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POSTED BY: LAURA BAILEY MARCH 2, 2026

by Mike Chaiken | The Bristol Edition | March 2, 2026 |

The city’s library budget request of less than a 1% increase earned compliments from the Board of Finance Tuesday night.

Debbie Prozzo, the Library Director, presented the department’s fiscal year 2027 budget request to the finance board. The department is seeking an additional 0.78% funding. The process is in the preliminary stages. The finance board will continue budget presentations in March before moving to the workshop phase before a budget is adopted in May.

After Prozzo made her department’s case, laying out the details and highlights of its proposed budget, Finance Board vice-chair Marie O’Brien said, “Job well done.... It’s amazing... Kudos to all of you.”

During her presentation, Prozzo said, “I want to frame this budget not simply as a library request — but as an investment in a core municipal service that supports the city’s goals for education, workforce readiness, economic vitality, public safety and quality of life.”

Prozzo said the department is seeking \$18,515 more than the current fiscal year.

The main library and the Manross Library received \$2,591,675 in FY2026 and they are seeking \$2,611,820.

Broken down, the main library on Main Street received \$2,058,020 in FY26 and it is seeking \$2,064,780, or an

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The children's library is holding steady with \$59,000 allocated in FY26 and the department is seeking the same figure for FY27.

The Manross Library in Forestville received \$438,965 in FY26 and is seeking \$450,720 for FY27, an increase of 2.68%.

Comptroller Diane Waldron said the current budget presented by the library does not work in some salary increases because there are negotiations currently underway with the city's unions. Once the contracts are settled, the numbers will be adjusted.

“We were able to keep our funding request this low (by relying on) financial decision rather than sacrifice; being thoughtful and strategic without cutting services to the public. That approach, combined with trust fund distributions from the Main Street Community Foundation, the ongoing support of the Friends of the Library, and the pursuit of grant opportunities, allowed us to meet our needs while minimizing the impact on the overall city's budget.”

Prozzo said, “This request continues the library's long-standing practice of conservative operations while ensuring full access to library services across both locations, continued support for programming of all ages, adequate staffing to maintain safety, service, and operational hours, the materials, digital resources, and technology that our patrons rely on, and compliance with rising mandated costs such as utilities and contracted services.”

The library director explained, “Library-generated revenue has remained stable. While the library continues to be fine-free, we still charge for lost or damaged materials, missing barcodes, and replacement (Radio Frequency Identification)

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She added, “The printing platform continues to fully offset its annual subscription costs through user-generated revenue. Meeting room rental revenue varies year to year; however, sustained community demand supports the fiscal 2027 projection.”

What increases there are at the library primarily reflect labor-related costs and targeted operational increases, said Prozzo. This includes the impending minimum wage increase in the state of Connecticut.

“By far, the largest increase is in the repairs and maintenance line item, a 36.36% increase totaling \$16,000,” said Prozzo. This increase addresses the end-of-life RFID equipment with a leasing option selected to avoid a large one-time capital expense.”

“I’m very pleased to see this presentation, especially the last portion of it, and that is significant funds coming from your three heritage assets, those funds being held by the community, by the Main Street Community Foundation,” said O’Brien.

Prozzo said, “Our approach has been conservative, but I think that tapping into library trust funds, pursuing grants that are available, and also the financial support from the Friends of the Library– this past year, they supported the library with \$26,000 – that is allowing us to come in at such a low increase. Without (that) support... I would probably have to come in with a higher request.”

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