



Town of Northwood 2021 Voter Guide Summary

Voting Day: June 8, 2021 7:00am to 7:00pm

Northwood Elementary School



Know the Facts and Vote!

As Town voting day approaches, we would like to be sure all Northwood voters are equipped with the facts so they can make an informed decision in the voting booth on June 8th. Your votes on the Town's warrant articles will determine the course of our community for 2021 and beyond. This flyer highlights the key points we would like the voters to know. More information is provided in the full Voter's Guide, which is available on-line and in print. If you have questions regarding any warrant article, please contact any Select Board member or the Town Administrator. We hope to see you at the poll!

Respectfully, Your Northwood Select Board

Fact: The estimated Town tax rate for 2021 if *all* warrant articles, as amended, are approved is \$3.95/\$1000. (This estimated rate is net of estimated revenue, credits and overlay) This is a *decrease* of \$.28 over the 2020 rate of \$4.23. This is a 6.6% rate decrease over the 2020 Town rate. *These figures have been reviewed and confirmed to be accurate by our Town Administrator and our Finance Director.*

Fact: The Town has developed a solid, multi-year fund balance plan that takes into consideration the Town's needs and the tax rate. The plan is critical for two reasons; 1. Maintaining a sufficient fund balance will assist the town with cash flow needs throughout the fiscal year avoiding the need to borrow funds in anticipation of taxes, which is costly. 2. Using the fund balance to offset typical annual cost such as contributions to capital reserve funds and some capital purchases helps maintain a stable tax rate from year to year while making improvements that protect the best interests of the Town.

Fact: *The Select Board and the Budget Committee were unanimous in recommending approval of the 2021 operation budget.* It not only includes increases in uncontrollable cost of operations for 2021 such as employee benefits, energy costs and wage adjustments, but also includes the increases in the 2019 and 2020 operations costs. A good example is waste disposal costs, which are up over 40% vs. 2018. A default budget will limit the Town's ability to provide critical services and keep the town moving forward.

Fact: Spending was restricted in 2020 due to the concerns of significant revenue shortfalls caused by the pandemic. The Board was urged by both Budget Committee Members and citizens-at-large to freeze spending starting in April. The prudent decision by the Select Board to follow this advice resulted in an unexpended balance of approximately \$500,000 *of which \$477,000 is being returned to taxpayers through funding articles 15, 22, 23 and 25.*

Fact: A total of \$385,403 was spent in 2020 for reclaiming and paving Tasker Hill Rd, Harvey Lake Rd, and Ridge Rd. That work was funded by a \$350,000 warrant plus and additional \$35,403 from the operating budget.

Fact: An additional \$249,734 was spent performing regular road maintenance. This brings the total spent on road maintenance to \$635,137. In addition, the red-listed Bow Lake Road Bridge was replaced using over \$700,000 in trust funds and state grants.

Fact: The Select Board made a firm commitment to spending the Town's road funds wisely. Without an updated road management plan, there were serious reservations about continuing roadwork in 2021 at historical levels. The \$150,000 requested in Warrant Article 17 will let us address the most obvious / critical projects without falling too far behind. An updated road surface management plan, to be completed later this year, will provide the data that will enable us to develop a cost-effective approach to our road maintenance for the coming years.

Fact: Maintaining our 32 miles of Town roads will always be our greatest financial challenge. Deferring our repair and maintenance will be more costly in the long term. Often times it is the unexpected costs that are most difficult to deal with. Approval of Warrant 25 will enable us to address those issues as well as smooth out the tax rate in years when the necessary work deviates from the historical average.

Fact: The need for improvements to our safety facilities is clear. Unfortunately, in today's real estate market it is not realistic to expect a seller to wait until a town vote for purchasing approval of the necessary land. Approval of Warrant 22 would let us address that issue. *Prior to any final commitment to purchase any property for a new public safety facility, the Select Board must hold a public hearing to receive public comment on the proposed purchase. That will include specific details of the purchase and the results of any studies that may have been done on the site.* Use of the current fund balance for this article will return a portion of the previously raised taxpayers' money as part of the fund balance management plan.

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