

January 29, 2020

Dear Resident and Taxpayer:

Enclosed is information about the Town of Colchester's Annual Town Meeting on Monday, March 2, 2020 and items to be voted on by private (Australian) ballot on Tuesday, March 3, 2020 from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM at Colchester High School. Early voting will be available around February 15 at the Town Clerk's office and by mail: visit <http://www.colchestervt.gov/325/Elections> for information about voter registration and early/absentee voting.

Voting Information

- ⇒ Voting is at the Colchester High School gym at 131 Laker Lane, off Blakely Rd. for *both* **Districts 9-1** and **9-2**.
- ⇒ **District 9-1** is comprised of the area east of I-89, the west side of I-89 north of the Malletts Creek inlet, excluding the south side of Blakely Road.
- ⇒ **District 9-2** is comprised of the area west of I-89 south of the Malletts Creek inlet, including the south side of Blakely Road.

Ballot Items

There are three articles to be voted on by ballot this year: The Town's general operating fund budget; the reauthorization of the Technology Capital Plan; and the reauthorization of the Communications Capital Plan.

FY 2021 General Fund Budget

The proposed FY 2021 budget maintains our current level of service and addresses significant needs in emergency services caused by slow, steady growth over the past decade.

Operating Budget

The Operating Budget is comprised of twenty-five service categories. The expenses of eight of these service categories have been reduced and sixteen have increased. Before factoring in non-tax revenues, the operating budget increase is **0.0%**.

Tax Rate

The Operating Budget and Capital Funding total is \$12,033,452. This is an increase of 2.2% (\$260,428) over FY 2020. With an estimated 1.18% growth in the Grand List, the estimated municipal tax rate for FY 2021 is \$0.5485. The tax rate is projected to increase by \$0.0056 (a little more than one half of one cent) or a 1.02% increase over the prior year.

Long Term Fiscal Constraint

- In June 2019, the Selectboard set the FY 20 Town tax rate of \$0.5429 per hundred dollars of property value. This rate was less than the rate of \$0.5530 set eight years ago for the FY 2013 tax bills.
- Based on 2019-20 taxes, taxes are the third lowest per resident among the seven inner Chittenden county communities.

The Selectboard and staff thank you for the opportunity to serve you. We encourage you to attend Town Meeting on Monday, March 2 and vote on or before Tuesday, March 3, 2020.

Sincerely,

The Colchester Selectboard

Jeffrey D. Bartley, Chair
Jacki Murphy, Clerk
Pamela Loranger

Tom Mulcahy, Vice Chair
Herbert Downing

ARTICLES TO BE VOTED UPON: REAUTHORIZATION OF THE TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS CAPITAL PLANS

ARTICLE 14

"Shall the Town of Colchester reauthorize the Selectboard to maintain a reserve fund accumulating annually in the amount of Thirty Five Thousand Dollars (\$35,000) for a period of five years, for the purpose of financing technology replacements and upgrades?"

ARTICLE 15

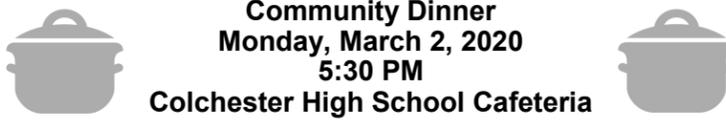
"Shall the Town of Colchester reauthorize the Selectboard to maintain a reserve fund accumulating annually in the amount of Twenty-Five Thousand, Five Hundred Dollars (\$25,500) for a period of five years, for the purpose of financing telephone and radio replacements and upgrades?"

Current Technology Capital Plan

- \$35,000 annually
- 0.0016 of one cent per \$100 of the tax rate
- Authorized first in 1999
- Reauthorized in 2000, 2004, 2010 and 2015
- Planned expenses for FY 2020-25 come to \$309,294
- Supports regular replacement of servers, firewalls, and back-up devices; desk tops, lap tops, and tablets for staff, elected officials, and volunteer boards; public use and special purpose programs; email; mobile terminals for public safety

Current Communications Capital Plan

- Currently authorized at \$25,500 annually
- 0.0012 of one cent per \$100 of the tax rate
- First authorized in 2000 for \$20,000 annually
- Reauthorized in 2005, 2010 and 2015
- In 2015 increased by \$5,500, which was offset by a \$5,500 decrease in the Operating Budget
- Planned expenses for FY 2020-25 come to \$284,000
- Supports phone system, digital phones, radio channels, base stations, vehicular and portable radios for Police, Rescue, Public Works, and Parks



Community Dinner
Monday, March 2, 2020
5:30 PM
Colchester High School Cafeteria

The Selectboard and School Board will be hosting the annual free community dinner before Town Meeting. Come join the Town staff, Selectboard members and your Legislators for dinner, news from Montpelier and a discussion of local issues in an informal setting.

Please bring a potluck dessert to share.

The annual meetings will follow in the high school's Performing Arts Center at 7:00 PM (Sign-in begins at 6:30)

COLCHESTER, VT.
RECEIVED FOR RECORD
January 29 AD. 2020 AT
9 O'Clock 05 Min. A.M
Recorded in Vol. _____ Page _____
of the Land Records.
Attest: Kissy Jenkins
Asst. Town Clerk

**WARNING
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING – 2020
COLCHESTER, VERMONT**

The legal voters of the Town of Colchester, Vermont are notified and warned to meet at the Colchester High School Performing Arts Center, Laker Lane, in said Town on Monday, March 2, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. to act on the following articles not involving voting by Australian ballot (Articles 8-12):

ARTICLE 8

To choose a moderator, if elected moderator is not present.

ARTICLE 9

To act on reports of the Town Officers.

ARTICLE 10

To set compensation, if any, to be paid to the Selectboard.

ARTICLE 11

To transact any other business proper to come before said meeting.

ARTICLE 12

To adjourn said meeting and to reconvene at the Colchester High School, Laker Lane, in said Town on Tuesday, March 3, 2020, for voters in District 9-1 and District 9-2 to vote for Town Officers and to transact any other business involving voting by Australian Ballot with voting to begin at 7:00 AM and to close at 7:00 PM. (Early Voting information below.)

ARTICLE 13

“Shall the voters of the Town of Colchester approve total general fund expenditures of Thirteen Million, One Hundred Thirty-One Thousand, Eighty-Four Dollars (\$13,131,084) of which Ten Million, Nine Hundred Thirty-Eight Thousand, Four Hundred Eighteen Dollars (\$10,938,418) shall be raised by taxes and Two Million, One Hundred Ninety-Two Thousand, Six Hundred Sixty-Six Dollars (\$2,192,666) by non-tax revenues for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021?”

ARTICLE 14

“Shall the Town of Colchester reauthorize the Selectboard to maintain a reserve fund accumulating annually in the amount of Thirty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$35,000) for a period of five years, for the purpose of financing technology replacements and upgrades?”

ARTICLE 15

“Shall the Town of Colchester reauthorize the Selectboard to maintain a reserve fund accumulating annually in the amount of Twenty-Five Thousand, Five Hundred Dollars (\$25,500) for a period of five years, for the purpose of financing telephone and radio replacements and upgrades?”

DATED AT COLCHESTER THIS 28th DAY OF JANUARY, 2020

[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]

[Signature]
[Signature]
Colchester Selectboard

[Signature]
Town Clerk

Early/ Absentee Voting: You may request a ballot be mailed to you through the Vermont’s Voter Registration system at “My Voter Page” at <https://mvp.sec.state.vt.us/> or by phone to the Town Clerk’s Office at (802) 264-5520 (allow time for postal transit).

Early/absentee voting is also available at the Town Clerk’s Office during office hours (7:30 AM to 4:30 PM) until Monday, March 2nd (eve of Election Day). Completed ballots should be mailed using the provided return envelope or taken to the Town Clerk’s Office.

If mailing be sure to allow time for postal transit! Ballots must be received in the Town Clerk’s Office by 4:30 PM on Monday, March 2, 2020 or brought to the polling location at Colchester High School on Election Day, March 3, 2020.

Town Budget Overview
Aaron Frank, Town Manager
FY 21 Proposed Budget

The Operating Budget maintains our current level of service and addresses significant needs in emergency services caused by slow, steady growth over past decades. The Operating Budget is comprised of twenty-five service categories. The expenses of eight of these service categories have been reduced and sixteen have increased. Before factoring in non-tax revenues, the operating budget increase is 0.0%.

Major changes include:

- Fire Services: An increase of \$207,428 to fund four career staff who will provide fire coverage during weekday-daytime when we do not have an adequate number of volunteers to protect life and property.
- Rescue: Creation of a Rescue enterprise fund that moves all expenses and non-tax revenues out of the property tax-based General Fund. It recognizes that Rescue generates 74% of its own revenue and is a significant cost center with a total budget of \$760,645. The fund will allow Rescue to better respond to call demand by staffing up or down according to call volume.
- Public Safety Dispatch: Increases Colchester's contribution to its public safety dispatch service by \$89,064 to maintain staffing following the departure of a contracted community.
- Green Mountain Transit: Transportation for Persons with Disabilities has increased by \$22,821 due to service cost increases as well as an increase in community needs.

Capital Funding

The Tax rate is also impacted by previously authorized voter approved taxes to support capital projects, which are fixed dollar amounts, fixed tax rates, or long-term financing. These total \$1,597,348. The Local Option Tax fund bond/lease purchase payments of \$502,314, leaving \$1,095,034 to be raised from property taxes. Multi-year capital funding allows us to maximize grant revenues and minimize borrowing for planned replacements of vehicles, equipment, and capital repairs to parks, roads and buildings. The property tax funded capital is \$1,095,034 and it increased by \$10,583 or 1% from last year.

Tax Rate

After non-property tax revenues the Operating Budget and Capital Funding total is \$12,033,452. This is an increase of 2.2% (\$260,428) over FY 2020. With an estimated 1.18% growth in the Grand List, the estimated municipal tax rate for FY 2021 is \$0.5485. The tax rate is projected to increase by \$0.0056 (a little more than half of one cent) or a 1.02% increase over the prior year.

Long Term Fiscal Constraint

- In June 2019, the Selectboard set the FY 20 Town tax rate of \$0.5429 per hundred dollars of property value. This rate was less than the rate of \$0.5530 set eight years ago for the FY 2013 tax bills.
- Based on 2019-20 taxes, taxes are the third lowest per resident among the seven inner Chittenden county communities.

Budget and Management Approach

- Minimize expenses
- Focus first on holding down and reducing expenses
- Constant re-evaluation of service delivery
- Operation of departments as businesses through fee-for-service "enterprise funds"
- Increase in non-tax revenues (fees and grants) covers \$2,192,666 (17%) of the general fund budget
- Apply budget savings to future years' financial obligations and reduced taxes. Savings from this approach was \$266,000 in FY18, FY19 & FY20.
- The use of Local Option Tax to fund \$502,314 of voter approved debt previously paid by property taxes.
- Property taxes are "last dollar in"
- Growth and investment in Colchester increased property value by \$237,123,300 (12%) from 2012 to 2021 (estimate).

Revenues

Revenue Type	Proposed FY 21	FY 20	% Change from FY 20	\$ change from FY 20
Property Taxes	\$10,938,418	\$10,689,804	2.3%	\$ 48,614
Other Revenues	\$ 2,192,666	\$ 2,439,615	-10.1%	\$ (246,949)
Total Revenues	\$13,131,084	\$13,129,419	0.0%	\$ 1,665

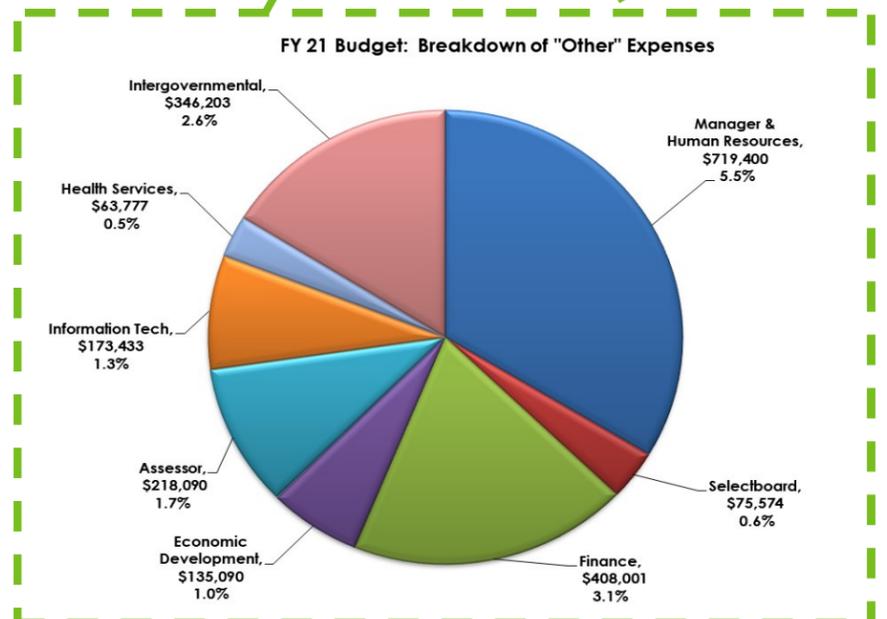
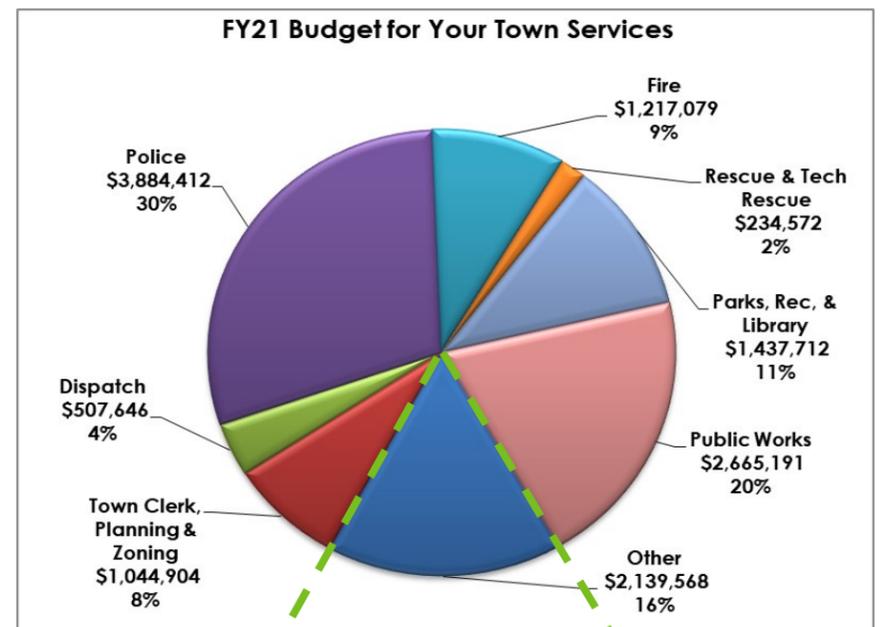
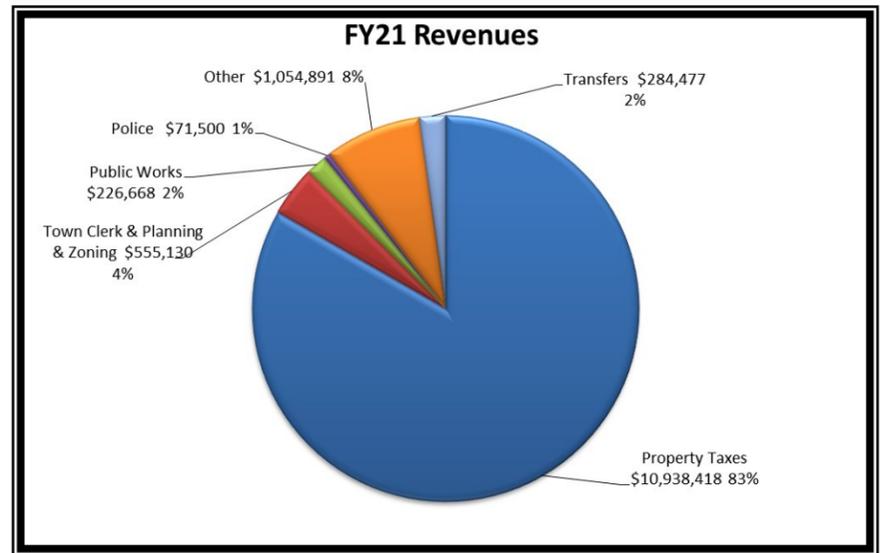
Expenses

Department	Proposed FY 21	FY 20	% Change From FY 20	\$ change from FY 20
Selectboard	\$ 75,574	\$ 75,574	0.0%	\$ -
Transfers	\$ -	\$ 20,000	0.0%	\$ (20,000)
Civil Board	\$ 41,808	\$ 38,640	8.2%	\$ 3,168
Manager	\$ 719,400	\$ 676,228	6.4%	\$ 43,172
Economic Development	\$ 135,090	\$ 134,144	0.7%	\$ 946
Finance	\$ 408,001	\$ 412,395	-1.1%	\$ (4,394)
Assessor	\$ 218,090	\$ 222,502	-2.0%	\$ (4,412)
Town Clerk	\$ 351,995	\$ 352,534	-0.2%	\$ (539)
Planning & Zoning DRB	\$ 651,101	\$ 637,769	2.1%	\$ 13,332
Information Tech	\$ 173,433	\$ 154,604	12.2%	\$ 18,828
Police	\$ 3,884,412	\$ 3,901,349	-0.4%	\$ (16,937)
Dispatch	\$ 507,646	\$ 418,582	21.3%	\$ 89,064
Fire Departments	\$ 1,217,079	\$ 1,009,651	20.5%	\$ 207,428
Rescue	\$ 197,965	\$ 680,281	-70.9%	\$ (482,316)
Tech Rescue	\$ 36,607	\$ 36,945	-0.9%	\$ (338)
Public Works-Administration	\$ 626,355	\$ 598,354	4.7%	\$ 28,001
Highway	\$ 1,377,723	\$ 1,305,893	5.5%	\$ 71,830
Maintenance Facility	\$ 360,260	\$ 349,517	3.1%	\$ 10,743
Stormwater	\$ 133,000	\$ 132,645	0.3%	\$ 355
Buildings	\$ 167,853	\$ 167,614	0.1%	\$ 239
Health Services	\$ 63,777	\$ 61,952	2.9%	\$ 1,825
Parks	\$ 431,806	\$ 433,692	-0.4%	\$ (1,886)
Recreation	\$ 247,973	\$ 238,907	3.8%	\$ 9,066
Library	\$ 757,933	\$ 748,906	1.2%	\$ 9,027
Intergovernmental	\$ 346,203	\$ 320,740	7.9%	\$ 25,463
Total Expenses	\$13,131,084	\$13,129,419	0.0%	\$ 1,665

Town Milestones

FY 2018-19

- **Solar Energy:** Completion of construction of two solar arrays that will save on municipal electrical costs and pay for themselves over the life of the projects: a savings of \$964,000 after all expenses
- **Village Park Trail:** In fall 2018 the Selectboard cut the ribbon for the approximately 1 mile loop for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.
- **West Lakeshore Drive Bike Path:** A major link between Upper Bayside Park and Airport Park, this paved, 8' wide walking / running / biking path is stormwater / eco-friendly.
- **Money Magazine's Top 100 Best Places to Live in America:** Colchester was recognized for a third time (2015, 2017, and 2018) by Money Magazine as one of the most desirable places to live in the United States.
- **Library Meeting House Remodel** Thanks to a generous gift from the estate of Sarah Crocker, the Meeting House basement received a beautiful makeover, with new flooring, paint, kitchen, and furnishings to provide a working space for Library programs for residents of all ages.
- **Pickleball Fundraising** Pickleball is popular in Colchester—so popular that our active and socially-engaged seniors need more courts for play. Pickleball enthusiasts raised over \$29,000 in donations and grants to put toward building four new dedicated pickleball courts at Airport Park. The Selectboard approved a major amendment to the FY20 Capital Budget Plan to supply the rest of the needed funds. The project will also include the repair and repaving of the two tennis / pickleball courts already at Airport Park. The project is estimated to be completed in spring 2020.
- **Stormwater Improvements** Two significant projects: the Shore Acres Drainage project to reduce phosphorus run-off to Malletts Bay and the replacement of a large culvert on Hercules Drive to provide adequate stormwater flow and reduce the risk of future failures.
- **Continued Fiscal Responsibility** As your neighbors and fellow tax payers, the Selectboard is committed to using our resources wisely and ethically. We are proud of our history of clean annual audits and a tax rate that is lower than it was in 2013, despite steady growth of our town and ever-increasing demands for services. Please refer to the budget section of this Colchester Sun insert for details.



Comparison – Inner Chittenden County Town Tax Rates

Williston	.2665
So. Burlington	.5084
Essex Town	.5261
Colchester	.5352
Essex Junction	.8349
Burlington	.8346
Winooski	1.0663
Average	.6531



2018-19 MUNICIPAL TAX RATES -TOWN LISTER/ASSESSOR'S DATA
Colchester is **17% below average** for inner Chittenden County.