

## Durham Budget under Construction

Two weeks ago, the Board of Selectmen presented a budget to the Board of Finance which is the first step of our budget process. The BOF will review, make changes and present to the public at a public hearing on Monday, April 12 at 8:00pm at CRHS auditorium. There will be ample time to made changes based on input from the hearing after which the budget will then be distributed for approval at the Annual Budget Meeting on Monday, May 10 at 8:00pm, also at the CRHS auditorium. Up until that time, the budget remains “under construction”. In fact, even at the budget meeting, any line item can be eliminated or reduced. This is a very interactive process and I urge everyone to participate.

As reported, the budget in its initial form would result in a .66 mil increase; however it does not represent a .66 mil increase in spending. The breakdown is as follows: General expenses (including contractual agreements, health insurance increase, library, public works, recreation, a new budget for a Durham Activity Center ) - .14 mil; Reserve & Capital (increased over last year because it was largely funded by a reallocation) - .31; Reduction in local and state revenue - .21 mil for a total of .66 mil. Unlike other years, we do not have an increase in the grand list to help offset decreased revenue or increased expenditures.

These numbers will mostly certainly change for a number of reasons. We are still out to bid for several major expenses such as fuel, public works contracted services and equipment. Also, I have asked for voluntary furlough days from union and non-union municipal employees. So far I have received a positive initial response. There is still hope that on-going negotiations with insurance carriers will result in savings.

We are actively working to create efficiencies by creating new partnerships with surrounding towns and through attrition and reorganization. However, savings from these efforts might not be realized in the short term.

I am very proud of our employees and volunteers who have diligently fine-tuned their budgets. This is the second year in a row that 55% of the line items were either reduced or stayed the same. We all pledge to continue to look for savings while this budget is still “under construction”. Attend the budget meetings or watch the minutes which are posted online. Please call me or any member of the Boards of Finance or Selectmen, or send emails to provide input ask questions or seek clarification and always remember, this is your budget, your town.

