

Budgets from page 1

increase of about \$266,000 or 4%.

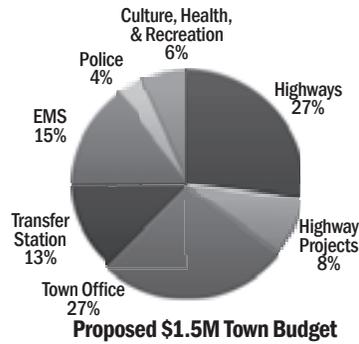
2013 Tax Rate

This early in the game, it's impossible to say exactly how much these budget increases, if approved by School District Meeting and Town Meeting, will impact Andover tax rates this fall. At this time of year, there are always at least two major unknowns when thinking about the fall tax rates:

Revenue: The Selectmen, the Budget Committee, and Town and School District Meetings together have quite a bit of control over "the budget," but "the budget" is primarily about expenses. None of us have much control at all over the other half of the equation, which are the revenues that the Town and the School District receive.

Turn to pages 18 and 19 of the Andover Town Report 2012 (see page 1 of this issue of the *Beacon* for

information on how to get your copy, or read the Town Report online at Bit.ly/YvXPAr) and you'll see that there are hundreds of thousands of dollars the Town takes in every year to reduce property taxes. Page 72 of the Town Report lists well over a million dollars



of revenue that the School District receives.

But you'll notice that the 2013 revenue figures are just projections. At this time of year, no one can say for sure what that the actual total revenue for the coming year will be.

Merrimack County: On page 25 of the Town Report, you'll see that 15% of our 2012 property taxes went to running Merrimack County. But unlike the Town and School District expenses, we don't get to decide how much we spend on county expenses. Instead, the county tells us how much we owe, and they don't tell us until close to the end of the year. So there's another big number (over \$712,000 last year) that's up in the

air at this point.

When we do hear from Merrimack County later this year, the news may be much the same as last year. Writing on page 12 of last month's *Beacon*, Merrimack County Commissioner Bronwyn Asplund-Walsh said that the proposed county budget for this year is within about a quarter of a percent of being flat-funded (i.e. the same total amount as last year).

Town Budget

The proposed 2013 net budget for the Town, including warrant articles, is up almost 9% over last year. Pushing the numbers up this year are:

- **Highways and Bridges Projects:** up \$62,500. The Road Agent will be tackling four of the most problematic town roads this year.
- **Town Office:** Budgeted higher this year, as explained in the front-page article in the February *Beacon*. Almost \$15,000 has been added for additional staff expenses; \$14,300 for improved computer systems and services; and \$10,000 for a proper emergency generator installation.
- **Andover Police Department:** Expenses are up about \$20,000, which includes the increased cost of benefits and money for hiring an additional part-time police officer due to new state limitations on the number of hours our existing part-time officers can work.

The net 2013 Town budget, including warrant articles, as recommended by the Budget Committee and the Selectmen, is up by about \$123,000 (or 9%) from last year's comparable figure.

Town Meeting votes every year on the Budget Committee's proposed budget (the highlighted figures on pages 14 through 17 of the Town Report). But the Selectmen can also propose their own set of budget figures each year in the column to the left of the Budget Committee's figures, and the meeting is free to consider the merits of each figure.

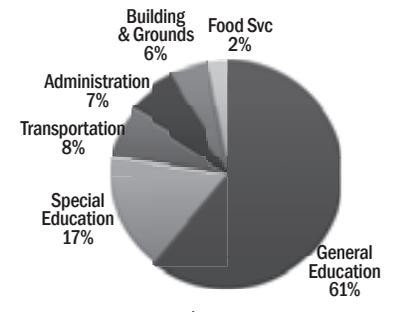
This year, the Selectmen and the Budget Committee agree on all the budget figures, as well as on all the warrant articles, so the bottom-line recommended budget from each is the same.

School District Budget
The Budget Committee's proposed 2013 net budget for the Andover School District, including warrant articles, is for a total appropriation of \$4.50 million. This proposed budget shows an

increase of nearly \$146,000 (3.4%) over the net appropriation of \$4.35 million voted for 2012.

Contributing to the increase in the Budget Committee's recommended budget this year were:

- **Regular Education:** up about \$135,000
- **Special Education:** increases in benefits and Special Ed tuition total about \$32,000
- **Teachers' Contract:** about \$36,000 in step-only increases kick in this year
- **Buildings and Grounds:** about \$10,000 less for maintenance, re-



pair, and electricity

The Andover School Board's proposed budget differs from the Budget Committee's on several points this year. The School Board's proposed budget (the third column of figures on pages 69 through 71 of the Town Report) includes about \$64,000 to fund an additional fourth grade teacher next year. The Budget Committee's figures (the fourth column, highlighted) don't include that additional money.

The two bodies also differ over Warrant Article 6, which would provide another \$64,000 to change the kindergarten at AE/MS from a half-day program to a full-day program.

Attend the Meetings!

To be a part of the decision process regarding the school budget, plan to attend the annual Andover School District meeting on Monday, March 4, at 7 PM in the Andover Elementary/Middle School gym.

The Town budget will be discussed and voted on at the annual Town Meeting on Tuesday, March 12, at 7 PM in the Andover Elementary/Middle School gym. All voters are urged to attend both these important meetings to participate in the discussions and to vote on the appropriations.

TAX DELINQUENCIES

As of December 31, 2009, the Andover Tax Collector reported \$500,113 in unpaid property taxes owed to the town. As of December 31, 2010 the figure was \$385,007, down 23% from a year earlier. As of December 31, 2011 the figure was \$507,972, up 32% from a year earlier. For this year, the December 31, 2012 figure was \$510,735, up about half a percent from 2011.

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