

Town of Westford

State of the Town Presentation

Presented By: **Kristen Las, Town Manager**
March 25, 2023 Annual Town Meeting

Westford Statistics

Current Population	24,282 <i>(10.61% increase since 2010)</i>
Registered Voters	18,190 <i>(74.91% of population)</i>
Median Value of Single-Family Home	\$660,500 <i>(2023)</i>
Median Household Income	\$161,076 <i>(2021)</i>
Unemployment Rate	Westford – 3.0% State – 3.6% Federal - 3.6% <i>(Jan 2023)</i>

FY 2023 Tax Rates

Single Tax Rate Communities		
Municipality	Residential	Commercial
Acton	\$17.56	\$17.56
Groton	\$15.64	\$15.64
Westborough	\$16.84	\$16.84
Westford	\$14.76	\$14.76

Dual Tax Rate Communities		
Municipality	Residential	Commercial
Ayer	\$12.42	\$27.45
Bedford	\$12.48	\$28.16
Billerica	\$11.87	\$26.45
Burlington	\$9.40	\$26.15
Chelmsford	\$14.37	\$18.17
Lexington	\$13.00	\$25.72
Littleton	\$16.25	\$25.37
Tewksbury	\$14.10	\$26.59

Exploring Planning Initiatives for Economic Growth

Zoning Bylaw Amendment at Annual Town Meeting 2023:

Commercial Recreation Opportunities Expansion

- Allowing commercial recreation uses in additional zoning districts in town

Commercial Recreation Overlay District

- Zoning overlay district over Kimball Farm and Nashoba Valley Ski Area to authorize commercial recreation through special permit
- Intended to streamline permitting to reduce or eliminate barriers to expansion or redevelopment opportunities



Exploring Planning Initiatives for Economic Growth

MBTA Community zoning amendment for Annual Town Meeting 2024

- New Section 3A of M.G.L. Chapter 40A designates Westford as an MBTA Community, and mandates the town provide at least 1 district of reasonable size that allows for multi-family housing as of right with a minimum density of 15 units per acre
- Exploring ways to incorporate economic development opportunities into a Zoning Bylaw amendment intended to achieve compliance with the new MBTA Community multi-family housing requirement
- May be an option to promote mixed use development
- May be used to encourage positive redevelopment by targeting underutilized areas
- The town has submitted an Action Plan which has been approved by the state
- Currently in the process to secure a consultant to begin the public planning process over the next several months

Exploring Planning Initiatives for Economic Growth

Streamline Site Plan Review

(Administrative, Minor, Major)

- Currently there is a single level of Site Plan Review set forth in the Zoning Bylaw which requires a public hearing
- Creating different levels of Site Plan Review could streamline Planning Board review and reduce time-to-permit from 3 or more months to a couple of weeks, or even days
- Would make Westford more competitive with neighboring towns and greater Middlesex 3 area
- Would free up Planning Board and staff resources to focus on additional planning initiatives

Redevelopment Opportunity

12 North Main Street

- In FY22, received Mass Development grant in the amount of \$240,000 to assist with cleanup of hazardous materials
- In FY23, applied for a Clean Up Grant from the Environmental Protection Agency in the amount of \$500,000

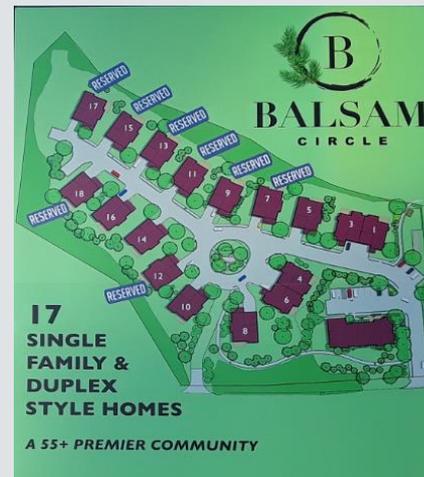


Residential Development

Project recently completed:

The Roberta McGuire Senior Residences (Balsam Circle - off Carlisle Road)

- Age-Restricted Housing
- 17 market-rate units, age-restricted to 55+
- 7 affordable supportive housing units, age-restricted to 62+



Residential Development

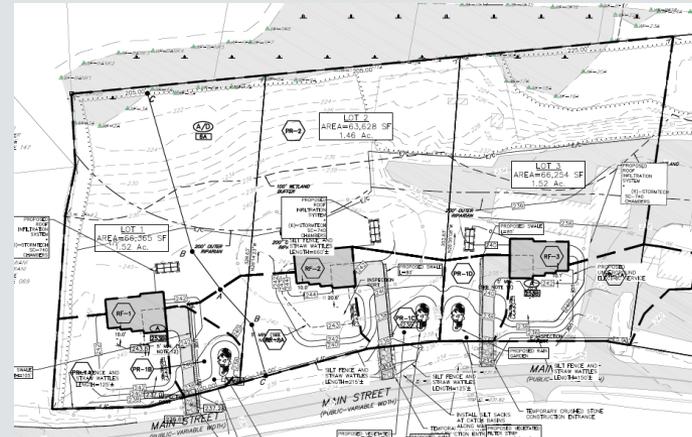
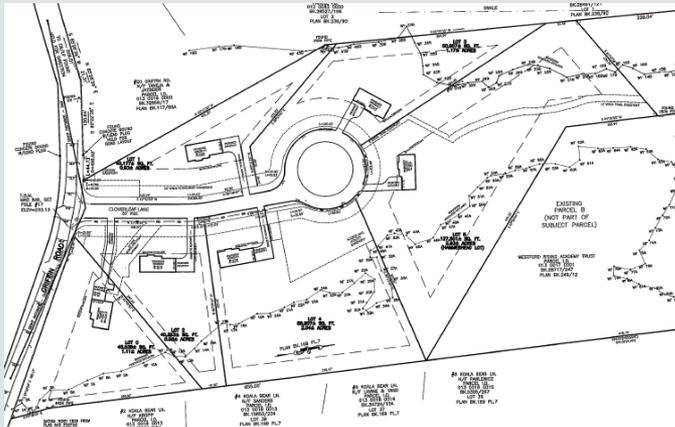
Projects nearly completed and partially occupied:

Cloverleaf Fields (22 Griffin Road)

- 6-lot Conventional Residential Subdivision Development

124 Main Street (Former Hicks Farm)

- Divided into 6 lots, total of 9 units: 5 lots with single-family detached homes; 1 lot with two duplexes



Residential Development

Projects under construction:

Spalding Hill Estates (5 St. Augustine Drive)

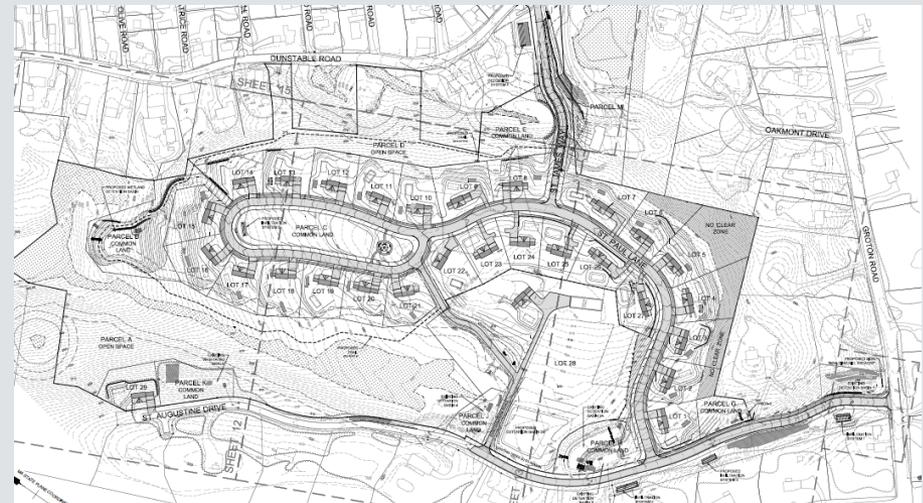
- 29-lot Open Space Residential Development

59 & 63 Hildreth Street

- 2 new dwellings, 1 existing dwelling razed

Annmarique Way (off Carlisle Road)

- 3-lot Residential Subdivision, Flexible Development



**Spalding
Hill Estates**

Residential Development

Projects under construction:

Helena Crocker Residences (60 Littleton Road)

- Eighteen (18) affordable rental units restricted to seniors aged 62+
- One 3-story building, with a mix of studio and 1-bedroom apts
- Construction started during the summer 2022



Residential Development

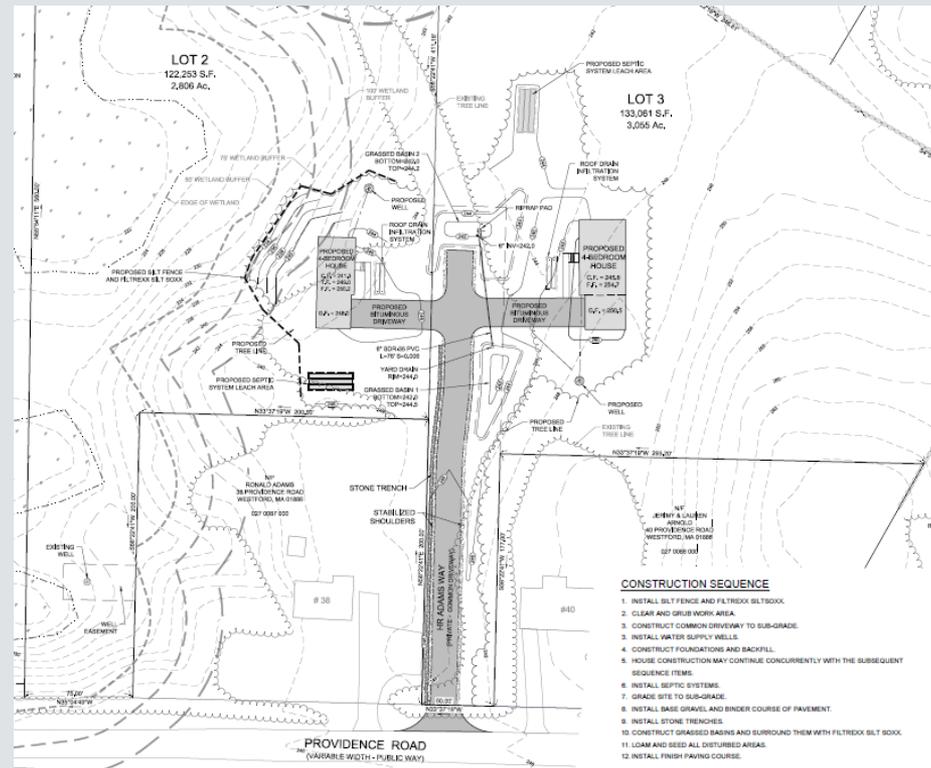
Projects under construction:

HR Adams Way (off Providence Road)

- New common driveway and 2 new dwellings

164 Main Street

- Conversion of single-family dwelling with ADU to a triplex with 3 units



**HR Adams
Way**

Residential Development

Projects that completed permitting process, but not yet under construction:

Wendell Place (off Nutting Road)

- 23-lot Open Space Residential Development



Wendell Place

New Senior Affordable Housing

35 Town Farm Road

- Town owned parcel
- Select Board awarded contract to SCG Development and CHOICE, Inc., with Icon Architecture, Inc.
- Proposed start date of January 2025
- Property to be redeveloped into 35 mixed income senior 62+ units and a new home for the Westford Food Pantry
- New Fire Training Facility to be constructed at 60 Forge Village Rd summer of 2023



Future Municipal Facilities

New Center Building at 51 Main to Replace Old Center Fire Station

- Office Space for 12 Employees (Information Technology, Veterans Services, Facilities Department, Community Wellness Coordinator, Sustainability Coordinator) and an additional 100+ person meeting room

J.V. Fletcher Library Expansion

- Town in line to receive \$7.85 million matching grant for project

Recreation Facility Feasibility Study

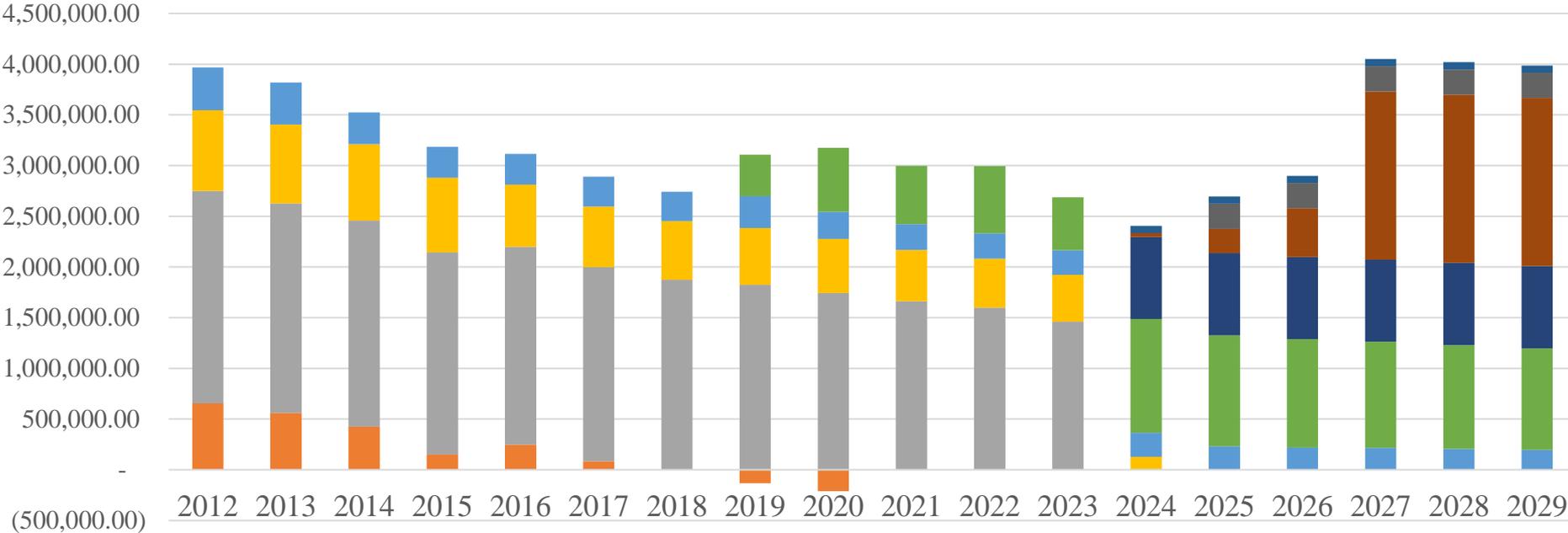
- Exploring the possibility of an indoor recreation facility with an aquatics component

Review space in schools/find location for School Administration

- \$250,000 recommended under Article 5 for a central office feasibility and redistricting study

Future Municipal Facilities

FY12- FY29 Excluded Debt



- Retired Debt
- Highway Garage
- Fletcher Fire Station
- JV Fletcher Library (Est. \$23,375,756)
- Contingency (Est. \$1,000,000)
- Miller, Crisafulli, and Stony Brook School
- Senior Center
- 51 Main Street (Est. \$12,400,000)
- Blanchard Middle School Roof (Est. \$3,500,000)

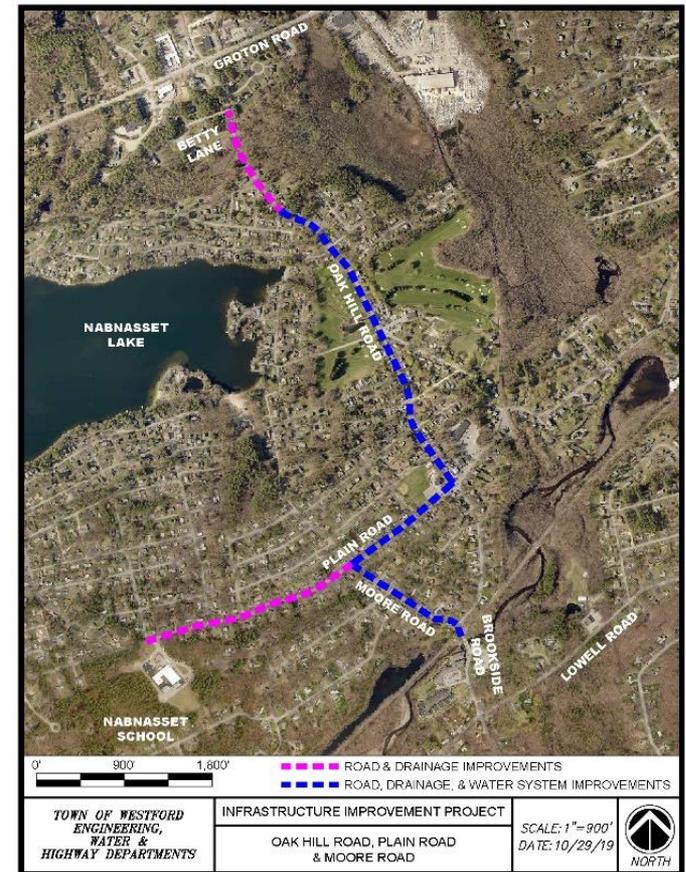
*Graph does not include results of May 2023 school feasibility study

Engineering / Infrastructure

Newly Created DPW Facebook Page

Recently Completed:

- Oak Hill Road, Plain Road, & Moore Road Infrastructure Project - Phase 1
- Blanchard School Wastewater Treatment Plant Rehabilitation
- Byrne Place Roadway Betterment
- 8.3 Miles of Road Paved



Engineering / Infrastructure

2023 Construction:

- Oak Hill Road, Plain Road, & Moore Road Infrastructure Project - Phase 2
- Beaver Brook Bridge Replacement Project
- Carlisle Road Sidewalk from Littleton Road to Balsam Circle
- Fire Training Facility

In Design:

- Boston Road Reconstruction, Town Hall Parking Lot, Plain Road Sidewalk Extension, Littleton Road Widening

Federal Funding – COVID-19 Pandemic

Grant Name	Amount	Spending Date
CARES Act	\$1,705,380	12/30/21
FEMA	\$506,779 received to date	6/30/22
American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	\$7,417,971	Appropriate by 12/31/24, Spend by 12/31/26
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER2)	\$271,511	9/30/23
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER3)	\$587,730	9/30/24

ARPA Funding

- Received all \$7,417,971, with last payment received in September 2022
- Select Board has appropriated \$5,537,536 for 74 different requests

Category	FY22 Appropriations	FY23 Appropriations	Total
Capital	1,236,981	1,259,444	2,496,426
Contact Tracing	7,650		7,650
Lost Revenue	803,708	167,128	970,836
Public Assistance	237,500	26,000	263,500
School Expense	166,042	231,003	397,044
Staffing	967,312	35,707	1,003,019
Town and School Expense	45,460	137,787	183,247
Town Expense	59,480	112,535	172,015
WCAT Request	31,635	12,164	43,799
Grand Total	3,555,768	1,981,768	5,537,536

- For a complete summary, please visit the [town's website](#)

Various FY23 Grants Received

- MA Public Library Construction Grant - \$7,851,994
- Dept of Public Health Excellence Grant (Year 2 of 3) - \$456,451
- 911 Dispatch Grants - \$125,943
- Council on Aging LRTA Grant - \$105,086
- Dept. of Housing & Community Development MBTA Grant - \$75,000
- Medical Reserve Corp NAACHO RISE Grant - \$75,000
- Council on Aging Formula Grant - \$67,718
- Police Dept Municipal Road Safety Grant \$24,000
- MA Cultural Council Grant - \$10,600
- Various State Earmarks – Parkerville Schoolhouse Roof (\$65K), Facilities Electric Vehicle (\$56K), School Bottle Refill Stations (\$35K)

Total Grants of \$8,947,792, or 6.47% of the total budget

March 25, 2023

Fiscal Years 2024-2026

Town of Westford Budget



Town of Westford
Fiscal Years 2024-2026

FY24 Projected Revenues

- \$850,000 in New Growth
- State Aid increasing by \$135,722 (0.65%)
- Collected \$2,856,000 in Motor Vehicle Excise through March 9 (75% of FY23 budget) – FY24 projection of \$3,895,000
- Hotel & Meals Excise projected at \$1,158,625 (114% of FY23 budget) – up from \$1,016,000 in FY22
- Collected \$941,041 in licenses & permits through March 9 (102% of FY23 budget) - FY24 projection of \$945,563
- Projecting \$200,000 in General Fund Investment Earnings (400% of FY23 budget)
- Generated \$558,442 through February in Recreation Enterprise Revenue – up from \$466,995 in FY22 - FY24 projection of \$952,300

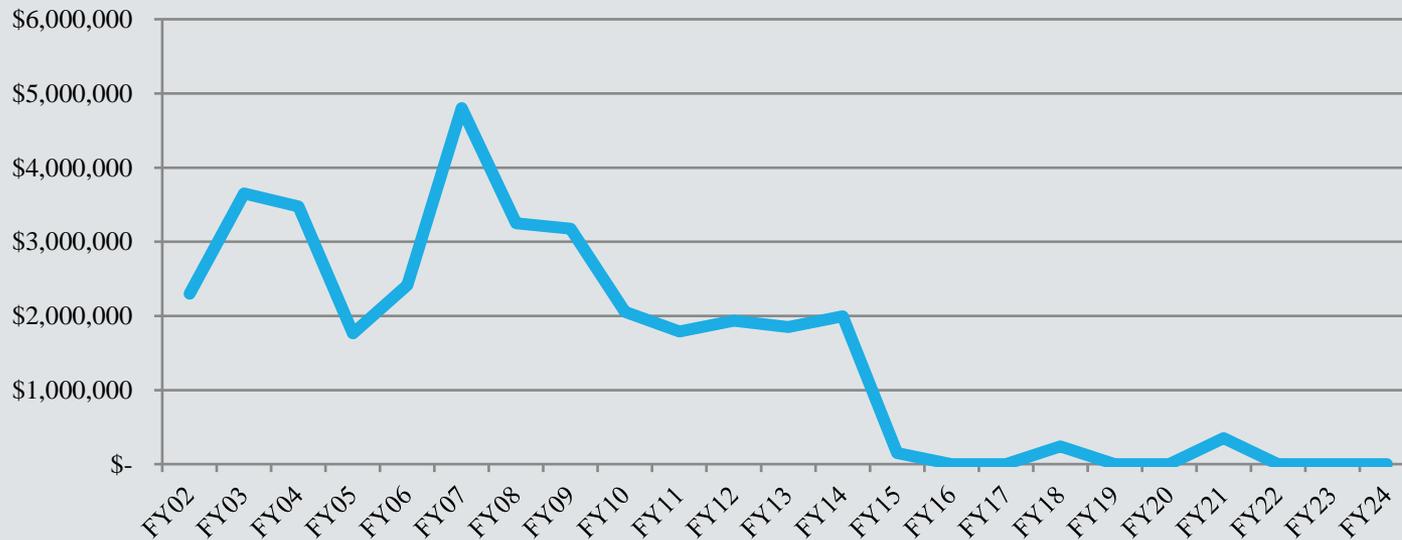
Allocation of FY24 New Revenue

New Revenue for FY24	\$1,693,987	
Less Fixed Costs		
Benefits & Insurance	(848,323)	
Debt Service	1,946,067	
NVTHS/Other	<u>(233,675)</u>	
Subtotal	864,069	
Fund Remaining for Depts.		<u>2,558,056</u>
Town Allocation (28%)	706,684	
School Allocation (72%)	1,851,372	
Net Remaining		\$0

Financial Accomplishments

- Presenting an FY24 balanced budget to Town Meeting
- Maintained AAA rating from Standard & Poor's

Free Cash Applied to Balance Operating Budget



FY24 Budget Highlights

- Initial budget requests +3.80% - reduced by \$1.1M
- Total projected cash reserves \$6.51M [5.50%] on June 30, 2023
- Overall Budget Increase +1.5% - additional \$1.90M
 - General Fund Budget Increase +2.81% - additional \$2.56M
- Westford Public Schools +2.89% – additional \$1.85M
- Other town departments +2.62% – additional \$707K
- N.V.T.H.S. assessment +7.79% to \$1,396,089
- Requesting \$31,359,881 for capital at the March 25th Annual Town Meeting
- Debt Service -31.02% or -\$1.946M – Stony Brook, Crisafulli, and Miller Schools note paid off in FY23

FY24 Highlights

Public Safety Needs

- Police and Fire Departments at full staffing levels
 - Allocated \$554,643 in FY22 from ARPA to fund 2 Firefighter/Paramedics
 - ARPA funding to be strategically decreased in future years through 2026 to absorb the additional cost into the budget, or about \$35,000 per year
- Reduction of one Police cruiser from requested amount
- Funded Police and Fire requested overtime amounts
- Additional 911 dispatcher included in the budget and is offset by decreasing the Public Safety Communications overtime budget

FY24 Budget

Other Departments

- Restored Town Manager's staff management training - \$10,000
- Funded a portion of the Community Wellness Coordinator and Sustainability Coordinator salaries within the budget
 - Sustainability Coordinator full time in FY24
- Reduced Legal Services budget - (\$20,000)
- Police gasoline increased - \$26,712
- Tree Warden increased by \$5,000 to \$40,000 total – \$27,500 short of the requested amount as recommended by the MVP Grant
- NVTHS Assessment increasing by \$100,884 - additional enrollment of six students from Westford
- Reduced Street Lights budget by \$25,000 – Credit from switching to LED lights

FY24 Budget Other Departments

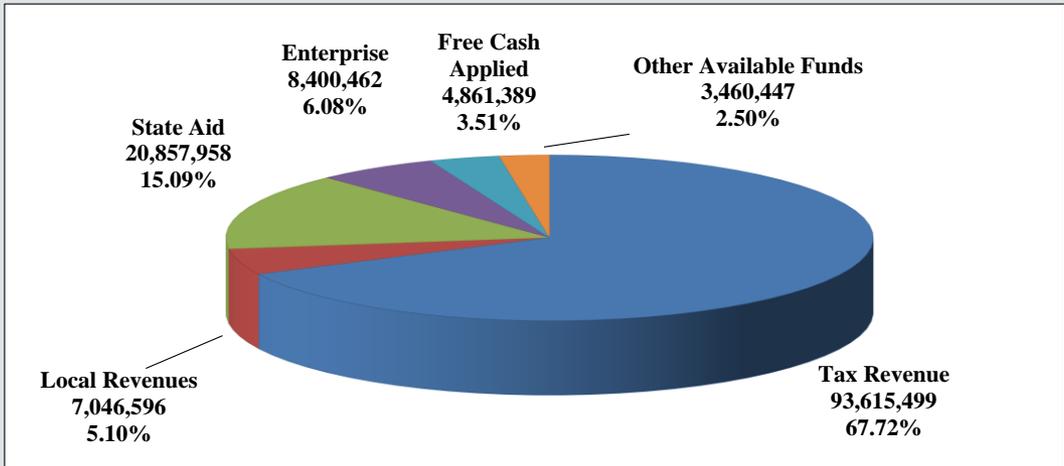
- Wastewater Treatment Management budget increased 8.45%
- Full salaries for Cemetery and Parks & Grounds no longer split with Highway Department to streamline the budget/payroll process
- Increased the COA Van Drivers budget by \$19,589 for a F/T driver
- Veteran's Services budget reduced by \$25,000 based on past few years actual expenditures. Will seek supplemental if demand increases.
- Land Management requested \$70,000 for surveying, monitoring, and treatment of Westford water bodies – funded \$50,000

FY24 Budget Enterprise Funds

- Water Commissioners authorized a 22% increase in water rates effective July 1, 2023
 - Cost of chemicals, higher EPA standards regarding PFAS remediation
- Recreation Enterprise – Revenue estimates lowered to reflect the post Covid enrollment trends.
 - Decreased two positions due to discontinuation of middle school after school program
- Ambulance Enterprise – Applying \$50,000 in retained earning, up from \$25,000 in FY23
- Stormwater Enterprise – General fund subsidy continues to be \$600,000
 - Debt service budget increasing by \$118,700 as several projects are underway

FY24 Projected Revenue to Fund FY24 Expenses

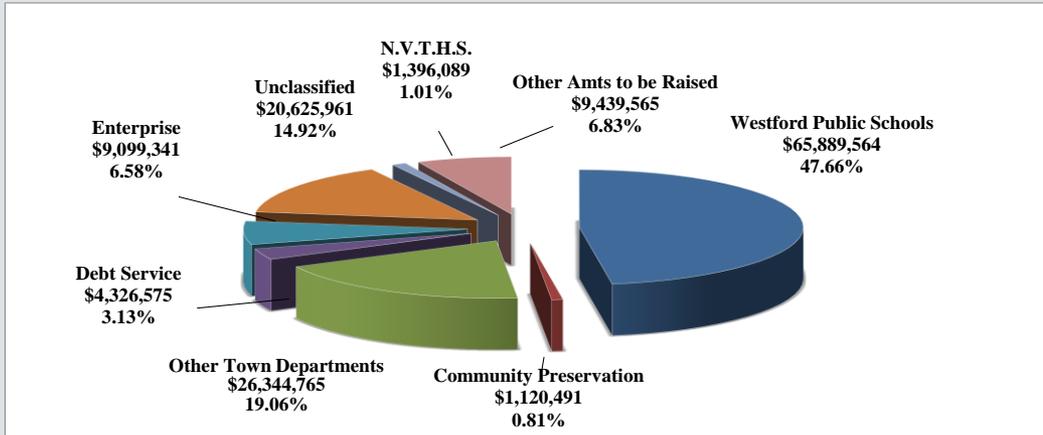
- New Growth \$850,000
- Currently using Governor's Budget for State Aid increased from \$20,722,236 in FY23 to \$20,857,958 in FY24; increase of \$135,722
 - State Assessments decreased by \$73,951 (mostly school choice and charter school sending tuition)
- Overall decrease to local revenue of \$1,219,535
 - MSBA funding for Stony Brook, Crisafulli, Miller schools budget in local revenue – bonds paid off in FY23
 - Decrease of \$1,664,778 offset by decrease in debt service budget
- Net of MSBA funding, Local Revenue increasing by \$445,243
 - Hotels and meals excise taxes increase by \$143,625 to \$1,158,625
 - Investment Income projected increase by \$153,000 to \$200,000



FY24 Projected Revenue

Tax Revenue	\$93,615,499
Local Revenue	7,046,596
State Aid	20,857,958
Enterprise Revenue	8,400,462
Other Available Funds	3,460,447
Appropriations from Free Cash	4,861,389
Free Cash to Balance Budget	0
Total	\$138,242,351

FY24 Expenditures



Westford Public Schools	\$65,889,564
Community Preservation	1,120,491
Other Town Departments	26,344,765
Debt Service	4,326,575
Enterprise	9,099,341
Unclassified*	20,625,961
N.V.T.H.S.	1,396,089
Other Amounts to be Raised**	9,439,565
Total	\$138,242,351

*Unclassified budget includes: health insurance, pension assessment, unemployment insurance, general insurance, OPEB, vacation and sick buyback (town only).

**Other Amounts to be raised includes: State assessments, State aid reserved for direct assessment (school choice, library), overlay, capital, community preservation projects, and other appropriations approved outside of the operating budget.

Health Insurance Trust

- On March 31, 2022, Westford became partially self-funded
- Health Insurance rates increased by 4.00% on November 1, 2022
- Funding for retirees on Medicare plan increased 3.82% on January 1, 2023
 - The Medicare plan will not be partially self-funded
- FY24 budget projects a 6% premium increase on November 1, 2023 totaling \$12,367,589
- The current balance in the Health Insurance Trust is \$2,142,826 as of February 2023
- The goal is to have a minimum of \$3.7M in the Trust

Other Post Employment Benefits

- Our OPEB policy – annually fund “normal costs” – accrued liability for employees hired after Jan 1, 2012
- Current net liability is \$102.63M as of June 30, 2022 – new actuarial study occurs each year
- Funding OPEB at \$1,355,532 with \$1,000,000 in the operating budget and \$355,532 from free cash – total increase of \$168,871 from previous year
- OPEB Trust Fund current balance \$12,141,938 – after FY24 appropriation balance will be \$13,497,470

FY24 Capital Investment

Capital Planning Committee Recommendation of \$29,359,881

Free Cash	\$3,768,859
General Fund Bonds (non-excluded)*	2,150,000
General Fund Bonds (excluded)	17,825,043
Enterprise Bonds	4,545,000
Enterprise Revenue/Retained Earnings	631,500
Other Available Funds	439,479

**Does not include Senior Center HVAC project*

Current Capital Stabilization Balance is \$513,276

Congratulations Westford!

- U.S. News & World Report:
 - Ranked Westford Academy 25th best high school in Massachusetts for 2022
- 2022 Niche.com rankings:
 - Ranked 12th in Massachusetts for “Best Suburbs to Live in”
 - Ranked 160th in Nation for “Best Teachers in America” and 8th overall in Massachusetts
 - 17th Safest School District in Massachusetts
 - 19th Best Place to Teach in Massachusetts
 - Ranked 103rd in Nation for Best School District and 10th in Massachusetts in 2022
- Masslive.com in 2021 ranked Westford as 25th safest community in USA!



Thank you to board members, department heads, employees, volunteers, and residents for your creativity, countless contributions, and most of all, your unwavering commitment to our community