



Council OKs budget override on ballot

By Caitlin Dee
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AMESBURY — The Amesbury City Council on Tuesday unanimously voted to place a much-talked about \$6 million operating override question on the Nov. 4 ballot.

The question proposed by Mayor Cassandra Gove states: “Shall the city of Amesbury be allowed to assess an additional \$6 million in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of funding the operating budgets of the

city and of the public schools for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026?”

The City Council voted 7-0 to allow the question to be placed on the ballot for citizens to decide. Councilors Steve Stanganelli and Anthony Rinaldi were absent.

While the City Council voted unanimously to put the question on the ballot, District 3 Councilor, Amanda Haggstrom expressed concerns about the override’s impact on community members. Haggstrom said the

override was a “temporary Band-Aid” to the city’s financial issues. Haggstrom, a single mother, said if the override were to pass it would be catastrophic for both her family and other Amesbury families.

“For families like mine and so many other families I know personally, the financial impact from this override is not manageable. And, it’s not just another annoying bill, it will be the breaking point,” she said, at Tuesday’s meeting.

Haggstrom said she felt it

was necessary to share her story at the meeting in order to represent her constituents who are a part of less traditional families. Despite her reservations, Haggstrom said voters should be given a choice.

“So, I will be voting to allow the voters to make this decision in November, but reluctantly because we will be pushing out the very people who make Amesbury, Amesbury,” she said at Tuesday’s meeting.

City Councilor Scott

Mandeville also said he feels it is important to allow voters to have a voice.

“I think everyone has their own feelings and opinions, but at the end of the day, I think this is something that has a big impact on the folks of Amesbury. And, I think it’s a fair position to give them the choice,” he said.

Mandeville said now that the decision is in voters hands, they will have to decide what their priorities are.

“Nobody likes raising taxes.

But we wanted to put the question to the citizens and to the voters to decide if their priority is with keeping taxes where they are and reducing services that we have. Or, if the priority is to maintain services and subject themselves to a tax increase. I think it’s something everyone will have to weigh and come to the table to decide,” he said.

Mandeville also said he was unsurprised by the council’s unanimous vote to put the

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Helping our heroes



KEITH SULLIVAN/Photos

Army veteran Bob Jackson from Newburyport talks with Ann Marie Gavin about the upcoming Newburyport Documentary Film Festival.

Newburyport COA hosts Veterans Resource Fair

By Matt Petry
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NEWBURYPORT — With around 20 different organizations set up within in the Newburyport Senior/Community Center Wednesday, local veterans had an opportunity to amass more information about the various benefits they have available to them.

“We’ve learned more about veterans benefits here than we could even imagine,” 76-year-old Amantha Moore said, as she left the event with her husband, 76-year-old Army veteran, Stephen Moore.

The two were among the more than 100 veterans and their families that attended the Council on Aging’s Veterans Resources Fair, which went on from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

“This is the first time that



Goldy’s Farm resident Jake the support donkey stopped for cookies before he went into the Veterans Resource Fair. Sandra Schwarzkopf of Newburyport helped with the cookies.

we’re doing it, and we’re happy with the turnout, not only from the people who support

the veterans, but also the veterans themselves,” Newburyport Veterans Services Officer

Kevin Hunt said.

Of the 20 organizations present, some are government agencies, while others are private charitable organizations, Hunt added.

Among the organizations present were the New England Center and Home for Veterans, the Lowell Vet Center, the Amesbury VFW Post, and Company 2 Heroes, a non-profit focused on helping veterans get their dogs trained as service dogs.

Sitting at her table with service dogs 5-year-old English lab, Kona and 10-year-old cavachon, Lucy; Company 2 Heroes Executive Director Kate Vanauken explained why they help veterans train their own dogs rather than get paired with an already trained

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AMESBURY

Officer files complaint against chief, department

By Dave Rogers
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AMESBURY — Claiming Amesbury police Chief Craig Bailey and others created a hostile work environment, while others called him disparaging names based on his heritage, an Amesbury police officer has filed a complaint against Bailey and the city for an unspecified amount of money.

Officer Samuel Marlar’s suit, filed under the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act of 1994 in United States District Court in Boston on Sept. 22, also targets Lt. Charles Sciacca and the entire police department.

Attorney Doug Louison, who has been retained by the city, said the complaint was baseless.

“We are aggressively denying and defending this claim,” Louison said. “Chief Bailey acted professionally throughout.”

Marlar, who lives in Newton, New Hampshire, joined the department in 2018 as a student officer and in 2019 became a patrol officer. Years earlier, in 2011, Marlar joined the military and served three tours in Afghanistan, the last one taking place

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Election ballot order set

Candidates receive endorsements

By Matt Petry
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NEWBURYPORT — With mayoral candidate and Ward 5 Councilor Jim McCauley watching from a new feet away, a City Clerk employee on Wednesday morning stretched up high to randomly pull candidate names from a hat. The drawing was to determine how the general election ballot will look like when voters go to the polls on Nov. 4.

The drawing, which took place around 10 a.m. in the City Council’s chambers started with the mayoral candidates.

For the mayor’s race, McCauley was drawn first, with incumbent Mayor Sean Reardon second on the ballot.

For the Ward 2 race Shawn Fenn’s name will appear before Stephanie Niketic’s, and in Ward 6 Mary DeLai will be above Jim Eichhorst.

Of the seven candidates vying for five

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HISTORY HAPPENINGS

With winter on the horizon on this day in 1873, readers learned the particulars of Willard Plumer’s greatly reduced prices on in-home footwear. Previously \$1 ladies slippers were now only 60 cents. Ladies French Kid Button Boots ranged from \$4.50 to \$1.75.

— Museum of Old Newbury

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» Complaint

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in 2017. Upon honorably resigning from active duty that year, Marlar joined the Army Reserves.

As a condition of his position in the Army Reserves, he is required to attend military training periodically on a monthly basis as well as professional education and annual training events.

According to the complaint, the department did not compensate him for days missed while fulfilling his duty with the reserves. That flew in the face of former police Chief William Scholtz's directive to fully compensate officers who need to take time away from the department to serve their country.

"Marlar explained that he was taking a pay cut anytime he went on military leave, the city had provided more beneficial military leave benefits to other employees, including Chief Bailey, which was unlawful. Chief Bailey stated that he had a separate contract with the city of Amesbury so his military compensation was different," the suit reads.

Sciacca, according to the suit, gave Marlar a hard time because of his military obligations and gave the impression to a sergeant that he is "not a fan of military members because he believes their military service obligations create unnecessary issues for the department."

Marlar went on to claim that Sciacca withheld overtime opportunities and gave them to non-Native American and non-military members of the department.

"Lt. Sciacca refused to follow proper department protocol and regulations governing the distribution of patrolman overtime. This decision specifically bypassed Marlar for the opportunity to work the overtime shift and violated department policy," the suit reads.

Marlar soon filed a grievance with the department's union only to be told two days later he had been bumped from two planned vacation days. Those time slots were given to other officers prompting Marlar to file another grievance.

On Feb. 7, 2025, soon after filing the second grievance, Marlar was placed on administrative leave from the department and informed he was the subject of an internal investigation. Bailey further ordered him to stay away from the police station and not have any contact with city employees, according to the suit.

"These orders and isolation created by Chief Bailey put significant stress on Marlar's family causing his wife's normal pregnancy to become a high-risk pregnancy over this time, and created a much more difficult and traumatic birth for her and his daughter. It further isolated Marlar and his family from close friends who used to frequent the Marlar's home for social

events," the suit reads.

Marlar inadvertently ran into Amesbury police officers in public three times from June 14 to July 18. Five days after the last interaction, Marlar was told he was again under investigation, this time for violating Bailey's no contact directive, according to the suit.

Bailey, according to Marlar's suit, also refused to consider Marlar for promotion to sergeant despite being the top candidate for the job, and left a sergeant's position vacant for a year.

"This is further evidence of Chief Bailey's retaliation," the suit reads.

Marlar's suit also claims that at least two officers called him disparaging names based on his Native American heritage.

"Marlar is believed to be the only Native American member in the Amesbury Police Department history and is currently an active citizen of the Cherokee Nation. Commencing in 2020, Marlar also began to suffer discrimination from fellow officers and superiors at APD, including derogatory names connected to his Native American heritage, such as micmac and chief," the suit reads.

When Marlar complained to Bailey about comments, Bailey "immediately laughed" and told him to "basically get over it."

In summary, Marlar suffered the loss of approved action time, was subject to unfair treatment during his required military leave, wasn't promoted despite being number one on the "merit based" sergeant list, and was placed on administrative leave for actions that went unpunished for other similarly situated officers, according to the suit.

"Plaintiff suffered adverse employment actions in the form of being placed on unjustified administrative leaves, being issued 'no contact' orders that extended to other jurisdictions and conditions of his leave that no other officer was subjected to, and failure to be promoted while there was a promotional opening for a year while he was the top candidate, and Chief Bailey made numerous attempts to fill the position outside Civil Service rules," the suit reads.

Louison said the city conducted an investigation into Marlar's claims and found no evidence to back them up.

"His claims of retaliation are similarly false," Louison said, adding Marlar is still employed by the Amesbury Police Department.

Now both sides must wait until a judge rules whether there is enough probable cause for the complaint to continue, according to Louison.

Marlar's attorney, Christopher Waterman, did not respond to a request for comment.

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» Budget

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question on the ballot, and noted the decisions made were not reflective of the councilors feelings about the question itself.

"I think that most councilors share my opinion that asking the people of

Amesbury is the right way to go. That vote is not an endorsement for or against the override," he said.

Now, voters will have a chance to express their thoughts and learn more about the override with a number of public forums scheduled on Oct. 8, 10, and 28 before the Nov. 4 election.

MASSACHUSETTS SENATE RACE

Moulton weighs primary challenge to Markey

By Christian M. Wade

» Statehouse Reporter

BOSTON — Democrat Seth Moulton rocked the state's political establishment more than a decade ago when he ousted nine-term Rep. John Tierney in a surprise victory in the Democrat primary, becoming the first challenger to defeat a sitting congressman from the same party in 22 years.

Now the ex-Marine and five-term U.S. Representative has apparently set his sights on taking down another top Massachusetts Democrat, incumbent Sen. Ed Markey, who is seeking another six-year term in next year's midterm elections.

Recent national media reports have cited unnamed sources claiming Moulton is actively discussing a Senate run, and has been conducting polling and interviewing people to work on his campaign. The New York Times reported Wednesday that a Moulton campaign kick off could come as soon as next month.

"While I continue to look at the best options to represent Massachusetts moving forward, I have not yet made a decision about running for

U.S. Senate," Moulton said in a statement.

Markey, 79 of Malden, announced his plans to seek another term last year and has been touting endorsements from Massachusetts Democrats, including lawmakers representing Moulton's 6th Congressional District, which includes three dozen communities north of Boston including Salem, Gloucester and Rockport.

Several members of the states all-Democratic congressional delegation have given a nod to Markey for another six years in office, including fellow Sen. Elizabeth Warren, and Reps. Katherine Clark, D-Revere, Rich Neal, D-Springfield, and Lori Trahan, D-Westford.

In the north of Boston region, Sen. Joan Lovely, D-Salem, Reps. Jennifer Armini, D-Marblehead, Manny Cruz, D-Salem, Tram Nguyen, D-Andover and Tom Walsh, D-Peabody, are among those who have formally endorsed Markey's reelection bid, according to a list released by his campaign.

Markey, a former U.S. Representative, deflected a primary challenge in the 2020 elections with a 10-point victory over Rep. Joe Kennedy III,



Seth Moulton

manager Cam Charbonnier said the incumbent Democrat is focused on pushing back against President Donald Trump's divisive policies trade, immigration and health care as he seeks another term as one of the state's two U.S. senators.

"Making health care and housing affordable, protecting our immigrant neighbors, ending MAGA Republican corruption, and taking back the House and Senate means stopping Trump's attacks on the very democracy that started in Massachusetts, and that is the fight Senator Markey is leading every day," Charbonnier said in a statement.

Moulton, 46, was first elected to Congress in 2014, after defeating Tierney and beating Republican Richard Tisei with 55% of the vote in the general election. He has won reelection five times, sometimes without

opposition. He ran for president in 2020, but dropped out of the race before the primary. In the 2024 election, he won a fifth term.

The former Marine captain, who served four combat tours of duty in Iraq, pushed to create the 988 National Suicide lifeline and has sought federal funding to create high-speed rail service and health care for veterans. He serves on the House's Armed Services, Transportation and Infrastructure committees.

The potential primary challenge comes amid calls for generational change in the Democratic party after it lost the White House and Congress to Republicans in last year's election.

Recent polling suggests the left-wing of the party wants it to stake out more progressive stances and aggressively push back against Trump's policies, while moderates and Democratic-leaning independents argue that the party needs to focus on a centrist agenda to win back working-class voters that cost them the last election.

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» Veterans

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dog.

"Currently, there is like a year and a half, two years, even two and a half year waiting list, waiting period for people. So if a veteran goes and fills out an application and then they say, 'OK, when can I get my dog?' It's like, 'well, it might be a couple years,'" Vanauken said.

She said that service dogs provide veterans who are suffering with mental health issues a way to get out of their funk and to find new purpose.

"All of a sudden they're walking that dog. So they're out. They're getting air, oxygen, exercise, all the things they really need to be out in public and get assimilated back into society instead of just staying in their PTSD and their depression at home alone by themselves," Vanauken said.

She said that the training itself can take quite some time.

"It could take two to three, four years, it depends," Vanauken said.

Hunt discussed why the resource fair is an important offering to provide to local veterans, sharing that one reason is veterans do not always have a mindset of helping themselves.

"So when they come to an event like this, you hear



KEITH SULLIVAN/Photo

Fair goers had many options available during Wednesday's event.

them saying things like, 'Gee, I didn't know that. I had no idea I could get that.' That's one reason," Hunt said.

He said the other reason is that with the large number of benefits offered in the state, even those who are informed can stand to learn something new.

"Jeremiah and I just learned today that the state pays a veteran bonus to the surviving spouse of a veteran who never collected the bonus," Hunt said.

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» Election

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at-large City Council seats, incumbent Mark Wright will be the first name followed by fellow incumbent Heather Shand, Ward 4 City Councilor Ben Harman, incumbent Afroz Khan, School Committee member Sarah Hall, Prospect Street resident Rani Eng, and finally incumbent Ed Cameron.

The order for the three School Committee candidates running for three available seats is John Ricci, Lauren Eramo and incumbent Juliet Thayer Hansel Walker.

There were no drawings for Wards 1, 3, 4 and 5, as they are all uncontested. Ward 1 City Councilor Sharif Zeid is set to return, while newcomer School Committee member Brian Callahan will be taking



MATT PETRY/Staff photo

Ward 5 City Councilor and mayoral candidate Jim McCauley watches as the ballot order finalized.

the seat in Ward 3, joined by fellow newcomers Beth Trach in Ward 4 and Lisa Medina Smith in Ward 5.

McCauley was among the only people in attendance for the drawing and said he was happy to be listed first on the ballot.

"It's great," McCauley said. Looking ahead toward the Nov. 4 election, McCauley spoke about how he plans to reach residents.

"We have our third town hall this Thursday (tonight) at the senior center, 7 p.m., we plan to be at The Townie candidate night. We plan to be at the Democratic Committee candidate night. There's also the debate run by the Daily News," McCauley said.

He said he will also continue knocking on doors, making phone calls, and sending emails.



Afroz Khan



Stephanie Niketic

"We're doing all of the above," McCauley said.

Asked about endorsements, he shared his thoughts on Ward 3 City Councilor Heath Granas' recent decision to back his colleague.

"I'm honored to have his endorsement," McCauley said.

He said he expects more to come soon.

"I have some things where people have pledged privately and they'll come out in their own way," McCauley said.

Reardon meanwhile has been endorsed by U.S. Congressman Seth Moulton, Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll, as well as Michael Colburn from the Salisbury Board of Selectmen.

"From strengthening Newburyport's infrastructure to investing in education and affordable housing, I have been impressed with Mayor Reardon's commitment to improving the lives of all residents of Newburyport. I'm proud to endorse him for re-election," Healey said, when announcing her endorsement in August.

Asked about his own campaign strategy, Reardon said it is going to be a busy next six weeks.

"We've been knocking on doors for a while now, and we have a full month of meet-and-greets scheduled in neighborhoods all across the city," Reardon said.

Similar to McCauley, he also said he will be employing some more grassroots legwork.

"We will be taking conversations about the future of our city to the doors of the voters of Newburyport, and they can expect to see resident-focused facts and information from my campaign on social media and in emails," Reardon said.

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