

# Town of Milford Budget Advisory Committee Report 2024

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 Voters' Guide published before the town vote. The members of this year's committee are Chris Pank (Chair), Karen Mitchell (Vice-Chair and Secretary), Peggy Seward, Paul Bartolomucci, Wade Campbell, Vanessa Sheehan, Claudia Lemaire, Mike Thornton, and Kevin Hunter.

To fulfill our dual roles, the BAC met with the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Department Heads, Conservation Commission, Water, and Sewer Commissioners, the School Budget Committee, 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.

**WARRANT ARTICLE 3 - PENNICHUCK BOOSTER PUMP STATION - \$2,427,500 BOND (Final project cost to the water users offset by \$1,000,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds).**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

This appropriation would fund the replacement of the current booster pump station built in 1987, which has reached the end of its useful life. The new pump station would be built inside the Milford Town line. The booster pump station is a critical asset to the Town of Milford as a backup water supply. Milford is beginning to rely on the Pennichuck Water System to supply a growing percentage of our water and the new pump station would be expandable for growth. Water Utilities has decided to advocate this route because the Town of Milford qualified for grants not available to our Pennichuck supplier. This would save Milford's water users money by reducing total costs. This action by the Water Utilities Director and Water Commissioners gives the Town greater control over water quality (optimally) and possibly a little better leverage in future negotiations since Milford will own the asset.

**WARRANT ARTICLE 4 - TOWN OPERATING BUDGET - \$ 18,261,680**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

The municipal portion of the budget has been carefully planned by Administration and reflects the current costs of operations for the town. The driving force behind the increase from 2023 was an increase in wages for town employees. These wage increases were imperative to retaining experienced staff and keeping current with industry standards for various positions. The default budget is **\$18,002,107** or **\$259,573** below the proposed budget amount. The BAC does **not** support the default budget.

## **WARRANT ARTICLE 5 - WASTEWATER DEPARTMENT OPERATING BUDGET - \$ 2,711,808**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

The proposed Wastewater Department Operating Budget reflects an increase of 3.11% over the 2023 Operating Budget. The Wastewater Department has over 3,000 customers, maintains about 40 miles of sewer main, with 1,200 manholes, and oversees 5.5 miles of larger sewer interceptor lines between the Wilton Town line and the wastewater treatment facility in east Milford.

## **WARRANT ARTICLE 6 - WATER DEPARTMENT OPERATING BUDGET - \$ 2,204,593**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

The proposed Water Department Operating Budget reflects an increase of 5.3% over the 2023 Operating Budget. The Water Department oversees the town wells, 64 miles of water pipe, over 3,400 customers, and 514 hydrants.

## **WARRANT ARTICLE 7 - RECONSTRUCTION OF TOWN ROADS - \$ 300,000**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

Road and sidewalk upkeep and repair are crucial to the safety of all of us. The water/sewer department and DPW have formulated a plan for underground pipework and then road repair, paving, and resurfacing. 2023 was a slow year due to work needed on washed-out areas. The 2024 plan includes Mill St., Knight St., Edgewood St., Verona St., Lewis St., Walker St., Cherry St., and Ash St. There will also be work on a part of South St., and Amherst St. There is approximately \$112,000 left in this non-lapsing account, but work planned will cost as much as \$650,000+. The DPW budget will also support some of the expenses.

## **WARRANT ARTICLE 8 - SOCIAL SERVICES - \$40,000**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

In these economic times, our citizens continue to need assistance. The funds this year are allocated to several different agencies focused on mental health, the elderly population, abuse disorders, housing services, and at-risk youth. Without these resources, the overall burden would likely increase more than the amount requested.

## **WARRANT ARTICLE 9 - NON-EMERGENCY COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION BUS SERVICES – \$32,000**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

This appropriation has been approved yearly as Milford's share of the cost for citizens needing rides to medical appointments, pharmacies, groceries, and some department stores in the area. This service is especially important for seniors, the disabled (the bus is wheelchair accessible), and citizens without vehicles. A small fee is also paid by the rider if able.

## **WARRANT ARTICLE 10 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE CAPITAL RESERVE - \$ 20,000**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

IT Infrastructure is a critical part of how the town operates on a day-to-day basis, both internally for the employees and externally for the residents. This capital reserve fund would be used to upgrade or replace existing hardware such as Servers, SAN Data Storage Devices, Network Switches, Fiber between buildings, and Phone system equipment, as well as major Software upgrades such as Server Operating Systems, Microsoft Office, and, Exchange E-Mail.

The committee feels that this fund is a worthwhile means to help prepare for future expenses much as we already do with other town departments (which rely heavily on the town IT infrastructure to function). The current balance of the fund is \$41,000.

**WARRANT ARTICLE 11 - MEMORIAL, VETERANS & LABOR DAY PARADES AND RECOGNITION SUPPORT - \$11,000**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

These parades are well-attended and popular with the community. This warrant includes costs for safety coverage and cleaning up by Police, DPW, and other Town Departments as well as the purchase of flags placed on Veteran's graves for Memorial Day.

**WARRANT ARTICLE 12 - SUMMER BAND CONCERTS SUPPORT - \$9,000**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

The summer band concerts have been funded at this dollar amount for at least the past 20 years. The Recreation Department has been able to continue to provide 10 concerts a year during the summer months. The department selects a variety of genres which results in entertainment for 100's of residents. As an example, it was estimated that a crowd of over 300 residents enjoyed the final concert of the season at the Stage at Keyes Park. The summer concerts provide an opportunity for the very young as well as more senior residents to enjoy a night of music in chairs or on blankets on the grass. The concerts will take place at either Emerson Park or the new Stage at Keyes Park depending on the size of the band and/or the weather.

**WARRANT ARTICLE 13 - ANNUAL LABOR DAY PARADE - \$6,000**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

This appropriation is used to fund the bands, musicians, and other allied expenses directly attributed to the annual Labor Day Parade. This annual event is popular with the citizens of Milford. Streets are closed and hundreds of people line the parade route and enjoy the bands, floats, and various local groups marching in the parade.

**WARRANT ARTICLE 14 - DISCONTINUE OSGOOD POND CAPITAL RESERVE TRUST FUND - \$0**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

This warrant article removes the unneeded Capital Reserve Fund as work has been completed on Osgood Pond. The remaining money would be deposited in the general fund that is used for unanticipated needs during the year.

**WARRANT ARTICLE 15 - CONSERVATION LAND FUND - \$30,000 By Petition**

**The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (9-0)**

There has been no allocation to this fund in three years. Presently the fund has approximately \$83,026 with \$15,000 of it already earmarked for an ecological study of BROX property. The BAC recommends at least \$118,000 be funded as used for land survey, title search, land donation legal fees, easements, as well as land purchase. Presently approximately 1,119 acres of Milford's 16,000 acres is protected conservation land which preserves and protects our water supply, air quality, recreation, wildlife, and natural beauty. The fund along with fundraising and grant applications will allow for quick action during the year if suitable land becomes available. Through public hearings and BOS approval, opportunities will not be lost.

## **WARRANT ARTICLE 16 – WALKABLE MILFORD - \$0 By Petition**

### **The Budget Advisory Committee SUPPORTS This Warrant Article (7-1-1)**

**Majority** - The Town of Milford has formed a planning committee to develop a multiyear master plan. A company has been awarded a contract to assist the town in the development of this long-range plan. Although there will be ample opportunity for community members to provide input, this article is an early opportunity for residents to voice their desire for Milford to improve as a walkable community. During the Nashua Regional Planning Commission meetings on two consecutive Saturdays here in Milford, this past year residents rated walkable sidewalks a high priority.

**Minority** - Like sidewalks, there are many infrastructure needs in town. The best way to discuss and address such needs is via our recently launched master plan committee. The town has funded a third party to facilitate the creation of a master plan. This committee with input from residents will establish what the priorities are.

**Abstention** - The minority abstained from voting for this petition warrant article as it would be more appropriately presented to the individuals working on the Milford Master Plan. There is no specific call to action for the voters or Board of Selectmen to take and is something that would be best presented for support with Community Development. This article is advisory only.