



Town of Amherst Voter Information Guide

*Please bring this document with you to the polls on March 13, 2018
at Souhegan High School between 6AM and 8 PM*

Dear Amherst Citizens:

This document, offered by your Board of Selectmen (BOS), is provided to help you better understand what each article on the warrant is proposing to accomplish in fiscal year 2019.

The past five years have seen a steady transformation across our municipal government as we have embraced and become adept with strategic governance as the normal mode of running the town. Our departments look out three to five years to make sure their efforts align with the types of outcomes our residents' desire.

*Amherst's use of strategic governance has gained attention in New Hampshire. The NH Municipal Association featured our innovative approach to strategic governance in its fall 2017 edition of its flagship publication, *Town and City*, and had us showcase our approach at their annual conference this past November. We are proud to be seen as innovators in municipal governance, mostly because we see how much more effectively it enables us to provide quality services to our residents while keeping the costs of doing so affordable.*

Strategic governance has helped set the stage for developing a 2018-19 plan and budget. This plan and budget ensure that all facets of the Town's governance operate as efficiently and effectively as possible, and either maintain or upgrade all areas of our Town's operations.

All department heads were tasked with updating the strategic plans they had previously developed, not only to advance the vision, but to aid the Selectmen in identifying strategic initiatives that deserved funding in the upcoming budget cycle. These initiatives were carefully considered by the Board, discussed publicly at many meetings, and shared with the Ways and Means Committee for analysis and comment. Each department's plan can be viewed on the Town's website. Because effective town governance can only occur with a clear vision of where Amherst is today and where residents want it to be in the years ahead, the BOS views the process as essential to good governance.

This year the municipal portion of the total Amherst tax bill is just over 20% of the Town's total tax rate. Amherst has the eighth lowest municipal tax rate of the 31 municipalities in Hillsborough County. That said, the BOS believe judicious, targeted funding will help balance all facets of town life, even as the major investment in roads and bridges brings this crucial infrastructure back in line. The key areas include, but are not limited to: Public Safety, Infrastructure, Environment/Landscapes, Historic Heritage, Economic Development, Recreation, Education (While education is the primary responsibility of the schools, the Town offers educational programs through Fire, Police, Library and Recreation.)

For more information on the Strategic Planning process, visit our website at <http://www.amherstnh.gov/board-selectmen>.

We encourage you to become educated on all the issues, to make your informed decisions, and to come to the Souhegan High School on Tuesday, March 13th to cast your votes.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to our employees, our Ways and Means Committee, and the citizens who participated in the process that has produced the warrant before you. We could not have been as effective without everyone's help and participation. We would also like to thank you for the opportunity to represent you, and we appreciate your support as we work together to keep Amherst a great community in which to live, to work, and to raise a family.

Sincerely,

The Board of Selectmen

*Dwight Brew, Chairman
Tom Grella, Selectman*

*Peter Lyon, Vice Chairman
Mike Akillian, Selectman*

Reed Panasiti, Clerk

2019 Proposed Warrant Articles

Amherst residents will have an opportunity to vote on the proposed budget and other Town matters on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, at the annual election to be held between 6:00 AM and 8:00 PM. There is one polling place in Amherst: Souhegan High School at 412 Boston Post Road.

The following information is provided as a public service to enable citizens to better understand the matters on which they will be voting. Additional information may be obtained by calling the Town Administrator's Office at (603) 673-6041, or by visiting the Town's website at www.amherstnh.gov.

ARTICLE 21: To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing terms as follows:

2 Selectmen for 3 Years

1 Town Moderator for 2 Years

1 Town Treasurer for 3 Years

1 Cemetery Trustee for 3 Years

2 Library Trustees for 3 Years

1 Supervisor of the Checklist for 6 Years

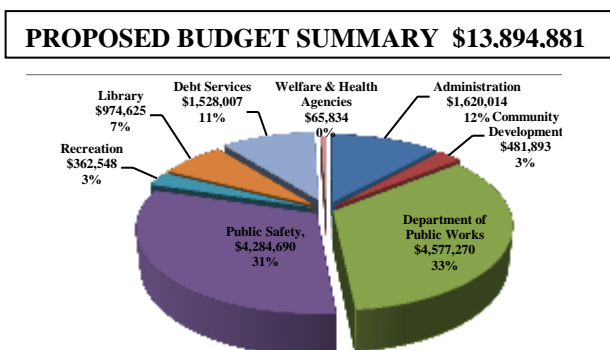
1 Trustee of the Trust Funds for 3 Years

2 Zoning Board of Adjustment Members for 3 Years

ARTICLE 22: Operating Budget

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth herein, totaling **\$13,894,881**. Should this article be defeated the default budget shall be **\$13,511,243**, which is the same as last year with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting in accordance with RSA 40:13 X and XVI to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. This operating budget warrant article does not include appropriations contained in ANY other Warrant Article. (Majority vote)

(The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0.) This article has a tax impact of \$0.09(nine cents per thousand).



The Board of Selectmen worked closely with our Department Heads and Ways & Means Committee in preparing the FY19 proposed budget. We took a three-pronged approach in developing this budget:

- We looked at what it would take to continue operations – insurance increases, retirement increases and fairly compensating our employees;
- Looked at initiatives in support of strategic goals that we wanted to include in the budget;
- And scrubbed the existing budget to find reductions we could make to offset the costs associated with the first two prongs, while maintaining a high quality of service to our residents.

The FY19 operating budget is now \$13,894,881, \$505,860 or 3.37% higher than the FY18 approved budget.

The increases associated with continuing operations are:

The initiatives funded in the budget are:

Master Plan Update	\$ 5,000
Stormwater Plan	\$ 64,300
Records Digitization	\$ 17,500
On-line Permitting	\$ 5,100
Police Department Restructuring	\$ 2,080
Health and Dental Insurances	\$111,964
2.5% wage increase & Step Increase	\$213,401

After many extensive reviews of the proposed FY19 budget, we were successful in reducing the total by just under \$100,000 to help offset the increases and initiatives mentioned above.

Proposed FY19 Operating Budget Breakdown

Department of Public Works	\$ 4,577,270
Public Safety	\$ 4,284,690
Town & General Government	\$ 1,620,014
Library	\$ 974,625
Community Development	\$ 481,893
Debt Service	\$ 1,528,007
Recreation & Culture	\$ 362,548
Welfare & Health Agencies	\$ 65,834
Total:	\$ 13,894,881

ARTICLE 23: Contingency Fund

Shall the Town vote to establish a contingency fund for the current year, in accordance with NH RSA Section 31:98-a, for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and appropriate one hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000) to go into the fund. Said sum shall come from the undesignated fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Any appropriation left in the fund at the end of the year will lapse to the general fund. (Majority vote)

(The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 6-0.) This article has an estimated tax impact of \$ 0.00 (zero cents per thousand).

In August of 2013 a new law regarding contingency funding came into effect (RSA 31:98-a). This law outlines the process the Selectmen must follow with regard to the establishment of a contingency fund.

By approving this article you will be giving the Selectmen the authority to withdraw up to \$120,000 from the undesignated fund balance, if some unforeseen circumstance should arise. The DRA has determined that this article will not have an impact on your property taxes.

ARTICLE 24: Amherst Conservation Commission 100% of LUCT Funds

Shall the Town vote, pursuant to RSA 79-A: 25, II, to change the amount of revenues of all future payments collected pursuant to RSA 79-A, Current Use Taxation, to be deposited into the existing Conservation Fund in accordance with RSA 36-A:5, III from 50%, which is the current level, to 100%. If adopted this article shall take effect on April 1, 2018 and shall remain in effect until altered or rescinded by a future town meeting. (Majority vote)

(The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 6-0.) This article has an estimated tax impact of \$ 0.00 (zero cents per thousand).

In 2001, Amherst voted to authorize the conservation commission 50% of LUCT funds received annually. Using that same process, as spelled out in RSA 79-A:25, II, it is now proposed that 100% of LUCT funds collected be deposited into the conservation fund.

Our conservation commission’s mission, to preserve and maintain open space for the residents of Amherst, makes the Conservation Fund a logical place for LUCT to be invested since it’s a tax related to the loss of open space. The Conservation Fund is used for management and maintenance of existing town land and for the acquisition of additional land.

It is also important to note that often property owners wishing to give Amherst and its conservation commission an opportunity to purchase their land, do not want to wait for the annual town meeting vote to appropriate the funds for the purchase. This article can help address that problem.

ARTICLE 25: Appropriation of Previously Collected Land Use Change Tax Funds

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of forty three thousand five hundred dollars (\$43,500), said sum to come from the amount collected and deposited into the Land Use Change Tax Fund (LUCT) in the preceding fiscal year and to transfer said amount into the Conservation Fund to be used for a trail grant match, update the town forest management plan and control of invasive species. No additional amount to be raised by taxation. (Majority vote)

(The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0.) This article has an estimated tax impact of \$ 0.00 (zero cents per thousand).

This article asks for your authorization to expend monies from the existing LUCT fund.

Money from the LUCT fund cannot be spent without voter approval. This article asks for approval to use the LUCT funds previously collected towards Recreation and Conservation initiatives.

First, our recreation department and conservation commission are partnering to secure a trails grant from the Department of Resources and Economic Development. The money requested will assist in the first phase of a proposed bike/pedestrian pathway to go through Birch Park, connecting the community from the area of Spring Road and Baboosic Lake Road to Joshua's Park and the Village. It is a hope that one day Amherst will have safe and accessible walk ways to get around all of Amherst. \$15,000 of the \$43,500 is earmarked for this trail project.

\$28,500 of the \$43,500 is for two conservation initiatives; one is to update the Conservation Town Forest Management Plan (\$13,500), last done about 20 years ago and the other is a project to control invasive plant species at two properties; Upper Bragdon Field and Forest and the Great Meadow.

ARTICLE 26: Police Station Renovation Capital Reserve Fund

Shall the Town vote to establish a Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1, for the purpose of renovating the Police Station and to raise and appropriate up to the sum of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) to be placed into said fund and to further name the Board of Selectmen as the agents to expend. (Majority vote)

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0.) This article has an estimated tax impact of \$ 0.11 (eleven cents per thousand).

This year the unfinished second floor of the central fire station was built out into living quarters for our medical first responders and for firefighters who overnight during major weather events.

The basement of the police station, formally the EMS department, is available to the police department creating an opportunity to renovate and update the building into a police service facility comporting to contemporary standards. This article seeks \$200,000 to begin putting money away for this project. It is anticipated to take approximately \$600,000 and we intend to fund it through contributions to this capital reserve over the next three years. The preliminary plan and the approximate cost have been developed by the architect who designed the last renovation in 1996, working with Chief Mark Reams.

Renovation of the structure will improve safety and security for our police staff, reduce town liability exposure, and improve the delivery of police and administrative services to visitors and guests. The plans are expected to meet the current and future needs of the department for the next twenty-five years.

The selectmen have authorized the formation of a seven person building committee, made up of one selectman, the town administrator, one W&M member, the police chief, the DPW director, and two at-large members of the community. The committee will oversee and evaluate all plan designs and costs should this article be approved. If you are interested in being a part of the committee, please let us know.

Article 27: Bridge Repair and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred and fifteen thousand (**\$115,000**) to be added to the Bridge Repair and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund, previously established. (Majority vote)

(The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 6-0.) This article has an estimated tax impact of \$ 0.07 (seven cents per thousand).

The Bridge Repair and Replacement CRF balance: \$85,837 as of December 31, 2017.

The Town is seeking support to fund a program that will allow us to replace our four town water crossings prior to failure, at approximately \$100k per crossing and \$15k to perform preventative maintenance on our other bridges. We are initiating this proactive program to prevent unanticipated closures, subsequent detours and permitting delays inherent in replacing a failed bridge.

Amherst has four bridges that do not qualify for the State aide replacement program and are, therefore, our responsibility to maintain or replace. Amherst has 14 bridges that fall under the state replacement funding program. This State has identified five bridges in need of replacement, also known as red listed bridges, over the next decade. All but one, which we repaired this past summer, are an obsolete multi-culvert design that does not allow for maintenance or repair to the culvert pipes.

The remainder of the NH DOT qualified bridges are not the multi-culvert design and can be maintained to extend their life span, avoiding costly replacement for many years to come.

ARTICLE 28: Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (**\$25,000**) to be added to the Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund, previously established. (Majority vote)

(The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 6-0.) This article has an estimated tax impact of \$ 0.02 (two cents per thousand).

The Assessing Revaluation CRF balance: \$32,391 as of December 31, 2017.

This article adds \$25,000 to the existing Capital Reserve Fund that has been established to budget for the State mandated reassessment of all properties in Amherst. The law, RSA 75:8-a, requires revaluation take place every 5 years. The last revaluation was just completed in the Tax Year 2016. The next revaluation will occur in Tax Year 2021 which will fall in Fiscal Year 2022. This \$25,000 request is one of the yearly installments needed to reach the estimated cost \$125k.

ARTICLE 29: Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (**\$25,000**) to be added to the Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund, previously established. (Majority vote)

(The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 6-0.) This article has an estimated tax impact of \$ 0.02 (two cents per thousand).

The Communications Center CRF balance: \$55,709 as of December 31, 2017.

The Communications Center CRF was established in 2005 to fund major equipment repairs and upgrades, and to provide a source of matching funds for State and Federal communication system grants. Over the last three years, approximately \$39,000 has been expended from this fund for those purposes. Contributions of \$25,000 each year are needed to maintain the fund for upcoming grant funding matches and long-term equipment replacement projects:

- Radio repeater system (\$49,000 grants match approved for FY18)
- Radio tower replacement in 2020 (estimated grant match of \$45,000)
- Radio console replacement in 2023 (estimated grant match of \$100,000)

ARTICLE 30: Fire Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Purchase and Repair Capital Reserve Fund

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of two hundred fifty seven thousand dollars (**\$257,000**) to be added to the Fire Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Purchase and Repair Capital Reserve Fund, previously established. (Majority vote)

(The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0.) This article has an estimated tax impact of \$ 0.15 (fifteen cents per thousand).

Fire Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Purchase and Repair CRF balance: \$798,346 as of December 31, 2017.

As part of our strategic planning, on July 1, 2015 the fire department and the emergency medical service department were merged to form the Amherst Fire Rescue Department. Last year you approved a change of purpose of the fire department capital reserve to be expanded to include EMS capital equipment to create this Fire Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Purchase and Repair Capital Reserve Fund.

Last year you also approved depositing \$200,000 into this fund. At the recommendation of Chief Conley, we are asking to add \$257,000 to this fund. This amount is consistent with the department’s vehicle and equipment replacement schedule.

ARTICLE 31: Discontinue Capital Reserve Funds

Shall the Town vote, pursuant to RSA 35:3, to discontinue the following Capital Reserve Funds with said funds with accumulated interest to date of withdrawal to be transferred to the town’s unassigned fund balance.

NAME	DATE EST.	AMT.
Rescue Squad CRF	1975	\$ 14.40
Fire Station Renovation CRF	2015	\$156.38
Structural Repair CRF	2013	\$ - 0 -
Forest View Design CRF	2006	\$ - 0 -

(The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0.) This article has an estimated tax impact of \$ 0.00 (zero cents per thousand).

Every couple of years as a matter of housekeeping the town administrator reviews the capital reserve fund the voters have established to determine if there is a continued need for the funds. These four; Rescue Squad Fund, Fire Station Renovation Fund, Structural Repair Fund and Forest View Design Fund are no longer needed and we need your permission to discontinue them.

Articles 32 & 33 are considered contingent articles, meaning both articles must pass in order for one fund to be discontinued and a new expendable trust to be created. If one passes and one fails, they both fail and the requested action cannot happen.

The Cemetery Lots Fund was set up in 1987 by warrant article. Because no agent to expend was specified, all expenditures must be approved by the town voters.

The fund was intended to hold money anticipated from a *Cy Pres* filing for the purchase of land for a new cemetery. The *Cy Pres* request was ultimately granted in 1990, which coincidentally, was right at the time the Forest View property became available for purchase. The money from the *Cy Pres* went immediately towards that purchase and was never deposited into the fund. Instead, the fund was used to hold the Town portion of the sales of cemetery lots, which, was not the original intent of the fund and this process has become a source of confusion ever since.

The Board of Selectmen, the Cemetery Trustees, and Trustees of the Trust Funds unanimously support making this change. By doing so, these funds will be available for the maintenance of all cemeteries, can also be used in the construction of Forest View, and can be expended by the Cemetery Trustees rather than having to wait for the voters to authorize expenditures via a warrant article.

We are seeking to close the Cemetery Lots Fund in article 32 and create a Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund with article 33.

The two-step process of closing the existing and opening the new one is mandated by state law. All that will be happening is that the monies in the fund will be held briefly by the Amherst town treasurer while the new fund is set up. The monies will then be transferred to the new fund.

ARTICLE 32: Article 32: Dissolve Cemetery Lots Fund

Shall the Town vote, in accordance with RSA 31:19-a, (II), to discontinue the Cemetery Lots Fund, previously established by town meeting in 1987, and transfer the balance in the amount of \$79,381.13 and accumulated interest, to the Town Treasurer. This article is contingent on the passage of Article 33. (Majority vote)

(The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 5-1.) This article has an estimated tax impact of \$ 0.00 (zero cents per thousand).

Article 33: Establish a Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund and Deposit Funds to Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund

Shall the Town vote to establish a Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund pursuant to RSA 31:19-a, and to authorize the expenditure of income and principal for the maintenance, capital improvements, and construction of all cemeteries and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$ 79,381.13 and accumulated interest, and deposit same into the Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund and further to designate the Cemetery Trustees as agents to expend. Said funds shall come from the monies available as a result of the passage of the preceding article (32) and no part of this appropriation shall be raised through taxation.

This article is contingent on the passage of Article 32.

(The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0.) (The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 5-1.) This article has an estimated tax impact of \$ 0.00 (zero cents per thousand).

Please use this guide to assist you as you cast your vote on Tuesday, March 13, 2018. The preceding pages provide a brief overview of the intent of each warrant article presented. Please bring this sheet with you to the polls on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, at Souhegan High School - 412 Boston Post Road between the hours of 6:00 AM and 8:00 PM.

TOWN WARRANT ARTICLES

YES NO

ARTICLE 22: Operating Budget		
ARTICLE 23: Contingency Fund		
ARTICLE 24: Amherst Conservation Commission 100% of LUCT Funds		
ARTICLE 25: Appropriation of Previously Collected Land Use Change Tax Funds		
ARTICLE 26: Police Station Renovation Capital Reserve Fund		
ARTICLE 27: Bridge Repair and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund		
ARTICLE 28: Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund		
ARTICLE 29: Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund		
ARTICLE 30: Fire Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Purchase and Repair Capital Reserve Fund		
ARTICLE 31: Discontinue Capital Reserve Funds		
ARTICLE 32: Dissolve Cemetery Lots Fund		
ARTICLE 33: Establish a Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund and Deposit Funds to Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund		