

**Town of Northwood
818 First NH Turnpike
Northwood, NH 03261**

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TOWN OF NORTHWOOD 2023 VOTER GUIDE

This leaflet is provided to assist you in deciding how to vote on each question. We recognize that a lengthy ballot can be frustrating, but it is a reflection of allowing you, the voter, to have input on what the priorities are to spend money on. Do you want clean lakes & recreation facilities? Do you want to address the critical needs of the Police & Fire facilities? These are among the questions on the 2024 ballot. We trust you will find the facts continued in this guide helpful.

Article 1: Elections To choose all necessary officers for the ensuing year.

Articles 2-7 Are revisions to the Northwood Development Ordinance as recommended by the Planning Board.

□ **Article 08: 2024 OPERATING BUDGET**

The Municipal portion of your Tax Bill is 14% of the overall bill you receive, 4% is the County and the remaining 82% is State & Local Education combined.

The Budget Committee's proposed 2024 operating budget for the town provides funding for the basic functions of all our departments and services. The overall change in non-payroll spending in the operating budget from last year is \$92,617 (This is the net of \$147,000 overall increase less \$55,000 for the police cruiser. Cruisers are now included in the budget at the direction of the Budget Committee and the auditors). This 7.5% increase for all other non-payroll items reflects inflation that we are all witnessing. Payroll expenses (wages, taxes, NHRS and insurances) increased by 6.4% (\$260,405) for all existing positions. The additional staffing needed to deliver the essential functions of the Town and perform regular and necessary maintenance added \$80,366 to the payroll expenses. The 2023 winter sand /salt and plowing lines were underfunded requiring an additional \$21,000 to be allocated to budget based on a 5-year average.

The Default Budget does not fund staffing for all essential functions, it does not fund the increases in Health Insurance premiums or the market rate adjustments in wages necessary to retain our life safety personnel nor the customary Grade/Step wage adjustments for all our employees, and it does not keep pace with the inflationary costs of delivering essential services. A default budget means the level of our critical services and our discretionary services will be adversely impacted.

This budget is recommended by a majority of the budget committee 10-5 and is recommended unanimously by the Selectboard.

□ **Article 09: Fire Dept. Ambulance Lease Payment**

Lease payment for the ambulance funded via ambulance revenues with no impact on taxes. If this article is defeated the vehicle must be returned and the town loses the \$100,000 down payment and all prior lease payments.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

□ **Article 10: Fire Dept. Fire Apparatus Lease Payment**

Lease payment for the tanker funded via ambulance revenues with no impact on taxes. If this article is defeated the vehicle must be returned and the town loses the \$300,000 down payment and all prior lease payments.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

□ **Article 11: Highway Dept. Dump Truck Lease Pay**

Lease payment for the town's highway dump truck purchased in 2019. If this is defeated the vehicle must be returned and the town loses all the money it has spent in prior years.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

□ **Article 12: Town Employee Cost of Living Increase**

To attract and retain qualified and capable employees in all town departments, we must keep our wages competitive. Given inflationary pressures, the customary step / grade increases will be insufficient to retain our personnel.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

□ **Article 13: Road Improvement ETF Deposit**

Funding in this article will allow the town to continue to follow the road surface management plan which was updated in 2021. As we continue to follow our road plan, we are seeing our focus change from major reconstruction projects to more preservation methods which are much less expensive. If we want to ensure this trend continues, we need to complete the proposed work as scheduled by the road plan.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

□ **Article 14: Northwood Public Safety Facilities**

This funding is needed to take the next steps in addressing the critical need for new police and fire facilities. This includes professional site evaluations and facility design / engineering.

This article is recommended by a majority of the budget committee 10-1 and is recommended unanimously by the Selectboard.

□ **Article 15: Narrows Station Roof Replacement**

This station to remain a component of the Northwood Public Safety facilities as recommended by the Safety Facilities Committee and so we need to spend the money to protect it.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

□ **Article 16: Fire Dept. Fire Apparatus Purchase**

The current E3 is 28 years old and needs to be replaced. With new engines' prices over \$1Million and delivery times approaching 2 years, a used apparatus is the most practical and cost-effective solution for Northwood. There are sufficient Special Revenue Funds for this purchase.

This article is recommended by a majority of the budget committee 10-1 and is recommended unanimously by the Selectboard.

□ **Article 17: Establish a Winter Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund**

2023 was underfunded in the sand, salt & plowing line items, and by the end of the March there were no monies available for winter maintenance for Oct – Dec 2023. This Fund allows us to budget in the operating budget based on previous averages over 5 years and hold a reserve in case of those bad years when winter arrives early, and storms roll in once a week.

This article is recommended by a majority of the budget committee 10-1 and is recommended unanimously by the Selectboard.

□ **Article 18: Building Maintenance ETF Deposit**

This article replenishes funds into the facilities expendable trust fund to fund current and future significant repairs, and improvements of Town buildings. In 2023 significant roof repairs were made to the town hall and the community hall totaling over \$30,000.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

Article 19: Lagoon Maintenance & Repair ETF

To see if the Town will vote to expand the use to include the development and implementation of the closure plans required by DES. (non-monetary article, no impact on taxes)

Article 20: Lagoon Maintenance & Repair ETF Deposit

The septage Lagoons must be closed in accordance with DES rules, the current closure plan is out-of-date, and funds are needed to develop that plan and then execute it. Initial estimates for this approximately \$350K +/- No more user fees being collected...5-6 years of appropriations before we can complete the closure.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

Article 21: Transfer Station ETF

To see if the Town will vote to expand the use to include the development and implementation of the closure plans required by DES. NOTE: This is for closure of the landfill, NOT closure of the transfer station operations. (non-monetary article, no impact on taxes)

Article 22: Transfer Station ETF Deposit

The Transfer Station must have a closure plan as a component of the operations plan in accordance with DES rules. Funds are needed to develop that plan and then execute it with regards to the old landfill site and accumulated glass. Initial quote \$1M. Current ETF balance \$256,000, fees deposited approximately \$75,000, anticipated implementation would be in approximately 10 years.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

Article 23: Highway Equipment Excavator Purchase

For the past 5 years the Highway Department has rented an excavator for 3-4 months each year. Renting for 4 months a year would cost the town \$18K annually. Purchasing the equipment and having it available year-round is a much better option for the town.

This article is recommended by a majority of the budget committee 9-2 and is recommended unanimously by the Selectboard.

Article 24: Benefit Vested Time ETF Deposit

This fund is dangerously underfunded, with a balance of \$5,052 and a potential liability of \$191,900.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

Article 25: RT 4 Recreation Field Improvements

Continuation of funding for basic improvements to the upper fields.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

Article 26: Recreation Facilities CRF Deposit

Funding to expand our recreation facilities beyond just youth sports.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

Article 27: Creating a Full-time Assistant Librarian

As with other town departments, part-time positions do not attract or retain qualified candidates. The Library Director is the only full-time employee; the Assistant Librarian and the Technology Librarian are currently part-time employees working 30 hours per week. We request that the Assistant Librarian become full-time at 35 hours per week.

This article is recommended by a majority of the budget committee 9-2 and divided the Selectboard 2-2.

Article 28: Master Plan Update

Approval of this article will allow the planning board to continue the work of updating the Town's Master Plan, focusing on the Economic Development chapter.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

Article 29: Establish a Fire Hydrant Expendable Trust Fund

Eliminates an ineffective budget line item. Funds repairs and new installations.

This article is recommended by a majority of the budget committee 13-2 and is recommended unanimously by the Selectboard.

Article 30: Discontinue Police Station Expansion CRF

To see if the Town will vote to discontinue this fund. Housekeeping question to correct a recording error. (non-monetary article, no impact on taxes)

Article 31: Discontinue Highway Safety CRF

To see if the Town will vote to discontinue this fund. Housekeeping question to close an unfunded and unused fund. (non-monetary article, no impact on taxes)

Article 32: User Fee ETF Deposits

Annual deposit of Cable, Transfer Station and Cemetery user fees to the appropriate Trust Funds (no impact on taxes).

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

Article 33: Terrestrial Invasive Species ETF Deposit

Continuation of our efforts to control terrestrial invasive species such as the Emerald Ash Borer and Japanese Knotweed.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee and the Selectboard.

☐ **Article 34: Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention ETF Deposit**

Continuation of our efforts to prevent aquatic invasive species from entering our lakes and ponds.

This article is recommended unanimously by the Budget Committee, with 1 abstention, and the Selectboard.

☐ **Article 35: Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Purpose**

*Expands the purpose to include prevention of cyano-bacteria, which closed our Lakes multiple times in 2023.
(non-monetary article, no impact on taxes)*

☐ **Article 36: Aquatic Invasive Species Treatment Purpose**

*Expands the purpose to include treatment of bacterial events.
(non-monetary article, no impact on taxes)*

☐ **Article 37: Conservation Easements**

*To place conservation easements on Town owned property for the conservation of wildlife habitat, forestry, and recreation, as recommended by the Conservation Commission.
(non-monetary article, no impact on taxes)*

☐ **Article 38: 250th Anniversary ETF Purpose**

*With the 250th anniversary behind us this question allows for the fund to be used for the next anniversary celebration at 275 years.
(non-monetary article, no impact on taxes)*

☐ **Article 39: Lease of Church Facilities**

By Petition – to see if the town should enter into a non-exclusive lease with Northwood Congregational Church.

This article is recommended by a majority of the budget committee 9-5 and not recommended by the Selectboard unanimously.

☐ **Article 40: Land Use Admin. Asst**

By Petition – to see if the town will fund the part-time Land Use Administrative Assistant position in the event the voters return a default budget. The Board appreciates the petitioner's recognition of the importance of this position; however, it is much more important to pass the operating budget, which includes this position, so we can deliver all the essential services the town needs - including police, fire, plowing, etc.

This article is recommended by a majority of the budget committee 13-1 and is recommended unanimously by the Selectboard.

☐ **Article 41: Building Inspector/Code Enforcement**

By Petition – to see if the town will fund the full-time Building Inspector/Code Enforcement position in the event the voters return a default budget. The Board appreciates the petitioner's recognition of the importance of this position; however, it is much more important to pass the operating budget, which includes this position, so we can deliver all the essential services the town needs - including police, fire, plowing, etc.

This article is recommended by a majority of the budget committee 13-1 and is recommended unanimously by the Selectboard.

Article 42: Video Access to Public Meetings

By Petition – to see if the town will create a policy requiring all meetings of public bodies with the ability to expend money or is charged with oversight of elections to record their meetings and make them available on the town website. (non-monetary article, no impact on taxes)

Article 43: Vehicle Purchases

*By Petition – to see if the town will purchase / lease vehicles in a manner consistent with the best interests of the town.
(non-monetary article, no impact on taxes)*

Please Note:

Tax impacts are estimates because they are based on the current property valuations and revenue estimates. As in previous years, they are likely to change by the time we set the actual tax rate for these warrants. The revenue total used to calculate the net impact of the operating budget does not include any use of any fund balance at tax rate setting.

If you have any question regarding any of the warrant articles on this years' ballot, please contact a member of the Select Board or our Town Administrator, Neil Irvine at 603-942-5586 ext. 2020. Thank you and please remember to vote!



**Please Remember to Vote
March 12th, 2024
at Northwood School Gymnasium
511 First NH Turnpike
from 7:00am to 7:00pm**

THIS IS NOT A BALLOT

	YES	NO
Article 8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 11	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 13	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 14	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 15	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Article 38	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 39	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 40	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 41	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 42	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article 43	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Mark this page as you read through the Voter's Guide and bring it with you to help complete your official ballot on voting day, March 12th at the Northwood School, 7am-7pm.