

For the Week of December 11, 2017

Manager's Message of the Week Dawn Francis, Town Manager

Proposed Budget FY19

The proposed FY 19 budget maintains our current level of service and addresses increased service demands caused by slow, steady growth over the past decade.

Budget and Tax Rate

The **Operating Budget** is comprised of twenty-five service categories. Five of these service categories have been reduced. Before factoring in non-tax revenues, the operating budget increase is 2.9%; after subtracting revenues, the net operating budget funded by property taxes increased by \$170,538 or 1.67%. Changes are comprised of:

- 1.1% (\$138,496) to maintain current services
- 1.8% (\$225,500) for additional services including:
 - \$41,000: Volunteer fire department operating and capital expense increases, including local match to a federal grant program to fund two full-time firefighters to provide daytime coverage
 - \$76,000: Rescue staff member to address rescue call increases of 25% since 2011
 - \$35,000: Parks staff changes from two seasonal positions to one year-round position.
 - \$73,500: Police staff change to add an additional police officer to address needs growth including 91 commercial properties and 1,335 residential units since 2000

The **Capital Budget** consists of capital borrowing and capital plans that have been previously authorized by voters. The capital budget totals \$1,661,705 and increased by \$21,376 or 1.3% over the FY 18 capital budget. The local option tax will pay for \$594,463 in voter approved projects. *The property tax funded portion of the capital budget is \$1,067,242 and increases by \$12,125 or 1.1% over last year.*

The **Combined Operating and Capital Budget** is \$11,459,649, net of non-property tax revenues. This is an increase of 3.2% (\$355,367) over the FY 2018 Combined Budget. With an estimated 1.29% growth in the Grand List the estimated municipal tax rate for FY 2019 is \$0.5370. *The tax rate is estimated to increase by one cent or a 1.89% increase over the prior year.*

Reduced Taxes

- In June 2017, the Selectboard set the FY 18 Town tax rate of \$0.5271 per hundred dollars of property value. *This rate was less than the rate of \$0.5370 set seven years ago for the FY 2012 tax bills.*
- Based on 2017-18 taxes, our rate is the second lowest per resident among the seven inner Chittenden county communities.

How is this tax rate reduction possible?

Budget Approach

- Minimize Expenses (1.1% increase for same level of services)
 - Focus first on holding down and reducing expenses
 - Constant re-evaluation of service delivery
- Maximize Non-Property Tax Revenues
 - Fee based service evaluation
 - Increase in non-tax revenues, such as fees and grants, which cover \$2,157,913 or 17% of the general fund budget
 - The establishment of a stormwater utility reduced the property tax generated budget by \$387,180.
 - Without the stormwater utility, the FY 18 tax rate would have been \$0.5454, lower than the FY 2013 tax rate.
 - Revised approach to budget savings by applying it to future years' financial obligations and reduced taxes. Savings from approach was \$153,000 in FY 15 and \$266,000 in FY 17.
 - The use of local option tax to fund \$627,964 of voter approved debt previously paid by property taxes.
- Property Taxes are “last dollar in”
 - Growth and investment in Colchester increased property value by \$150,005,900 (7.7%) from 2012 to 2018.

Additional Budget Information can be found at <http://colchestervt.gov/349/Budget-Documents>

For more about Town Administration visit <http://colchestervt.gov/manager> or call (802) 264-5509.

Police Department
Jennifer Morrison, Police Chief

Holiday Charitable Drives at CPD

Colchester Police Department gives back to the community all year long. This holiday season we are once again participating in “**Operation Firecuffs**” which is now in its 7th year! Santa Claus and representatives from participating agencies deliver new toys and other gifts to kids (infants to ‘tweens) who are spending the holidays in the Children’s Hospital at the UVM Medical Center. Donations from the public are welcome! Toys may be dropped off at the Colchester Town Offices or the Police Department. Suggested items include rattles and mobiles for babies; musical, pop-up, stacking, and stand & walk toys or large blocks and trains for toddlers; Legos, art kits, and athletic gear for school-age kids; nail polish, body lotion, and journals for tweens. Gift cards for iTunes, Walmart, Best Buy, grocery stores, casual restaurants, bowling, or movies would be appreciated as well.

CPD is also participating in the UPS / WCAX3 **Mitten Tree**. Donations of new or handmade mittens, gloves, hats, scarves, and socks for children and adults will be delivered to schools, daycares, and shelters. Spread a little warmth this winter!

You may donate items at the Colchester Town Offices (781 Blakely Road) or Colchester Police department. Operation Firecuffs donations may be made until December 13th, with delivery on the 14th. You may donate to the Mitten Tree through the holidays.

For more about these programs visit the Colchester Police Department’s Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ColchesterVTPolice/>.

Rescue and Technical Rescue Squads
Amy Akerlind, Rescue Chief

November was one of our slower months this year, with 105 calls for service. Until one and a half years ago, 105 calls was considered a busy month. In comparison, in 2017 we averaged 125 calls per month. August was extremely busy, with 161 calls for service! To date, that is a record month for us. As of December 5th we’ve already had 28 requests for service!

Increased call volume is not unique to Colchester. Ambulance services throughout this district have been seeing significant increases in requests for their services. We turn calls over to other agencies when we’re already on a call and we also go into neighboring communities when they have multiple calls at once. In the month of

November we turned over 7 calls and responded to neighboring communities 17 times.

Overall, our call volume (as of December 5th) was ahead of last year by 187 calls. We will probably hit around 1500 calls by year's end! That is an average of four calls a day, most of which come in between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM.

For more about Colchester Rescue, please visit <http://colchestervt.gov/rescue> or call (802) 264-5990.

Upcoming Town Meetings:

- **Selectboard:** Tuesday, December 12, 6:30 PM
- **Recreation Advisory Board:** Wednesday, December 13, 7:00 AM, Champlain Room, 2nd floor
- **Development Review Board:** Wednesday, December 13, 7:00 PM
- **Conservation Commission:** The December meeting has been **cancelled**.
- **Selectboard:** The December 26 meeting has been **cancelled**. The next meeting of the Selectboard will be January 9, 2018.

(All meetings take place at the Colchester Town Offices, 781 Blakely Road, in the Outer Bay Conference Room on the 3rd floor unless otherwise noted.)

Reminder: The winter Parking Ban is now in effect through March 15. There is no parking on Town-owned roads or parking lots from 10 PM to 6 AM.

Events:

- **Colchester's Got Talent Auditions:** January 18, 2 - 8 PM, Colchester High School Performing Arts Center.
- **Colchester Winter Carnival:** February 2, 3, & 4, 2018 at Colchester High School: "Wacky World of Science."
- **NEW! Balaclava Blitz: Winter Sprint Triathlon!** Sunday, February 18, 9:00 AM at Bayside Park. 3K run, 5.6K Mountain Bike, and 5K Nordic ski course. Racers must be 16 or older.

For more on these events visit our website (Parks and Recreation) or call 264-5640.

Notices:

- The Town Offices will **close at noon** on Friday, December 22 in observance of Christmas Eve and will be **closed** on Monday, December 25, in observance of Christmas.
- The Town Offices will **close at noon** on Friday, December 29 in observance of New Year's Eve and will be **closed** on Monday, January 1, 2018 in observance of New Year's Day.



Colchester Town News

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