

**2024 Town Vote
Board of Selectmen and
Water and Sewer Commissioners
Majority and Minority Reports**

In preparation for Town Voting Day on March 12th the Board of Selectmen, Water & Sewer Commissioners, and the Warrant Article Petitioner would like to present to you the following information for your consideration before placing your votes on this year's ballot.

The premise of the information given is that each elected official was able to cast their vote in favor or against each warrant article as presented (excluding non-appropriation petition warrant articles in which only the petitioner's views are listed – as per state statute requirements, and Water/Sewer non-bonding articles which are voted on by the Water & Sewer Commissioners as their governing body). Once their votes were cast, they then were allowed to write a brief piece to explain their thoughts on why they chose the position they did.

We thank you for your participation in the democratic process and look forward to seeing you on March 12th!

WARRANT ARTICLE 3 - PENNICHUCK BOOSTER PUMP STATION - \$2,427,500 BOND (Final project cost to the water users offset by \$1,000,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds).

**Board of Commissioners Majority Report – Commissioners Courage, White, and Philbrick
RECOMMEND this article 3/0.**

This is to replace an existing asset that was built in 1987, the current booster pump station has reached the end of its useful life and is a critical asset to the Town of Milford as a backup water supply. In the new contract with Pennichuck, the town chose to build the new booster pump station because the town would be eligible for grants and other funding sources that Pennichuck is not eligible for. It will also give the town greater control of what water quality is coming into the town's distribution system.

WARRANT ARTICLE 4 - TOWN OPERATING BUDGET - \$18,261,680

**Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Labonte, Dargie, Freel, and Finan
RECOMMEND this article.**

The proposed 2024 operating budget of \$18,261,680 is \$795,214 or 4.6% higher than the 2023 operating budget (with contractual commitments), which totaled \$17,466,466.

The 2024 default budget of \$18,002,107 is \$535,641 or 3.1% higher than the 2023 operating budget (with contractual commitments), which totaled \$17,466,466.

The proposed 2024 operating budget of \$18,261,680 is \$259,573 higher than the 2024 default budget of \$18,002,107.

The Board of Selectmen prioritized personnel resources this year, for without those resources, the town services expected by citizens could not be met. Similar to last year, hiring and retention was a challenge not only for Milford but for a great number of towns and private businesses alike. The prioritization of personnel resources is reflected in the overall increase in the 2024 budget versus the 2023 budget.

Driving the vast majority of the budget increase are the following items:

- In ensuring that our community remains safe, increased funding would be available for five full-time personnel in the Milford Police Department, which has been understaffed - \$248,100.
- There was an increase in employee benefits costs, such as healthcare and the New Hampshire Retirement System - \$160,665.
- A 4% Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) would be given to Town employees effective 4/1/2024 - \$155,357.
- At a time when our roads seem to deteriorate faster than we can maintain them, the Board is proposing an increase in the Public Works budget for road maintenance, supplies, and materials - \$78,000.
- The town is subject to an increase in hydrant rental costs - \$57,798.
- The Wadleigh Memorial Library is projecting an increase in operating costs - \$34,000.
- Our contract with MACC Base (Milford Area Communications Center), which handles our emergency communications, has contractually increased - \$28,609.
- The cost of voter registrations and elections always increases in a Presidential election year. Such is the case in 2024, where additional elections will need to be held - \$24,510.

The Board also used \$331,515 of the 2023 budget surplus (mostly from unfilled positions) to pay for some one-time 2024 expenses, and to pre-buy gasoline and diesel, all to keep the 2024 budget as lean as possible.

The Board is very mindful of the cost impacts to taxpayers and thanks the Town Administrator and Department Heads for their diligent work in making the necessary adjustments to present to the Board a budget that addresses the needs of the town in this challenging time. As such, the Board of Selectmen feels that this is a responsible budget that will provide the needed services at a reasonable cost in these challenging times.

WARRANT ARTICLE 5 - WASTEWATER DEPARTMENT OPERATING BUDGET - \$2,711,808

**Board of Commissioners Majority Report – Commissioners Courage, White, and Philbrick
RECOMMEND this article 3/0.**

The proposed Sewer Department Operating Budget reflects an increase of 3.11% to the 2023 Operating Budget. The Sewer Department has over 3,000 customers, maintains approximately 40 miles of sewer main, and 1,200 manholes, and oversees 5.5 miles of sewer interceptor between the Wilton town line and the wastewater treatment facility in east Milford.

WARRANT ARTICLE 6 - WATER DEPARTMENT OPERATING BUDGET - \$2,204,593

**Board of Commissioners Majority Report – Commissioners Courage, White, and Philbrick
RECOMMEND this article 3/0.**

The Proposed Water Department Operating Budget reflects an increase of 5.3% to the 2023 Operating Budget. The Water Department oversees the town wells, 64 miles of water pipe, over 3,400 customers, and 514 hydrants.

WARRANT ARTICLE 7 - RECONSTRUCTION OF TOWN ROADS - \$ 300,000

**Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Labonte, Dargie, Freel, and Finan
RECOMMEND this article.**

Over the past year, The Board of Selectman have had many conversations with our Town Administrator, Water and Sewer Commissioners and the DPW Director in regards to the status of our town roads and infrastructure. It is apparent, that in the past, not enough has been done on a yearly basis to keep up with

the deteriorating road conditions throughout the town. We have decided to make Maintenance of the roadways a priority moving forward. Unfortunately, this cannot be accomplished overnight. The current plan is to keep increasing the DPW budget line items that deal with our road surfaces and infrastructures so that in a few years an additional warrant article, such as this one, is not needed.

WARRANT ARTICLE 8 - SOCIAL SERVICES - \$40,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Labonte, Dargie, Freel, and Finan RECOMMEND this article.

Presently these six (6) agencies assist Milford residents. The services offered by these organizations provide an invaluable benefit to Milford residents in need. Not only do these funds go to provide critical assistance to our neighbors in need, but by helping these organizations, we reduce the amount the Town of Milford spends on welfare to qualifying residents.

WARRANT ARTICLE 9 - NON-EMERGENCY COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION BUS SERVICES – \$32,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Labonte, Dargie, Freel, and Finan RECOMMEND this article.

The Board unanimously supports this article. The Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative continues to provide affordable, wheelchair-accessible transportation for non-emergency healthcare appointments and other activities such as shopping. Since its founding in 2008, they have provided more than 45,000 rides of which 62% have been for Milford residents. This “Blue-Bus” service for the Town of Milford and surrounding communities mainly benefits the elderly and disabled population helping them be independent.

WARRANT ARTICLE 10 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE CAPITAL RESERVE - \$ 20,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Labonte, Dargie, Freel, and Finan RECOMMEND this article.

This Capital Reserve Fund is to be utilized for high-cost, one-time, or occasional infrastructure items needed for the Town's software, network, and data needs. This fund intends to smooth out the IT budget line from extreme ups and downs by keeping these high-cost, one-time, or occasional infrastructure items out of the budget and using the capital reserve instead. The current balance in this fund is approx. \$41,000

Possible upcoming projects that could take advantage of this fund include Installing fiber from Town Hall to the DPW building on South St, making the portable generator at Town Hall a permanent fixture, and IT infrastructure improvements at the Police Station.

WARRANT ARTICLE 11 - MEMORIAL, VETERANS & LABOR DAY PARADES AND RECOGNITION SUPPORT - \$11,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Labonte, Dargie, Freel, and Finan RECOMMEND this article.

These funds cover the cost of town department expenses needed to properly support the Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Veterans Day parades that are held each year. These funds also cover the cost of flags for veterans in our cemeteries on Memorial Day. The three parades allow us to honor those who have served and/or made sacrifices to make our country better. They promote community involvement and allow our current groups and organizations to be recognized.

WARRANT ARTICLE 12 - SUMMER BAND CONCERTS SUPPORT - \$9,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Labonte, Dargie, Freel, and Finan RECOMMEND this article.

Milford's summer band concerts are an example of why Milford is such a great place to live. The concerts are held at Emerson Park next to the post office, The Stage at Keyes Memorial Park or Town Hall when there is bad weather. Listening to the various types of music on the banks of the Souhegan River is a wonderful experience that is suitable for people of all ages, including the many seniors who live nearby.

WARRANT ARTICLE 13 - ANNUAL LABOR DAY PARADE - \$6,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Labonte, Dargie, Freel, and Finan RECOMMEND this article.

Milford's annual Labor Day Parade is one of the largest and most well-known in the state. It gives Milford the opportunity show off its community pride, honor its working-class roots, and maybe even meet the occasional politician or two. This warrant article will pay for marching bands, musicians and other expenses directly tied to the parade. The current Labor Day Parade account contains \$9,550.

WARRANT ARTICLE 14 - DISCONTINUE OSGOOD POND CAPITAL RESERVE TRUST FUND - \$0

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Labonte, Dargie, Freel, and Finan RECOMMEND this article.

The purpose of this trust fund was for the dredging of Osgood Pond. All work has been completed and the fund is no longer needed. This is a housekeeping exercise.

WARRANT ARTICLE 15 - CONSERVATION LAND FUND - \$30,000 By Petition

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Labonte, and Freel DO NOT RECOMMEND this article.

A majority of the Board does not recommend this warrant article because of this year's total budget increase. We realize that it is good to keep funds available to purchase parcels of land that the town and its committees are interested in keeping undeveloped. However, the Conservation land fund already has a small surplus of funds available. Because of that and an increased operating budget for 2024 we do not support adding to the fund this year.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report – Selectmen Dargie and Finan RECOMMEND this article.

This article will increase the funds in the Conservation Land Fund. These funds enable the Conservation Commission to be able to react quickly to opportunistic situations such as desirable land purchases or easement funding that become available but can't wait to be approved at the annual March vote. By voting to support this article, you are helping to protect the town's natural resources. The Conservation Land Fund currently contains \$83,026, however, \$15,000 of that total has already been earmarked for current and future projects.

WARRANT ARTICLE 16 – WALKABLE MILFORD - \$0 By Petition

After much discussion, the Board of Selectmen chose to not take a position on this warrant article. While the board generally supports the spirit of the article, we felt that the way it is written implies that the town does not prioritize such things, and the wording also ignores the many existing efforts to improve the

infrastructure of our community. The improvement of town infrastructure, which includes roads, sidewalks, drainage, etc. has been a high priority of the board, and will continue to be so.

The board recently allocated \$100,000 of the Town's America Rescue Plan funds to update the town's Master Plan, of which a significant portion is dedicated to roads, pedestrian access, trails, walkability, etc. A steering committee has already been formed to drive this effort and significant community outreach has begun (and will continue). The goal of the Master Plan is to set the very priorities that this warrant article discusses, and the board believes that we should respect not only the process, but also this dedicated group of residents as they move forward.

We are also nearing the final design phase of a nearly \$2.5 million project (Town's financial match previously approved) to improve roadways, sidewalks, parking and general safety in the Oval area. These efforts all reinforce the board's commitment to infrastructure improvements.

This warrant article contains no specific call to action and may in fact subtly imply that such priorities do not already exist. We respect the dedicated citizens working on our Master Plan and do not want to disrepute their work by endorsing a seemingly parallel message implied by this warrant article.