

WARNING
VILLAGE OF OLD BENNINGTON ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING
May 8, 2018

The legal voters of the Village of Old Bennington are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Old First Church Barn in said Village on Tuesday May 8, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. to transact the following business from the floor:

- (1) To hear the reports of the Village Officers and to act thereon.
- (2) To discuss and approve the budget for fiscal year 2018-2019.
- (3) To set the taxes to be appropriated by the Village to pay the expenses of the ensuing year and to determine how and when the Village will collect such taxes.
- (4) To see if voters will authorize the Trustees to borrow monies in anticipation of taxes.
- (5) To elect the following officers:
 - a. Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer and Tax Collector, and Auditor for a term of one year.
 - b. Three trustees for a term of two years.
- (6) To consider whether the Village should adopt the website OldBennington.org as its official website.

By order of the Trustees
April 3, 2018

Ronald E. Rabidou
Acting Clerk, Village of Old Bennington



Old Bennington Board of Trustees

Annual Report

May 8, 2018

Annual Meeting

The Village's Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 8, 2018, at 7:00 pm in The Old First Church Barn.

This Annual Report contains the materials that the Village Officers will discuss during the business session.

Village Officials

Two long-serving Village Officials, Donna Berry with nearly 50 years of service as Village Clerk, and Don Miller with many years as Trustee, are both leaving the Board this year. We wish to thank them both for their long years of service.

Both need to be replaced for the coming year. The Trustees are actively soliciting nominations for these important positions, both before the meeting and during it.

Please help! If you have questions about the duties associated with a position, please contact any of the current Village Officials for information. And if you have time to devote to the Village, please nominate yourself for service

Roads Commissioner

By Andy Buchsbaum

Due to a lengthy winter, the village spent more on the salting and plowing of sidewalks and roads than was budgeted. The March storms, each of which lasted multiple days, depleted our salt reserves so that even the regional salt supplier ran short on product. In the end we had to replace the salt with a sand/grit mixture which requires more clean-up than usual. Additionally, Jerome Construction will repair lawn edges that have been inadvertently damaged by the sidewalk plow.

Upcoming road projects include the state-funded Rt. 9 repaving plan, which will extend from the Four Chimneys to the museum. The timing of this construction has not yet been determined. The long-awaited museum crosswalk will be built this season. This is a cost-sharing project in conjunction with the town.

The addition of a length of curb that was planned for the western edge of the South Island spur will be postponed due to a shortage of funds.

In general, the village roads are in decent condition. Minor patching and repairs, and some re-striping will be taken care of.

State officials are coming to the village in mid-April to discuss grant opportunities for both Bank St. and the sidewalk on the western side of Monument Ave. The size of the gravel-lined drainage swale along the north edge of Bank needs to be evaluated, along with some of the driveway culverts which are compromised. The swale may need modification along its entire length as a first step toward potential roadbed repairs later on.

There has been much discussion about the condition of the sidewalk on the western side of Monument Ave. The Trustees' proposal is to apply for a 50/50 matching-funds state grant to help defray costs. Several options - with graphics - will be presented at the annual meeting, but below is a summary of each (with estimated costs). Please bear in mind that it is the general opinion of the Trustees that one of these options needs to be implemented due to safety concerns.

- **Option 1:** complete reconstruction of the current sidewalk from the end of the new northern section (#11 Mon. Ave.) down to the Wright's entry pathway and turn towards the street (586' total). A new crosswalk would connect to the east side of Monument Ave., just north of the Bank St. intersection. All sidewalk sections south of this point would be removed and re-seeded with grass. **\$55,000**

(A Phase 2 scenario could also replace/add another 566' of sidewalk down to the Laumeister driveway. \$47,950)

- **Option 2:** replace intermittent sections of broken sidewalk along the length described in Option 1 (230' total), leaving intact those sections and lengths that are in serviceable condition. Install a new crosswalk near Bank St., remove the remaining sections to the south, and re-seed that section with grass. **\$25,000**
- **Option 3:** complete removal of the sidewalk as described in Option 1 (675' total). Backfill with soil and re-seed with grass. Install a new crosswalk where the current northern section ends and connect to the east side. **\$30,000**

It is a state requirement that the village's share to complete a project be accounted for in the upcoming village budget. The plan is to budget \$30,000 to take care of any one of the three options listed above. For Option 1 this assumes an approximate 50% village-share with a 50% grant-match from the state.

We will discuss each of these options and choose one at the annual meeting.

Police Commissioner

By Charles Edson

Police Activity

The Streets of Old Bennington have been without a major incident over the past year. Officer George "Andy" Corey continues to serve in an outstanding manner as police officer for the Village with much success at helping to reduce driving speeds and assisting residents by checking their homes while they were absent. He continues to update his skills by attending appropriate training classes. The police car has functioned well, but now needs occasional repairs.

Bennington Police Chief, Paul Doucette, has been very helpful by placing speed monitoring machines that provide significant traffic data and by supplying additional patrols in the Village. We thank the Town of Bennington for the help they provided this past year.

The Trustees approved an in-

crease of hours for Officer Corey last year. His additional hours have a very positive impact on the speeding and truck problem.

Every year in my Annual Report, I have requested residents to lock their doors when absent from their homes. Again, I request that you lock your doors! Please also lock your vehicles when not in use, even if they are in a garage.

Officer Corey has increased his vacant-home inspections, and this consumes more of his time than previously.

We again thank Dr. Richard J. Mahler for allowing the Village to store the police car in his garage. We appreciate his generosity.

We recommend that villagers do not exceed the **speed limit of 25 mph** on Village streets (30 mph on Route 9).

Bennington County Regional Commission

I attend BCRC meetings and serve on the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC reviewed all proposed transportation projects for the county and placed them in priority order for VTrans. Old Bennington has no projects on the list this year.

Some of the presentations at BCRC meetings:

- A program on Vermont Conservation Design. Conservation Design maps can be found on the ANR's Biofinder website and the Natural Resources Atlas.
- A discussion on state tax

policy and how some may encourage subdivision. He also discussed possible mechanisms that would promote consolidation of parcels to incorporate them into the Use Value program

- A discussion of work done at the Nature Conservancy focusing on climate change resiliency and the fact that there is considerable overlap with the Conservation Design block analysis.

- A presentation on substance abuse and help available.

- A presentation on healthcare initiatives.

- A presentation on important initiatives underway in the region. The BCRC has been assisting the Collaborative with development of a "A Primer for Health, Wellness, & Substance Abuse Prevention Planning in Bennington County" that will be a useful planning tool for our communities.

- A Discounted Home Energy audit can be done for \$100, and a rebate program can save up to \$8,000 on things such as:

- Upgrading insulation
- Sealing air leaks
- Replacing furnaces
- Installing heat pumps
- Upgrading a water heater

- A presentation on 'Best Farm Development'

- An overview of the work of the ANR River Management Program, how it has helped to develop new procedures for flood management, stream alteration permitting, and interfacing with local officials, regional planning commissions, and others.

Parks Commissioner

By Susan Wright

Work continued on the Old First Church Marker garden throughout 2017. The marble paving stones surrounding the marker were cleared of encroaching grass and the turf was compressed for a more even transition from stone to grass. Some of the pavers have sunken significantly creating depressions. We plan to have these raised and reset to grade level.

The village received some generous donations which enabled the purchase of spring bulbs. These bulbs were planted by the UVM Master Gardeners, who donated their time to do so. An educational tie-in involved Monument Elementary students who participated in the planting. There are still funds available in the flower fund so that the Master Gardeners can plant summer annuals to compliment the perennials that were planted in 2016. The spring and summer displays should be very appealing to visitors to the Old First Church area.

We would like to remind residents that with the coming of spring, there is much clean up to do on private properties. We thank all of you who have maintained your grounds over the years. Pembroke will be doing the spring cleanup of village streets and parks.

Tree Commissioner

By Ron Rabidou

We are assessing the health of the trees in the village greens – many are quite old and a few show signs of decay. Given the importance of these trees to the character of the village, we want to preserve them when possible and replace them when necessary.

Since maintaining, removing, and replacing trees involves substantial cost, we are developing a plan to spread the expense over several years. As some of you may know from experience, removing and replacing a single tree can cost several thousand dollars. During the last ten years, we have spent an average of just \$1,700 per year on trees. It seems likely we'll need to spend more in coming years to maintain this important resource.

During the past year, several residents removed dead or diseased trees from the village right-of-way. Working with these residents, we plan to replace two of the trees this spring – one a sugar maple, the other an Autumn Blaze maple.

Just a reminder concerning two Village Ordinances. First, residents need the permission of the trustees to remove any trees or shrubs in the public right-of-way bordering their property (generally, the public right-of-way extends about

twenty-five feet from the center of the road). Second, residents should keep the right-of-way clear of any trees or shrubs that may obstruct vision or safe passage of pedestrians or vehicles, especially low hanging branches that interfere with seeing traffic signs or walking on sidewalks. Also, in some circumstances, residents may need a zoning permit to remove trees from their front yards. Residents should contact the Tree Commissioner with any questions.

Proposed Village Website

Several months ago, a village resident developed an unofficial website for the village:

<https://oldbennington.org>.

As you can see, the website contains information about the village and village officials. It also includes notices, agendas, and minutes relating to village meetings as well as documents such as annual reports, newsletters, zoning bylaws, ordinances, and historical papers.

Over the course of several meetings this year, the trustees considered adopting the website as the official village website. Discussions concerned the cost and effort of maintaining the website, potential legal liabilities, and alternatives to an official website such as email lists and continued use of NextDoor.com.

The trustees learned that the cost of maintaining the website would be less than \$150 per year. The only additional work entails posting documents to the website, little more effort than attaching a document to

an email. The only legal consideration requires the village to post documents to the website at the same time as it posts them to three physical sites in village.

We also recognized that both email lists and NextDoor.com may involve privacy issues. For the village to set up an email list, residents must share email addresses with the village. And NextDoor.com requires that residents register with the website, a commercial site containing advertisements. In any case, sending items to an email list or posting items on NextDoor requires as much work as posting items on a dedicated website.

The trustees also considered the potential benefits of an official website. It would provide most, if not all, village residents with timely access to important information about the village. It would also facilitate maintaining and distributing village documents at less cost than printing and mailing (or hand delivering) such documents.

For example, we last printed our village ordinances in 1998. If residents want to see an up-to-date copy of the ordinances, they need to request copies of the original document and all subsequent ordinances from the village clerk, involving both time and effort on the part of residents and the clerk.

With a website, residents could simply read the updated document online. Residents without computers or internet access could still request documents from the village clerk

or access documents online at the town library. Neither an email list nor NextDoor would provide the same access to such documents.

Lacking a consensus, the trustees decided to let residents vote on the matter at the annual meeting. We look forward to your input.

Auditor

By Dale Cobb

I have met with Kathy Wagenknecht, the Village Treasurer, on several occasions and examined all the records for the accounting year of 2017-2018.

Each month, Kathy files the bank statements, deposit slips, invoices, check stubs and the accounting software reports in a folder. I have reviewed all the documents within those folders and everything appears to be in order and within normal operating procedures for the village.

I commend Kathy on her outstanding job of being organized and for the excellent handling of village finances.

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# Treasurer & Tax Collector

By Kathy Wagenknecht

## BENNINGTON & OLD BENNINGTON TAXES

Contrary to popular belief, Old Bennington taxes are **LESS EXPENSIVE** than Bennington taxes.

As you are aware, residents of Old Bennington receive two property tax bills, one from the Town of Bennington and the other from the Village of Old Bennington.

There are five categories of tax rates that account for these property taxes. Three of these, Local Agreement, Fire, and School, are the same for residents of Bennington (Town) and Old Bennington (Village).

The other two categories, General and Highway, are different for Town and Village:

- Village Residents pay Village General Taxes IN ADDITION TO Town General Taxes.

|                            |               |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Town General Rate          | 0.6747        |
| Village General Rate.      | <u>0.0400</u> |
| <b>General Rate we pay</b> | <b>0.7147</b> |

- Village Residents pay Village Highway Taxes IN PLACE OF Town Highway Taxes.

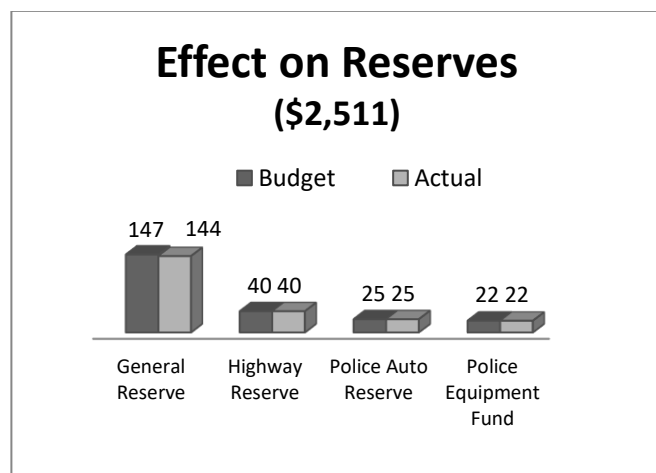
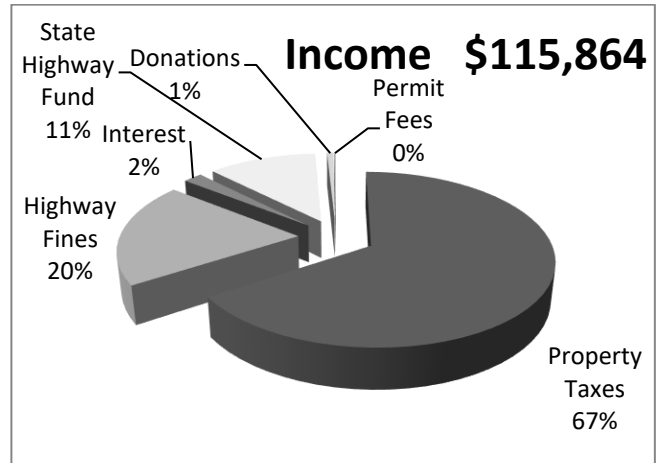
|                            |               |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Town Highway Rate          | 0.3848        |
| Village Highway Rate.      | 0.1950        |
| <b>Highway Rate we pay</b> | <b>0.1950</b> |

The good news is that your house, if it were located in Bennington, would be taxed at a rate of 0.1498 MORE THAN YOU CURRENTLY PAY. That amounts to an additional \$149.80 per \$100,000 of home value assessment.

**The best news is that NO TAX INCREASE is proposed for 2018-19.**

*Note: Tax rates were supplied on Jan 4, 2018, by Melissa Currier, Finance Director, Town of Bennington.*

## FINANCIAL REPORT



**2017-2018 Financial Report**

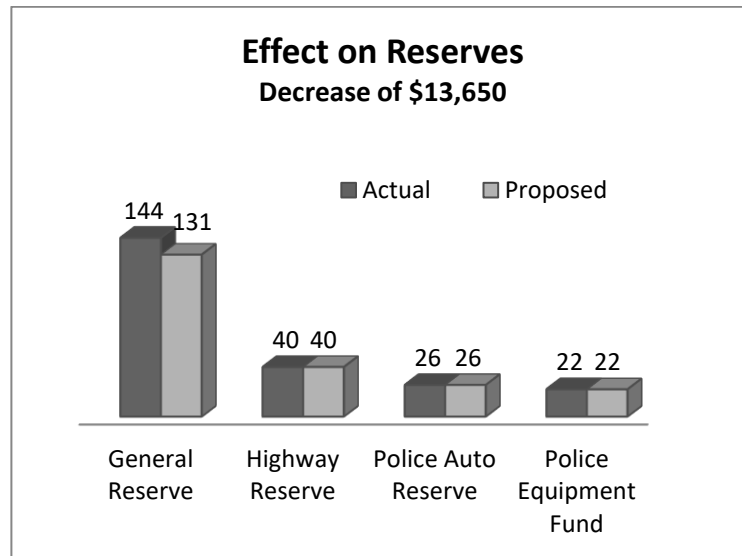
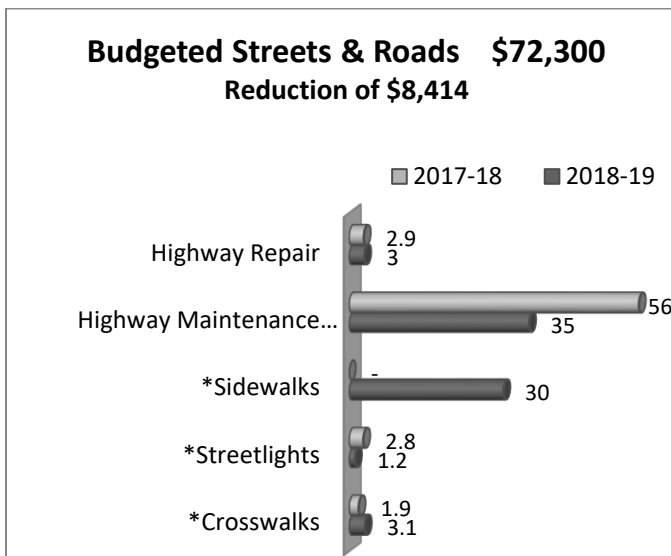
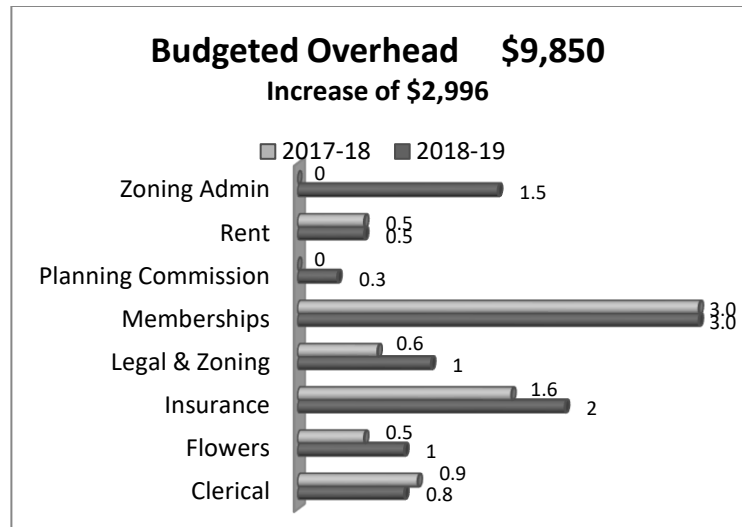
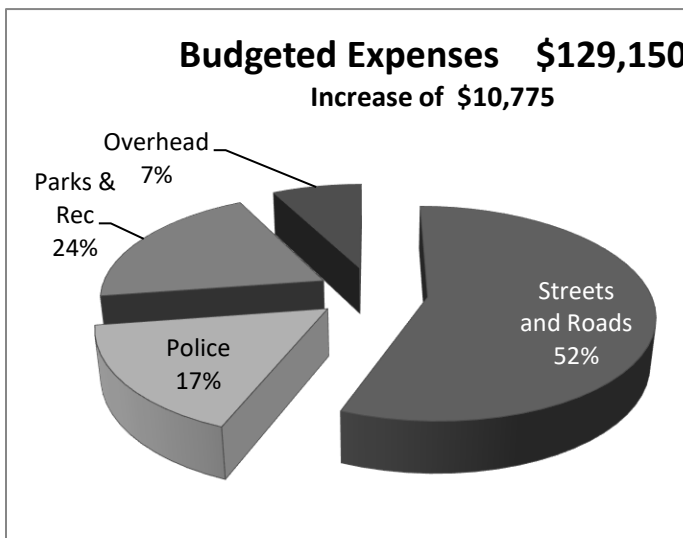
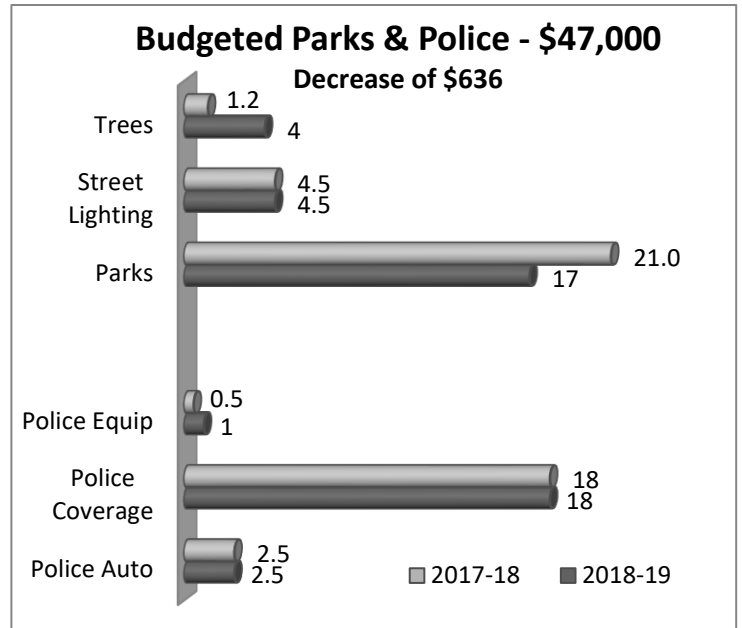
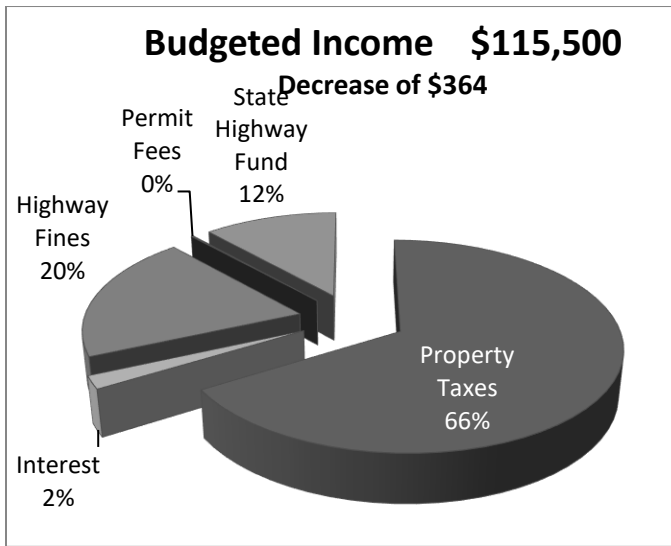
April 1, 2016- March 31, 2017

|                                                  | <b>2017-18<br/>Budget</b> | <b>2017-18 Actual</b> | <b>Variance</b>   |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>INCOME</b>                                    |                           |                       |                   |
| Donations                                        | \$ -                      | \$ 800                | \$ 800            |
| Highway Fines                                    | \$ 19,000                 | \$ 22,950             | \$ 3,950          |
| Interest                                         | \$ 1,600                  | \$ 2,336              | \$ 736            |
| Permit Fees                                      | \$ 500                    | \$ 165                | \$ (335)          |
| Property Taxes                                   | \$ 76,600                 | \$ 76,222             | \$ (378)          |
| State Highway Fund                               | \$ 13,400                 | \$ 13,391             | \$ (9)            |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>                              | <b>\$ 111,100</b>         | <b>\$ 115,864</b>     | <b>\$ 4,764</b>   |
| <b>EXPENSE</b>                                   |                           |                       |                   |
| <b>STREETS &amp; ROADS</b>                       |                           |                       |                   |
| Capital Construction--Highway                    |                           |                       |                   |
| General                                          | \$ -                      | \$ 1,315              | \$ 1,315          |
| Crosswalks                                       | \$ 5,000                  | \$ 1,868              | \$ (3,132)        |
| Lighting Fixtures                                | \$ 2,700                  | \$ 2,788              | \$ 88             |
| Sidewalks                                        | \$ 2,500                  | \$ -                  | \$ (2,500)        |
| Highway Maintenance (Salt & Plowing)             | \$ 35,000                 | \$ 56,300             | \$ 21,300         |
| Highway Repair                                   | \$ 13,000                 | \$ 1,615              | \$ (11,385)       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                     | <b>\$ 58,200</b>          | <b>\$ 63,886</b>      | <b>\$ 5,686</b>   |
| <b>POLICE</b>                                    |                           |                       |                   |
| Police Auto Expense                              | \$ 4,000                  | \$ 2,469              | \$ (1,531)        |
| Police Coverage                                  | \$ 18,000                 | \$ 17,983             | \$ (17)           |
| Police Equipment                                 | \$ 2,000                  | \$ 544                | \$ (1,456)        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                     | <b>\$ 24,000</b>          | <b>\$ 20,996</b>      | <b>\$ (3,004)</b> |
| <b>PARKS &amp; RECREATION</b>                    |                           |                       |                   |
| Parks                                            | \$ 17,000                 | \$ 20,947             | \$ 3,947          |
| Street Lighting (Power)                          | \$ 4,500                  | \$ 4,497              | \$ (3)            |
| Trees                                            | \$ 4,000                  | \$ 1,195              | \$ (2,805)        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                     | <b>\$ 25,500</b>          | <b>\$ 26,639</b>      | <b>\$ 1,139</b>   |
| <b>OVERHEAD</b>                                  |                           |                       |                   |
| Clerical                                         | \$ 800                    | \$ 911                | \$ 111            |
| Flowers                                          | \$ 500                    | \$ 451                | \$ (49)           |
| Insurance                                        | \$ 2,000                  | \$ 1,617              | \$ (383)          |
| Legal & Zoning                                   | \$ 1,000                  | \$ 579                | \$ (421)          |
| Memberships                                      | \$ 2,700                  | \$ 2,796              | \$ 96             |
| Planning Commission                              | \$ 2,000                  | \$ -                  | \$ (2,000)        |
| Rent                                             | \$ 600                    | \$ 500                | \$ (100)          |
| Zoning Administration                            | \$ 1,500                  | \$ -                  | \$ (1,500)        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                     | <b>\$ 11,100</b>          | <b>\$ 6,854</b>       | <b>\$ (4,246)</b> |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>                             | <b>\$ 118,800</b>         | <b>\$ 118,375</b>     | <b>\$ (425)</b>   |
| <b>NET INCOME (LOSS) transferred to Reserves</b> | <b>\$ (7,700)</b>         | <b>\$ (2,511)</b>     | <b>\$ 5,189</b>   |

| <b>RESERVE ACCOUNTS</b> | <b>Actual as of<br/>4/1/17</b> | <b>Actual Net<br/>Income (Loss)</b> | <b>Actual as of<br/>3/31/18</b> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| General Fund            | \$ 146,754                     | \$ (2,511)                          | \$ 144,243                      |
| Highway                 | \$ 40,000                      | \$ -                                | \$ 40,000                       |
| Police Auto             | \$ 25,500                      | \$ -                                | \$ 25,500                       |
| Police Equipment        | \$ 22,090                      | \$ -                                | \$ 22,090                       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>            | <b>\$ 234,344</b>              | <b>\$ (2,511)</b>                   | <b>\$ 231,833</b>               |



**PROPOSED BUDGET**



**2018-2019 Proposed Budget  
April 1, 2018 - March 31, 2019**

|                                                  | <b>PROPOSED<br/>2018-19 BUDGET</b> | <b>2017-18 Actual</b>       | <b>Variance</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>INCOME</b>                                    |                                    |                             |                 |
| Donations                                        |                                    | 800                         | (800)           |
| Highway Fines                                    | 23,000                             | 22,950                      | 50              |
| Interest                                         | 2,300                              | 2,336                       | (36)            |
| Permit Fees                                      | 200                                | 165                         | 35              |
| Property Taxes                                   | 76,600                             | 76,222                      | 378             |
| State Highway Fund                               | 13,400                             | 13,391                      | 9               |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>                              | <b>115,500</b>                     | <b>115,864</b>              | <b>(364)</b>    |
| <b>EXPENSE</b>                                   |                                    |                             |                 |
| <b>STREETS &amp; ROADS</b>                       |                                    |                             |                 |
| Capital Construction--Highway                    |                                    | 1,315                       | (1,315)         |
| Crosswalk (Museum)                               | 3,100                              | 1,868                       | 1,232           |
| Lighting Fixtures                                | 1,200                              | 2,788                       | (1,588)         |
| Sidewalks                                        | 30,000                             | -                           | 30,000          |
| Highway Maintenance (Salt & Plowing)             | 35,000                             | 56,300                      | (21,300)        |
| Highway Repair                                   | 3,000                              | 1,615                       | 1,385           |
| TOTAL                                            | 72,300                             | 63,886                      | 8,414           |
| <b>POLICE</b>                                    |                                    |                             |                 |
| Police Auto Expense                              | 2,500                              | 2,469                       | 31              |
| Police Coverage                                  | 18,000                             | 17,983                      | 17              |
| Police Equipment                                 | 1,000                              | 544                         | 456             |
| TOTAL                                            | 21,500                             | 20,996                      | 504             |
| <b>PARKS &amp; RECREATION</b>                    |                                    |                             |                 |
| Parks                                            | 17,000                             | 20,947                      | (3,947)         |
| Street Lighting (Power)                          | 4,500                              | 4,497                       | 3               |
| Trees                                            | 4,000                              | 1,195                       | 2,805           |
| TOTAL                                            | 25,500                             | 26,639                      | (1,139)         |
| <b>OVERHEAD</b>                                  |                                    |                             |                 |
| Clerical                                         | 800                                | 911                         | (111)           |
| Flowers                                          | 800                                | 451                         | 349             |
| Insurance                                        | 2,000                              | 1,617                       | 383             |
| Legal & Zoning                                   | 1,000                              | 579                         | 421             |
| Memberships                                      | 3,000                              | 2,796                       | 204             |
| Planning Commission                              | 250                                |                             | 250             |
| Rent                                             | 500                                | 500                         | 0               |
| Zoning Administration                            | 1,500                              |                             | 1,500           |
| TOTAL                                            | 9,850                              | 6,854                       | 2,996           |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>                             | <b>129,150</b>                     | <b>118,375</b>              | <b>10,775</b>   |
| <b>Net Income (Loss) Transferred to Reserves</b> | <b>(13,650)</b>                    | <b>(2,511)</b>              | <b>(11,139)</b> |
| <b>RESERVE ALLOCATIONS</b>                       |                                    |                             |                 |
|                                                  | <b>2019 Proj Reserves</b>          | <b>2018 Actual Reserves</b> | <b>Variance</b> |
| General Reserve & Carryover                      | 130,593                            | 144,243                     | (13,650)        |
| Highway Reserve                                  | 40,000                             | 40,000                      | 0               |
| Police Auto Reserve                              | 25,500                             | 25,500                      | 0               |
| Police Equipment Fund                            | 22,090                             | 22,090                      | 0               |
| <b>TOTAL RESERVE FUNDS</b>                       | <b>218,183</b>                     | <b>231,833</b>              | <b>(13,650)</b> |