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| **SELECTBOARD REPORT** |

As 2017 comes to a close and the Selectboard works on its proposed budget for FY18-19 we are challenged in meeting new State mandates, improving our aging infrastructure while still providing the everyday needs of our town at a tax rate our residents can afford.

Effective, July 1, 2018 all towns will be required to apply for a new State of Vermont Municipal Road General Permit (MRGP). The permit sets out minimum road construction standards for local highways and requires towns to prioritize, via a long-term work plan, drainage improvements based on the level of erosion risk to streams and rivers. Eden’s 2018 permit application fee is approximately $2,824. The highway crew has been implementing many of the forthcoming permit requirements during their normal annual maintenance operations and grant projects. The MRGP will increase the roadside ditch repair or installation costs over prior practices, however, that increased cost is anticipated to result in a more resilient/less costly drainage system for town taxpayers. Part of the forthcoming state permit is a*Road Erosion Assessment Study*to identify the town's high erosion road segments and then implement a plan to upgrade the identified segments within the next 20 years. LCPC plans to assist Eden with the Road Erosion Assessment Study in 2019. Financially addressing the concerns of the study and administratively maintaining the plan must be considered as we budget for future years.

In spite of the above and increased costs for contracted services we are presenting an overall proposed budget .67% lower than FY17-18. We have included in our budget monies for continued emergency coverage with LCSD, the fire department equipment fund and the paving and structures fund. It is our belief that maintaining these within our budget provides a more stable tax rate with no sudden increase due to an unanticipated need.

Benefactors such as the American Gift Fund and Good Neighbor Fund are sincerely appreciated by the Selectboard and the town for their generous patronage to Eden. American Gift Fund monies were used to replace the carousel at LERA, purchase rain gear for ECS kindergarten and pay for amenities at Lake Eden fishing access; Good Neighbor funds assisted with the cost of tire disposal from Green-Up Day and mowing costs at Eden Cemetery. At a resident’s suggestion, we plan to utilize the funds left by Eden Rescue, with any overage to come from the Good Neighbor Fund, to purchase and install 911 identification signs at every residence in Eden. NHP/Eden Fire Department has offered its assistance and will work with the town office, doing road by road until the town is complete. This project should start this spring.

We continue to be fortunate in receiving grants which help defray costs. Lake Champlain Basin Program grants for the prevention of invasive species at Lake Eden continues to be successful in protecting one of Eden’s most valuable assets. Awards from the State of Vermont include work in progress on both structures on Knowles Flat Rd, and emergency repairs on various roads from the heavy rain event in June. Knowles Flat Culvert #13-8 was delayed last year due to permitting and easement acquirements, but is ready to go this construction season and should be opened to traffic by early fall, 2018. The twin culvert site is in the preliminary stages with utility mapping, permitting, engineer/design activities. That site is estimated to be opened in 2020 or 2021. Completed State of Vermont funded projects include: a Better Back Roads grant for drainage work on Cooper Hill Rd; a VT Rural Fire Protection grant for installation of a dry hydrant on East Hill Rd; and a municipal planning grant to assist with updating of the Eden Town Plan. Future grant awards include a Better Back Rd grant for drainage work on Square Rd; and a Dept. of Public Safety grant to update Eden’s Hazard Mitigation Plan. We are well aware that these funding sources may not always be available, but will utilize every opportunity presented in an effort to offset the costs of these and future projects. We acknowledge and thank the local and state agencies that work with us to acquire, implement and complete these grants.

During 2017 the town worked to update or put in place plans and policies to assist with the governing of our community now and in the future. Updates to the Eden Town Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan are in progress and a policy for the collection of delinquent taxes and placement of sap lines over town highways were put into effect. Collection of delinquent taxes by the town office has not proven to cause a lot of increased work for office staff and we are working with a new delinquent tax attorney. FY16-17 brought in revenue of $8247.07. As of 12-31-17 the revenue for FY17-18 was $6260.76.

As we move into the future, we must look at what we have, what our needs are and how best to manage our equipment, buildings and other assets. The new highway truck purchased this past year has been delivered and is in operation maintaining our winter roads. A town pickup truck has been ordered. This purchase was long overdue with staff using their personal vehicles for town activities. Garage door replacement at the town garage was approved and hopefully will take place this spring. Thanks to the highway department, last summer saw the removal of the old office and storage building and site preparation for a new building purchased from Town & Country Shed’s at LERA. The town office, built in 1972 is busting at the seams. Additional vault space is in dire need and work space is at a minimum when there are several people doing research at the same time. It is also a tight squeeze whenever there are more than the Selectboard and staff at a Selectboard meeting. Aside from some cosmetic work over the years, this building has been untouched since its construction and it is time to look at expanding this space to accommodate future needs. We have solicited a design and will be studying how to proceed.

LERA saw a quiet summer, with lifeguards and swim lessons. In support of the annual appropriation for swim lessons which was questioned at Town Meeting, 2017 we compiled a report of cost vs. appropriation since 2000. This summary appears on pages 44-45. We strongly support the need for every child to know how to swim. Swim lessons have already been scheduled for 2018 during the weeks of July 23rd and July 30th. Bob & Jeanne Spaulding will return as managers.

Eden is continually challenged with dog problems and retaining a dog officer. It is the responsibility of every dog owner to abide by state law in registering their dog and adhere to the town ordinance by keeping their pets under control and on their property.

We acknowledge the importance of taking care of our dedicated and qualified employees who provide the community with the many services of our municipal government and beyond. We continue to strive to level fund as much as possible but unfortunately, do not have control over outside contracted services which the community depends upon. This, along with the increased demands of the public and state regulation compliance, continues to make our jobs more challenging. We are grateful for the many volunteers who serve on various committees. They are a unique reflection of what makes Eden the special place it is to each of us.

Eden continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in Lamoille County and working together, it is our hope to continue to be able to provide the townspeople of Eden with the services they require at a tax rate that they can afford to pay. We make every effort to do so and our actions reflect the best interest of all Eden residents.

***Ricky Morin, Chair George Sheldrick Adam Degree***