

# **Town of Milford**

## **Budget Advisory Committee Report**

### **2014**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Milford Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) is comprised of nine citizens of Milford appointed by the Town Moderator. The Budget Advisory Committee was created in 1974 by a Town Vote to serve two primary purposes: 1) to advise the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator on budgetary matters as they prepare the operating budget and warrant articles, and 2) to develop positions of support or non-support for the proposed budget and warrant articles, which are presented at the Deliberative Session and included in the Voter's Guide published prior to the Town Vote. The members of this year's committee are: Matt Lydon (Chair), Rose Evans (Vice Chair), Karen Mitchell (Secretary), Peggy Seward, Steve Sareault, Bert Becker, Jolie Whitten, Jim Roccio, and Chris Pank.

In order to fulfill our dual roles, the BAC met with the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Department Heads, Milford Improvement Team (MIT), Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative (SVTC), Conservation Commission, Water and Sewer Commissioners, and members of the community. The committee objectively reviewed the proposed operating budget and warrant articles, and after careful consideration, developed positions of support or non-support for each. Throughout our review process any questions about budget items were presented to Department Heads or the Town Administrator for clarification. All answers and any additional information requested were provided to the committee.

#### **ARTICLE 3 – DRAM CUP HILL WATER STORAGE TANK RENOVATION - \$330,000**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 8-0, (1-abstension), to support this warrant article.***

The majority feels it is important to maintain our water distribution system, and repairs are necessary to prevent further degradation of this water storage tank. It should be noted that there is no tax impact associated with this warrant article – it will be paid for by water users.

The abstention is based on the fact that this article has no general tax impact and all costs are borne by the rate payers. The rate payers should have the opportunity to advise on the merits of this expenditure prior to it being put on the ballot.

#### **ARTICLE 4 – OPERATING BUDGET - \$13,007,697**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 9-0 to support this warrant article.***

The Town operating budget reflects an increase of 4.5%. \$401,000 (72%) of this increase is included in the default budget as a result of increased debt service and contractual items. The remaining \$159,000 (28%) is discretionary and will be used to fund salary increases and increased operating costs.

#### **ARTICLE 5 – WASTEWATER TREATMENT OPERATING BUDGET – \$1,804,945**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 8-0, (1-abstention), to support this warrant article.***

The Wastewater Treatment Operating budget is funded by wastewater user fees. The proposed budget represents an increase of 0.5% from last year's appropriation.

The abstention is based on the fact that this article has no general tax impact and all costs are borne by the rate payers. The rate payers should have the opportunity to advise on the merits of this expenditure prior to it being put on the ballot.

#### **ARTICLE 6 – WATER OPERATING BUDGET - \$1,368,189**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 8-0, (1-abstention), to support this warrant article.***

The Water Operating budget is funded by water user fees. The proposed budget represents an increase of 0.3% from last year's appropriation.

The abstention is based on the fact that this article has no general tax impact and all costs are borne by the rate payers. The rate payers should have the opportunity to advise on the merits of this expenditure prior to it being put on the ballot.

#### **ARTICLE 7 – SOUTH STREET RAILROAD CROSSING - \$200,000**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 9-0 to support this warrant article.***

This warrant Article has no cost. These funds have already been appropriated, and this Article merely would extend its period of use for improvement of the South Street Railroad Crossing.

State and Federal funding plus funds previously appropriated will cover the cost of the project.

Failure to approve this Warrant Article may result in the loss of State and Federal matching funds.

**ARTICLE 8 – BRIDGE REPLACEMENT CAPITAL RESERVE - \$125,000**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 9-0 to support this warrant article.***

The Capital Reserve Fund would start the process of needed repairs of the Town's 13 bridges. First priority is completion of the work on the Hartshorn Brook/Jennison Road Bridge with committed Grant money from the State towards this project. Also an engineering study to evaluate the conditions and traffic flow of the other Bridges would be done to prioritize and predict future costs.

The Budget Advisory Committee feels strongly that it is imperative to start this process.

**ARTICLE 9 – FIRE LADDER TRUCK #1 REPLACEMENT – \$770,000/(first year payment \$117,500)**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 9-0 to support this warrant article.***

The Budget Advisory Committee recognizes the need to maintain, equip and insure the adequacy of firefighting equipment and supports the implementation schedule for vehicle upgrades and replacements provided by the fire department.

The Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) recommended by the Citizens Advisory Committee included this project for the year 2014.

**ARTICLE 10 –DUMP TRUCK (6 CUBIC YARD) – \$144,000/ (first year payment \$30,000)**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 8-1 to support this warrant article.***

This Warrant Article replaces one dump truck that has been retired from the DPW fleet and is included in the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) recommended by the Citizens Advisory Committee for the year 2014.

The minority feels that this capital expenditure should be delayed to reduce the overall tax impact of this year.

**ARTICLE 11 – TRANSFER STATION SCALE HOUSE/OFFICE REPLACEMENT - \$74,500**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 9-0 to support this warrant article.***

The present office and work break buildings do not provide adequate space or weather protection for the employees and volunteers who work at the transfer station. The proposed replacement would also add handicapped access to the facility.

**ARTICLE 12 – AFSCME CONTRACT - \$17,600**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 9-0 to support this warrant article.***

This agreement covers cost items included in the Police Officer's collective bargaining agreement. The AFSCME members have agreed to accept this contract. It should be noted that this contract is for a four year period which will produce more stability in this area for the Town.

**ARTICLE 13 – SOCIAL SERVICES - \$35,000**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 9-0 to support this warrant article.***

The Committee believes that in these economic times, our citizens continue to need assistance. These funds are allocated to 19 different agencies that provide various resources to our citizens. Without these resources, the overall Welfare burden would likely increase in excess of the amount requested.

**ARTICLE 14 – NON-EMERGENCY COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION BUS SERVICE - \$28,950**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 9-0 to support this warrant article.***

The Committee continues to believe that the Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative (SVTC) provides a valuable service to the community providing transport for medical appointments and other necessities to our residents.

**ARTICLE 15 – PUMPKIN FESTIVAL, HOLIDAY DECORATIONS AND PLANTINGS - \$20,000**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 5-4 to support this warrant article.***

The Pumpkin Festival is an annual event that is well supported by the community. This event garners publicity in various local and regional news outlets, and draws attendance from residents of other towns in the region. This article does not fund the entire cost of the Pumpkin Festival; rather it pays the cost of the support provided by Public Works, Police, Fire and Ambulance departments.

The minority recognizes that this Warrant Article pays for extra man hours by DPW, Police, Fire and Ambulance Personnel and not for any other Pumpkin Festival expenses. However, in a year of economic concern, this could be amended to \$15,000 as appropriated in the past, and supplemented by Pumpkin Festival income. The minority also believe it may be possible for the Pumpkin Festival to be self-sustaining and profitable after 25 successful years running in the Town of Milford.

**ARTICLE 16 – MILFORD IMPROVEMENT TEAM (MIT) OPERATING BUDGET SUPPORT - \$20,000**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 1-8 to not support this warrant article.***

Milford Improvement team is an organization whose mission is to promote, revitalize, and enhance the historic, natural, social, and economic vitality of Milford.

The majority has noticed a decrease in monthly rent expense as the Town is providing them with office space rent free and also notes a significant increase in the M.I.T. reserve fund causing them to feel that in the current economic environment the tax payers should not be shouldering the full amount of funding \$20,000 towards the M.I.T. operating budget. The majority also believes that the time has come for the MIT to consider and develop a path to a self-sustaining operation approach.

The minority feels M.I.T. provides great value to the community, and notes that as a non-profit organization, M.I.T. uses the proceeds of events such as the Pumpkin Festival to fund other activities and events.

**ARTICLE 17 – SUMMER BAND CONCERTS - \$9,000**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 7-2 to support this warrant article.***

The concerts provide culture and entertainment for all ages and are one of the many activities that make Milford a highly desirable place to live.

The minority feels that these band concerts are an asset to our town but could be supported financially by local donations or fund raising.

**ARTICLE 18 – FIREWORKS - \$8,500**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 1-8 and does not support this warrant article.***

The majority feels that fireworks are a low priority item and there are other, more pressing needs this year. In the past, the Town's Fourth of July celebrations have been successful without town funded fireworks.

The minority feels that fireworks are an appropriate and enjoyable way to celebrate America's independence, and serve as a symbolic reminder of the struggle our nation's founders endured to gain independence.

**ARTICLE 19 – MEMORIAL, VETERANS & LABOR DAY PARADE TOWN SUPPORT - \$6,000**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 9-0 to support this warrant article.***

These events are very well attended and popular with the community. This article pays the cost of Police and DPW details for the safety of the attendees.

**ARTICLE 20 –ANNUAL LABOR DAY PARADE (By Petition) - \$5,000**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 9-0 to support this warrant article.***

In 1945 Governor Charles M. Dale asked the VFW and the American Legion to cover the costs of the annual Labor Day Parade in Milford. This parade has been in existence for the past 67 years, and the costs have been provided by these 2 groups. The VFW and the American Legion can no longer afford to support the parade. This Labor Day Parade as originally established by the governor is a yearly tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity and well being of our country. This parade is one of the favorite activities provided to the citizens of Milford and should be continued as it was conceived in 1945.

**ARTICLE 21 –SALE OF OTHER DISPOSITION OF RESOURCES (By Petition) - \$0**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 1-4, (4-abstentions), to not support this warrant article.***

The request to authorize the Board of Selectmen to sell or dispose of existing mineral interests, earth materials or other natural resources located on a portion of the BROX property needs more work and evaluation to be fully understood by Town Citizens.

The Town should design a plan including input from the Recreation Committee (who is completing a redesign of use at present), the Conservation Committee, Planning Board, Town Public Hearings, and an updated Soil Mining Feasibility Study (last done in 2004). Once a plan is in place including the expected costs that the Town can expect to be responsible for, this Article could be presented on a future Town Warrant.

Expected income from the sale should be dedicated to tax relief yearly.

There is also concern about conservation of the area and wildlife habitat preservation.

The abstentions are based on the fact that this article has no general tax impact and all advantages and disadvantages of the proposed action have not been fully vetted before nor are the within the purview of the BAC.

**ARTICLE 22 –VETERANS CREDIT INCREASE (By Petition) - \$53,000**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 1-8 to not support this warrant article.***

The majority feels that we should continue to honor our Veterans by maintaining the Veteran's credit at its current level. The amount of credit should be studied in the future to determine whether the amount is appropriate and what impact State legislation may have on eligibility guidelines.

The minority feels that the Veteran's Credit of \$300 has remained constant since 2006. The State RSA specifies the requirements of Service for eligibility for the credit. The Town may grant up to \$500 credit as allowed by the State. Milford should honor those Veterans that are eligible with the increase of \$100 as requested by this Warrant.

## **ARTICLE 23 – CONSERVATION LANDS FUND (By Petition) - \$20,000**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 5-4 to support this warrant article.***

The majority recognizes this Fund provides the Town with money to react quickly to auction or foreclosure of undeveloped land. If privately developed, the Town could be obligated to provide more services such as schools and road maintenance than the tax on additional homes would provide. Selectmen approval and public notice are required before spending any of this money.

The minority feels this appropriation is low on the priority list and there are other more pressing needs this year.

## **ARTICLE 24 – MILESLIP TOWN FOREST (By Petition)**

***The Budget Advisory Committee voted 6-0, (3-abstentions), to support this warrant article.***

The Conservation Commission needs to ensure that land obtained for Conservation Purposes is protected to preserve wildlife habitat, rural water supplies, and air quality.

An Easement is the most permanent method used to achieve this.

The abstentions are based on the fact that this article has no general tax impact and all advantages and disadvantages of the proposed action have not been fully vetted before nor are they within the purview of the BAC.

## **ARTICLE 25 – RESOLUTION TO OVERTURN CITIZENS UNITED (By Petition)**

***The Budget Advisory Committee takes no position on this warrant article.***