$123,937 or 13.90%. As more employees retire, these legacy costs will remain a serious pressure point on the Town’s finances.

**Budget impact: \$123,937**

Health insurance costs also rose despite the Town making significant changes to its offerings. Premiums increased by a combined \$99,941 (6.6%) for the Town and School. Even with reforms, the long-term

trajectory of healthcare costs remains steep, and further increases should be expected in future fiscal years.

**Budget impact: \$99,941**

The Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen remained closely aligned throughout this year's budget process. As of the joint meeting held on Wednesday, May 21st, the budget presented tonight was formally recommended by the Finance Committee and that recommendation was accepted by the Board of Selectmen.

The final budget represents a departure of nearly \$850,000 from what would be required to maintain level services for FY2026. This is not a budget of expansion or even of stability—it is an absolute reduction in Town services. It reflects a severe compromise between the needs of the community and the limited fiscal means available to meet them.

While the use of cash reserves can provide critical short-term relief, it is not a sustainable long-term solution. As of June 30, 2024, the Town's General Stabilization Fund held a balance of \$2,197,830. After accounting for the \$130,000 appropriated on the floor of last year's Town Meeting, estimated investment earnings at 5% annually, and the proposed appropriation of \$706,379 on this year's warrant, the remaining balance would fall to approximately \$1.45 million. These funds are finite and non-renewable without surplus revenue in future years. If appropriations of this magnitude continue, the Fund would be fully depleted within two years.

Using reserves to fund recurring operational costs is fiscally inadvisable, as it masks a budget deficit and delays necessary decisions about long-term revenue and expenditure alignment. Once the reserves are exhausted, the Town will face steep fiscal cliffs, likely requiring abrupt cuts to essential services or significant tax increases with little lead time or planning.

In closing, the Finance Committee recommends the approval of Warrant Articles 3 through 7. We thank the department heads who presented their budgets, the Board of Selectmen for their collaboration, and all members of the public who engaged with this process. These are difficult times for Berkley, but we remain confident in the Town's ability to face these challenges with resolve and integrity.

And finally, we are happy to report that there are only three available seats on the Finance Committee this year. If you have an interest in public service and shaping Berkley's fiscal future, this is a fine place to start.

It has been an honor to serve the town of Berkley.

Eric Wu, Chairman

Andrea Grillo, Clerk

Christopher Sullivan, Member

Michele Hamilton, Member

# Year over Year Certified Free Cash Appropriations

<b>Certified Free Cash (FY2024 Appropriations)</b>	<b>\$ 1,144,750</b>
Bristol/Plymouth Interest	\$ (27,742)
OPEB Contribution	\$ (35,000)
Snow and Ice	\$ (17,258)
All Contractual Allocation	\$ (250,000)
Dump Truck	\$ (80,000)
Operating Free Cash	\$ (256,834)
Transfer to: General Stabilization	\$ (477,916)
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

<b>Certified Free Cash (FY2025 Appropriations)</b>	<b>\$ 856,780</b>
Snow and Ice ( <b>Article #3</b> )	\$ (33,838)
Past Due Bills ( <b>Article #3</b> )	\$ (12,600)
Library Application ( <b>Article # 14</b> )	\$ (75,000)
Operating Free Cash ( <b>Article #6</b> )	\$ (735,342)
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

<b>Certified Free Cash (FY2026 Appropriations)</b>	<b>\$ 585,417</b>
Snow and Ice ( <b>Article #3</b> )	\$ (190,697)
Past Due Bills ( <b>Article #3</b> )	\$ -
Opioid Settlement	\$ (115,667)
Operating Free Cash ( <b>Article #6</b> )	\$ (279,053)
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

**Article 2** Selectman Vincent made a motion and it was seconded that the Town move to pass over Article 2.

**Explanation:** The Capital Improvement Planning Committee lacks quorum and the report required by the Town of Berkley's bylaws doesn't need to be produced.

**No discussion, Motion carried unanimously**

**Article 3** Selectman McCrohan made a motion and it was seconded that the Town transfer and appropriate from available FY25 funds the following amounts:  
Appropriate from Free Cash to:

1. Snow and Ice Account \$190,697

**Totaling; \$190,697**

Transfer from the Post Retirement Buyout Account to:

1. Salaries – Fire Chief (01-220-510-5122) \$60,000

**Explanation:** This article appropriates available FY25 funds to cover the Snow and Ice deficit only. In prior years, similar articles have also been used to fund capital expenditures or Address outstanding obligations from prior fiscal years. In addition to the Snow and Ice appropriation, this article includes a transfer from the Post-Retirement Buyout account to the Fire Chief Salary line. This transfer supports the implementation of a previously negotiated retirement arrangement between the former Fire Chief and the Town. The adjustment ensures that the appropriate funding source is utilized in accordance with the terms of the agreement, while maintaining clarity and consistency within the Town’s financial records.

**Discussion: Resident Voter: Mark Horsfall stated the Town spent a lot of money on a piece of equipment for highway; will it be used on other roads. Selectmen McCrohan explained the reason for the purchase of the certain piece of equipment. Mr. Horsfall then stated there are other ways to do it. Could have saved money being on the verge of bankruptcy, the equipment shouldn’t have been purchased. Resident Voter: Edward Harmon said everyone voted at the last meeting for Ridge Rd. The equipment had to be purchased, cheaper than to lease it. The purchase was the right choice, bought on Mass state bids. Mark Horsfall said not a lot of snow days, buy under Ch.9, shouldn’t have been bought. Highway Surveyor/Tree Warden Robert Rose spoke, explained there is a lot of plowing on Ridge Rd. The way the road is designed, leads into a private road, and explained the reason for the purchase of the equipment. Since the Town adopted the road, he needs to take care of it. He spoke with the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator about the purchase and everyone was all set with it. No further discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 4** Selectman Vincent made a motion and it was seconded that the Town fix salaries and compensation of elected officials, appointed officers and employees and that the Town raise and appropriate, and transfer from available funds, or otherwise provide for, the payment of said salaries and compensation, a reserve fund, and for the charges, expenses and outlays of the several Town departments for the twelve (12) month period from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026, all as set forth in the budget presented by the Finance Committee, and summarized as follows:

from taxation	\$ 7,025,820
from General Stabilization	\$ 266,014
from Ambulance User Fees	\$ 485,000
<b>Totaling</b>	<b>\$ 7,776,834</b>

**Explanation:** This article will fund all town departments, boards and commissions, for the upcoming fiscal year.

*Vote Required: TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY*  
Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED  
Finance Committee Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**FY 2026 OPERATING BUDGET (BY DEPARTMENT)**

		FY2025	Level Services	Selectmen
		ACTUAL		
		APPROP	FY2026	RECOMM
DEPARTMENT NAME	RESERVE FUND			
ACCOUNT NAME				
Expense		25,000	25,000	25,000
Total		25,000	25,000	25,000

DEPARTMENT NAME		MODERATOR	
ACCOUNT NAME			
Stipends	102	102	102
Expense	3,200	3,200	3,200
Total	3,302	3,302	3,302

DEPARTMENT NAME	SELECTMEN		
ACCOUNT NAME			
Salaries Elected	12,000	12,000	12,000
Salaries	110,434	106,611	88,589
Expense	10,600	12,350	12,350
Total	133,034	130,961	112,939

DEPARTMENT NAME		FINANCE COMMITTEE	
ACCOUNT NAME			
Expense	1,330	1,330	1,330
Total	1,330	1,330	1,330

**DEPARTMENT NAME****TOWN ACCOUNTANT**

ACCOUNT NAME

Salaries	84,500	91,272	75,368
Expense	36,600	47,600	47,600
Capital Outlay	0	0	0
Total	121,100	138,872	122,968

**DEPARTMENT NAME****ASSESSORS**

ACCOUNT NAME

Salaries Elected	12,240	12,546	12,546
Salaries	46,353	58,608	76,736
Expense	51,315	39,180	44,015
Capital Outlay	0	0	0
Total	109,908	110,334	133,297

**DEPARTMENT NAME****TOWN TREASURER**

ACCOUNT NAME

Salaries Elected	35,198	5,866	5,866
Salaries	50,342	114,096	114,096
Expense	20,200	20,200	20,200
Capital Outlay	0	0	0
Total	105,740	140,162	140,163

**DEPARTMENT NAME****TOWN COLLECTOR**

ACCOUNT NAME

Salaries	35,198	1	1
Salaries	26,500	35,456	35,456
Expense	16,500	16,500	16,500
Capital Outlay	1,000	1,000	0
Total	79,198	52,957	51,957

**DEPARTMENT NAME****TOWN COUNSEL**

ACCOUNT NAME

Expense	55,000	75,000	65,000
Total	55,000	75,000	65,000

**DEPARTMENT NAME****DATA PROCESSING****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	0	0	0
Expense	90,618	96,794	98,618
Capital Outlay	8,000	8,000	3,000
Total	98,618	104,794	101,618

**DEPARTMENT NAME****TOWN CLERK****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries Elected	35,198	50,000	40,000
Salaries	27,100	31,000	31,307
Expense	8,250	9,750	8,000
Capital Outlay	0	1,000	0
Total	70,548	91,750	79,307

**DEPARTMENT NAME****ELECTIONS & REGISTRATIONS****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	7,500	13,500	11,500
Expense	9,600	15,700	14,700
Capital Outlay	0	0	10,000
Total	17,100	29,200	36,200

**DEPARTMENT NAME****PLANNING BOARD****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries Elected	1,200	1,200	1,200
Total	1,200	1,200	1,200

**DEPARTMENT NAME****TOWN BUILDINGS****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	18,305	18,305	18,305
Expense	29,760	31,386	30,336
Total	48,065	49,691	48,641



**DEPARTMENT NAME****PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING****ACCOUNT NAME**

Expense	77,400	83,000	79,400
Capital Outlay	0	0	0
Total	77,400	83,000	79,400

**DEPARTMENT NAME****POLICE DEPT.****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	1,438,402	1,493,951	1,492,492
Expense	116,072	133,297	112,630
Capital Outlay	0	2,145	2,145
Total	1,554,474	1,629,393	1,607,267

**DEPARTMENT NAME****FIRE DEPARTMENT****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	186,577	192,270	191,270
Expense	83,760	89,260	82,760
Capital Outlay	12,000	17,000	14,000
Total	282,337	298,530	288,030

**DEPARTMENT NAME****EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	696,528	778,400	709,600
Expense	89,500	101,100	92,600
Capital Outlay	4,000	4,000	39,000
Total	790,028	883,500	841,200

**DEPARTMENT NAME****BUILDING DEPARTMENT****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	48,340	52,629	52,629
Expense	1,790	1,790	1,790
Capital Outlay	1,000	1,000	1,000
Total	51,130	55,419	55,419

**DEPARTMENT NAME****COMMUNICATIONS DEPT.****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	389,528	396,837	396,837
Expense	18,681	22,431	22,431
Capital Outlay	0	0	0
Total	408,209	419,268	419,268

**DEPARTMENT NAME****ANIMAL CONTROL/DOG OFFICER****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	24,990	25,242	25,242
Expense	2,723	2,777	2,777
Total	27,713	28,019	28,020

**DEPARTMENT NAME****FORESTRY****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salary Elected	4,000	4,200	4,120
Expense	21,000	25,000	21,000
Total	25,000	29,200	25,120

**DEPARTMENT NAME****HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT****ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries Elected	81,000	85,000	85,000
Salaries	564,000	627,590	610,790
Expense	391,550	426,230	376,950
Capital Outlay	5,000	5,000	4,000
Total	1,041,550	1,143,820	1,076,740

**DEPARTMENT NAME****VETERANS GRAVES****ACCOUNT NAME**

Expense	1,750	1,750	1,750
Total	1,750	1,750	1,750

**DEPARTMENT NAME****STREET LIGHTS****ACCOUNT NAME**

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Expense	4,000	4,000	4,000
Total	4,000	4,000	4,000

**DEPARTMENT NAME**

**CEMETERY**

**ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	600	600	600
Expense	8,500	8,500	3,000
Total	9,100	9,100	3,600

**DEPARTMENT NAME**

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

**ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries Elected	3,000	3,000	0
Capital Outlay	0	0	0
Total	3,000	3,000	0

**DEPARTMENT NAME**

**COUNCIL ON AGING**

**ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	31,954	44,770	34,034
Expense	10,115	10,115	10,115
Capital Outlay	0	0	0
Total	42,069	54,885	44,149

**DEPARTMENT NAME**

**VETERANS DEPARTMENT**

**ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	8,487	8,487	8,487
Expense	4,500	4,500	4,200
Veterans Benefits	40,000	40,000	40,000
Total	52,987	52,987	52,687

**DEPARTMENT NAME**

**LIBRARY DEPARTMENT**

**ACCOUNT NAME**

Salaries	134,152	140,055	140,411
Expense	40,132	48,547	33,873
Capital Outlay	0	0	0
Total	174,284	188,602	174,284

**DEPARTMENT NAME****CELEBRATIONS 6692**

ACCOUNT NAME	ACTUAL EXPEND	ACTUAL EXPEND	ACTUAL APPROP
Expense	1,500	1,500	0
Total	1,500	1,500	0

**DEPARTMENT NAME****HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

ACCOUNT NAME			
Expense	200	200	0
Total	200	200	0

**DEPARTMENT NAME****MISCELLANEOUS**

ACCOUNT NAME			
Town Fuel	100,000	100,000	100,000
SRPEDD	1,399	1,434	1,434
In-LINE OF DUTY INJURY FUND	3,000	3,000	3,000
Unfunded Liability	20,000	20,000	20,000
Stormwater Reporting	1,000	25,000	25,000
Total	125,399	149,434	149,434

**DEPARTMENT NAME****PENSIONS**

ACCOUNT NAME			
BRISTOL COUNTY RETIREMENT	891,595	1,015,532	1,015,532
MEDICARE	195,000	200,000	200,000
Total	1,086,595	1,215,532	1,215,532

**DEPARTMENT NAME****HEALTH INSURANCE**

ACCOUNT NAME			
BLUE CROSS/ BLUE SHIELD HEALTH	476,833	546,497	546,497
FLEXIBLE BENEFIT PLAN	0	0	0
Total	476,833	546,497	546,497

**DEPARTMENT NAME****LIABILITY INSURANCE**

## ACCOUNT NAME

INS. PR. DIS.-FIRE-POL. ACC. H	67,556	69,000	69,000
LIABILITY INSURANCE	84,545	91,515	91,515
Total	152,101	160,515	160,515

**DEPARTMENT NAME****WORKERS COMPENSATION**

## ACCOUNT NAME

FRINGE BENEFIT/CHARGES	20,000	21,000	21,000
Total	20,000	21,000	21,000

**DEPARTMENT NAME****UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION**

## ACCOUNT NAME

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE	75,000	75,000	60,000
Total	75,000	75,000	60,000

**DEPARTMENT NAME****RETIREMENT OF DEBT**

## ACCOUNT NAME

Bristol Plymouth High School	20,434	18,923	18,923
Berkley Community School	0	0	0
Multiple Use of Equipment	250,000	250,000	250,000
TOWN OFFICE BLDG	170,000	175,000	175,000
SBRSD HIGH SCHOOL	354,634	387,878	387,878
Total	795,068	831,801	831,801

**DEPARTMENT NAME****INTEREST**

## ACCOUNT NAME

Bristol Plymouth High School	219,348	543,148	543,148
Berkley Community School	0	245,839	245,839
Multiple Use of Equipment	14,963	4,988	4,988
TOWN OFFICE BUILDING	69,600	64,500	64,500
SBRSD HIGH SCHOOL	169,585	166,234	166,234
Total	473,496	1,024,709	1,024,709

ACCOUNT NAME

## SCHOOL DEPARTMENTS 3325

Berkley School	8,715,624	9,793,385	9,180,000
Salaries Elected	1,200	1,200	1,200
K-8 Out of District Special Education	325,310	190,702	190,702
K-8 Transportation and Insurances	1,803,448	1,971,505	1,971,505
S/B/ High School Assessment	2,747,558	3,013,899	3,013,899
B.P. Regional High School	1,332,200	1,353,780	1,353,780
Bristol Aggy. Assesment	139,953	176,743	176,743
SBSRD Taxation	79,040	0	0
Total	15,144,333	16,501,214	15,887,829

GRAND TOTAL	23,764,698	26,366,427	25,521,173
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Fiscal Year 2026 Budget (All Figures Are Estimates)						
REVENUE	FY 2025	FY2026		BACKCHARGES	FY 2025	FY2026
FY 2025 Levy	\$ 11,711,401	\$ 12,167,722		State and County Charges & Deficits	\$ 204,967	\$ 205,405
FY2025 Amended New Growth	\$ -			Abatements and Exemptions	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
2 1/2 Tax Increase	\$ 292,785	\$ 304,193		Library	\$ 16,449	\$ 18,825
New Growth	\$ 160,000	\$ 160,000		Charter School Sending	\$ -	
Debt Exclusion	\$ 1,268,564	\$ 1,856,510		School Choice Sending/Receiving	\$ 734,585	\$ 942,700
State Aid Chap. 70 (HWM's estimate)	\$ 4,222,848	\$ 4,318,848			\$ 1,056,001	\$ 1,266,930
Charter Tuition Reimbursement	\$ -					
State Aid Local (HWM's estimate)	\$ 749,194	\$ 765,676				
Veterans Benefits	\$ 22,214	\$ 9,180				
Exempt Elderly	\$ 32,948	\$ 50,097		EXPENSES	FY 2025	FY2026
State Owned Land	\$ 60,685	\$ 60,685		Local Government General Cost	\$ 7,351,801	\$ 7,776,834
Public Library	\$ 16,449	\$ 18,825		Reserved for Debt Exclusion	\$ 1,268,564	\$ 1,856,510
School Choice	\$ 812,992	\$ 997,422		Local Schools-Net School Spending	\$ 10,209,258	\$ 10,572,996
Motor Vehicle Excise	\$ 875,000	\$ 920,000		Local Schools-Non Net School Spending	\$ 636,324	\$ 770,411
Other Excise	\$ -	\$ 19,000		Regional Vocational H.S.	\$ 1,332,200	\$ 1,353,780
Rentals Solar	\$ 158,970	\$ 162,149		S/B/HighSchool Assessment	\$ 2,747,558	\$ 3,013,899
Meals Tax	\$ 35,000	\$ 40,000		S/B/HighSchool Taxation	\$ 79,040	\$ -
Pen. & Int.	\$ 60,000	\$ 90,000		Regional Aggy.	\$ 139,953	\$ 176,743
Other Charges	\$ 83,000	\$ 100,000			\$ 23,764,698	\$ 25,521,173
Fees	\$ 50,000	\$ 25,000				
License & Permits	\$ 125,000	\$ 127,500		REVENUE	\$ 24,820,700	\$ 26,788,103
Fines	\$ 10,750	\$ 10,965		EXPENSES	\$ 23,764,698	\$ 25,521,173
Invest Income	\$ 10,000	\$ 100,000		BACKCHARGES	\$ 1,056,001	\$ 1,266,930
E.M.S. Receipts Reserved Account	\$ 450,000	\$ 485,000		Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ 1	\$ 1
Overlay Surplus - ATM	\$ -	\$ -	Appropriations			
High School Stabilization	\$ 2,747,558	\$ 3,013,899	\$ 7,025,820	From taxation		
Operating Free Cash	\$ 735,342	\$ 279,053	\$ 485,000	EMS Receipts		
General Stabilization Fund	\$ 130,000	\$ 706,379	\$ 266,014	From General Stabilization	FY 2026 Revenue less Free Cash	\$ 25,802,671
	\$ 24,820,700	\$ 26,788,103	\$ 7,776,834	Subtotal (Article #4)	FY 2025 Revenue less Free Cash	\$ 23,955,358
			\$ 1,856,510	From taxation (Article #5)	Revenue Growth	\$ 1,847,313
FY2024 Free Cash	\$ 585,417				Revenue Growth as percentage	7.71%
Snow and Ice (Article #3)	\$ (190,697)		\$ 279,053	From free cash		
Past Due Bills (Article #3)	\$ -		\$ 440,365	From general stabilization		
Opioid Settlement	\$ (115,667)		\$ 12,154,512	From taxation	FY 2026 Expenses and Backcharges	\$ 26,788,103
Operating Free Cash (Article #6)	\$ (279,053)		\$ 12,873,930	Subtotal (Article #6)	FY 2025 Expenses and Backcharges	\$ 24,820,699
Balance	\$ -				Cost growth	\$ 1,967,404
			\$ 3,013,899	from HS Stabilization	Cost growth as percentage	7.93%
			\$ -	From taxation		
			\$ 3,013,899	Subtotal (Article #7)		
			\$ 25,521,173	total budget		

**Discussion:** Several Resident Voters put a Hold on the following Departments: Assessors- salaries, Treasurer- salaries, Tax Collector- salaries, EMS- salaries, Highway Dept.- salaries elected & expense, COA- salaries, & Celebrations- expense. Resident Voter: Dean Larabee asked for an explanation of why town stabilization is being used and clarification on a difference on the interest. T.A. Matt Chabot explained the reason for stabilization money being used and there was an interest error the total amount coming out of stabilization is \$706,000.00. Resident Voter: Joseph Botelho stated to the Board he feels how Article 4 is written needs to be changed, should be able to vote for the whole thing or not at all, should change in the future or he will try to get a bylaw. Resident Voter: Jenifer Andrews asked if the School Dept. is a separate article. Selectman Vincent stated yes. Resident Voter: Joe Freitas reviewed with the Board: \$706,000.00 out of stabilization, money for Free Cash coming out, the B-P bond is all set and then he further discussed bond rates. He also told the Board there were no percentages showing on the salaries. He then spoke about the Holds he put on: Assessors: why was there such a raise in the salary. Selectmen McCrohan stated the salary needed to be raised to be competitive for the new hire and the hours are increasing. Tax Collector/Treasurer: what does the salary include? Selectmen McCrohan said she went to the State House the combined position should go through in August. Salaries and positions were further discussed. He asked if the Tax Collector salary is actually \$1.00, she said yes. Resident Voter: Susan Hathaway put a Hold on EMS she asked why there was such a big difference in money given compared to other depts. Selectmen McCrohan stated at the last Town Meeting money came out of General Stabilization to hire 2 full time staff and free cash a little bit of a gap for a potential hire of a Deputy Chief some cost savings for that. Resident Voter: Ed Harmon put a Hold on Treasurer salary, wanted to know what the salary will be. Salary will be \$62,500.00. Resident Voter: Joe Freitas put a Hold on COA he told the Board Krista does a lot of work, seniors need to be taken care of and Krista deserves more money. Highway Dept. Hold he feels Robert Rose received a substantial raise FY25, elected vs appointed gets more money and increases retirement obligations. He put a Hold on Celebrations because he feels it's horrible not to be able to find money for that. Selectmen Vincent told everyone she got a grant for \$2,500.00 to fund that Dept. Resident Voter: Mark Horsfall put a Hold on Highway Dept. He made a motion to reduce the expense line for the Highway Dept. to \$246,100.00, got a second on the motion. J. Freitas asked what line it was coming out of M. Horsfall- expenses. A vote was taken to reduce the expenses of the Highway Dept.; motion was Not passed. No further discussion, Motion to approve Article 4 was passed unanimously.

**Article 5** Selectman McCrohan made a motion it was seconded that the Town raise and appropriate the outlays of the following Town governmental accounts for Debt Service for the twelve (12) month period from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026, all as set forth in the budget presented by the Finance Committee, and summarized as follows:

## RETIREMENT OF DEBT

Town Office Building	\$175,000
SBRSD High School	\$387,878
Bristol Plymouth High School	\$18,923
Multiple Use of Equipment	\$250,000
TOTAL	\$831,801

## INTEREST

Town Office Building	\$ 64,500
SBRSD High School	\$ 166,234
Bristol Plymouth High School	\$ 543,148
Berkley Community School	\$ 245,839
Multiple Use of Equipment	\$ 4,988
TOTAL	\$ 1,024,709

**from taxation**      **\$ 1,856,510**

**Totaling**              **\$ 1,856,510**

**Explanation:** This article will fund the obligation of the Town's borrowing debt, and interest.

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

Finance Committee Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**No discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 6** Selectman Vincent made a motion and it was seconded that the Town vote to raise and appropriate, and transfer from available funds, the payment of the outlays of the following Town School related expenses for the twelve (12) month period from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026:



## School, Departments

Berkley School Spending	\$ 9,180,000
Salaries Elected School Committee	\$ 1,200
K-8 Out of District Special Education	\$ 190,702
K-8 Health Insurance	\$ 1,067,362
K-8 Transportation	\$ 770,411
K-8 Workers Compensation Insurance	\$ 51,000
K-8 Liability Insurance	\$ 82,732
Bristol Plymouth Reg. Voc. H.S.	\$ 1,353,780
Bristol Aggie. H.S. Assessment	\$ 176,743

For a total from free cash of \$ 279,053

For a total from General Stabilization of \$ 440,365

For a total from taxation of \$12,154,512

**Totaling** \$12,873,930

**Explanation:** This article provides the funding necessary for the Berkley K-8, Bristol Plymouth H.S., and Bristol Aggie H.S. for the upcoming fiscal year.

***Vote Required: TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY***

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

Finance Committee Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**No discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 7** Selectman McCrohan made a motion and it was seconded that the Town approve and raise and appropriate and transfer funds for its assessed share of the Somerset/Berkley Regional School District Budget for fiscal year 2026, as follows:

From High School Stabilization of	\$ 3,013,899
Totaling	\$ 3,013,899

**Explanation:** This article will provide funding for the Somerset Berkley Regional High School District for the upcoming fiscal year. For the first time in many years, this appropriation from the Special Purpose Stabilization Fund will include support for out-of-district special education expenses, which in turn helps ease financial pressure on the Berkley K-8 district's operating budget.

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

Finance Committee Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**No discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 8** Selectman Vincent made a motion and it was seconded that the Town authorize expenditure limitations for the following revolving funds pursuant to G.L. c. 44, § 53E½, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, to be expended in accordance with Article 35 of the General Bylaws: wiring inspector, \$10,000; gas inspector, \$10,000; plumbing inspector, \$10,000; Board of Appeals, \$5,000; Planning Board, \$10,000; Soil Conservation Board, \$5,000; Board of Health, \$60,000; Police Department, \$200,000; and School Department, \$60,000.

**Explanation:** This article provides for the authorization of expenditure limits for the listed department accounts for the upcoming fiscal year.

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

Finance Committee Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**No discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 9** Selectman McCrohan made a motion and it was seconded that the Town authorize the Board of Selectmen to accept and enter into contracts for the expenditure of any funds allocated by the Commonwealth and/or federally aided programs for the construction, reconstruction and improvements of Town roads.

**Explanation:** The article allows for the Board of Selectmen to accept and enter into Contracts for any funds received from the Commonwealth and or any federally aided programs for the construction, reconstruction, and improvement of town roads. The town regularly receives Ch 90 funding for roads which the Selectmen need to accept.

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

Finance Committee Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**No discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 10** Selectman Vincent made a motion and it was seconded that the Town vote to authorize the Board of Assessors to hire one or more of its members to do annual tax maintenance on real and personal property and to set the fee paid to said members at \$15.00 per parcel, said funds to be paid from the Annual Tax Maintenance Account.

**Explanation:** The article will allow the Assessors to appoint one or more of its members to do the annual tax maintenance on real and personal property that needs to be completed during the year.

**No discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 11** Selectman McCrohan made a motion and it was seconded that the Town vote to accept the provisions of Ch. 126 of the Acts of 1988, amending Sec. 4 of Ch. 73 of the Acts of 1986, to allow an additional exemption which shall be for all exemptions and none of which shall exceed 100% of said exemption for which they qualify in Fiscal Year 2026.

**Explanation:** This article provides for an increase in property tax exemptions for certain qualifying individuals, including surviving spouses, low-income elderly residents, individuals who are blind, and disabled veterans. These additional exemptions must be reauthorized annually and have traditionally appeared on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. For the first time, this article has been amended to authorize the maximum increase allowed by state law—up to 100% of the base exemption for which an individual qualifies.

This article seeks approval to petition the State Legislature for a special law allowing Berkley to issue up to five (5) additional all-alcohol, on-premises liquor licenses within the General Business District. Under the state's license quota system (based on population), Berkley is currently limited in the number of licenses it may issue. While there is not currently a surge in demand, proactively securing these licenses would support economic development and make the Town more attractive to new restaurants and hospitality businesses.

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**No discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 12** Selectman Vincent made a motion and it was seconded that the Town vote to authorize the Board of Health to appoint one or more of its members as agents(s) of the Board of Health as well inspectors and sanitation inspectors and to set the dollar amount for said agents' Inspector fees as follows: \$75.00 per perc hole, \$100.00 per well inspection, \$150.00 per sanitation inspection, \$75.00 per food service inspection, \$75.00 per pumper truck inspection, \$75.00 for other miscellaneous inspections when a license or certificate is required.

**Explanation:** This will set the rate of pay for each inspection that the Board of Health Inspectors are required to complete.

**Resident Voter: Peter Abdallah asked how much money goes to the town, how is the money broken down. T.A. Matt Chabot said it was enough to sustain the department. No further discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 13** Selectman McCrohan made a motion and it was seconded that the Town amend Article 27 of the General Bylaws, entitled “Capital Improvement Planning Committee,” as set forth in the 2025 Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

**Explanation:** This article makes several updates to the bylaw governing the Capital Improvement Planning Committee. It removes the restriction preventing members from holding other town positions, increases the project cost threshold for capital planning review from \$5,000 to \$10,000, and eliminates a procedural requirement that previously limited appropriations for projects not reviewed by the Committee. It also relocates a sentence clarifying quorum requirements for better organizational flow.

These changes would allow a broader cross-section of Town government and residents---particularly those already serving on minor Boards and Committees to participate in the CIPC, strengthening collaboration and representation in capital planning

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**Resident Voter: Dean Larabee questioned about the Town going for bonds, and who can serve on Capital Imp Com and other Boards at the same time. Since the Board has not in a long time, how are we making sure all the projects and bonding are in alignment with any other town plans. Atty. Adam Costa stated there is no law saying you can’t serve on both Capital Imp Com. and another Committee, case by case basis. No further discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 14** Selectman Vincent made a motion and it was seconded that the Town authorize the Board of Selectmen to petition the General Court for special legislation, as set forth in the 2025 Annual Town Meeting Warrant, to create a process for the recall of elected Town of Berkley officials; provided that the General Court may make clerical or editorial changes of form only to the bill, unless the Board of Selectmen approves amendments to the bill before enactment by the General Court, it being authorized hereunder to do so, which are within the scope of the general public objectives of the petition.

**Explanation:** This article seeks authorization for the Board of Selectmen to petition the state legislature for special legislation establishing a formal recall process for elected officials in the Town of Berkley. Currently, Berkley has no mechanism by which voters may recall an elected official prior to the end of his or her term, leaving the citizenry without recourse in cases of misconduct, incapacity, or loss of public confidence.

The proposed legislation outlines a structured process:

A recall effort begins with an affidavit signed by 25 registered voters, identifying the official and stating grounds for recall.

Once certified, petition forms are issued by the Town Clerk. To advance, the petition must gather valid signatures from at least 15% of registered voters in each precinct, submitted within 20 business days.

If the petition is certified, the official is given 5 days to resign. If no resignation is tendered and the Town Clerk so reports, the Board of Selectmen must call a recall election within 90 days (or align it with a regular election if one is already scheduled within 100 days).

The ballot includes two questions: (1) whether the official should be recalled, and (2) who should succeed them. The official may appear on the ballot as a candidate unless they decline.

If the recall succeeds and a successor qualifies, the recalled official is removed. If the successor does not qualify, the seat is deemed vacant. Additionally, any recalled or resigning official may not be reappointed to any Town position for two years.

While the language of this proposed act is modeled on similar legislation adopted in other Massachusetts towns, it represents an effort to establish a tested and legally sound process rather than to create a wholly original one. It reflects standard practices that have been upheld elsewhere, ensuring administrative clarity and legal durability.

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**Resident Voter: Joe Freitas asked how the Town will pay for this, need something in the budget. Selectman Vincent and T. A. Matt Chabot both stated it would be transferred from another account. No further discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**Moderator George Miller asked for a motion to recuse himself for the next two Articles # 15 & 16 and appoint Selectman Vincent as Deputy Moderator. Motion was made and seconded- Motion approved unanimously.**

**ARTICLE 15** Selectman Vincent made a motion and it was seconded that the Town amend the Berkley Zoning By-Law, being Article 21 of the Town's General Bylaws, as set forth in the 2025 Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

**Explanation:** The passage of this article will correct clerical errors or inconsistencies within the Zoning By-Law's Table of Use Regulations, in Section 3.2, and in the language of Section 4.2.2. In the current Table of Use Regulations, a "multifamily dwelling, not to exceed 4 dwelling units" could be granted a special permit by the Board of Selectmen in the Residential zone, but two and three family dwellings are prohibited in all circumstances. Passage of this article will require a 2/3rds majority.

***Vote Required: TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY***

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

Planning Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**Planning Board member Marc Oliveira stated the Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend to approve Article 15 as presented, he explained it was a clerical error. Resident Voter: Melissa Martin asked for an explanation of the situation and clerical error. Atty. Adam Costa further explained. Resident Voter: Jenifer Andrews asked to move the question. Resident Voter: Edward Harmon stated Robert Rules need to be in order when move the question is stated. Atty. Adam Costa said he agreed, but the moderator determines it. Moderator said she would let the 2 residents already in line speak before moving the question. Resident Voter: Robert Perruzzi questioned about Sec 8 in the Zoning By-Laws- In-law apartments. M. Oliveira stated accessible units have nothing to do with this article. Resident Voter: George Miller questioned about the lot size, 1 ½ acers required for a one family. Atty. Adam Costa explained the acreage requirement and 3 acres would be required for a 2 family. G. Miller stated allowing this would cost the town more money. G. Miller said he would like to file a motion to amend the Article, deleting the Table of Use, no 2 family units, copy will be submitted to the Town Clerk. He agrees with multifamily homes in a business zone not a residential zone. The amendment Mr. Miller submitted was given to Atty. Adam Costa for review. Atty. Adam Costa told the Moderator the first part of the amendment was ok, but the other part is not printed in the warrant for the Town Meeting, would need to give notice for the seconded part. George Miller stated he would withdraw the motion. A call for a vote to move the question was approved. No further discussion, Motion defeated unanimously. Failed**

**ARTICLE 16** Selectman McCrohan made a motion and it was seconded that the Town amend the “Town of Berkley Zoning Map,” as referenced and incorporated in Section 2.2 of the Berkley Zoning By-Law, being Article 21 of the Town’s General By-Laws, by rezoning the following Lots as part of and to be included in the General Business District: 33 Padelford St. (Map 10 Lot 36-01); 35 Padelford St. (Map 10 Lot 60); and 35R Padelford St. (Map 10 Lot 61).

**Explanation:** This article proposes to amend the Town’s official Zoning Map to rezone three properties located at 33, 35, and 35R Padelford Street from their current zoning designation to the **General Business District**. This change would allow for a broader range of commercial uses on these parcels in accordance with the General Business zoning regulations.

***Vote Required: TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY***  
Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED  
Planning Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**Planning Board member Marc Oliveira stated the Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend to approve Article 16 as presented. Resident Voter: Gerald Laliberte said he is against the new Dunkin, traffic is a mess now, against this also. Resident Voter: Diane Maxwell said she knows we need businesses but this will not bring in enough tax revenue, need Commercial Tax, should table this question. Marc Oliveira stated Commercial Tax will never happen in Berkley. Resident Voter: Kelly Borges said she agrees we need commercial property, but this is looking at a lot of acreage for commercial. She is an abutter and still wants a neighborhood. She proposes to table the question to come up with by-laws for this. Resident Voter: Thomas Smith stated there is a lot of traffic around, the town needs revenue, but needs more planning, table it. Resident Voter: Ruth Alcante asked if there was any consideration on the impact of the well water, need to think of impact first. Marc Oliveira stated the owners came to the Planning Board and asked for this to be zoned Commercial, as far as the water, Site Plan Review would be done. Resident Voter: Kristin Costa said to keep in mind the residents that are not direct abutters, buffer zone for business area, lights, noise, and air pollution, additional traffic, a lot of considerations. Moderator Vincent made a motion to table the article, motion carried. No further discussion, Motion to table the article carried unanimously. Tabled.**

**ARTICLE 17** Selectman Vincent made a motion and it seconded that the Town file a Home Rule Petition with the General Court, as set forth in the 2025 Annual Town Meeting Warrant, for a special law authorizing the Town to grant an additional five (5) licenses for the sale of all alcoholic beverages to be drunk on the premises.

**Explanation:** This article seeks approval to petition the State Legislature for a special law allowing Berkley to issue up to five (5) additional all-alcohol, on-premises liquor licenses within the General Business District. Under the state's license quota system (based on population), Berkley is currently limited in the number of licenses it may issue. While there is not currently a surge in demand, proactively securing these licenses would support economic development and make the Town more attractive to new restaurants and hospitality businesses.

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**No discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 18** Citizen's Petitioner- Kerrie-Ann Auclair made a motion and it was seconded that the Town exclude its municipal administrative buildings and Town property from being defined as "prohibited areas" under Chapter 269, Section 10, of the Massachusetts General Laws, thereby allowing possession of a firearm, loaded or unloaded, as defined in Section 121 of Chapter 140, in said buildings.

**Explanation:** This article seeks to opt the Town out of a provision in state law (Chapter 135 of the Acts of 2024) that would otherwise classify municipal administrative buildings and Town-owned property—including places such as Town Hall, libraries, community centers, and other municipal facilities—as "prohibited areas" for firearm possession. If approved, the Town would allow lawful firearm possession, in accordance with state law, on these properties.

**Kerrie-Ann Auclair did a presentation and explained the article. Selectman Vincent asked questions about the bill, it was further explained. Resident Voter: Jacob Kress asked if it included carrying in schools. K. Auclair stated schools are off limits. Resident Voter: Mark Freire said he agrees with the article if there is a problem in Town Hall, everyone needs it, all people with LTC have had background checks. Resident Voter: Kathleen Strozyk said she proposes this, need gun free zones, there is no need to have a loaded firearm at the town hall and she worries about children. Resident Voter: Andrew Derusha said it will keep everyone safe, he always carries a gun, need to be protected, he is for this. K. Auclair spoke about gun free zones, told a story of an incident and explained how gun free zones are not safe. Resident Voter: Bruce Bodner stated too many people have been killed by guns. It will be a mistake for Berkley to do this. Resident Voter: Ann Marie Holmes asked about other places in town this will affect. Resident Voter: Cheyanne Laliberte spoke about school shooters and how many shootings do we see. K Auclair further discussed and asked to allow the town to opt out of this law, it is**



**part of our lives. Resident Voter: Dean Larabee asked to move the question. All voted to move the question. No further discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 19** Selectman McCrohan made a motion and it was seconded that the Town amend Article 1 of the General Bylaws, entitled “Validity of Bylaws,” Section 2, by deleting therefrom, in its entirety, the sentence “A public hearing shall be held by the Board of Selectmen on any such changes at least ten days prior to presentation at any town meeting for acceptance.”

**Explanation:** This article proposes to remove the requirement that the Board of Selectmen hold a public hearing at least ten days before presenting changes to the General Bylaws at Town Meeting. The change would streamline the bylaw amendment process while maintaining Town Meeting as the final approving authority, consistent with state law.

Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**Resident Voter: Joe Freitas questioned the process, democracy needs a voice, it’s well worth the money. Selectman Vincent explained the article. Atty. Adam Costa state law requirement for any amendment in the Zoning By-Laws, no requirement in state law to have a public hearing, Berkley’s By-Law requires a hearing. No further discussion, Motion Carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 20** Selectman Vincent made a motion and it was seconded that the Town accept the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 60, Section 3D, authorizing the establishment of a Property Tax Relief Fund I, so-called, for the purpose of defraying the real estate taxes of elderly and disabled persons of low income; the creation of a Taxation Aid Committee, consisting of the Town Treasurer/Collector, the Chair of the Board of Assessors, the Director of the Council on Aging, one member of the Board of Selectmen, and one citizen-at-large appointed by the Board of Selectmen, to identify recipients of aid; and acceptance by the Town Treasurer/Collector of voluntary donations to the aforementioned Fund from residents and other sources.

**Explanation:** This article seeks to establish a Property Tax Relief Fund under state law to assist low-income elderly and disabled residents with their real estate taxes. A Taxation Aid Committee would be created to identify eligible recipients. All donations to the fund would be **segregated from the general fund** and could be used **only for the express purpose** of providing property tax relief to qualified residents.

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**Resident Voter: Bruce Bodner questioned about revenue. Atty. Adam Costa explained. Resident Voter: Margaret Clark-Moroff stated this should be coming through the COA, why do we need a state fund, anyone can make a donation it's a waste of resources. Resident Voter: Krista Ceila- COA Director should be a separate fund from all COA funds, she supports this. Eric Wu-Fin Com asked how it would be fair and consistent. Resident Voter: Dean Larabee asked to move the question. No further discussion, Motion passed unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 21** Selectman McCrohan made a motion and it was seconded that the Town accept the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Chapter 5K, authorizing the establishment of a program through which the property tax liability of persons over the age of 60 may be reduced in exchange for volunteer services, to be effective for Fiscal Year 26.

**Explanation:** This article proposes to adopt a state law allowing the Town to implement a senior property tax work-off program beginning in FY26 (July 1, 2025).

Under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 5K, the senior property tax work-off program allows residents aged 60 and older to reduce their property tax bills by volunteering for the Town. The value of the tax reduction is based on the number of hours worked, calculated at no less than the state minimum wage. By default, the maximum benefit a participant can receive is \$1,500 per year, unless the Town votes to raise that cap. Volunteer roles typically include tasks such as clerical assistance in municipal offices, support at the library, or helping at the Council on Aging. The program is designed to provide meaningful tax relief for seniors while offering the Town valuable support from experienced residents.

Municipalities **may set income guidelines** or prioritization criteria, but it is not required by the statute.

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**Resident Voter: Joe Freitas asked who will run the program. Selectman Vincent explained the process of the volunteer work. J. Freitas asked if they can triple Dip, need a public meeting. Resident Voter: Paula Dugan stated this would help. Resident Voter: Michelle Pappas Is this per person, Selectman Vincent, no both can apply. Resident Voter: Ruth Alcante asked a question, it was the wrong article. Resident Voter: Jeffrey Martin asked what would happen if someone got injured while volunteering. Atty. Adam Costa explained it would go under the town insurance. No further discussion,**

**Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 22** Selectman Vincent made a motion and it was seconded that the Town accept the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Chapter 5N, authorizing the establishment of a program through which the property tax liability of veterans may be reduced in exchange for volunteer services, to be effective for Fiscal Year 26.

**Explanation:** This article proposes to adopt a state law allowing the Town to implement a veterans property tax work-off program beginning in FY26 (July 1, 2025).

Under **Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 5N**, the veterans property tax work-off program allows eligible veterans to earn a reduction in their property tax bills in exchange for volunteer service to the Town. Like the senior work-off program, the value of the reduction is calculated at no less than the state minimum wage and is typically capped at **\$1,500 per year**, unless increased by local vote. There are **no income requirements** under the statute, though the Town may establish guidelines or priorities. Volunteer work may include tasks such as office assistance, maintenance, or helping with public events or services, depending on departmental needs. The program is typically **administered by the Town's Veterans' Services Officer (VSO)** in coordination with the Town Administrator and Treasurer/Collector, ensuring veterans are matched with appropriate roles and that earned credits are applied to tax bills.

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

**No discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved**

**ARTICLE 23** Citizen's Petitioner- Robert Powell made a motion and it was seconded that the Town adopt a certain citizens' petition submitted in writing by ten or more registered voters of the Town, entitled "*Berkley Noise Law*," the complete text of which is printed on the handout entitled "Berkley Noise Law."

**Explanation:** The following explanation as approved by the citizen's petitioner: The Berkley Noise Bylaw (§95) establishes a framework for addressing concerns related to excessive or continuous noise within the Town. The bylaw applies to both stationary and mobile sources of sound and is intended to define when noise may rise to a level that interferes with the reasonable quiet, comfort, or health of others.

Under the bylaw, it is considered a violation to generate noise that is plainly audible from a distance of 300 feet from the property line of its origin or that otherwise causes a disturbance. Examples of regulated activity include loud music, amplified sound systems, or repeated operation of motor or recreational vehicles. Specific examples of prohibited acts are provided, but the list is not exhaustive.

There are several exemptions built into the bylaw, including agricultural and forestry activities, construction work, domestic tools such as lawnmowers and leaf blowers, public safety responses, snow removal, alarm systems, and noise associated with municipal or religious uses. These exemptions reflect activities considered necessary, customary, or legally protected.

Enforcement authority is vested in the Select Board and the Berkley Police Department. When a potential violation occurs, the process typically involves a written notice of violation, followed by a public hearing if necessary. The Select Board may issue a cease-and-desist order if a violation is found. Continued or repeated violations may result in fines ranging from \$200 to \$300 per offense, and violations may be pursued through both criminal and noncriminal channels as allowed under state law.

The bylaw also includes provisions for determining responsibility in cases where the source of the noise cannot be directly identified. In such instances, the person in lawful custody or control of the property—such as the owner, tenant, or occupant—may be deemed responsible.

The full text of the Noise Bylaw has been included in the packet for tonight's meeting for reference and transparency.

**Robert Powell did a slide presentation and explained the article. Resident Voter: Angela Ricardo stated this was her property that is the problem. They have done everything they can to work with the neighbors. Take the time to look at this proposal it will affect everyone, just not a dirt bike issue, if you want to have a party it will affect you. Resident Voter: Susan Hathaway stated she lives next to the train tracks, she doesn't care what her neighbors do. They should do what they want to do, she is mad about this article. No one should need a permit to play loud music, all further discussed. Resident Voter: Paula Dugan asked how this would address to commercial areas. Resident Voter: Michael Ricardo told everyone there has been 45 drone surveillance over his property, he has been Fined over \$6,600.00, neighbors can't see his track, he is an abutter to the train. The noise Law being proposed is vague. He has a Special Permit and received a cease and desist. His track is 1,320ft. from the closest house, 300ft away from a neighbor would not be enough for this noise order. Resident Voter: Andrea Pontes should have a time limit,**

nothing after 10:00pm, have a right to do what they want with a time limit. Resident Voter: Jeffrey Martin said it is crazy to ask for Special Permits under this law. R. Powell stated this sound law was taken from another town, further explained. Berkley doesn't enforce it. He's not sure how it will affect commercial property. Resident Voter: Dean Larabee asked to move the question. Moderator said last two voters already there and then will move on. Resident Voter: David Destefano said he lives next to the track, need to respect the neighbors, 5 days a week he listens to noise from the race track. Resident Voter: Karen Kullas explained the neighbor's issues, Berkley has no noise ordinance, police can't do their jobs. She supports this article. No further discussion, Motion failed unanimously. Failed

**ARTICLE 24** Selectman McCrohan made a motion and it was seconded that the Town discontinue as a public roadway a portion of the roadway known as Cotley St., from its intersection with the railroad crossing bounded southerly by 17 Cotley St. (Map 15 Lot 19-03), westerly by 18 Cotley St. (Map 15 Lot 10) and extending northeasterly roughly five hundred eighty feet to the border of the City of Taunton.

**Explanation:** This article proposes to formally discontinue a portion of Cotley Street as a public roadway, from the railroad crossing near 17 Cotley Street to the Taunton city line. This action would formalize the closure of the Cotley Street rail crossing and allow for the elimination of routine train horn use in the area, except during maintenance or when trains are passing one another. Emergency access for Berkley Public Safety personnel will be preserved.

Select Board Recommendation: RECOMMENDED

Resident Voter: Edward Harmon asked if the City of Taunton has been notified about the article, made a motion to table, could be a possible law suit. Resident Voter: Susan Hathaway asked if the MBTA has been spoken to about this article, what if there was a medical emergency. Selectman Vincent said MBTA has been notified. Resident Voter: Karen Kullas stated she met with Mayor Shaunna O'Connell and this will be put on the record in Taunton. Resident Voter: Julie Barboza said it is safer now with the gate, the gate can be undone, much quieter. Resident Voter: Paula Como since the gate it is so good, yes vote. Resident Voter: Peter Mis quality of life, value of homes has depreciated, yes vote. Resident Voter: Cheryl Marshall asked if a study on usage being done with the MBTA. Atty. Adam Costa explained no need for notification to the abutting town for just a road closure, only if it pertained to a maintenance situation of the road Motion to table, No further discussion, Motion carried unanimously. Approved

A motion was made to adjourn and it was seconded.

Time adjourned 10:42PM

*A True Copy Attest*

*Heather J. Almy*  
*Town Clerk*