

Proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

The Selectboard has proposed a fiscal year 2027 budget that will balance the needs of the community with the pocketbooks of taxpayers. Part of this process includes long overdue Capital planning to replace the sand shed this summer and several older Highway Department vehicles requiring costly repairs in the coming years. The total proposed municipal budget of \$1,609,903 is up 8 percent or \$120,234. The amount to be raised in taxes is \$1,184,804. The proposed budget is available online at www.wallingfordvt.com under the Government heading on the Home page then Town Meeting in the drop down menu. Annual Town Reports will be distributed in mid-February.

For a closer look at budget numbers, the Administration section of the budget is \$599,375. This represents a 3 percent or \$19,125 increase. Three percent cost of living raises were given to employees and there's an anticipated \$5,650 increase on line 5025 for all insurances - unemployment, liability, health, dental, etc. - from \$107,550 to \$113,200.

The Town Government section of the proposed budget is \$257,114, up \$67,194 from the current \$189,920. The increase is due to Grant Expenses line 5027 in the amount of \$68,670. These funds will be used for required local matches for two grants: the Town was awarded \$800,000 to replace School Street sidewalks and after setting aside Asset Fund (formerly ARPA) for the local match, the Town needed to budget \$57,350 for the balance. Sidewalk construction will begin this spring. The Town was also awarded \$13,187 to update the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan as required by FEMA. FEMA cut funding for this program last April, so the Town obtained a grant for this \$13,000 expense requiring a 10 percent local match.

The Appropriations' budget of \$84,764 is up \$189. Nearly every line was level funded. Unfortunately, that means the Town had to turn down Gilbert Hart Library's request for a \$5,000 increase.

The Highway Budget of \$435,915 increased just \$1,355 from the current \$434,560. Most lines were level funded.

The Public Safety budget of \$84,535 is up slightly. The Board hoped to increase weekly police patrols, However, with unavoidable adjustments in other areas of the budget, the decision was made to increase line 5406 Special Police Officer Contract to reflect the anticipated 5 percent increase in Rutland County Sheriff services.

The Capital Budget of \$101,500 is up \$20,000 from the current \$81,500. The Board has diligently worked on a multiyear Capital plan to replace the dilapidated sand shed as well as outdated Highway Department equipment –including the 2016 Kenworth dump truck and the 2011 Caterpillar backhoe – both of which are costing the Town significant dollars in ongoing repairs. For this year, the Board opted not to put the usual \$40,000 into the Bridge Fund line 5712 in order to increase the Highway Reserve Fund line 5716 from \$20,000 to \$80,000. The plan is to use the reserve fund in this next fiscal year to help pay for the cost to replace the sand shed and in future years to replace the 2016 Kenworth dump truck and eventually replace the 2011 Backhoe.

The Recreation budget of \$46,700 is up \$8,400 from the current \$38,300. We need to resurface and repair the tennis court at a cost of \$8,328, so line 5805 Maintenance was increased from \$4,000 to \$12,400. Resurfacing is needed every five years or so.

As you review the proposed fiscal year 2027 budget, you will see many line items were level funded or reduced. Of the \$120,234 increase - \$68,670 will be used for local matches for important grants; \$5,650 for insurance increases; cost of living adjustments of \$12,000 for employees; \$8,400 for needed tennis court resurfacing and repairs; \$2,900 added for three elections in the fiscal year; and we've increased the overall Capital budget by \$20,000 for much needed future planning.

Finally, Capital Planning for the Town of Wallingford is overdue. By comparison, here is what some of our neighbors set aside annually in their budgets:

Annual appropriations to highway equipment reserve funds

- Plymouth - \$130K
- Clarendon - \$100K
- Shrewsbury - \$85K
- West Rutland - \$80K
- Danby - \$70K (50 for equipment, 20 for highway structures)
- Ira - \$60K
- Wells - \$50K
- Pawlet - \$50K
- Middletown Springs - \$40K (20 for equipment, 20 for highway buildings)
- Proctor - \$30K
- Wallingford - \$20K (fiscal year 2026).

The Selectboard urges voters to attend any upcoming Selectboard meeting (first and third Mondays of each month) and/or the Monday, March 2, 2026 annual Informational Meeting at Wallingford Elementary School at 7:00 p.m. to review the budget or ask questions.