

WARNING
VILLAGE OF OLD BENNINGTON ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION
May 11, 2021

As permitted by the Secretary of State, the Trustees voted to conduct the business of this year's Annual Meeting by Australian Ballot due to continuing Covid-19 concerns. Voters will decide the following matters:

1. Shall the Village of Old Bennington authorize \$194,550 to operate the general government of the village during the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2021?
2. Shall the Village of Old Bennington set the tax rate at \$0.4042 per \$100 assessed value to be paid to the Tax Collector in one installment due November 10, 2021?
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. Two trustees for a term of two years.

Ballots will be mailed to all registered voters by Friday, April 16. 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, May 4 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 2021-2022.
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

April 12, 2021

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Gallen", written in a cursive style.

James Gallen

Clerk, Village of Old Bennington

P.O. Box 1532

Old Bennington, Vermont 05201

clerkgallen@gmail.com

Presiding Officer's Report

Ronald Rabidou

Annual Meeting and Election

As permitted by the Secretary of State, the Trustees voted to conduct the business of this year's Annual Meeting by Australian Ballot due to continuing Covid-19 concerns. Election day will be Tuesday, May 11.

We will also hold a Special Meeting on Tuesday, May 4 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 2021-2022. See the village website for instructions on how to access the meeting.

The ballot includes 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 also includes an article to elect two trustees for terms of two years and a moderator, clerk, treasurer and tax collector, and auditor for terms of one year.

We mailed ballots to registered voters in mid-April. 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 turnout at the polling station for the safety of both voters and election officials.

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 wearing face masks.

Review and Outlook

Some of the past year's highlights include holding our first Annual Meeting and Election by ballot, completing the Monument Avenue sidewalk project, removing several dead or diseased trees from the Village Green, appointing a new Administrative Officer, and revising the zoning permit fee schedule.

Fifty-five voters cast ballots in last year's election, somewhat higher than the usual turnout at our past meetings, but just forty percent of registered voters. Thanks to the volunteers who staffed the polling station as well as Jill and Galen Jones and Jim Warren who provided tents, tables, and chairs for the event.

With the completion of Phase 2 of the project, the new sidewalk now runs the full length of the western side of Monument Avenue from Monument Circle to the intersection with Route 9. Thanks to former trustee Andy Buchsbaum who played a key role in securing \$65,000 in state grants for the complete project and in coordinating work with VTrans and the general contractor, Jerome Construction.

In February, the trustees approved the Planning Commission's appointment of Danielle Gallen as Administrative Officer. Thanks to Bob Bullington for serving as Acting Administrative Officer for most of the past year in addition to his role as Presiding Officer of the Planning Commission. The trustees also approved several changes to the zoning permit fee schedule to ensure that fees cover our costs.

As part of our long-term plan for maintenance of village roads, we intended to begin reconstruction of Bank Street last year. However, given the economic uncertainty relating to the coronavirus pandemic, including the availability of state funding, we decided to defer the work until this year. As Road Commissioner Jim Warren indicates in his report, long deferred maintenance of our village roads

means we face substantial construction costs over the next several years.

Two years ago, Treasurer Kathy Wagenknecht pointed out (a) that village taxpayers pay the village highway tax rate rather than the town highway tax rate and (b) that the village rate has been consistently lower than the town rate. Consequently, village taxpayers have been paying less in overall taxes than town taxpayers on properties with the same valuations.

At the time, the trustees decided to increase the village highway tax rate to match the town rate over two years to help meet future construction costs. Voters approved the first half of the increase in 2019. However, because of concerns over the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the trustees deferred proposing the second half of the increase last year. Despite continuing uncertainties relating to Covid-19, we need to move forward on our long-term plan for maintenance of village roads for the safety of village residents as well as others who use our roads. Consequently, we propose to make the second half of the planned increase this year.

To put the planned tax increase in perspective, if village taxpayers had simply paid the same highway tax rate as town taxpayers for the past decade, we would have more than \$500,000 in additional reserves, putting us on a firm financial footing to meet our share of future construction costs. In hindsight, we had no reason to assume our highway costs would be lower than the town's highway costs in the long run.

Further, only our Class 2 roads (Monument Avenue, Elm Street, and Bank Street) currently qualify for any state funding for construction. We will continue to monitor the availability of grants for other roads, but unless the state or the federal government expands infrastructure spending, we will need to

fund reconstruction of Fairview Street and other roads ourselves.

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 at <https://oldbennington.org>.

Thanks to all our officers for their efforts over the past year, especially Charles Edson who is stepping down as trustee this year after many years of service to the village.

Road Commissioner's Report

James Warren

In 2019, the trustees commissioned a survey of roads within the village with a view to identifying and prioritizing future roadwork and to provide cost estimates for various treatment options. The resulting *Roadway Condition Assessment, Village of Old Bennington*, prepared by MSK Engineering and Malone & MacBroom, Inc., provided a comprehensive basis for our fiscal and infrastructure planning and is available on the village web site.

The *Assessment* presented a table of action priorities with cost estimates ranging from \$281,000 for Bank Street reclamation and reconstruction to \$16,000 for Church Lane crack sealing and patching.

Bank Street reconstruction was identified as of highest priority. In anticipation of the strain on the Village's finances, my predecessor, Andy Buchsbaum, successfully worked with the Agency of Transportation (AOT) to have Bank Street reclassified as a Class 2 highway, making the proposed work eligible for a state grant. Due to the Covid -19 plague, the 2020 state grant application process was suspended until 2021; we are assured

that the 2020 application documentation may be submitted in 2021 when that program is announced.

State grant funding is not assured, and the trustees are exploring alternate funding options including use of village reserve funds and low interest state infrastructure loans. No matter how the funding is structured, it is clear it is time to “pay the piper.” The Treasurer’s Report will show a proposed increase in the village highway tax rate. For decades, that tax rate has been approximately half that assessed by the Town of Bennington (village residents do not pay town highway tax). In anticipation of future road expenses, the trustees believe it is prudent to raise additional funds, either for immediate needs or to add to reserves.

Winter road and sidewalk maintenance is a major and inescapable portion of our budget and the trustees are exploring cost reducing options. Unfortunately, those options are few. The town has rejected the possibility of extending their plowing routes by contract with the village leaving two local operators to supply winter maintenance services. We will be developing guidelines for snow and ice treatments based on state and municipal standards and on those of large users such as the SVMC and the Walmart/Price Chopper Plazas in the hope of better controlling costs.

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.

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 remind residents not to 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.

Tree Commissioner’s Report

Steven Anisman

This was a quiet year. We cleared the dead or diseased trees on the Village Green. Over the next year our focus will be to replant trees as appropriate.

Just a reminder that the removal of trees within the village right-of-way requires approval of the trustees. The removal of mature trees beyond the right-of-way may need the approval of the planning commission. Contact the Tree Commissioner about trees in the right-of-way or the Administrative Officer about trees beyond the right-of-way if you have questions.

We also remind residents to prune vegetation in the right-of-way that may impede safe passage on sidewalks or that may obscure stop signs and other signage.

Parks and Sidewalks

Commissioner’s Report

Susan Wright

We completed Phase 2 of the Monument Avenue sidewalk project with the assistance of a \$35,000 grant from the state. The finished sidewalk now runs the full length of the western side of Monument Avenue from Monument Circle to the intersection with Route 9.

The village parks will again be maintained by Pembroke Landscaping. We are exploring the cost for edging and raising some of the marble paving stones surrounding the Old First Church Marker garden to improve its appearance. And we would also like to thank the volunteers from the UVM Master Gardener Program who have helped maintain the flower beds on the Village Green.

In response to questions from village residents after storms brought down several large trees this year, the trustees revised the Village Bylaws and Ordinances to clarify responsibility for removing debris from roads and sidewalks. The revision says that in event of an emergency where trees or shrubs obstruct safe passage on village roads or sidewalks, the trustees may arrange to clear such trees or shrubs to the extent necessary to ensure safe passage for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. It also makes clear that it is the responsibility of property owners to remove any remaining debris at their expense.

Weather and the pandemic have slowed, but not stopped, the installation of a commemorative bench in recognition of Donna Berry's many years of service to the village. We hope to install the bench in late April and hold a dedication ceremony when Covid-19 guidelines permit. When we finalize the plans, we will post details on the village website. The trustees thank those residents whose generous donations funded the acquisition and installation of the bench.

Auditor's Report

Dale Cobb

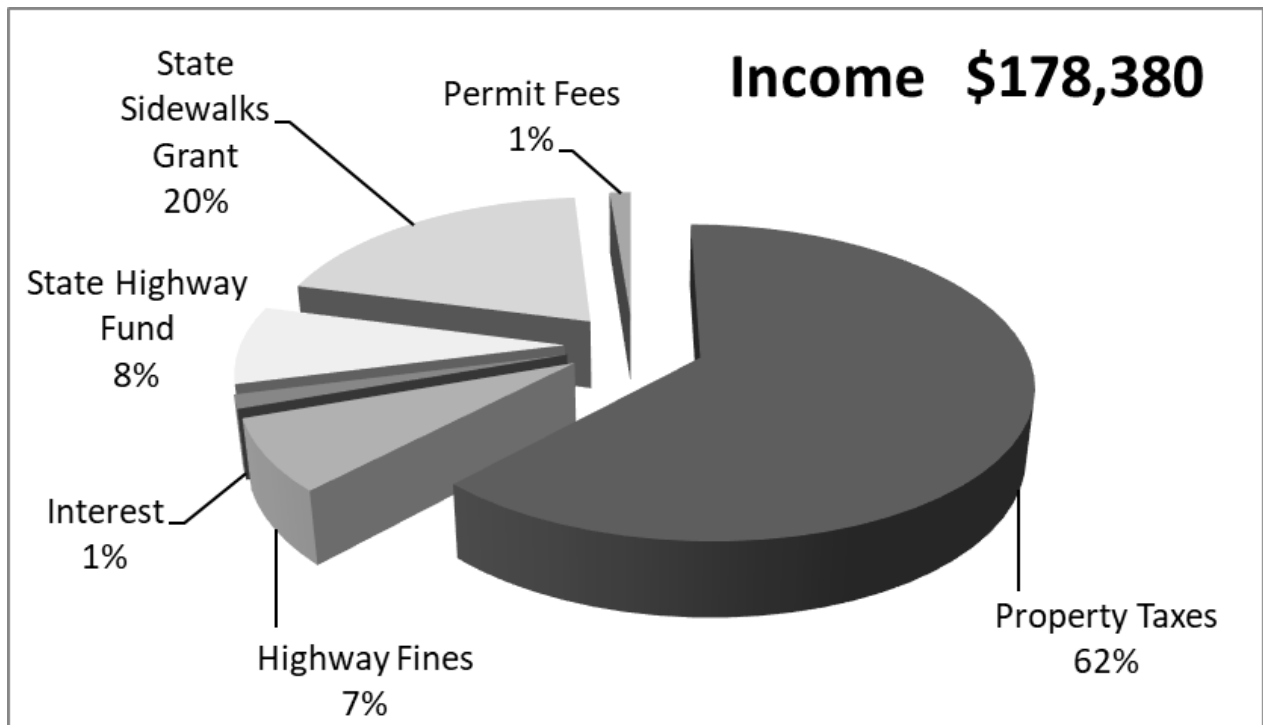
I have examined all the records for the accounting year of 2020-2021. Each month, Kathy files the bank statements, deposit slips, invoices, check stubs and the accounting software reports in a folder. I have reviewed all the documents within those

folders, and everything appears to be in order and within normal operating procedures for the village.

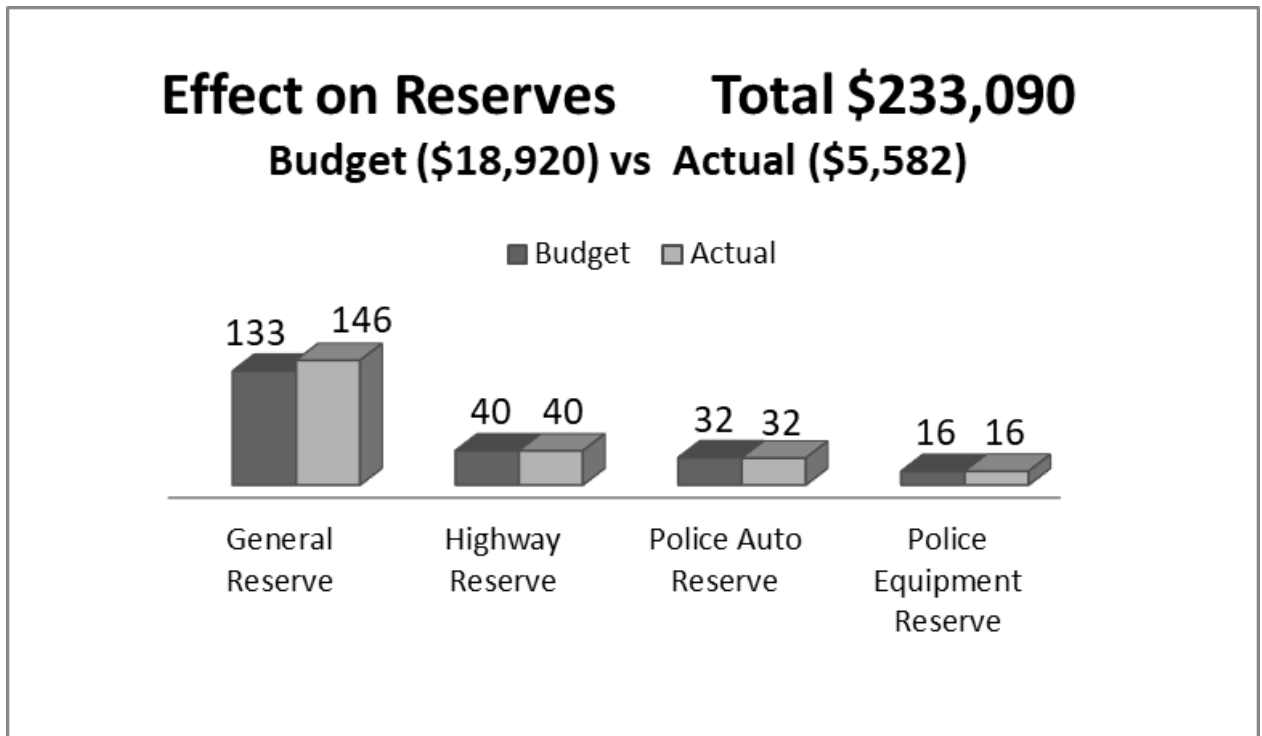
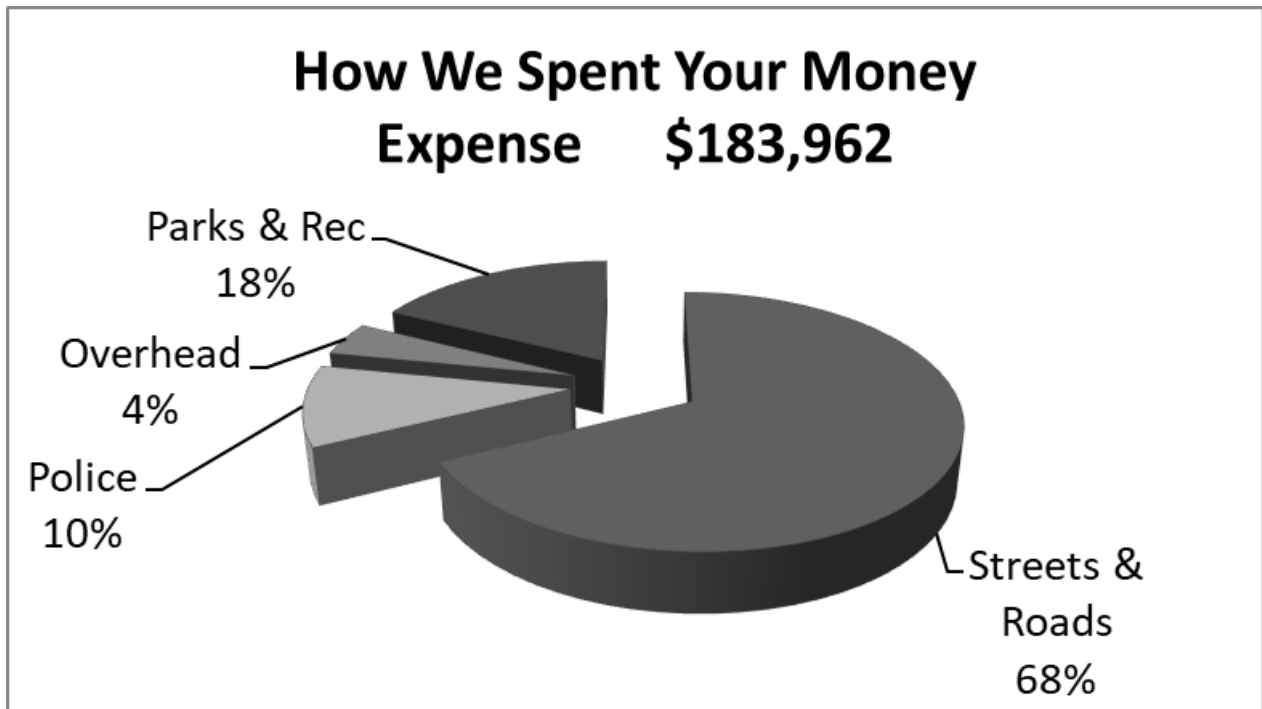
The Village is fortunate to have a person that has a great way of handling details in charge of financial records and the checking/saving accounts. I commend Kathy on her outstanding job of being organized and the excellent handling of village finances.

2020-21 FINANCIALS			
	APPROVED 2020-21 BUDGET	ACTUAL 2020-21	Variance
INCOME			
Highway Fines	\$ 15,000	\$ 13,309	\$ (1,691)
Interest	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,570	\$ 70
Permit Fees	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,210	\$ 1,210
Property Taxes	\$ 109,300	\$ 110,745	\$ 1,445
State Highway Fund	\$ 13,600	\$ 14,546	\$ 946
State Sidewalks Grant	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000	\$ -
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 176,400	\$ 178,380	\$ 1,980
EXPENSE			
STREETS & ROADS			
Capital Construction--Highway			
Lighting Fixtures	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,560	\$ 560
Sidewalks	\$ 70,000	\$ 70,665	\$ 665
Highway Maintenance (Salt & Plowing)	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,176	\$ 176
Highway Repair	\$ 15,000	\$ 2,104	\$ (12,896)
TOTAL	\$ 136,000	\$ 124,505	\$ (11,495)
POLICE			
Police Auto Expense	\$ 6,000	\$ 2,449	\$ (3,551)
Police Coverage	\$ 17,000	\$ 16,746	\$ (254)
Police Equipment	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ (500)
TOTAL	\$ 23,500	\$ 19,195	\$ (4,305)
PARKS & RECREATION			
Parks	\$ 21,000	\$ 27,853	\$ 6,853
Street Lighting (Power)	\$ 4,500	\$ 4,418	\$ (82)
Trees	\$ 1,800	\$ -	\$ (1,800)
TOTAL	\$ 27,300	\$ 32,271	\$ 4,971
OVERHEAD			
Clerical	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,194	\$ 194
Flowers	\$ 500	\$ 51	\$ (449)
Insurance	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,427	\$ (73)
Legal & Zoning	\$ 750	\$ 1,649	\$ 899
Memberships	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,950	\$ (50)
Planning Commission	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ (250)
Rent	\$ 520	\$ 55	\$ (465)
Zoning Administration	\$ 1,000	\$ 665	\$ (335)
TOTAL	\$ 8,520	\$ 7,991	\$ (529)
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 195,320	\$ 183,962	\$ (11,358)
Net Income (Loss) Xfer to Reserves	\$ (18,920)	\$ (5,582)	\$ (13,338)
RESERVE ACCOUNTS			
	Budget 3/31/21	ACTUAL 3/31/21	Actual 3/31/20
General Fund	\$ 132,162	\$ 145,500	\$ 120,172
Highway	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000
Police Auto	\$ 31,500	\$ 31,500	\$ 28,500
Police Equipment	\$ 16,090	\$ 16,090	\$ 20,000
Capital Construction (Sidewalks)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 30,000
TOTAL	\$ 219,752	\$ 233,090	\$ 238,672

2020 Tax Year	
Total Property Taxed	\$ 31,679,700
Tax Rate	0.3074
Billed to Residents	\$ 97,383
*Collected from Residents	\$ 99,855
PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes from State)	\$ 10,890
Total Paid	\$ 110,745
Delinquent	
2018 Taxes Past Due w Penalty/Int	\$ 1,135
2019 Taxes Past Due w Penalty/Int	\$ 1,405
2020 Taxes Past Due w Penalty/Int	\$ 1,269
Total Delinquent	\$ 3,809
* Includes Penalties, Interest and Prior Delinquencies	

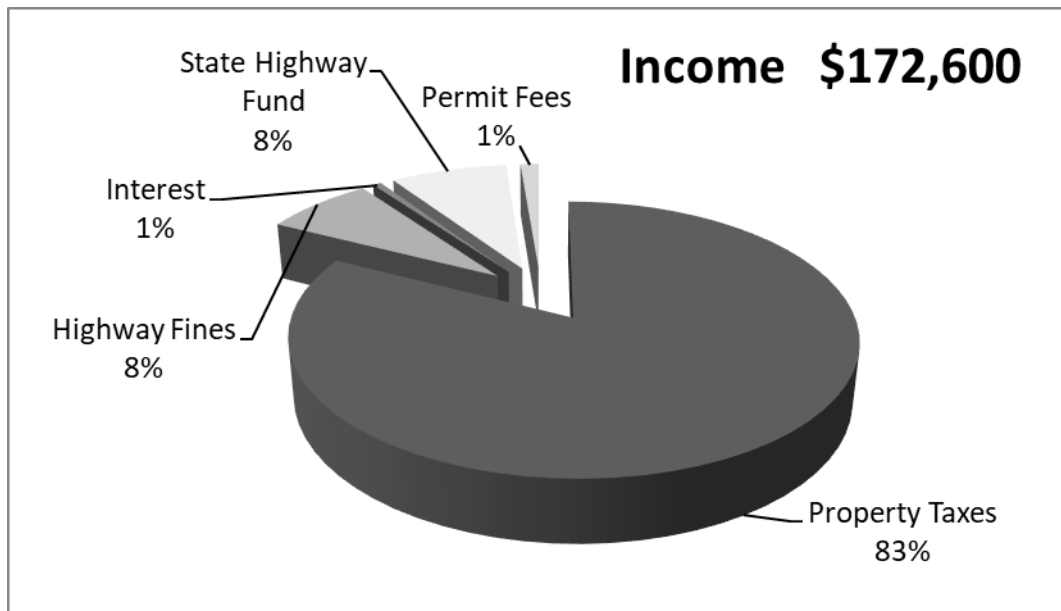


Note: Rounding may cause total of percentages not to equal 100.



2021-22 PROPOSED BUDGET			
	PROPOSED 2021-22 BUDGET	ACTUAL 2020-21	Variance
INCOME			
Highway Fines	\$ 13,000	\$ 13,309	\$ (309)
Interest	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,570	\$ (1,570)
Permit Fees	\$ 2,200	\$ 2,210	\$ (10)
Property Taxes & PILOT	\$ 142,400	\$ 110,745	\$ 31,655
State Highway Fund	\$ 14,000	\$ 14,546	\$ (546)
State Matching Grant	\$ -	\$ 35,000	\$ (35,000)
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 172,600	\$ 178,380	\$ (5,780)
EXPENSE			
STREETS & ROADS			
Capital Construction--Highway			
Lighting Fixtures	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,560	\$ (60)
Capital Const - Sidewalks	\$ -	\$ 70,665	\$ (70,665)
Capital Const - Bank St	\$ 65,000	\$ -	\$ 65,000
Highway Maintenance (Salt & Plowing)	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,176	\$ (176)
Highway Repair	\$ 15,000	\$ 2,104	\$ 12,896
TOTAL	\$ 131,500	\$ 124,505	\$ 6,995
POLICE			
Police Auto Expense	\$ 6,000	\$ 2,449	\$ 3,551
Police Coverage	\$ 17,000	\$ 16,746	\$ 254
Police Equipment	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ 500
TOTAL	\$ 23,500	\$ 19,195	\$ 4,305
PARKS & RECREATION			
Parks	\$ 21,000	\$ 27,853	\$ (6,853)
Street Lighting (Power)	\$ 4,500	\$ 4,418	\$ 82
Trees	\$ 1,800	\$ -	\$ 1,800
TOTAL	\$ 27,300	\$ 32,271	\$ (4,971)
OVERHEAD			
Clerical	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,194	\$ 6
Flowers	\$ 50	\$ 51	\$ (1)
Insurance	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,427	\$ 73
Legal & Zoning	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,649	\$ 351
Memberships	\$ 2,950	\$ 2,950	\$ -
Planning Commission	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ 250
Rent	\$ 300	\$ 55	\$ 245
Zoning Administration	\$ 4,000	\$ 665	\$ 3,335
TOTAL	\$ 12,250	\$ 7,991	\$ 4,259
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 194,550	\$ 183,962	\$ 10,588
Net Income (Loss) Xfer to Reserves	(21,950)	(5,582)	(16,368)
RESERVE ACCOUNTS			
	Proposed 3/31/22	ACTUAL 3/31/21	Actual 3/31/20
General Fund	\$ 120,640	\$ 145,500	\$ 120,172
Highway	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000
Police Auto	\$ 33,500	\$ 31,500	\$ 28,500
Police Equipment	\$ 17,000	\$ 16,090	\$ 20,000
Capital Construction			\$ 30,000
TOTAL	\$ 211,140	233,090	238,672

PROPOSED 2021-2022 TAXES				
MATCH BENNINGTON RATE				
Tax Type	<i>Bennington 2021 Tax Rate</i>	Old Bennington 2020 Tax Rate*	Old Bennington 2021 Tax Rate*	Old Bennington Increase
General		0.0400	0.0400	0.0000
Highway	0.4042	0.2674	0.3642	0.0968
Total	0.4042	0.3074	0.4042	0.0968
*Rate is per \$100 assessed value				
REVENUE COMPARISON				
	Total Property Taxed \$31,679,700	Old Bennington 2020 Tax Rate	Old Bennington 2021 Tax Rate	Increase
*Tax Revenue		\$97,383	\$128,049	\$30,666
**PILOT		\$10,890	\$14,319	\$3,429
Total		\$108,273	\$142,368	\$34,095
*Not including delinquencies, interest or penalties				
**Payment In Lieu of Taxes from State - 2021 Estimate				



Note: Rounding may cause total of percentages not to equal 100.

