

What is a Responsible Budget?

The Board of Finance is almost ready to distribute the FY10-11 budget for your consideration at the Budget Hearing to be held on Monday, April 12 at 8:00pm at CRHS.

Because nothing is final until our vote at the Annual Budget Meeting on May 10th, we continue to sharpen our pencil and review and edit, all in an effort to make sure the budget we present is responsible. How do I define responsible? I believe a municipal budget should reflect the priorities of the town residents, meet our legal obligations as defined in our Town Charter, State Statutes and Federal regulations and consider the state of the economy. Here are a few highlights from the proposed FY 10-11 budget that further these goals.

Our budget includes expenditures to comply with many statutory and regulatory mandates; most of course, are unfunded. I just printed out the report of all CT mandates on municipalities, a report compiled by the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. It took almost a ream of paper, printed on both sides. This budget includes new funding for improvements at our Public Works site on Cream Pot Road as part of our storm water discharge permit requirements. Also, we will fund over the next 5 budgets a road sign replacement program to comply with new retro reflectivity regulations.

Several budgets have been funded, increased or added because we have identified them as local priorities; areas that many residents consider important to quality of life in Durham. These include: increased books and media budget for the library which has seen a significant increase in utilization; continued funding for major road projects to deal with drainage and other issues. Road projects were restored two years ago and have helped entire neighborhoods all over town; a budget for a Durham Activity Center is included. For many years, both our senior citizen and recreation committees have been extremely limited with programming due to lack of space. We now have a rental opportunity that would not require a long-term capital expense. You have communicated with us that more programming is desired even if a user fee was required. Therefore, we have included a budget for the space but will not need to add additional staffing or programming expense. All new programs will be budget neutral; also included is seed money to obtain technical assistance to address the ponding issues at White's Farm, another concern we heard loud and clear.

I can attest that the economy has played a big role in budget preparation for several years now. Not only have many budgets been decreased or remained flat, but many town employees have agreed to voluntary furlough days. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, we may see a small increase in our mil rate this year after being frozen for the past three years.

You have elected the members of the Board of Selectmen to administer town functions and the Board of Finance to adequately manage the financing of those functions; a responsibility we take very seriously. However, you play a major role in helping both boards set direction. Please attend the Budget Hearing and Budget Meeting.