

A Letter to the Residents and Tax Payers of Milton

In 2014 the Town of Milton Department Heads put forth an effort to establish a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the town. Residents supported that effort at the March 2015 town meeting. At the same time we began working together to prioritize our capital needs in a team effort to move the town in a positive direction. Residents approved the lease to purchase several new pieces of highway equipment, an amazing new playground for our Milton families, needed repairs to the Milton Free Public Library and to finalize the design of the proposed fire station. In the summer of 2015 residents came together in a show of the largest community support we have seen in years to construct the new playground at the town beach. The Fire Department spent countless hours working with the engineers and architects to complete the design of the fire station. Public works took delivery of three new dump trucks and a new grader that immediately went to work improving town roads, all while the library was under construction for most of the summer.

In addition to our normal duties, we continued meeting to discuss the CIP. As time went on more questions arose and clear answers were not available. As Department Heads, we wanted to ensure the errors of the 2004 CIP were not repeated. We felt it most appropriate not to rush the plan through in preparation for the 2016 town meeting. Knowing the plan would need more time we once again reviewed our immediate needs and aligned them in an effort to afford a minimal tax impact. When we began meeting in 2014, it was determined that the number one priority for the Town of Milton was the construction of a new fire station. Department Heads agreed that a two year approach would be the best option (with 2016 being the year to seek approval for a bond to construct the building). The fire station has been put out to bid. The cost will only rise from here on. Now is the time to finalize this long overdue project. In addition to the construction of a new fire station, other priorities include the adoption of a Highway Department pay scale. This request, much like the Police Department's pay scale from a few years ago, is intended to bring public works wages in line with area municipalities. This is in effort to retain qualified employees. Additionally, funding is being requested to finalize the Milton Free Public Library's revitalization.

At first glance, you may ask how we can possibly afford this with our current tax rate. When we began looking at possible warrant articles to be proposed in 2016, our goal was to level fund the requests from 2015. With the priority projects identified, we looked at the impact they would have on the tax rate. With several of last year's warrant articles being one time expenditures; it was easily determined the projects could be implemented with little tax impact. The total requested funding for warrant articles in 2016 is \$30,919 more than 2015. The budget has increased by \$258,295.54, mainly due to the addition of the Public Works equipment payment approved in 2015; and the rising costs of town insurance and employee benefits. With that being said, the total increase if all warrant articles pass including the fire station and the budget would be \$289,215.44 or 79 cents per \$1,000 of your homes valuation. This increase could be easily offset by the Board of Selectmen applying funds from the unreserved fund balance. In 2015 the Board applied \$499,075 from the unreserved fund balance to the tax rate effectively reducing the town's portion by 9 cents. There is no reason to believe this historical practice won't happen again in 2016. If the Board applies the increase of \$289,215 from the unreserved fund balance to the 2016 tax, the town's portion of the tax rate will remain the same, while the much needed projects will be completed paving the way for a successful implementation of the CIP next year.

In 2015 we saw the largest turn out ever for a town election. As Department Heads, we ask for your support again to bring Milton to where it deserves to be. If there are any questions or concerns please reach out to any Town of Milton Department Head or a member of the Board of Selectmen. Please vote on Tuesday, March 8th 2016.

Respectfully,

Betsy Baker, Public Library Director
Brian Boyers, Code Enforcement Officer
Karen Brown, Parks & Recreation Director
Kathy Wallingford, Assessing Director
Nick Marique, Fire Chief

Michelle Beauchamp, Town Clerk/Tax Collector
Pat Smith, Public Works Director
Rachael Cote, Welfare Director
Richard Krauss, Police Chief