

From the Managers Desk

Town of Berwick

2016-2017 Budget Summary and Highlights

The Budget Committee and the Board of Selectmen have completed the Budget Review process. This was a very thoughtful and complete review of each department and the Capital Improvement Program. Department Heads provided Maureen Finger, Finance Director and me the information we needed to put together a comprehensive and responsible budget that moves the town forward and takes care of the employees, buildings and infrastructure and keeps the increase to a minimum. The infrastructure improvements that need the most work are the roads and sidewalks which are the most expensive. The road program will require 5+ years, starts with rebuilding some of our worst roads but also needed is good ditching and a proper base. This will make our roads last longer and in the end save us money.

Within the following departments we are recommending changes that we feel are necessary to improve our efficiency, replace aging equipment and provide the public safety departments the tools and manpower to deal with issues such as increase of heroin use that they are confronted with. Due to the changing social environment our public safety department's needs are challenged to provide more coverage in all areas in order to provide the community with the service they expect.

Planning

The Planning Department and the Water Department are requesting to add a part-time staff person. This person will share duties in the Town Office splitting their 25 hours between both. This will provide a person that will assist customers looking for information from assessing and code enforcement and it will also provide assistance to water customers.

Police

The Police Department will be adding another patrolman this year. This will help in reducing the overtime that has been created from the increase in the drug trade. It will also provide much needed staffing to fill in for when others have vacations, etc. We are updating their IT Server and Telephone system this year. We are transitioning to a leasing program for our fleet replacement this year. This will improve our cash flow for other needed areas.

Fire

The Fire Department is transitioning to a 24/7 schedule. They will be adding an additional Fire Fighter/EMT. Staffing with volunteer fire fighters has become very difficult throughout the country. Berwick has had difficulty with the call force (fire fighters) that just aren't available due to jobs being out of town or other commitments. We are also requesting financing to replace 2 of our old fire trucks that require \$100,000+ to repair and we would still end up with an old truck.

Capital Improvement Program

We have updated the Capital Improvement Program and have looked out 5-10 years. This provides us with a guide to what items need replacement and or repaired. We are replacing the roof on the Doran School Gym and the PW Salt Shed. We have also updated our Road Paving program. This summer we are rebuilding Diamond Hill, Wentworth, Pond and Beech Ridge Roads. We will rebuild and fix roads over the next five (5) years that will have a longer life.

Overall Operating Budget

Overall the Operating Budget was recommended with an increase of 3.3%. The Budget Committee and the Board of Selectmen made several recommendations that lowered some and increased other areas. The Selectmen's Budget as presented to the voters is an increase of \$109,919 that we estimate to be a 0.17 increase to the tax rate. This does not take into consideration any changes in valuation, homestead exemption, BETE program or the school budget.

Referendum and Town Meeting this year is set for June 14 and 15th. I hope to see you all turn out and support the Selectmen's requests. The Town of Berwick is moving forward and it is one of the busiest and committed group of citizens, elected officials and municipal staff I have had the pleasure to work with. It is exciting to see and imagine the future of this community.

Respectfully,

Stephen G. Eldridge

Town Manager

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