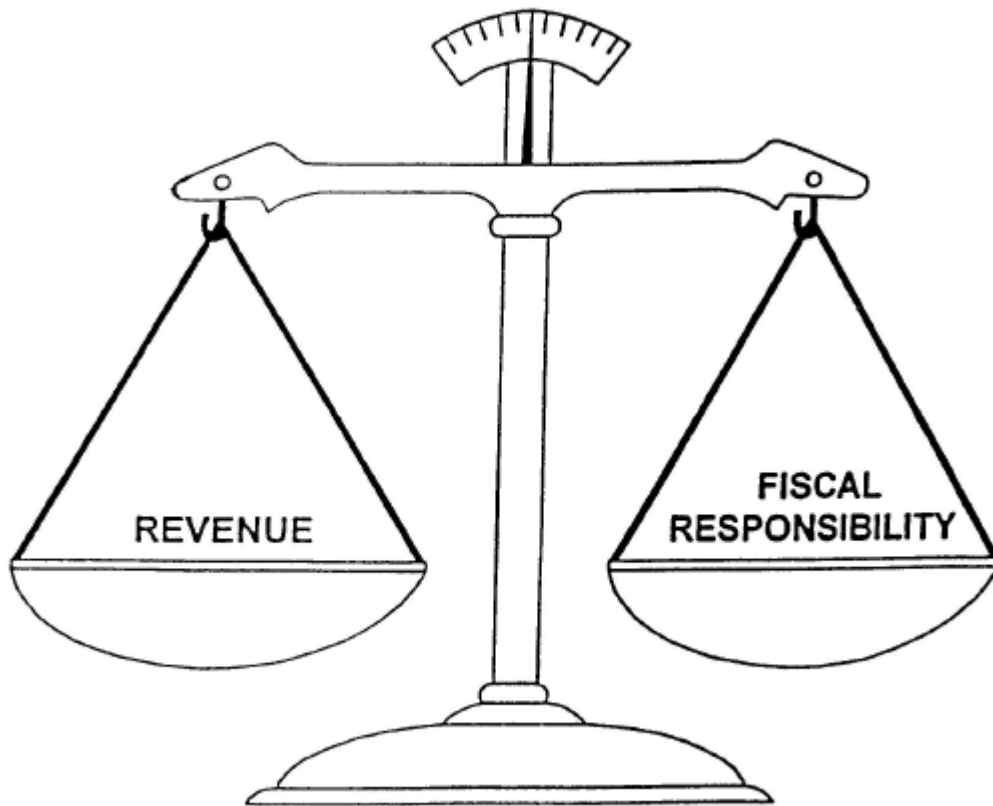


**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
OF THE  
NORTHBRIDGE FINANCE COMMITTEE**



**Spring Annual Town Meeting  
Tuesday, May 7, 2024  
7:00 p.m.**

**Northbridge High School  
427 Linwood Avenue  
Whitinsville, MA**



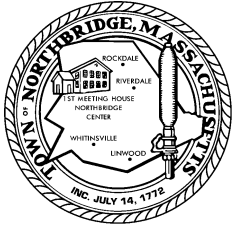
# THINK

## VOTERS CHECK LIST

### To be considered on each vote:

1. IS IT NECESSARY? Or is it something that is not really needed or perhaps already being provided by a private or public group?
2. CAN WE AFFORD IT? Remember, there is no limit to what we would like, but there is a limit to what we can afford.
3. WHAT WILL IT COST ULTIMATELY? Many proposals are like icebergs - only a small fraction of the total is apparent on the surface.
4. HOW WILL IT AFFECT BASIC LIBERTIES? If it imposes unreasonable or illegal restraints on your life or that of others, it should be vigorously opposed.
5. IS IT IN THE BALANCED BEST INTEREST OF ALL? If it is designed to benefit a small group or special interests, while taking unfair advantage of others, work for its defeat.
6. IS IT A "FOOT-IN-DOOR" PROPOSITION? Compromising a little now may bring an oppressive burden later, either in more regulation or more taxes or a combination of both.
7. DOES IT PLACE TOO MUCH POWER IN THE HANDS OF ONE INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP? Once decisive power is granted to a non-elected public official, a commission or a municipal authority, the private citizens may lose effective control.
8. DOES IT RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE MINORITY? This is a cornerstone of our Republic.
9. IS ITS APPEAL BASED ON EMOTIONAL PROPAGANDA OR FACTS? The farther a proposition gets away from facts, the more critical one should be.
10. DOES IT SQUARE WITH YOUR MORAL CONVICTIONS? If so, fight for it. If not, oppose it.

*From Finance Committee Handbook*



**TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE  
FINANCE COMMITTEE  
7 MAIN STREET  
WHITINSVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 01588**

May 7, 2024

Dear Voters:

Enclosed is the warrant for the Spring Session of the Annual Town Meeting along with a short summary prepared by the Town Manager and the Recommendations of the Finance Committee for each article.

As in previous years, the Town Budget was constructed using the Governor's estimate of Local Aid. The Town Manager met with his department heads, reviewed their budgetary requests, and submitted his recommendations to the Finance Committee. Over several weeks, the Finance Committee met with the Town Manager and some department heads including DPW, Northbridge Public Schools, Police and Fire as well as representatives from the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School. We also held a public hearing, all to make our recommendations contained in this booklet. Article three of the enclosed warrant details the proposed Fiscal Year 2025 operating budget of approximately \$54.5 million.

In the enclosed warrant, there are many articles that address items we act on each year such as allowing the treasurer to enter into agreements, establishing revolving account limits, community preservation appropriations, operational funding for the water and sewer departments, and appropriating chapter 90 monies for repair and maintenance of roads.

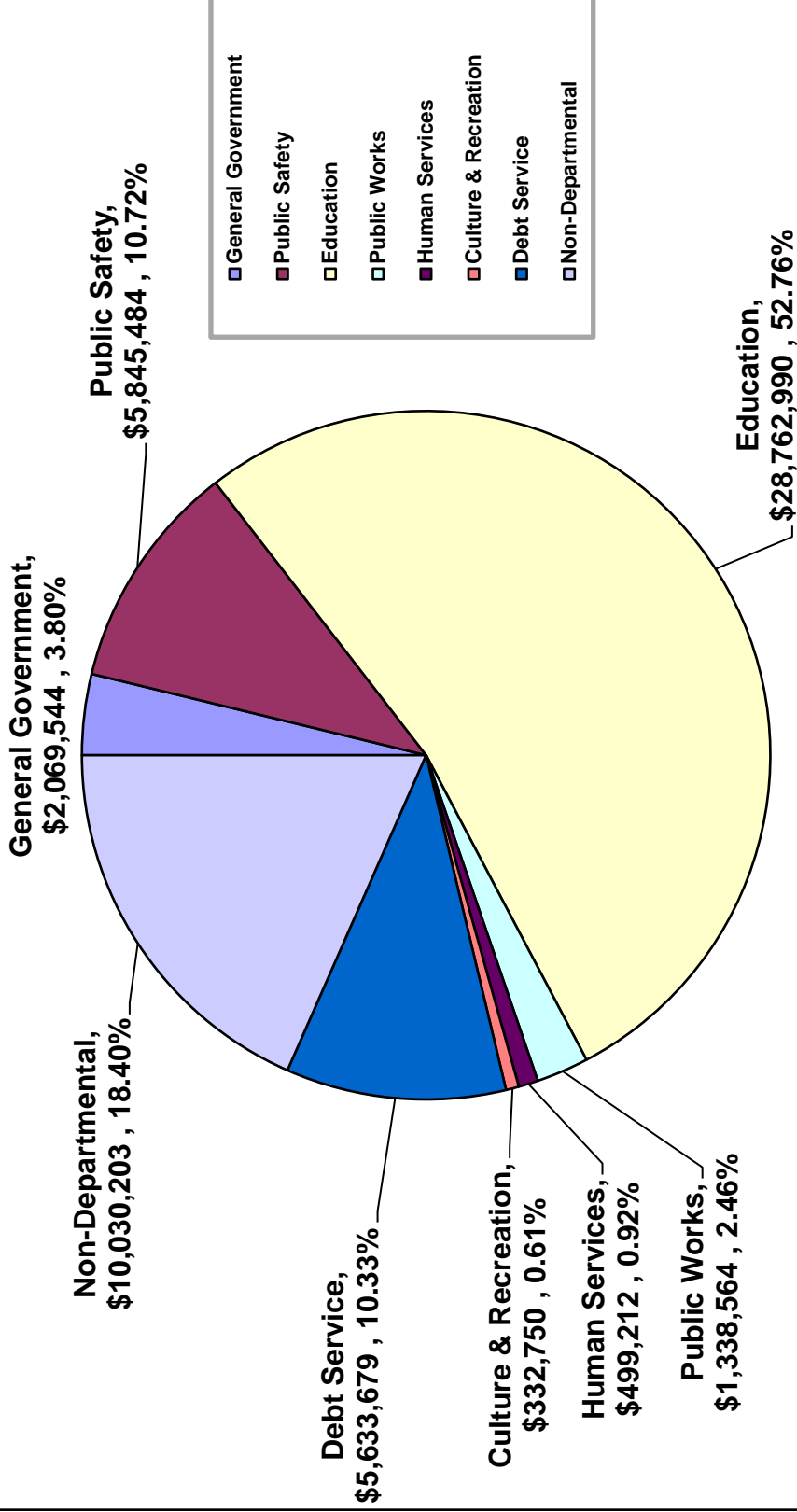
Also, within the warrant there are requests to transfer monies for improvements to the sewer system, approximately \$1.4 million to fund capital projects, repairs to the school buildings and a vote to give authorization to the Selectmen to dispose of the Rockdale Fire Station and the former Northbridge Elementary School property. Additionally, there are articles among others to transfer \$1 million from free cash to begin to address an issue with the cap at the Quaker Street Landfill, and a request, subject to a debt exclusion vote and a Massachusetts School Building Authority grant, to approve debt for the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School for the repair/replacement of a roof and HVAC units.

We hope you will find this publication helpful in making informed decisions when voting at the town meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Plato Adams, Chairman  
James Barron  
Sean Ferry  
Steven Gogolinski  
David Graham  
Christopher Thompson

# FISCAL YEAR 2025 RECOMMENDED OPERATING BUDGET



**TOTAL RECOMMENDED BUDGET:**

**TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE  
WARRANT FOR  
SPRING ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
TUESDAY, MAY 7, 2024 - 7:00 P.M.**

**ARTICLE 1: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds in the Treasury and/or transfer from the unexpended appropriated funds of one or more of the departments of the Town the following sums of money and authorize the payment of prior year bills; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This article seeks authorization to pay prior year bills. Should there be none, this article will be passed over at Town Meeting.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** There being no prior year bills, the Finance Committee *recommends passing over* this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 2: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to amend the votes taken under Article 3 of the 2023 Spring Session of the Annual Town Meeting (May 2, 2023), and under Article 2 of the 2023 Fall Session of the Annual Town Meeting (October 24, 2023), appropriations and transfers under the Omnibus Budget Article; or take any other action relative thereto.

**BUDGET TRANSFERS**

**GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**TOWN MANAGER:**

Line 2B: Town Manager Expenses

By **transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)**

the additional sum of

\$ 11,000

**TOTAL TOWN MANAGER: \$ 11,000**

**TREASURER/COLLECTOR**

Line 7B: Treasurer/Collector Expenses

By **transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)**

the additional sum of

\$ 5,000

**TOTAL TREASURER/COLLECTOR: \$ 5,000**

**INFORMATION SYSTEMS**

Line 8B: Information Systems Expenses

By **transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)**

the additional sum of

\$ 45,000

**TOTAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS: \$ 45,000**

**TOTAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT: \$ 61,000**

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**FIRE DEPARTMENT:**

Line 16A: Fire Personnel

By **transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)**

the additional sum of

\$ 25,000

**FIRE DEPARTMENT:**

Line 16B: Fire Expenses

By transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)

the additional sum of

\$ 12,000

**TOTAL FIRE DEPARTMENT: \$ 37,000**

**AMBULANCE:**

Line 17A: Ambulance Personnel

By transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)

the additional sum of

\$ 25,000

**TOTAL AMBULANCE: \$ 25,000**

**TOTAL PUBLIC SAFETY: \$ 62,000**

**PUBLIC WORKS**

**DPW HIGHWAY DIVISION:**

Line 22A: Snow/Ice Personnel

By transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)

the additional sum of

\$236,000

**TOTAL SNOW/ICE: \$236,000**

**TOTAL PUBLIC WORKS: \$236,000**

**HUMAN SERVICES**

**LANDFILL ANALYSIS:**

Line 26B: Landfill Analysis Expenses

By transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)

the additional sum of

\$ 25,000

**TOTAL LANDFILL ANALYSIS: \$ 25,000**

**TOTAL HUMAN SERVICES: \$ 25,000**

**CULTURE & RECREATION**

**RECREATION:**

Line 31B: Recreation Expenses

By transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)

the additional sum of

\$ 10,000

**TOTAL RECREATION: \$ 10,000**

**TOTAL CULTURE & RECREATION: \$ 10,000**

**NON-DEPARTMENTAL**

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION:**

Line 37B: Workers' Compensation Expenses

By transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)

the additional sum of

\$ 14,017

**TOTAL WORKERS' COMP.: \$ 14,017**

**UNEMPLOYMENT:**

Line 38B: Unemployment Expenses

By transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)

the additional sum of

\$ 75,000

**TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT: \$ 75,000**

**PROPERTY & LIABILITY**

Line 40B: Property & Liability Expenses

By transferring from the undesignated fund balance (free cash)

the additional sum of

\$ 57,768.15

**TOTAL PROPERTY & LIABILITY: \$ 57,768.15**

**TOTAL NON-DEPARTMENTAL: \$146,785.15**

**TOTAL ARTICLE 2: \$540,785.15**

**TOWN MANAGER’S SUMMARY:** This article seeks to allow amendments to the FY 2024 operating budget, which was also amended at the Fall Session of the Annual Town Meeting held on October 24, 2023.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION:** This article looks at balancing the FY 2024 Town budget. The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER’S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

**ARTICLE 3: (Finance Committee)**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds in the Treasury and/or transfer from the Pine Grove Cemetery Fund such sums of money, not to exceed \$54,532,426 to defray the necessary and usual expenses of the several departments of the Town for FY 2025, beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025; or take any other action relative thereto.

LINE # ACCOUNT NAME	FY 24 Approved	FY 25 Recommended
<b>GENERAL GOVERNMENT</b>		
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE</b>		
<b>1 SELECTMEN</b>		
1A Personnel	5,150	5,150
By allocating \$1,150 to the Chairman and \$1,000 to each of the other 4 Selectmen		
1B Expenses	103,260	63,260
<b>Total Selectmen</b>	<b>108,410</b>	<b>68,410</b>
<b>2 TOWN MANAGER</b>		
2A Personnel	372,271	383,868
2B Expenses	19,810	19,810
<b>Total Town Manager</b>	<b>392,081</b>	<b>403,678</b>
<b>3 FINANCE COMMITTEE</b>		
3B Expenses	6,275	6,275
<b>Total Finance Committee</b>	<b>6,275</b>	<b>6,275</b>



<b>4 RESERVE FUND</b>		
4B Expenses	50,000	50,000
<b>Total Reserve Fund</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>
<b>5 TOWN ACCOUNTANT</b>		
5A Personnel	165,170	185,145
5B Expenses	15,380	50,965
<b>Total Town Accountant</b>	<b>180,550</b>	<b>236,110</b>
<b>6 ASSESSORS</b>		
6A Personnel	192,707	196,460
6B Expenses	46,245	46,245
<b>Total Assessors</b>	<b>238,952</b>	<b>242,705</b>
<b>7 TREASURER/COLLECTOR</b>		
7A Personnel	199,652	201,468
<b>APPROPRIATE FROM PARKING TICKET RECEIPTS</b>		
7A Personnel	0	0
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE</b>		
7B Expenses	60,500	60,500
<b>Total Treasurer/Collector</b>	<b>260,152</b>	<b>261,968</b>
<b>8 INFORMATION SYSTEMS</b>		
8A Personnel	87,068	87,939
8B Expenses	172,536	172,536
<b>Total Information Systems</b>	<b>259,604</b>	<b>260,475</b>
<b>9 TOWN CLERK/ELECTIONS</b>		
9A Personnel	140,459	145,816
9B Expenses	55,042	70,695
<b>Total Town Clerk/Elections</b>	<b>195,501</b>	<b>216,511</b>
<b>10 CONSERVATION</b>		
10A Personnel	80,241	84,527
<b>APPROPRIATE FROM WETLAND FEES</b>		
10A Personnel	11,500	11,500
10B Expenses	0	0
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE</b>		
10B Expenses	2,590	2,590
<b>Total Conservation</b>	<b>94,331</b>	<b>98,617</b>
<b>11 PLANNING BOARD</b>		
11A Personnel	125,313	126,660
11B Expenses	9,881	9,881
<b>Total Planning Board</b>	<b>135,194</b>	<b>136,541</b>

<b>12 ZONING/APPEALS BOARD</b>			
12A Personnel		9,760	10,349
12B Expenses		6,330	6,330
<b>Total Zoning/Appeals Board</b>		<b>16,090</b>	<b>16,679</b>
<b>13 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>			
13A Personnel		0	0
13B Expenses		0	0
<b>Total Economic Development</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>14 TOWN HALL/CENTRAL SERVICES</b>			
14A Personnel		13,565	13,750
14B Expenses		57,825	57,825
<b>Total Town Hall/Central Services</b>		<b>71,390</b>	<b>71,575</b>
<b>TOTAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT</b>		<b>2,008,530</b>	<b>2,069,544</b>
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE PUBLIC SAFETY</b>			
<b>15 POLICE</b>			
15A Personnel		2,878,839	2,929,772
15B Expenses		329,602	348,952
<b>Total Police</b>		<b>3,208,441</b>	<b>3,278,724</b>
<b>16 FIRE</b>			
16A Personnel		1,015,261	1,025,513
16B Expenses		201,988	203,240
<b>Total Fire</b>		<b>1,217,019</b>	<b>1,228,753</b>
<b>APPROPRIATE FROM AMBULANCE RECEIPTS</b>			
<b>17 AMBULANCE</b>			
17A Personnel		859,560	948,746
17B Expenses		136,400	183,475
<b>Total Ambulance</b>		<b>995,960</b>	<b>1,132,221</b>
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE</b>			
<b>18 CODE ENFORCEMENT</b>			
18A Personnel		170,773	174,446
18B Expenses		12,190	12,190
<b>Total Code Enforcement</b>		<b>182,963</b>	<b>186,636</b>
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE</b>			
<b>19 CIVIL DEFENSE</b>			
19A Personnel		7,500	7,500
19B Expenses		11,650	11,650
<b>Total Civil Defense</b>		<b>19,150</b>	<b>19,150</b>

<b>TOTAL PUBLIC SAFETY</b>	<b>5,623,533</b>	<b>5,845,484</b>
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE EDUCATION</b>		
<b>20 SCHOOL DEPARTMENT</b>		
20 SCHOOL DEPARTMENT	25,888,853	26,321,630
20A TRANSPORTATION	0	0
20B TRADE SCHOOL	350,000	350,000
20C BLACKSTONE REGIONAL	1,847,540	2,091,360
<b>TOTAL EDUCATION</b>	<b>28,086,393</b>	<b>28,762,990</b>
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE PUBLIC WORKS</b>		
<b>21 DPW HIGHWAY DIVISION</b>		
21A Personnel	555,260	558,167
21B Expenses	606,369	606,369
<b>Total Highway</b>	<b>1,161,629</b>	<b>1,164,536</b>
<b>22 DPW SNOW AND ICE</b>		
22A Personnel	30,000	15,000
22B Expenses	70,000	85,000
<b>Total Snow and Ice</b>	<b>100,000</b>	<b>100,000</b>
<b>23 DPW CEMETERY</b>		
23A Personnel	0	30,855
23B Expenses	0	43,173
<b>Total Cemetery</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>74,028</b>
<b>TOTAL PUBLIC WORKS</b>	<b>1,261,629</b>	<b>1,338,564</b>
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE BUILDING, PLANNING &amp; CONSTRUCTION COMM.</b>		
<b>24 BUILDING, PLANNING &amp; CONSTRUCTION COMM.</b>		
24B Expenses	0	0
<b>TOTAL BUILD, PLAN, &amp; CONSTRUCT</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE HUMAN SERVICES</b>		
<b>25 BOARD OF HEALTH</b>		
25A Personnel	71,336	72,045
25B Expenses	23,779	23,779
<b>Total Board of Health</b>	<b>95,115</b>	<b>95,824</b>

<b>26 LANDFILL ANALYSIS</b>			
26B Expenses		16,700	40,320
<b>Total Landfill Analysis</b>		<b>16,700</b>	<b>40,320</b>
<b>27 COUNCIL ON AGING</b>			
27A Personnel		173,321	176,660
27B Expenses		20,508	20,508
<b>Total Council On Aging</b>		<b>193,829</b>	<b>197,168</b>
<b>28 DISABILITY COMMISSION</b>			
28A Personnel		0	0
28B Expenses		1,000	1,000
<b>Total Disability Commission</b>		<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>
<b>29 VETERANS</b>			
29A Personnel		0	0
29B Expenses		164,900	164,900
<b>Total Veterans</b>		<b>164,900</b>	<b>164,900</b>
<b>TOTAL HUMAN SERVICES</b>		<b>471,544</b>	<b>499,212</b>
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE CULTURE &amp; RECREATION</b>			
<b>30 LIBRARY</b>			
30A Personnel		252,181	255,249
30B Expenses		29,601	29,601
<b>Total Library</b>		<b>281,782</b>	<b>284,850</b>
<b>31 RECREATION</b>			
31A Personnel		0	0
31B Expenses		12,000	29,000
31C Youth League Equipment		0	0
<b>Total Recreation</b>		<b>12,000</b>	<b>29,000</b>
<b>32 HISTORICAL COMMISSION</b>			
32B Expenses		2,000	2,000
<b>Total Historical Commission</b>		<b>2,000</b>	<b>2,000</b>
<b>33 MEMORIALS</b>			
33A Soldiers Memorials		15,000	15,000
33B Veterans Celebrations		1,900	1,900
<b>Total Memorials</b>		<b>16,900</b>	<b>16,900</b>

<b>34 RECYCLING</b>		
34A Personnel	0	0
34B Expenses	0	0
<b>Total Recycling</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL CULTURE &amp; RECREATION</b>	<b>312,682</b>	<b>332,750</b>
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE</b>		
<b>35 DEBT SERVICE</b>		
35A Debt Principal	3,037,000	2,134,000
<b>APPROPRIATE FROM RECEIPTS RESERVED - TITLE V</b>		
35B Debt Principal	4,796	4,796
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE</b>		
35C Long Term Debt Interest	2,056,469	1,975,483
35D Short Term Debt Interest	20,000	725,000
35E Short Term Debt Principal	0	735,000
35F BVRS Debt	64,511	59,400
<b>TOTAL DEBT SERVICE</b>	<b>5,182,776</b>	<b>5,633,679</b>
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE</b>		
<b>NON-DEPARTMENTAL</b>		
<b>36 RETIREMENT SYSTEM</b>		
36B Expenses	2,133,630	2,176,303
<b>Total Retirement System</b>	<b>2,133,630</b>	<b>2,176,303</b>
<b>37 WORKERS' COMPENSATION</b>		
37B Expenses	175,000	191,927
<b>Total Workers' Compensation</b>	<b>175,000</b>	<b>191,927</b>
<b>38 UNEMPLOYMENT</b>		
38B Expenses	131,300	206,300
<b>Total Unemployment</b>	<b>131,300</b>	<b>206,300</b>
<b>39 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS</b>		
39A Medicare	345,000	345,000
39B Life Insurance	10,000	10,000
39C Employee Ins. Benefits	6,419,240	6,419,240
39D Reserve for Wage Adj.	12,500	12,500
39E Retirement Benefits	24,750	24,750
<b>APPROPRIATE FROM AVAILABLE FUNDS [FREE CASH]</b>		
39F Employee Ins. Benefits	250,000	250,000
<b>Total Employee Benefits</b>	<b>7,061,490</b>	<b>7,061,490</b>
<b>RAISE AND APPROPRIATE</b>		
<b>40 PROPERTY &amp; LIABILITY INS.</b>		
40B Expenses	341,070	394,183

Total Property & Liability Ins.	341,070	394,183
41 APPROPRIATE FROM AVAILABLE FUNDS [FREE CASH]		
41B Stabilization Fund	0	0
Total Transfer to Other Funds	0	0
 TOTAL NON-DEPARTMENTAL	 9,842,490	 10,030,203

**TOTAL:** **\$ 52,789,577 \$ 54,512,426**

**TOWN MANAGER’S SUMMARY:** This article is the Town's Omnibus Operating Budget Article for FY 2025, which cannot exceed \$54,532,426. Sewer and Water are enterprise funds that are approved by separate articles.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER’S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 4: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from the Retained Earnings Account of the Sewer Enterprise Fund a sum of money to operate the Sewer Enterprise Operation of the Department of Public Works for FY 2025; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER’S SUMMARY:** This article seeks to raise and appropriate the sum of \$2,064,554 for expenses and debt service to operate the Sewer Enterprise Operation of the Department of Public Works for FY 2025, said sum to be offset by the sum of \$2,064,554 from betterments and other revenues received by the Sewer Enterprise Fund during Fiscal Year 2025; said appropriation to be used for the following purposes:

Wages and Salaries	\$ 463,278
Expenses	\$1,098,361
Interest on long term debt	\$ 26,964
Sewer maturing principal	\$ 221,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$1,809,603;</b>

and further vote to transfer \$254,951 from said \$2,064,554 to the General Fund as reimbursement for shared costs and fringe benefits.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION:** This article funds the Sewer Department budget. The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER’S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 5: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from the Retained Earnings Account of the Water Enterprise Fund a sum of money to operate the Water Enterprise Operation of the Department of Public Works for FY 2025; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER’S SUMMARY:** This article seeks to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,705,709 for expenses and debt service to operate the Water Enterprise Operation of the Department of Public Works

for FY 2025, said sum to be offset by the sum of **\$1,705,709** from revenues received by the Water Enterprise Fund during Fiscal Year 2025, said appropriation to be used for the following purposes:

Wages and Salaries	\$ 29,458
Expenses	\$1,593,221
Interest on long term debt	\$ 5,088
Water maturing principal	\$ 35,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$1,662,767;</b>

and further vote to transfer \$42,942 from said \$1,705,709 to the General Fund as reimbursement for shared costs and fringe benefits.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** This article funds the Water Department budget. The Finance Committee recommends passage of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 6: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money and such additional funds as may become available from the Commonwealth's Department of Transportation, Chapter 90 Bond Issue proceeds, to be used by the Department of Public Works for the repair and maintenance of Town roads in conformance with MGL and further to see if the Town will vote to meet said appropriation by borrowing and to authorize the Treasurer/Collector, with approval of the Board of Selectmen, to issue bonds or notes of the Town therefor in anticipation of the receipt of said State Aid; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This article is an annual request to authorize the Board of Selectmen to expend Chapter 90 State Road funds for FY 2025 in the amount of \$465,747.07.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 7: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Treasurer/Collector to enter into a compensating balance agreement or agreements for FY 2025, pursuant to Chapter 44, Section 53F of the M.G.L.; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This article authorizes the Treasurer/Collector to enter into agreements with banks and to manage Town funds for FY 2025.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 8: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to set the FY 2025 spending limits for the Town's revolving funds under section 5-113 of the Northbridge Code as follows:

Program or Purpose	FY 2025 Spending Limit
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Playgrounds and Recreation	\$20,000
Food Health and Safety	\$25,000
Compost Site	\$10,000

or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER’S SUMMARY:** The purpose of this article is for the FY 2025 annual reauthorization of the Playground & Recreation Commission’s revolving account not to exceed \$20,000; for the FY 2025 annual reauthorization of the Board of Health’s revolving account for Food Health and Safety not to exceed \$25,000; and for the FY 2025 annual reauthorization of the Board of Health’s revolving account for the Compost Site not to exceed \$10,000.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER’S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 9: (Community Preservation Committee)**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate or reserve for future appropriation from the Community Preservation Fund annual revenues, the amounts of money recommended by the Northbridge Community Preservation Committee for community preservation projects and other expenses for the Fiscal Year 2025, with each item to be considered a separate appropriation; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER’S SUMMARY:** The purpose of this article is to utilize Community Preservation Fund annual revenues for community preservation projects and other expenses for FY 2025, based on the recommendations of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). The CPC will present their recommendations at the Spring Annual Town Meeting, Tuesday, May 7, 2024.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION:** This article allocates the funds to the different categories for future use as follows:

Reserves:

- 1. a) From FY 2025 estimated revenues for Historic Resources Reserve -the sum of \$ 25,000
- 2. b) From FY 2025 estimated revenues for Community Housing Reserve -the sum of \$ 25,000
- 3. c) From FY 2025 estimated revenues for Open Space & Recreation Reserve -the sum of \$ 25,000
- 4. d) From FY 2025 estimated revenues for Budgeted Reserve -the sum of \$175,000

The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER’S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 10: (Community Preservation Committee)**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money from the Community Preservation Fund reserves to the Northbridge Community Preservation Committee for expenses associated with the implementation of the Community Preservation Act, including but not limited to clerical assistance, office supplies, property surveys, appraisals, attorney fees, and other professional services, recording fees, printing and all other necessary and proper expenses for the Fiscal Year 2025; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER’S SUMMARY:** This article seeks to appropriate funds from Community Preservation Fund reserves to the Northbridge Community Preservation Committee for expenses associated with the implementation of the Community Preservation Act, including but not limited to clerical assistance, office supplies, property surveys, appraisals, attorney fees, and other professional services, recording fees,



printing and all other necessary and proper expenses for Fiscal Year 2025. The CPC will present their recommendation at the Spring Annual Town Meeting, Tuesday, May 7, 2024.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 11: (Community Preservation Committee)**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate from the Community Preservation Fund revenues the following sums of money for the following projects recommended by the Community Preservation Committee:

\$50,000 from the Historic Resources Reserve for an architectural and structural assessment of the Fletcher Homestead;

\$13,500 from the Historic Resources Reserve for replacement of the boiler at the Fletcher Homestead;

or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This article seeks funding for the Fletcher Homestead Assessment (\$50,000) and Boiler Replacement (\$13,500).

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 12: (Community Preservation Committee)**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate from the Community Preservation Fund revenues the following sums of money for debt service payments for the Castle Hill Farm acquisition, as recommended by the Community Preservation Committee:

\$126,436 from the Community Preservation Unreserved Fund for fiscal year 2024 debt service;

\$131,200 from the Community Preservation Unreserved Fund for fiscal year 2025 debt service;

or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** The purpose of this article is to fund the 2024 Debt payment for Castle Hill (\$126,436) and the 2025 Debt payment for Castle Hill (\$131,200).

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 13: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$55,000 from the unexpended balances of the Pine Grove Cemetery Accounts XXXXXX for the following cemetery maintenance projects: \$10,000 for tree and stump removal; \$20,000 to make cemetery road improvements; and \$25,000 for lawn tractors; said sum to be expended under the direction of the Director of Public Works; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER’S SUMMARY:** This article seeks to transfer \$55,000 from the unexpended balance of Pine Grove Cemetery Account 18324200-596100 for the following cemetery maintenance projects: \$10,000 for Tree and Stump Removal, \$20,000 to make Cemetery Road Improvements, and \$25,000 for Lawn Tractors, all to be expended under the direction of the Director of Public Works.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER’S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 14: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer the sum of \$499,990.90, which includes \$378,547 from the Retained Earnings Account of the Sewer Enterprise Fund, and \$121,452.90 from the unexpended balances of the following sewer capital accounts:

<u>Account #</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Amount</u>
60003050-530000	Siphon #2	\$ 783.37
60000404-589004	Whitinsville Interceptor	\$ 2,881.47
60001011-589004	D&C Repairs	\$ 349.63
60001513-589101	Sutton Street Sewer	\$69,612.90
60001322-585342	Bldg. Weatherization	\$ 146.70
60001520-589004	WWTP Facility Upgrade	\$44,227.00
60003050-530000	Inspection Camera	\$ 3,451.83
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$121,452.90</b>

to be expended under the direction of the Director of Public Works for the following purposes: the sum of \$149,999.90 for funding work recommended as a result of the Town’s Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) and infiltration & inflow reports for the multi-year program to make physical improvements to the Town’s sewer collection system, including the sealing/replacement of leaking manhole structures and relining/replacement of deficient/cracked/broken sewer lines; and the sum of \$350,000 to complete the SCADA system upgrades; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER’S SUMMARY:** This article seeks to appropriate and transfer the sum of \$499,990.90 which includes \$378,547 from the Retained Earnings Account of the Sewer Enterprise Fund, and \$121,452.90 from the unexpired sewer capital accounts listed as follows: [60003050-530000 - Siphon #2 - \$783.37]; [60000404-589004 - Whitinsville Interceptor - \$2,881.47]; [60001011-589004 – D & C Repairs - \$349.63]; [60001513-589101 - Sutton Street Sewer - \$69,612.90]; [60001322-585342 - Bldg. Weatherization - \$146.70]; [60001520-589004 - WWTP Facility Upgrade -\$44,227.00;] and [60003050-530000 - Inspection Camera - \$3,451.83] for a total of \$121,452.90 to be expended under the direction of the Director of Public Works for the following purposes: the sum of \$149,999.90 for funding work recommended as a result of the Town’s Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) and infiltration & inflow reports for the multi-year program to make physical improvements to the Town’s sewer collection system, including the sealing/replacement of leaking manhole structures and relining/replacement of deficient/cracked/broken sewer lines; and the sum of \$350,000 to complete the SCADA system upgrades.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION:** This article seeks the use of retained earnings and unexpended funds from previous projects. The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER’S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 15: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer the sum of \$104,946 from the Retained Earnings Account of the Water Enterprise Fund, for the purpose of replacing nine (9) fire hydrants at the cost of

\$60,000 and for the purpose of replacing the Church Avenue water main at the cost of \$44,946; to be expended under the direction of the Director of Public Works; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER’S SUMMARY:** The purpose of this article is to appropriate and transfer the sum of \$104,946 from the Retained Earnings Account of the Water Enterprise Fund, for the purpose of replacing nine (9) fire hydrants at the cost of \$60,000 and for the purpose of replacing the Church Avenue water main at the cost of \$44,946 under the direction of the DPW Director.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION:** This article seeks the use of retained earnings of the Water Department. The Finance Committee **recommends passage** of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER’S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 16: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to fund the capital projects shown below by appropriating and transferring the total sum of \$1,411,100 from the undesignated fund balance (free cash);

<u>Project Title</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Real Property Valuation	Assessors	\$ 5,000
Perimeter Fencing at Plummers Place	Council on Aging	\$ 40,000
Green Communities Match	Town Planner/DPW	\$ 25,000
Leaf Vacuum	Public Works	\$ 60,000
Trackless Sidewalk Tracker	Public Works	\$225,000
Sidewalk Maintenance	Public Works	\$ 25,000
Pavement Maintenance	Public Works	\$200,000
Repaving of Riverdale Cemetery Roads	Public Works	\$ 19,000
Quaker Street Guardrail Replacement	Public Works	\$ 9,000
Town Hall Parking Lot Reclamation (Add'l Funds)	Public Works	\$ 20,000
School Street Guardrail Replacement	Public Works	\$ 15,000
Environmental Study Sutton St/Gendron	Public Works	\$ 50,000
Upton Street – Engineering & Repairs	Public Works	\$ 75,000
Repaving of Church Ave	Public Works	\$100,000
Purchase New Ambulance	Fire Department	\$450,000
Repair Library Walkway	Library	\$ 25,000
Skatepark Upgrades	Playground/Recreation	\$ 32,500
Purchase 23 Department Tasers	Police Department	\$ 5,600
UST Removal (Additional Funds)	Police Department	\$ 10,000
Town Hall – Selectmen’s Room – AV Equipment	Facilities	\$ 20,000
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>\$1,411,100;</b>

or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER’S SUMMARY:** This article seeks to fund the capital projects shown below by appropriating and transferring the total sum of \$1,411,100 from the undesignated fund balance (free cash); [Real Property Valuation – Assessors - \$5,000]; [Perimeter Fencing at Plummers Place - Council on Aging - \$40,000]; [Green Communities Match - Town Planner/DPW - \$25,000]; [Leaf Vacuum - Public Works - \$60,000]; [Trackless Sidewalk Tracker - Public Works - \$225,000]; [Sidewalk Maintenance - Public Works - \$25,000]; [Pavement Maintenance Public Works - \$200,000]; [Repaving of Riverdale Cemetery - Public Works - \$19,000]; [Quaker Street Guardrail Replacement - Public Works - \$9,000]; [Town Hall Parking Lot Reclamation (Add'l Funds) - Public Works - \$20,000]; [School Street Guardrail Replacement - Public Works - \$15,000]; [Environmental Study Sutton St/Gendron - Public Works - \$50,000]; [Upton Street / Engineering & Repairs - Public Works - \$75,000]; [Repaving of Church Ave. - Public Works - \$100,000]; [Purchase New Ambulance - Fire Department - \$450,000]; [Repair Walkway – Library - \$25,000]; [Skatepark Upgrades - Playground/Recreation - \$32,500]; [Purchase 23 Department Tasers -

Police Department - \$5,600]; [UST Removal (Additional Funds) - Police Department - \$10,000]; and [Town Hall – Selectmen’s Room AV Equipment - Facilities & Cable Staff - \$20,000] for a total of \$1,411,100.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** This article seeks to use undesignated funds (free cash) for listed capital items. The Finance Committee **recommends passage** of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 17: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer the following unexpended sums from appropriations of prior years for the purposes set forth below:

<u>Account #</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Amount</u>
01022319-585343	NES Reuse Study	\$11,486.97
01022319-585353	Field Mower	\$15,420.06
01022319-585009	Hot Box Trailer	\$ 419.00
01022023-585373	Park Christmas Trees	\$17,052.80
01022023-585374	WWTP Brush Removal	\$ 1,300.00
01022023-585376	Linwood Guardrail	\$ 4,263.75
01022217-585012	Replace FD Air Bottles	\$13,060.00
01022319-585355	FD UST Removal	\$ 750.00
01022023-585358	Library Gas Conversion	\$27,118.00
01021915-585313	PD Sidewalk Repairs	\$12,470.00
01021915-585314	Town Hall Sign Board	\$ 5,656.76
01021915-585315	Town Manager Vehicle	\$ 4,232.73
01022318-585833	Replace Intercoms/Clocks	\$11,589.72
01022318-585334	Upgrade Network Switches	\$25,815.00
01022318-585004	Replace Cafeteria Tables	\$11,847.49
01022023-585391	Ride-on Floor Scrubber	\$ 5,867.00
01022023-585393	Middle School Clocks	\$ 225.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$168,574.28</b>

\$100,000 to be expended under the direction of the Chief of Police to purchase 23 Police Department Tasers, and \$68,574.28 to be expended jointly by the Fire Chief, Police Chief, and Director of Public Works to replace the Police Department gas pump; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This article seeks to appropriate and transfer the following unexpended sums from appropriations of prior years for the purposes as follows:

[01022319-585343 - NES Reuse Study - \$11,486.97]; [01022319-585353 - Field Mower - \$15,420.06]; [01022319-585009 - Hot Box Trailer - \$419.00]; [01022023-585373 - Park Christmas Trees - \$17,052.80]; [01022023-585374 - WWTP Brush Removal - \$1,300.00]; [01022023-585376 - Linwood Guardrail - \$4,263.75]; [01022217-585012 - Replace FD Air Bottles - \$13,060.00]; [01022319-585355 - FD UST Removal - \$750.00]; [01022023-585358 - Library Gas Conversion - \$27,118.00]; [01021915-585313 - PD Sidewalk Repairs - \$12,470.00]; [01021915-585314 - Town Hall Sign Board - \$ 5,656.76]; [01021915-585315 - Town Manager Vehicle - \$4,232.73]; [01022318-585833 – Replace Intercoms/Clocks \$11,589.72]; [01022318-585334 - Upgrade Network Switches - \$25,815.00]; [01022318-585004 - Replace Cafeteria Tables - \$11,847.49]; [01022023-585391 - Ride-on Floor Scrubber - \$5,867.00]; and [01022023-585393 - Middle School Clocks - \$225.00] for a total of \$168,574.28 of which \$100,000 to be expended under the direction of the Chief of Police to purchase 23 Police Department Tasers, and \$68,574.28 to be spent jointly by the Fire Chief, Police Chief, and DPW Director to replace the Police Department Gas Pump.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** This article seeks to use unexpended funds from previous year’s projects. The Finance Committee recommends passage of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 18: (School Committee and Board of Selectmen) SEE NARRATIVE ON PAGE 26**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer the sum of \$325,286 from the Town Building-Maintenance Fund, established pursuant to Chapter 438 of the Acts of 2012, for Town-owned buildings and facilities maintenance purposes in Fiscal Year 2025 as follows: \$7,000 for Middle School Auditorium Lift; \$22,000 for Middle School Loading Dock Lift Replacement; \$200,000 for Middle School Bathroom Renovations; \$43,286 for Middle School and High School Wireless Access Points Upgrade; \$8,000 to replace the Town Hall Ground Floor Exterior ADA Door; \$33,000 to replace the Town Hall Ground Floor Interior ADA Door; and \$12,000 for the Library Exterior ADA Door; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This article seeks to appropriate and transfer the sum of \$325,286 from the Town Building-Maintenance Fund, established pursuant to Chapter 438 of the Acts of 2012, for Town-owned buildings and facilities maintenance purposes in Fiscal Year 2025 as follows: \$7,000 for Middle School Auditorium Lift; \$22,000 for Middle School Loading Dock Lift Replacement; \$200,000 for Middle School Bathroom Renovations; \$43,286 for Middle School and High School Wireless Access Points Upgrade; \$8,000 to replace the Town Hall Ground Floor Exterior ADA Door; \$33,000 to replace the Town Hall Ground Floor Interior ADA Door; and \$12,000 for the Library Exterior ADA Door.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 19: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to apply for, accept, and expend Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program ("MPLCP") grant funds, and vote to appropriate or take from the undesignated fund balance (free cash) the sum of \$150,000.00, or any other sum, said sum to be expended by the Town for library assessment, planning, feasibility and/or design if the MPLCP grant is approved; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This article seeks town meeting approval to apply for, accept, and expend Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program ("MPLCP") grant funds if approved, and vote to appropriate or take from the undesignated fund balance (free cash); the sum of \$150,000.00, or any other sum if said MPLCP grant is approved, said sum to be expended by the Town for library assessment, planning, feasibility and/or design.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 20: (Board of Selectmen)**

To see if the Town will vote to transfer the custody, care and control of the former Rockdale Fire Substation property, located at 2305 Providence Road and shown as parcel 177 on Assessors' Map 22A, from the Board of Selectmen to the Board of Selectmen for the purpose of disposition, whether by sale, lease – in whole or in part – or otherwise; and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to take any and all action necessary to accomplish such disposition; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This article seeks town meeting approval to transfer the custody, care and control of the former Rockdale Fire Substation property, located at 2305 Providence Road and shown as parcel 177 on Assessors' Map 22A, from the Board of Selectmen to the Board of Selectmen for the

purpose of disposition, whether by sale, lease – in whole or in part – or otherwise; and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to take any and all action necessary to accomplish such disposition.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee **recommends passage** of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 21: (Board of Selectmen) SEE NARRATIVE ON PAGES 27-30**

To see if the Town will vote to transfer the custody, care and control of the former Northbridge Elementary School property, located at 30 Cross Street and shown as parcel 160 on Assessors' Map 14A, from the Board of Selectmen to the Board of Selectmen for the purpose of disposition, whether by sale, lease – in whole or in part – or otherwise; and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to take any and all action necessary to accomplish such disposition; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This article seeks town meeting approval to transfer the custody, care and control of the former Northbridge Elementary School property, located at 30 Cross Street and shown as parcel 160 on Assessors' Map 14A, from the Board of Selectmen to the Board of Selectmen for the purpose of disposition, whether by sale, lease – in whole or in part – or otherwise; and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to take any and all action necessary to accomplish such disposition.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** This article would allow the Board of Selectmen to transfer the custody, care and control of the entire parcel 160 on Assessors Map 14A, which includes the Northbridge Elementary School property, for disposition, whether by sale, lease in whole or in part – or otherwise, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to take any and all action necessary to accomplish such disposition.

The Finance Committee **recommends passage** of this article. *However, note that the vote was 3-1-2, with 3 Finance Committee Members voting in favor of the article, 1 Finance Committee Member voting not in favor of the Article, and 2 Finance Committee members abstained from voting on the Article.*

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 22: (Planning Board)**

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Code of the Town of Northbridge (Bylaws) by adopting a Stormwater Management Bylaw, in the form on file in the office of the Town Clerk, in order to comply with requirements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** The purpose of this General Bylaw (Warrant Article) is to bring the Town of Northbridge into compliance with its Municipal Stormwater Permit (MS4) in accordance with the federal Clean Water Act.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** This article is driven by an EPA mandate. The Finance Committee **recommends passage** of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 23: (Board of Selectmen) SEE NARRATIVE ON PAGES 31-32**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer from the undesignated fund balance (free cash), the sum of \$1,000,000 for response action activities associated with the Quaker Street Landfill, including but not limited to testing of water supply wells, in order to comply with the Immediate Response Action Plan submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This article seeks to appropriate and transfer from free cash, the sum of \$1,000,000 to comply with the Immediate Response Action Plan submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for activities at the Quaker Street Landfill.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** This article is the Commonwealth of Massachusetts - EPA driven. The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 24: (Bylaw Review Committee)**

To see if the Town will vote to approve amendments to the Code of Northbridge (Bylaws), including grammatical and stylistic changes, and substantive revisions, in accordance with the final report of the Bylaw Review Committee appointed in 2021 pursuant to Section 8-9(b) of the Home Rule Charter, said report being on file with the Town Clerk; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This purpose of this article is to approve the grammatical and stylistic amendments to the Code of Northbridge (Bylaws) in accordance with the final report of the Bylaw Review Committee appointed in 2021 pursuant to Section 8-9(b) of the Home Rule Charter, said report being on file with the Town Clerk.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 25: (Town Manager)**

To see if the Town will vote to approve the \$10,000,000.00 borrowing authorized by the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District ("District") School Committee on February 15, 2024, and amended by its actions of March 14, 2024, for the purpose of paying costs of roof reconstruction and the replacement to energy efficient rooftop HVAC units at the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School, located at 65 Pleasant Street, Upton, MA, including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto (the "Project"), which proposed repair project would materially extend the useful life of the school and preserve an asset that otherwise is capable of supporting the required educational program, and for which the District may be eligible for a school construction grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA"), said amount to be expended at the direction of the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational School Committee; with the understanding that the MSBA's grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any Project costs the District incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the District and its member municipalities, and that any grant that the District may receive from the MSBA for the Project shall not exceed the lesser of (1) the MSBA-determined percentage of eligible, approved Project costs, or (2) the total maximum grant amount determined by the MSBA; and provided that the Town's approval of the borrowing shall be contingent upon the District's ability to secure grant approval from the MSBA; and provided further, however, that the approval of the District's borrowing by this vote shall be subject to and contingent upon an affirmative vote of the Town to exempt its allocable share of the amounts required for the payment of interest and principal on said borrowing from the limitations on taxes imposed by M.G.L. 59, Section 21C (Proposition 2 ½ ); and that the amount of borrowing authorized by the District shall be reduced by any grant amount set forth in the Project Funding Agreement that may be executed between the District and the MSBA, or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** This articles seeks town meeting approval of the \$10,000,000 debt authorized by the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee on February 15, 2024 and amended by its actions of March 14, 2024, to pay costs of roof reconstruction and the replacement to energy efficient rooftop HVAC units at the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School, located at 65 Pleasant Street, Upton, MA including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto.

Such debt approval by the Town to be contingent upon the District's ability to secure grant approval from the Massachusetts School Building Authority Accelerated Repair grant program, and so as long as the Town shall have voted to exclude the Town's allocable share of this debt from the provisions of G.L. c. 59, §21C (also known as proposition 2½) and that the amount of borrowing authorized by the District shall be reduced by any grant amount set forth in the Project Funding Agreement that may be executed between the District and the MSBA.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 26: (Finance Committee)**

To see if the Town will vote to create an Opioid Settlement Revenue Fund, and to transfer to said Fund, from the undesignated fund balance (free cash), a sum of money representing the amount the Town has received from opioid litigation settlements; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** The purpose of this article is to transfer \$124,833.13 from free cash to account 15201230-471000 for the opioid settlements that we received in Fiscal 2023.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** These funds will be set aside to be used at a later date in an Opioid deterrent program. The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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**ARTICLE 27: (Finance Committee)**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, and/or to transfer from the undesignated fund balance (free cash), a sum of money to the General Stabilization Fund; or take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER'S SUMMARY:** The purpose of this article is to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, and/or to transfer funds from free cash to the Stabilization Fund.

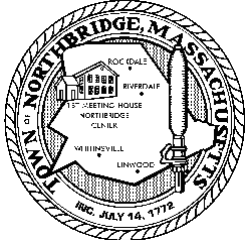
**FINANCE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:** The Finance Committee *recommends passage* of this article. The vote was unanimous.

**VOTER'S COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:**

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# Town of Northbridge Board of Assessors

Town Hall, 7 Main Street

Whitinsville, Massachusetts 01588-2210

(508) 234-2740

## 2024 TAX RATES IN DESCENDING ORDER

	FY 2024 TAX RATES	AVERAGE SINGLE FAMILY FY 2024 TAX	AVERAGE SINGLE FAMILY FY 2024 VALUE
1. HOPEDALE	\$ 16.60	\$ 8,045	\$ 484,628
2. BLACKSTONE	\$ 16.33	\$ 6,431	\$ 393,808
3. GRAFTON	\$ 14.31	\$ 8,532	\$ 596,235
4. MENDON	\$ 13.71	\$ 8,350	\$ 609,042
5. UPTON	\$ 13.68	\$ 8,466	\$ 618,837
6. DOUGLAS	\$ 13.52	\$ 6,064	\$ 448,492
7. MILLBURY	\$ 13.23	\$ 5,823	\$ 440,150
8. MILLVILLE	\$ 13.22	\$ 5,456	\$ 412,707
9. UXBRIDGE	\$ 12.92	\$ 6,041	\$ 467,533
10. SUTTON	\$ 12.68	\$ 7,087	\$ 558,897
11. NORTHBRIDGE	\$ 12.09	\$ 5,520	\$ 456,564



**TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE  
BOARD OF ASSESSORS  
TOWN HALL, 7 MAIN STREET  
WHITINSVILLE, MA 01588-2210  
508-234-2740**

**FISCAL YEAR 2024 TAX RATE BREAKDOWN**

		<u>TOTAL TAXABLE VALUE FY 2024</u>		(Rounded)
<u>2023 Levy Limit</u>	<u>Last Year's Levy</u>	\$25,522,442 /	\$2,587,852,000 *	1,000 = \$ 9.86
+ Prop 2 1/2		638,061 /	\$2,587,852,000 *	1,000 = \$ 0.25
+ New Growth		345,400 /	\$2,587,852,000 *	1,000 = \$ 0.13
+ Debt Exclusion	New Balmer School	2,855,092 /	\$2,587,852,000 *	1,000 = \$ 1.10
	BVRHS Expansion	61,944 /	\$2,587,852,000 *	1,000 = \$ 0.02
	School Roof	131,306 /	\$2,587,852,000 *	1,000 = \$ 0.05
	Police Roof	11,620 /	\$2,587,852,000 *	1,000 = \$ 0.00
	DPW Building	298,370 /	\$2,587,852,000 *	1,000 = \$ 0.12
	Fire Station	1,429,450 /	\$2,587,852,000 *	1,000 = \$ 0.55
<b>=Tax Rate</b>		<b>\$31,293,685 /</b>	<b>\$2,587,852,000 *</b>	<b>\$1,000 = \$ 12.09</b>



# The Northbridge Public Schools Town of Northbridge

87 Linwood Avenue, Whitinsville, Massachusetts 01588 (508) 234-8156 FAX (508) 234-8469  
[www.nps.org](http://www.nps.org)

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Amy McKinstry, Superintendent of Schools  
Jill Healy, Director of Curriculum

Melissa Walker, Director of Business and Finance  
Kate Ryan Vokes, Director of Pupil Personnel Services

April 1, 2024

Dear Community Members,

For fiscal year 2025, we have developed a budget that supports the academic and social-emotional needs of our students PK-12 and provides for a safe, supportive and healthy learning environment. Although there are staff reductions in this budget, we believe that, based on decreased student enrollment and comparatively small class sizes, these reductions will have minimal impact on the quality of education provided to our students.

Our focus for the FY25 Budget includes the following:

- Maintain the additional positions acquired with ESSER funding that support student mental health and special education;
- Maintain a strong core academic program that focuses on providing students with engaging and varied learning opportunities to set them up for success;
- Maintain appropriate levels of support for our students identified as high needs (inc. students with disabilities, English learners, and students identified as low income);
- Maintain a staffing level that will allow us to develop and implement new strategic goals and initiatives aligned to a new vision for our NPS students; and,
- Ensure a safe and healthy teaching and learning environment.

The Leadership Team was charged with putting together a level services budget with the flexibility to reorganize programs and positions as needed to align with current needs, provided the reorganization was relatively net neutral in cost. However, the budget was built with the knowledge that funding was likely going to be short and adjustments to services would need to be made as necessary to fit within available revenue.

The initial calculation of a level services budget for FY25, what it would cost in FY25 to provide the same level of services provided in FY24, was \$33,045,173, which represented an increase of \$958,470, or 2.99%, over the original budget for FY24. However, that same amount of revenue was not available to fund the FY25 budget; therefore, more than \$700,000 of budget reductions needed to be made to balance the budget.

As the school district has been operating at level services, or reduced level services, for the last ten years, with the exception of some additional staffing positions that were added in FY22 to combat the effects of COVID with the award of ESSER grant funds, there were not too many areas to reduce other than personnel. While supply, technology, stipend, and substitute lines were reduced by \$67,917, the majority of budget reductions are in the form of staffing. Reducing staff is always difficult, and much thought and deliberation goes into the decision-making process. After many thoughtful discussions focused on the continued drop in enrollment, decreasing class sizes, and increasing student needs, a final list of staff reorganizations and reductions was agreed upon.

The following positions are being reduced:

Site	Position/Item	FTE
District	Social Worker (vacant)	(1.0)
District	Instructional Technologist (vacant)	(1.0)
MS	Spanish Teacher (vacant)	(1.0)
MS	Grade 6 Teacher	(1.0)
MS	Grade 7 Teacher	(1.0)
MS	Grade 8 Teacher	(1.0)
HS	ELA Teacher	(1.0)
HS	Social Studies Teacher	(1.0)
HS	Science Teacher	(1.0)
HS	Bridge Adjustment Counselor (cut 2/5 days)	(0.4)
<b>Total Reductions</b>		<b>(9.4)</b>

The following positions are being re-organized:

Site	Action	Position	FTE
District	Add	BCBA	1.0
District	Reduce	BCaBA	(1.0)
District	Reduce	Physical Therapist (employee)	(1.0)
District	Add	Physical Therapy Contracted Service	
District	Reduce	Occupational Therapist	(0.6)
District	Add	COTA	0.2
District	Reduce	Lead Nurse	(0.5)
MS	Add	School Nurse	0.5
MS	Reduce	Per Diem Perm Sub Nurse	(0.5)
NES	Add	Title I Instructional/ Academic Coach	1.0
MS	Reduce	Title I ELA Specialist	(1.0)
MS	Reduce	Title I Reading Interventionist	(1.0)
MS	Add	Title I ELA/Math Tutor	2.0
<b>Total Reorganizations</b>			<b>(0.9)</b>

Additionally, a Grade 6 teacher is being transferred to Grade 5 to accommodate the small 5th grade class moving up to 6th grade and the larger 4th grade class moving up to 5th grade. The photography teacher position at the high school is being converted to a wood/vocational skills position to meet the needs and interests of the students. In addition, the Dean position at the high school is being changed to a Dean/Vocational Coordinator position, as the schedule at the high school is being updated to allow for a fixed block at the end of the day to provide students with opportunities to participate in off-campus internships.

The only addition to staffing for the upcoming year is a second Assistant Principal position at Northbridge Elementary School. NES houses more than double the students and staff compared to both the middle and high schools, yet they only have one additional administrator comparatively to each of the other schools. Therefore, an additional Assistant Principal is being added to assist with the high volume of staff evaluations and student management needs.

A total of 9.3 FTE's and \$707,721 is being reduced from the initial FY25 level services budget, and with these reductions and staffing adjustments incorporated, the Superintendent's Recommended FY25 School Department Budget totals \$32,337,452. This is a \$250,749, or 0.78% increase, over FY24.

Budget Category	FY 2024 Approved Budget	FY 2025 Proposed Budget	Increase/ (Decrease)	% Change
Salary/Other Compensation	23,155,070	22,554,159	(600,911)	-2.6%
Supplies/Materials/Texts	267,169	247,922	(19,247)	-7.2%

Professional Development	73,533	83,090	9,556	13.0%
Instructional Contracted Services	229,260	309,848	80,588	35.2%
Athletics	402,948	436,524	33,576	8.3%
Technology	283,860	281,147	(2,713)	-1.0%
Utilities	1,038,358	1,049,461	11,103	1.1%
Custodial/Maintenance	385,587	404,092	18,505	4.8%
Transportation	1,654,057	1,789,042	134,986	8.2%
Out of District Tuition & Trans	3,994,955	4,600,468	605,513	15.2%
Title I	330,061	311,306	(18,755)	-5.7%
Other Expenses	271,847	270,394	(1,453)	-0.5%
	<b>32,086,703</b>	<b>32,337,452</b>	<b>250,749</b>	<b>0.78%</b>

Special Education Out of District Tuition and Transportation makes up the largest budget increase for FY25, as was the case in FY24. Of the \$605,513 increase, tuition makes up \$394,912 and transportation makes up \$210,601. We have budgeted placements for 34 students next year versus the original 28 budgeted for FY24. Additionally, OSD, the Operational Services Division of the Commonwealth, set the inflation rate at 4.69% for next year, meaning the daily rate and overall annual costs for each private out of district placement is increasing by 4.69% regardless of the increase in the number of students. Granted this 4.69% is much better than the 14% increase OSD set for FY24; however, it is still double the average annual increase OSD approves. Altogether, this special education OOD tuition & transportation category increased by just over 15% compared to what was budgeted in FY24.

In-district transportation also increased for FY25. This \$134,986 increase is driven by our yellow school bus contract. Our daily bus rates are increasing by approximately 5% next year. Even with this increase, when we compare our contract rate for our school buses to that of other towns around us, some of whom are serviced by our same contractor, our rate is currently one of the lowest.

The FY25 School Department budget is primarily funded by the appropriation voted at Town Meeting. The appropriation is made up of two parts, Chapter 70, which is state aid for education, and town contribution, which is the funding that comes from the town – primarily from the tax levy and other town receipts. Chapter 70 state aid makes up \$15.9M of the appropriation. Our Chapter 70 state aid only increased by the minimum required increase of \$30 per student, or \$57,540 total over the amount received in FY24. This is the 12th year in a row that our Chapter 70 aid has not increased by more than the minimum increase required per student. The town contribution to the School Department increased by \$315,327 from \$10,042,882 to \$10,358,209 resulting in a total appropriation increase of 1.67% or \$432,777. In addition to the appropriation, the school department budget also utilizes grants and revenue from revolver accounts to fund the operating budget. Grant funding reflected within the operating budget for FY25 is approximately \$1.1M. This is nearly \$1M less than FY24 due to the expiration of ESSER (Covid) grant funding, which is only good through September 2024. Additionally, \$4.8M of revolver funds are anticipated to be utilized to balance the FY25 budget. Unfortunately, only approximately \$2.3M is anticipated to be deposited back into the revolver accounts in FY25, so this same amount of revolver funding will not be available to fund future budget years.

The cost to provide a level services budget, or reduced level services budget, year after year, is increasing faster than revenue is increasing. Despite implementing cost savings measures, reorganizing staffing positions to meet current needs and priorities, aligning schedules to share resources across buildings, pursuing grants, collecting user fees, utilizing additional funds from revolver accounts, and making budget reductions, it is becoming more difficult to balance the school department budget and maintain current programming and services.

While Northbridge is not alone in struggling with minimal increases in state aid despite growing expenses, a comparison to neighboring communities shows that Northbridge spends less per pupil on education than most neighboring districts. Per pupil expenditures are calculated by dividing a district's operating costs by its average pupil membership. Additionally, Northbridge only spends just over the minimum required net school spending (NSS), which is the minimum amount that the state calculates must be spent by a city or town on education; it is the sum of Chapter 70 state aid and a local contribution amount

as determined by the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE.) While Northbridge only spent 1% over this minimum in FY23, neighboring towns spent 8% to 47% more than their required minimum.

District	FTE Pupils	FY23 Per Pupil Expenditures
Grafton	3,100	15,703.87
Northbridge	1,962	16,813.24
Douglas	1,159	18,043.70
Hopedale	1,096	18,198.68
Milford	4,438	18,358.54
Sutton	1,288	18,581.77
Mendon Upton	2,115	19,065.39
Millbury	1,640	19,400.58
Uxbridge	1,637	19,827.12
Bellingham	2,016	20,639.09

District	FY23 Required NSS	FY23 Actual NSS	Amt Over or Under Req'd	Actual as % of Req'd
Northbridge	29,416,708	29,739,638	322,930	101.10%
Douglas	16,804,982	18,183,160	1,378,178	108.20%
Milford	66,524,190	75,268,277	8,744,087	113.10%
Mendon Upton	30,678,179	35,421,457	4,743,278	115.50%
Uxbridge	23,541,922	27,936,619	4,394,697	118.70%
Grafton	36,001,738	43,471,776	7,470,038	120.70%
Sutton	17,221,194	21,409,153	4,187,959	124.30%
Hopedale	12,546,415	16,604,984	4,058,569	132.30%
Millbury	20,915,573	29,275,171	8,359,598	140.00%
Bellingham	27,269,890	40,136,892	12,867,002	147.20%

As has been discussed for the past several years, without a sustainable increase in revenue going forward, funding the school department budget will be a challenge. While coming in under budget and receiving increased grant funds since COVID has helped push off this fiscal cliff a little longer than initially anticipated, it has not solved the structural revenue issue, and fixed and contractual expenses keep outpacing new revenue increases. Funding the FY26 budget and beyond will be very difficult unless additional revenue can be secured.

The School Committee and the staff at the Northbridge Public Schools are committed to delivering a high-quality educational program to the students of Northbridge. Informational sessions to help community members become more familiar with the school budget and budget process will be held in the upcoming months. Please visit the district website, [www.nps.org](http://www.nps.org) to learn more.

Respectfully submitted,

*Amy McKinstry*

Superintendent of Schools

*Shannon Canoy*

School Committee Chair

*Melissa Walker*

Director of Business and Finance

**A COMPLETE DETAILED LINE ITEM BUDGET IS AVAILABLE ON THE SCHOOL'S WEBSITE  
WWW.NPS.ORG**

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE NARRATIVE

### ARTICLE 18

#### **Auditorium Stage ADA Lift at NMS: \$7,000**

The stage at the Middle School only has stair access. The current setup of the stage and surrounding stage area is not conducive to adding the length ramp that would be required to accommodate appropriate ramp access. To ensure that all students and/or staff can fully participate in activities and events that occur on the stage, a portable wheelchair stage lift is requested to be purchased.

#### **Replace Loading Dock Lift/Leveler at NMS: \$22,000**

The existing loading dock leveler at the MS needs to be replaced. The MS does not have a full-size loading dock like the HS or NES, so a leveler is needed to act as the bridge between the smaller MS dock and delivery trucks that pull up to make deliveries. The current leveler has excessive rust and corrosion. Repairs have been made to extend the current lift's useful life, but in order to ensure smooth and safe loading and unloading, the leveler needs to be replaced. Funds requested will cover the purchase and installation of the lift and the necessary electrical hookup.

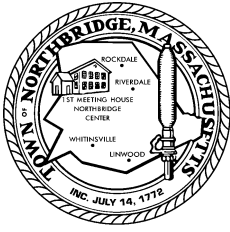
#### **Bathroom renovations at the MS: \$200,000.**

The majority of bathrooms at the MS are in need of renovation. Many stall doors are broken. When possible, new doors have been hung, but some supports are broken preventing new doors from being hung. Additionally, some of the replacement doors are not the appropriate size requiring modification to try to preserve privacy and close gaps. Not all of the toilets in the bathrooms work. Toilets are repaired, when possible, but some toilets are so old that replacement parts cannot be found. Additionally, some of the toilet bases are leaking, leading to the appearance of rust and rotted-out surrounding floor areas. Some bathrooms always remain locked because of their condition or because of the number of toilets or stalls that are out of order. Not all sinks have hot water. The sinks also clog up and don't drain easily. Funds are being requested to renovate the bathrooms, including purchasing new toilets, sinks, stall partitions, etc.

#### **Replace MS & HS Wireless Access Points: \$43,286 (cost includes E-rate Discount)**

The Middle School and the High School are currently using Aerohive access points. Aerohive was purchased by Extreme Networks back in 2019. While our current AP's still work, they are unsupported and no longer receive updates. Before we could work on upgrading our AP's we first needed to upgrade our switches. Back in 2023, we received the capital money necessary to upgrade the MS & HS switches. Now that our infrastructure is updated, we can work on upgrading our wireless AP's. When NES was built, Extreme Networks access points were installed with the future intent of matching the MS and HS access points so all AP's across the district could run on the same platform. We are looking to upgrade approximately 100 Wi-Fi access points throughout the MS & HS and configure those AP's to run on Extreme's hosted public cloud.

Funding for the above projects will come from the Town Building Maintenance Fund. Thank you for your consideration and support.



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**Adam D. Gaudette  
Town Manager**

## **MEMORANDUM**

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**TO: TOWN MEETING VOTERS**  
**From: Adam Gaudette, Town Manager**  
**RE: ARTICLE 21 – Authorization to Sell the former NES Property**  
**Date: May 7, 2024**

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### **HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF THE ARTICLE:**

The property known as “NES”, or the former “Northbridge Elementary School”, located on Cross Street, Whitinsville, and the custody thereof, was transferred from the School Committee to the Town by a Town Meeting vote (Article 20 – May 4, 2021) and in accordance with G.L. c. 71, §68 and G.L. c. 40, §15A.

This vote was based on the School Committee voting on March 1, 2021, that they expected to be moving into the new NES/Balmer School as of the 21-22 School Year on or about September 1, 2021, and that they expected to be fully out of the old NES by December 1, 2021.

At the May 3, 2021, Spring Annual Town Meeting, voters approved Article 19, which appropriated funds to be used by the Town’s Building, Planning, and Construction Committee, to conduct a Reuse Study for the property.

Over the summer/fall of 2021, a Request for Proposals was prepared and advertised, and the BPCC interviewed prospective architects over the winter of 2021. The firm Abacus was hired in the spring of 2022 to perform the Reuse Study, which was completed a year later in the Summer of 2022.

The Study had multiple components, including background of the property and surrounding area, site and building assessments, market study, reutilization options, summary of community input, and next steps. The Study involved public input in the form of meetings with various boards/committees and staff, the local business community, and general public hearings during the study and post-completion.

An economic development subconsultant, Drew Leff of Stantec, provided the market study section of the report. He presented that his investigations into market data, “concluded that there is a strong demand for housing in the region and immediate area and that this site would be most appropriate for multi-family housing development.”

Despite this conclusion, the BPCC asked Abacus to consider other reutilization options for the site, including keeping the existing structures, partial demolition, commercial uses such as office space, restaurant/brew pub, manufacturing, and various housing style developments including townhomes and apartments. They also asked to show examples of community uses (senior/community center and recreation park) in the Study report. The completed study can be viewed on the Town’s website at



[www.northbridgemass.org](http://www.northbridgemass.org) under the “Projects” page. Other documents that can also be viewed on the website include the Existing Conditions Survey Plan, the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Environmental Reports, hazmat sections of the Balmer Study project, and Whitinsville Historic District Information.

The Board of Selectmen, once the Study was completed, voted to place an article on the May 2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant to obtain voter authorization to sell the property. Under G.L. c. 40, §3, the Board of Selectmen could advertise and lease the building without a Town Meeting Vote. But, because of the property’s significance and location in the community, the Board of Selectmen opted to seek all options, and ask for voter approval to advertise an RFP and sell the property under the Uniform Procurement Act, G.L. c. 30B, which would allow the Selectmen to choose the best proposal that suits the Town or deny all proposals in the best interest of the Town, if none of the proposals were deemed acceptable.

However, at the May 2, 2023, Spring Annual Town Meeting, the voters DID NOT APPROVE Article 19, which would have given the Selectmen permission to advertise and review submissions for possible sale. The voter sentiment was that they preferred the Selectmen to advertise the RFP first, then bring back a selected proposal to a subsequent Town Meeting for approval, essentially seeking a Town Meeting “voter referendum” on the selected proposal.

Thus, over the summer/fall of 2023, the Selectmen asked the Town Manager to prepare and advertise an RFP for the sale of the property. The RFP was advertised during the winter of 2023, and the Selectmen received only one (1) proposal. This proposal was for 46 multi-family housing units, 36 of which would be in a 3-story apartment structure, and the other 10 units spread across two-attached dwelling townhome-style units. The existing 33,100 sq. ft. school building would be slated for demolition.

The Board of Selectmen interviewed the proponents of the project and voted to place an article on the Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant again, seeking voter authorization to sell the property. Thus, Article 21 seeks permission again from the voters.

## **THE PROPOSAL:**

The proposal was submitted by Lobisser & Ferreira (L&F) Construction Corp. They are a well-known building company of multi-family housing located out of Milford, MA. They currently manage over 180 rental units and have developed projects in the nearby towns of Bellingham, Douglas, Franklin, Hopkinton, Milford, Oxford, Upton, and Uxbridge. A recent comparable project they completed is located at 45 Main Street, Milford, MA known as “Landmark Place”. This site was also a former school and involved strategic demolition to establish 38 new rental units of community living for residents looking to downsize and stay in the region. It has an occupancy rate of 95%+/-.

L&F proposes to transform the NES site into a multi-family, residential community, incorporating a blend of housing options. Their vision includes a cluster of townhomes alongside a garden-style apartment building. The townhomes are planned with a footprint area of 8,000 sq. ft and total gross floor area of 16,000 sq. ft. The garden-style apartments will have a footprint area of 12,600 sq. ft. and a total gross floor area of 37,800 sq. ft over 3 floors. Approximately 33% of the proposed project area is designated as open space.

The apartment building will offer a mix of 1, 2, and 3-bedroom configurations that will range anywhere from 600 sq. ft. to 1,200 sq. ft. The townhomes are expected to be approximately 1,350 sq. ft. on average. The project also entails 54 parking spaces allocated for the apartment building, including 4 handicap spaces. Each individual townhome unit will have one space inside their garage area and another outside in front of the garage door, summing up to a total of 74 parking spaces across the residential development. The proposed impervious area for pavement and walkways amounts to 35,780 sq. ft., with an additional 20,600 sq. ft. for roof coverage.

All driveways are 24 feet wide to accommodate two-way traffic with two proposed access points onto Cross Street. The residential development will be connected to existing sewer and water infrastructure

within the vicinity. A formal drainage system involving catch basins, drain manholes, and stormceptor design will be provided for runoff collection, treatment, and mitigation.

It should be noted that the proponent has chosen not to utilize the existing Northbridge Schools Administration Building and rather proposes to separate that part of the site from the proposed new development. Thus, the ownership of the “admin building”, associated parking, and adjacent land, would remain in the ownership of the Town.

As outlined in their statement of interest, the proposal entails pursuing a Local Initiative Program (LIP) in collaboration with the Town, to secure State approval for this project. When doing an LIP, and aligning with Mass Housing guidelines, 25% of the units are designated as affordable, while targeting residents that are 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). This would help to address the Governor’s priority to address the shortage of housing in the State, as well as help the Town towards achieving the required affordable housing percentage in Town.

The estimated value of the improvements provided by the proponent is \$14,152,000, which would generate an estimated \$170,000 - \$200,000 in annual property taxes. The project will be privately maintained so there would be no cost to the Town to salt or plow. In addition, the fact that the units are made up of a mix of 1, 2, and 3-bedroom units and based on the square footage of the units, it is anticipated that most of the residents will be empty-nesters or first-time renter couples and thus the strain on the Town’s school system and traffic would be less than if single-family units. It is also suggested by the proponent that due to the proximity of the downtown commercial area and nearby services, that the project will foster increased economic activity for local businesses.

### **WHAT’S NEXT IF APPROVED BY VOTERS:**

The following is a proposed timeline for the project if voters approve Article 21:

- May 2024: Commencement of a 12-month permitting phase with the Town, with plans to apply to Mass Housing during the summer.
- May 2025: Receipt of State approvals triggers the pre-construction phase.
- June 2025: Initiation of construction at 44 Cross Street beginning with demolition and other site development.
- Spring 2026: Commencement of the lease-up phase for the new building.

### **WHAT’S NEXT IF NOT APPROVED BY VOTERS:**

The building currently costs \$45,000 a year for the Town to insure the property. In addition to paying for annual utilities to protect the building’s integrity and safety (electricity for safety lighting, natural gas for minimal heat), the Town has also experienced numerous criminal and public safety incidents at the site since closing, including: vandalism, burglary, breaking and entering, suspicious activity, and commercial fire alarms, all of which have resulted in the burdened use of public police, fire, and DPW services to address.

Due to the fact that the Selectmen don’t wish to continue to incur these costs and expend these services, and that they have already studied the property and advertised it for sale, it is expected that they would move forward onto asking the voters to raise and appropriate funds for the demolition of the school buildings and asphalt areas; as well as seek voter permission to outfit the property for recreational open space. It is estimated that this would cost \$2-3 million to raise in taxes to perform these tasks depending on required amenities such as signage, lighting, seating, walkways, plantings, amenities parking. At a current tax rate of \$12.09, and with an average home value of \$456,564 (FY2024), it can be anticipated that the impact of the project could be as high as \$0.39 additional on the tax rate, and have the impact of on the average homeowner would be an estimated \$178 on a 3-year BAN.

## **WHAT IF VOTERS VOTE YES AND L&F PULLS OUT OF THE PROJECT?**

Same as directly above, the Selectmen would likely move forward with a request to demolish the existing school and raise funds to make it a community use such as recreational open space.

With only one proposal from a local builder, it is evidence there is not much of a market for properties with outdated school buildings requiring significant development costs (demolition and disposal).



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**Adam D. Gaudette  
Town Manager**

## **MEMORANDUM**

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**TO: TOWN MEETING VOTERS**  
**From: Adam Gaudette, Town Manager**  
**RE: ARTICLE 23 – Quaker Street Landfill Property**  
**Date: May 7, 2024**

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### **HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF THE ARTICLE:**

The property known as the “Quaker Street Landfill”, and also identified as 1201 Quaker Street, Assessors Map 29, Lots 23 and 75, is a former landfill that was and still remains privately-owned, but that the Town had once “operated” as a municipal landfill. The landfill was capped by the Town in 1997. By formerly operating the site as a landfill, the Town assumed responsibility for maintenance (annual mowing) and monitoring the landfill (groundwater and methane gas testing), which also requires 3<sup>rd</sup> party inspections of the cap’s condition and the periodic testing of well water for homes in the nearby vicinity of the site. One of the homes is actually located at the front of the site with the address of 1201 Quaker Street.

In 2021, the Town’s 3<sup>rd</sup> party inspector, EnviroTrac, identified the exceedance of contaminants (1,4-dioxane) present in the drinking water well at the single-family home of 1201 Quaker Street. With additional testing, other contaminated wells were identified at 63 Carroll Road, 11 Mendon Road, 1222 Quaker Street, 1231 Quaker Street, 1240 Quaker Street, and 1256 Quaker Street. Based on these findings, the Town filed an Immediate Response Action Plan (“IRA”), which required monthly testing and supplying bottled water to all affected properties immediately. In addition, POET water treatment systems were installed at 1201 Quaker Street, 63 Carroll Road, and 1256 Quaker Street. After additional testing, it was found that the well water at 1231 Quaker Street and 1240 Quaker Street met acceptable drinking water standards, and bottled water was no longer required to be provided to these homes.

In addition to the Town having responsibility, MGL c.21E, Sec. 5 also provides that the owner of the property is considered a party with “potential liability for response action costs and damages”. The owner, Green Wave Environmental Corp, has done some of its own 3<sup>rd</sup> party monitoring of the site. Their consultant, Weston & Sampson, identified deficiencies with the existing cap (settling) as well as the presence of trash beyond the toe of the slope that is in close proximity to the Blackstone River. Working with a closure management consultant, Clean Earth, the owner has presented to the Town and to MADEP, an option for removing the trash beyond the toe of the slope, reshaping the existing cap with imported soils (Comm 97), and providing an additional lined cap over the site.

Based on the deficiencies of the cap, the presence of 1,4-dioxane contaminants and PFAS6 in nearby wells, and due to the recent stance and concerns of PFAS compounds by MADEP and USEPA, last year in May of 2023 MADEP issued a “Notice of Responsibility” for an “Immediate Response Action Plan Modification” to the previous IRA submitted in 2021.

This order required the Town to submit a modified IRA plan, along with an IRA status report within 60 days of the Notice, which was provided. It also called for sampling of all wells within 500 feet of the properties where the PFAS6 was identified. This monthly testing began in July of 2023 and is to continue for at least one (1) year. At the end of the one-year period, the Town must file additional submittals that may include a Tier Classification, a Permanent Solution Statement, or, if applicable, a Downgradient Property Status Submittal. After one of these is filed prior to July 2024, then MADEP will issue additional action plan requirements.

The Town has had to engage the services of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party consultant to perform the monthly sampling and testing of the well water from these properties. The Town has entered into multiple monthly agreements with SLR, a consultant out of Glastonbury, CT to perform these tasks and in addition, provide reporting to the Town and DEP.

The amount of expenditures anticipated for FY2024 is \$510,580 based on completed work to date and the expected scope of services from the date of this letter through June 30, 2024.

The amount of expenditures for FY2025 is unknown at this time and until MADEP issues required action plans moving forward after the one-year timeline mentioned above.

Article 23 of the May 7, 2024 Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant, provides for a transfer of undesignated surplus funds (Free Cash) in the amount of \$1,000,000 into an account that has been set aside for expenses related to addressing the IRA from MADEP. This amount will balance our FY2024 expenditures and reserve almost the same amount of funds for FY2025. Our hope is that testing requirements may be reduced. Any surplus funds would be used towards a permanent solution for drinking water for these residents, which may require further Town Meeting votes in the future.

The Town is exploring the possibility of providing an extended water line in this area, along with MADEP and Whitinsville Water Company.

## SOME COMMON TOWN FINANCE TERMS

### **APPROPRIATION**

An amount of money voted to be spent for specific purposes.

### **ARTICLES**

Each of the numbered items of business in the Warrant is called an Article. Articles for a town meeting are submitted to the selectmen by boards, departments, and by citizens of Northbridge. All Articles must be voted upon; none can be withdrawn from the Warrant.

### **CHERRY SHEET**

The cherry colored form received each year from the state listing the town's State Aid and county and state charge against the town.

### **ENTERPRISE FUND**

Accounts for activities for which a fee is charged to external users for goods or services. Accounts for operations that are financed and operated in a manner similar to private business enterprises - where the intent of the governing body is that the costs (expenses including depreciation) of providing goods and services to the general public on a continuing basis be financed or recovered primarily through user charges.

### **FISCAL YEAR**

July 1st through June 30th and normally designated by the year in which it ends.

### **FREE CASH – AVAILABLE FUNDS**

Surplus revenue less all uncollected taxes from prior years. A source for funds at special town meetings, special projects, or lowering the tax rate. Actual amount is determined at the close of each fiscal year. Free Cash should be thought of as being the town's "Savings Account".

### **GENERAL FUND**

The fund into which the general (not-earmarked) revenues of the town are deposited and from which money is appropriated to pay the general expenses of the municipality.

### **LOCAL RECEIPTS**

Money collected by the town departments for Automobile Excise taxes, licenses issued by the clerk's office, Parks and Recreation activities, etc.

### **NET ASSETS UNRESTRICTED** (formerly Retained Earnings)

An equity account reflecting the accumulated earnings of an enterprise fund that may be used to fund capital improvements, to reimburse the general fund for prior year subsidies, or to reduce user charges and to provide for enterprise revenue deficits (operating loss).

### **OVERLAY**

The amount raised by the Assessors in excess of appropriations and other charges to cover abatements granted and avoiding fractions.

### **OVERLAY SURPLUS**

The accumulated amount of the not used overlay for various years which may be used for extraordinary or unforeseen purposes or voted into the Reserve Fund.

### **OVERRIDE**

A referendum question on the ballot in a general election which allows a town to assess taxes in excess of the allowable 2½ % yearly increased allowed by law. Override questions must specify the purpose of the override and require a majority vote for approval.

### **RESERVE FUND**

A fund to provide for extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures. A sum may be appropriated at the Annual Town Meeting not to exceed 5% of the tax levy of the preceding year.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION (SPED)**

Special Education is a program that serves students who have disabilities that impair learning. The town is partially reimbursed through Chapter 70 based on availability of funds and through recently enacted circuit breaker legislation.

### **SURPLUS REVENUE**

The amount by which cash, accounts receivable and other assets exceed liabilities and reserve (a bookkeeping item not to be confused with Available Funds.) Actual amount is determined at the close of each fiscal year.

### **TAX LEVY**

The revenue a community can raise through real estate and personal taxes. This is limited by Proposition 2 ½ but can be increased by an override.

### **TRANSFER**

The authorization to use an appropriation for a different purpose or from the Reserve Fund for extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures.

### **USER CHARGES/FEES**

A municipal funding source where payment is collected from the user of a service to help defray the cost of providing the service.

### **WARRANT**

The list of items, known as Articles, to be considered at the town meeting is called the Town Warrant. The only business that may be considered is that listed in the Town Warrant.



**SPRING ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

**7:00 PM**

**TUESDAY, MAY 7, 2024**

**NORTHBRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL**