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backhoe/loader for the Highway Department. This proposal would have had no impact on the tax rate, since funding would have come from reductions in other Highway Department expenses.

Included in the operating budget is \$81,650 for rebuilding Chase Hill Road. The meeting also voted additional funding of \$133,610 for rebuilding Emery Road, a project that was not recommended for this year by the Budget Committee.

Combining the approved operating budget with the other approved warrant articles resulted in a total appropriation of \$1.48 million. Omitting pass-through expenses that come with their own funding and do not impact taxes, the total net budget is \$1.40 million. This is up over last year's net budget of \$1.29 million by \$189,123, a very sizable 15.6%.

The impact of this increased expenditure on the Town tax rate can only be estimated at this time. The amount of other revenues that will be available to offset taxes is estimated to be somewhat less this year. However, the selectmen plan to apply \$150,000 of previous year's funds toward reducing taxes this year, \$100,000 more than they used to reduce taxes last year.

It is presently estimated that the amount to be raised by taxes to fund this budget will be up \$167,000 over last year's amount of \$575,068. This will increase the Town portion of the total tax

rate to \$2.80, which is 29.0% above last year, when the Town portion was \$2.17.

Fire Departments

The Andover Fire Department voted a net appropriation of \$68,928, and the East Andover Fire Department voted a net appropriation of \$53,507, representing small decreases below the previous year.

Appropriations (Net of Pass-Through Items)				
Department	2010	2011	Change	
School	\$4,251,130	\$4,317,579	\$66,449	1.6%
Town	\$1,210,528	\$1,399,651	\$189,123	15.6%
Fire				
Andover	\$69,275	\$68,928	-\$347	-0.5%
E. Andover	\$55,313	\$53,507	-\$1,806	-3.3%
Total	\$5,586,246	\$5,839,665	\$253,419	4.5%
Tax Rates (2010 actual, 2011 estimated)				
School	\$11.63	\$12.70	\$1.07	9.2%
Town	\$2.17	\$2.80	\$0.63	29.0%
Fire				
Andover	\$0.64	\$0.64	--	--
E. Andover	\$0.36	\$0.35	-\$0.01	-2.8%
County	\$2.56	\$2.56	--	--
Total Tax Rates				
Andover	\$17.00	\$18.70	\$1.70	10.0%
E. Andover	\$16.72	\$18.41	\$1.69	10.1%
Tax on a \$200,000 Property ('10 actual, '11 estimated)				
Andover	\$3,401	\$3,740	\$339	10.0%
E. Andover	\$3,344	\$3,682	\$338	10.1%

Total Tax Rate

The total net appropriations voted this year at the various annual meetings comes to \$5.84 million, up \$169,419 or 3.0% over the previous year. Assuming that the Merrimack County charge to Andover this year remains the same as last year, the total combined tax rate for this year is estimated to be up approximately 10%, as shown above.

Note that the school budget represents about 68% of the total tax bill. The town budget accounts for about 15%, the fire departments about 3%, and Merrimack County about 14%.

The increase in the total tax bill for a typical property valued at \$200,000 will be about \$340.

Merger from page 1

command, fire ground operations will be clearer and better able to respond rapidly to changes in the incident.

Combining the fire departments will use both our existing stations, and no new equipment is required. Though there will be a financial benefit when purchasing equipment in the future, for the next few years this change will not affect the budget.

In January of this year, the officers of both departments met at the East Andover station. The purpose of the meeting was to decide if we should join or not, and if we do join, how we should proceed. We were all a bit apprehensive at the start of the meeting. For us, this will be a major change in uncharted waters.

About 20 minutes into the meeting, all officers had an opportunity to say what was on their minds. Everyone felt that becoming one department was the best path moving forward.

With not joining no longer an issue, a spirit that we are all on the same team replaced any remaining apprehension. We agreed that we should have our trainings and business meetings together and work out concerns as they come up.

The next meeting was called with all members of both departments (not just the officers this time) to discuss combining. Again, everyone agreed that becoming one department was the best course.

In truth, we think our younger members just want to fight fire and would rather let others manage operations. Combining departments places all our young members together, training and working as a team. Who wouldn't want to manage that kind of energy and enthusiasm?

We are now in March and still moving toward union. The differences discovered so far have been minor and easily dealt with.

There are several department logistical issues that must be worked out. We will manage and overcome each in turn. The questions of budget and management at the commissioner level have yet to be answered. Those must be decided at precinct meetings next year. The selectmen's study has the chief reporting to both of the precinct commissioners, and as chiefs we both support that finding.

The team is confident that given a year to work out operations, we will be able to operate as one department better than we did as two.

Thank You, Volunteers!

We couldn't publish the *Beacon* without you. Everyone in Andover appreciates everything you do for the *Beacon*!

Renewal from page 1

Step 4: Enter the Plate Number for one of your vehicles. Enter the Acct Number for that vehicle in the space where the computer says "Enter PIN." Click the Search button.

Step 5: The computer will present a list of all the vehicles registered in your name that need to be renewed. Click the renewal box for each vehicle you wish to renew. (If you no longer have a vehicle that is on the list, just ignore it.) When you've checked all the appropriate boxes, click the Continue button to go to the summary page.

Step 6: On the summary page, carefully review your vehicle information. Read the Terms and Conditions. If you wish to proceed, click the "I agree" box and then click the Pay Now button to go to the payment page.

Step 7: On the payment page, select your payment method:

- credit or debit card (Discover or MasterCard)
- direct withdrawal from a business checking account

• direct withdrawal from a personal checking account and then supply the required information. The online payment process is private and secure, as described in the Terms and Conditions (which you can access from the summary page).

The convenience fee for credit cards or debit cards is 2.5% of your total payment. The convenience fee for direct withdrawal from a checking account is \$1.49.

Step 8: Click the button to submit your payment information.

Step 9: Check your e-mail for a confirmation e-mail to be sure that your renewal instructions and electronic payment went through.

Step 10: Watch your mailbox. Your information will be forwarded to the Andover Town Clerk's office, and we will mail your registration and decals to your postal address. You should plan on a five-day turn-around. This allows for bank confirmation, processing the registration(s), and mailing.



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