

## TOWN HALL MONTHLY: March

Three public hearings were held since our last writing in preparation for Town Meeting.

On January 28 the Selectmen's Small Roads Committee held a hearing to air the information they collected over the year and the resulting recommendations about the reclassification of some of our small roads. The approximately 55 attendees of the hearing asked many questions and supplied information they felt was missing. There was criticism that abutters to roads under consideration were not more involved in the study. The Committee is willing to continue working to answer the new questions and incorporate the new information along with input by any who wish to participate. There will be no articles about reclassification on this year's Town Meeting warrant.

On February 6 the Selectmen held a public hearing about the proposed article to take out a second flood repair loan in the amount of one million dollars. There was discussion at the hearing about the amount of flood repair still to be done Town-wide which has been estimated to be at least seven million dollars and which will take several years to accomplish. There was also discussion about the FEMA process and that towns have yet to see reimbursement for the 2021 disaster. There was support for continuing to fund repairs at a lower amount until reimbursements begin. As a result the Selectmen and the Budget Committee lowered the proposed loan request to \$750,000 and reduced the scope of projects planned for this year to accommodate the reduction in funding.

On February 8 the Budget Committee aired the proposed 2023 budget and money warrant articles. During the budget review it was noted that the proposed budget shows a reduction in highway department expenses due to moving from a four man to a three man crew, and a reduction in capital spending on equipment as we complete payment on the International truck and the roller and also because no new equipment purchases are proposed. Our usual capital spending of \$500,000 is split between completing paving on Cold Pond Road per the Planning Board's recommendation and applying the balance to flood repairs. A few departments such as Cemetery and Library show small increases due to budget deferrals made last year at the height of the flood response along with an increase in fire protection for the same reason. The budget includes provisions for disaster loan interest and principal repayment in the event FEMA reimbursement does not fully cover our borrowing for repairs. Overall the proposed budget increase is approximately 2% which could increase the tax rate twelve cents.

The Budget Committee and Selectmen completed their work on the 2023 proposed budget at a final meeting February 13 in time for Charlotte to submit the Town Report to the printer for distribution the first week of March.

Town Meeting will be Tuesday, March 14. During the day there will be ballot voting on Town officers, the Zoning Ordinance amendments proposed by the Planning Board and the School District budget. The polls open at 10AM. The meeting part of Town Meeting starts at 7PM in the Town Hall. In addition to voting on the flood loan and Town budget articles, there will be voting on increasing Veteran and Elderly credits and exemptions. The complete warrant with all articles will be posted around Town early in March and included in the Town Report. Town Reports are usually available from the Town offices, the Post Office and the Village Store. Soups, coffee and other goodies will be available during voting and donations will benefit the Meetinghouse painting project.

Spring is around the corner. See you soon, Kathi