**Town Manager Update**

*February 27, 2023*

Much of my time over the last week has been spent assisting the budget process. But there’s really substantial news regarding the state budget:

The Governor promised to release proposed local aid numbers before releasing her proposed budget as a whole. There’s some very good news: the amount of Chapter 70 going to the Central Berkshire Regional School District is proposed to rise by almost $600,000, for example, and regional school transportation by $165,000. I’m not sure why Dalton’s share of Chapter 70 money is going down, but the total for the district is rising. Also, estimated charges are proposed to go down by about $157,000, for a net increase in receipts of $789,738. Payments for state-owned land are rising almost $11,000, to $89,884, so about 13%, and unrestricted general government aid, know as UGGA, is going up about $26,359, or 2%. Of course, the budget still has to go through each legislative chamber and the subsequent conference committee, but it’s a good place to start.

In related news, Wahconah did not award a winner for their first attempt to procure a track builder. They only received one bid, and that was over budget. They are going to rebid without a timeline, as that was a sticking point with quite a few of the potential bidders.

Some of the historical FY 2023 figures we used during the FY24 budget presentations were not accurate. We corrected those for the Finance Committee. Two of those are that the Select Board had $6,150 approved for the appraisal rather than $6,500, and Communications had a lower figure for total FY23 salaries, though the line items were all correct. The corrections have been made to the budget sheets, and I don’t see a need to revote the budgets, as the proposed FY24 figures were correct, but please let me know if your opinion differs.

Colonial Power is working on the next contract, to start in November, but I’ll need to sign off on a contract in the next couple of months. In the past, a three-year contract has worked to our advantage. We’ll know indicative pricing by April 3, when I’m next meeting with them, and definitive pricing not long after that. On a related note, Eversource is planning to install smart meters over the next few years, which will help us know our usage much better, and will help our negotiations for 2027, but not for this round.