

Town Meeting, June 2016 Message from the Select Board

Welcome to the June, 2016 Town Meeting. Here is a summary which should serve as a context for the Warrant articles.

Financial Summary:

In developing the FY 2017 \$80.6 million general fund operating budget for Dartmouth, we continued to maintain a conservative approach to estimating our revenues. Also, at this time, we have not appropriated all available funds as the Commonwealth has not adopted its budget and we are trying to limit spending as we look ahead to FY2018 and thereafter with a projected lower growth rate for revenues. This helps to insure the Town will continue to have a positive Free Cash certification at year-end to address the Town's Capital Project and Capital Equipment needs. This is a key aspect of our fiscal policy and is one of the more critical factors in insuring that the Town maintains its AAA bond rating.

In comparing the FY2017 operating budget with the FY2016 operating budget, there is an increase of \$2,643,400 or 3.4% to our budget. These funds have been allocated through the work of the Select Board and Town Administrator discussed and voted with the Finance Committee and reflects the Town's 2016 priorities.

Our priorities include increasing Dartmouth Schools education funding to reach the School Superintendent and School Committee's request for a \$1,362,761 increase plus provide education funding to 9 % above minimum net school spending. This provides resources focused on maintaining educational programs and ensuring that we are making progress towards the Commonwealth's goals for education. This is the continuation of a trend that was initiated in FY2011. Of particular note for FY2017, the Town's assessment from Greater New Bedford Vocational School increases by \$450,116. The major reason for this increase is an increase in Dartmouth's enrollment of 32 students from 248 students last year. Additionally, we have provided funds so that the Library budget matches the Commonwealth's MARS criteria which will avoid for the necessity of applying for a waiver.

The Public Works Department is consolidating its mechanics as part of the implementation of a central vehicle maintenance program for the Town. This also includes adding one mechanic to handle the additional vehicles to be maintained by the Public Works Department. An Engineering Aide position is being funded as the Engineering staff was not fully funded over the past few years and the demand for the engineering services has increased. Also, one permanent part-time clerical position is being eliminated and a full-time position is replacing it to reflect the greater complexity of the work which is to be performed. Finally, this budget reflects the filling of the Deputy Harbormaster position which, due to the Shellfish duties being included within this position, is partially funded from the Shellfish budget, and the implementation of several stipends for the Environmental Affairs Coordinator and Director of Development. These stipends reflect the additional duties which these individuals have been performing. By utilizing stipends, the Town avoids hiring additional personnel, either on a part-time or full-time basis to perform these duties. This practice also ensures having qualified individual, who are already working full time and flexible and able to serve the public as the need arises. This also reflects a Town practice that is already in place with three other positions.

The Capital Improvements Projects (CIP) Plan includes a number of capital projects. In the Special Town Meeting Warrant, you are requested to provide funds for replacing the windows and siding at the Senior Center and to rehabilitate the Rock O'Dundee culverts. The major project in the Annual Town Meeting is the proposed replacement of the Middle School roof. As proposed, we are hopeful the Massachusetts School Building Authority will fund almost half the \$3.5 million cost of this project. Otherwise, the work will have to be done over multiple years thereby delaying funding for other critical capital projects. Except for the Middle School roof project, the majority of the remaining capital projects/equipment is funded by enterprise type funds as we will do the other General Fund projects in October.

Town Meeting Articles:

- Article 1 provides funds through Community Preservation funds to create a pavilion at Apponagansett Park which will complete a project started last year to make the park more accessible to the handicapped plus provide protection for summer campers there.
- Article 2A provides \$466,000 in Community Preservation funds which is more than the 20% required for the Seaport Council grant of \$1 million. Additionally, the current plan calls for CIP funding in October to meet the current estimated project cost of \$1.7 million for the Dartmouth Maritime Center. All efforts will be made to minimize the current plan costs which were developed by local architect who has developed similar maritime centers in other communities in Massachusetts. The Community Preservation funds will be used toward the cost for the Transient Boating facility. As can be seen in Article 1, the cost is high as these facilities are constructed in an area subject to flooding and must be capable of withstanding such events.
- Article 2B provides authorization to purchase 4 Water Street in order to create the Dartmouth Maritime Center. Funding for this comes from the Commonwealth's Seaport Council grant which had the goals of increasing coastal tourism, economic development, and providing recreational opportunities and public accessibility and providing a direct link from Padanaram Village to the harbor.
- Article 19 transfers Apponagansett Park to the Parks & Recreation Department as an old quirk in Massachusetts laws had it under the jurisdiction Planning Board before the establishment of a Parks & Recreation Department.
- Article 21 authorizes the Select Board to sell the Old Southworth library which should be vacated by the DNRT this year. Prior to any sale, the Select Board will need to attain responses from other Town boards and commissions related to their interest in the property prior to declaring its surplus and selling it. Since the Town may have an interest in the property in the future, the Select Board can include a deed restriction providing the Town with the right of first refusal if there is a subsequent sale plus add a deed restriction governing the preservation of the façade.

- Article 4 in the Special Town Meeting implements three union contracts plus non-union salary increases for FY2016-2018. Based on the settlements with the unions of 2% for FY2016 and 2% for FY2017, Schedule A reflects a 4% increase in most salary accounts over the FY2016 Adopted salary accounts which did not include those increases. For FY2018, the proposed increase is 1.25%.
- Article 7 in the Special Town Meeting creates a Stabilization fund to cover unresolved collective bargaining agreements. This allows us to preserve those funds for future use rather than allowing them to become Free Cash and then trying to secure them in the future.
- In January, MIIA Health Insurance recognized Dartmouth for its work in implementing a wellness program for its employees.
- The April vote on the Police station was disappointing but the Police Chief is working with an Advisory Committee to provide assistance and guidance on returning to the October Town Meeting with a new project proposal combined with a referendum question to be considered at the November election.
- The Parks & Recreation Department is moving into the Allen St. garage facility which will also be a location for housing Waterways and DCTV vehicles and equipment.
- Exterior repairs to Town Hall's east and north facades are near completion and included the installation of new windows.
- During the past month, we formally adopted a Sister City relationship with Dartmouth Devon and this spurred us to become the first community on the South Coast to be part of the Mayflower 400 program. Hopefully, we can utilize relationships to build on our rich history.