Dear Fellow Bradford Taxpayers:

The Board would like to make a few comments on the Bradford 2015 Town Tax Rate.

1st: Our Town Tax Base, the value of all the taxable structures, buildings, etc., shrank over the last five (5) years from $220,000,000 to $198,000,000. This approximate 10% decrease would have taken last year’s rate from $6.67/$1000 to $7.41/$1000. The average taxable value of your property dropped 10%, therefore, to raise the same amount of money, your rate would have to go up 10%. The net should be zero.

2nd: 2015 saw a number of uncontrolled issues raise up to negatively affect our financial requirements:

1. Revenues ($$) from outside agencies and Town activities were down:
   1. NHCOPS Police Support ($43,000)
   2. Car Registrations ($20,000)
   3. Income from many departments: ($12,000)
   4. Land use taxes (current use) ($25,000)
   5. Less timber tax ($18,000)

Approximate Total: ($118,000)

1. The Town approved higher expenditures versus 2014 at last year’s Annual Meeting: $63,000.
2. The Town could not use as much of our overlay as done in 2014: ($40,000)
3. This equates to a total difference of $218,500 versus 2014. Divide the amount by our new valuation of $198,000,000 = $1.11/$1000.
4. Our old rate of $7.41/$1000 ($6.67/$1000) + $1.11/$1000 = $8.52/$1000; the official rate will be approved at $8.52/$1000.

Consider the following.

* + Annual Appropriations for the last eight (8) years, including 2015 show amazing consistency! +/- $66,000 except for 2010.

The tax rate increased in 2015; we do not like it any more than you; we are all taxpayers!

That said, in last year’s Town Report Commentary we noted the need to share departmental costs with nearby towns to reduce costs and improve quality of service. In 2014 we joined with Henniker to supply more reliable ambulance service at a lower cost; both operational and capital needs will be reduced. In 2014 the department sold the old ambulance, purchased a new 1st response vehicle (for the FAST squad), doubled the size of our volunteer department and Henniker ended up charging us $4,000 less than our agreed $68,000, a 5.4% savings to budget.

We seek to duplicate this effort with other departments and other towns. In September we met with Sutton and Warner; Newbury chose to not attend, to begin seeking possible additional opportunities to save money, and improve services:

* Police
* Transfer Station
* Cemetery Care
* Building Inspectors
* Fire Departments
* Office Tasks

It is the first step in a process that some will seek to delay; we shall push forward. It is important for small towns in NH to be able to survive with excellent services provided at reasonable costs. The alternative is to reduce services provided. We are not inventing a new solution, rather building what Bradford and Henniker have demonstrated with our ambulance agreement. Other small NH Towns have joined together to do exactly what your Board seeks: Co-operate with neighboring towns, reduce costs and improve or maintain services.

Meanwhile you must understand the Town’s Departments have been doing their share to address costs!

1. The Road Crew:
   1. Paved Old Warner Road at approximately half the anticipated costs; we completed the project with the $80,000 raised and appropriated last year without waiting for a like amount this coming year. Reduced oil costs and work performed by our crew versus contractors served us well.
   2. Completed Pond Bridge for approximately $18,000 versus the Town’s share of $825,000 the State Program would have built. The bridge was opened for use in July!
   3. We hope to duplicate this effort, with State approval, for the Water Street Bridge.
   4. Bought a 60 hour Grader from Federal Surplus. $25,000 money came from the new fund created at last year’s Meeting for “special needs/requirements”. A new grader costs over $275,000.
2. Police Department:
   1. Will come in under Budget by a significant dollar figure; helps the Town offset a large overly spent Legal Appropriation due to uncontrolled costs of the PSNH v. NH Towns suit.
3. Transfer Station:
   1. Has to be a leader in the State in the category of least weight shipped to landfills per citizen. Our great crew creates a desire to recycle and reduce the pounds we ship out!
   2. It saves money. They are under budget for the year. Also will be used to offset the high legal fund costs.
4. We need to appreciate Departments/Entities that always work hard to come in at or under budget:
   1. Planning & Zoning
   2. Election & Registrations
   3. Cemeteries
   4. Parks & Recreation
   5. Fire
   6. Library
   7. Financial Administration
   8. Personnel Administration
5. We mentioned our largest financial concern was with our legal costs; which probably will need to be increased to end the PSNH case in 2016 with the budget going back to normal ranges in 2017.

We enjoy your support and comments. Bradford continues to improve our infrastructure and operations; we are blessed with superior, dedicated employees and volunteers.

The Select Board