



OFFICE OF THE SELECTMEN

115 Main Street, PO Box 96, Voluntown, CT 06384

June 27, 2025

Voluntown Taxpayers,

The proposed Board of Selectmen's Town Government Budget and the proposed Board of Education Budget both failed to pass at the Special Town Meeting that was held on June 18th. The Board of Selectmen met at two Special Meetings to discuss revisions and approve a revised budget. We also voted on sending the revised budget to a Special Town Meeting for discussion and to an Adjourned Referendum for a vote. **The Special Town Meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 8, at 7:00pm at the school, and the Adjourned Referendum will be held on Tuesday, July 15, from 12pm- 8pm in the Town Hall Meeting Room.**

Tax bills have not been sent out on time. We are aiming to have them sent out for August 1, with the last day to pay September 2. We decided on this to avoid the extra cost of a supplemental bill and/or refunds that could be associated with setting a mill rate for collection without a budget passed. Since the new fiscal year starts on July 1st, regardless of whether a budget is passed or not, we will be running the town on essential spending only. This could limit non-essential services until tax collection begins.

Changes in the Revised Proposed Government Budget and Why

The Board of Selectmen still strongly believe that the first Government budget that we submitted to the Town is the budget that fully meets the needs and commitments of the Town. The subsequent Government and Board of Education budgets have received cuts that could have consequences in funding needs and commitments.

All the changes made in the revision #3 budget, since the revision #2 budget are highlighted in the Town Government Budget 2025-2026 document that is attached. There are line items that went down, and line items that went up.

The Board of Selectmen heard at the last town meeting that residents support the addition of the paid weekend day staff for the fire department that was included in the original budget proposal, so it was added back. The costs for this are shown in the additions to the FICA/Medicare line, the 457B- Town Contribution line under Board of Selectmen, and the Emergency Responders line under Public Safety.

The Board of Selectmen also heard at the last town meeting that residents do not support the staff wage increases that were the result of the salary study that was done by a contracted company. The Board firmly believes that our employees should be paid for the work that they do and the training and certifications that they hold. The team of town employees that we currently have work in the best interest of the town and go above and beyond in providing affordable services. Many are instrumental

in seeking and applying for grants to cover expenses in their department line items. Despite this, we heard the residents' concerns, and we reduced wage increases. We will stretch the increases out over more budget years to get current staff at the rates where they should be according to the study results. We know that this could result in losing valuable and dedicated staff and make it challenging to find replacements for those positions. There are some staff salary line items that still show what some might consider a higher increase. This is because those positions are hourly positions, and those employees are working more hours to fulfill the responsibilities of their job description. Salary employees get paid the same regardless of their hours, though they often work more than 35 hours a week.

Other key areas that received cuts were various department dues and workshops, and Voluntown Public Library, Economic Development Commission, and Recreation Commission line items. There were other small cuts in line items throughout departments. In total we cut just over \$33,000 from the previously proposed budget.

With the line-item additions for the weekend paid emergency responders, and the cuts that were done, we are proposing an increase in this revised Government budget from the previously revised budget of just under \$21,000. The Board of Education was recommended to do what they could in their budget revision to offset this increase. The revenue budget still includes an appropriation from the unassigned fund balance to cover the total \$211,402 increase seen with the Government and Board of Education budgets, and the loss in State revenue. This would give us a 20.72 mill rate.

Next Steps

The revised Government and Board of Education budgets will be discussed at the **Special Town Meeting on Tuesday, July 8, at 7:00PM at Voluntown Elementary School. The budgets are being moved to a referendum vote which will be held on Tuesday, July 15, 12:00PM- 8:00PM in the Town Hall Meeting Room.**

If any of the budgets do not pass this referendum, we do not have time to do another referendum by the end of July to get the tax bills out for August 1st, and we would be voting at any further revisions at another Special Town Meeting. If we do not have the tax bills out by August 1st we risk not being able to pay our bills.

If anyone has any questions about anything in the proposed Government budget or the proposed revenue budget, please reach out to the Town Hall or raise your questions at the Special Town Meeting.

Sincerely,

Tracey Hanson
First Selectman

