

**2023 Town Vote
Board of Selectmen and
Water and Sewer Commissioners
Majority and Minority Reports**

In preparation for Town Voting Day on March 14th 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 to be 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 14th!

WARRANT ARTICLE 3 - WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY (WWTF) UPGRADE PROJECT – \$23,953,000 BOND (Loan Forgiveness \$3,592,950) (Wilton NH Portion \$3,031,611.45) Remaining amount \$17,328,438.55.

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

EPA issued a new permit in November of 2020 to the Town of Milford, and with that permit came more stringent requirements for what the Town of Milford Wastewater Treatment plant can discharge into the Souhegan River. The EPA issued a timeline of when the Town of Milford Wastewater Plant had to become compliant with the new limits that were established in the permit, as of January 2023 the town of Milford is meeting the schedule that was established by the EPA. The facility has been in continuous operation, 24/7, 365 days a year since 1982 with no substantial upgrades since coming online. It is of utmost importance that the town of Milford replaces the aging infrastructure before permit violations start occurring.

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

Milford's Wastewater Treatment Facility has been in operation since 1982, operating non-stop, 24 hours/day, 365 days a year. Critical infrastructure upgrades are now needed, not only to maintain current operations but to meet new, more stringent, requirements for wastewater discharge into the Souhegan River, as required by a new permit issued by the EPA in November of 2020. The project cost of \$23,953,000 will be offset by loan forgiveness and contributions by the Town of Wilton bringing the cost to taxpayers and users to \$17,328,438.55, with the hope of additional grants offsetting the cost further. This cost will be shared between general taxation and wastewater ratepayers with the ratepayers paying 55% and the taxpayers paying 45%.

This facility, while not directly used by all residents, is a necessary component of the Town's infrastructure which allows us to support and attract the critical industrial base that is necessary to lessen the town's reliance on residential taxes, thereby keeping our taxes as low as possible. The Board of Selectmen feels that this is a necessary project and unanimously supports it.

WARRANT ARTICLE 4 - TOWN OPERATING BUDGET - \$ 17,291,068

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

The proposed 2023 operating budget of \$17,291,068 is \$918,708 or 5.6% more than the \$16,372,360 2022 operating budget.

The 2023 default budget of \$17,041,768 is \$669,408 or 4.1% more than the 2022 operating budget of \$16,372,360.

The proposed 2023 operating budget is \$249,300 more than the 2023 default budget which equals an estimated tax impact of \$11.99 on an assessed valuation of \$100,000.

While an increase of 5.6% is higher than anyone wants, it is in line with the 6.1% Northeast Consumer Price Index increase for 2022.

The town has had difficulties relating to our non-competitive salary levels in recent years with the problems coming to a head this past year due to increased wage inflation rates. We have experienced a lot of turnover in positions, and we have had difficulties with hiring people for open positions. We did a comprehensive compensation review during the past year and identified a series of actions that were needed to correct the imbalances. The proposed budget implements the needed changes. Several areas such as the Department of Public Works and the Ambulance Department were provided with larger increases due to particularly large wage gaps, while most employees in town received a salary increase of at least 7%. These salary increases were a large component of the 5.6% overall increase.

The majority of 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 - \$2,677,050

Board of Commissioners Majority Report - Commissioners Courage, White, and Philbrick RECOMMEND this article.

The proposed Sewer Department Operating Budget reflects an increase of 5.0% to the 2022 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 - \$2,083,269

Board of Commissioners Majority Report - Commissioners Courage, White, and Philbrick RECOMMEND this article.

The Proposed Water Department Operating Budget reflects an increase of 22.6% to the 2022 Operating Budget. The Water Department oversees the town wells, 64 miles of water pipe, over 3,400 customers, and 514 hydrants.

WARRANT ARTICLE 7 - FIRE ENGINE REPLACEMENT - 7-YEAR LEASE/PURCHASE - \$755,000 Gross Purchase Price (Annual Lease Payment \$124,665)

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

Approval of this article would allow for a new primary first-line response vehicle and shift 3 other vehicles in the current fleet. Engine 4 would be retired. Engines 2 and 3 are identical in design and year and are currently first-line engines. One would be retired, and the other moved to reserve status. The replacement for Rescue 1, which is a combination Rescue/Pumper will be placed in service before this change and will allow the department to maintain 4 pumps in the fleet while addressing the issue of severely aging apparatus.

Currently, 3 of the 4 engines operated by the Milford Fire Department are not aligned with industry standards promulgated by the National Fire Protection Association. The purchase of this vehicle would bring the department closer to meeting best practices by ensuring that all of the first-line units are less than 15 years in service.

WARRANT ARTICLE 8 - RECONSTRUCTION OF TOWN ROADS - \$ 400,000

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

The roads in town continue to be largely in poor condition because we have underfunded their maintenance for many years. The general town budget has about \$320,000 of road repair funding in it, but this is nowhere near what is needed to keep up with the deterioration that occurs each year on our 92 miles of roads. Very roughly, we need to spend about \$1,000,000 per year to properly maintain our roads. The additional funds in this warrant article will add to the base budget funding to get us to a funding level that is closer to what is needed to not fall further behind in average road conditions. Continuing to defer road maintenance makes the total cost higher over time since it is much more expensive to rebuild a road that has failed than it is to do preventative maintenance regularly. While this is a difficult year, a majority of the Board of Selectmen believes that it is important to fund road maintenance at a higher level than is in the base budget. There is a diagram in the town hall entrance near the Town Clerk's office that shows the roads that are planned for maintenance in the coming years.

WARRANT ARTICLE 9 - ONE REPLACEMENT AMBULANCE (5-YEAR LEASE/PURCHASE) (Annual Payment \$60,820/Total Purchase Price \$409,000)

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

Approval of this article would allow for the replacement of the 2013-A (3A) ambulance as a front-line ambulance. The 3A ambulance currently has 234,929 miles on the odometer with the rebuilt engine having 73,000 miles.

The 3B ambulance would be moved to a backup role in the event one of the two front-line ambulances is out of service,

The department currently operates a fleet of three ambulances with two of the ambulances in front-line service on 10-year cycles followed by 5 years in a backup role as a 'spare' ambulance. Moving to a 5-year ambulance replacement cycle would eliminate purchasing two ambulances at one time.

WARRANT ARTICLE 10 - AFSCME/POLICE CONTRACT - \$175,398

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

The Board of Selectmen is unanimously in support of the work achieved by our negotiating team to develop and negotiate a contract that is fair and agreed to by all parties. This is a three-year agreement covering

the years 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026, from April 1 in the first year to March 31 in the last year. The increase in salaries and benefits are:

2023 \$175,398 (8% wage increase on April 1, 2023)

2024 \$122,354 (4% wage increase on April 1, 2024)

2025 \$104,155 (3% wage increase on April 1, 2025)

2026 \$33,539 (this only covers the first three months of 2026)

WARRANT ARTICLE 11 - BANDSTAND RENOVATION - \$90,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report - Selectmen Dargie, Finan, Dudziak and Freel RECOMMEND this article.

The iconic Pillsbury Bandstand located on the town's common "The Oval" was built in 1896 and has had occasional maintenance since then. It has been a long while since it was last renovated, and it has fallen into disrepair. In 2021, the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance included it in their annual list of "Seven to Save," which identifies properties of historical significance that need and deserve a proper renovation. A detailed review of the work that is needed to renovate the structure using historically appropriate methods was conducted last summer, and it was estimated that it would cost roughly \$90,000 to do a proper job. A fund-raising effort led by the Heritage Commission was done to partially offset the cost of the renovations. There has been over \$30,000 raised to date which is reflected in the tax impact calculation. A majority of the Board of Selectmen supports this project.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report – Selectman Daniels DOES NOT RECOMMEND this article.

The 62-page report by Ironwood Restoration, LLC, released on August 20, 2022, noted several deficiencies in the Pillsbury Bandstand. The minority supports restoration of the bandstand, but does not recommend appropriating the \$90,000 estimated cost in one lump sum, supporting instead an alternate proposal that would continue fundraising until the funds are needed for the restoration project. Restoration discussions have revealed that \$42,000 has already been raised through fundraising, but because of the specialized skills needed, restoration was unlikely to be done in 2023. Therefore, the minority supports continued fundraising until the funds are raised. If the projected \$90,000 has not been raised and the shortage of funds are needed, the minority recommends taking the remainder of the needed funds from the Town Facilities Renovation and Major Repair Replacement Capital Reserve, which currently has a balance of over \$100,000. In this way, we can accomplish our goal of restoring the bandstand, while avoiding further impact to tax payers (taxing them again instead of using the capital reserve funds which have already been appropriated through taxation).

WARRANT ARTICLE 12 - SOCIAL SERVICES - \$40,000

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

Presently nine (9) agencies provide assistance to Milford residents. The services offered by these organizations provide an invaluable benefit to Milford residents in need, thus reducing the amount the Town of Milford spends on welfare to qualifying residents.

WARRANT ARTICLE 13 - TRANSFER STATION RECYCLING CENTER / REVOLVING FUND - \$40,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report - Selectmen Finan, Daniels, Dudziak, and Freel RECOMMEND this article.

The Transfer Station is a critical facility in our community, and yet historically, has not been treated as such. Currently, funds generated from recycling are put into the general fund and used for other projects, rather

than being used for the upkeep of the Transfer Station. We can continue solid waste and recycling operations at its current North River Road location because the operation is well run, and we have adhered to the strict requirements imposed by the state. If, however, we are not prepared for emergencies (critical equipment breaking, etc.), we do not have the resources to address emergencies that potentially could result in the state requiring that the Transfer Station be closed and moved to a different location. The Revolving Fund being proposed is meant to be proactive in the case of emergencies and other repairs that are time-sensitive to ensure that the Transfer Station can continue to successfully operate while addressing any emergency. The Revolving Fund would be funded through income generated from recycling (approximately \$40,000 in 2022). While some may lament that recycling income would not go to the general fund, the majority views this action as appropriate and imperative to the health and well-being of the facility and further anticipates that some maintenance covered by the Revolving Fund may offset expenses that enable the Operating Budget to be reduced.

Board of Selectmen’s Minority Report – Selectman Dargie DOES NOT RECOMMEND this article.

The minority of the Board of Selectmen does not object to setting aside money for funding capital expenses at the transfer station, but they do object to the method for accomplishing this that was chosen by proponents of this warrant article. The proposal is to set up a revolving fund that is funded by the revenue from the sale of recycled materials as a funding source. This is not a good idea since it ties the hands of future boards with regard to setting priorities. The money will go into the fund each year and can only be used for specified purposes. There is no mechanism to stop funding the fund even if it has a large balance – it will continue to grow unless there is a future warrant article to modify it in some way. A revolving fund is appropriate and best used for situations such as the Recreation revolving fund where the recreation committee can add and delete programs at will during the year as long as they are self-funding. It gives them a lot of flexibility to manage their offerings. There is no need for this type of capability with transfer station capital expenditures.

A better method for funding capital expenditures at the transfer station would be to set up a capital reserve fund that is funded by a warrant article each year, as we do for several other areas such as bridges and buildings. The amount to go into the fund would be decided each year considering the amount currently in the fund along with other considerations. This has a lot of flexibility and does not tie the hands of the Selectmen when making priority decisions.

WARRANT ARTICLE 14 - NON-EMERGENCY COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION BUS SERVICES – \$32,000

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report - Selectmen Dargie, Finan, Daniels, Dudziak, and Freel RECOMMEND this article.

Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative continues to provide affordable, wheelchair-accessible transportation for non-emergency healthcare appointments and other essential activities. This is an invaluable service to the Town of Milford as well as surrounding communities which greatly benefits the town’s elderly and disabled population giving them a sense of independence.

WARRANT ARTICLE 15 - MODIFICATION OF EXISTING ELDERLY EXEMPTION CRITERIA - \$30,000

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report - Selectmen Dargie, Finan, Daniels, Dudziak, and Freel RECOMMEND this article.

These exemptions provide relief to our elderly population who meet certain criteria, by providing specific exemptions from their property taxes. This article seeks to increase the exemption for those over 80 years old from the current exemption of \$165,000 to \$200,500, to increase the single income limit from 38,600 to

\$40,500, and to also increase the maximum asset limit for all age groups from \$100,000 to \$125,000 (excluding their primary residence)

The existing exemptions for other age groups remain unchanged and are as follows: age 65-74, \$83,000, and age 75-79, \$124,000. The income limit for dual-income households also remains unchanged at \$46,000.

WARRANT ARTICLE 16 - WADLEIGH LIBRARY MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP CAPITAL RESERVE - \$25,000.

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

The Wadleigh Library is an aging facility with many ongoing maintenance issues and improvements that are needed to keep the Library a safe and reliable structure for its Contents, workers, and town residents. Earlier in the year The Board decided to apply ARPA funds of over \$280,000 to help with its planned HVAC and Electrical upgrades, only to hear shortly after about leaks in its roofing system. We believe the Capital reserve should be funded this year to begin saving for obvious repairs that will be needed.

WARRANT ARTICLE 17 - INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION FIREWORKS - \$0

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

This has been a difficult year with large increases in spending in various areas. Due to this, the voters at the Deliberative Session felt that fireworks were a lower priority than other spending needs and they changed the funding for this article from the \$14,000 that is needed for a decent fireworks display to \$0. This means that the fireworks will need to be privately funded in some way if they are going to occur at all this year. Please vote yes on this article since if this article fails, no fireworks can be paid for by the town even if they are privately funded. Voting yes has no tax impact so there is no downside to a yes vote.

WARRANT ARTICLE 18 - SUMMER BAND CONCERTS SUPPORT - \$9,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report - Selectmen Dargie, Finan, and Dudziak RECOMMEND this article.

Milford's summer band concerts are an example of what makes Milford a great community. The concerts are held in Emerson Park next to the post office 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 that live nearby.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report – Selectman Daniels and Freel DO NOT RECOMMEND this article.

The minority believes that these events should be more appropriately funded through the Recreation Revolving Fund, as they are not part of the core function of local government.

WARRANT ARTICLE 19 - MEMORIAL, VETERANS & LABOR DAY PARADES AND RECOGNITION SUPPORT - \$8,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report - Selectmen Dargie, Finan, Daniels, Dudziak, and Freel 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 20 - ANNUAL LABOR DAY PARADE SUPPORT - \$3,000

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

Traditionally this article is presented to the Select Board with a request of \$10,000. The cost of the parade roughly runs approximately \$15,000. This year, due to substantial budget increases, the Board was split on the support of this article at \$10,000. It was noted that a Balance of roughly \$12,000 to \$13,000 is currently in the parade account. After discussion, the Board decided to lower this article to \$3,000 which would be enough to cover the parade costs along with its current account balance.

WARRANT ARTICLE 21 - RE-ADOPT THE OPTIONAL VETERAN'S TAX CREDIT WITH EXPANDED ELIGIBILITY - \$2,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report - Selectmen Dargie, Finan, Dudziak, and Freel RECOMMEND this article. Selectman Daniels abstained from voting.

This warrant article recognizes the commitment and contribution of our Veterans and Service Men and Women who have served our country in armed conflict, by re-adopting the existing \$400 Optional Veteran's Tax Credit that is currently in place. By re-adopting this statute (RSA 72:28 II), Milford will now begin to offer this credit to Service Men and Women who have served for four years or more and who continue to serve in the Armed Forces, in addition to those who have already been discharged.

WARRANT ARTICLE 22 - RE-ADOPT ALL VETERAN'S TAX CREDIT WITH EXPANDED ELIGIBILITY - \$2,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report - Selectmen Dargie, Finan, Dudziak, and Freel RECOMMEND this article. Selectman Daniels abstained from voting.

This warrant article recognizes the commitment and contribution of our Veterans and Service Men and Women by re-adopting the existing \$400 All Veteran's Tax Credit that is currently in place. By re-adopting this statute (RSA 72:28b), Milford will now begin to offer this credit to Service Men and Women who have served for four years or more and who continue to serve in the Armed Forces, in addition to those who have already been discharged.

WARRANT ARTICLE 23 - MILFORD COMMUNITY ELECTRICITY AGGREGATION - \$0

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

New Hampshire recently passed legislation allowing communities to band its residents together in hopes to adopt a plan to help combat ever-increasing costs from local Utility companies. Earlier this year after a lengthy discussion, the Board decided to start this process by forming a Committee with town residents that have a good understanding of the processes needed to move this plan forward. The Committee met with 2 of the top providers in the industry and the end decided to move forward with the current plan from Standard Power. Electricity rates have never been higher. The Board feels this will allow Milford's residents a chance to keep their electrical utilities as low as possible by purchasing electricity as a group with a company that is in business to keep its buys as low as possible for its customers.

WARRANT ARTICLE 24 - HISTORICAL PRESERVATION OF THE TOWN OF MILFORD'S FIRE HORN by Petition

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

The board supports this warrant article 5-0, as it seeks to recognize the historical importance of the Fire Horn in our town's history. This article encourages the board to consider all reasonable options to properly memorialize the horn, while maintaining the proper discretion needed to ensure that our community's many diverse interests continue to be met.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report – Selectman Freel RECOMMENDS this article.

For over a century, Milford's Fire Horn has sounded to alert its townspeople of many different important circumstances. From Emergency Alerts calling in firefighters and notifying us of impending traffic in and out of the town oval to the timely 11:45 (Noontime) blast. A recent discussion came before the Board and we were faced with a tough decision. To weigh the benefits and History of the Milford Fire horn against the safety of an individual. In the end, the Board chose to side with the safety of the individual. This was a tough decision for me, as well as the other board members. Do we put the needs of one in front of the desires of possibly many? I first took the stance that something this important, this historical, go before the townspeople at Town Vote in March. However, the majority of the Board at that time felt that it was a decision for the current Board to make and not an issue that should be put to a town vote. Well, here we are, presented with a Warrant Article brought to the people by Petition with large support. I support this article for more than one reason. I can understand why people that have called Milford their home for decades would want to preserve the Fire Horn's use. However, we do have an individual and resident of Milford with a serious issue regarding the horn. I believe, with the townspeople's support of this article, a compromise can be reached between the Governing body, Town Officials, and residents affected by its use. One such compromise could be to only have the horn sound at a consistent, scheduled time. Like the noon-time blast, we have all heard for decades. This would give anyone with an issue, a chance to prepare. In the end, I believe the use or non-use of the Milford Fire Horn, be at the discretion of the Milford Residents.

WARRANT ARTICLE 25 – ELECT MEMBERS OF THE MILFORD PLANNING BOARD by Petition

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report - Selectmen Dargie, Finan, Daniels, Dudziak, and Freel DO NOT RECOMMEND this article.

The Planning Board is currently, and has always been, appointed by the Board of Selectmen (as is the case with most town boards and committees). Each member serves a three-year term and must be re-appointed by the selectmen at the end of each term. Members are fully vetted by the Selectmen, the Community Development office, and others. They are accountable not only to the Board of Selectmen but also to the residents of Milford.

Being a volunteer/appointed board, it can be difficult to attract qualified people who are willing to serve and put in the time necessary for this very important land use board. We fear that if members were required to campaign and run for office every 3 years, this would make it even more difficult to attract members. An elected Planning Board might also be susceptible to, and attract candidates who may have a specific agenda to push which would be contrary to the entire purpose and function of the board.

Milford's Planning Board has always been a dedicated, competent, and reliable board that has been a reasonable and consistent advocate for good planning and land use in our community. There is no indication that any change is needed, and we see no need to change something that is not broken.