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Prepared by: Brigitte Codling, Town Manager

Public Statement regarding the Woodsville Highway Fund:

I recognize this topic on the agenda is one that is complicated and potentially polarizing, so I have prepared a written statement so that I do not misspeak any of the facts.

A few months ago, a Woodsville Commissioner approached me requesting that my office reevaluate the Woodsville Highway funding formula and how it was applied over the past few years. Shortly thereafter, the same commissioner made requests of the Select Board Chair asking him to compel my office to do that same.

In response to those requests, myself and my staff, with help of the Town Clerk, have tediously researched how the Town funds the Woodsville Highway Department.

Woodsville Precinct was formed in 1887 via legislation and since then the law has been amended four times, the last time the law was amended was in 2009, which was when the current highway funding formula was established.

The formula as it stands today is rather complicated, but in general, it has two parts:

- The first part provides the Woodsville Precinct a sum of money equivalent to, between **23-25 percent** of the Haverhill Highway Budget. This part of the calculation is based upon a ratio of property values and a ratio of population.
- The second provides the Woodsville Precinct a sum of money equivalent to, consistently **18.84 percent** of the Highway Block Grant. This part of the calculation is based upon a ratio of population and a ratio of Class V road mileage.

After analyzing all information, it became evident that the current funding formula does not appear equitable to all resident tax payers throughout the Town of Haverhill.

- Within the boundaries of the Woodsville Precinct there are **8.306 miles** of Class V roadway to maintain. These miles are maintained by the Woodsville Highway Department.
- Within the rest of the Town of Haverhill there are another **72.380 miles** of Class V roadway to maintain. These miles are maintained by the Haverhill Highway Department.

This means that the Woodsville Precinct has essentially **10 percent** of Haverhill Class V roads to maintain. Yet, they receive, on average, **27.36 percent** of all highway monies raised.

When we compared the two department's highway budgets for 2019 the difference is stark.

- The 2019 operating budget for the Woodsville Highway Department was **\$422,950.00**; that is a rate of **\$50,592.11 per mile**.
- The 2019 operating budget for the Haverhill Highway Department was **\$699,511.00**; that is a rate of **\$9,640.45 per mile**.

At a work session held on October 21, 2019 the Select Board was updated on all information, including the historical documents from 1887 through today. The Board was also told that if the funding formula was to be modified then the law should be updated as well; because the law must support the funding formula.

To that effect my office requested that our legal team prepare draft legislation for the Select Board's consideration that would help create equity in the law. That draft legislation was provided to local officials for review last week.

The funding formula and draft language are a consideration of the Select Board tonight.

The introduction of any legislation is time sensitive; as proposed legislation must be introduced to the Senate by October 30, 2019 to be considered in 2020. The process would include legislative hearings where all parties would have an opportunity to participate in modifications to the law.

It would be advantageous, and recommended, for the Haverhill Select Board, Town Administration, and Woodsville Precinct Commissioners to begin meeting to discuss all the variables in an effort to mutually establish a new funding formula. One that is truly equitable to all residents of the entire Town of Haverhill; is relative to the miles of road each Highway Department must maintain and the effort it takes to maintain them.

I personally hope that all parties can come together to collaborate and cooperate in doing just that for all the people of Haverhill.

Respectfully,

Brigitte Codling  
Haverhill Town Manager