

ISSUES AT TOWN MEETING

Here's what you need to know about the Town warrant.

By Vicky Mishcon, Board of Selectmen

This introduction of Andover's 2013 Town Warrant will give you important background information and justifications of an unusually long list of warrant articles. (Unusually long for Andover, that is. Many towns have much longer lists!)

The first five articles are housekeeping. Some will be familiar (Article 1: "To choose all necessary officers..."), and others are required by the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration to establish or renew the Town's authority to conduct certain business.

Article 2: To issue tax anticipation notes. This allows the Town to borrow money until we receive tax revenue at the end of the year.

Article 3: To allow the Selectmen to apply for, accept, and expend un-anticipated money from government or private sources without further action from Town Meeting. Without this article, the Town could not accept and expend in the same year.

Article 4: To allow the Selectmen to accept gifts of personal property offered to the Town for public purposes.

Article 5: To authorize the Tax Col-

lector to accept pre-payment of taxes.

Article 6 is the Town Budget. This year, there is no difference between the Selectmen's recommendations and the Budget Committee's proposals. Both support and recommend the full budget as presented in the Town Report.

Article 7 is asking the voters to expand the purpose of the Bridge Rehabilitation Capital Reserve Fund. The fund was initially established to build up reserves for the Town's 20% portion

\$1,000 ≈ 75¢

When you go to Town Meeting and School District Meeting this year, remember this:

For every \$1,000 the meeting adds to (or subtracts from) the amount to be raised by taxes, it will add (or subtract) approximately 75¢ to (or from) the tax bill of a \$200,000 property in Andover.

of large projects requiring State Building Aid. State Building Aid money is not as available as it once was. After the Morrill Hill Road Bridge project this year, the next State aid won't be available to Andover until 2022.

With the condition of our bridges steadily deteriorating, the Selectmen would like to be able to tap into the

Bridge Capital Reserve Fund if an emergency repair is needed that our operating budget cannot accommodate. To that end, we are asking the town to vote to expand the purpose of the fund to include "Town Bridge Improvement Projects and State Bridge Aid Improvement Projects, and to appoint the Selectmen as Agents to Expend."

Article 9 addresses money needed for road improvement projects. This year, the request is to allow the Town to expend up to \$150,000 on the following projects:

- Overlay (top coat) of Bradley Lake Road
 - Improve Apple Crest Lane with pipes, gravel, ditching, and repaving
 - Restructure Pancake Road with gravel, a 2" base, culvert pipes, and repaving
 - Ditching and top coat of Mill Road
- Articles 8 and Articles 10 through 16 are all related to putting money into the Town's capital reserve funds.

Article 17 addresses last year's re-organization of the Recreation Committee. In the interest of improving accountability and ease of bookkeeping, the Selectmen and the Recreation Committee are asking the voters to allow them to create a revolving fund for the purpose of receiving fees and charges for programs and services.

Instead of raising taxes to cover the cost of programs such as ski, basketball, soccer, and swim programs, the fees will go directly into the revolving fund and can be expended for the same purposes.

Article 18 will allow the Recreation Committee to expend money from the Blackwater Park Fund to work toward completing the park building.

Article 19 asks to allow the Selectmen to expend money from the Cileyville-Bog Bridge fund for repairs to the covered bridge. This fund was established by a committee which was created to raise money to preserve the bridge. As the committee is no longer active, the Selectmen would like to be-

come "agents to expend" so that the funds will be available for additional repairs.

In 2012, the Department of Transportation found the stone supports to be deficient and ordered the Town to close the bridge to pedestrian traffic. The Town repaired the stone supports with money from the highway budget.

Article 20 is on the warrant for several reasons. Some residents who have thought about installing wind or solar energy systems have said they wouldn't follow through if the installation would be taxed. Others have already installed their systems and have asked about tax exemptions.

The Andover Energy Group, a local non-governmental committee, has recommended that Andover provide a renewable energy tax exemption to encourage and enable more people to install renewable energy systems. It is one small step that we can take locally to help promote alternative (non-fossil fuel) energy use in our state.

The New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning has provided sample wording for the warrant article pursuant to RSA 72: 61-72. You will notice that the article calls for exempting the total assessed cost of the installation only, and that it does not reduce the property assessment for tax purposes. By implementing it as a tax neutral policy, homeowners do not have a disincentive of higher property taxes for installing a renewable energy system, and since there is no net reduction in municipal tax revenues, other taxpayers in a municipality are not affected. Eighty-five New Hampshire cities and towns have already adopted RSA 72: 61-72.

This article is for solar and wind energy installations only.

Article 21 is on the warrant because the Town has not adjusted the values for the Elderly Tax Exemption since 2006. To be eligible, a senior's assets cannot exceed \$75,000 (excluding the home in which they reside). Assets include, but are not limited to, all other real estate

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