



## ANNUAL TOWN MEETING May 17, 2021

The Annual Town Meeting was held on Monday, May 17, 2021, in the Richard H. Smith Town Hall Auditorium. Members of the Region #4 administration, Region #4 and Deep River Elementary School Boards of Education, Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen, the Registrars of Voters and their deputies and approximately 32 other residents attended in person. Kim Olson facilitated people signing in for COVID-19 contact tracing at the door. Selectman's Assistant, Joyce Berardis facilitated another 20 residents attending and voting remotely via ZOOM. Luther Moen handled the audio/visual presentation of the meeting. First Selectman Angus L. McDonald, Jr. called the meeting to order at 7:54 p.m. A motion to appoint Alex Silva as moderator of the meeting was made by Duane Gates. The motion was seconded by Jim Olson and was approved unanimously.

The moderator appointed Town Clerk Amy Winchell as clerk of the meeting, who then read the call. A motion to accept the call of the meeting as read was made by Jane Cavanaugh with second by Miriam Morrissey. Motion was approved unanimously.

A motion to approve Item #1 was made by Lori Guerette and seconded by Jim Olson.

### **1) To approve the Town Budget for the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 in the amount of \$19,279,257.**

DISCUSSION: Board of Finance Chair, George Eckenroth, gave an overview of the proposed 2021-22 Budget. He noted that last year's 2020-2021 Budget had not gone to Town Meeting because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The budget had been approved by the Board of Finance at their special meeting as per Governor Ned Lamont's Executive Orders #7B, 7I, 7S, 7CC and 7HH.

Budget Expenditures					
		Proposed	Change		
<u>2020-2021</u>	<u>2021-2022</u>		<u>Dollar</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
\$18,300,768	\$19,279,257		\$978,489	5.3%	
	New Firetruck		700,000	72%	
	Net increase		\$278,489	28%	
Education			194,583	70%	

	Infrastructure			83,998	30%	
	Public Safety			83,119	30%	
	General Town Administration			-83,211	-30%	
				\$278,489		

This year's proposed budget includes \$700,000 for a new fire truck which is long overdue. The Town had approved the purchase of this truck in 2019 and efforts to procure a grant to cover part of the cost were unsuccessful. The Town will finance this purchase and the first payment will not be due until the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

The 2020 revaluation resulted in a 4.47% increase in property values and the Board of Finance chose to reduce the mill rate rather than increase taxes. The 2021-2022 proposed budget does not contribute to the surplus fund but is a balanced budget.

- Jane Samuels asked if the surplus included money from the State. Eckenroth responded that our surplus is not dependent on State money.
- Kate Russell made note of the number of larger percentage increases in a number of line items. McDonald responded that many of those increases were because of an increase of hours where salaries were concerned or relocation of items within the budget meaning that amount had zeroed out in another category.
- Tim Lee asked for clarification in the Fire Department budget. He noted that the department is scheduled to replace two more trucks in the near future. McDonald responded that they were planning a graduated payment scale on the loan to accommodate all three purchases in the next several years.
- Bill Burdick was concerned that many households had seen reduced income in the pandemic and wanted to know if the Board of Finance had considered that. Eckenroth responded that the Board was critically aware of that in the creation of this budget.
- Dan Morrissey noted the ballot allowed three voting options: Yes / No-too high / No-too low. He was concerned about how the breakdown would impact the results. Eckenroth said they were looking for information on what the taxpayers wanted in their budget.
- Marc Lewis, attending remotely, expressed concern for how the numbers were being presented. He felt the fire truck should not be included as it skews the numbers. Eckenroth responded that the Board of Finance needs to identify the needs of the Town and is obligated to show the Town how their tax dollars are spent. Lori Guerette, BOF member, added that this is how our auditors want this sort of purchase presented.
- Greg Alexander, former BOF member, added that a purchase of that magnitude used to be put in a capital non-recurring fund instead of in the operating budget and suggested a separate meeting for that.

There being no further discussion, the meeting paused at 8:48 to allow voting. Those voting remotely had verified their eligibility with the Registrars of Voters before the meeting and cast their votes via "chat". In-person voting was done by paper ballot and was administered by Registrars of Voters Dale Winchell and Elizabeth Lori Gegan and their deputies Tom Lindner and Shelby Olson. The meeting reconvened at 9:16 and the results were read aloud by Dale Winchell. **The results were: 47- YES votes to 20- NO votes. The breakdown of NO votes was 2- NO, too low / 18- NO, too high. Item #1 was approved.**

A motion to approve Item #2 was made by Rick Daniels and seconded by Greg Alexander.

**2) To authorize the Tax Collector to collect real estate taxes and personal property taxes in two semi-annual installments, the dates to be July 1, 2021 and January 1, 2022.**

**To authorize the Tax Collector to collect regular motor vehicle taxes in one installment, due and payable on July 1, 2021.**

**To authorize the Tax Collector to collect supplemental motor vehicle taxes in one installment, due and payable on January 1, 2022.**

**Any property tax due the Town of Deep River in an amount that does not exceed one hundred dollars (\$100) shall be due and payable in a single installment on July 1, 2021.**

There being no discussion, **Item #2 was unanimously approved** by voice vote.

A motion to adjourn was made by Rick Daniels, with second by Kate Russell. The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

ATTEST: Amy M. Winchell, MCTC  
Town Clerk