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Town ADMINISTRATOR

2018 BUDGET OVERVIEW

TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN

**Introduction**

The Board of Selectmen issued a directive to the department heads and board chairpersons to produce their respective proposed budgets for the 2018 Budget by July 31st, 2017. The goal of the BOS is to have a minimal increase in the town portion of the tax rate in 2018. The BOS anticipates cost increases in certain areas such as property liability insurance,

health insurance, implementation of the wage classification system and retirement rates. Department Heads were expected to develop their 2018 Budgets with no increases in their operating budgets other than cost increases due to the implementation of the wage classification system. The wage scales were adjusted for a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for employees in 2018. The wage scales are based on 2014 salary data and have not been adjusted since then. The COLA adjustment amount was based upon the Consumer Price Index at 2%. Some employees will see a salary increase from the wage classification system if they are scheduled for a step increase. There was no COLA increase in 2017. The BOS anticipates the long term budget analysis will focus on the priority objectives of the Town. The Board’s goal is to provide necessary services and minimize the increase in the tax rate for the residents of the town.

The spreadsheet provides an overview of the budgets submitted.

 **Executive Summary**

The proposed 2018 Town budget submitted by the department heads will result in a 2% increase in spending from the 2017 approved budget. This year’s proposed budget is $78,497 higher than last year’s budget.

The areas of significant increase are the Elections & Registrations, Fire, Capital Outlay and Executive budgets. The Elections & Registrations budget was increased due to three elections in 2018 budget year and only one occurred in 2017.

The Board has implemented performance auditing for the main functions of the town. The police department and the functions at town hall were audited in 2015. The fire department was audited in 2016 and the highway department was audited in 2017. Health insurance rates have been reduced by 10.8%. The volume and cost of claims has gone down for the Suncook Regional Towns Association Group. The switch to a Site of Service health insurance plan and the use of a Health Reimbursement Account have reduced costs. The increase for 2016 was 17% for health insurance. The 2017 Budget saw a net reduction as we changed to a lower cost plan with deductibles and higher co-pays which were partially offset by utilizing a Health Reimbursement Account.

During 2017 considerable progress in repairing our roadway infrastructure. The Town received just over $76,000 in additional roadway funds from a one-time appropriation by the State. Just over $30 million in surplus funds from the State budget were distributed to Towns and Cities across the State. The following streets were paved or totally reconstructed in 2017; two sections of Deerfield Rd., Highfield Dr., a section of Birchwood Dr., a section of Clearview Dr., a section of River Rd., Martinson Ln. and Gilbert Rd.

The areas of significant change are as follows:

1. There are increases in the Personnel line. The cost of Health Insurance for 2017 was reduced as a result of plan changes, younger employees are taking single plans. We also eliminated a buffer of one of the two family plans which we add to the budget to accommodate employment turnover and plan changes. However the increase in premiums for 2016 was 17.4% over the 2015 rates. The rates for 2018 are 10.8% less than the 2017 rates. The Town is part of a group of seven towns which pool their buying power as a consortium to obtain lower rates. The Suncook Valley Regional Towns Association recently completed a study and made a recommendation to enter into an agreement with Health Trust to continue to provide health & dental insurance for employees. The Board of Selectmen will continue to review proposed changes to the coverage plans that are offered to employees. The NH Retirement System had a rate increase which took effect in July of 2017. Group 1 (non-police and fire) employee rates increased by 1.88%. Group II (police and fire) increased by 11.56% for police and 9.36% for fire personnel.
2. The Finance line was decreased by **$19,666.** The reductions are a result of two items. The elimination of the Assessing Clerk position and the contracting of those services to Avitar has reduced our operating costs. The cost of the financial audit was reduced because a single audit is not necessary in 2018. The Federal government requires a single audit when a municipality receives more than $750,000 in grant funds.
3. The proposed Parks & Recreation budget has increased to cover the cost of the new community center which opened in June of 2016. The 2017 budget reflected a full 12 months of operational costs. The 2018 budget had a smaller increase **$1,185.**
4. The Building Inspector budget was increased to provide for the wage classification adjustments for the administrative assistant position shared with the fire department, mileage reimbursement and salary increases for the BI position itself. **$2,508**.
5. The ambulance budget had a decrease for the third consecutive year. The reduction was 5%, **$10,406**. This is a result of two factors. The percentage of service used between Allenstown and Pembroke has changed. Pembroke is paying a higher percentage of the cost compared to Allenstown. The payments by insurance companies continues to come in above projections.
6. The Elections and Registration line was increased by 14%, **$2,466** as the number of elections is being increased from one in 2017 to three in 2018.
7. The Police budget was increased by 1% as a result of salary increases in the wage classification system. **$6,994.**
8. The Executive Budget increased by **$21,740** to implement a records management system and payroll increases. The records management system is part of a multi phased project to manage and secure documents. The project will meet the requirements of our MS4 Federal Stormwater Permit and our transparency initiative.
9. Property liability insurance rates declined by 10%. This was as a result in a reduction in claims over the previous year.

**Spending Analysis and Estimated Tax Impacts**

The proposed 2018 Budget proposed by the department heads results in a 3.35% increase in spending from 2017. The tax rate for the Town for 2016 was $11.36. The tax rate for 2017 has not been determined yet.

The assessed valuation for 2016 was $249,523,983. The assessed valuation for 2017 is $288,823,373 which is an increase of $39,299,390 or 16%. This is a change in a positive direction however the amount of new inventory was relatively low. The value of properties increased significantly due to the demand in the housing market.

The revenues other than property taxes for 2018 are projected to be relatively flat. The determination of actual revenues for 2017 will be made at the end of this budget year. We always project revenues conservatively to ensure we do not have a revenue shortfall at the end of the year.

The next several pages include graphs that depict the various facets of the Town’s budget, revenues and tax information.



The Public Works budget includes highways, storm water, streetlights and solid waste. The Administration budget includes the executive, town clerk/tax collector, finance, insurance, legal, parks & recreation and the various boards/committees. The Personnel budget includes the cost of employee benefits: health/dental/life/STD/LTD, retirement, workers comp, social security, medicare and unemployment compensation.



This chart shows the percent change in appropriations from year to year for the town budget excluding the appropriations for the sewer department. The red bar represents the change in the Consumer Price Index which is a measurement of the growth of the economy. The percent change for 2017 is based on the budget approved by the Board of Selectmen.

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This chart shows the tax rate history in dollars per thousand for each tax year. There are a number of factors that determine the rate.

 

This chart depicts the estimated revenues that were prepared for the 2018 budget. We will not know until the end of the year what the actual amount of revenues were for 2017. We have utilized this same projection for 2017 for now. Revenue projections continue to be adjusted throughout each year until September when the final revenue projections are submitted to allow the tax rate to be set.



This chart depicts the actual property tax levy for each year. This amount represents the total amount of taxes levied for the local school, town and county tax needed to meet the appropriations set minus the other anticipated revenues. The amount of taxes committed will be set when the tax rate is set.

This chart shows the amount of taxes for a given tax year and the total amount of taxes owed to the town. As you can see the amount of taxes owed in comparison to the total tax levy is comparatively low.





This chart depicts the actual revenues for 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 other than property taxes. The numbers for 2017 are projected conservatively. There is a significant reductions in fines for zoning violations due to one violator that has paid the last installment of fines.

Revenues other than property taxes includes grants, fees, fines, sale of town property, interest on unpaid taxes, etc...