

To Citizens of Bowdoinham:

First, I would like to thank everyone for their support in my first year as your Town Manager, I appreciate all the kind words I've received from the community, thank you! I have enjoyed my new role and I am looking forward to all the important work still to come. As always, I look forward to hearing from the community about your priorities, questions, and hopes for Bowdoinham, please don't hesitate to contact me.

This past year, with the \$900,000 bond that was approved at Town Meeting, we paved section 1 of Dingley Road, sections 1 and 2 of Carding Machine Road and the Fire Station Parking lot. This year we are requesting a \$400,000 bond to do work on Fisher Road and continue our road paving projects. This upcoming year we will be completing the Mallon Brook stream crossing on Dingley Road, funding for which will be from a Stream Crossing grant and the \$250,000 bond that was approved last Town Meeting. We will also begin construction on the non-motorize boat launch and infrastructure for the redevelopment of former Public Works property, which is being funded from a Boating Facilities grant, Shore & Harbor Improvement Program grant and the Riverfront/CMP TIF.

### **Budget Highlights**

#### Wages & Benefits

Over the past year, it was difficult to recruit employees, primarily due to our wages not being competitive. This budget reflects wage adjustments in the following areas based on Maine Municipal Association's 2021 Salary Survey for Sagadahoc/Kennebec/Androscoggin/Cumberland counties for similar positions:

- Office Staff – The median rate for deputy clerks/tax collectors and excise tax collectors is \$19.11 and \$19.22 per hour, this budget proposes \$18/hour. The median rate for a general duty secretary is \$19.88/hour, this budget proposes \$18.50/hour.
- Recreation – The median rate for a Recreation Director is \$27.27/hour, this budget proposes \$23/hour and continues with a part-time position.
- Planning & Development – The median rate for a planner is \$72,032/year, this budget proposes \$70,000. The median salary for a Director of Community/Economic Development is \$89,294. The median rate for a Code Enforcement Officer is \$29.06/hour and \$33.52/hour for a Licensed Plumbing Inspector, this budget proposes \$27/hr. The median rate for an Assessor is \$39.42/hour, this budget allows for hiring a consultant one day a week for 48 weeks, unless we can hire an employee at \$35/hour for 16 hours/week.
- Public Works Foreman – The median rate for a highway foreman is \$26.60/hour and \$31.48/hour for a garage foreman/supervisor, this budget proposes \$27/hour. The median for a public works director is \$38.62/hour (\$80,330/year).
- Public Works Staff – Our public works staff perform many roles for the Town, this budget proposes a base rate of \$21/hour. The median rates are: mechanic - \$24.85/hour, heavy equipment operator - \$22.36/hour, truck driver - \$19.79/hour, light equipment

operator - \$20/hour, laborer - \$17.84/hour. Brunswick currently pays \$18.57 to \$23.21 for truck drivers and Topsham's pay scale is \$20.45 to \$24.43. Given the shortage of plow drivers around the state this past winter, we need to ensure we have a budget to attract and retain staff.

For employees not receiving a wage adjustment as stated above, this budget provides a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of 5.9%. The Consumer Price Index for the Northeast Region has now gone up 7.4% over the last 12 months. I have also budgeted a 2.0% allowance for merit wage increases based on performance evaluations for all employees. Additionally, I've reviewed our stipend positions and their hours worked, and am recommending increasing stipends to ensure adequate hourly rates for these positions (recommending \$18/hour). We need to be sure that our employees are making the minimum hourly wage of \$12.75. Health insurance costs increased by 11%. I've budgeted each eligible employee for a minimum of the employee spouse plan, to ensure there are funds budgeted should we have employee changeover.

#### Utilities & Supplies

I've budgeted for an increase in our utilities, especially electricity and heating. We've also seen an increase in the cost of supplies, from office supplies to vehicle parts and gas/diesel.

#### Administration

The Administration budget shows an increase of \$76,044, or 13.6%, which includes:

- funding for wage adjustments for office staff, election workers and stipend employees,
- increase in hours for office staff time, to ensure adequate office coverage,
- contracted assessing services,
- two quarters of property card updates, and
- increases for IT services and Utilities.

#### Debt Services

The Debt Services Budget shows an increase of \$56,873, or 13.2%, as our first payments will be due on our new bonds that were approved last year.

#### Fire & Rescue Department

The Fire and Rescue Department budget shows an overall increase of \$8,603, or 8.1%. This includes an increase for personnel and utilities.

#### Town Facilities & Maintenance

The Town Facilities & Maintenance budget shows an overall increase of \$18,465, or 20.1%. This includes an increase for supplies and utilities and annual maintenance for the Town Landfill.

#### Animal Control Officer and Harbor Master Departments

These department budgets show an overall increase of \$4,276, or 20.1%. This includes an increase for personnel and mileage reimbursement.

### Public Works

The Public Works budget shows an overall increase of \$122,278 or 23%, which includes:

- funding for wage adjustments and health insurance based on the position (not the employee),
- increase in overtime hours,
- funding for crack seal,
- increases for supplies (vehicle parts, gas/diesel) and utilities.

### Solid Waste & Recycling

The Solid Waste & Recycling budget shows a proposed increase of \$18,160 or 9.6%. This includes an increase for supplies, safety & personal protection equipment, our single stream contract, and a wage adjustment, including some additional hours. The net cost of the department to taxpayers would be \$98,872.

### Recreation

The Recreation budget shows a proposed increase of \$15,729 or 26.2%. Much of this increase is funding for facility maintenance, utilities and a wage adjustment, including some additional hours. The net cost of the department to taxpayers would be \$47,787.

### Planning & Development

The Planning & Development budget shows a proposed increase of \$42,564 or 44.6%, mostly due to making the Code Enforcement Officer position full-time. With new staff we need to restore our training, miscellaneous (supplies) and mileage budget items.

### Non-Municipal Organization Requests

We received four municipal budget requests, the two that provided additional information have been included in the budget. The Finance Committee is recommending funding for Spectrum Generations (\$1,500) and The Life Flight Foundation (\$723). This is an increase of \$723 or 48.2%.

### Capital Reserves

The Capital Reserves budget shows a proposed decrease of \$16,500 or -11.1% and is based on the Capital Improvement Plan 23-28. This budget was able to be reduced with the use of ARPA funding.

The following capital expenditures are proposed for FY23:

- Purchase & Installation Server for Town Office \$7,500 (ARPA)
- Purchase & Installation of Remote Meeting Technology \$30,000 (ARPA)  
*Kendall Room and Fire Department Meeting Room*
- Gear Extractor & Dryer \$30,000 (ARPA)
- Fit Test Machine \$15,000 (ARPA)
- Public Works/Recycling Truck with Plow Gear up to \$145,000  
(ARPA & Municipal Lease)
- Deck over Trailer \$15,000 (ARPA)

- Purchase & Installation of Compacting Dumpster \$20,000 (ARPA)
- Leaf Vacuum \$5,000 (ARPA)
- Tractor with Bushhog \$8,000 (ARPA)
- Road Work \$500,000 (ARPA & Bond)
- CEO/Assessor Office Renovation \$20,000  
(Capital Improvement Reserve)
- Recycling Facility Studies up to \$125,200  
(SW/Recycling & Capital Improvement Reserve)

Town Revaluation

I recommend that we fund the revaluation from the undesignated fund balance in FY23. We declared a certified ratio of 91% in May 2021 for FY22, which is why property owners only received \$22,750 of the \$25,000 homestead exemption and the Town only received 91% of the homestead reimbursement. For FY2023 our declared ratio for FY23 will be 87%, making the homestead exemption \$21,750. By moving forward with the revaluation, the Town will be able to declare a certified ratio of 100% for FY24, which will allow property owners to receive their full homestead exemption of \$25,000 and the Town will receive the full reimbursement rate. If we don't move forward with the revaluation, I expect our declared ratio to fall to at least 83% for FY24.

If you have any questions, or ideas that you would like to discuss, please feel free to contact me at the Town Office or by email at [townmanager@bowdoinham.com](mailto:townmanager@bowdoinham.com). In closing, I would like to thank the municipal employees who work very hard to satisfy your need for municipal services. I would also like to thank the Select Board and Finance Advisory Committee for their work on the budget and all our boards and committees for their dedication to make our community a better place.

Respectfully submitted,

*Nicole Briand*

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Town Manager