

2016 Town Vote Board of Selectmen and Water and Sewer Commissioners' Majority and Minority Reports

In preparation for Town Voting Day on March 8th 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 8th!

ARTICLE 3 - Library Building Project – BOND - \$5,618,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report - Selectmen Daniels, Federico, Fougere, and Putnam do not support 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. Slow new assessments continue to lag, reducing new tax revenue to the town. Although the project would not have a tax impact in 2016, it would in future years, and 32 cents on the tax rate the first year. 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 proposed expansion and renovations are drastically needed for the library. The original building was built in 1950 and the most recent addition in 1986. The town population then was 12,000. Now it exceeds 15,000. The library has greatly expanded its services since then and is highly used. The proposed changes can be viewed online or at the Town Hall lobby or the library.

ARTICLE 4 – Storm Water Video Inspection - BOND - \$216,000

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

This warrant article will fund inspection work, creating a video inspection record of the current storm water system. This work is necessary to complete a required state filing (MS-4 Storm Water Management Plan). The majority of the 48 miles of system are over 50 years old, and, in need of inspection. This process will give the town an accurate and complete report, enabling the DPW to establish a maintenance and preventative maintenance plan for cleaning and repair. By completing this work in as project, we can take advantage of State monies. A 33.9% forgiveness from the State of New Hampshire will save the Milford taxpayers roughly \$73,200.

ARTICLE 5 – UV Disinfection Replacement – BOND - \$950,000

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

This is a Special Warrant Article in accordance with RSA 32 and is paid for by the wastewater user fees. The purpose of this article is for the replacement of the existing 1991 Ultra Violate Disinfection System used to treat wastewater before being discharged to the Souhegan River.

ARTICLE 6 – Town Operating Budget - \$13,993,310

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

The BOS continues to face budget challenges due to cost increases and the lack of increased tax revenues from new assessments. This year's Operating Budget is an increase of 2.3%, or \$318,000. The \$318,000 increase consists of additional monies for paving (\$100,000), insurance/benefits, a merit based raise not to exceed 3%, new equipment, a town wide revaluation required under state law, extra voting days, and a contract with a collection service for the Ambulance Department. The majority is very mindful of cost impacts to the taxpayers and numerous cuts were made to each Department budget. 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 this article.

While cognizant that the passage of capital expenditures over the past few years have significantly increased the 2016 default budget, the minority feels that more could have been done to reduce the proposed 2016 operating budget to a level equal to or lower than the default budget using alternative methods of cost savings than are traditionally used. Even after voters adopted the default budget in 2015, the town ended the year with about a \$200,000 surplus. 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.

The minority opposes the budget, in part, for the following reasons:

- The Town is not living within its means
- Revenue has been somewhat stagnant
- Expenses exceed expected revenue, forcing an increase in property taxes to make up the difference, which in turn results in a greater tax burden for taxpayers
- Milford has the second highest tax rate among our surrounding towns
- While our employees do a good job, salary increases of 3.0% are proposed at the same time the Consumer Price Index for the Northeast Region, as of November 2015, reflected regional prices (inflation) up only 0.3 % over the year. In addition, Social Security recipients are seeing no cost of living increase this year.
- Alternative programs should be considered (even if on a trial basis) to control costs and achieve desired results, as opposed to automatically defaulting to the higher-costing status quo methods.

ARTICLE 7 – Water Department Operating Budget - \$1,393,395

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

The proposed Water Department Operating Budget reflects an increase of 0.8% to the 2015 Operating Budget, or an increase of \$10,967.

ARTICLE 8 – Wastewater Treatment Operating Budget - \$1,913,465

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

The proposed 2016 Sewer Department Operating Budget reflects an increase of 0.9% to the 2015 Operating Budget, or an increase of \$16,533.

ARTICLE 9 – Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve - \$350,000

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

The Department of public works continues to make substantial progress in addressing the 13 bridges in town that have been listed in "need of repair" by the State of New Hampshire. In 2015 the DPW was able to complete work on the following three bridges, Jennison road, Jones road, and Savage road. The town was also able to complete engineering assessments on the Swinging Bridge. With the amount of bridges "Red Listed" and listed "in need of repair" The Selectman feel that it is imperative to keep the bridge repair work moving forward by continuing to fund the capital reserve.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report - Selectmen Daniels does not support this article.

The proposed amount doubles what was requested in 2015 for this capital reserve. Because of the extent in which spending requests exceed our revenue, the minority recommends reducing this article to \$200,000.

ARTICLE 10 – Sidewalk Tractor Plow with Sander- 5-Year Lease/Purchase \$34,400 (Annual Payment \$34,400/Total Purchase Price \$162,000)

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

The majority recognizes that although the proposed article is very expensive, few reliable alternatives exist. At this time, the town only has one operating sidewalk plow for the town's 13.62 miles of sidewalk. Given the narrow nature of many of our sidewalks, the plow is even more expensive than other options. Given the density of our downtown neighborhoods, the need for many children to walk to school the need to have sidewalks cleared in a timely manner is imperative.

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

The minority feels that the existing tractor plow should be able to go through 2016 given the mild winter we have had so far. The minority also feels that the Public Works department should look into purchasing a refurbished Sidewalk Tractor Plow with Sander next year which would provide substantial savings to the town.

ARTICLE 11 – Dump Truck (8 Cubic Yard) 5 Year Lease/Purchase - \$35,800 (Annual Payment \$35,800 Total Purchase Price \$168,600)

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

This request will replace a vital piece of equipment in order for the Public Works Department to successfully complete its required work. This article will replace the 2000 Sterling dump truck which will be 16 years old upon replacement. The current truck is no longer cost effective to continually repair. This is a scheduled replacement listed in the Capital Improvement Plan.

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

Significant money for capital equipment is being requested. Passage of this article will further increase the debt on capital equipment leases, where principal alone has increased 90% over the past two years from \$178,338 to \$338,775.

ARTICLE 12 – Tractor-Backhoe-Loader – 5-Year Lease/Purchase - \$25,000 (Annual Payment \$25,000 Total Purchase Price \$117,500)

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

This existing piece of equipment is very old (2001) with mounting repairs costs which equal the original cost of the backhoe when purchased; it has reached the end of its life cycle and needs to be replaced. Spending additional valuable tax dollars to continue prop this piece of equipment up is unwise and foolish.

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

Significant money for capital equipment is being requested. Passage of this article will further increase the debt on capital equipment leases, where principal alone has increased 90% over the past two years from \$178,338 to \$338,775.

ARTICLE 13 – Kinder Morgan Pipe Line Legal Fees - \$40,000

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

The Board of Selectmen unanimously opposes the Kinder Morgan pipeline crossing Milford property. It would be disruptive, potentially dangerous and would give no benefit to the town of Milford. The board of Selectmen supports the request for \$40,000. We must have legal counsel to defend this position.

ARTICLE 14 – Social Services - \$35,000

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

Ten agencies provide immeasurable assistance to Milford citizens, thus greatly reducing the amount of welfare dollars that the town is obligated to pay for citizens who qualify.

ARTICLE 15 – Non-Emergency Community Transportation Bus Services - \$27,700

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

The Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative (SVTC) or “Blue Bus” continues to provide an invaluable service to the Town of Milford and its surrounding communities. The \$27,700 reflects Milford portion of the cost. Without this service our communities Senior and disabled population would have extreme difficulty finding appropriate transportation to get to local area resources that they need to access.

ARTICLE 16 – Architect Fees for Fire Department Expansion Project - \$25,000

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

The Fire Department building was built in 1974 and has had very little repairs done to it other than a new roof this year. The Towns Capital Improvement Plan proposes upgrades/repairs to the Fire Station that include: electrical upgrades, building renovations, space efficiency improvements, and additional parking. The building upgrades and renovations will help us to protect the expensive new and old equipment that we have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on. By approving this article, we have the flexibility to move forward in a prudent, methodical manner that will best serve the interests of the taxpayers.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report - Selectmen Daniels does not support this article.

The Board of Selectmen has not discussed whether or not these upgrades will be done next year, nor has it assigned a priority to this project. Because these decisions have not been made, and because expense requests far exceed our revenue, the minority feels it is more fiscally prudent to determine the viability and priority of this project before spending what limited funds we have on architect fees.

ARTICLE 17 – Conservation Land Fund - \$20,000

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

Although the majority supports conservation efforts, given the continued budget challenges facing the town, we feel that we cannot support this expense. There are numerous projects and needs that the Selectmen are deferring in order to keep tax impacts to a minimum; all requests for funding cannot be honored.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report - Selectmen Bauer supports 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 \$53,146 and needs to be added to each year for purchase of easements and property when available for town preservation.

ARTICLE 18 – Pumpkin Festival Holiday Decorations and Plantings - \$23,000

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

The Milford Improvement Team (MIT) will be organizing our 26th Annual Pumpkin Festival for 2016. Hundreds of volunteer hours go into making this a spectacular a three-day community event with music and activities for all ages. The event puts Milford "on the map". Over 35,000 visitors attended the 2015 Pumpkin Festival. The huge success of the festival was due to the collaboration of MIT with several town departments, over 25 local businesses, and hundreds of volunteers. Forty non-profit community based groups participated in 2015 with fundraising and awareness activities that benefit Milford in countless ways. **This money supports funding for extra man-hours for the Department of Public Works, Police, Ambulance and Fire Department.**

ARTICLE 19 – Band Concerts - \$9,000

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

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 take place in Emerson Park, a downtown location close to many residents, including a number of senior housing complexes.

ARTICLE 20 – Fireworks - \$8,500

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report - Selectmen Bauer, Fougere, and Federico support 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.

This article has increase 89% since 2012, when the cost was \$4,500. In trying to keep your property taxes down, the minority sought to present to voters a budget and warrant articles that contained cost, yet provided the services expected, and viewed this activity as something that, if desired, could be funded in a different manner. This activity was, in fact, rejected by taxpayers in 2010 and self-funded in 2011. The Recreation Department successfully substituted a bonfire event.

ARTICLE 21 – Labor Day Parade (Bands and Musicians) - \$6,000

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

This warrant is to fund the bands for the Labor Day parade. The VFW has expressed that they can't afford to fund the entire parade. 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 revenue 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.

ARTICLE 22 – Memorial, Veterans & Labor Day Parades and Recognition – Town Support - \$6,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report - Selectmen Bauer, Daniels, Federico, Fougere, 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. We support the Labor Day Parade to not only promote community involvement, but also because it presents an opportunity for people to identify the numerous volunteer organizations and services that contribute to Milford's character and way of life. Milford's parades are a long 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.

ARTICLE 23 – Gravel Pit Reclamation/Restoration & Sale or Other Disposition of Resources – \$0

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

In order to increase town revenue, this is a revenue, this is a reauthorization Article to allow the Selectmen to proceed to sell excess gravel resources that exist at the Brox Community Lands property; the original authorization expired in 2013. The lack of new tax revenue continues to be anemic, increasing a mere \$30,000 per year over the last four years. 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. Supporting this Article will:

- Reclaim/restores 17 acers of old gravel pit, which is presently unusable for recreation.
- Generates needed town revenue estimated to range from \$780,000 - \$1,000,000.
- New revenue, deposited into General Fund, will offset costs for roads, bridges, etc.
- Preserves 60 year + supply of material for future town use (175,000 cubic yards).
- Maintains 50% of the area as open space.
- Limits excavation to one area of the property.
- Consistent with Community Lands Master Plan.
- Prepares land for future town uses/needs.
- Maintains property for all residents, not just a few.

ARTICLE 24 – Modify Solar Exemption - \$0

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

The Solar Exemption Warrant article seeks to correct the wording in the local option exemption. Currently, Milford’s exemption allows for the full cost of the solar array. Some arrays are very costly, but the amount of value they add to the property may not equal the cost to install. Based on the cost, some exemptions would be \$5,000 and some exemptions would be \$80,000 or more that would be exempted from taxation; each property would be different. At this time, the data indicates that a solar array would add approximately \$10,000 to the value of a home. The proposed wording is intended to match the exemption amount with the value a solar array adds to a home. An exemption for the added value of the solar array is the intent of the state legislation. The proposed Solar Exemption Warrant Article seeks to correct the wording for the local exemption to meet the legislative intent, to make the exemption consistent for all properties with a solar array, and to remove any additional and unintended burden from all other taxpayers.

ARTICLE 25 – Adjustment of Elderly Exemption - \$0

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

Tax exemptions for the elderly are based on age and income conditions. The Board of Selectmen unanimously supports this warrant article.

ARTICLE 26 – Discontinuance of Linden St. Extension - \$0

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

This portion of town road was never constructed and bisects a residences property. The “paper’ road is not needed and the town has reserved appropriate legal rights for existing utilities that exist.

ARTICLE 27 – Discontinuance of a Portion of Scarborough Lane - \$0

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

With the recent extension of Scarborough Lane, this area of the existing street and right of way is no longer needed. The property will be deeded back to the adjacent property owners.

ARTICLE 28 – Hitchener Town Forest Conservation Easement- \$0

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

The minority feels that this land, given to the Town by Hitchiner Manufacturing Company, should not be subject to a conservation easement in perpetuity, but for a period of 25 years, at which time the residents of Milford at that time may then choose to renew the easement or take a different course of action. Current residents may desire to use this land for conservation during our lifetime, but by making this property subject to a conservation easement in perpetuity we take away the right of future generations to decide how they would like to use the property. By making the easement renewable every 25 years, future generations maintain the freedom to decide for themselves the best use of this land, rather than it being forever subject to the will of the voters in 2016.

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

The majority of the Board of Selectmen supports the Conservation Commission's plans to create a conservation easement to the Hitchner Town Forest.

ARTICLE 29 – Open Space Access - \$0

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

The Board of Selectmen unanimously grants the Conservation Commission's request to convey a non-exclusive easement to Christopher and Sara Brown across a portion of Open Space Lot 3-5 as shown on Hillsborough County Registry of Deeds. In exchange the Browns will give the Town an eight acre conservation easement on their land.

ARTICLE 30 – Pipeline Authorization Consent - \$0 – by Petition

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – The Board of Selectmen takes no position on this article.

ARTICLE 31 – Sale of a Portion of the Brox Property - \$0 – by Petition

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

This Article is needless given that the planned sale of industrial land has been withdrawn and is no longer relevant.

ARTICLE 32 – New Hampshire Resolution to Get Big Money out of Politics - \$0 – by Petition

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report - The Board of Selectmen takes no position on this article.