In 2024 the Selectmen and Advisory Committee are again both recommending budgets that are under the state mandated cap. The Selectmen’s and the Advisory Committee’s recommended municipal budget needed to be raised by taxation is $45,493 more than 2023. After reducing this budget by Reserve Funds, State Revenue Sharing, and available surplus the budget by taxation is $144,941 more than last year.

**ARTICLE 2:** As there are no official candidates running for the seat of Selectmen, we would like to inform you that Wayne ‘Chip’ Johnson will be running as a write-in candidate.

**ARTICLE 3:** The amount that can be raised by taxation, after deducting available funds, is limited to a certain percentage increase based on new taxable property in the municipality and the TPI that is set by the state. A municipality can vote at town meeting by a written ballot to increase this limit. This article, if passed, will make the budget adopted at the town meeting legal even if it is more than the spending cap limitation. In 2024 this spending cap limit is $757,776**.** The Selectmen’s and the Advisory Committee’s2024 proposed budget by taxation is under this cap by $144,464.

**ARTICLE 4:** The 2023 Winter Roads budget was over budget by $7,843.87. We need town approval for that to be covered by surplus funds.

**ARTICLES 5 THRU 18:** These are the articles to raise money for various purposes. Our Budget Worksheet will be available at the Town Office and at the Town Meeting. Salaries have been increased due to the State Minimum Wage increase from $13.80 to $14.15 for 2024 and the 3.5% cost-of-living increase reported in December. Also, there are increases due to the rising prices for just about everything. Other items of note in that group are listed below.

**ARTICLE 5:** Most of the large increase is due to the full year funding for Retirement Benefits for our full-time employees. In 2023, the first year we started giving this benefit, it was only budgeted for 9 months. Also, our previous town auditor died in 2023 and there was a $4,700 increase to hire a new auditor.

**ARTICLE 8:** The Library is now also open on Tuesday and Thursday hours of 10 am to 6 pm and Saturdays from 10 am to 4 pm.

**ARTICLE 12:** The Recreation Programs have been very active in 2023 and will continue to be active in 2024 so more funding is needed.

**ARTICLE 17:** We are asking to raise less money for the Road Paving Reserve and more money for the Highway Equipment Reserve this year so we can purchase a new truck for the Highway Department.

**ARTICLE 19:** We are asking to move the funds in the Tree Planting Reserve to the Municipal Grounds Maintenance Reserve. We have not added any funds since 2016 and have not expended any funds. We want to move the funds to the Municipal Grounds Maintenance Reserve Account. If we ever decide to plant trees in town, we can use the Municipal Grounds Maintenance Reserve Account to pay for it.

**ARTICLES 20 & 21:** These will create and raise funds for a reserve for our Town Web Site maintenance fee. If we renew it every 3 years, we get a discounted rate.

**ARTICLES 22 & 23:** New safety requirements are coming out every year for our firefighters. These require us to update and add new equipment and gear to keep our firefighters safe. This sets up a reserve account and raises reserve funds for this purpose.

**ARTICLES 24 & 25:** These articles are related to creating a reserve account for funds to replace or upgrade our town garage.

**ARTICLE 28:**  It is time to purchase a new town truck to replace our 1994 truck. We currently have 2015 and 2017 Western Star trucks. We will also need to purchase a new dump/sander body and plow setup. We have about $18,000 in the equipment reserve account. We are suggesting that instead of raising $225,000 for the paving reserve to only raise $15,000 for the paving reserve and raise the other $210,000 for the equipment reserve account plus the usual $10,000 we have been raising so we will have $238,000 available for the truck, plow, and dump/sander body purchase.

**ARTICLE 29:** Due to the flooding on May 1, 2023, the 2023 summer roads budget is $98,628.98 over budget. We took funds from the LRAP reserve account to cover the shortfall. We expect to receive at least $115,000 from FEMA/MEMA for the Federally Declared Disaster and need to reimburse the LRAP reserve for the $98,628.98 used to cover the summer roads budget.

**ARTICLE 30:** We have not yet found a used baler for the transfer station, so this is to allow us to continue looking for a baler and to purchase it and other associated equipment using ARPA funds.

**ARTICLE 31:** Old Canada Road Scenic Byway wants to enter into discussions with the town on taking over ownership of the Robbins Hill Scenic Byway Overlook property in Solon and to work with them to maintain and improve the overlook property. MDOT currently owns the property and might be willing to turn it over to the town. This will give us permission to enter into the discussions and to form a committee if necessary.

**ARTICLE 32:** This will change the Road Commissioner from an elected to an appointed position.

**ARTICLE 33:** Google maps shows 2 McCarty Roads in Solon on their maps. One is the one just north of the River Road going east to the Parkman Hill Road and the other is just north of the South Solon road going east to the Parkman Hill Road. We want to name the road just north of the South Solon Road going east to the Parkman Hill Road Woods Road. It is an unnamed road across from 447 S. Main Street. It is a road a Scott Paper Company (currently Weyerhaeuser) put in and maintains when they are logging their property along the road and on the McCarty Road. We just want to name it, not take ownership of it.

**ARTICLE 34:** The roadbed that covers the three culverts at Michael Stream on the Hole in the Wall Road was undermined during the May 1 flooding event that was declared a Federal Disaster. FEMA will pay for most of the repairs but not for extending the culverts so we can put more rip rap along the inlets and outlets of the culverts. So far, they are saying that we have to pay for the extensions ourselves.

**ARTICLES 35 thru 41:** These articles are either required by Maine law every year or are articles included every year for the reasons stated in the articles.