



## **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING May 21, 2018**

The Annual Town Meeting was held on Monday, May 21, 2018, in the Richard H. Smith Town Hall Auditorium. Members of the Region #4 administration, Region #4 and Deep River Elementary School Boards of Education, Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen, the Registrars of Voters and over 100 residents attended. First Selectman Angus L. McDonald, Jr. called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. A motion to appoint Angus McDonald as moderator of the meeting was made by Duane Gates. The motion was seconded by William Burdick and was approved unanimously.

The moderator appointed Town Clerk Amy Winchell as clerk of the meeting, who then read the call. A motion to accept the call of the meeting as read was made by William Burdick with second by Lori Guerette. Motion was approved unanimously.

A motion to approve Item #1 was made by William Burdick and seconded by Lori Guerette.

### **1) Town Budget for the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 in the amount of \$16,993,355.**

DISCUSSION: Board of Finance Chair, George Eckenroth, gave an overview of the budget, pointing out certain areas of interest. 70% of the total budget goes to the schools and the remaining 30% must maintain town operating expenses. While the total school budget decreased by \$80,000, the 20 year old roof on the elementary school needs to be completely replaced. The roof has an anticipated cost of approximately \$200,000, to be financed.

Other budget drivers include employee costs. Union negotiations will determine how much of health insurance costs will be offset by employee contributions. Employee retirement costs were also factored into the budget. The Town will continue to match by one half any State contributions to tax rebates for the elderly.

The Fire Department will get additional funding for supplemental insurance in case of injury to firefighters which causes them to miss work. The Town will also increase funding to the incentive (pension) program for volunteer firefighters. The Town continues to explore possibilities for a new firehouse and improving the current facility. Joe Courtney will help the Town apply for a grant which could cover the cost of a new firetruck which is approximately \$600,000 - \$650,000.

The Transfer Station costs go up as State costs increase. There is much misuse of our Transfer Station by non-residents and businesses which is costly to the Town. The Board of Finance decided against hiring additional personnel to monitor dumping of bulky waste and to purchase a gate instead.

The Highway Department was kept very busy cleaning up after multiple snowstorms with extensive tree damage. The budget line for this was reduced last year and the fund was depleted this year, causing us to turn to the General Fund to cover costs. This budget will replace two very old Town trucks which cost \$147,000 just to maintain last year. The average cost per year to maintain Town roads is \$348,414 which was offset by half from State grants.

There is also an increase for the Property Revaluation required every five years. Town revenues include property taxes, various revenues from Town offices and State aid. State aid has been reduced and there is much uncertainty that aid promised will be delivered. This budget does not depend on uncertain State funding but we are not meeting the State standard in our surplus fund. The Board of Finance believes a 0.5 mill increase will cover the Town's needs but will not build our surplus fund which allows some fiscal uncertainty for Deep River.

Lisa Bibbiani suggested the budget amount was too low and does not deliver the increases promised last year. She asked if the Town would be asking taxpayers for supplemental taxes as was a possibility last year. Angus replied that last year's budget was not sustainable because of many years of putting off needed expenses. The Board of Finance believes this budget will cover expenses and to over-tax in order to build the surplus fund puts an unnecessary burden on the taxpayers.

Richard Nagot asked about our 5-year Capital Improvement plan which schedules purchase of trucks and other larger expenses. This year we need 2 Town trucks and a firetruck but are just getting the Town trucks in hopes the firetruck will be covered by a grant. Variation from the 5-year plan was caused for many years by increases in the education budget. Jim Budney questioned the high cost allowed for the two Town trucks and had suggestions for less expensive purchases. Jan Kollmer suggested that eliminating any addition to the surplus fund would eliminate the need for any mill rate increase. Angus reminded her that the surplus level for the 2016-2017 year was inadequate to run the town and did not allow for any emergencies. Denis Recchia asked why our resident State Trooper salary line was the highest of area towns and did we have any say in who was assigned to our Town? Angus replied that we have some say but do not make the decision of who is assigned. He added that that salary line included more than just Dawn Taylor's salary and that she has reached the top of her salary level so will not increase. He also asked how much the illegal dumping costs the Town and if the cost of the gate at the Transfer Station would be worth the savings. It is unknown how much illegal dumping costs the Town. Sally Carlson Crowell asked if the entire roof at the elementary school needed to be replaced. It does and the job will go out to bid.

There being no further discussion, a vote by paper ballot was administered by Registrars of Voters Dale Winchell and Elizabeth Lori Gregan and deputy Kathryne Wright. **The results were 79- YES votes to 25- NO votes. Item #1 was approved.**

A motion to approve Item #2 was made by William Burdick and seconded by Lori Guerette.

- 2) **To authorize the Tax Collector to collect real estate taxes and personal property taxes in two semi-annual installments, the dates to be July 1, 2018 and January 1, 2019.**

**To authorize the Tax Collector to collect regular motor vehicle taxes in one installment, due and payable on July 1, 2018.**

**To authorize the Tax Collector to collect supplemental motor vehicle taxes in one installment, due and payable on January 1, 2019.**

**Any property tax due the Town of Deep River in an amount that does not exceed one hundred dollars (\$100) shall be due and payable in a single installment on July 1, 2018.**

There being no discussion, **Item #2 was unanimously approved** by voice vote.

A motion to approve Item #3 was made by Carmella Balducci and seconded by Lori Guerette.

- 3) **To authorize the First Selectman on behalf of the Town of Deep River to Quit Claim a certain triangular parcel of land located at River Street to Sally Carlson Crowell that was to have been abandoned and deeded to the adjacent property owner in 1929 but which never transpired. Said property is located between 15 Old River Street and River Street.**

There being no discussion, **Item #3 was unanimously approved** by voice vote.

A motion to adjourn was made by William Burdick, with second by Duane Gates. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

ATTEST: Amy M. Winchell, Town Clerk