

Dear citizens and voters of Hooksett,

The Hooksett Budget Committee is empowered by state law, RSA 32. “A town or district may establish a municipal budget committee to assist its voters in the prudent appropriation of public funds. The budget committee, in those municipalities which establish one, is intended to have budgetary authority analogous to that of a legislative appropriations committee.”

The Hooksett Budget Committee reviews the municipal, school, and two water precinct budgets. The four entities provide proposed budgets for the Budget Committee to review and amend at public meetings over the year, with sixteen of these occurring from September through January.

We spend many hours combing through these budgets line by line, and asking many questions of department heads, administrators, and the Town Council and School Board. We arrive at conclusions and make motions to adjust budget lines to ensure prudent budgeting. The Budget Committee is the taxpayers’ “last line of defense”, as we are ultimately responsible for the budget number you see in the town and school warrant articles. We work to ensure the budgets are correct, appropriate, adequate and responsible while still being mindful of their tax impact.

The Budget Committee’s budgets are discussed at public hearings in January, then again at the Deliberative Sessions in February. *The Deliberative Sessions are the only opportunity, for the voters who attend, to amend the budget and warrant articles prior to their placement on the ballot for town-wide vote in March.* At the town election, the only options are these amended budgets or the default budgets, and yes/no for the other warrants.

Below is a summary of the budgets and warrants submitted to the Budget Committee, showing their changes throughout the budget process.

<b>Budgets for 2019-2020</b>	<b>Town Council / School Board / Commission Request</b>	<b>Budget Committee Request</b>	<b>Deliberative Session Amended Budget</b>	<b>Voter Approved Budget</b>
<b>Town Operating Budget</b>	\$19.0 million	\$19.0 million	\$19.1 million (added \$49,000)	\$19.1 million
<b>Additional Town Warrants</b>	\$1.6 million ( <i>\$2.5 million TIF bond excluded</i> )	\$1.3 million ( <i>\$314,000 not recommend</i> )	\$1.6 million	\$1.3 million
<b>School Operating Budget</b>	\$33.4 million	\$32.8 million ( <i>reduced \$615,000</i> )	\$33.1 million ( <i>added back \$315,000</i> )	\$33.1 million

<b>Additional School Warrants</b>	\$4.9 million <i>(\$4.8 million for bond)</i>	\$0.1 million <i>(\$4.8 million not recommended)</i>	\$0.1 million <i>(bond amended to \$0)</i>	\$0.1 million
<b>Village Water</b>	\$1.2 million	\$1.2 million	\$1.2 million	\$1.2 million
<b>Central Water</b>	\$0.9 million	\$0.9 million	\$0.9 million	\$0.9 million
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$61.0 million</b>	<b>\$55.3 million</b>	<b>\$56.0 million</b>	<b>\$55.7 million</b>

The Budget Committee recommended a 2019-20 town budget of \$19.0 million, 3.5% higher than the previous year’s budget, as 2018-19 was a default budget. Reductions by the Budget Committee were almost entirely offset by a last-minute increase in water district fees. Notable increases beyond inflation include:

1. \$149,000 debt principal and interest
2. \$100,000 EPA stormwater system
3. \$100,000 Administration, notably technology services
4. \$100,000 increased waste tipping fees
5. \$65,000 library
6. \$32,000 for increased fire hydrant costs by water districts
7. Health Insurance
8. Other contractual obligations

Compared to actual spending the previously completed year, 2017-18, this is an increase of 11%. This disparity is largely due to open positions in several departments resulting in an underspending of the 2017-18 budget by \$1.5 million. Staffing wages, plus contributions to NH Retirement System, health insurance, and related employer taxes, represent a significant town expense.

The Budget Committee’s recommended town budget was increased by \$49,000 at the Saturday, Feb. 2 Town Deliberative session by attendees, and this amended \$19.0 million town budget was passed by voters at the March election over the smaller default budget of \$18.7 million.

The Hooksett Budget Committee had recommended a 2019-20 school budget of \$32.7 million which is \$1.8 million or 6% more than what was actually spent in the most recently completed school year, 2017-18. This School Board’s original request was \$615,000 higher than this, or 8% more than previously spent.

The Budget Committee’s recommended school budget was increased by \$315,000 at the Friday, Feb. 8 Town Deliberative session by attendees, and this amended \$34.3 million school

budget was passed by voters at the March election over the larger default budget of \$34.5 million.

The School Board proposed a \$4.8 million bond at the January 10 public hearing, which was similar to a bond defeated by voters the previous year. The Budget Committee voted to not recommend this bond for a variety of reasons. The School Board motioned to amend this to \$0 at the School Deliberative session to avoid triggering the “10% rule”, which protects citizens from egregious budget increases beyond 110% of what the Budget Committee has proposed.

The school budget drew the majority of attendees at our public hearings. The Budget Committee is collaborating with the School Board and administration this summer to improve the budgeting process, level of detail, and communication in the upcoming budget cycle. We strongly believe the town would be better served by holding the School Deliberative Session on a Saturday like the Town Deliberative session, not a Friday night as is done currently, so more taxpayers could attend.

Budget Committee meetings are typically Thursdays at 6:30 pm. The public is welcome to attend. All public meetings are also streamed live and available for later review on Hooksett’s website, [hooksett.org](http://hooksett.org).

We appreciate the time and effort put forth by the town, school, and water administrations and governing bodies who worked on these budgets throughout the year, and the constructive consideration given by many Hooksett citizens during our review process.

Finally, we would like to thank the Budget Committee members who worked so hard this year, acting with remarkable transparency, fiscal prudence, and rigor in giving the town fiscally responsible budgets. The are: Jason Hyde, Chair, Chris Morneau, Vice Chair, Nathan Norton, Rep. Michael Yakubovich, Brian Soucy, Wayne Goertel, Elliot Axelman; also Town Council Representative Rob Duhaime, School Board Representative Adam Gianunzio, and administrative assistant Leeann Moynihan.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Hyde  
Hooksett Budget Committee Chair

Wayne Goertel  
Hooksett Budget Committee