

## SELECT BOARD MEETING

January 30, 2023

Acting Chair Lilia Maselli called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in Room 9 of the Town Hall. Present were Select Board members Kevin A. Caira and Gary B. DePalma.

A motion was made and duly seconded and by the affirmative roll call vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the purchase, exchange, lease or other acquisition of real property at 333 Andover Street in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30A, Section 21(a) 6 as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Town as determined by the Chair with the intention to return to open session.

Acting Chair Gregory B. Bendel reconvened the meeting at 7:07 p.m. in Room 9 of the Town Hall. Present were Select Board Members Kevin A. Caira, Gary B. DePalma and Lilia Maselli. Also present was Town Manager Jeffrey M. Hull.

Acting Chair Bendel provided an explanation why he is chairing the meeting. He advised that Judith O'Connell is mourning the loss of her Dad, Leo O'Connell. The Board extends its deepest condolences to Judy and her family. Acting Chair Bendel stated that Chair O'Connell expresses her sincere appreciation to members of Public Safety for their heroic efforts. Acting Chair Bendel called for a moment of silence.

Chair Bendel asked those present to rise and he led the pledge of allegiance.

### TREASURY WARRANTS

Acting Chair Bendel asked for a motion to accept the Treasury Warrants. A motion was made by Select Board Member DePalma, seconded by Select Board Member Caira and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board accept Treasury Warrants 202328, 202328WIRES, 28A, 202329, 202329WIRES, 29A, 202330, 202330WIRES & 30A.

### MINUTES

A motion was made by Select Board Member Caira, seconded by Select Board Member Maselli and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board table approval of the minutes of their meeting held January 9, 2023 until their meeting of February 13, 2023.

### **JEFFREY M. HULL, TOWN MANAGER, RE: PRESENTATION OF TOWN MANAGER'S FY 2024 BUDGET**

The Select Board and members of the Finance Committee were provided with information regarding the Fiscal Year 2024 budget. Included in the information was the Town Manager's budget summary, Municipal Personnel Book, Motor Vehicle Book and the Capital Improvement Plan.

Department heads were provided with a copy of the Town Manager's budget summary. Town Manager Hull provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining his budget message which, by attachment, is made a part of these minutes.

Town Manager Hull recognized department heads and other employees that worked closely with him in preparing the budget, members of the Select Board, Finance Committee and the School Department.

Acting Chair Bendel thanked the Town Manager for his presentation and asked if there were any questions or comments from the Board. Members of the Board commended the Town Manager for the budget presentation and offered comments regarding different aspects of the proposed budget.

Acting Chair Bendel asked if there were any questions or comments from the audience and there were none.

A motion was made by Select Board Member DePalma, seconded by Select Board Member Maselli and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board take a brief recess.

Acting Chair Bendel reconvened the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

**VALERIE GINGRICH, PLANNING & CONSERVATION DIRECTOR, RE: ACTION PLAN  
MULTI-FAMILY ZONING FOR MBTA COMMUNITIES**

Ms. Gingrich stated that the Action Plan was developed after her previous conversation with the Board in October 2022. She advised that this Action Plan keeps the Town in interim compliance with the requirement for the Town to have a “As of Right, Multi-Family Housing District.” She stated that the plan is general in nature and does not bind the Town to anything. The plan does not require a vote from the Board as she is able to submit on the Town’s behalf.

Ms. Gingrich reviewed the plan that will be submitted. She said that Wilmington is a commuter rail community and, according to Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), has an obligation to create a zoning district that allows for 1,248 units.

Ms. Gingrich stated that her response to the question about non-housing characteristics that are important to the community include incentives for ground floor retail, sewer availability, capacity of existing transportation infrastructure and avoiding Groundwater Protection District areas that limit impervious coverage.

Ms. Gingrich reviewed the anticipated timeline with the proposed district being presented at the April 2024 Annual Town Meeting and submitted to DHCD in August 2024.

Acting Chair Bendel asked if there were any questions or comments from members of the Board. Select Board Member Maselli asked what would happen if Town Meeting votes down the proposed zoning district. Ms. Gingrich advised that the Town would not be in compliance. She noted that the DHCD allows multiple Town Meetings to pass.

Select Board Member DePalma asked whether the Town could designate an area and whether the property must be available to be developed. Ms. Gingrich stated that the property does not have to be available at this time, it must have potential to be developed. She advised that DHCD wants the Town to designate at least 50 acres of property and meet density requirements and other specifications.

Select Board Member Caira asked whether the intent is for the 50-acre district to accommodate the 1,248 required units. Ms. Gingrich confirmed.

Select Board Member Caira asked Ms. Gingrich whether there was an update on the status of Princeton Properties. Ms. Gingrich stated that she has been advised by different sources that the Town would be hearing “any day” but she has not received any information.

Select Board Member Caira asked about West Street and was advised that the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) closed the public hearing and will be voting on the development at their March 8 meeting. Ms. Gingrich advised that the Town is waiting for a final report from the sewer consultant to advise whether the sewer has the capacity to pump off peak but those issues are being worked out with the ZBA. Select Board Member Caira asked if the West Street project is approved how it affects the Princeton Properties project as either project would enable the Town to meet the 10% affordable housing threshold. Ms. Gingrich advised both projects would move forward.

Acting Chair Bendel asked if residents have comments regarding the Action Plan and zoning district, who should they contact. Ms. Gingrich advised that residents should contact her at the Planning and Conservation Department. She stated that she would welcome community feedback.

Acting Chair Bendel asked if Town Manager Hull wished to comment. Town Manager Hull reiterated that if the district were to be established and superimposed on an area of Town it does not mean the existing structures go away. He stated that Ms. Gingrich has expressed concern about the Groundwater Protection District. Ms. Gingrich confirmed and stated that a majority of property near the stations are within the Groundwater Protection District and she explained the significance.

Members of the Board thanked Ms. Gingrich for her attendance this evening.

### COMMUNICATIONS

Town Manager Hull reviewed his memorandum regarding comments developed by the Town's environmental consultant in consultation with staff and special counsel to address the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Community Involvement Plan for the Olin Chemical Superfund Site.

Town Manager Hull reviewed his memorandum updating the Board on the Senior Center Building Committee. Lee Morrisette, from Dietz & Company, provided a PowerPoint presentation. Town Manager Hull stated that Mr. Morrisette will be meeting with the Elderly Services Director to review the features of each room to confirm details. The project is shifting from schematic design to design development. Mr. Morrisette advised that the Committee will need to meet every other Wednesday for the immediate future.

Town Manager Hull reviewed his memorandum updating the Board on the Town Hall / School Administration Building Committee. He advised that the Committee met on January 17 primarily to consider the approaches to procurement of construction services for the new Town Hall / School Administration Building. Phil O'Brien, from Johnson Roberts Architects, and Dan Pallotta, from P3, outlined the pros and cons of design, bid, build versus the construction manager at risk approach.

Town Manager Hull reviewed his memorandum requesting to reallocate ARPA funds to install a Pre-Kindergarten / Kindergarten play structure next to the middle school.

Town Manager Hull reviewed his memorandum which provided the schedule of Finance Committee meetings.

Town Manager Hull reviewed his memorandum advising that he spoke with Melanie Morash from EPA about his meeting with representatives from Wilmington Woburn Industrial and inquired about the status of negotiations on a consent agreement between EPA, Olin and the other responsible parties. Ms. Morash stated that WWI is seeking to enter a Perspective Purchase Agreement which would be required as part of their effort to purchase the Olin property. She advised that EPA has taken their request under advisement.

Town Manager Hull reviewed his memorandum where he advised that a virtual meeting was conducted on January 11, 2023 with Ryan Coholan and Jody Ray from the MBTA and Abdellah Chaijai from Keolis. Mr. Chaijai presented data from October through December 2022 regarding reported incidents at crossings in Wilmington. The number of incidents has decreased from prior years. The reduction in incident reports is being attributed to the various measures taken by the MBTA over the past year to address their equipment.

Town Manager Hull advised that discussion took place about the train platform in north Wilmington. Reference was made to the email provided by Valerie Gingrich, Planning & Conservation Director, from another platform that illustrated black fencing and is aesthetically appealing. Jody Ray noted that the fencing for the project has already been purchased and will be a black vinyl coated fence. The MBTA was advised that Princeton Properties has a planned apartment project in that area including a building behind the existing “L” shaped retail space which is in the area of the new boarding platform. The Town’s request was to permit egress from that location rather than requiring residents of this building to walk along Jefferson Road to Middlesex Avenue only to head back in the direction from which they came to access the new platform. Representative Robertson questioned the MBTA representatives about the prospect of site mitigation along the rail corridor where trees and vegetation separating residents from the rail tracks was clearcut. The MBTA will investigate options to respond to the request.

Town Manager Hull reviewed his memorandum regarding the Wildwood School Interim Plan. He noted that an exhaustive effort has taken place to reach consensus on a plan to accommodate students and staff displaced from the Wildwood School and that effort is applauded. He stated that his misgivings have centered around the cost and the impact to the interior space of the middle school. Town Manager Hull advised that a meeting was held on Thursday, January 25, 2023 with Jennifer Bryson, School Committee Chair; Dr. Glenn Brand, School Superintendent; Judith O’Connell, Select Board Chair and him to pursue a resolution. He provided a synopsis of the discussions.

Town Manager Hull reviewed a memorandum from Jamie Magaldi, DPW Director, relative to the planning for creation of new Section Q in the Wildwood Cemetery. Mr. Magaldi noted that the bids for the demolition of the single-family house at 64 Wildwood Street were opened on October 26, 2022. The project was awarded to Brighter Horizons Environmental, Inc. and the house was demolished on December 22, 2022. This project will make room for the future expansion of the Wildwood Cemetery which should add at least 150 new 2-grave lots with upright monument privilege.

The preparation of the property will require the filing of a Notice of Intent with the Wilmington Conservation Commission due to its proximity to adjacent resource areas. In an effort to finalize design documents of the new layout and prepare the Conservation Commission filing, the Department of Public Works is in the process of scheduling a public meeting with the Cemetery Commission to endorse a conceptual orientation of the new section. Once the Cemetery Commission votes on an orientation of new Section Q, the Engineering Division will permit the development of the property. Obtaining an Order of Conditions through the permitting process

will allow the Department to start developing the property during the spring of 2023 with the intent to open the area up for burials once the existing upright sections in Wildwood Cemetery have been sold. All told, including existing flat marker lots, the current available space at the Wildwood Cemetery, exclusive of new Section Q, is approximately 20 years.

Town Manager Hull reviewed a memorandum from Valerie Gingrich, Planning & Conservation Director, which advised that the Town received a letter of intent expressing interest in the Massachusetts Economic Development Program from 6K Inc. in October 2022. 6K's headquarters is located in North Andover where they are developing new plasma battery material to be used to support lithium-ion batteries. 6K is looking to build out tenant space at 38 Upton Drive to start manufacturing the new material with zero waste and less energy than traditional battery material production.

Following receipt of the letter, Town staff met with company representatives and their consultant to discuss their business and their expansion plans. Ms. Gingrich noted that the Town has approved only one Tax Increment Financing (TIF) in the past, for Analog Devices to expand their campus to recreate their worldwide headquarters in Wilmington. Similar to 2018, it is recommended that a committee be formed to explore economic incentive options that might be appropriate for 6K. Once a committee is established, members can engage in further conversations with 6K and make a recommendation to the Select Board on how to proceed.

Town Manager Hull reviewed communication from Daniel R. Deutsch, Esq., Brooks & DeRensis, regarding the decision of the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to suspend further Status Reports until 60 days after Olin and EPA enter into a consent decree or 60 days after Wilmington and "NET" learn that no consent decree will be forthcoming. This action was taken at the request of New England Transrail (NET) and agreed to by special counsel.

Town Manager Hull reviewed communication from Glenn Brand, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, extending an invitation for a member of the Select Board to serve on the WPS Strategic Plan Development Committee.

Town Manager Hull reviewed communication from Niall Connors, Franchise Service Manager, Verizon, regarding the Annual Complaint Filing report filed with the Department of Telecommunications and Cable.

**BOARD TO CONSIDER SIGNING LOCAL INITIATIVE PROGRAM COMPLIANCE  
CERTIFICATE FOR THE RESALE OF WHISPERING PINES CONDOMINIUM  
DEVELOPMENT, UNIT 2305, 195 SALEM STREET**

Town Manager Hull advised that this is to ensure that when affordable housing units are sold, the unit remains affordable. A motion was made by Select Board Member DePalma, seconded by Select Board Member Maselli and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

**VOTED:** That the Select Board sign the Local Initiative Program Compliance Certificate for the resale of Whispering Pines Condominium Development, Unit 2305, 195 Salem Street.

**BOARD TO CONSIDER REQUEST OF J. CHRISTOPHER NEVILLE TO USE TOWN BEACH AT SILVER LAKE AND THE BEACH HOUSE FOR ROTARY AND ROTARY INTERACT MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLAR PLUNGE ON SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 2023 AT 11:00 A.M.**

Town Manager Hull advised that the Recreation Director, Police Chief and Fire Chief have reviewed the request and have no concerns. A motion was made by Select Board Member Caira, seconded by Select Board Member DePalma and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board approve the request of J. Christopher Neville to use Town Beach at Silver Lake and the beach house for Rotary and Rotary Interact members to participate in the Polar Plunge on Saturday, March 18, 2023 at 11:00 a.m.

**BOARD TO CONSIDER REQUEST OF DIANNA DIGREGORIO, PRESIDENT, WILMINGTON COMMUNITY FUND, TO USE THE MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2023 FROM 9:00 A.M. TO 12:00 P.M. FOR THE PURPOSE OF A COMMUNITY SHREDDING EVENT**

A motion was made by Select Board Member Caira, seconded by Select Board Member Maselli and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board approve the request of Dianna DiGregorio, Wilmington Community Fund, to use the municipal parking lot on Saturday, September 16, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for the purpose of a community shredding event.

**BOARD TO CONSIDER REQUEST OF JOHN ROMANO, PAST PRESIDENT, WILMINGTON SONS OF ITALY, TO USE THE MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT AND FOURTH OF JULY BUILDING FOR ANNUAL ANTIQUE AND COLLECTORS CAR SHOW ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2023 FROM 9:00 A.M. TO 2:00 P.M. (RAINDATE: SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22)**

It was noted that October 17 is not a Sunday. The Sunday would be October 15. A motion was made by Select Board Member Caira, seconded by Select Board Member DePalma and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board approve the request of John Romano, Wilmington Sons of Italy, to use the municipal parking lot and Fourth of July building for its annual antique and collectors car show on Sunday, October 15, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (RAINDATE: SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22)

**BOARD TO CONSIDER REQUEST TO REALLOCATE ARPA FUNDS FOR INSTALLATION OF A PLAY STRUCTURE NEXT TO THE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

A motion was made by Select Board Member Maselli, seconded by Select Board Member DePalma and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board approve the request to reallocate ARPA funds for the installation of a play structure next to Wilmington Middle School.

**BOARD TO CONSIDER REQUEST OF DANIEL HALL, CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES, TO SPONSOR TOWN MEETING ARTICLE NAMING CONFERENCE ROOM AT WILMINGTON MEMORIAL LIBRARY THE CHRISTINA STEWART ROOM**

A motion was made by Select Board Member DePalma and seconded by Select Board Member Maselli. Select Board Member Caira opined that it is a fitting tribute and asked which conference room. Town Manager Hull advised it is the large room. There being no further discussion and a motion having been made and seconded, by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board approve the request of Daniel Hall, Chairman, Board of Library Trustees, that the Select Board sponsor a Town Meeting Warrant Article naming the conference room at Wilmington Memorial Library the Christina Stewart Room.

**BOARD TO CONSIDER APPOINTING SELECT BOARD MEMBER TO SERVE ON WILMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

A motion was made by Select Board Member Caira, seconded by Select Board Member DePalma and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board table action on the request until its meeting of February 13, 2023.

**BOARD TO CONSIDER REQUEST OF LINDA CARUSO, BLOOD DRIVE CHAIRPERSON, WILMINGTON SONS OF ITALY, TO USE THE MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT AND FOURTH OF JULY BUILDING FOR A BLOOD DRIVE ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2023 FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 4:00 P.M.**

A motion was made by Select Board Member Maselli, seconded by Select Board Member DePalma and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board approve the request of Linda Caruso, Sons of Italy, to use the municipal parking lot and Fourth of July Building for a Blood Drive on Saturday, February 25, 2023 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**BOARD TO CONSIDER REPRESENTATIVE TO SERVE ON TAX INCREMENT FINANCING COMMITTEE**

A motion was made by Select Board Member Caira, seconded by Select Board Member DePalma and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board table action on the request until its meeting of February 13, 2023.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were none.

**NEW BUSINESS**

There were none.

### IMPORTANT DATES

Town Manager Hull reviewed important dates including:

- January 31 – Finance Committee – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.  
FY 24 BUDGET OVERVIEW; REVENUE; GENERAL GOVERNMENT
- February 1 – Town Hall / School Administration Building Committee  
Town Hall – Room 9 – 6:00 p.m.
- February 2 – Finance Committee – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.  
RECREATION, VETERANS' SERVICES, ELDERLY SERVICES COMMISSION, HISTORICAL COMMISSION
- February 3 – Last Day to Submit Petitioned Warrant Articles for Inclusion on the Warrant for  
the Annual Town Meeting – April 29, 2023
- February 7 – Finance Committee – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS; PUBLIC BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
- February 9 – Finance Committee – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, PUBLIC LIBRARY, TOWN CLERK
- February 13– Select Board – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.
- February 14– Finance Committee – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.  
PLANNING & CONSERVATION, BUILDING INSPECTOR/BOARD OF APPEALS, BOARD OF HEALTH
- February 16– Finance Committee – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.  
POLICE DEPARTMENT, PUBLIC SAFETY CENTRAL DISPATCH, FIRE DEPARTMENT
- February 20– Presidents' Day – *Town Offices Closed*
- February 27– Select Board – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.
- February 28– Finance Committee – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.  
WILMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- March 2 – Finance Committee – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.  
SHAWSHEEN TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
- March 13 – Select Board – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.
- March 21 – Finance Committee / Planning Board Public Hearing  
Town Hall – Auditorium – 7:00 p.m.
- March 27 – Select Board – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.
- April 12 – Last Day to Register to Vote in the Annual Town Election/Annual Town Meeting  
Town Clerk's Office Open Until 5:00 p.m.

Select Board Member Maselli noted that the meeting dates for the Senior Center Building Committee were not included in the list of Important Dates.

### SALUTE TO SERVICE

Acting Chair Bendel stated that this evening he would like to recognize the service of Nicholas Nofle. Mr. Nofle joined the Army Reserves National Guard in 2002. He was activated in 2003 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and served in Cuba; in 2005 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and served in Iraq where he was awarded a Bronze Star and in 2011 served in Afghanistan, then reactivated in 2012 for another tour in Afghanistan.



Among Mr. Nofle's many awards are the Armed Forces Reserve Medal with "M" Device and 10 Year Bronze Hourglass, Excellence in Competition Rifleman Badge and Excellence in Competition Pistol Badge, Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Medal, NATO Medal, 2 Army Accommodation Medals, a Joint Meritorious Unit Medal, Combat Action Medal and the German Army Marksmanship Badge Bronze.

Mr. Nofle currently serves as a Police Sergeant with the Wilmington Police Department. The Select Board and citizens of Wilmington salute Nicholas Nofle and thank him for his service to our country and our community.

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was made by Select Board Member DePalma, seconded by Select Board Member Maselli and by the affirmative roll call vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Select Board adjourn to Executive Session for purpose of discussing strategies with respect to Collective Bargaining as it relates to International Association of Fire Fighters Local 1370 in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30A, Section 21(a) 3, not to return to open session.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Recording Secretary



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January 30, 2023

FISCAL YEAR 2024 BUDGET  
General Remarks

CHAIR Judith L. O'Connell  
MEMBERS of the Select Board

CHAIRMAN John F. Doherty, and  
MEMBERS of the Finance Committee

Dear Members:

Each year at this time in accordance Chapter 592 of the Acts of 1950, one of the most critical responsibilities of the Town Manager is the submission of projected expenditures and revenues for the ensuing fiscal year to the Select Board and Finance Committee. This document reflects the proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023. Included with the annual operating budget for all municipal departments is a five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP anticipates the expenditures on improvements to municipal buildings, acquisition of vehicles, upgrades in technology and road improvements that will have a useful life in excess of three (3) years.

While some of the challenges that we have faced and worked through over the past year have begun to recede into the background, new challenges have arisen to take their place. The inflation rate is at levels not seen in generations. Rising interest rates, instability in the energy markets, and continuing supply chain issues pose serious hurdles for the private and public sector and for our families. We have all experienced firsthand in the grocery store paying the same or more for food cleverly packaged in smaller quantities. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine, while perhaps not affecting most of us personally, further lends to economic uncertainty.

As a region and as a country we are in a precarious place with some sectors of the economy clearly slowing down. Many of the major players in the tech industry including Google, Twitter, and most recently Microsoft have announced layoffs. Attempting to forecast conditions six (6) to eighteen (18) months into the future is no easy task.

At the same time the Town is on the eve of taking advantage of the opportunity to make significant improvements to its public buildings which will not only benefit the dedicated public servants who work in them but will provide a greatly enhanced experience for residents seeking to conduct business and seniors seeking to take advantage of programs and assistance. Ongoing efforts to pursue a new elementary school and a location to construct a fire substation are all critical projects that will require the investment of significant tax dollars over the next five years and beyond. The ability to execute these projects to completion requires disciplined management of Town finances now. Financial reserves that have been deliberately set aside over many years will continue to be relied upon to assist in the financing of these and other building projects or to blunt the impacts of an economic downturn.

These factors collectively make it exceptionally important to limit overall spending to the greatest extent possible as we continue to provide the services that residents and local businesses depend upon.

The fiscal year 2024 expenditure plan proposes a total budget of at \$129,931,393 which is a 3.55% increase over the current fiscal year spending plan. The budget breaks down into four major categories in order of size as a percentage of the entire budget: Wilmington Public Schools, Shared Costs which include statutory charges, insurance and debt and interest, General Government, and Shawsheen Valley Technical High School.

	FY2023	FY2024	\$\$\$ Change	% Change
Wilmington Schools	\$ 45,935,465	\$ 47,658,045	\$ 1,722,580	3.75%
Shared Costs	\$ 39,566,165	\$ 39,894,368	\$ 238,203	0.60%
General Government	\$ 33,653,119	\$ 35,201,175	\$ 1,548,056	4.60%*
Shawsheen Tech	\$ 6,319,831	\$ 7,267,806	\$ 947,975	15.00%
Total	\$125,474,580	\$129,931,393	\$4,456,813	3.55%

\*2.89% attributed to potential ALS and town/school heating cost increases. (\$974,477)

It should be noted that fiscal year 2023 salary line items for union and non-union personnel costs did not reflect cost of living increases (COLA). Collective bargaining agreements with most unions were due to expire on June 30, 2022, and agreements had not been reached. Five of the six general government unions have settled contracts for the current fiscal year. Budgeted salaries for non-union and four (4) of six union agreements in fiscal year 2024 will reflect the COLA adjustment for FY2023 and FY2024 in addition to any step changes. While vacancies continue to exist in the

Public Safety Departments progress is being made. One year ago, the Police Department had seven vacancies and as of this writing has three vacancies. The Fire Department has one vacancy while Central Dispatch has two vacancies as was the case last year at this time.

Once again, this year, the expectation is that the assessment to the Shawsheen Valley Technical High School will increase significantly. The assessment increased \$1,048,584 in the current fiscal year. The increase in students attending from Wilmington as of October 1, 2022 enrollment was less than the previous year but there are multiple factors that impact Wilmington's assessment. Based on the smaller increase in enrollment this fiscal year the assessment is expected to increase by over \$900,000 in the next fiscal year. Homeowners have experienced the financial impact of significant increases in home heating oil. The Town of Wilmington is no different. School and general government buildings heated by oil are expected to consume roughly 200,000 gallons at a cost of \$1,228,710 which represents an increase of \$229,560 over the current budget for heating fuel.

The Town is working to address the provision of advanced life support (ALS) medical services. Wilmington fire fighters are trained as emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and provide basic life support (BLS) for medical emergencies. The Town contracts with a private company to provide ALS/paramedic services. Many private ambulance services are struggling to maintain personnel and to remain financially viable. At present the Town has not finalized a plan for ALS but expects to develop in-house capacity to provide this service and includes funds in this budget to pursue multiple options to address this critical need. Since this plan is not expected to be finalized until well into fiscal year 2024, funds are budgeted for the continuation of contracted ALS services until the Town's plan is ready to implement. Funding for both options increased the budget by over \$744,917 above and beyond the \$17,000 increase in contracted ALS service.

One consequence of the COVID pandemic, ironically, has been its impact on health insurance costs. With healthcare providers straining to address COVID cases and their variants and the general concern over exposure to COVID for those admitted to hospitals it appears there has been a reluctance to obtain some forms of medical care which has slowed the increase in cost for health insurance. As the country has come out of what is believed to be the worst of the pandemic, use of the medical system is increasing which is reflected in medical claims. Overall health insurance costs are expected to increase between 6% and 8% in FY2024. This is reflected in a proposed increase of \$781,459.

## **REVENUES**

As a longstanding practice, revenues continue to be estimated conservatively to avoid a circumstance in which the operating budget is based upon revenues that fall short of projection. Such an outcome would require either the identification of other revenue streams to replace the revenue shortfall or a reduction in expenditures which would impact services.

The local property taxes provide the overwhelming majority, 79.23%, of the revenue for the Town. This year for the first time since the enactment of Proposition 2 1/2 the decision was made to not increase property taxes to the levy limit. Recognizing the economic slowdown and the impact that significant increase in property values would have on the average tax bill, \$1.2 million in levy capacity was not accessed. Nonetheless, the base amount from property taxes increased by \$4,886,921. New growth, which is a function of the value associated with new construction and the value of machinery and equipment purchased by certain businesses once again significantly exceeded the projection of \$1.1 million. New growth during the most recent tax year generated \$2,426,892 in added revenue. When the economy is strong, and business is adding square footage to their facilities or replacing machinery and equipment and homes are being constructed “new growth” is a welcomed source of additional revenue. However, given the vagaries of the economy this additional revenue is never a given. Once again revenue from new growth is projected to be \$1.1 million.

Financial support from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, also referred to as local aid, is the second largest source of revenue and represents 11.58% of the total revenue stream. While the pandemic posed serious challenges for the state, they have remained a strong partner by avoiding cuts to local aid and, in fact, provided for a slight increase in financial assistance of \$390,756 or 2.67% over the prior fiscal year. The projection is for level funding of local aid in the upcoming fiscal year in the amount of \$15,049,313.

Local receipts comprise the third largest source of revenue to the Town and are expected to account for 5.51% of revenue. Included under the umbrella category of local receipts are motor vehicle excise taxes, meals tax, building and health permits, investment income, fees and in lieu of tax payments from Reading Municipal Light Department. The slowing economy is decreasing the demand for new vehicles which will impact the excise tax. Motor vehicles excise tax revenue makes up nearly half of all local receipts. The auto industry experienced an 8% to 9% decline in sales in calendar year 2022 compared with the prior year. The slowing economy and ongoing supply chain issues have been cited as factors. A continued economic slowdown could also affect building construction which in turn will impact building permit fees. At present the projection is for a decrease in excise tax by over \$600,000. While most other categories are expected to remain level, investment income is expected to see a decline.

## **AREAS OF FOCUS:**

### **Education**

A core function of every community is the education of their children. Wilmington continues to take that very seriously as demonstrated by approval of its operating budgets and capital requests and the appropriation of \$1.2 million in funds as the next step in the Massachusetts School Building Authority process in pursuit of an elementary school.

The budget for Wilmington Public Schools is proposed to increase by 3.75% following two consecutive years of 2.5% increases. A significant cost driver for the School Department continues to be special education. While district wide enrollment continues to decline, student needs have prompted increased demands on special education teachers and support staff. Out of district placements are projected to see increases of up to 14% in tuition. Efforts are ongoing to provide resources for greater in-district placement, as appropriate, which would benefit affected children by enabling the children to remain in class settings within the community in which they live in addition to avoiding costs associated with tuition and transportation. The most significant demand on funding is personnel salaries. Funding is required for a new teachers contract while negotiations continue with education assistants. The School Department is in the midst of seeking a new contract for student transportation which is expected to see a potential cost increase of over \$110,000. The conclusion of pandemic related grant funds will shift the financial burden back on the district to assume costs to the extent possible for grant funded programs. While the return to in-person learning has been a welcome change, the impacts to the educational progress of children engaged in remote learning for a considerable period of time are beginning to manifest themselves and will likely continue to do so for the immediate future.

The Town has engaged the services of SMMA as its Owners Project Manager (OPM) to assist with procuring the services of a designer/architect to work with the Town to explore options for an elementary school whether via expansion/modification to an existing school or construction of a new school. Utilizing the \$1.2 million in funds appropriated at the March 8, 2022 Special Town Meeting will lead to completion of feasibility study detailing the preferred course of action.

Accommodating students and staff displaced from the Wildwood Early Childhood Center continues to be a major focus of school and town officials. Since February of 2022 these students and staff have been located in three schools across the district. Everyone acknowledges that the current situation is far from ideal, but due to leadership of the School Department and the commitment of the teaching staff they are making it work.

Considerable discussion has taken place over the past several months to establish an improved educational environment for the students and staff who would typically attend the Wildwood Early Childhood Center for roughly the next five years until a permanent solution is agreed upon, funded, and constructed. As I recently explained to the Wildwood School Building Committee my concerns with the so-called option 17, recommended by the committee, include the cost and building modification to the Middle School required for a short time period. Based upon my recent January 25, 2023 discussions involving Select Board Chair Judith O'Connell, School Committee Chair Jennifer Bryson and School Superintendent Dr. Glenn Brand, I am prepared to endorse the Wildwood School Building Committee and Wilmington School Committee's recommendations that up to \$1.1 million be appropriated from free cash to modify the library section of the Middle School. The intention is for the modifications to be less impactful to the building than initially proposed but still adequate to accommodate students and staff.

The Shawsheen Valley Technical High School serves as an attractive option for students seeking to pursue a different course both with respect to academics and beyond. The October 1, 2021 enroll increased by 36 students to 311 from the previous October 1<sup>st</sup> while enrollment as of October 1, 2022 had increased by 6 students. As the Shawsheen Tech budget cycle trails Wilmington's budget cycle and information from the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) was unavailable as this budget was being prepared, predicting the Town's assessment is very challenging. The increase of 15% in assessment is predicated on the fact that the increase in students attending the school is less than in the previous year and will equate to a smaller assessment increase. The amount of \$7,267,806 is budgeted for fiscal year 2024

## **Public Safety**

The provision of services related to the safety of residents and those working in and visiting Wilmington remains a major priority.

In an effort to address the increasing demand for service faced by the Police Department, two additional patrol officers and two sergeant positions have been added to the ranks over the past three fiscal years. Vacancies continue to be a challenge as several officers have retired and a few officers resigned for other positions. Working through the Civil Service System to fill vacancies takes time but efforts continue. Three recent hires graduated from the Lynnfield police academy and will begin training with police personnel. Two additional new hires are slated to enter a police academy at the end of January. The continued dedication of the Health and Recovery Coordinator and Recovery Coach have provided experienced personal to assist the department in addressing individuals with mental health and substance abuse challenges.

Central Dispatch is a key but sometimes overlooked part of public safety team. In emergencies time is of the essence. Having individuals in the dispatch seats that can remain calm and focused on stressful situations while giving clear precise instructions and information to the caller and the police or fire personnel is critical. Over the past three years \$1.3 million has been invested to upgrade the central dispatch communication system to provide reliability and clarity of communications.

As with the Police Department, vacancies and call volume have tested the limits of staff in the Fire Department. Through the efforts of Fire Chief William Cavanaugh, the Town was awarded up to \$1,509,000 in funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency SAFER grant program to cover the cost of personnel over a three (3) year period which began in 2020. The Town will assume full funding of the eight (8) positions authorized by the Annual Town Meeting and supported by the grant. The additional staffing per shift is serving to mitigate overtime costs.

Providing access to reliable, timely advanced life support services is critical to supplementing the basic life support (BLS) services provided by the Fire Department. Providers of ALS services are struggling to meet their existing services and maintain the number of operable ALS ambulances. One consequence has been an increase in the amount charged to provide the service. In 2022 as

the three-year contract with the Town's existing provider was due to expire a request for proposal was issued. Only the existing ALS provider and one other provider responded. The bid prices from both entities were dramatically higher than the cost with the existing provider. The Town decided to exercise its option to extend the current contract for one year with the existing provider. The second provider to respond with a bid has since gone out of business.

This budget seeks to provide ALS services within the Fire Department. The Town is considering multiple options which include creating eight (8) paramedic positions and one position responsible for oversight and compliance with state Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) regulations. A second approach under consideration is providing the opportunity for existing fire fighter personnel to become trained as paramedics to assume those responsibilities on medical calls. The Town recognizes its obligations to discuss its plans with the fire union and at this time has not settled on a final approach. In order to retain its options, and with the goal of implementing an approach in the fiscal year 2024, the budget includes funds to reflect the multiple options. As the Town engages in discussions with the union and determines a direction that can be implemented, there will be time required for the transition. Funds are also included in the budget for the continuation with the existing ALS ambulance service until the change can occur.

Efforts are ongoing to identify a location for a substation in North Wilmington. Suggested parcels have been reviewed by staff and a request has been issued to the public seeking buildable parcels of approximately 2 acres in size within the target area. It is not advisable to appropriate funds which will likely be \$400,000 to \$500,000 for design services that cannot be engaged until the Town confirms that it has access to one or two sites for consideration, similar to the process used for the senior center and town/school administration building. As soon as a viable location can be identified, and the necessary agreement established than design funds will be pursued.

### **Capital Investment**

Beyond the costs associated with the daily responsibilities of serving the public are the longer-term investments that "set the stage" to enable departments to operate. Departments need accessible and functional buildings within which to work, require vehicles, equipment, and technology to enable them to carry out their responsibilities. Additionally, the public expects access to safe potable water, roads, sidewalks, and public spaces. The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) services to place projects that require attention over the next five years "on our radar."

Given the fact that the demand for resources always outpaces the ability to pay, decisions need to be made about projects that can be deferred and projects that require more immediate attention. The CIP changes each year but provides a means to anticipate the more costly items or projects.

Capital expenditures will be addressed using a combination of the tax levy, free cash, and the Town's capital stabilization fund. Free cash and the capital stabilization fund must be used judiciously recognizing the future demands for capital projects including a new or expanded school and a fire substation.



The Public Works Department has over 110 miles of roads to maintain and over 60 acres of parks, public grounds, and ballfields to maintain. Replacement of a 2006 dump truck is recommended for \$300,000. This vehicle will be particularly versatile as it is equipped with dump body, flatbed and sander that can be attached or removed depending upon the job required. Purchase of this vehicle is proposed using free cash. The Town's 2014 Jacobson wing mower is the primary mower for over 40 acres of sports fields and large public areas. Due to the age and amount of usage the mower requires replacement at a cost of \$142,000. A 3/4-ton pick-up truck primarily used by the Cemetery Division was purchased in 2010 and requires replacement due to excessive wear and tear and corrosion. The replacement cost is \$65,000.

A play structure next to the Boutwell Early Childhood Center was installed in 2001. Sections of the structure have failed and been removed due to the inability to obtain replacement parts. The structure is scheduled for replacement at a cost of \$120,000. Funds in the amount of \$80,000 are recommended as part of a multi-year phased expansion of the Wildwood Cemetery. Funds are used to make improvements to the street network within the cemetery in addition to beginning the grading and preparation work required to create a new Section Q on property recently acquired by the Town. In order to remain in compliance with the Town's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit, the Town has budgeted \$50,000 for work associated with addressing stormwater runoff. Replacement of the artificial turf field at the high school, installed in 2013, is scheduled for fiscal year 2026. In advance of the replacement of the turf, engineering services including preparation of specialized specifications is budgeted for \$40,000. Due to significant cracks in the surface of the tennis courts at the Boutwell School, resurfacing is planned at a cost of \$40,000.

Replacement of 19,124 square feet of roof at the West Intermediate School is scheduled at a cost of \$675,000 using capital stabilization funds. Replacement of windows at the West Intermediate School is also necessary. In FY2024 design services will be commissioned at a cost of \$170,000 to evaluate the windows, confirm a cost estimate and develop bid specifications for construction the following year. Windows at the historic Harnden Tavern must be replaced. Design services are budgeted in the amount of \$15,000. Once a cost estimate is obtained, replacement of the windows will be scheduled for FY2025.

Four police cruisers are scheduled for replacement at a cost of \$250,000. The new cruisers will replace the four front line patrol vehicles. Free cash is proposed for funding of this purchase.

The final phase of a three-year effort by the IT Department to replace the Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone system is slated for completion at a cost of \$54,000. This replaces a system that is over 20 years old. Four mobile computers with associated antennas are planned for purchase for installation in the police cruisers. Similar to the replacement practice of office desktop computers on a scheduled basis, the intention is to replace these mobile computers in the police cruisers every three to four years.

As part of the effort to bring the ALS service in house, the department will require three (3) cardiac monitors. These monitors are required on all ALS licensed ambulances and will cost \$180,000. The Fire Prevention Officer's vehicle is scheduled for replacement. The existing vehicle is a high mileage former police cruiser. The new vehicle will have adequate storage for public education materials and emergency response gear as the Fire Prevention Officer is regularly out of the station conducting inspections or in the schools. The cost of this vehicle is \$67,000.

The School Department is seeking \$200,000 from the tax levy for the replacement of the VOIP telephone system. Microsoft will stop supporting the existing system. Replacement of a 2015 handicapped accessible minivan will cost \$76,000. The existing van has approximately 113,000 miles. Funds are recommended in the sum of \$45,000 for the ongoing upgrade of the public address system in the schools. The system being replaced is estimated to be 30 to 40 years old.

Capital improvements for fiscal year 2024 total \$6,419,250 and break down as follows:

Funding Source	Expenditure
Chapter 90	\$ 750,000
Tax Levy	\$ 1,494,250
Free Cash	\$ 1,650,000
Capital Stabilization	\$ 675,000
Grant Funding	\$ 100,000
Water	\$ 1,720,000
Sewer Enterprise	\$ 30,000

A listing of capital projects funded from the Operating Budget (Tax Levy, Free Cash and Capital Stabilization) can be found on pages 71 through 73 of the budget book.

### **Long-Term Commitments**

The Town's Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) liability and its pension liability are both legitimate obligations that are noted in the Town's financial statements and are evaluated by Standard & Poors each time the Town seeks to borrow money. While Standard & Poors has lauded the Town's ability to retain strong reserves it consistently expressed concerns about the Town's ability to reign in or fund these dual long-term obligations.

One way of demonstrating the commitment to address both liabilities is through constancy of effort. Clearly action speaks louder than words and the discipline to set money aside each year in recognition of these obligations should serve to send a strong message that the Town is serious about addressing OPEB and pension liability. The extra payments in excess of the Town's annual retirement assessment are expected to reduce the Town's pension obligation at a quicker pace than is the case by only making the annual assessment contributions. Once the pension liability

can be retired a greater level of focus can be directed to the OPEB liability. Again, this year \$1,500,000 will be directed from the tax levy for pre-payment of the pension liability leading to over \$8,500,000 in advance payments made over the past eight years. The sum of \$1,000,000 will be earmarked from the tax levy to the OPEB Trust Fund. The account balance as of June 30, 2022 was \$10,532,271.

The Town's facilities master plan will continue to be used as a guidance document for upgrade and replacement of municipal buildings. While the Town pursues work to complete a new senior center and town/school administration building the focus remains on locating a site for a fire substation and initiating its design and construction. At the same time efforts continues to determine the best option for creating a new elementary school setting. The outcome of these efforts will likely establish the roadmap for future elementary school construction. As the Town continues to draw down reserves, including the capital stabilization account, to address its building needs it is vitally important that funds replenish these accounts. That is why \$1,000,000 is recommended from the tax levy to transfer to the capital stabilization account. The balance in the Capital Stabilization as of June 30, 2022 was \$17,370,562. The November 19, 2022 Special Town Meeting subsequently appropriated \$6,000,000 from this account.

The Town does not expect to issue additional debt this year for the two building projects approved at the recent Special Town Meeting because funds allocated from free cash and capital stabilization are expected to be adequate to cover the initial costs of these projects. However, permanent financing is expected next year for these projects and the Nassau Avenue water tank.

## **Personnel**

Personnel costs will always account for the largest percentage of the municipal operating budget by far. There is no question that maintaining up to date reliable tools including technology, vehicles and equipment enhance the ability of employees to be productive. In the end, however, it is the people who fulfill their roles each day that provide for the delivery of services to the residential and business community. Other than the potential for additional personnel to provide advanced life support services, no new positions are proposed in general government departments this year.

In the future strong consideration should be given to meeting the demands of specific general government functions.

With over 300 full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees the volume of work associated with human resources merits a position wholly responsible for that specialty. The ability of the current and previous assistant town manager/human resources directors to take on increasing general administration functions including supporting ad hoc committees, following-up on interests in property, assisting with efforts to establish a fire substation and other projects that arise is severely limited by responsibilities associated with personnel.

Information technology is ubiquitous to every aspect of local government operations. The demands on this department to troubleshoot problems, educate employees on more effectively using these tools, completing the replacement of computers on a regular basis, and developing and executing strategies to bolster the Town's cyber security is outgrowing the capacity of current staff.

The Town spends hundreds of thousands of dollars annually on the procurement of goods and services. The Town has a few personnel in some departments who have completed training with the Inspector General's Office and have obtained certification. Procurement is only one of their many responsibilities. They are very competent in that work, however, there is merit to considering a centralized approach in which procurement is overseen and coordinated by a purchasing agent. There may be opportunity to share such a position with the School Department which might provide savings through joint purchasing of paper, office supplies and other products and services.

Wilmington is a place that is not only desirable for individuals to raise families but for entrepreneurs to create or expand their businesses. The Planning & Conservation Department regularly responds to inquiries seeking guidance on setting up business, in addition to pursuing affordable housing, and drafting modifications to the zoning by law for presentation at Town Meeting all of which are clearly forms of economic development. The department's requirements to oversee subdivision control, to participate and offer advice on comprehensive permits, to stay abreast of developments related to the Olin Superfund site, to ensure that the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan is being implemented and updated and to oversee responsibilities associated with conservation and the state's Wetlands Protection Act leave little time for engaging with the business community on more of an outreach basis. Establishing capacity that can complement the efforts of the Planning & Conservation Department and the other departments responsibility for interacting with the business community should be a future focus.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through the support of residents, Wilmington is at the threshold of the most significant municipal building construction since the new Wilmington High School was completed in 2015 and possibly since the early 1960s when four schools were completed in four years. Completing the facilities master plan in 2018 was an important step in assessing our buildings and prioritizing actions. However, in the absence of follow-up and follow-through, even the best plan is just that, a plan. The next ten years will require significant expenditure on multiple facilities. The scale of expenditures on new buildings will "tax" the Town's financial reserves in an unprecedented way and will require a major ramp up in debt. The annual demand for funds to replace ambulances, police cruisers, dump trucks and other key parts of the vehicle fleet, the ongoing need to replace window systems, roofs, and boilers, re-invest in technology hardware and software and pursuit of additional property for municipal purposes will not abate and will require thoughtful use of limited fiscal resources. One of the greatest challenges in municipal finance is knowing when to say "No."

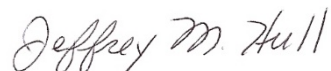
Recent news accounts site dramatic layoffs in the technology sector, which for so long has appeared immune to the economic ups and downs. Microsoft, Google, Twitter, and Amazon all household names associated as being stalwarts of economic growth have all hit the “reset” button with respect to employees. Whether this translates into an across-the-board precipitous decline in the economy or the “soft landing” the Federal Reserve Board is seeking is unknown. However, knowing that such a trend will negatively impact local revenues, it is wise to be cautious.

The fiscal year 2024 proposed budget is a sincere attempt to provide adequate financial resources to our schools and general government departments while holding the line on the overall budget increase to the greatest extent possible. Wilmington Public Schools and Shawsheen Valley Technical High School are both pressed to respond to the changing and increasingly complex needs for student support services. The largest financial pressure points within this budget for this upcoming fiscal year include the escalating heating fuel costs, developing a reliable option for ALS service that can be readily implemented and providing interim accommodations for students and staff displaced from the Wildwood School.

This budget plan will be vigorously debated as it should be. Rufus Miles, Jr. who served in various administrative roles for Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson offered an astute observation when he noted: “Where you stand depends on where you sit.” Clearly, our perspectives are shaped by the circumstances within which we find ourselves. The supreme challenge for each of us is to respect other perspectives, step back to genuinely consider opposing viewpoints and to use those insights to shape consensus.

Public meetings with the Finance Committee begin tomorrow evening at 7:00 p.m. and continue throughout the month of February and into March. The public is encouraged to attend to learn about the work of the various departments and the rationale for their budgets.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeffrey M. Hull".

Jeffrey M. Hull  
Town Manager