

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING May 16, 2022

The Annual Town Meeting was held on Monday, May 16, 2022, in the Richard H. Smith Town Hall Auditorium. Members of the Region #4 administration, Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen, and approximately 40 other residents attended in person. Valley Courier reporter Aaron Rubin was also in attendance. First Selectman Angus L. McDonald, Jr. called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. A motion to appoint Rick Daniels as moderator of the meeting was made by Duane Gates. The motion was seconded by Rich Balducci and was approved unanimously.

The moderator appointed Town Clerk Amy Winchell as clerk of the meeting, who then read the call.

A motion to approve Item #1 was made by Balducci and seconded by Jonathan Kastner.

1) To approve the Town Budget for the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 in the amount of \$19,076,304.

DISCUSSION: Region #4 Superintendent, Brian White and Board of Finance Chair, George Eckenroth, both repeated budget presentations previously done at their respective public hearings.

Appropriated 2021 - 2022	Proposed 2022 -2023	Change	
		Dollars	Percent
Budget Revenues			
\$20,940,145	\$18,386,524	(\$2,553,621)	-12.2%
Budget Expenditures			
\$20,855,352	\$19,076,304	(\$1,779,048)	-8.53%
Excess of Revenues over Expenditures			
	(\$689,780)		
FY End Surplus			
\$2,895,888	\$2,206,108	(\$689,780)	-23.8%
Tax Rate			
29.58	28.98	-0.6	-2.0%

Eckenroth highlighted various drivers including rising costs of all fuels and employee benefits, bringing certain employee salaries up to market review levels, increasing constable shifts and data security, bringing on additional personnel in the finance office and at the transfer station, and paving a road at the transfer

station in an attempt to stop non-resident usage. While education is still 70% of our budget, it has actually declined slightly for 2022-2023. We will be borrowing to finance a number of items approved last year but moved into this year because of supply chain issues including a fire truck. A portion of our ample surplus, accumulated due to lack of spending during the pandemic, will be used to pay down our mil rate and bring the surplus down to a more reasonable level. This should result in a 0.6 mill rate reduction.

- Mike Dinello of 209 Main Street asked if we could expect to see motor vehicle taxes reduced next year since they are currently higher due to supply chain issues. Tax Collector Kate Cryder said the assessment process will be changing for motor vehicles but taxes might go down. Dinello also asked White what the education budget might look like in the next 5-10 years. White pointed out that while enrollment was expected to continue to decline, the cost of staffing and maintaining 5 school buildings in Region #4 will keep increasing the budget. We will need to increase efficiency by possibly consolidating building use.
- Doug Gingrave of 156 Essex Street asked why salary and benefits increases for the town were different for the school. McDonald explained that they were separate collective bargaining units and negotiations for the town are still in process. Teacher salary increases are actually very close to town employee salary increases. The school manages their own insurance and was able to keep costs down because of lower than expected claim usage. The town changed their insurance plan a few years ago for a significant cost savings but insurance costs typically increase every year. Gingrave also asked why fuel costs were up when we were promised a cost savings when natural gas came to town. McDonald explained that we did see those savings but "Fuel" under "Building Operations" includes oil, gas and gasoline for both buildings and vehicles, all of which are going up in cost.

A vote was held by show of hands with all in favor except for one (1) opposed. Item #1 was approved.

A motion to approve Item #2 was made by Balducci and seconded by Russ Marth.

- 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, 2022 and January 1, 2023.**

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

To authorize the Tax Collector to collect supplemental motor vehicle taxes in one installment, due and payable on January 1, 2023.

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, 2022.

There being no discussion, **Item #2 was unanimously approved by show of hands.**

A motion to adjourn was made by Balducci, with second by Jim Olson. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

ATTEST: Amy M. Winchell, Town Clerk