



Town of Winchester

Richard M. Mucci, Chair
Anthea Brady, Vice Chair
Michael Bettencourt
John Fallon
Michelle Prior

Select Board
71 Mt. Vernon Street
Winchester, MA 01890
Phone: 781-721-7133
Fax: 781-756-0505
townmanager@winchester.us

April 25, 2023

Dear Town Meeting Members,

The Select Board looks forward to Winchester's annual spring Town Meeting. On May 1st, we will come before you to ask the Town to vote to amend the water and sewer rates for FY24, per Article 18 of the Spring Town Meeting warrant.

The last three years had unprecedented impacts on the Town's water use, from 2020 when many residents worked at home and limited travel, to 2021's wettest July on record in Massachusetts, to 2022 reaching extreme drought conditions. Fluctuations to Winchester's water usage impact revenues collected, increasing in dry years and decreasing in wet years. However, water usage also impacts expenditures, particularly in MWRA assessments, that are based on water usage compared to other communities and average sewer use of the last three years.

Based on these fluctuations, in 2022 (FY23) there was both increased water use due to drought – resulting in increased revenues, but also leading to an increase in the MWRA FY24 assessment of 21.2% over FY23. There is a projected deficit of \$1.1 million if no increase is made to the water and sewer rates for FY24.

The Town's consultant, The Abrahams Group, and DPW staff reviewed prior year's water and sewer and expected revenues and presented three scenarios to the Select Board for FY24-FY27 water and sewer rates, including recommending a scenario consistent with the rates reviewed and approved by the Board in 2022 and presented to Town Meeting and voted on at Spring 2022 Town Meeting.

On March 13, 2023, the Select Board voted to increase the water and sewer rates for FY24 by 6.5%. This rate is consistent to the rates proposed by the Select Board in spring 2022 that planned for 6.5% increases across FY24-FY27.

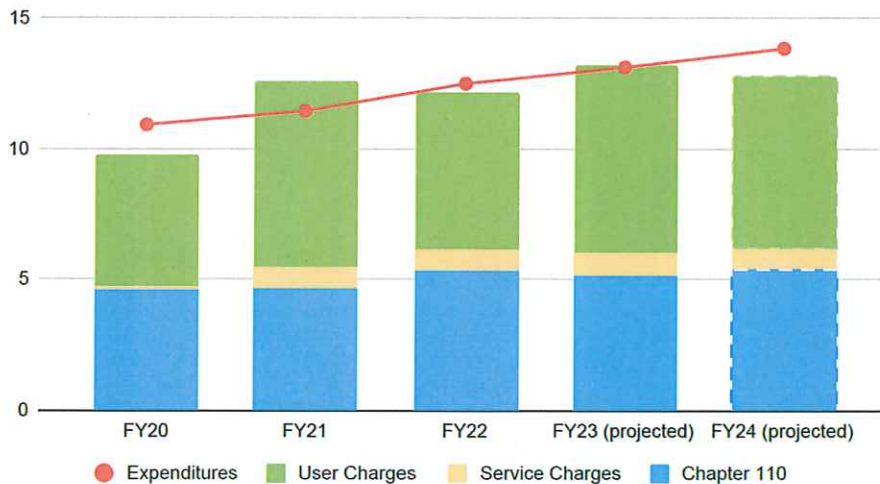
At Town Meeting, the Select Board will present this proposed rate increased as Article 18:

To see if the Town will vote to amend the water and sewer rates currently in effect in accordance with Chapter 7, Section 3 of the Code of By-Laws; or take any other action in relation thereto.

Proposed Rate Increases

User Type	Usage	Current Bill (FY23)	New Bill (FY24)	Increase
Tier 1 Residential	15	\$80.85	\$84.16	\$3.31
Average Residential	21	\$138.21	\$145.24	\$7.03
Average Commercial	37	\$602.39	\$639.60	\$37.21
Average Irrigation	74	\$803.52	\$853.80	\$50.28

Water & Sewer - Revenues and Expenditures



Article 14 – Lynch Elementary Traffic Improvement Project

In order to ensure the safety of students, staff and others travelling in the vicinity of our schools, the Select Board and School Committee adopted a policy to require a traffic safety study pursuant to school expansion projects in 2018

(<https://www.winchester.us/DocumentCenter/View/9948/School-Traffic-Safety-Study-Policy>).

The policy identifies enrollment increases as one of the primary determining factors for performing the safety study as more students, families and staff would be using the school facility on a daily basis. The enrollment at Lynch is projected to increase from 437 to 510 students, as approved by the Massachusetts State Building Authority (MSBA).

The Select Board and School Committee remain committed to this policy to implement a strategic traffic safety plan in line with the Lynch Elementary School Project. The Select Board hired Toole Engineering to study the neighborhood around the Lynch project site and held multiple public hearings to determine what investment would be necessary for the design, engineering and construction of the recommended plan. To this end, the Select Board voted to put a general override question for \$400,000 on the January 7, 2023 Town wide election ballot, contemporaneously with the Lynch debt exclusion override.

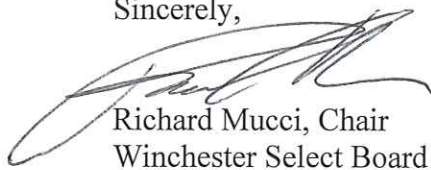
In January 2023, the voters approved a general override of \$400,000 that will be directed to the Capital Stabilization Fund. First and foremost, the override was intended to fund the borrowing authorization for the proposed traffic improvements around the Lynch School, the cost of which is preliminarily estimated at \$3 million.

Town Meeting is being asked as part of this Article 14 to authorize borrowing of \$400,000 to cover the engineering design and permitting of the proposed projects. We expect to be back before Town Meeting in either Spring or Fall 2024 to request construction funding.

The concept plans for the traffic improvement project to the Lynch Neighborhood can be found on the Town's website at <https://www.winchester.us/1001/Preliminary-Lynch-School-Traffic-Improve> and have at all times been linked on the Lynch Project website.



Sincerely,



Richard Mucci, Chair
Winchester Select Board