

## Cohasset Board of Selectmen

*The mission of the Board of Selectmen is to protect, maintain, and enhance our dynamic community, historical heritage, and coastal environment by providing thoughtful leadership and fostering citizen engagement.*

### Budget Message for FY 2018

The following is the Board of Selectmen's message to the Town of Cohasset establishing our budget priorities for the 2018 fiscal year (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018):

#### Background

The financial health of Cohasset is strong. The Town has consistently delivered reliable services and addressed our long-term fiscal stability through annual contributions to several stabilization funds (including an OPEB Trust fund), the development of sound reserve policies, and the achievement of a AAA Bond Rating in fiscal 2016.

The Board of Selectmen reaffirms our commitment to providing high-quality, valued services, continued infrastructure development and maintenance, and sustainable, transparent financial management.

We also reaffirm our commitment to the "One Community" initiative which seeks to find and foster resource sharing with the School district wherever possible, so as to prudently use tax payer revenues. As well, the Board remains committed to supporting a professional and valued work and volunteer force. We expect the Town Manager to provide adequate resources to this function for its proper operation.

The Cohasset Board of Selectmen hereby promulgates the following Fiscal Year 2018 budget message.

#### **1. Adhere to the Town's financial management and reserve policies.**

We seek to:

- Maintain a AAA bond rating.
- Continue annual OPEB Trust Fund contributions.
- Maintain and build stabilization and reserve fund balances to meet reserve policy objectives.

- Review and revise financial management policies, if and when needed.
- Review, maintain and monitor 5 and 10 year budget and capital maintenance forecasts.
- Actively pursue RFPs for existing contracted services.

**2. Budget for the delivery of Town-wide services equivalent to those of the preceding fiscal year within available revenue sources including the allowable tax levy.**

Cohasset taxpayers experience sustained fiscal pressure due to our narrow, mostly residential tax base and a desire to maintain independence in core services. As well, we must address liabilities previously unrecognized on the Town's balance sheet (primarily OPEB – which represents a substantial unfunded liability), while maintaining our ongoing infrastructure and capital investments.

We remain committed to seeking further efficiencies of services and aspire to find ways to efficiently and prudently deliver the best possible services so as to arrive at a point at which we are not taxing to the levy.

Accordingly, we find it necessary to maintain our levy increase at 2.5% and to maintain a unified tax rate. We will continue to review user fees for consistency, equity and value.

**3. Establish capital priorities and plan for funding.**

The Board emphasizes the importance of maintaining and improving the practice and function of a long range capital plan.

The Board recognizes and supports near-term capital priorities including:

- Creating an action plan for moving forward with 2 major building projects, Town Hall and a Public Safety facility, which, at a minimum, will include placing an article on the Town Meeting Warrant for approval and funding of the Town Hall project.
- Creating a Town-wide policy addressing the ongoing repair and maintenance of publically and privately owned ways, as well as identifying related jurisdictional issues.

#### **4. Use technology to create operational efficiencies.**

We recognize our duty to expend taxpayer funds with care and note that the competitive bidding process is an effective tool for efficient price discovery which, along with the use of modern technology, produces increased efficiency. We seek to drive technology infrastructure development to support key initiatives including efficiencies in operational automation, recordkeeping and communications with residents and staff.

Accordingly, we highlight our support for the following:

- Development of a comprehensive communications strategy to include the use of social media and digital technology.
- Organization of electronic records for more effective storage and retrieval of data and documents.
- Adoption of a comprehensive inventory management system.
- Enhancing online activity: two-way communication, operations, permitting, document sharing, and payment processing.
- Implementation of technologically-enhanced management of service and information requests.

This document constitutes the Board of Selectmen's Budget Message and FY18 fiscal priorities and should be used as a guiding budget development document for the Town Manager and his staff.

We look forward to working with Town Manager Chris Senior, employees, committees, boards and residents over the next several months to create a responsible and forward-looking budget that commits to sustaining and further developing an engaged workforce and delivering the best possible services to our residents.

END