

WARNING
VILLAGE OF OLD BENNINGTON ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION
August 11, 2020

As permitted by Section 4 of Act 92 (2020), the Trustees voted to conduct the business of this year's Annual Meeting by Australian Ballot. Voters will decide the following matters:

1. Shall the Village of Old Bennington authorize \$160,320 to operate the general government of the village during the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2020?
2. Shall the Village of Old Bennington set the tax rate at \$0.3074 per \$100 assessed value to be paid to the Tax Collector in one installment due November 10, 2020?
3. Shall the Village of Old Bennington authorize the Trustees to borrow monies in anticipation of taxes?
4. Shall the Village of Old Bennington 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.

Ballots will be mailed to all registered voters by Tuesday July 28. Any registered voter not receiving a ballot by mail, may request a ballot before election day from the Village Clerk. Voters may (a) return their ballots by mail to the Village Clerk by election day or (b) drop off their ballots at the polling station on election day. Voters may also pick up and cast their ballots at the polling station on election day. The polling station will be located outdoors on the Center Island of the Village Green and will be open from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm. All voters and officials at the polling station will be required to comply with current state and local social distancing measures including face masks.

While there will be no in-person Annual Meeting, the Trustees will hold a Special Meeting on Tuesday, July 28 at 7:00 pm using the Zoom videoconferencing service covering the following matters:

1. To hear the reports of the Village Officers.
2. To discuss the budget for fiscal year 2020-2021.
3. To discuss 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 discuss any other business that may come before us.

Instructions on how to access the meeting will be posted on the Village website:

<https://oldbennington.org/>.

By order of the Trustees

July 7, 2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Anisman", written in a cursive style.

Steven Anisman
Clerk, Village of Old Bennington
P.O. Box 1532
Old Bennington, Vermont 05201
clerkanisman@gmail.com

Presiding Officer's Report

Ronald Rabidou

As many of you know, we will not be able to hold our annual meeting this year due to Covid-19 concerns. Instead, we will conduct the business of this year's meeting by ballot as permitted by recent legislation. Election day will be Tuesday, August 11, 2020.

We will also hold a remote special meeting on Tuesday, July 28 at 7:00 pm using the Zoom videoconferencing service to provide information usually presented at the annual meeting, including the reports of village officers and discussion of the proposed budget and tax rate for fiscal year 2020-2021. See the village website for instructions on how to access the meeting.

The ballot will include articles to authorize funds for the operation of the village, to set the tax rate and tax due date, and to authorize the trustees to borrow funds in anticipation of taxes. It will also include an article to elect three trustees for terms of two years and a moderator, clerk, treasurer and tax collector, and auditor for terms of one year.

We plan to mail ballots to registered voters at the end of July. Voters may return their ballots by mail to the village clerk by election day or drop off their ballots at the polling station on election day. Voters may also pick up and cast their ballots at the polling station on election day. **We encourage voters to cast their ballots by mail to limit voting at the polling station for the safety of both voters and election officials.**

The polling station will be located outdoors on the middle island of the village green and will be open from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm. All voters and officials at the polling station will be required to comply with current state and local social distancing measures including wearing face masks.

Some of the past year's highlights include the successful application for a matching grant from the state for phase 2 of the Monument Avenue sidewalk project, the preparation of a long-term plan for maintenance of village roads, the reclassification of Bank Street from a Class 3 to Class 2 highway, qualifying it for state road grant programs, and the updating of our Subdivision Regulations.

As part of our plan for maintenance of village roads, we intended to begin reconstruction of Bank Street this year. However, given the economic uncertainty relating to the coronavirus pandemic, including the availability of state funding, we decided to defer the work until next year. Consequently, we plan to hold the tax rate steady for this year.

Just a reminder that information about the village, including contact information for officers, agendas and minutes of meetings, bylaws and ordinances, permit applications, and historical documents is available on the village website.

Thanks to all our officers for their efforts over the past year, especially Road Commissioner Andy Buchsbaum who is stepping down this year after two terms as a trustee and the Planning Commission for its work in updating our regulations.

Road Commissioner's Report

Andy Buchsbaum

Roads

The winter season was long, and as a result our plowing and salting of the roads and sidewalks exceeded the \$40,000 that was budgeted. Our intent next season is to propose something short of the 'dry-roads' policy that seemed to govern this year, and to follow what the state recommends – generally not plowing right after the first flake falls. This will be discussed at future trustee meetings and residents

will have a chance to be part of that discussion. Even with this, we are proposing an increased budget of \$50,000 for roads, consistent with our costs in recent years.

At last year's annual meeting, the village voted to proceed with an assessment report which would evaluate the condition of the roads within the village boundaries. This excluded Route 9 which is a state road and not under the village's purview. The report, prepared by MSK Engineering and Design in conjunction with Milone & MacBroom, was undertaken to provide a road maintenance master plan for the village moving forward (it can be found on the village web site). The analysis is thorough, but is based on visual inspections only – no coring samples were taken to investigate the roadbed conditions below grade at this juncture. The report prioritizes which roads need the most attention, and gives a range of costs based on the professionals' recommendations for each road. This could involve a complete roadbed reconstruction which re-shapes the road profile to help with drainage, or a mill and overlay approach, or just crack sealing. I would recommend taking a look at the report so that you get a sense of the magnitude of the issues.

It was concluded that Bank Street is a top priority and is a candidate for complete reconstruction work. The *upper* range of cost for repairs is estimated to be \$281,000. After previous failed attempts over the years to get any state grant funds, it was suggested that we try and re-classify Bank Street. from a Class 3 road to a Class 2 road (Class 3 roads generally do not qualify for state funds). Through the application process last summer, I made the case to VTrans that Bank Street was a main artery in and out of the village and was in disrepair and the state ultimately agreed to the reclassification.

With that in hand, I applied in November for a Town Highway-Class 2 Road Grant, with a maximum

award of \$175,000. We have yet to hear anything back from the state – it was explained that due to Covid-19 state awards were being put on hold for the time being.

Elm Street is already a Class 2 Road, as is Monument Avenue, so that will make future grant applications easier at the outset. Fairview Street needs constant attention (and some significant repairs), but keeping up with the hot mix patching of holes is about all we can handle at the moment. I cannot speak about every road here, so please take a look at the synopsis for all of them in the report.

Aside from expensive repairs, the report also recommends that a thorough crack sealing (hot tar) effort be undertaken throughout the village. This is the most cost-effective measure to help *extend* the life of the current roads by preventing moisture penetration. The estimated cost for this is \$15,000, and is included as part of the proposed budget.

Sidewalks:

I applied for a 50/50 state sharing grant (with generous and expert help from Jill Jones) for phase 2 of the west side of Monument Avenue sidewalk project totaling \$70,000. We were awarded \$35,000 from the state last fall, and I was hoping to have pictures of the completed sidewalk to share at the annual meeting. However, due to Covid-19 again, the construction start was delayed. Jerome Construction is aware we are all set to start and will get us on their calendar shortly. I am hopeful that it will not be much longer before this is complete.

With the completion of this project, there should be no further large-scale expenditures for the sidewalks. Maintenance and repairs should be the order of the day for the sidewalks. Please note that the sidewalks are now under the supervision of Parks and Sidewalks Commissioner Susan Wright.

This will be my final Road Commissioner's report as I will not be serving a third, two-year term. Prior to this, I also served 2 years on the Planning Commission. I have learned quite a bit doing this and I have no plans to leave the village, so I am happy to consult and be as helpful as I can in the future.

Police Commissioner's Report

Charles Edson

The streets of the village have been without a major incident over the past year. Officer George "Andy" Corey continues to serve in an outstanding manner as police officer with much success at helping to reduce driving speeds and assisting residents by checking their homes while they were absent. The police car required significant repairs during the last year and will likely need to be replaced within a few years.

Covid-19 gave us some time to think and for a little over a month when the virus was at its peak, we issued warnings rather than confront speeders in close proximity. We placed an emphasis at being visible to the public.

You are requested to lock your doors when absent from the house. Please also lock your vehicles when not in use, even if they are in a garage. We also request that villagers do not exceed the speed limit of 25 mph on Village streets (30 mph on Route 9).

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you again this past year.

Bennington County Regional Commission

Charles Edson

This representative of the village has attended Bennington County Regional Commission meetings and serves on the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).

The TAC has reviewed all the proposed transportation projects for the county and placed them in a priority order for VTrans. The village has no projects on the list this year.

Tree Commissioner's Report

James Warren

Although this year may seem a horrible sequel to that classic movie "The Day the Earth Stood Still," trees still grow, mature, and decay. Our village has been blessed with a wonderful array of mature trees that delight both residents and visitors (they will return), but with that delight comes the real cost of maintenance. In 2020 the village will be emphasizing the maintenance and replacement of those trees on the village greens – the North, South and Middle Islands – to the degree that a modest budget allows. Parks Commissioner Susan Wright and I will be working together to identify action needed to maintain the historic character of our "commons."

Outside village property, the task of maintaining the village's street trees, those within the right-of-way, is the responsibility of individual property owners, a proposition that we understand may involve considerable expense. I commend those of you who have taken on the expense of promptly removing trees and deadwood on trees lining our streets that pose a hazard to the public.

I will note, as always, that the removal of trees within a village right-of-way requires approval by the trustees, by way of the Tree Commissioner. The removal of mature trees beyond the rights-of-way that contribute to the general arboreal ambience may need a permit. Contact the Tree Commissioner or Administrative Officer if you have questions or just would like to talk about your trees.

Finally, assuming the additional title of Shrub Commissioner, I also ask residents to please prune vegetation that may impinge on our public walks or that may obscure stop signs and other signage.

Parks and Sidewalks Commissioner's Report

Susan Wright

The village parks continue to be well maintained by Pembroke Landscaping. The Old First Church Marker garden had a lovely display of daffodils this spring, but unfortunately after two seasons the tulips have not been showing. Some more perennials were planted by the University of Vermont master gardeners program and provide an appealing display throughout the year. The surrounding marble paving stones still need to be raised and reset. However, due to the \$4,000 estimated cost, we have deferred this project for now.

The Trustees have approved the installation of a commemorative bench for Donna Berry in recognition of her many years of service to the village. The stone bench has been funded by donations from generous residents and will be installed late July or early August.

Auditor's Report

Dale Cobb

I have met with Kathy Wagenknecht, the Village Treasurer, on several occasions and examined all the records for the accounting year of 2019-2020. 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 the excellent handling of village finances. I found her improved reporting of tax delinquencies for the last year especially informative.

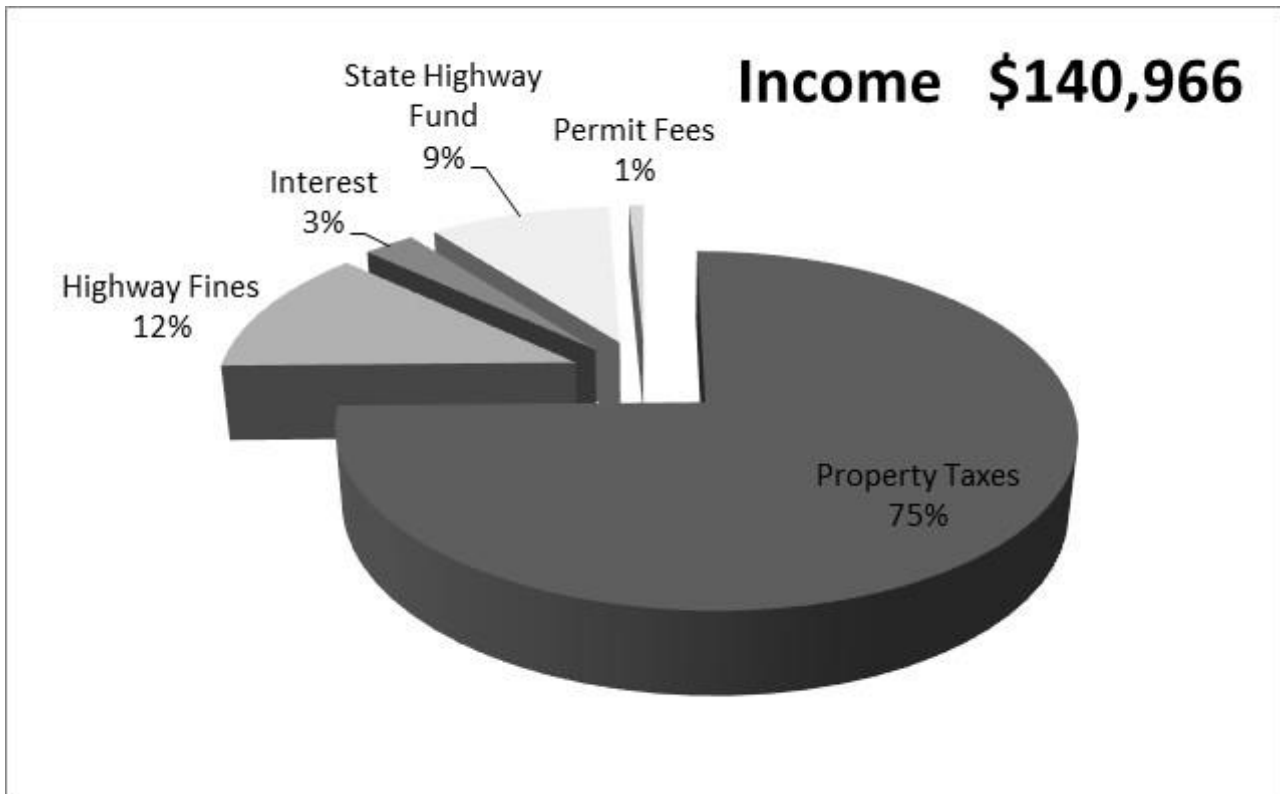
Treasurer & Tax Collector’s Report

Kathy Wagenknecht

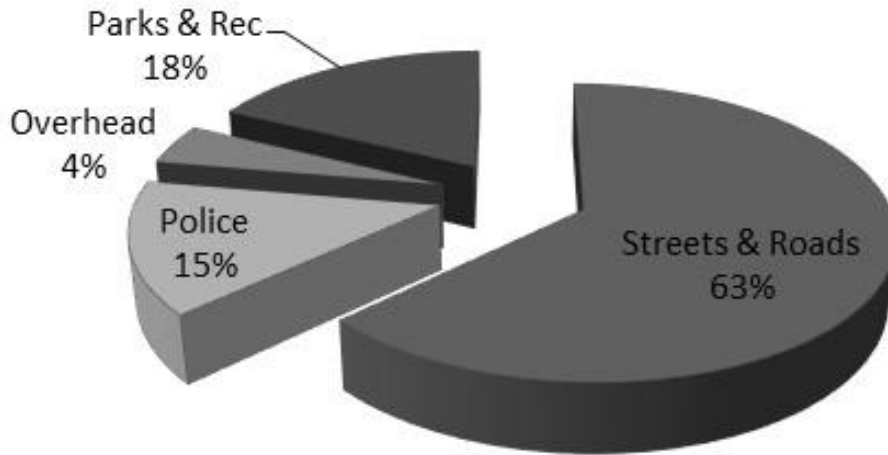
2019-2020 Tax Report

2019 Tax Year			
Total Property Taxed		\$32,000,500	
Total Tax Due	2019	\$ 98,370	Billed
	2018	\$ 2,077	Past Due
		\$ 275	Int/Penalty
		\$ 100,722	
Total Tax Collected	2019	\$ 96,082	
	2018	\$ 8,213	PILOT
		\$ 1,007	
		\$ 105,302	
Past Due	2019	\$ 4,570	2 Properties
	2018	\$ 1,070	1 Property
		\$ 5,640	

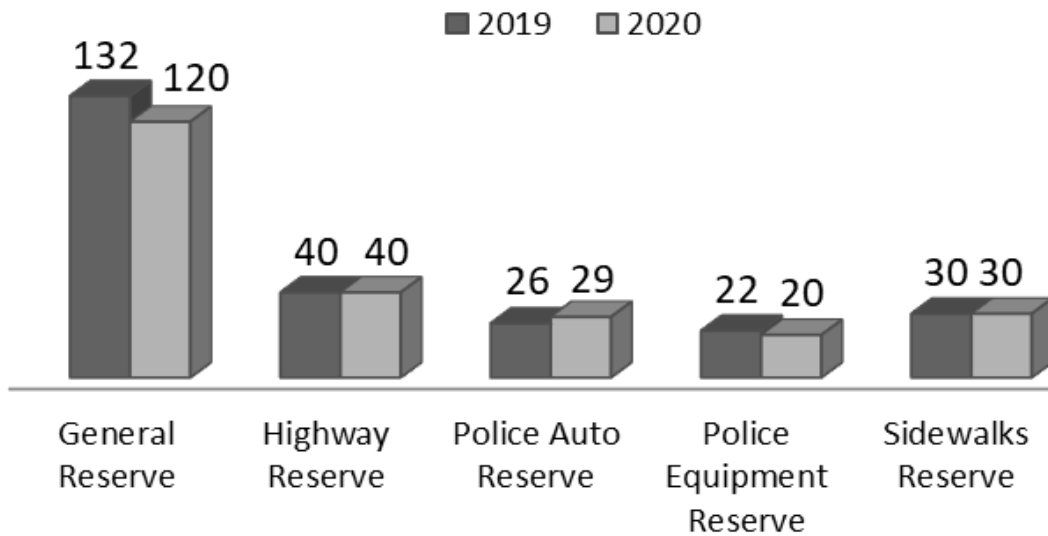
2019-2020 Financial Report



How We Spent Your Money Expense \$152,058



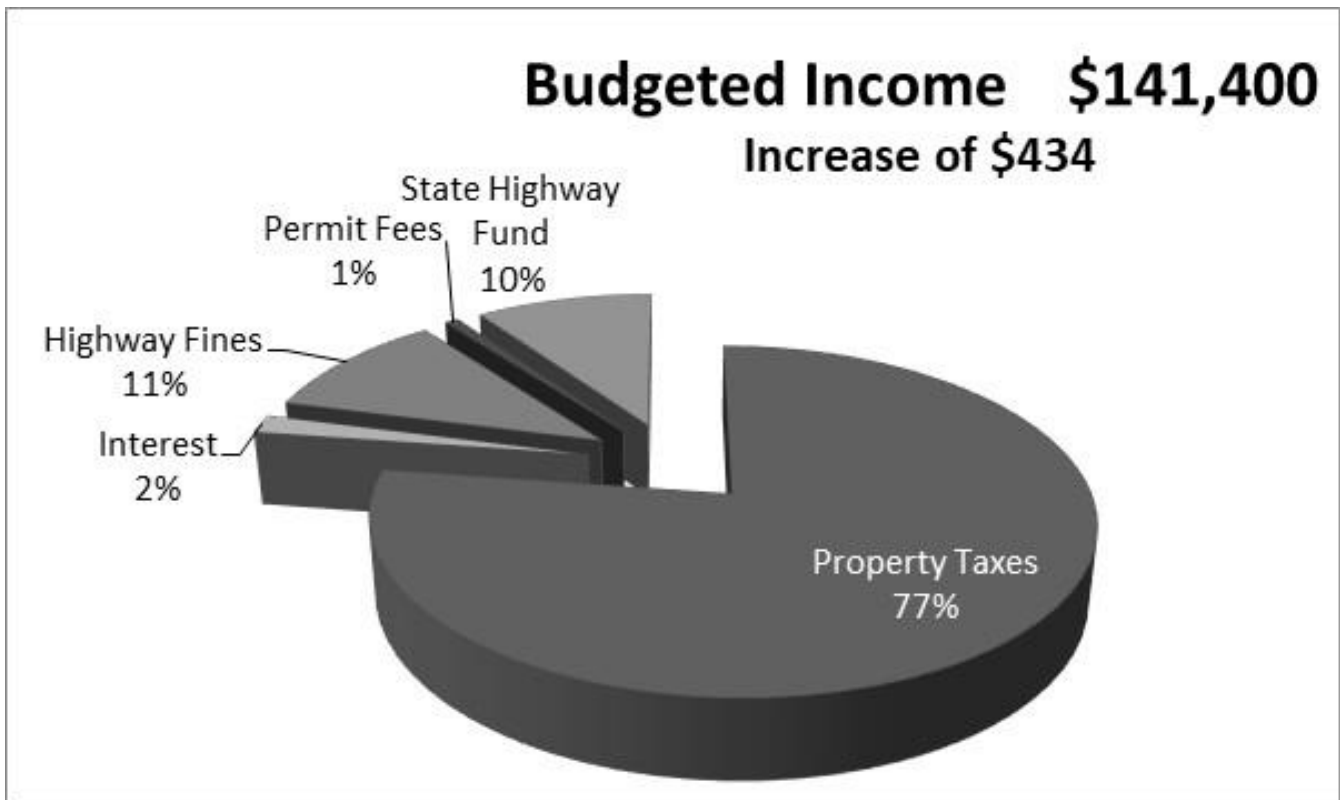
Effect on Reserves (\$11,092)

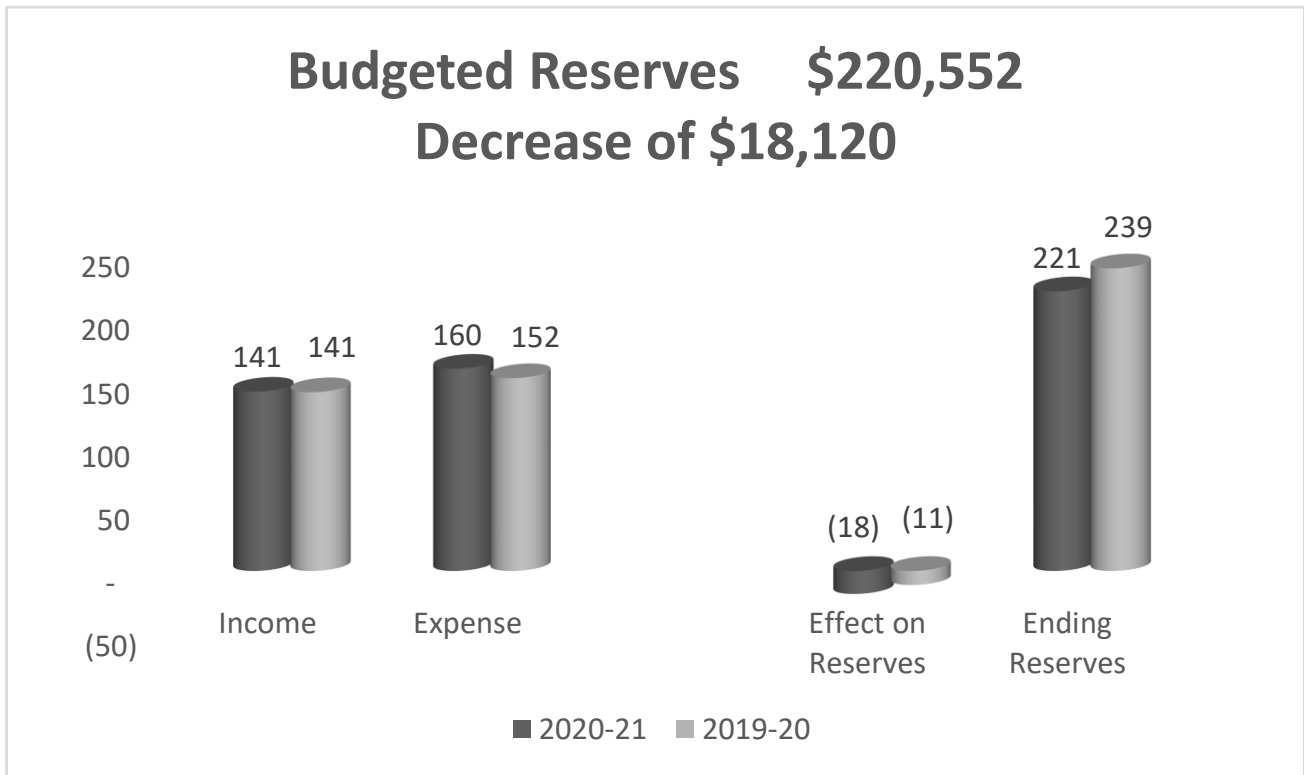
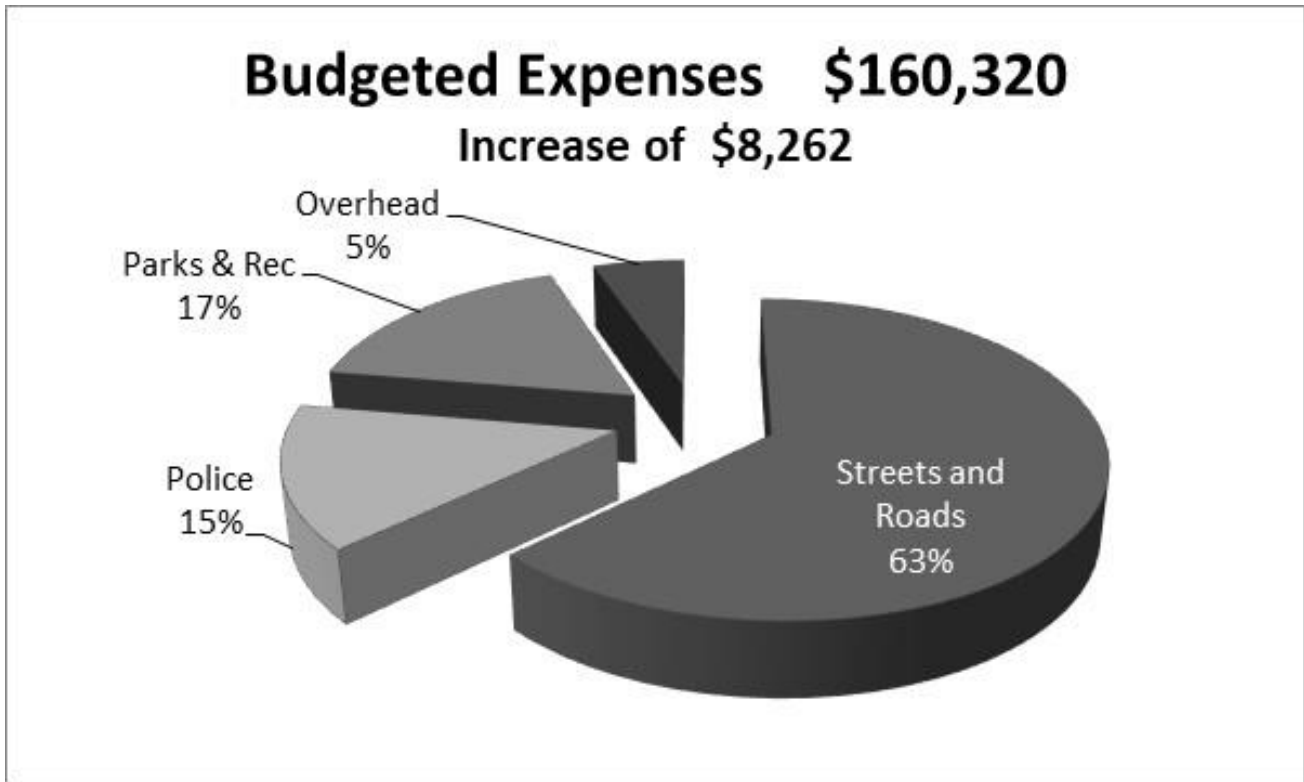


2019-20 FINANCIALS			
	APPROVED 2019-20 BUDGET	ACTUAL 2019-20	Variance
INCOME			
Donations			-
Highway Fines	18,000	\$ 17,109	(891)
Interest	3,500	\$ 3,873	373
Permit Fees	500	\$ 1,066	566
Property Taxes	106,000	\$ 105,302	(698)
State Highway Fund	13,400	\$ 13,616	216
TOTAL INCOME	141,400	\$ 140,966	(434)
EXPENSE			
STREETS & ROADS			
Capital Construction--Highway			
Road Survey/Plan	5,000	\$ 6,665	1,665
Lighting Fixtures	2,000	\$ 1,055	(945)
Sidewalk Repairs	30,000	\$ 30,100	100
Highway Maintenance (Salt & Plowing)	40,000	\$ 54,038	14,038
Highway Repair	5,000	\$ 4,084	(916)
TOTAL	82,000	\$ 95,942	13,942
POLICE			
Police Auto Expense	3,000	\$ 5,851	2,851
Police Coverage	17,000	\$ 16,369	(631)
Police Equipment	500		(500)
TOTAL	20,500	\$ 22,220	1,720
PARKS & RECREATION			
Parks	21,000	\$ 21,480	480
Street Lighting (Power)	4,000	\$ 4,250	250
Trees	2,000	\$ 1,265	(735)
TOTAL	27,000	\$ 26,994	(6)
OVERHEAD			
Clerical	3,000	\$ 905	(2,095)
Flowers	500	\$ 244	(256)
Insurance	1,500	\$ 1,435	(65)
Legal & Zoning	500	\$ 689	189
Memberships	3,000	\$ 2,882	(118)
Planning Commission	250	\$ -	(250)
Rent	500	\$ 520	20
Zoning Administration	2,500	\$ 227	(2,273)
TOTAL	11,750	\$ 6,902	(4,848)
TOTAL EXPENSE	141,250	152,058	10,808
Net Income (Loss) Xfer to Reserves	150	(11,092)	(11,242)
RESERVE ACCOUNTS			
	Budget 3/31/20	ACTUAL 3/31/20	Actual 3/31/19
General Fund	129,324	\$ 120,172	132,264
Highway	40,000	\$ 40,000	40,000
Police Auto	28,500	\$ 28,500	25,500
Police Equipment	19,090	\$ 20,000	22,000
Sidewalks	30,000	\$ 30,000	30,000
TOTAL	246,914	238,672	249,764

PROPOSED 2020-2021 TAXES	
NO CHANGE TO CURRENT TAXES	
Tax Type	Old Bennington Tax Rate*
General	0.0400
Local Agreement	
Highway	0.2674
Fire	
School--Homestead	
Total for Homestead	0.3074
*Rate is per \$100 assessed value	

2020-2021 PROPOSED BUDGET





2020-21 BUDGET PROPOSAL			
	PROPOSED 2020-21 BUDGET	ACTUAL 2019-20	Variance
INCOME			
Donations		-	-
Highway Fines	15,000	17,109	(2,109)
Interest	2,500	3,873	(1,373)
Permit Fees	1,000	1,066	(66)
Property Taxes	109,300	105,302	3,998
State Highway Fund	13,600	13,616	(16)
TOTAL INCOME	141,400	140,966	434
EXPENSE			
STREETS & ROADS			
Capital Construction--Highway			
Road Survey/Plam	-	6,665	(6,665)
Lighting Fixtures	1,000	1,055	(55)
Sidewalk Repairs	35,000	30,100	4,900
Highway Maintenance (Salt & Plowing)	50,000	54,038	(4,038)
Highway Repair	15,000	4,084	10,916
TOTAL	101,000	95,942	5,058
POLICE			
Police Auto Expense	6,000	5,851	149
Police Coverage	17,000	16,369	631
Police Equipment	500	-	500
TOTAL	23,500	22,220	1,280
PARKS & RECREATION			
Parks	21,000	21,480	(480)
Street Lighting (Power)	4,500	4,250	250
Trees	1,800	1,265	535
TOTAL	27,300	26,994	306
OVERHEAD			
Clerical	1,000	905	95
Flowers	500	244	256
Insurance	1,500	1,435	65
Legal & Zoning	750	689	61
Memberships	3,000	2,882	118
Planning Commission	250	-	250
Rent	520	520	-
Zoning Administration	1,000	227	773
TOTAL	8,520	6,902	1,618
TOTAL EXPENSE	160,320	152,058	8,262
Net Income (Loss) Xfer to Reserves	(18,920)	(11,092)	
RESERVE ACCOUNTS			
	Projected as of 3/31/21	Actual 3/31/20	Actual 3/31/19
General Fund	132,962	120,172	132,264
Highway	40,000	40,000	40,000
Police Auto	31,500	28,500	25,500
Police Equipment	16,090	20,000	22,000
Sidewalks	-	30,000	30,000
TOTAL	220,552	238,672	249,764