

Town Of Greenville 2002-2003 Budget

1st Draft – Town Manager – Department Heads – Completed March 20, 2002
 2nd Draft – Town Manager – Selectmen – Review April 1 & 3, 2002
 3rd Draft – Budget Committee – Selectmen – Review April 4, 2002

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Introduction

As in previous years, the Town of Greenville is faced with declining funding from the State of Maine, increasing needs for funds at the school, and aging public infrastructure throughout the community. Our current total assessed value for the Town of Greenville has declined in the past year as the value of the Greenville Steam Plant was reduced from \$9.6 million to \$4.3 million. A recent abatement request which was not granted by the Board of Assessors may go to appeal, resulting in the need to keep a larger-than-usual overlay. The landfill costs have gone up due to the need to fully-fund the reserve account for the eventual closure of the facility. Despite the increase in GPA and the retention of a cushion in the state's funding of education, the Greenville schools will still lose about \$25,000 in GPA under the best scenarios, and apparently have to raise their foundation amount by over \$200,000, just to get this lower amount of aid. Look down the road and consider that student enrollment at the Greenville schools is projected to drop by another 85 students over the next ten years, that Greenville's second largest tax payer – Greenville Housing Corporation – is filing for a change in their IRS tax status which may result in exempting them from roughly ½ of their current property tax burden, and you can see that we as a community have some problems.

This budget does not provide for everything that we need as a community. It replaces less than ½ of the computers in the town office and police department which need replacing (due not only to being outdated, but also multiple hardware failures). This budget reduces the amount of money available for Public Works to complete necessary roadwork this summer. This budget does not address the needs for greater professional leadership and administration work within the fire department. This budget does not provide sufficient funding to address our need for an improved municipal building. This budget does not provide for any way to improve winter maintenance of sidewalks, nor to prevent the erosion of lawn edges through our current sidewalk winter maintenance program. This budget does not meet all of the requests from service groups seeking funds. This budget generally does not provide for employee raises beyond 3% cost-of-living adjustments.

General Government – Up \$18,798 from last year – Increase of 9.67%

The largest increase is \$15,000 for the municipal building reserve account, followed distantly by \$1,955 more for the contract with TRIO software just to keep the same services we have, followed by another \$1,833 to update our software to a windows-based environment (TRIO runs on DOS currently). The clerks and I recommend the upgrade to Windows as we will be utilizing the MOSES software program this year provided by Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. This new system allows all IF&W transactions to be done electronically with Augusta. The system is mandatory if you perform more than 500 transactions per year, which we easily do. The system is Windows-based, which will require getting "out" of DOS-based TRIO to perform a MOSES transaction. If we would switch to Windows-based TRIO, hang-ups would be less likely. We already have times when the computer lock up in the middle of a transaction: we are told that this is due to the strain on computer resources, using both windows and DOS based programs at this time. Finally, the cost for the maintenance of the web site will go up by about \$900: money well spent, as Greenville's site is one of the best in the region. The total increase is more than \$900, but the extra will be included in the school budget as more information regarding the school will be added to our site. Wages increased by 3%.

The increases may be totaled as follows:

- Building Reserve - \$15,000
- TRIO contract increase - \$ 1,955
- TRIO upgrade - \$ 1, 833
- Web Site - \$ 900
- Wage increases: \$ 3,375
- TOTAL: \$23,063
- Offsetting cuts: (\$ 4,265)
- NET INCREASE: \$18,798

Furthermore, I am recommending to the Board of Selectmen that the Municipal Building Reserve Account be funded through unappropriated surplus, therefore not increasing the amount to be raised by taxes. If this is done, the percent increase to the budget which affects taxes drops to 1.95%. One of the items NOT included in the general government account is an improved telephone system. Our current system does not allow for calls to "roll over" from one line to another. As a result, many people calling the Town Office get a busy signal. Furthermore, basic functions such as picking up a line which has been put on hold, or signaling that a line is already in use, do not work on all of the phones all of the time. Our phone system is over ten years old, and should be upgraded. The quote we got from Sierra Communications (formerly Taylor Telephone, the company which installed the original Centrex phone system), is for \$4,900 as a one-time fee, or \$111 per month for 60 months. After considering our various needs, I have opted to pull this proposal out of the budget this year, although our phone system desperately needs improvements.

Public Safety – Up (at least) \$21,306 – increase of 6.27%

Working backwards from the order within the spreadsheet, the single-largest increase which we will have to absorb is the \$15,000 increase in hydrant rental associated with Consumer Maine Water Company's 14.85% increase in rates across the board. Police Department cruiser maintenance increased slightly (\$350), wages increased 3%, and \$600 has been proposed for an extra officer to patrol the downtown area during the busiest part of the summer months. The police cruiser reserve increased by \$1,000 to meet the schedule for replacement set 6 months ago (see appendix).

The Fire Department budget has gone up by \$6,940, mostly to accommodate the increase in minimum wage, and various insurance premium increases. There are several costs listed for various options for creating the position of professional fire chief (as in paid professionally). The current fire chief has presented a proposal to the Board of Selectmen, asking to make his position full-time. I have listed the cost to the Fire Department budget to fund the position full time and also ½ time, and also for \$5,000 in "discretionary funds" to pay for the Chief to perform certain duties during business hours. The Board of Selectmen will consider these proposals in the very near future. A breakdown of increases in these budget lines is listed below:

Hydrant rental increase: \$15,000
 Fire Department Increase: \$ 6,940
 Police Department Increase: \$ 4,941
 Offsetting cuts (various): \$ 5,575
 TOTAL INCREASE: \$21,306
 Additional cost for disc.
 Funds for fire chief: \$ 5,000
 Cost for ½ time chief: \$16,000
 Cost for full-time chief: \$32,000

Public Works – Up \$209 – increase of .09%

Last year, Public Works accounts increased quite a bit to accommodate the need for long-overdue roadwork in several areas. Mike Thornton and I have consciously tried to "hold the line" this year in order to keep the mill rate low, and trying to do the same amount of work as we did last year. There are various budget figures listed here as well, depending upon what happens with the fire chief's position. Since Mike Drinkwater works full-time as an operator / laborer for Public works, the Public Works budget would be affected should he vacate all or part of his position: his replacement would start at a lower wage than Mike earns currently as a 14-year municipal employee.

Although we are hoping that next winter will be fairly mild (as were the last two), we have purposely reduced our funds for summer roads this year. There is much work to be done, but we are postponing some of it in order to keep the budget low. We had hoped to rebuild (to some extent) at least 1 ½ miles of the Scammon Road: now this distance will probably be ½ to 1 mile. We had hoped to work on ditching and culvert replacement along the Drew Road, Woodland Drive, Dorr Street, and Spruce Street: now, only ½ of these projects will be done. We will be working with the MDOT on a retainage pond at the base of Scammon Road as part of the Lily Bay Road project. Also, we will be utilizing MEMA funds to complete a similar retainage pond project on Shoals Road.

New equipment for Public Works has been dropped to just \$1,500, to cover the cost of a new hydraulic jack for use during truck repair and maintenance, and also a new drill press. The current jack leaks hydraulic fluid like a sieve, and has been known to release suddenly while in use. The jack is a non-commercial grade jack, which is why it has not lasted. The new drill press is simply an upgrade: the current drill press is old and

starting to show its age. A transit for setting grades was considered, but pulled from the budget request by Foreman Mike Thornton, in an effort to lower the cost of the total budget.

I have added one line for Public Works: a personal safety equipment allowance. In discussion with the three-member Public Works Department, each worker goes through 2-3 pairs of pants and at least a couple shirts each year, ruining them with axle grease, motor oil, raw rock salt, paint, sparks from the welder and/or torch, or any number of other work-related hazards. Although it is hard to isolate these costs, one cost is easier to ascertain: the cost of steel-toed work boots. The work done by the Public Works crew requires steel-toed boots. These boots are bought by the workers at their expense. Through use and exposure to rock salt and calcium, these boots typically last no more than two years for each worker. I have added a line to reimburse full-time Public Works employees for their purchase of steel-toed work boots once every two years. I figure this reimbursement will help to defray the total cost borne by these employees for work clothes and work boots.

Health & Welfare Accounts – down \$850 from last year, a decrease of 3.85%

Although total requests this year from various service groups totaled over \$26,000, I have recommended funding some of these requests at lower amounts than last year, and cutting other requests out all together. One request which should be noted is that from the Charlotte White Center. Although the Center continues to deliver services to Greenville residents, and although they make an appeal to all Piscataquis municipalities each year, the Center decided NOT to request any municipal funds this year, out of consideration for September 11 and the worsening economy which resulted. I for one appreciate their consideration for the big picture, and for our budget.

I have invited representatives from these different groups to come before the Budget Committee at their first meeting April 4. I have also made recommendations (as seen in the spreadsheet) for how to fund these requests. Essentially, I kept the same amounts given out for the past two years, with the singular adjustment of funding the Piscataquis County Soil & Water Conservation District request of \$200, reducing the amount to be given to one of the other groups (Eastern Area Agency on Aging) by the \$200. I further rounded the amount to be paid to Penquis CAP from \$2,100 to \$2,000 even. These last two groups mentioned are requesting far more than what I am recommending, or what was given to them in each of the past two years. I believe these requests should be pared back, just as municipal department accounts are being pared back significantly.

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