

Dear Norton Residents:

I am writing to provide you with information about the Fiscal Year 2019 operating budget as recommended by the Town Manager and the Town of Norton Finance Committee after many meetings over the last six months, including a Public Budget Hearing.

As in the past, the budget as proposed for Fiscal Year 2019 relies on projections regarding available revenue. These figures represent the best estimate we can provide based on the most current information available. The State's **Budget Process Timeline** is attached along with the Town's worksheet, **FY19 Estimated Operating Revenues and Expenditures**. The proposed budget is based upon an established ceiling of revenue derived from local property taxes in accordance with Proposition 2½, local receipts and state aid, and the Proposition 2½ Debt Exclusion for Norton High School renovations (**Debt Excluded attached**).

### **FY19 OPERATING BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

The FY19 departmental budget requests for the **General Government** (which includes Norton Public Library) budgets totaled \$12,680,567. I reviewed the requests and made organizational decisions based upon the funds available. One such decision was to *restore* the full-time position in the Selectmen's Office that was reduced to part-time in FY17 and to *restore* a part-time position to the Veteran's Agent department. In addition to these position restorations, additional hours were included for the Part-Time Parks and Recreation Coordinator, a position that was long ago a full time position with departmental staff. These modest restorations were made in concert with **General Government** budget line reductions.

My FY19 **General Government** recommendation totaled \$12,360,040, which amount grows **General Government** budgets by 1.45% over FY18, this percentage includes a 2.5% increase in the Norton Public Library budget. The votes of the Finance Committee were in agreement with my original recommendations except the following increases were recommended (which grows the General Government budgets by 1.7% or \$207,219 over FY18):

\$ 2,000.00	Conservation expense line;
\$18,729.00	Planning Department reorganization (additional part-time position);
\$ 1,300.00	Planning Department expense line; and,
<u>\$ 6,406.00</u>	Animal Control (restored overtime request eliminated by Town Manager).
\$28,435.00	

The FY19 budget request for the Norton Public Schools was in the amount of \$30,181,994 which was a requested increase of \$2,946,383 over the previous year's final appropriated budget (a 10.82% increase over the final FY18 budget of \$27,235,611). This type of increase is not sustainable. Whether we like it or not the voters have indicated that we must work within the constraints of Proposition 2 ½.

With the recommended FY19 budget amount of \$28,000,000, the Norton Public Schools will receive an increase of \$764,389 which grows the budget by 2.8% over the final FY18 budget.

The **School** worksheet illustrates that the budget growth for this department is increasing at an unsustainable rate based on the resources available. With the continued decline in student enrollments both locally and nationally structural changes are being made in public school systems and colleges to account for this decline. With the unpredictability of Special Education enrollments and declining **Enrollment Data** provided by the Massachusetts Department of Education, the structure of the Norton Public Schools may also need to change.

In order to provide a balanced budget as required by law for July 1, 2018, it was necessary to decrease the overtime accounts for public safety departments (i.e. Police, Fire, and Communications) in order to ensure that the Norton Public Schools would be ready for business in September. The hope is that the overtime (\$283,544) for the 24/7/365 Public Safety operations can be restored when the State finalizes its budget process (likely, sometime in July), and the necessary funds can be allocated at the Fall Session of the Annual Town Meeting.

Michael D. Yunits  
Town Manager

**DOCUMENTS**

**FY19 Proposed Budget – Finance Committee Recommendation (\$ and %)**

**Budget Control Worksheets:**

**Budget Proof**

**Budget Subsheets**

**Balance of General Government Accounts**

**Fixed and Shared Expenses**

**Fixed General Government Expenses**

**Miscellaneous Town Officers and Board Expenses**

**Schools (NPS, Southeastern Regional, and Bristol County Agricultural)**

**FY19 Operating Budget Summary (All Operations)**

**Budget Process Timeline**

**Preliminary Municipal Cherry Sheet Estimates**

**FY19 Estimated Operating Revenues and Expenditures**

**FY17 Turnbacks Summary**

**Enrollment Data**

**Debt Budget**

**Debt Excluded**