



City of Westbrook, Maine

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FY 2018-19 BUDGET MESSAGE

Thank you, I am pleased to present to the Westbrook City Council my second budget proposal as Mayor. My goal remains to provide quality public services that are responsive to the needs of our residents and businesses in Westbrook, while keeping our city affordable and livable for everyone.

The costs and demands for local public services in our community continue to grow. While the overall economy has been experiencing recovery, many of our residents, families and seniors continue to struggle financially. If we are to be responsive to the needs of our youth, families and seniors, while keeping our community affordable, we need to identify and maximize our utilization of alternative funding sources. We can no longer simply turn to the property tax payer for additional funding support for our municipal and educational programs and services. This proposed budget attempts to begin moving our community in this more sustainable direction.

The municipal portion of this budget provides for significant expansion of public transit services for our community and increases the full-time staffing of our Fire & Rescue Department by eight positions. A Transit TIF will cover the entire cost of this expansion of public transit services and a federal SAFER Grant pays for 75% of the cost of increased Fire Department staffing. I am pleased to report that both of these initiatives are being paid for through funding sources other than the general fund property tax. This budget also increases our investment in before and after school programs, student tutoring and mentoring services, nutrition programs and related youth activities, utilizing funding generated through comparable programs at the community center, and no property tax dollars.

Other initiatives that are not specifically funded in this budget proposal but remain at the top of our priority list include:

- Working with Councilor Peoples, our municipal leadership team and many community partners to make Westbrook a truly Age Friendly Community;
- Working through Westbrook Housing and Senator Susan Collins to provide expanded housing opportunities for our veterans;
- Exploring the cost and feasibility of providing real property tax relief for our seniors.

The municipal portion of the proposed budget calls for expenditures of \$28,084,591 which reflects a growth of 5%. These expenditures are offset by revenues of \$12,620,839 which have increased an impressive 10.7% or \$1,218,725 over the current year. This revenue growth brings the increase in property tax needs down to a more manageable 0.7%.

The school portion of the budget proposal, which is still under deliberation in the School's Finance Committee, calls for spending of \$38,620,404 an increase of \$2,342,463 or 6.5%. School revenue, which is primarily derived from the State of Maine's General Purpose Aid to Education, anticipates an increase in funding to Westbrook of \$767,743 or 4.4%, and yields a projected increase in the School Department's needs from property taxes of \$1,574,720 or 8.3%.

The Cumberland County 2018 budget, which was approved by the County Commissioners this past January, reflects a spending increase of \$50,037, which raises Westbrook's annual county tax bill by 4.23%.

The combined municipal, school and county budget proposal for fiscal year 2018-19 totals \$68,107,172. These expenditures are offset by \$30,794,642 in anticipated revenue and yields a total need from property taxes of \$37,453,185. This represents an increase of \$1,739,630 in the needs from local taxes and, based on a reduction of \$8,000,000 in city-wide assessed valuation, yields a projected property tax rate increase of \$1.00 per \$1000 of assessed valuation, an increase of 5.3% over the current rate.

The City Council's Finance Committee Budget Review process begins the coming Saturday, April 7th at 9:00 AM, continues on Monday, April 9th at 6:30 PM and again on Thursday, April 12th also beginning at 6:30 PM. The April 12th session will include a review of the proposed School Department Budget. If necessary, a final budget review will take place on Monday, April 23rd, immediately following a 7:00 PM City Council meeting. All Finance Committee Budget Sessions will be held here in Room 114 at Westbrook High School, are open to the public and will be telecast live on Cable TV Channel 3. Copies of the budget review schedule are available at the entrance to the chambers, at Westbrook City Hall and will be posted on the City's Web Site and CATV Channel 3 Community Bulletin Board. Public attendance and participation are strongly encouraged.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Sanphy
Mayor