



Town of Mansfield

6 Park Row, Mansfield, Massachusetts 02048

Town Manager

William R. Ross

January 4, 2017

To the Board of Selectmen and the Citizens of Mansfield:

I am pleased to present to you the recommended Fiscal Year 2018 budget for municipal operations of the Town. The municipal budget is based on the moderate assumptions contained in the five year financial plan that is attached and made an integral part of this budget and can be found at tab 14(b). The overall budget, as presented, has a deficit. This deficit, is lower than the deficit in the Fiscal Year 2017 budget when presented. The Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and School Committee will need to work together to resolve the deficit before a final budget is presented to Town Meeting for consideration and adoption. We are confident that further review and discussion of the proposed budgets will result in a balanced budget for presentation to Town Meeting. I believe that it is appropriate to note that the deficit in the proposed budget has been lower for each of the past five years.

The budget assumes that Chapter 70 and Unlimited Local Government Aid from the state will increase by 0.5%. The Governor will not submit his Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposal until late January. The State has seen slight decreases in revenue during the current fiscal year; it is doubtful that the budget proposed by the Governor will include a significant increase in either school or general local aid. The State faces significant cost increases, especially in the area of health care; therefore, it is difficult to anticipate significant increases in local aids.

The Municipal and School Departments continue to jointly develop and present a budget document that represents the service needs of the entire community. Superintendent Gianetti and I are committed to working together for the benefit of the community. We will give a joint budget presentation at Town Meeting which demonstrates how the entire budget is linked together as one plan for the provision of services to the citizens of Mansfield.

It is easy to look at budgets as a series of numbers and dollar signs. There are vital services to the community that are provided by the Town. The dollars available are invaluable in assisting us to provide those services; however, we must link the two together and recognize the service needs of the community, as expressed by the citizens through contacts with the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, School Committee, and Superintendent of Schools.

I would like to highlight the following issues that are addressed in the municipal portion of the proposed budget:

1. The budget includes an estimated increase in health insurance costs of 10%. The proposed rates for Fiscal Year 18 will be reviewed by the Health Group Board in January with action on the rates in February.

2. The amount paid to Bristol County Retirement for retirement benefits for all Town employees, except educational employees, has been reduced as previously reported. The reduction is included in the benefit costs for each department.
3. A part time person to take minutes for several boards and committees is proposed with the appropriation of \$10,000 to cover the cost in one line item. The amount has been combined from the budgets of various boards and committees resulting in a level funding. The individual will be on call to take minutes and will not receive benefits.
4. One Bookkeeper position has been added in the Finance/Town Accountants Office based upon the workload in the office and as recommended by the auditors for the Town in the management letter that accompanies the annual audit. This position will relieve the Finance Director of routine work and allow him to concentrate on long-term planning and supervision of the offices within his area of responsibility
5. We are proposing to add the procurement officer position to the staff in fiscal year 2018. This position would coordinate all procurement activities for the municipal departments. This position was recommended in the financial report that was developed for the Town several years ago.
6. The MIS department is requesting an additional part-time technician to work on public safety issues, primarily with the Police Department. The addition of technology, such as cameras in the vehicles, more sophisticated information systems, and similar items has increased the need for IT support to a level that requires additional personnel.
7. The Fire Department is requesting the addition of an EMS Coordinator. This individual would oversee and coordinate all EMS activities of the Department. The State and Federal requirements for training, record keeping, and compliance with new and updated rules has reached a point where the two part-time coordinators cannot adequately handle the workload. The EMS activities of the Town are approximately 70% of the Fire Department workload and bring revenue to the Town of approximately \$1,000,000 per year. It is important to manage this activity effectively.
8. The Highway Department is proposing two additional skilled labor positions. One position would be funded in the Highway budget and one in the Wastewater Collection budget. These two positions would bring the Highway Division closer to the employment level that was in place ten years ago before the staff reductions that were necessary to address budgetary issues.
9. The demand for fuel assistance has risen in the past three years to a level that required additional hours for the part time position that performs that work. This position also fills in for the social worker when she is on vacation, off for training or has other time off.
10. The Library Board has requested one additional part time Librarian position.
11. I am recommending returning the Park and Recreation Direction position to 37.5 hours a week from 25 hours. The hours for this position were reduced several years ago as part of a budget reduction process. The renewed interest in the community in recreation activities and park development required additional time for the Park and Recreation Director to meet those demands. The additional hours will be funded from the Recreation revolving fund rather than the General Fund. The Recreation revolving fund has an adequate revenue stream to support this additional expense.

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I will be meeting with department heads over the next two weeks to review their budget proposals. Updates will be made available as revisions are made.

We are at the beginning of the budget process that will continue over the next two to three months as additional review of budget requests is undertaken and additional information is received on State revenue sources. The budget, as presented, is a starting point that will go through careful scrutiny and review before a final budget is ready for adoption. I look forward to working with the Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Budget Subcommittee and Finance Committee to review the proposed budget and develop a final document for presentation at Town Meeting.

I thank the staff of the Town for their diligent work in assisting in the preparation of this budget, especially John Stanbrook, Finance Director.

I ask for your approval of this budget when I present it at Town Meeting, as recommended by the Board of Selectmen, School Committee and Finance Committee.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "William R. Ross".

William R. Ross, Town Manager

WRR/