

Budget Committee to Recommend 2.6% Rise in School Budget

Public hearing for Town budget on February 3

Ed Hiller, Budget Committee

The Budget Committee has made significant changes in its procedures for receiving budget data and background information from the School District and the Town. Dates have been established for each financial center to forward written documentation of their budget requests to the Budget Committee. These dates are set one week or more in advance of the meeting with the Budget Committee to discuss those requests. The purpose is to allow time for the Budget Committee members to review the materials and prepare for meaningful discussions at the meeting.

A second change in the Budget Committee procedure has been to schedule more time to review and discuss the Town budget. As the Town grows, the various departments have also grown, each with increasing functions. To allow time for detailed consideration of the budgeting needs for all of the Town departments, additional meetings are scheduled.

The result of these two procedural changes is to extend the overall time period for arriving at recommended budgets. It is not practical to start the process earlier in the fall, since necessary data for the year are far from complete. The result is to delay the final budgets into February.

There has been overwhelming agreement that these new procedures are successful. The Budget Committee members are now prepared in advance for consideration of issues and concerns at meetings with the departments. The departmental representatives are also better prepared for meaningful discussions. And additional meetings with Town departments provide more time to understand and deal with the issues.

The Budget Committee schedule for the 2016 budgets resulted in the Fire Department budgets being finalized in November. The School budget was finalized on January 6. The Town budget will not be finalized until Wednesday, February 10.

The recommended School budget for fiscal year 2016-17 is summarized here. The recommended budget for the Town will be reported in the next issue of the *Beacon*.

Andover School Budget

The Budget Committee recommends a total budget for the Andover School District for the coming fiscal year 2016-17 of \$4,900,864, up \$126,399 (2.6%) over the current year's

budget. This includes an operating budget of \$4,862,300, plus warrant articles for an additional \$48,564.

A significant increase in the operating budget is for transportation. The previous fiscal year 2015-16 was the first year of a new five-year bus contract. The transportation appropriation for that year showed an increase over 2014-15 by \$94,523. The proposed appropriation for the coming year 2016-17 shows a further increase by \$64,240.

The Alternative Transportation Study was funded by last year's appropriation of \$10,000 and has the goal of determining the most cost-effective way to provide transportation for our students. This study is now under way, and preliminary results are expected to be available by the time of the School District Meeting.

Another significant increase is for wages and benefits for Special Education staff, up by \$63,838. There is little room for negotiation on Special Education costs, since the programs are driven by procedures and regulations beyond our control.

A new two-year contract has been negotiated with the teachers' union. A warrant article calls for approval of the cost items in this agreement. The teachers agreed to change from an HMO to a "Consumer Driven High Deductible Plan" for health insurance, and the savings there offset almost all the salary increases in the first year of the contract. Therefore, the warrant article approving the teachers' new two-year contract includes an appropriation of only \$3,564 for the first year's costs.

Another warrant article proposes adding \$10,000 to the High School Tuition Expendable Trust Fund, bringing that fund up to \$60,000 plus interest. A third warrant article proposes adding \$25,000 to the Special Education Expendable Trust Fund, bringing that fund up to \$100,000 plus interest. These expenses were matched by similar warrant articles voted in the previous year's budget.

The recommended appropriation for the coming year is up \$126,399 over last year's appropriation. If approved by the School District Meeting, the amount to be raised by taxes would go up by the same amount. The tax rate would go up from last year's rate of \$12.99 by approximately \$0.50 to \$13.49.

Any changes in revenues, including changes in available unexpended surplus (last year's amount was an unprecedented \$459,757) will also have a direct effect on the tax rate and cannot be estimated this early in the fiscal year.

Andover Real Estate Transactions, December 2015 and January 2016

December 1, 2015 through January 15, 2016

On December 11, the White Trust sold 145 Cilleyville Road to Thomas and Wendy Humphrey for \$175,000. David Cleveland of Country Houses Real Estate assisted the seller and the buyer. The 2,991-square foot house has 4 bedrooms and 2 baths and sits on 0.5 acres.

On December 11, the Emeny Trust sold 434 Chase Hill Road to Darrell and MaryAnne Lockwood for \$450,000. Stacey Viandier of Country Houses Real Estate assisted the seller; Joseph Beauchemin of RE/MAX Synergy assisted the buyer. The 3,000-square foot house has 3 bedrooms and 2.5 baths and sits on 17 acres.

On December 15, Leo and Ann Frego sold 303 Tucker Mountain Road to Kimberly Pease for \$129,900. Art Urie of Lake Farm Realty assisted the seller; Deirdre Ryan of BHG Masiello Concord assisted the buyer. The 800-square foot house has 2 bedrooms

and 1 bath and sits on 5.6 acres.

On December 18, Nancy Fox and Judith Lauren sold 413 Bay Road to Kenneth and Jacqueline Hurley for \$155,000. Robert Swisher of BHG Masiello Tilton assisted the seller; Rachel Dethomas of Country Houses Real Estate assisted the buyer. The 1,698-square foot house has 3 bedrooms and 1.5 baths and sits on 9 acres.

On December 31, Dalbello Sports LLC sold 519 Main Street to Claremont Properties LLC for \$425,000. The commercial building sits on 3.94 acres.

Andover Inventory

There are currently 16 residential properties on the market, plus 4 residential properties under contract for sale.

There are currently 7 land parcels on the market, and no parcels under contract for sale.

There is currently one commercial property on the market, and none under contract for sale.

Data from NNEREN.com/sold-properties and MerrimackCountyDeedsNH.com for 12/1/2015 through 1/15/2016

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keeper. Shelley brings a wealth of experience and a passion for non-profits to the team, and with help from Pam Cooper, our volunteer accountant, she's quickly starting to make a difference.

One Position Left to Fill

That leaves the Publisher/Editor position to be filled before I can retire. It's a part-time job (about half-time) with flexibility in terms of which hours you work, the ability to work from home, etc. The full job description is at AndoverBeacon.com/Pub-Ed.

For the right person, this is a very fulfilling job. It offers a chance to work with many people in the community on projects – the *Beacon*, the Town Report, etc. – that are very important to the community.

The job requires someone who is:

- comfortable working with people from different backgrounds, with

different agendas and different levels of expertise

- comfortable with computers and technology being at the center of each project
- willing to embrace the process, procedures, and deadlines that allow our team to produce an extraordinary volume of high-quality work for an organization of our size

If you think that being our new Publisher/Editor might be a good fit, please contact me right away at Charlie@AndoverBeacon.com. We'd love to find an Andover resident for this position, but if no one comes forward, then we'll pretty quickly have to broaden our search.

For me, working at the *Beacon* has been a life-changing experience, full of exciting challenges, personal growth, and deep satisfaction. If you'd like to see whether it could be the same for you, let's talk!

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