

*Moultonborough 2025-2026 Town/Library
Budgets*

Recommendations and Comments
Advisory Budget Committee
3 February 2025



January 31, 2025

To the Members of the Select Board, Town Administrator, Library Trustees
Moultonborough Town Hall
Moultonborough, New Hampshire 03254

Moultonborough's Advisory Budget Committee (ABC), established in July 2008, is an appointed volunteer body whose mission is to provide the community and governing bodies with independent review and objective analysis of the annual budget. At the time of this writing the Committee does believe that the 2025/2026 budgets as reported herein are substantially complete with the exception of two union contracts still under negotiation (Police and DPW). We will continue to monitor all additions or deletions.

Please be aware that the views in this report are not always unanimous. The report strives to include all members' thoughts, ideas, and opinions.

This has been a challenging budget cycle for the Town this year due to the 100% turnover in the Executive, Finance and Administration staffing. We want to thank the Interim Town Administrator and the newly appointed Finance Director along with all related support staff for their extraordinary efforts.

This year, the ABC will address both Town and Library in one consolidated report. We will provide our budget summary similar to past reporting. Our comments and observations will focus on suggestions and opportunities to streamline processes and organizational structure.

Operating Budget Summary: Town

At the time of this report, the proposed total Town Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 is \$11,487,545 versus \$10,720,865 for the prior year. The 2025/2026 budget represents an overall increase of \$766,680 or 7.15 %.

The year-over-year increase is primarily attributable to the following:

Administration: The addition of a reserve in Administration for \$325,000 covering all employee salary increases and related benefits including the anticipated impact related to the two union contracts still under negotiation, \$30,000 increase in salary and related benefits to adjust the Town Administrator salary to current market value.

Transfer Station: Increase of \$139,440 primarily representing an increase in the disposal and tipping fee contracts,

Public Safety: Fire \$65,833 representing cost to cover anticipated cost for overtime covering time off for full-time staff and Police \$14,642 primarily representing the addition of two additional part time staff.

Recreation: Increase is related to the cost of change in health insurance status for full-time staff.

Land Use/Assessing: Land Use \$37,659 representing computer consulting services along with a change in employee status for healthcare and Assessing \$21,065 representing increases in maintenance for Docuware (electronic data storage) and a change in employee status for health care.

Emergency Lanes: \$40,000 representing an increase in local contracts for plowing.

No major operating initiatives are included in the 2025/2026 budget.

Requests for charitable contributions received to date amount to \$150,080.
pending a favorable vote at the Town Meeting all requests will be taxpayer funded.

Operating Budget Summary: Library

At the time of this report, the proposed total Library Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 is \$740,031 versus \$689,823 for the prior year. The 2025/2026 budget represents an overall increase of \$50,208 or 7.28 %.

The increase in expenditure includes approximately \$35,000 including 5% pay increases for all staff, additional hours to cover staff absences and related costs. In addition, the library will be updating their technology and switching technology vendors for an increase of \$3,500. Also increasing are outside maintenance costs of approximately \$5,000.

We are pleased to see the continued cooperation between the Library and Town especially in the areas of maintenance. We look forward to continued partnership between both groups in the future.

Capital Funding: Town

Capital and Capital Reserve Fund Budget for 2025/2026 is \$4,156,551 of which \$2,169,500. is to be taxpayer funded, \$1,735,000 to be withdrawn from reserve funds and \$252,051 from grant funding. Details for all capital projects are depicted in the chart below.

Capital Funding

Capital	Cost	Taxation	Reserve Fund	Other/ Grant
Trust Funds				
Ambulance Contingency	\$70,000	\$70,000		
Bridge Repair/Manit	\$92,051			\$92,051
Dry Hydrant	\$7,500	\$7,500		
Milfoil	\$100,000	\$100,000		
Police Cruiser	\$25,000	\$25,000		
Fire Fighting Equipment	\$350,000	\$350,000		
Historical Building Fund	\$25,000	\$25,000		
Town wide technology	\$22,000	\$22,000		
Capital Purchases				
Fire Engine	\$1,350,000		\$1,350,000	
Police Radios	\$75,000	\$75,000		
Police Ford Interceptor	\$85,000	\$85,000		
Police Ford Interceptor	\$85,000	\$85,000		
Transfer Station Truck Scale	\$85,000	\$85,000		
DPW Sand/Salt Shed Roof	\$50,000	\$50,000		
DPW Truck/Plow/Sander	\$110,000	\$35,000	\$75,000	
Fire/ Pole Barn	\$75,000	\$25,000	\$50,000	
DPW Garage Pole Shed	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	
DPW Vehicle Lift	\$35,000	\$35,000		
Town Hall Space Needs Study	\$15,000	\$15,000		
2025/2026 Road Maintenance	\$1,300,000	\$980,000	\$160,000	\$160,000
Total	\$4,156,551	\$2,169,500	\$1,735,000	\$252,051

v Capital Funding: Library

The library has requested to increase their Building Repairs and Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund by \$68,000. The Committee commends the library's efforts to focus on long range planning and related participation with the Town's Capital Improvements Committee.

OBSERVATIONS & COMMENTS:

The ABC would like to provide observations and comments on the following issues, some of which continue repetitively from prior reports.

Capital Planning: Funding capital reserves ensures that funds are available for the purchase of big-ticket items without causing yearly spikes in the tax rate. Simply stated, this process flattens the cost of replacement over a period of time and minimizes the year-over-year spikes in the tax rate that the Town has been experiencing. The ABC believes this is the most significant area of tax rate exposure the Town currently has. We continue to strongly suggest that the Selectboard, Town Administrator, Capital Improvement Committee and Department heads undertake a detailed review of capital funding requirements anticipated for the next ten to fifteen-year period and establish appropriate annual contributions to the capital reserve funds which are to be reviewed and updated on a routine annual basis. The ABC commends the CIPC voluntarily with the support of the Select Board to undertake the detailed review. This is an expensive and high visibility component to the overall annual budgeting and planning process that has been neglected over the past several years. Carefully planned and executed, capital project planning is done to estimate future replacement needs, obsolescence timing and replacement costs. Capital planning generally utilizes an industry standard schedule for replacement, with estimated costs adjusted annually for inflation. When performing the initial long-range planning, department heads have no way of knowing what the condition of the items will be at the end of their normal life cycle. Therefore, as the scheduled replacement date moves closer for any given capital item, it is imperative that each item be reviewed and adjusted accordingly, for both current cost and replacement timing.

Infrastructure, Technology: Town-wide internet expansion for fiber internet by both Fidium and NH Broadband has provided the opportunity to allow much needed upgrades for all municipal buildings to improve communications, technology, and the related efficiency improvements in workflow. An effort should be undertaken to link all municipal buildings to fiber under one carrier. Providing high speed internet will enable the town to take advantage of faster and much needed online services. The Town's current Communications Technology Fund (which was set up to help provide internet service to underserved areas in town could be repurposed to facilitate Fiber to the town municipal buildings. Workflow could be greatly enhanced. The implementation of Docuware (electronic Storage) for years of planning, zoning, and general municipal records was initiated approximately 6+ years ago. The project still awaits completion due to lack of ownership and stewardship. Currently, most records are maintained in file boxes stored in space at the back of the Town Hall. Research is done by searching through boxes of paper consuming unnecessary staff time and utilizing physical space that could be repurposed... The project needs to be a priority with accountable stewardship and training for all staff.

The Committee commends the Land Use group for its recent efforts to provide access for bringing online activities related to permitting and tracking. The implementation of this project should receive high priority and target benchmarks for completion and training.

Electronic efficiencies should continue to be explored in other areas including Tax Clerk, Town Clerk's office, Finance and Administration. We should strive to move manual efforts online versus paper or in person one on one processing. Electronic access and mailing of tax bills, auto and boat registrations, dog registrations (although available) need to be actively promoted, and residents encouraged and trained to move into the "digital World." We do acknowledge that paper and in person transactions will never be totally eliminated. The cost of postage is ever increasing (currently \$.73 per standard mailing). Printing, mailing and one on one window service are costly and time consuming. Most of society has moved to digital processing for both their personal and business needs.

Regional Solutions: The Town has successfully regionalized its ambulance service over the past several years. In addition, the town has previously entered into a joint effort to eradicate Milfoil with Tuftonboro and Wolfeboro, entered into a joint agreement to share Code Enforcement services with Holderness for a few years and had merged its' Visiting Nurse program with Meredith/Center Harbor. The Committee continues to believe that there are other opportunities that could jointly benefit both the Town of Moultonborough and its neighboring communities (economically and through expanded service offerings). The time is rapidly approaching when small towns will find it increasingly difficult to provide the funding, equipment, and trained personnel to provide these services. Other disciplines that may lend themselves to regionalization might include Town Prosecutor, Recreation, Senior Services, Welfare, Legal Services, Assessing, Police Dispatch and Waste Disposal. We encourage the Town to actively explore such opportunities. Additionally, the town should continue to explore opportunities to combine services with county administration and operations where feasible. Moultonborough funds approximately 25% of the total county budget and should look to receive commensurate services. We further suggest that preliminary steps be taken to look at what regionalization of one department, be it fire, police, DPW, or recreation might look like, and to open conversations with neighboring towns about the same. We need to continue looking at regional collaborations in an effort to continue to provide all the services our community members have come to expect.

Misc. Revenue User Fees: Given the current economic trends and rising inflation, the Committee suggests that the Town undergo a review of all miscellaneous revenue generating sources to include, but not limited to, transfer station fees, land use fees, building and code fees, dump and beach stickers, late fees, recreation program fees, cemetery fees, boat launch fees, library fees, Function Hall rental fees, etc.

Community Planning: Over recent years several community planning needs and issues have surfaced and continued to percolate. We need to step up and either finally address the issues or put them to rest. The Town Hall is in need of additional office space. A proposal was made during budget deliberations this year to have a study prepared to expand and or better utilize existing

space. Although approved in the final budget, the initial budget request has been reduced by 50 %. The Town is moving forward with plans to reconfigure the Transfer Station layout for efficiencies of operations and safety layout. Paving for a proposed traffic rerouting within the facility for \$15,000 was proposed as an initial first step in this year's budget. The cost of this project was cancelled during Select Board deliberations. The ever-ongoing pathway project continues to surface. A definitive decision on its future needs to be made and acted on. The old elephant in the room "adequate community function space" remains an issue and still needs to be addressed.

Conclusion: Both Municipal and School budgets seem to be ever increasing, however, we need to continue to focus on the issues and work together as a community to balance the needs and resources to ensure that the Town continues to be a vibrant and prosperous community for all our residents.

Respectfully submitted,

Moultonborough Advisory Budget Committee

Kay Peranelli	(Chair)
Joe Adams	(Alternate at Large)
Jean Beadle	(Member at Large)
Karel Crawford	(Select Board Representative)
Kathy Garry	(School Board Representative)
Linda Murray	(Alternate at Large)
Mary Phillips	(Member at Large)