

For the Week of February 12, 2024

Manager's Message

Aaron Frank, Town Manager

In observance of Presidents Day, the Town Offices and Burnham Memorial Library will be closed on Monday, February 19, 2024.



Town Meeting Day will be here soon! The Annual Town Meeting will be held Monday, March 4, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at the Colchester High School Auditorium. The ballot items, to be voted on by Australian Ballot, can be found at the following link, but will also be presented at the Annual Town Meeting:

<https://colchestervt.gov/344/Ballot-Items>.

Voting by Australian Ballot will take place Tuesday, March 5, 2024 from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Colchester High School, but early/absentee voting is also an option. Visit this link for more information: <https://colchestervt.gov/325/Elections-and-Voter-Information>

Your Town staff wants you to be informed about what you're voting on. Below is information on the **FY 25 Municipal Services Budget ballot item**:

Budget Summary: The proposed FY 25 municipal services budget maintains the current level of Town services and addresses community needs by providing more resources to your public safety departments as well as groups that support the public safety departments. The tax impact of the municipal services budget, along with the previously approved capital items, is a **4.6%** increase to municipal services property taxes. Examples of the impact are noted below:

HOW DOES THIS IMPACT THE MUNICIPAL SERVICES PORTION OF YOUR TAX BILL COMPARED WITH FY24?

<i>Estimated Municipal Services Property Tax Increase (Compared to FY 24)</i>				
Assessed Value	200,000	300,000	400,000	500,000
Annual	\$56	\$84	\$112	\$141
Monthly	\$4.68	\$7.03	\$9.37	\$11.71
Weekly	\$1.08	\$1.62	\$2.16	\$2.70

FY25 Tax Rate: \$0.6381
(per \$100 of assessed value)

4.6% Municipal Services Tax Rate Increase
Compared with FY24

Budget Approach: First, we focus on holding down costs and reducing expenses. Of the twenty-five service areas, the planned expenditures for three have been reduced, one remained the same and four increased by \$5,000 or less. Next, non-tax revenues from fee-based services are maximized. Use of non-tax revenues, such as fees and grants, cover \$4,979,977, or 16%, of the municipal services budget. Then, property taxes are the last dollar in.

Additional Resources in FY25 Municipal Services Budget to Maintain Current Level of Services (+\$681,272):

- Two Police Officers to increase sworn officers in department from 29 to 31 and decrease the number of calls per officer providing more time for proactive community policing
- One Civilian Police Support Services Manager to oversee Records and Public Safety Dispatch, now performed by a Police Lieutenant which takes them away from focusing on policing
- One Information Technology (IT) Manager to address expanding needs in public safety and other Town departments in response to cybersecurity threats, department specific software and network connectivity
- One Human Resources Coordinator to assist with recruiting, onboarding and retention in light of a sustained higher rate of employee turnover due to societal changes
- One Firefighter added in June 2023 that was not budgeted
- One Paramedic (Rescue) which allows Assistant Rescue Chief to provide more day-to-day management since combining the position of Chief for both Fire and Rescue services

Other Significant External Costs Impacting the FY25 Municipal Services Budget:

- Increased costs for Health Insurance: +\$122,817 due to carrier rate increase of 12%
- Increased costs for new VT Childcare Tax: +\$27,681
- Increased costs for Private Sector Services & Utilities: +\$88,382
- Increased costs for Supplies & Parts: +\$50,354
- Increased Fees for Public Transportation Services: +\$21,000

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Comparison – Inner Chittenden County Municipal Services Taxes per Resident

Williston	\$ 714
Colchester (2nd lowest)	\$ 785
Winooski	\$ 935
Burlington	\$ 984
Essex (City)	\$ 997
South Burlington	\$ 1,005
Essex (Town)	\$ 1,042
Average	\$ 923



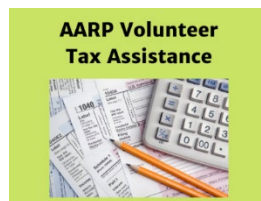
Fiscal Sustainability:

- Secured \$1,970,000 in grants supporting 53% of Town FY 24 capital expenses
- Careful management of the budget in FY 23 allowed revenues to exceed expenses with \$351,000 in fund balance from FY 23 to be used as revenue in FY 25, to offset tax increases
- Renegotiated agreement with Green Mountain Transit, saving \$15,000 (30%) yearly
- Avoided an 18% increase in healthcare costs by aggressively negotiating
- FY 2024 Municipal Services Tax Rate is 6.7% higher than what it was in FY 2015—ten years ago--both in the rate and the amount paid to the town for municipal services taxes. In FY 2024, an owner of a property valued at \$300,000 paid approximately \$116 more in municipal services taxes than they did in FY 2015

You can find more information on the [Budget Document Page](#). If you have any questions, please contact Renae Marshall, Deputy Town Manager at rmarshall@colchestervt.gov or by phone at 802-264- 5509.

Department Updates

Parks & Recreation: The 2024 Summer Brochure is now out! This brochure covers the month of June through August. Register online here: <https://colchestervt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/8678/2024-Summer-Brochure>



Burnham Memorial Library: AARP Tax Aide Service

Tax Season is nearly here! AARP Foundation Tax-Aide provides in-person tax assistance to anyone, free of charge, with a focus on people over 50 with low to moderate income. All volunteers are IRS certified. Contact the library to set up your appointment: 802-264-5660 or burnhamlib@colchestervt.gov.

Upcoming Town Meetings & Agendas

Selectboard Meeting: Tuesday, February 13, 6:30 p.m. at the Colchester Town Offices, 3rd Floor Outer Bay Conference Room, 781 Blakely Road. Alternatively, send a note, up to 1,000 words, to TownManager@colchestervt.gov with "Citizens to be Heard" in the Subject and your name. As with in-person Citizens to be Heard, we ask that you SHARE YOUR ADDRESS. The email will be shared with the entire Selectboard prior to the meeting and included in the information packet at the next meeting.

- Watch the Meeting Online via Live Stream: <http://lcatv.org/live-stream-2>
- Agenda: www.bit.ly/Colchester-SB-Agendas

Recreation Advisory Board: Wednesday, February 14, 7:00 a.m. at the Colchester Town Offices, 3rd floor, Outer Bay Conference Room, 781 Blakely Road. Agenda:

<https://clerkshq.com/Colchester-vt?docId=RecAdv&path=BOARDS%2CRecAdv%2C>

Development Review Board: Wednesday, February 14, 7:00 p.m. at the Colchester Town Offices, 3rd Floor Outer Bay Conference Room, 781 Blakely Road. Residents are welcome to attend the meeting or public comments can be submitted prior to the hearing by email to zmaia@colchestervt.gov or by mail to Town of Colchester, c/o Development Review Board, 781 Blakely Road, Colchester, VT 05446. Agenda: <https://clerkshq.com/Colchester-vt?docId=DRBAgenda>

Library Board of Trustees: Thursday, February 15, 4:00 p.m., in the Burnham Room of the Burnham Memorial Library. Agenda: <https://clerkshq.com/Colchester-vt?docId=LibBoard&path=BOARDS%2CLibBoard%2C>

Colchester Conservation Commission: Monday, February 19, 6:00 p.m., at the Colchester Town Offices, 2nd Floor, Champlain Room, 781 Blakely Road. Agenda: <https://clerkshq.com/Colchester-vt?docId=ConservCommssn&path=BOARDS%2CConservCommssn%2C>

Subscribe to the Town Newsletter: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/jkMAO2v>

For more information or to comment, call 802-264-5509 or email townmanager@colchestervt.gov