

**Town of Washington
Board of Finance
Special Meeting - Presentation of the Budget
April 1, 2024**

Present: Members: Craig Schoon, Matt Cain, Sally Cornell, Ted Bent
Alternates: Phyllis Allen, Patrick Horan
Selectmen: James Britton, Jay Hubelbank, Dean Sarjeant
Guest: Rebecca Rebillard, Andrew Carron, Michelle Gorra, Joan Lodsins, Judy
Gorra, Linda Banks, Ralph Averill, William Fairbairn, Leslie
Anderson
Press: Ann Jamieson

Chairman Craig Schoon called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

Prior to the Power point presentation of the budget, First Selectman, James Brinton spoke of one of the cuts that was made in the budget was the Housing Commission request. Subsequently, the Housing Commission Chair, Judy Gorra wrote a letter to the Board of Selectman in support of their request. The letter was read at the meeting and is attached to the minutes. The Board of Selectmen budget the \$150,000 that is in the budget and \$100,000 of the land transfer sales will give them a total of \$250,000. The selectman is fully committed to the housing Commission needs.

The Board of Assessment Appeals met and have granted close to 21 million in assessment appeal. The assessor is working on getting us the new Grand List.

James Brinton, First Selectman Presented the 2024-2025 Budget with a power point presentation.
(located on Washingtonct.org Board of Finance Section)

Education:

- Budget Contribution is \$11,707,579.51 - 46.32% share
- Decrease in percentage from the FY 2023-2024 by 1.32%
- There is no BOE or Referendum approval yet.

General Budget: Total Proposed Budget \$21,673,978 or 3.50% increase

- Operating Budget \$6,811,078 or 4.06% increase
- Capital Budget \$2,791,250 or 0.68% decrease
- Region #12 Education budget \$11,707,576.51 or 1.49% increase

The Primary Budget Drivers in Capital:

- Fire Department Apparatus cost increase \$575,000
 - We may need to look into how we do business because the cost for apparatus has doubled in the last couple of years.
- Large Truck- replacement of "Lemon" Trucks \$250,000
- Public Works (2) small truck replacement \$175,000
- B & P truck Replacement \$ 72,000
- Pickle Ball Court (to complete 2 court) \$25,000
- Solar Flashing Crosswalk Lights (2 Units) for in town \$40,000

Items requested but removed from budget:

- Emergency Management request of \$55,000
- Washington Fire request for the New Preston shed upgrade of \$50,000
- Police request to have another F/T officer. Of \$82,000
- Emergency Management request of a Mobile Generator of \$135,000
- Economic Development request of F/T – Salary / Benefits of \$41,211
- Emergency Management Message Board - \$20,000

The cola for employees is 3.5% increase. There was select position that received more of an increase to be comparable to other towns – mostly the highway department.

There is concern on the Explore Washington website and its cost. It is in the 2024-2025 budget but the selectmen will be looking into it for the future to lower its cost. The selectmen are very much aware that it helps the business community but thoughts are that maybe the business community can help pay for it. Explore Washington is \$36,000 and the remainder in that line item is the newsletter. Patrick Horan spoke in how the Explore Washington has helped the business community.

William Fairbairn spoke about the Housing Trust and the donation of 30 acres that they will be receiving and that the Housing Commission request would help pay for the processes they need to get it ready to request grant money. He thanked Michelle Gorra in helping them receive a \$960,000 state grant for the repairs at Dodge Farm.

Waiting on the adjusted Grand List. But as it stands now if your revaluation were under 30% higher a new mil rate will create a savings in taxes. The new mil rate will also create a savings in car and personal property tax.

Elections and primaries are going to cost more because of the early voting. It will be 14 days for the presidential election in November.

The public can ask questions at the Town Hearing on May 2nd.

Respectfully Submitted

Linda Kennedy Gomez
Finance Director

To: Board of Selectmen
Jim Brinton
Jay Hubelbank
Dean Sargeant

From: Judie Gorra
Chairperson Housing Commission

Re: Budget Request

Date: April 1, 2024

It was with great disappointment that I found out that the Board of Selectmen had put in the 2024-2025 budget a request for \$150,000 for the Housing Fund instead of the \$250,000 that was spoken about when the budget request was discussed by the Board of Selectmen. When I was present at that meeting it appeared that all three of you understood the need for the request and were in favor of it. It is a big ask especially considering what much smaller amounts have been requested in the past. But Washington has a big job ahead of it, if it intends to meet the goals of the Housing Plan of 2022-2027 which was approved by the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Commission.

To meet the needs of the workforce, young families who may wish to move into our community, and seniors who might want to downsize and stay in Washington, much more reasonably priced homes will need to be available. The Washington Community Housing Trust has worked hard since its inception to bring housing to a diverse set of people. The Housing Commission supports their mission and would like to be able to fund the cost of feasibility studies of land that has been donated to the Trust. It is only when those studies are complete that State and Federal grants can be applied for.

I understand the hard job of the Selectmen and the Finance Board trying to keep taxes at a reasonable level. Surely nobody wants to pay more taxes. It seems that with the influx of high priced homes in recent years that the grand list might have gone up enough eliminating the need to raise the mil rate very much in order to meet all the needs of the Town of Washington, including its housing needs.

I respectfully request the Board of Selectmen or the Board of Finance reconsider the Selectmen's budget request and put in the budget the \$250,000. Let the people decide at the Town Meeting in May. Do we as privileged residents want an economically and age diverse community which supports its workforce, its seniors and young families or do we want our town to be like a gated community? Those of us in favor of affordable housing feel the moral obligation to provide for our volunteers, our workforce, our seniors, and young families. Please reconsider this budget request.