



Town of Wayland Massachusetts

Finance Committee

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Finance Committee Budget Recommendation

The Wayland Finance Committee is pleased to recommend a budget to Town residents that preserves our valued services and meets our financial obligations. Just as importantly, our budget keeps a tight lid on taxes. We urge you to read the Warrant and plan to attend Town Meeting to support our budget.

Our operating budget fully funds the Superintendent and School Committee's responsible budget request. With a few exceptions, we fully funded the Town-side budget requests, including the Police Department's request for an additional officer and the requested appropriation for Wayland Cares, a long-term substance abuse program previously funded by federal grants.

Our capital budget and recommendations on capital articles are supported by a long-term capital improvement program and many years of planning. We support building a new Department of Public Works facility. The existing facility is dilapidated and needs to be replaced now. Overall, our capital budget reflects a sober assessment of our needs, paring or delaying projects that are not essential or ready.

We continue to budget for long-term liabilities such as employee retirement and other benefits. This year, we were pleased to see a real payoff after years of hard work in controlling health care expenses. Thanks in large part to the healthcare changes we implemented for employees and retirees over the past five years, not only do our current healthcare expenses continue to run lower than our peers and nationwide averages, but our actuaries tell us that our annual obligation to fund Other Post-Employment Benefits was cut almost in half.

We minimized multiyear tax increases by approving tighter expense budgets and demanding better revenue estimates, as well as by applying a judicious amount of free cash to the budget. First, the Town tightened up expenses, most importantly by taking a zero-based approach to the Unclassified budget for the first time. We re-allocated expenses between the General Fund and the Enterprise funds like Water and Wastewater. The improved operations of the Board of Assessors helped us in two ways, by returning overlay surplus and by seeking a lower overlay reserve this year.

We caution taxpayers not to focus on the one-year change in the projected average tax bill. Last year, the Finance Committee recommended—and Town Meeting agreed—to return excess free cash to taxpayers the only way we could: by using \$6.5 million of it to effectively buy down property taxes for one year. We couldn't do that again even if we wanted, given our current free cash balances. The only realistic way to maintain last year's artificially low taxes would be to cut services.

Almost no-one in Wayland has called for any service cuts, let along the drastic cuts required to sustain last year's low property taxes. After rebounding from last year's temporary dip in property taxes, we estimate that the FY 2014 property tax rate will be essentially the same as it was three years ago.

A long time ago, Thomas Jefferson noted that in America we are not governed by the majority; we are governed by the majority of those who

participate. Make your voice heard. Attend Town Meeting and support the recommended budget.

Full budget details are included in the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. The Warrant is already posted on the Town's website, and it will be mailed out to residents on March 21st. Additional copies are available at the Library and in the Town Building. Town Meeting starts Thursday, April 4, 2012.

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