

\$7.6 million budget, fire truck on Belmont warrant

Deliberative session this Saturday will give voters their say

By THOMAS P. CALDWELL

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BELMONT — Voters facing a \$7.6 million operating budget and other spending requests will have a say in how the final town warrant appears when they meet for the deliberative session of Town Meeting this Saturday, Feb. 3, at 10 a.m. The meeting will take place at Belmont High School.

The Belmont Budget Committee is recommending an appropriation of \$7,593,919 to cover operating expenses of the town, an amount that does not include any of the spending contained in separate warrant articles. Voters may amend that figure during the deliberative session, after which the final figure will go onto the March 13 ballot.

The default budget, which would kick in if voters turn down the proposed budget in March, would be \$7,776,548. The default budget is based on prior-year spending, with adjustments for contractual obligations such as employment agreements, service contracts, and debt service.

Other highlights of the 2018 warrant include a request for \$950,000 to purchase a quint fire truck — a combined pumper, water tanker, hose-carrier, aerial and ground ladders rescue truck — of which \$250,000 would come from the Fire/Ambulance Equipment and Apparatus Special Revenue Fund and the remainder from an anticipated \$700,000 award from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. Should the town not receive the grant, the appropriation would not be funded.

Another article would continue funding of the lease-purchase agreement for a fire department pumper truck approved at the 2016 town meeting. That payment is \$62,117.

Voters also will be asked to rescind a 1999 Town Meeting article that places all ambulance receipts in the Fire-Ambulance Equipment and Apparatus Fund in order to send the first \$171,400 in revenues to the general fund to cover ambulance expenses.

Another article asks voters to adopt RSA 72:81, which provides a property tax exemption for commercial and industrial structures that are new construction, as well as additions, renovations, and improvement of existing structures, for a period of six years in an effort to encouragement investment in Belmont. The exemption provides the business with a 50 percent exemption on the increased value of the property as a result of the construction, but applies only to the municipal and local school taxes. State education and county taxes would not be exempt.

The town also is looking to appropriate \$65,000 for a space needs and feasibility study of town buildings, with the money coming from the Municipal Facilities Capital Reserve Fund, resulting in no new taxation if the article passes.

Allowing keno also is on the warrant. Keno proceeds support public kindergarten, but each community has the option of allowing or disallowing that form of gambling within its borders.

The Belmont Planning Board has proposed amendments of the town zoning ordinance to regulate indoor and outdoor boat storage, as well as indoor and outdoor warehousing and self-storage, separately from other permitted uses.

It also asks to prohibit accessory dwelling units on manufactured homes, recreational vehicles, "and where one or more single-family units are already attached such as condominium developments and duplexes." It also would prohibit the condominium sale of such dwellings and duplexes.

The Planning Board also proposes allowing a subordinate dwelling unit on a lot with a primary business in the Commercial and Industrial zones that would require a conditional use permit for occupancy by anyone other than the business owner.

Another article would amend the definition of a "snow dump" to regulate snow being brought onto a site from another lot.

Voters will be asked to discontinue portions of Pond Road and Hackett Road, and to rescind bond authorizations for projects where the borrowing ability is no longer needed.

Another article outlines where income from the John M. Sargent Trust Fund would be spent. The fund assists local organizations such as the Belknap County Fair, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, as well as programs by other youth and educational organizations.

There are several articles seeking to place funds in various capital reserve and expendable trust accounts to save toward future purchases. Water and sewer appropriations, which would be covered by user fees, also are on the warrant.