

The Granby Drummer

Published at 11 North Granby Road

by Citizens for a Better Granby

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PAID
 GRANBY, CT
 PERMIT NO. 15

VOLUME XXXIII, No. 7A

2003-2004 BUDGET SPECIAL EDITION

FREE

2003-2004 TOWN BUDGET

BOS bond issue saves vital jobs

by JOHN FLINT, Selectman

When the Board of Selectmen (BOS) began discussions about their 2003-2004 budget, it was clear that this was going to be a difficult year. The CPPAC model already showed a 5.9 percent increase in the mill rate while limiting the BOS operating expenses to just a fourpercent increase.

The four percent figure wasn't sufficient to keep services at the current levels. The town has experienced major increases in insurance and medical costs, and the CRR/Enron fiasco put an extra burden on the budget. Combine that with negotiated increases for personnel and some changes would have to be made.

The Board of Finance (BOF) gave the BOS a guideline of just three percent. To accomplish this, a reduction in staff was necessary. One position was cut from the police department; one maintainer from public works and one from the library staff (25 percent of its full-time staff) were also cut. In the case of PWD and the library, this meant reducing staff levels that had been maintained for at least fifteen years. The budget was sent to the BOF with reinstatement of

these positions as top priority "add-backs."

At a BOS workshop, "small capital" items were discussed. For a number of years, the BOS has presented a ten year small-cap program as part of its budget. In recent years some items, such as major road repairs and bridge repairs were delayed because of a lack of funds in this account.

It was suggested that if a number of these items were lumped together, and a bond issued to cover the cost, repairs could be made before further deterioration occurred. And, the 2003-2004 budget could be reduced, since less money would have to be put in the small-cap account. After considerable discussion, the selectmen agreed to present the idea to the BOF along with the budget.

The BOF agreed in principle, and asked for a list of projects totaling \$1.5 to \$2 million. With reduced pressure on the budget, BOF also agreed to restore the three cut positions. Thus, the BOS budget presented at the April 14 hearing, meets the BOF's recommendations and will have no reductions in staff.

Frugality in budgeting not new for BOE

by DANIEL J. WOLFE JR
Chairman, Board of Education

The Granby school budget for 2003-2004 was prepared according to guidelines established by the Board of Finance (BOF), unanimously approved by the Board of Education (BOE), and then presented to the BOF on March 31 for their approval. This budget is the result of a thorough decision-making process begun by the BOE and school administration many months ago.

This year's guideline allowed BOE to increase our operating budget by six percent. Although this may not seem to be a constraint, insurance, utilities and transportation costs have all experienced double-digit increases. Student enrollment continues to

rise at a pace of three percent or more annually, a natural consequence of a robust town and a highly-respected school system. Nonetheless, it's a recurring challenge to prepare a responsible budget as expansion continues. The state and federal governments continue to add mandated services, even while the state tries to save money by reducing community funding.

BOE budgets remain frugal while continuing to provide a quality education. Most notably, the BOE kept salary account increases for next year at 4.4 percent, increasing at roughly the same pace as enrollment. There is a continuing commitment to bring individual salaries more in line with area districts with whom Granby competes, to re-

CPPAC's computer model balances income, BOS and BOE needs

by ELAINE JONES

In the last decade, Granby's population increased from 9,369 (1990) to 10,431 residents (2001). There are more children to educate, more roads and bridges to maintain, and more services to provide. These factors require planning ahead to acquire land to maximize the rural atmosphere and minimize large development, and expansion of the sewer line to encourage multi-unit residential and commercial development.

The Capital Programs Priority Advisory Committee (CPPAC) must satisfy these competing needs. The committee includes two members each from the Boards of Selectmen (BOS), Finance (BOF) and Education (BOE); the town treasurer; and *ex officio* members (the first selectman, Superintendent of Schools, Town Manager, and the chairmen of the BOF and BOE). Its mission is to recommend a five-year rolling capital-projects program and financial plan to the BOS.

Several years ago, CPPAC developed a computer model. All anticipated projects are entered and

balanced with anticipated income. This generates a timeline for each project based on priority need and funding considerations. It also computes additional tax increases necessary to fund the projects while funding the BOS and BOE operating budgets and emergency funds.

On April 1, CPPAC chairman Gordon Bischoff explained to the townspeople how the committee works, and why it made the recommendations that will drive budget plans for the next five years. The group needed to balance necessary capital projects, ongoing operational budgets and lower anticipated income without continually raising taxes.

On April 7, CPPAC presented its recommendations to the BOS. At that meeting, the BOS, BOF, and BOE were asked to sign a statement of commitment agreeing to a five-year plan for operating and capital budgets. A majority acceptance would signify commitment to the plan. The next steps are a budget public hearing and a budget town meeting.

CPPAC's recommendation was a 5.9 percent tax increase each year for the next five years, be-

ginning with the 2004 fiscal year. Because of anticipated large capital projects, operating budgets for the BOS and the BOE must be tightly restricted. For the BOS, this means a 5 percent increase this year and a 4 percent increase in the next four years. For the BOE, it means a 6 percent increase now and 5 percent in the next four years. The decision to bond several small capital projects enabled the BOS to save three full-time positions and increase their budget from three percent to five percent.

A change might occur in 2006 when, upon the recommendation of CPPAC and at the sole discretion of the BOF, the BOF may recommend an annual 1.5 percent tax increase. This would only happen because of unforeseen expenses beyond the town's control, such as a greater than five percent increase in school enrollment, an increase in the Consumer Price Index of more than four percent, or an unfunded mandate from the state. If necessary, taxes would increase 7.4 percent that year.

The anticipated capital projects include: expanding the two inter

See CPPAC on page 4

Board of Finance to finalize budget at April 15 meeting

by MIKE GUARCO
Chairman, Board of Finance

As prescribed in the Town Charter, a public hearing on the proposed budget for municipal and educational services will be held at the high school auditorium on the second Monday of April (the 14th) at 7:30 PM. This is an opportunity for the public to be heard—pro and con—on the Board of Education (BOE) and Board of Selectmen (BOS) proposed budgets as well as Debt Service and the Capital Budget. Per the Charter, the Board of Finance (BOF) then considers what was and was not said, as well as short and long-term implications of these budgets. At its subsequent meeting on April 15,

BOF will finalize the FY 04 budget for submission to the Town Meeting on the fourth Monday of April (the 28th) at 7:30 PM at the high school. At that meeting, voters and taxpayers may approve the budget, or forward it to referendum.

The proposed budgets sent to Public Hearing are a difficult balance between providing services and taxpayers' ability and willingness to pay for them. Preliminary planning led the BOF to direct the BOE to produce a budget with up to a six percent increase in operating expenses, and three percent for the BOS' municipal operations. In both cases, these levels caused a significant decline in programs. The

See BOF on page 4

Charter revs change voting process

by DON WILMOT
Town Moderator

As elected moderator for the town of Granby, and with the annual Budget Town Meeting fast approaching, I am pleased to describe the town meeting process.

The Granby town charter provides that the annual budget is submitted to voters at a Town Meeting held on the fourth Monday of April each year. This year the meeting will be on April 28, at 7:30 PM at the Granby Memorial High School auditorium.

The budget approval process has changed this year. The budget will now be approved in one of two ways. First, if at least 230 qualified voters (residents of Granby who are registered voters, or non-residents who own property in Granby having a value of at least \$1,000) are in attendance at the meeting, the budget can be approved that night by affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the registered voters in attendance, with the vote taken by secret ballot. I want to emphasize that, unlike recent years, the voting for approval or disapproval of the budget at the town meeting is now mandatory rather than optional.

If at least two-thirds of the voters approve the budget, the budget process will be complete and the Budget Town Meeting will be adjourned.

However, if less than 230 qualified voters are in attendance at the meeting or less than two-thirds approve the budget, the Budget Town Meeting is recessed and the budget can only be approved by a machine vote held the next Monday from noon to 8 PM.

If a majority of the voters approve the budget by machine vote, the budget process completes and the Budget Town Meeting adjourns. If the budget is not approved, the meeting resumes the next Monday at the high school with a new machine vote to follow one week after the reconvened meeting. This process continues until the budget is approved.

As moderator, I don't espouse any particular position at the meeting; I'm responsible for running the meeting. The town meeting process encourages participation from qualified voters. Voters are free to comment, pro or con, on the budget. I ask that comments not be personal in nature, and that they relate to the budget. I'm gratified that participants have respected the right of each person to express a viewpoint, even ones contrary to their own. This is the democratic process at its best.

REVENUES		
Property Tax Levy	\$22,893,535	
Other Property Tax	600,000	
Intergovernmental Revenues	5,140,782	
Local Revenues and Fund Transfers	1,914,655	
Fund Balance Transfers	808,000	
Total	\$31,356,972	

EXPENDITURES		
MUNICIPAL SERVICES: \$11,290,112		
General Government Department (Operations)		
Administration	\$2,287,982	
Personal & Property Protection	1,750,276	
Libraries, Recreation, and Social Services	568,803	
Public Works & Environment	2,242,081	
<i>Operations subtotal:</i>	<i>\$6,849,142</i>	<i>\$6,849,142</i>
Board of Selectmen and Board of Education		
Capital Equipment/Improvement Allotment	615,000	
Capital Non-Recurring Expenditure Fund (CNEF)	806,991	
Quality & Diversity-BOE	66,000	
Debt Service	2,952,979	
EDUCATION SERVICES: \$20,066,860		
Salaries		
Certified and Administration	\$10,236,910	
Substitutes, Tutors, and Support	386,029	
Teacher Assistants	978,380	
Clerical	673,680	
Custodian Maintenance	894,122	
<i>Salaries subtotal:</i>	<i>\$13,169,121</i>	<i>\$13,169,121</i>
Benefits	2,971,696	
Transportation	774,074	
Purchased Services	661,667	
Other Board of Education Expenditures		
<i>(Items each comprise 2% or less of the BOE budget)</i>		
Legal Services	45,000	
Repairs and Maintenance	224,700	
Insurance	72,463	
Communications	101,051	
Tuition	393,100	
Conference/Travel	49,801	
General Supplies	404,618	
Electricity	328,683	
Fuel	149,662	
Textbooks	190,999	
Library	50,505	
Software	47,892	
Dues and Fees	28,025	
Equipment	38,751	
Student Activities	365,052	
<i>Other BOE Expenditures subtotal:</i>	<i>\$2,490,302</i>	<i>\$2,490,302</i>
Total	\$31,356,972	

SELF-SUSTAINING PROGRAMS OR FUNDED FROM THE GENERAL FUND		
OTHER FUNDS	REVENUES	EXPENDITURES
Capital Equipment/Improvement Fund	\$615,000	\$615,000
Dog Fund	\$13,100	\$13,100
Recreation	\$255,000	\$255,000
Sewer Utility	\$112,245	\$112,245

Budget asks for 5.9% property tax hike

by DAVID HILDRETH

A 5.9 percent increase in the property tax rate is expected for the coming fiscal year if the budget presented by the Board of Finance (BOF) is approved at the annual Town Meeting on April 28. Compared with the tax increases for the last five years, this may seem high.

Where did the 5.9 percent figure come from, and how valid is it? It came from the Capital Program Priorities Advisory Committee (CPPAC), after the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and the Board of Education (BOE) put together Plus One budgets for the year

beginning July 1, 2003. CPPAC took those forecasts together with the anticipated income for the same period and fed them into the computer model.

Last summer, CPPAC used this program to determine how much of the requested money could be provided with a reasonable tax increase. The BOE Plus One budget called for a 10.9 percent increase, and the BOS for a 6.2 percent increase. The resulting tax increase was unreasonably high. It was necessary to cut increases to three percent for the BOS, and six percent for the BOE, to arrive at the 5.9 percent tax rate increase.

The computer forecast is only as valid as the assumptions that go into it. The BOS and BOE can predict some things with reasonable accuracy. Others, like special education expenses and new building costs, are unpredictable. Estimates of new buildings are just that. Income from the state is never known accurately ahead of time. Therefore, assumptions must be conservative. Experience has shown the program is reliable.

The school population and school construction drive the budget up. Bonds, repaid over time, pay for construction costs. If done on a schedule to meet the

schools' needs, and with the income as predicted, it can be done with the 5.9 percent tax increase.

After reviewing the budgets and the nature of the cuts, the BOS and BOF found a way to restore three positions to the BOS budget. The boards agreed to bond repayment of certain capital expenses, thus freeing enough revenue to keep the tax increase at 5.9 percent.

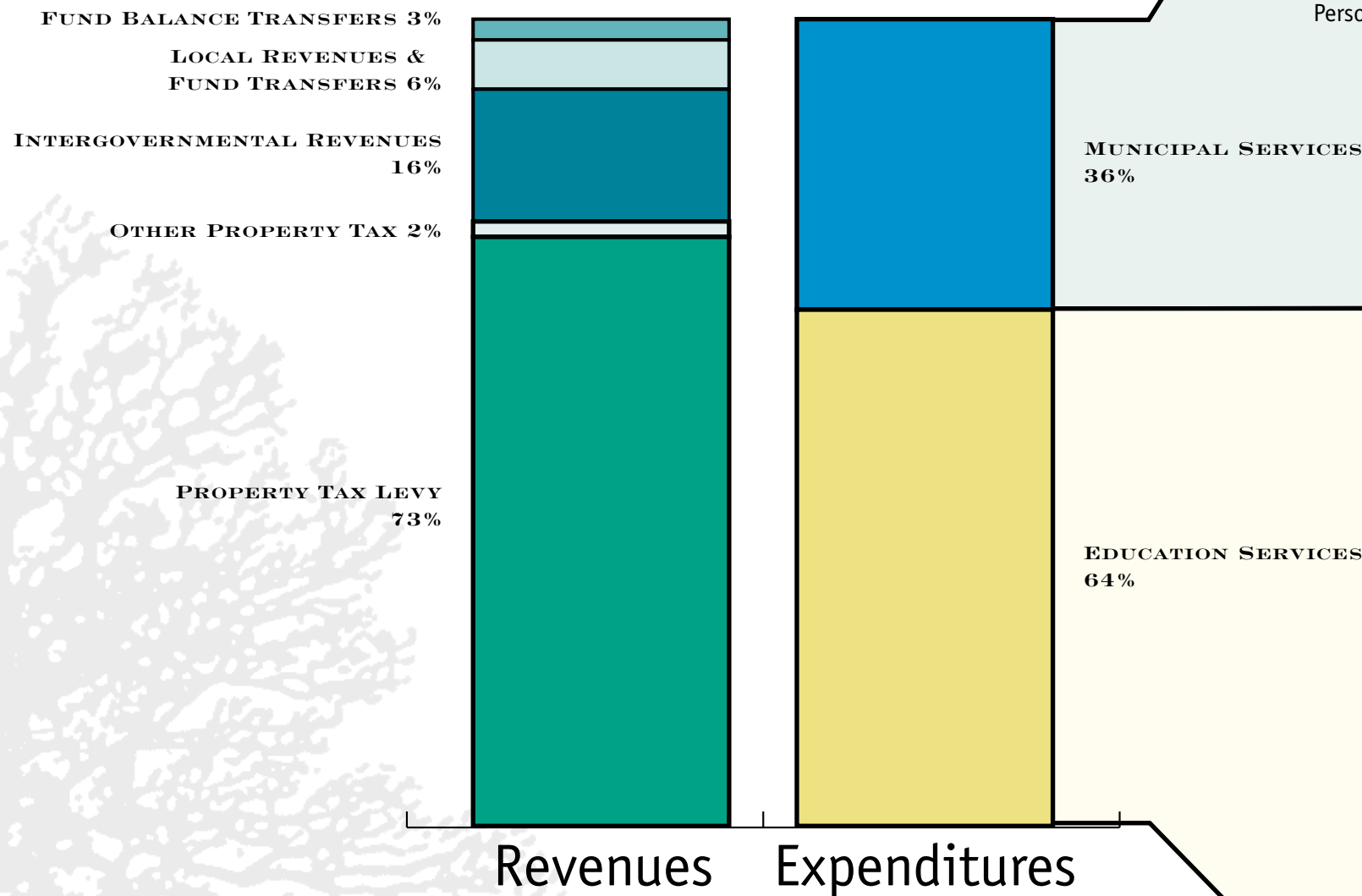
The efforts of the three boards and CPPAC to hold down costs are the result of lengthy and hard work over the past year. They recognize the constrictions of the present economy and the penalty the town is paying for growth. The boards' budgets have been sharply cut in the process.

2003-2004 BUDGET

Budget Hearing in the high school auditorium April 14 at 7:30 P.M.

Budget Town Meeting in the high school auditorium April 28 at 7:30 P.M.

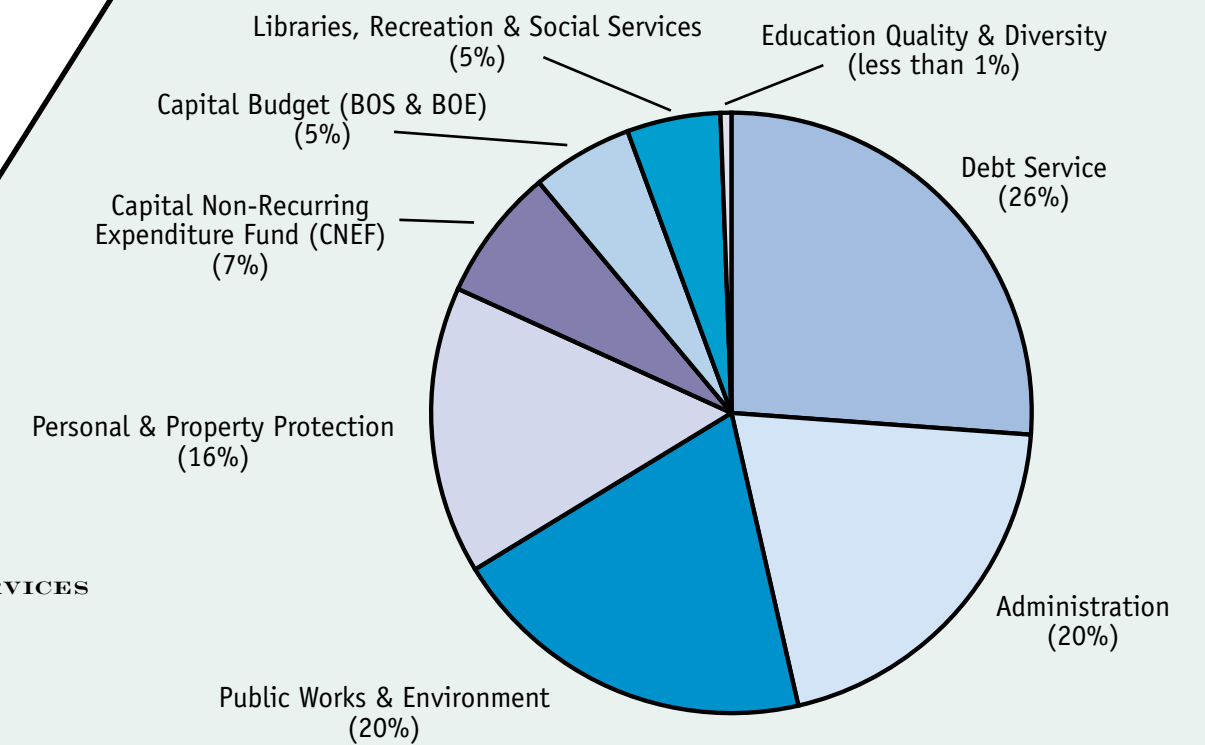
\$31,356,972



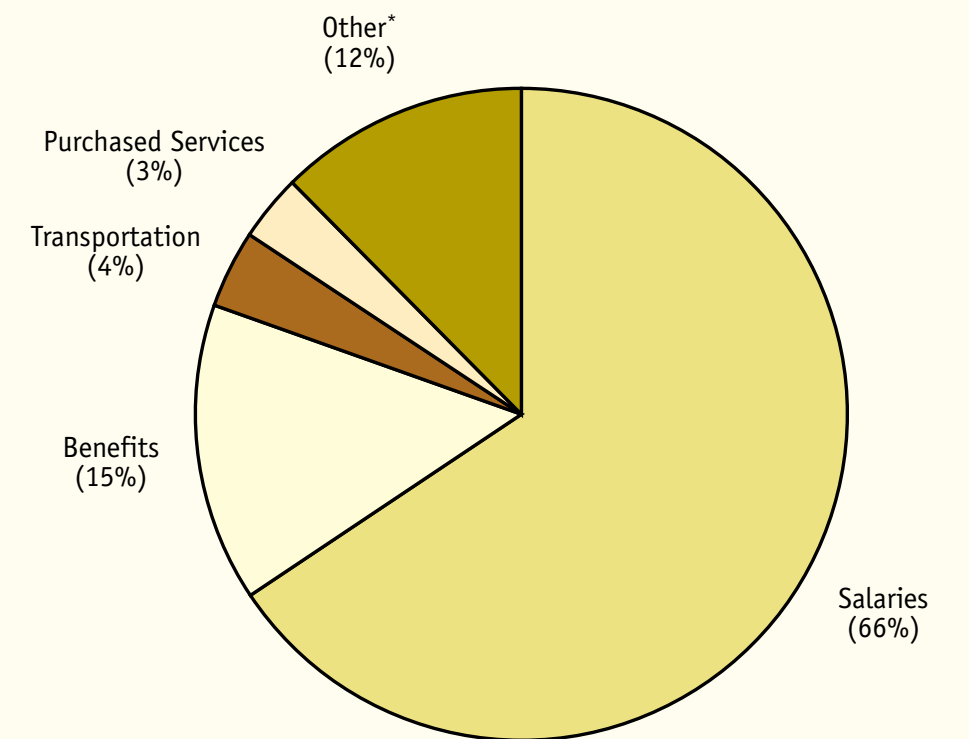
Due to rounding, percentages in the charts may not total 100%. Please consult the table at left for exact figures.

Final budget documents will be available at the Granby Town Hall after April 10.

Board of Selectmen Expenditures



Board of Education Expenditures



* Expenditures comprising less than three percent of the BOE budget have been combined into the "other" category in this chart for ease of reading. Detailed figures are in the numeric tables.

Board of Selectmen overcomes restraints

by ROSCOE PIKE

At a Three-Board Meeting in November 2002, the Board of Selectmen (BOS) presented a proposed budget based on three forecasts: 6.19 percent, 4.87 percent, and 4 percent budget increases. The last two, if adopted, would result in reduced town services. The problem was magnified when, based on the Capital Program Priorities Advisory Committee (CPPAC) model, the Board of Finance (BOF) adopted budget guidelines for the BOS and the Board of Education (BOE) of three percent and six percent, respectively. These proposed increases would result in a 5.9 percent increase in the mill rate. For comparison, the mill rate increase for 2002-2003 was 3.7 percent.

To meet the three-percent target, board members "sharpened their pencils" and spent many hours going over the revenue and expenditure portions of the budget. A total of \$318,723, delineated as "the reduction list," was identified for possible savings. Included in the reductions were three full-time staff positions—one each from the Public Works Department, Police Department, and Library Services. As Town Manager Smith said, "the loss of three employees would be devastating to operations as well as employee morale." A possible solution to the dilemma was formulated: a plan that rearranges, consolidates and provides for alternative funding of the Capital Program by bonding certain identified items and freeing up a portion of the General Fund.

The BOF, at their March 31 meeting, examined overall budget projections and approved funding for 44.4 percent of the reduction of list items, for a total of \$141,700. This allows restoration of the three jobs. The amount will be added to the operations total. The remaining items, eventually to be bonded, are in the Small Capital budget and will be dealt with later. In effect, this reduces the Capital Budget by approximately \$316,000. Once the numbers are finalized, the BOS will have a five percent increase in their budget—approximately \$160,000 less than the originally proposed budget—meeting the 5.9 percent CPPAC target.

It appears the "sharp pencils" worked for the BOS budget.

Education budget grows

by LYNN GUELZOW

In March, the Board of Education (BOE) finalized its budget for 2003-2004. The budget has grown substantially over the past three years as the BOE confronted a rapidly expanding student body, higher salaries for administrators and teachers and costlier health benefit packages. The BOE asked the Board of Finance (BOF) for a total appropriation of just over \$20.5 million.

The BOE's budget breaks down into three parts—the operating budget, the educational capital improvement fund (the "small cap fund"), and the Project Choice grant.

At \$20 million, the operating budget is the largest portion of the BOE budget. The operating

budget pays the salaries for administrators, teachers, and support staff. The next largest component is the employees' benefit package. Salary and benefits make up about 80 percent of the operating budget. The increase in these two items will be about \$900,000.

The BOE justifies its decision to increase salaries by pointing to neighboring towns. Granby's educational salaries lag behind other Farmington Valley towns. If Granby's pay is not more competitive with school districts in Hartford County and the Farmington Valley, the BOE fears difficulty in recruiting and retaining good teachers and other staff. Even with the increases, the BOE believes Granby will be at the median, not near the top.

See Education on page 4

CPPAC's computer model balances income, expense

Continued from Page 1

mediate schools housing the third through sixth grades, open-space land purchases, park and sewer expansions, and the repair of roads and bridges. The middle school will be reduced to the seventh and eighth grades, and expand in two phases of construction.

School expansions are based on a professionally calculated enrollment projection that anticipates 38 percent growth. Today, there are 2,032 children in the schools; by 2010 that figure is projected to reach 2,806. The expansions will bring Wells Road and Kelly Lane schools to 20 classrooms, plus Unified Arts rooms and new core facilities. Kearns School expands to 25 classrooms, plus early childhood services and core facilities. All the schools have enough sur-

rounding land to accommodate expansion.

State reimbursement for school building projects is 46 percent. However, reimbursement on the four projects submitted in June of 2002 may drop to 35 percent if not approved by June of 2003. BOE chairman Dan Wolfe says the state is concentrating on magnet schools this year, anticipating that money will be freed up in coming years for local school projects already in the planning stages.

In the final analysis, CPPAC recommendations reflect that the model is conservative with respect to revenues and should be reviewed in this context. The next two to three fiscal years are not impacted by new projects, as the model assumes delayed principal payments until fiscal year

2006. The next fiscal years are primarily impacted by four items: The operating budgets—a one percent increase in the BOE operating budget increases the mill rate by one percent; a three percent increase in the BOS operating budget increases the mill rate by one percent. Existing debt on projects already completed, but not paid for, amounts to \$3 million in fiscal 2003, and declines thereafter. Reserves must be utilized carefully to avoid jeopardizing this emergency fund or impacting the town's credit rating. The model assumes a weak growth in revenues.

The BOF said additional revenues will be used to buffer the tax increase, protect reserves, and provide more for operations where justified.

BOF to finalize budget at April 15 meeting

Continued from Page 1

selectmen, by deferring and bonding several items in their Small Capital multi-year budget, can reduce the feed into "small-cap," utilize anticipated Debt Service designated for municipal use, and add back three municipal positions. Restoration of these positions puts the municipal increase at five percent. Combined as the FY 04 budget, these proposals drive a 5.9 percent increase in taxes.

Why the request for approval of such an increase? What factors are causing it? Where do we go from here? All are valid questions with complex answers. First, some background: since 1990, Granby has seen significant stability in tax increases (five-year average ± 3.25 percent, ten-year ± 3 percent). We have dealt with population growth, increased school enrollment, and the need to modernize, expand, and in some cases build new physical plants. By planning and choosing well, Granby has been fortunate to do this so reasonably. There has been a considered fiscal discipline in growing the operating budgets—not everything the administrations wanted to do got done. It can be argued that prior to 1990, a great deal was voted down by the public. Most of the successes in the 1990s are owed to the lessons learned in the

'70s and '80s, as well as a track record honoring previous Statements of Commitment.

A number of factors drove limiting tax increases to 5.9 percent. The current environment is far less stable than it was a couple of years ago. In the past two years, towns and businesses have seen basic insurance almost double in price. The Enron fiasco led CRRRA to increase trash disposal fees by a significant percentage. These factors all led to a significant increase in the cost of doing business.

Salaries and benefits are over 75 percent of the operating budget—as they go, so goes the budget. In the 1990s, the long recession kept wage increases modest for the private and public sectors. Beginning in 2000, increases already seen in the private sector showed up in the public sector. The key to keeping upcoming budgets in line is keeping salary negotiations in the three-percent range and continually increasing premium sharing into the 20-percent range, and reducing benefit levels. These items will *make or break* upcoming budgets.

The entire revenue picture for FY 04 is also a significant factor affecting the mill rate request. Except for Grand List growth of over three percent, all other revenue categories—state aid and

local—are down. Investment earnings are down from \$400,000 to \$135,000 due to low interest rates. Also, the proposed use of reserves is reduced—from the General Fund and the Capital Set-Aside account. While the BOF significantly increased use of the General Fund in the current year's budgets, that use must be stepped down so that the fund doesn't dip below a reasonable level for operating and bonding criteria. The use of Set Aside money is stepped down as the current year's peak in Debt Service is passed.

The FY 04 proposed budget doesn't please any of the Boards; it reduces programs, yet carries a significant tax increase. In that way, it's a fair compromise between those who want more, and those who prefer to spend less. It's a delicate balance; any more and it would represent "business as usual" while any less would impact educational and municipal services. Given the realities of mandates, collective bargaining and arbitration, the cost trends for salaries and benefits, and unstable cost factors, this is the best the boards could do. The boards hope that the track record of commitment and building value for your tax dollar will be weighed and considered as you make your decision.

Budget process not perfect, but more forward-looking than most towns

by WILLIAM F. SMITH JR.
Town Manager

One cannot honestly discuss budget outside of its process. Town budgeting is a difficult, complex and burdensome process. Its fundamentals are driven by state law, local law, and local custom. Granby's budget process is guided by all the above. In Granby, all town services blend into a plan that attempts to meet both legal requirements and quality services.

The local custom in Granby, however, takes a much broader direction. While most other towns' budgets are on a year-to-year basis, Granby imposes upon itself a series of "prebudget activity measures." These measures force town officials to think and plan ahead. Prebudgeting involves preparing a so-called "Plus One Budget." It is next year's budget. This gives a heads up on the next year's contract requirements. In addition, a five-year operations plan is prepared.

This plan looks into growth patterns and direction. A ten-year forecast for capital programming is also produced and updated annually. This information is presented to the BOF. They, in turn, establish budget guidelines using an updated needs analysis and the influences of past and future activity.

This process is not perfect, none are. Predictions of interest rates, growth and inflation on different marked trends can shift dramatically in a very short time.

The Granby Drummer

A volunteer, non-profit publication established in 1970.

The Granby Drummer is published monthly except January and August by Citizens for a Better Granby at 11 North Granby Road, Granby, CT 06035. It's delivered free of charge to all Granby households and businesses. Out-of-town subscriptions are \$15 per year in the continental United States. Periodicals postage paid at Granby, CT, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE GRANBY DRUMMER,

P.O. Box 165, Granby, CT 06035-0165.
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BUDGET SPECIAL EDITION

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Education budget grows

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Transportation costs are expected to rise next year. Two new bus routes will need to be added due to the increase in students and transporting some students to the Oliver Wolcott Technical School in Torrington. These costs will increase nearly \$100,000 next year, to just under \$800,000. The operating budget doesn't reflect the purchase of additional buses—this expense falls under the Small Cap Fund (see below)—only the cost of maintaining and operating the existing fleet of buses.

The operating budget also pays for instructional materials (textbooks and workbooks) utilities, and school maintenance, costs which are expected to increase next year. Textbooks and training to expand and continue the implementation of Everyday Math and the Integrated Math Program at the high school will cost about \$28,000. Special education costs that increased in prior years, are not expected to change significantly next year.

The second portion of the budget, the Small Cap Fund, pays for the purchase of buses, furniture, equipment, technology, building maintenance and improvement projects. Next year, three new buses will be purchased—two for new runs and one to replace an old bus. The fleet will have 23 large buses and one small, handicapped accessible bus. Other small cap purchases include computer workstations at the high school, a new computer lab at Wells Road School, updating other computer workstations, a new telephone system at Kelly

Lane School, laser printers at each of the schools, and audio/video equipment. At Kelly Lane, the roof will be repaired and the playground base extended. The BOE requested about \$385,000 for the Small Cap Fund for next year.

The Project Choice Grant is separately appropriated from the BOF. The State of Connecticut pays Granby \$2,000 for each Hartford student that attends Granby schools. Next year, 33 Hartford students will be accepted through this project. The state pays the Project Choice Grant directly to the town and the schools must request that money be transferred from the town's accounts to the school's accounts. The \$66,000 in grant money provides services to the Hartford students and pays tuition for a small number of Granby students that choose to attend magnet schools—the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts and the Greater Hartford Academy of Math and Science.

Among BOE cuts are the gifted and talented program at the intermediate school level, the middle school remedial math workshop, stipends to teacher leaders, the mail courier service, the elementary component of the school-to-career program and fewer teacher assistants. Parents will pay \$50 for each student in summer school. Only a portion of the gifted and talented program will remain at the middle school. Teachers that previously taught gifted and talented education move to regular classrooms to help keep class sizes down.

This makes the budget planning process much more difficult.

The town side of the budget, as approved by the BOS and recommended to the public by the BOF for the next fiscal year maintains services. The original guideline could not be met without serious staff reductions. A plan to bond several capital projects versus paying cash for them or deferring them seems to make sense. This alternative will enable the town to restore staffing in the police, public works

and libraries. It will also complete various capital projects, which are already several years behind schedule. Perhaps just as importantly, the proposed bond measures do not change the town's capital planning process or the proposed mill rate increases.

Even though the guideline process is not perfect, I am pleased that it works. Also, I am relieved that we are able to keep our staff and provide most of the existing services for residents.