

*The Barrington Board of Selectmen presents this explanation of the articles to be voted upon by ballot on Tuesday, March 8 between 8 AM and 7 PM at the Barrington Middle School. For a complete copy of the articles, including details on the budget, the Board urges voters to go to the official town website at www.barrington.nh.gov or to the Town Offices at 333 Calef Highway. On the home page, click on the link to **2016 Town Meeting** for all the documents.*

ZONING ARTICLES

Articles 2-18. Zoning Amendment Articles proposed by the Planning Board. These articles are recommended unanimously by the Planning Board. A summary of what each article does is stated on the warrant/ballot. The actual wording of the amendments and additional details can be obtained from the Planning Office (664-0195) and are also posted on the town web page.

Article 19 This article is a **Zoning Amendment** placed on the ballot by petition and is not recommended by the Planning Board. This article would restrict future approval of gas stations in the town of Barrington.

BUDGET AND SPENDING ARTICLES

The Board of Selectmen proposed and recommends budgetary articles 20-31. The Advisory Budget Committee recommends all these articles as well. *Article 20, the bond to finance the Town Hall project, is discussed on the following page.*

Article 21 Operating Budget. The proposed budget for 2016 shows an increase over the 2015 budget, mainly to increase staff hours in the Fire Department and Public Works. Other expenses, including a modest wage increase for town employees, are largely offset by anticipated increases in revenues, resulting in a tax reduction of 3 cents/\$1,000.

Most of the other spending articles include the statement that passage of the article “has no impact on 2016 property taxes.” This is because the Selectmen propose to fund the articles by transferring funds from the town’s fund balance, essentially a savings account that holds any surplus from year to year, to cover the cost of the article. The capital reserves and

“expendable trust” accounts (articles 22-27) are themselves savings accounts dedicated to specific purposes like replacing a fire truck or emergency snow removal in excess of the normal winter budget. Article 28 continues the funding of the multi-year plan adopted by the town to repair and pave town roads before they deteriorate and require more costly maintenance. Article 29 reflects the costs for salary and benefit adjustments for police as negotiated with the union representing the police, and must be funded via a tax increase.

The total impact on property taxes in 2016 if all of these articles pass would be a reduction in the tax rate of about ½ cent/\$1,000 or a reduction of about a dollar on the average property valued at \$250,000. The tax impact of the proposed new Town Hall would not be felt until 2017.

OTHER ARTICLES

Article 32 Conservation Easement. This article incorporates two recently purchased conservation parcels into the Tamposi Water Supply Reserve already overseen by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

Article 33 Solar (By Petition). Because the Board abandoned its effort to engage in a solar power purchase agreement, this article has no effect, whether passed or not.

Article 34 Ordinance Establishing a Community Bill of Rights (By Petition). The Board of Selectmen unanimously opposes this article. The Town attorney asserts there is no statutory authority to adopt or enforce portions of the proposed ordinance and that some provisions are contrary to the state and federal constitutions. If adopted, the town could incur costly legal expenses to defend the ordinance against those who claim their land is being taken unfairly.

Article 20 - Proposed New Town Hall

Barrington needs a permanent location for the many functions of town government, as well as records storage and meeting spaces. This article provides the authority to borrow \$2,900,000 to build and furnish a new Town Hall. If passed, construction would commence in April 2016 and be completed in December 2016.

The town is currently renting temporary space in an office building that lacks adequate space for meetings, parking and record storage and is inefficient in space design. The present rental expense for the office space and an off-site storage locker for town records is \$61,000/year.

The Selectmen believe the 11,551 sq. ft. proposed building, to be located on the site of the former Town Hall, is the best alternative for the needs of Barrington. It has been designed to be very energy efficient, meet the space needs of the town now and into the future, include modern technology, and provide meeting spaces for the community and storage space for the Recreation Department's adjacent playing fields. The site also will accommodate a future library, creating the possibility for a community campus that will be the heart of our community. Although construction and borrowing costs have risen since last year, they are likely to rise more in the future, so moving forward now is in the best interests of the town.

The vote by the Board of Selectmen was 4-1 in favor of the project, and the ABC vote was unanimous in support. The passage of this article will have no impact on the amount to be raised by 2016 property taxes, because the bond payments will not commence until 2017. While there are many factors affecting future property taxes, the projected annual average net increase starting in 2017 is 16 cents/\$1,000, or \$40 in the property tax bill on a home currently assessed at \$250,000. A 20-year bond is anticipated, and once the bond is paid off, the town will incur only normal maintenance expenses for the building, rather than paying rent indefinitely.

The Board has received many questions about this building project over the past year, and has responded to those questions in a Q&A document posted on the town website, www.barrington.nh.gov. Voters are urged to read that document for more detailed information about the proposal. The Board is convinced that new construction is in the best long-term interests of the town, and believes this proposed building will serve the community well.

