

2015 Town Vote Board of Selectmen and Water and Sewer Commissioners' Majority and Minority Reports

In preparation for Voting Day on March 10th the Board of Selectmen, Water & Sewer Commissioners, and the Warrant Article Petitioner would like to present to you the following information for your consideration prior to placing your votes on this year's ballot.

The premise of the information given is that each elected official was able to cast their vote to be in favor or against each warrant article as presented (excluding non-appropriation petition warrant articles in which only the petitioner's views are listed – as per state statute requirements, and Water/Sewer non-bonding articles which are voted on by the Water & Sewer Commissioners as their governing body). Once their votes were cast they then were given the opportunity to write a brief piece to explain their thoughts on why they chose the position they did.

We thank you for your participation in the democratic process and look forward to seeing you on March 10th!

ARTICLE 3 - Library Building Project – BOND - \$5,460,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Federico and Putnam do not in support of this article.

Although there are many strong arguments for this proposed project, the majority does not feel it can support a multi-million dollar capital project at this time. As the region slowly comes out of the recession, the town has not seen a great increase in revenue to help offset costs. Although the project would not have a tax impact in 2015, it would in future years (approximately 28 cents per \$1,000 valuation). This project will remain in the Capital Improvement Plan and will be revaluated next year.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report – Selectmen Bauer supports this article.

The Wadleigh Memorial Library is a highly used overcrowded facility. The original building was constructed in 1950 and was added to in 1986 for a population of 12,000. Milford now has a population of over 15,000.

The plan is to add 8,000 square feet to the existing building and renovate some areas. The parking area will be expanded. Site plans can be viewed in the town hall lobby and at the library. The library trustees will be contributing \$500,000 to lower the cost to the town. The library will be open during the phased construction process.

ARTICLE 4 – West Elm Street Water Main Extension - BOND

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

In 2016 the State will be widening and adding a turning lane in the center of Route 101 from the Green Bridge to the Irving Station, at which time there will be 5 year moratorium on digging. Property owners on the West end of Milford requested that the town extend the water main due to inadequate ground water supply. Several property owners are desperate for water and have no alternatives. At this time it makes since to extend the water main as it will address their needs, increase fire protection and lay the ground work for potential future connection to Wilton water. The priority is to ensure that water gets to the people who need it.

Water and Wastewater Commissioner’s Majority Report - Commissioners Courage, Putnam, and White unanimously support this article.

ARTICLE 5 – Storm Sewer Video Inspection - BOND

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Bauer, Federico and Fougere support this article.

This warrant article will fund necessary inspection work to video the current storm water system. Most of the 48+ miles of system are over 50+ years old and in need of inspection. This process will give the town a complete report, enabling DPW to establish a maintenance and preventative maintenance plan for cleaning and repair. By completing this work in one project, we can take advantage of the 20% forgiveness plan from the State of New Hampshire saving the taxpayers roughly \$72,000.

Board of Selectmen’s Minority Report – Selectmen Putnam does not support this article.

Now is not the time to spend this kind of money on something that’s been a problem for years.

ARTICLE 6 – Town Operating Budget

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam are in support of this article.

The BOS found this year’s budget very challenging due to the costs increases we were facing given last year’s budget votes. This year’s Operating Budget is an increase of 5.8%, or \$759,747. Of the \$759,747 increase, \$638,381 consists of new debt/leases (ladder truck, dump truck and sidewalk plow approved in 2014), mid-year wage adjustments at Police and Library to stay competitive, and insurance/benefit costs which the BOS has no control over. Individual department budgets range from a decrease of 8.8% to a 5.2% increase. The remainder of the increase, \$121,366 consists of a 2% salary increase for employees and increases to the Public Works budget to cover critical infrastructure improvements. The majority is very mindful of cost impacts to the taxpayers and numerous cuts were made to each Department. Past year budgets have been very lean and the majority feels this budget is reasonable.

Board of Selectmen’s Minority Report – Selectmen Daniels does not support of this article

While cognizant that the passage of capital expenditures last year significantly increased the 2015 default budget, the minority feels that more could have been done to reduce the proposed 2015 operating budget to a level equal to or lower than the default budget using alternative methods of cost savings than are traditionally used. The minority feels it is the duty of the Select Board, in developing the budget, to balance the needs of the town with the ability of taxpayers to cover the cost, and that this budget places too heavy of a burden on taxpayers, many of whom are already struggling to pay their taxes in an economy that has not fully recovered. The cost of the peoples’ government should not exceed the ability of the taxpayer to comfortably support it.

ARTICLE 7 - Wastewater Treatment Operating Budget

Water and Wastewater Commissioner's Majority Report - Commissioners Courage, Putnam, and White unanimously support this article.

ARTICLE 8 - Water Department Operating Budget

Water and Wastewater Commissioner's Majority Report - Commissioners Courage, Putnam, and White unanimously support this article.

ARTICLE 9 – Jennison Road Bridge

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The BOS is committed to fixing and upgrading many of the towns culverts and bridges that are presently in disrepair and the Jennison Road bridge will be the first of many that will be upgraded. The NHDOT declared the bridge unsafe a few years ago and emergency temporary repairs were taken to keep the bridge open. Eighty percent of the cost will be paid for by the State and the new structure will have twice the life span of the existing structure

ARTICLE 10 – Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

This article represents the Board of Selectmen's ongoing effort to address bridge deficiencies in town. Adding the \$175,000 requested by this article to the \$125,000 currently in the Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve Fund, the Board feels it can address two bridge issues with these funds – (1) the dismantling of the Jones Crossing Bridge (aka the Green Bridge), our share (20%) estimated to be about \$100,000, and (2) slip-lining a bridge on Savage Road (\$200,000) that is currently weigh restricted, such weigh restrictions currently prohibiting school buses from travelling over it, thus disrupting not only the school bus route, but the ability of families between the Whitten Road/Savage Road intersection and the weigh-restricted bridge from having direct access to a school bus. With the establishment of this Capital Reserve in 2014, Selectmen were appointed as agents to expend from this fund.

ARTICLE 11 – Dump Truck (8 Cubic Yard)

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Fougere, Bauer, and Federico, are in support of this article.

This request will replace a vital piece of equipment required in order for the Public Works Department to successfully complete its required work. This dump truck is a 1999 with over 8400 engine work hours, because of age and condition; the majority feels that this vehicle should be replaced before it becomes too costly to repair. Replacing this important piece of equipment is necessary to maximize the efficiency of the Department.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report – Selectmen Daniels and Putnam do not support this article.

Although the minority recognizes that the existing Dump Truck is old, we felt that given the difficult town budget and other Warrant Article priorities that this item could wait until next year.

ARTICLE 12 – Sidewalk Tractor Plow

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere and Putnam do not support this article.

Although the majority recognizes that the existing sidewalk tractor plow is old, we felt that given the difficult town budget and other Warrant Article priorities that this item could wait until next year.

Board of Selectmen’s Minority Report – Selectmen Bauer and Federico support this article

The town needs to replace our fifteen year old sidewalk tractor plow. This equipment plows 13.6 miles of sidewalk, always in a harsh environment. Parts are not always available.

ARTICLE 13 – Social Services

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

Nineteen agencies provide much needed assistance to Milford citizens, thus greatly reducing the amount of welfare dollars that the town is obligated to pay to citizens who qualify.

ARTICLE 14 – Conservation Lands Fund

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere and Putnam do not support this article.

While we believe firmly in Conservation, and feel that the Conservation Committee does a great job, there comes a time that we need to conserve money. There are several priorities that we feel are more important than purchasing additional conservation land this year.

Board of Selectmen’s Minority Report – Selectmen Bauer and Federico support this article.

The Milford Conservation Commission is asking the town for \$20,000 to add to their existing Land Fund. The balance of this fund is currently \$38,220 and needs to be added to each year for purchase of easements and property when available for town preservation.

ARTICLE 15 – Teamsters Union Collective Bargaining Agreement (2015 – 2016)

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The Board of Selectmen is unanimously in support of the work achieved by our negotiating team to develop and negotiate a contract that is fair, and agreed to, by all parties. In 2015 \$11,540 in benefit increases will be paid from the General Fund, while \$5,289 will be paid from the Water & Sewer User Fund. In 2016 an estimated \$2,885 in benefit increases will be paid from the General Fund, while an estimated \$1,320 will be paid from the Water & Sewer User Fund.

Water and Wastewater Commissioner’s Majority Report - Commissioners Courage, Putnam, and White unanimously support this article.

ARTICLE 16 – Non-Emergency Community Transportation Bus Services

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative (SVTC) was established in 2008 by representatives from each of the communities participating in the Souhegan Valley Rides bus service. SVTC oversees the transit service and works with the municipalities and local organizations to provide seamless transportation service based on community needs. Each participating town shares in the cost of providing this demand-response bus service based on the annual percentage of rides provided to residents of each town and on the anticipated costs to provide the bus service. SVTC’s administrative expenses and free bus pass program are funded through grants and donations from local foundations, civic groups, businesses and citizens. Milford continues to lead the way with its higher rate of use and Milford’s continued participation is critical. Souhegan Valley Rides, better known as “the Blue Bus”, offers a dial-a-ride type wheelchair-accessible bus service to citizens of Milford, Amherst, Brookline, Hollis and Wilton. The driver, bus and call center services are purchased from the Nashua Transit System. Souhegan Valley Rides focuses on providing transportation to non-emergency health care appointments and assisting those in greatest need – senior citizens, residents living with a disability, and residents who are unable to drive. Other residents of the participating towns may use the service as space is available. By using local funding to leverage federal transportation funding, the service is able to operate five days a week. Most rides are to non-emergency healthcare appointments. Other destinations include social service agencies, pharmacies, senior centers, and town facilities. In addition, rides are available on Mondays and Thursdays to four local shopping centers. Demand for the service continues to grow and currently provides an average of 335 rides per month. Milford residents continue to use the lion’s share of the service.

ARTICLE 17 – Pumpkin Festival, Holiday Decorations and Plantings

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The Milford Improvement Team (MIT) will be organizing our 26th Annual Pumpkin Festival for 2015. Hundreds of volunteer hours go into making this a spectacular 3-day community event with music and activities for all ages. The event really puts Milford "on the map". Over 35,000 visitors attended the 2014 Pumpkin Festival. The huge success of the festival was due to the collaboration of MIT with several town departments, over 23 local businesses, and hundreds of volunteers. Forty non-profit community based groups participated in 2014 with fundraising and awareness activities that benefit Milford in countless ways. Let's not forget the beautiful plantings downtown which we all enjoy every year and the holiday decorations every winter. This is a collaborative effort by MIT, town employees, and various community groups and businesses to beautify our town. Most of the money goes for extra man hours for the Department of Public Works, Police, Ambulance and Fire Department.

ARTICLE 18 - Funding of the Annual Labor Day Parade

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

This warrant is to fund the bands for the Labor Day parade. The VFW explained that they couldn’t afford to fund the entire parade this year as they have in past years. It has been a tradition in town for 69 years and is the largest Labor Day parade in the state. It brings a lot of revenues to the local businesses and offers the opportunity for area businesses and organizations to showcase their services and activities. We feel that it should be continued. There is a search ongoing for private funding. We offer our thanks to the Kaley Foundation, whose \$2,500 donation enabled the cost of this article to be reduced to \$7,500.

ARTICLE 19 – Summer Band Concerts

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

As we continue to recover from tough economic times, vacations may still be few and far between for a lot of our citizens and these concerts provide an opportunity to get out and enjoy an evening of music and community involvement along the Souhegan River. These concerts are also an on-going and long standing tradition that has been part of Milford's character and charm. These concerts also take place in Emerson Park, a downtown location close to many residents, including a number of senior housing complexes.

ARTICLE 20 - Fireworks

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Fougere, Bauer and Federico are in support of this article.

Milford has always been a very special place to live. It is activities such as the July 4th fireworks that have always brought the community together to create traditions that last for generations. Particularly in uncertain economic times, when people tend to stay home rather than take vacations, it is necessary to continue to support activities that people can enjoy here in Milford. The majority feels that this is an important aspect of Milford's community character and that voters should have the opportunity to make a decision on this warrant article.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report – Selectmen Daniels and Putnam do not support this article.

At this time we feel that money spent on fireworks could be put to better use elsewhere.

ARTICLE 21 – Memorial, Veterans & Labor Day Parades and Recognition – Town Support

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The Memorial, Veterans' Day and Labor Day Parades are a way of honoring those who have made our way of life possible through their service and sacrifice. We also support the article in hopes that their actions and their stories will be passed on to future generations and that we never forget those who served, and those who gave all. Milford's parades are a land standing and vital component of our community spirit that has been enjoyed by generations of residents through the years. These funds cover the cost for emergency services and DPW expenses associated with these events, as well as the purchase of flags to be placed on the graves of veterans on Memorial Day.

ARTICLE 22 - Jones Road Opening

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

In 1996 the Town voted to close the intersection of Jones Road at Elm Street because it had become a dangerous intersection, primarily for vehicular traffic cutting across traffic to travel west-bound. This article authorizes the Board of Selectmen to negotiate the re-opening of the intersection of Jones Road at Elm Street for the purpose of accommodating east-bound traffic only, alleviating traffic congestion at the traffic light intersections by Veterans Bridge and VIP.

ARTICLE 23 – Sale or other Disposition of Resources BROX Property

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

In order to increase town revenue, this is a reauthorization Article to allow the Selectmen to proceed to sell gravel resources that exist at the Brox Community Lands property; the original authorization expired in 2013. One of the many benefits to the community that were advocated when the Brox property was purchased was the potential to sell sand and gravel material from the site to help offset the \$1.9 million dollar purchase cost. The quantity of material at the site far exceeds the needs of the Town and an adequate amount of the material will remain onsite to meet Town needs for years to come. This excavation will be conducted consistent with the Community Lands Master Plan with over 75 acres of the 145 acre site will remain as open space. Any revenue received from the selling of these materials will deposited into the General Fund. Any other uses of gravel revenue will require Town Meeting approval.

ARTICLE 24 – Discontinuing Solar Exemption

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Federico and Putnam support this article.

In 1976 the town voted to adopt an ordinance granting a property tax exemption on real property to those who purchased a solar energy system. Since no designation was given as to how long this exemption would be given, the exemption is given in perpetuity. The majority feels this ordinance is only beneficial for those who can afford to purchase a solar energy system, while unfairly placing the financial burden to cover any exemption on those who cannot afford to purchase a solar energy system. Therefore, the majority feels this article should be passed to discontinue this exemption.

Board of Selectmen’s Minority Report - Selectmen Bauer does not support this article.

The current solar exemption on property taxes is an incentive to use solar energy for heating or cooling thereby decreasing energy costs and decreasing dependence on fossil fuels.

ARTICLE 25 – Budget Committee Charge

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

This warrant article makes the title Budget Advisory Committee official and more truly reflects their charge to make recommendations on all warrant articles including the town operating budget.

ARTICLE 26 – Numerical Tallies on Warrant

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

This article codifies the practice we have been using for years to bring transparency to voters pertaining to votes of the Selectmen and Budget Committee. Should this article pass, it would require a vote of the people to return to a practice of less transparency.