



2021 General Fund Budget

Town Meeting Review



COVID ACTIONS

- 2020 was a tough year in many respects with COVID bringing several hurdles
- Once we realized the potential impacts to the town's budget, we began reviewing current practices
- Department spending was reduced to only what was necessary, putting off some items until the future
- The Highway Department was put on furlough for approximately 4 weeks at the beginning of the summer due to restrictions of only 2 workers together
- Recreation Programs were limited this year, but the pool was able to be open



COVID ACTIONS

- Town hall was closed with business continuing via mail, dropbox and in some cases, by appointment
- All trainings and meetings were moved to zoom
- All of these actions resulted in positive outcomes for the town
- Reduced spending created a General Fund Surplus
- Precautionary actions prevented any positive COVID cases among town staff
- Thank all of the employees for their patience and help as we work through this pandemic.

Budget Overview



The General Fund Budget was created using a Zero-Based Budget approach



This required all items to be built from zero instead of relying solely on previous budgets



This created savings in many categories



You will also notice that the budget has a new look; We have added a comment section which helps to inform the taxpayer of special items within each category



My goal is for the budget to be transparent and easy to follow

General Government

- The staff in the Administration Dept has been restructured to include the elimination of one full time position; This has produced a favorable savings in salary and benefits
- With a grant from the CARES Act, the Town Clerk's Office was able to digitize 40 years of land records, allowing Title Searches to be completed online; this feature will be completed end of March
- The Town Hall is open to the public with vault use being limited to by appointment
- Wanda Purdy retired from the Lister's Department in June. Wanda was a tremendous asset to the town. We wish her well in her retirement.
- Val is the town's primary lister and is working hard to stay on top of all that takes place in the lister's office.
- The town has contracted with NEMRC to assist with other lister functions needed throughout the year.

General Government Cont.

- The Planning/Zoning office has seen some changes this year.
- Michael Normyle has left his position as Zoning Administrator. I would like to thank Michael for his service to Chester for the past several years
- Jill Barger has been hired as the new Zoning Administrator. Jill comes with skills and experience that make her a tremendous asset to our team.
- Understanding the need for enforcement related issues throughout town, the Selectboard increased the hours budgeted for the ZA position to 20 per week.
- In addition to Jill as our ZA, we are also very fortunate to have Cathy Hasbrouck on staff in our Planning Department as support to the Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission and Development Review Board. Cathy brings much to our team and is a valuable asset.

General Government Cont.

- The Development Review Board continues to work diligently in their permitting of Conditional Uses, Subdivisions and Variances.
- Carla Westine has served as Chair of the DRB for many years. Carla is stepping down this year.
- Thank you, Carla for your years of service to the Town of Chester.
- The Planning Commission continues to work very hard on the revisions to the Unified Development Bylaws. This is a very difficult task that requires a lot of time and attention to detail. Conversations are often difficult and the work is tedious, but the result is so important to the future of the town.
- Naomi Johnson has served on Chester's Planning Commission for 20 years. Naomi has decided to step down this year.
- Thank you, Naomi for your years of service to the town of Chester.



Public Safety

- The Public Safety Division has been actively involved in the construction of the new Public Safety Building. Move in day is currently planned for June.
- The Police Dept. has been busy this year, in spite of COVID restrictions on routine traffic stops.
- Payroll expenses appear to be higher than usual. This is due to special details on the Route 11 project. These expenses are offset in Revenue with no cost to the taxpayers.
- Capital expenses for the Police Department are now reflected in the PD budget as contributions to the Capital Plan. These expenses are for cruiser purchases.



Public Safety

- The Fire Department responded to 175 calls in 2020; Details can be seen on page 43 of the Town Report
- The Fire Department budget remains similar to 2020.
- Items purchased through the Capital and Bond Plans are now included within the Fire Department Budget as their contribution to these plans.



Public Safety

- Chester Ambulance responded to 370 calls in 2020; for details please see page 45 of the Town Report
- The Ambulance Department budget also remains stable compared to 2020.
- All Public Safety departments were the recipients of PPE grants and support through various CARES Act programs.

Public Works

- The Highway Department has had a very busy year. Due to personnel being put on furlough for 3-4 weeks in the spring, all of the usual summer work had to be completed in much less time.
- The 2020/2021 winter has also proven to be challenging as the storms have not been typical of Vermont winters over the last several years.
- The Highway budget has recognized a large surplus at the end of 2020 which is carried into the 2021 budget. A highway surplus has to stay with the Highway Department per State Statute.
- This surplus was due to reduced spending and additional State Aid money from the CARES Act
- Highway expenses are actually down in 2021. However, there is a transfer to the Bond Plan as their contribution towards Capital expenses. This is producing a budget that appears higher.

Public Works Cont.

- Overall, to include highway expense and revenues, the highway department budget is down \$200,000.
- Renovations to the Highway Garage are slated to begin in June with completed by November 1
- The town is hoping to obtain its ACT 250 permit very soon. The issues relative to the Stowe Clubs Highland Analysis were resolved through an appeal of the Commissions decision. The application has been sent back to ACT 250 for review on the merits.
- The intent is to clear land, install the road and begin excavation in the summer of 2021.
- Benefits of this town owned gravel operation will hopefully be recognized in the town's 2022 budget.

Recreation

- The Rec. Dept. was forced to be creative in 2020.
- Many camps/programs were not held this past year, but Matt did a good job of coming up with 1 on 1 and small group skills sessions
- The Recreation Department budget is relatively flat compared to 2020.
- Rec's contribution to the Bond Plan has been included in their budget as well
- The payroll for the lifeguards has been moved from the Facilities budget to the operating budget
- Several camps and programs have been combined for easier budget maintenance

Facilities

- There is a Facilities section of the budget that breaks down Library, Town Hall, Recreation, Historic Buildings and the new Public Safety Building
- Library Budget is up slightly to provide a stipend to the FT employees for Health Insurance
- Town Hall budget shows an increase due to cleaning services as well as additional work to the second floor
- Recreation Budget includes funds for screening one boundary at the Pinnacle, as well as repairs to the Skate Park
- A new parking area has been created by the Ice Rink; The final touches will be completed in 2021. New signage has been installed as well.

Facilities Cont.

- Public Safety Building has been included this year showing estimates for 6 months of operation; also includes several 1 time move in expenses
- Revitalization budget shows an increase for several reasons. SRDC fees have been moved from the Zoning budget; Additional funds for continued marketing efforts; Historic Facilities line increased
- Historic Facilities line includes repairs to plaster ceiling at Academy Building, match for replacement of West Slope to roof & work at Yosemite



Plan for Surplus

- The General Fund is ending with a combined surplus in the amount of \$335,000
- This budget proposes the following:
 - \$200,000 to pay the grant match required for the Depot Street Sidewalk project
 - \$41,000 to purchase the cruiser that was scheduled for replacement
 - \$72,000 to be added to the Fund Balance
 - \$20,000 to be transferred to the Reserve Fund upon adoption by the voters at a future special meeting

Capital Plan/Bond Plan

- Capital Plan and Bond Plan have been combined into one plan
- This plan shows the current and 2021 proposed debt repayment schedule
- The only capital purchase being financed in 2021 is the purchase of a dump truck; 5 year term
- Sidewalks and cruiser are being paid from the surplus
- A \$250,000 bond is being proposed for paving; Popple Dungeon and Lovers Lane; 7 year repayment
- The Capital Plan Fund does show a current fund balance of \$135,000 which I am proposing be allowed to carry for use in one of the peak years

Water & Sewer Departments

Water & Sewer Departments are not budgets voted on at town meeting

Critical part of the town's infrastructure

Both departments have a positive growing fund balance to be used for upcoming projects

Secondary Well is being considered and assessed using funds from an Asset Management Grant

Upgrades to the Sewer Plant will begin to be considered in 2022

Summary

- The 2021 Budget reflects a slight decrease
 - Utilizes a \$335,000 surplus earned in 2020 to pay Capital expenses outright, eliminating the need for financing
 - This budget was developed balancing the needs of the town with the impact to the taxpayers
 - Asking for voter support of this budget
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