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FISCAL YEAR 2022 BUDGET  
General Remarks

CHAIRMAN Jonathan R. Eaton  
MEMBERS of the BOARD OF SELECTMEN

CHAIRMAN John F. Doherty, and  
MEMBERS of the FINANCE COMMITTEE

Dear Members:

In accordance with Chapter 592 of the Acts of 1950, as Town Manager it is my responsibility and honor to present "a careful, detailed estimate of the probable expenditures of the town for the ensuing fiscal year" not less than ninety (90) days before the annual town meeting. Presented this evening is a plan for the proposed expenditures for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021 in addition to a five (5) year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) which forecasts large scale investments in public facilities, infrastructure, vehicles, equipment and technology required in the ensuing five (5) years.

As always, crafting the Town's budget requires making decisions about competing needs against the backdrop of scarce resources. Making these decisions requires an assessment of the importance of expenditures required in the next fiscal year to provide the services and programs that residents need and expect, while also recognizing that there are consequences that come with deferring expenditures into the future.

My goal entering into budget development for the coming fiscal year was to limit the increase in the budget presented to annual town meeting to no more than one percent as compared with the current budget. Given the ongoing upward expenditure pressures associated with wages, insurance and construction costs to name a few, attaining this goal presented a serious challenge. However, I am pleased to announce that due to the cooperative efforts from all departments and the commitment to find opportunities for saving, the proposed fiscal year 2022 budget increases .46% over the fiscal year 2021 annual town meeting authorization.

Operating expenditures for fiscal year 2022 are budgeted at **\$119,852,135** which represents an increase of \$545,773. As you know the operating budget is based upon four (4) major expenditure categories: They are 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.

	FY2021	FY2022	\$\$\$ Change	% Change
Wilmington Schools	\$ 43,722,036	\$ 44,815,088	\$ 1,093,052	2.50%
Shared Costs	\$ 40,044,895	\$ 38,218,186	\$ (1,826,709)	- 4.56%
General Government	\$ 30,752,576	\$ 31,418,861	\$ 666,285	2.16%
Shawsheen Tech	\$ 4,786,855	\$ 5,400,000	\$ 613,145	12.81%
Total	\$ 119,306,362	\$ 119,852,135	\$ 545,773	.46%

While there is always uncertainty forecasting six (6) to eighteen (18) months into the future, what has transpired for most of calendar 2020 and is expected to continue for the foreseeable future is simply beyond predictable. The global COVID-19 pandemic has substantially altered our way of life here in Wilmington, across the country and throughout the world. The toll that this outbreak has taken from lives lost, family members left behind and the loss of a livelihood for individuals and businesses is on a scale not seen in several generations. While I have recommended for many years the need to build financial reserves for the next economic downturn, I never imagined the next downturn would be driven by a pandemic.

The principle increases in this budget are driven by personnel costs. Overtime costs in the fire department and the central dispatch department continue to exceed expectation and will be discussed more fully later in this presentation. Health insurance has been budgeted for a minor increase of 1%. Costs for medical care remain below projections in the current fiscal year, however, it is likely that many employees and family members are deferring all but the most critical medical care. There will likely be a significant increase in claims when COVID-19 subsides. The health insurance budget is being increased \$131,950. The Town's insurance carrier has advised us to expect a sharp increase in the other categories of insurance including workers compensation, police and fire injury insurance, general liability, professional liability, property and automobile liability insurance. The need to invest in technology and communications continues and has also led to a significant increase in the Town's information technology budget.

Countering these budget increases are significant declines of nearly \$500,000 in borrowing costs, \$162,587 in the cost for collection of trash and recycling, \$25,200 in the streetlight line item, an expected decline of \$106,000 in heating fuel costs, a decline of \$98,580 due to completion of the assessor's property revaluation, and a projected decline of \$50,000 in costs for legal services.

**REVENUES**

Revenues are expected to increase by \$505,646 due primarily to the increase in the tax levy permissible as a result of the Proposition 2 1/2 legislation. Most other categories of revenue are level funded or are expected to decrease. New growth, which has steadily increased over the past few years, is expected to decline as the large residential developments are nearing completion. A significant portion of FY2020 new growth was tied to personal property. The acquisition of new personal property is not expected to occur at the same pace in light of the economic downturn.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 and prior to the June 27, 2020 annual town meeting, revenue projections for fiscal year 2021 were re-evaluated. The expectation at the time was that the impacts from the pandemic would lead to a decrease in meals tax revenue and a reduction in local aid. Meals tax revenue has declined, although not as much as projected through the end of December 2020, but the local aid reductions did not occur. The Governor and the state legislature have gone to extraordinary lengths to "hold harmless" cities and towns by drawing upon the state's reserve fund and other onetime sources of revenue to bridge the gap.

While the extension of the CARES Act will certainly assist the state, the slow economic recovery coupled with ongoing COVID related expenses will continue to stress the state budget. The reductions in local aid that were predicted for fiscal year 2021 are likely to take place instead in fiscal year 2022. As a consequence, the budget reflects a five percent (5%) reduction or \$573,459 in Chapter 70 education aid and a fifteen percent (15%) reduction or \$396,073 in Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) from the current fiscal year local aid. Meals tax revenue is not expected to recover fully although is budgeted for \$300,000 versus the \$200,000 estimate for fiscal year 2021. Due to a decline in Chapter 115 Veterans claims, and the corresponding decline in subsequent reimbursement for the current fiscal year, Chapter 115 reimbursements reflect a \$40,150 decline in the coming fiscal year. Fiscal year 2022 revenues from all sources are projected to be \$119,852,135. The commitments on motor vehicles excise taxes as of this writing are on track to be surprisingly close to the projected \$4,644,224. While sale of new vehicles may have continued to be relatively strong during the pandemic as the number of unemployed residents grew and residents remained out of work during calendar year 2020 the impact on revenue from motor vehicles excise tax could be a lagging indicator of the economic downturn.

## **LONG RANGE GOALS**

**Invest in the success of students by supporting the initiatives and providing the resources for a 21<sup>st</sup> century education.**

As noted by School Superintendent Dr. Glenn Brand, Wilmington Public Schools realized an accelerated decline in enrollment during the current academic year. While long-term projections suggest a steady but gradual decline in students attending Wilmington Public Schools this decline was exacerbated due to the pandemic. Students were enrolled in private schools or home schooled as parents responded to pandemic conditions and the challenges posed by remote learning. The School Department is expecting that many of those students will return to Wilmington Public Schools once COVID-19 subsides and there is a return to more consistent in-class learning. The correlation between a declining student population and the school budget was discussed during our budget meeting. There is no easy formula that can be applied to student enrollment and education costs. Factors including the type of services required by members of the student population and changing state and federal requirements need to be considered going forward. However, Superintendent Brand has indicated a need to evaluate the impacts of declining student enrollment on staffing requirements.

In recognition of the expected constraint on Town revenue growth this year, the School Department has agreed to limit their overall operating budget request to an increase of 2.5%. The operating budget for the Wilmington School Department is projected to increase by \$1,093,052 of which \$1,028,190 is attributed to salary adjustments. At present the department has no plans for additional staffing, however, unlike general government, the School Department has the budget flexibility to redirect funds within their aggregate appropriation at a later time for purposes that it deems appropriate.

Capital improvements call for an appropriation of \$330,000 directed primarily at technology. Plans call for a two year replacement of projectors in the elementary schools with \$100,000 recommended in each of the next two fiscal years. Existing projectors are outdated and in some instances not operable. The new projectors will have improved picture quality and a classroom sound system. Replacement of the Middle School network switches will cost \$90,000. Based upon the department's five year technology plan these switches are targeted for replacement as they are at the end of their useful life. The amount of \$68,000 is requested to replace personal computers (PCs) in the high school laboratories. Existing PCs will be seven years old in fiscal year 2022. Servers that support the security system throughout the district require replacement at a cost of \$30,000. The existing servers, which are seven years old, enable video recordings from cameras in the schools. The new servers will also have scalability for increasing the number of cameras as needed.

In an effort to obtain school building financial assistance from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) six (6) Statements of Interest (SOIs) were submitted in May of 2020 to the MSBA for each of the elementary schools. The priority school remains the Wildwood Early Childhood Center but there is a recognition that grade configuration must be evaluated while addressing the Wildwood and that a more comprehensive and integrated plan must be developed to address the elementary schools. State funding of school renovation or replacement is highly competitive. If Wilmington is invited into the program it will take five (5) to eight (8) years from the time Wilmington becomes eligible for financial assistance until a school is ready for occupancy.

The assessment for the Shawsheen Valley Technical High School is projected to increase 12.81% or \$613,145 for the upcoming fiscal year. According to School Superintendent Brad Jackson, the number of students from Wilmington is expected to increase by thirty (30) from the most recent reporting period. As of October 1, 2020 there were 246 Wilmington students attending the Shawsheen Tech. This budget number of \$5,400,000 is preliminary as the superintendent's budget had not been finalized at the time of our conversation. Superintendent Jackson stated that in light of the current circumstances he is working to limit the budget increase. This preliminary assessment is expected to be adjusted within the next few weeks once his final budget is presented to the Shawsheen Tech School Committee.

### **Reducing energy consumption by improving efficiencies of our buildings, vehicle fleet and systems throughout Town.**

Maintaining a tight "building envelope" for town facilities is one key element for promoting heating and cooling efficiency. The "building envelope" includes windows, doors and roofs. Included in the CIP for the coming fiscal year is completing design and specifications for replacement of 24,000 square feet of roof at the Shawsheen School. Sections of the existing tar and gravel roof were installed beginning in 1998. An appropriation in the amount of \$85,000 will enable the Town to obtain engineering services to prepare bid documents and a cost estimate for replacement of the elementary school roof. Plans call for seeking an appropriation at the 2022 annual town meeting to replace the roof that summer.

Work is in the early stages to complete the feasibility studies and schematic designs for a new senior center and town/school administration building. After obtaining annual town meeting approval for both projects, requests for qualifications were issued for firms to serve as the Owners Project Manager (OPM). The firms will serve as the town's representative throughout the course of the first phase which includes engaging an architect/design firm to determine a recommended location for each facility and developing the building design and construction costs. When those milestones have been achieved town meeting will be asked to fund the construction and furnishing of the new facilities. At present P3, a Norwell based OPM, has been hired to work with the town on the senior center. An OPM for the town/school administration building is expected to be engaged shortly.

Regular replacement of vehicles that are approaching the end of their useful life helps control maintenance costs and ensure that the existing fleet has more energy efficient vehicles than their prior models. While the longstanding practice has been to seek five (5) replacement police cruisers, in light of the fiscal challenges in the coming year, only two Ford Explorer Interceptor Utility vehicles are requested for \$100,000.

A school district minivan requires replacement at a cost of \$42,000. This 2013 minivan is the oldest of their minivan fleet and is approaching 100,000 miles. These vans transport special needs students and also provide pick-up and drop-off for post-graduate life skills students to their vocational jobs. Maintaining safe, reliable transportation for students is a priority.

## **Improved service delivery through utilization of technology as a tool in our organization.**

Investment in technology planned for the School Department and general government totals \$423,000 for fiscal year 2022. Technology purchases in the School Department are previously noted. Advances are being made to both hardware and software at a quickening pace. Oftentimes older technology is not supported after a few years in the marketplace. The Town must continue to adhere to a regular replacement schedule for personal computers, laptops, servers, switches and other elements of technology infrastructure.

The existing non-emergency Public Safety telephone system has not been upgraded since the construction of the Public Safety Building. Both the Public Safety and general government phone systems rely upon copper lines which are no longer replaced by Verizon. The consequence is dropped calls during inclement weather. A new phone system will provide for redundancy which currently does not exist. The existing phones are no longer manufactured or supported which raises questions about whether a non-iPitomy phone model will operate on an IPitomy phone system. Telephones remain a critical communication tool to convey information not only during this time of a pandemic but during more normal times. The estimated cost to replace the phone system with a voice over internet protocol (VOIP) is \$178,000 over three years. In fiscal year 2022, \$70,000 is requested for the first phase of this transition. The longer term plan is to integrate the Town phone system with the School Department phone system.

Replacement of the Town Hall and Public Safety Building servers is required at a cost of \$35,000. The intended replacement schedule for servers is five years. Both servers are currently at maximum CPU capacity and will not accommodate growing needs. In order to have real time access to information such as criminal records, police officers require mobile computers in their police cruisers. In many respects the cruiser serves as their mobile office. The replacement cycle for mobile computers is three to four years. Addressing this need will require an appropriation of \$30,000.

Annual town meeting appropriated \$450,000 in 2020 for the first of a three phase replacement of the public safety analog radio communications system. This second phase also requires an appropriation of \$450,000. The existing dispatch communications system is over twenty years old and is not scalable to meet the current demands for functionality. The dispatch center will be migrating from an analog to a digital communication system. This transition will result in moving off of the leased copper circuits which are unreliable and have a monthly cost to utilizing the Town's existing fiber optic network. Another key feature of this upgrade will be system redundancy to lessen the likelihood of disruption to the public safety communications system. Work during phase 1 included updating the licensing arrangements with the Federal Communications Commission for frequencies in addition to transitioning the three (3) repeaters from copper wire to the fiber optic network.

Phase two will address the purchase and installation of communication equipment. Included within this appropriation will be new repeaters, receivers, antenna and cabling. The Fire Department, which has been operating with only one communication channel will receive a second channel which will enhance their radio communication throughout Town. During the coming fiscal year the Police and Fire Departments will begin a gradual transition from the old to the new equipment while remaining fully operational.

In fiscal year 2020 funds were appropriated to replace the fire alarm alerting system and radio box fire alarm receiving system. A request for \$55,000 will complete this changeover from outdated equipment for receiving alarm signals and remove the remaining master box alarm system from the fire station. Many businesses throughout Town along with Town buildings have alarm systems that send their signal to Wilmington central dispatch which will prompt a response from police or fire. Installation of this new receiver will create redundancy so that if the first receiver is temporarily offline this new receiver will ensure that the alarm signal is received by dispatch.

**Establish and maintain a multi-year capital improvement plan to enable the Town to make informed decisions on spending, borrowing and saving for future capital improvement needs.**

Beyond being attentive to the annual costs associated with obligations to provide services and programs to the residential and business community, the Town must continuously take the long view of maintenance, upgrades and replacement associated with buildings, infrastructure, the vehicle fleet and additions to public properties. Having knowledge of these capital needs several years out enables the town to take steps such as building financial reserves to respond to those projects when they must be addressed. A conscious decision has been made over the past many years to build free cash and a capital stabilization fund.

There are multiple large scale projects on the horizon that residents will be asked to make difficult choices on. The Town's financial reserves will mitigate the impact of these projects on taxpayers. As previously noted voters approved funding for feasibility studies and schematic designs for both a senior center and a town/school administration building. Residents could be asked to approve construction of these facilities within the next eighteen to twenty four months. A fire substation in North Wilmington remains a high priority. Efforts continue to locate a site that is suitable for construction. Once the site is identified funds will be requested for design and construction. The six (6) elementary schools were constructed between 1955 and 1970. The Town is seeking assistance from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to pursue replacement of the Wildwood Early Childhood Center and possible rehabilitation or replacement of one or more of the other elementary schools.

While these projects are on "the radar" for future funding, a number of capital purchases are planned for FY2022. Reconstruction of the Shawsheen Elementary School tennis courts and basketball court are proposed at a cost of \$350,000. Design work was completed this year which calls for reclaiming the existing pavement through regrading and compacting the base material, resurfacing and repainting the courts along with installing new black vinyl fencing. The existing three (3) tennis courts and one (1) basketball court will be converted to two (2) tennis courts and two (2) basketball courts.

Funds are proposed in the amount of \$150,000 to purchase a refurbished fire pumper that will be placed in reserve status and replace the 2002 Pierce which performed that role until being disposed of due to significant frame rot. In order for the Town to retain its Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating it needs to maintain four (4) pumpers in service. The ISO rating is expected to take place in 2023 or 2024.

Replacement of a 2000 Samsung/Volvo excavator will cost \$235,000. The existing excavator is showing signs of excessive wear. This piece of equipment is relied upon during sidewalk construction, water main replacement and road construction projects. Without access to an excavator the Public Works Department will be required to rent an excavator incurring cost and project delays due to scheduling. A third sidewalk plow at a cost of \$175,000 will help address the growing sidewalk network. Currently the Town has 26 miles of sidewalks. Expansion of the sidewalk network continues annually with the ongoing work to the Lawrence Street/Shady Lane Drive sidewalks and with other sidewalk projects to follow. During the winter months timely clearing of the sidewalks is expected for both school students and adults. A 2008 Ford F350 heavy duty dump truck with over 108,000 miles is planned for replacement at a cost of \$85,000. This vehicle supports roadway construction projects and snow removal operations. The existing vehicle is experiencing excessive corrosion and requiring ongoing mechanical repairs. An asphalt hot box trailer is proposed for \$42,000. Currently hot patch is picked up at the plant and loaded into dump trucks for use in patching potholes and other road maintenance. Due to the material being transported in an open environment a portion of the material hardens en route to its destination making the material unusable. The trailer will keep the asphalt at a temperature where it will be pliable and available for use.

A major component of work performed by the Engineering Division consists of surveying. Determining boundaries is important for establishing right of ways for sidewalk and roadway projects. The existing equipment is twelve (12) years old and outdated. This budget earmarks \$25,500 to purchase a "robotic total station" which will be a reliable and accurate tool to establish survey points. The National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) is a federal law that regulates the discharge of pollutants in water bodies. The Town expects to spend \$250,000 over the next five (5) years to maintain compliance with its permit. In FY2022 the sum of \$50,000 is planned to supplement existing in-house stormwater catch basin cleaning and to assist in maintaining the system of stormwater detention basins.

When the high school fields were upgraded as part of the high school construction project completed in 2015, the Frank Kelley Track was resurfaced only. It appears that portions of the subbase have deteriorated as there is cracking along sections of the track. Engineering services will prepare specifications and design documents at a cost of \$40,000 to reconstruct the track in FY2023.

Addressing traffic flow and safety at intersections continues to be a focal point for the Public Works Department. Engineering services to design new signalization at the intersection of Shawsheen Avenue and Lake Street/Hopkins Street is proposed for \$25,000. The design work will meet current standards and enable the Town to seek funding for signal replacement in the FY2023 budget. Funds in the amount of \$20,000 are requested to install a traffic signal detection system at the intersection of Salem Street (Route 62) and Woburn Street. A similar system has been installed at Federal Street and Middlesex Avenue and permits the traffic light sequencing to adjust to the traffic queuing on each leg of the intersection. This change will allow traffic to flow more efficiently and safely through the intersection.

When the Town engaged the services of Russell Disposal for curbside collection of trash and recycling it needed to supply homeowners with trash and recycling collection barrels. The Town entered a ten (10) year contract for collection services and decided to spread the cost for the collection barrels over the life of the contract. When Russell Disposal announced to the Town that they wished to terminate the agreement in 2020 they agreed to permit the Town to make annual payments to retire the obligation. After further consideration the Town believes paying off the remaining balance is in its best interest. The balance remaining of \$365,000 is included in this budget to retire the obligation. Making full payment will save the town \$45,000 over four (4) years.

The Town has made a sustained effort to address asbestos encapsulated materials in its schools. While the asbestos containing materials (ACM) presents no imminent health risk to building occupants, it does make maintenance of the ACM area difficult and oftentimes requires the hiring of specialists to safely remove the ACM in areas being worked on. Recently ceiling tiles in the West Intermediate School were removed and replaced with new non-ACM tiles. Funds in the amount of \$527,000 are budgeted to replace ceiling tiles at the Woburn Street School. This cost includes design, monitoring and air sampling required during the abatement process. With the completion of this work, all schools with suspended ceiling tiles will be ACM-free.

The Browns Crossing Wellfield is the Town's largest remaining producer of water in Wilmington. Mineral deposits and sand from soils surrounding the wells reduce production capacity over time. The budget calls for expending \$130,000 from water revenue to clean fifteen (15) wells and the associated piping in the wellfield. Similar work is planned for redevelopment of wells in the Shawsheen Avenue and Salem Street wellfields. Cleaning these wells enables the Town to draw the maximum allowable amount of water from these sources efficiently and lessen the reliance on water from the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA). This project will also be funded from water revenue.

Replacement of the water main at the intersection of Lowell Street and Woburn Street in the amount of \$125,000 is planned for the coming year. Since intersection improvements to be funded by the state through their Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) are scheduled to be taking place, this presents an opportune time to upgrade this undersized line while work is being conducted at this location. This work will be funded through water rates.

The sum of \$40,000 will be expended from the sewer enterprise fund to relocate an underground sewer pump station control panel aboveground. Since the control panel is slated for repairs, now is an appropriate time to relocate this Main Street pump station aboveground. Twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) will be expended from the sewer enterprise fund to replace a pump at the Shawsheen Commons pump station. This is one of two pumps at this location and is over 25 years old.

Capital improvements for fiscal year 2022 total \$4,664,500 and break down as follows:

Funding Source	Expenditure
Chapter 90	\$ 750,000
Tax Levy	\$ 1,042,500
Free Cash	\$ 2,252,000
Water	\$ 555,000
Sewer Enterprise	\$ 65,000

Eight (8) new voting machines are recommended at a cost of \$45,000. The existing machines are a 2000 model that were purchased in 2004. Purchase of the new machines is recommended in the coming fiscal year due to concerns over how long the vendor will continue to maintain these machines and an expectation that the Secretary of the Commonwealth will require communities to have updated voting machines. When the 2020 census is finalized the population in Wilmington is expected to necessitate the addition of a new voting precinct beyond the six (6) precincts currently in place. Maintaining a spare voting machine is a best practice in the event that one machine must be temporarily removed from service.

The complete listing of capital projects can be found on pages 71 through 73 of the budget book.

**Develop policies, plans and tools to enhance our financial capabilities, reduce risk and improve efficiency and operations.**

A revenue and expenditure forecasting model developed for the Town by the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management in 2018 continues to assist with making projections beyond the annual time horizon.

Through the efforts of Bryan Perry, Finance Director/Town Accountant; Kerry Colburn-Dion, Assistant Town Manager/Human Resources Director; Pamela MacKenzie, Treasurer/Collector; Karen Rassias, Principal Assessor and Valerie Gingrich, Planning & Conservation Director the Town once again affirmed its AA+ bond rating with Standard & Poors. This was particularly significant given that the timing of the rating took place during the economic downturn brought on by COVID-19.

By refinancing of the high school debt, the Town has accelerated the declining debt payment by \$227,973 in fiscal year 2022. This savings comes in addition to a savings of \$168,300 by retiring the debt associated with the Shawsheen School window replacement project and the aerial tower truck in the Fire Department. Relatively speaking as compared with other communities Wilmington's debt as a percentage of the operating budget is quite low at approximately 3.0%. Creating debt capacity is a key step in the financial planning required for the multiple building projects that are expected to be coming in the next several years.



Financial policies serve as a tool for keeping the community on track. The challenge is having the discipline to “stick to the plan” or policy in this case. The benefit of maintaining that discipline was confirmed in the financial rating offered by Standard & Poors. Once again this year the Town will continue to commit to earmarking funds to address long term obligations. One million dollars (\$1,000,000) will be directed from the tax levy to the capital stabilization fund. Once again one million dollars (\$1,000,000) is being directed toward addressing Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB). Finally in an effort to reduce the Town’s pension liability \$1.5 million will be paid to the Middlesex County Retirement System above and beyond the annual retirement assessment. This contribution will mark six (6) years of “pre-payments” on the Town’s retirement liability. A total of \$6.0 million will be prepaid since fiscal year 2017. The Middlesex County Retirement System’s actuary confirmed that the \$3.0 million in pre-payments made through fiscal year 2020 represent a reduction in future pension obligation of \$6.7 million. When rating agencies consider a community’s financial well-being consistency of actions and predictability are key factors.

## PERSONNEL

Departments were advised that given the expected ongoing financial storm in FY2022 additional positions would not likely be possible. Nevertheless, a few requests were made for new positions or converting part-time positions to full-time positions. Each request was considered carefully. Department heads are well aware of the current climate and understand that we are in this together. After careful consideration two full-time positions are being recommended.

First is the funding of an additional police sergeant. For the past few years the former police chief and current police chief have made a strong case for additional personnel in this department. The calls for service, the diversity of calls and in many cases the time required to deal with these calls is increasing. In spite of the increasing level of activity the police department continues to divide the Town into three sectors for patrol purposes which has been the case for five decades. During discussions in preparing the fiscal year 2021 budget Police Chief Joseph Desmond again recommended two additional patrol positions and two additional sergeant positions. My recommendation at that time was to take a phased approach by funding one patrol and one sergeant position in fiscal year 2021 and the same in fiscal year 2022. In light of the economic uncertainty we are currently facing and based upon discussions with Chief Desmond the recommendation is for one new sergeant position this year with plans for one new patrol position in fiscal year 2023. The additional sergeant position would modify the command staff to include, beyond the Police Chief and Deputy Police Chief, five (5) lieutenants and seven (7) sergeants. The base salary for this position is expected to be \$74,525.

The Public Buildings Department has also experienced a growing demand for service. While most buildings have custodians assigned to them on a daily basis, due to staffing limits some buildings such as the Library, Senior Center and Veterans’ Services share a custodian or rely upon a relief custodian. Prior to COVID-19 when restrooms at the Yentile Farm Recreation Facility were open to the public, having personnel available to clean those facilities was challenging. During the current fiscal year the former Town Hall, which for many years served as host to the Wilmington Arts Council, was converted to space for the Wilmington Public Schools Student Support Services. While the Art’s Council used the building on a limited basis, the former Town Hall is now being used five days per week during the school year and hosts twelve employees. The establishment of a new relief custodial position will allow for regular cleaning at the former Town Hall building and provide for more coverage at the little West School which is home to the Veterans’ Services Department. The amount of \$49,771 is budgeted for this salary.

Overtime costs budgeted for the Fire Department and the Central Dispatch Department are expected to increase dramatically next year over the appropriations for FY2021. The addition of eight (8) new positions in the Fire Department should have led to a reduction in overtime. A combination of retirements, constraints of the Civil Service hiring process and the impacts from the onset of the pandemic have not

enabled the department to be fully staffed. The addition of eight positions was expected to increase the shift strength to 11 fire fighters with an expectation of not backfilling on overtime unless shift strength fell below 10 fire fighters. Currently based upon trained available personnel the department continues to staff to 9 per shift. The conditions required to see a reduction in overtime are: (1) issuance of a new Civil Service candidate list with certified EMTs, (2) the declining impact of COVID-19, (3) resolution of a longstanding work injury claim and (4 )personnel graduating from the academy that are able to be counted on a shift.

Residents at the June 2020 annual town meeting funded one additional position in the Central Dispatch Department to address overtime. Filling vacancies in this department continues to pose challenges. The pool of qualified candidates applying for the position has been limited. The screening process further winnows the number of suitable candidates for consideration. Several candidates have withdrawn their applications during the screening process, obtained other employment or after being hired and trained determined that the position is not what they expected and resigned. Still other individuals who work in dispatch for a period have a goal of becoming a police officer or fire fighter. Two (2) dispatchers transferred to the Fire Department in 2020. The contractual requirement to use earned time before the end of the year also leads to a flurry of requests for use of time in the fourth quarter of the calendar year further exacerbating overtime. Recruiting is ongoing with the goal of identifying candidates that are well suited for the position.

## **CONCLUSION**

To suggest that this past year has been one like no other is a major understatement. In January of 2020 a global pandemic and the repercussions to follow were not something ever contemplated by most people. For far too many, the impact from COVID-19 has been far too personal and far too tragic. While there has been much that has divided us across the state, across the country and throughout the world, one unifying force has been the desire to protect our loved ones and make COVID-19 - history.

Locally, we have much for which to be thankful. While the risk of personal exposure to COVID has been high, fire and police personnel have continued to deliver the same professional, calm and compassionate service for which they have become known. Dispatchers, oftentimes the unsung heroes of the public safety triad, continued to convey clear and accurate information to police and fire colleagues and to calmly and professionally communicate with anxious callers. With the collaborative efforts of the Board of Selectmen, the Town Moderator, the Finance Committee, the Town Clerk, tellers and checkers and personnel from Public Buildings, Public Works, Police, Fire and the School Department we held the Town's first outdoor annual town meeting under "the big tent." And by all accounts, it was a success.

The Town Clerk's Office and her cadre of election staff and a supporting cast from the departments previously mentioned conducted an efficient and accurate Presidential Election at the Shriners Auditorium. The IT Department ably guided us into the new world of "Zoom" to replace our in-person meetings hosting countless "Zoom sessions" day and night over the past ten (10) months. Personnel in departments like Elderly Services, Veterans Services, Library and Recreation adjusted their entire operations to remain accessible and respond to the "new norm." Staff in the Recreation Department became "utility players" assisting the Town Clerks Office, the Health Department and wherever they were needed.

Building maintenance personnel revamped working spaces with protective barriers while custodians cleaned and disinfected schools and Town building on a regular basis, many times following cases in which employees left work reporting COVID symptoms. Public Works personnel continued to accommodate grieving family members at Wildwood Cemetery, maintain Town parks and ensure that residents had access to clean, potable water.

Throughout this pandemic the Health Department has become the calm in the eye of the storm disseminating timely data, responding to questions at all hours and compassionately walking concerned residents and local business managers through the changing protocols associated with COVID testing, social gatherings and requirements to quarantine. Employees across all departments along with volunteers on boards, committees and commissions have stepped up and continued to perform the people's business in spite of the pandemic. You may not be singled out by name but please know that each one of you play a vital role in the operation of local government and that your commitment over the past year has been more important than ever before. Thank you for your service.

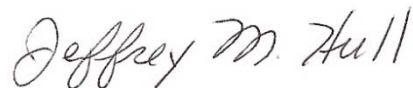
It was clear at the outset of developing the FY2022 budget that this coming year would be difficult. Many people remain out of work. Businesses in town are struggling to remain solvent. Many residents are restricted to their homes and desperate to avoid isolation from family and friends. The resources at the state level have been stretched to the limit. My goals in drafting this budget were to limit the overall budget increase to no more than 1% above the current budget, to avoid layoffs, to enable departments to continue to provide the programs and services residents have come to expect and to continue to invest in facilities, infrastructure and equipment. This budget proposal hits all the marks.

The consequences of this pandemic have made this an incredibly challenging year and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. But in the words of former British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli "There is no education like adversity." I think it is fair to say we have all learned a great deal about our ability to adapt, to adjust and to carry on.

With the conclusion of this budget presentation I look forward to questions and comments from the Board of Selectmen and now pass the torch to the Finance Committee to take the public process of finalizing the Town's budget from here. You will no doubt review the details and pose many questions over the next several weeks. It now becomes the work of the department heads and me to offer clarity where needed, to "make the case" for recommendations and to listen and consider different perspectives.

Finance Committee meetings via Zoom begin tomorrow at 7:00 p.m. and will continue on Tuesday and Thursday evenings through February before concluding in early March. Following the conclusion of the joint Finance Committee/Planning Board public hearing again via Zoom on March 16<sup>th</sup> the Finance Committee will meet on March 18<sup>th</sup> to make recommendations on the budget and warrant articles with the expectation that the Finance Committee recommendations will be published and distributed to residents in advance of the May 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Town Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Jeffrey M. Hull  
Town Manager