



# "WARRANT LITE" VOTER GUIDE

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## Town Budget Lines

What went up? What went down? We only include lines here that have either increased or decreased and have *excluded school budgets* since these are a little too complicated to explain in just one line!

Department	↑↓	Explanation
135 Town Audits	↑	This includes the salary of our town accountant, formerly paid for through the FRCOG
141 Assessors	↑	Increase for the new contract with assessing firm RRG, Regional Resource Group
141 Assessors Wages	↓	Taken from the salary line and put into the contracted services line
145 Treasurer-Collector	↑	General increased costs
145 Treasurer-Collector Wages	↑	COLA
150 Town Administration	↑	General increased costs
150 Town Administration Wages	↑	Salary increases
151 Legal	↑	Hourly cost increases
159 Information Technology	↑	Subscription cost increases
161 Town Clerk	↑	General increased costs
161 Town Clerk Wages	↑	COLA
163 Elections	↑	General increased costs
163 Elections Wages	↑	Additional funds for police detail at elections
171 Conservation Commission	↑	Increase in dues
190 Personnel Committee	↑	Prior years have been \$1; adjustment now that there is a committee.
192 Building Maintenance	↓	\$4,000 was taken out of the mowing budget.
193 Town Insurance	↑	Reflects regular increases
210 Police	↑	General increased costs
210 Police Wages	↑	Salary increase
220 Fire	↑	General increased costs
220 Fire Wages	↑	COLA
292 Animal Control	↑	Contracted amount increase
422 Highway	↓	Reduced rental costs after the purchase of the boom lift and chipper.
422 Highway Wages	↑	Salary increases
423 Snow & Ice Wages	↑	Salary increases
433 Transfer Station	↓	Savings from pay-per-throw
433 Transfer Station Wages	↑	Salary increases
512 Board of Health	↑	General increased costs
512 Board of Health Wages	↑	COLA and additional hours for BOH clerk
541 Council on Aging	↑	The COA had had a \$1,200 line amount for a decade or more.
630 Parks & Recreation	↑	General increased costs
710-752 Debt Service, Interest, etc.	↓	Interest payments have gone down as we pay off the debt.
830 FRCOG	↓	The accounting contract amount is now in 135 Audits.
900 Employee Costs	↑	Increased costs in retirement and health benefits

**Articles** — Each of these is asking “Should the town...?”

3. **Have the legal authority to set the salaries of elected officials?** Boilerplate language recommended by town counsel (we do this every year).

**4 & 5. Transfer funds from the CGS Stabilization Fund for a new phone system and video surveillance system?** Current phone system needs an upgrade for security and reliability; the Grammar School does not currently have any kind of video monitoring system. A YES vote on both of these articles would allow the Grammar School to perform these upgrades for overall campus and student safety.

**6. Transfer funds from the CGS Stabilization Fund to reimburse the account for money spent on mini-splits?** A technicality. The town appropriated and spent this money, then received a rebate on the installed mini-splits. A YES vote would just return the funds back to the CGS Stabilization Fund.

**7. Put funds back into the CGS Stabilization Fund?** A YES vote would replenish the fund from Free Cash, totaling the amounts in 4-6.

**8. Move money to the Fire Truck Stabilization Fund in order to save up for a new pumper?** Chief Baker expects we will need a new pumper in approximately 5 years at a cost of at least \$600K (which continues to grow). If we continue saving now it will be a less painful purchase in 2028. Town has voted YES on this two (2) years in a row.

**9. Purchase a side entry/exit rubber tire compact loader for the Highway Department?** The current loader has required over \$16K of repair costs in the last 4 years. The loader is used on a near daily basis, has a 10 year life expectancy, and will be able to utilize all the current attachments already owned by the town. With a 38.4% municipal discount and a projected \$21,500 trade in value, the cost of a new loader is cheaper than that of a similar used loader and would have a warranty. The new loader would have rubber tires as opposed to tracks, which would offer more usability and lessen repair costs.

**10. Purchase a plow truck for the Highway Department?** The current main plow truck is over 120K miles and has needed nearly \$25K in repairs over the past 4 years. Purchasing a new plow truck would allow our current main plow truck to be used as both a backup plow truck and daily use truck. The new truck would ensure we have adequate equipment for winter weather.

**11. Purchase a new police cruiser for the Police Department?** The town currently owns only one aging police vehicle, which can limit the responsiveness of public safety officers, particularly when said vehicle is in the shop. Without a working vehicle, officers are not able to respond. The current vehicle would be used as a backup, and Conway is one of the only towns in the region without at least a second vehicle.

**12. Replenish the General Stabilization Fund?** A YES vote would bring the fund up to \$283,404.04—still less than the target of 5% of the total budget (\$352,616.66).

**13. Save money for a new ambulance?** Current balance of that fund is \$228,123.31.

**14. Move money from the Ambulance Receipts Fund to the Ambulance Department?** The Ambulance Receipts fund holds revenue generated by ambulance calls; this is just a technical vote to transfer that money back to the department to help cover operating expenses.

**15. Support a study of town streetlights?** A YES vote would allow the town to contract with an energy consultant to study town streetlights and make recommendations about the quantity, location, ownership and type of streetlights with the overall goal of reducing long-term energy costs to the town.

**16. Authorize the spending limits on each of the revolving funds?** This currently has to be voted annually.

**17. Transfer opioid settlement funds to a new account?** The state has changed the way they want towns to account for opioid settlement money. This is just a technical vote to move our awarded funds from a stabilization fund to a special revenue fund.

**18. Contribute money to the OPEB Trust Fund?** See glossary. Contributing annually to this fund for future town retirees is recommended by the state and also improves Conway's standing as being responsible in planning for the future.

**19. Make payments on our loan to build the Highway Garage?** When the town agreed to borrow funds for the Highway Facility it was agreed to take a certain amount annually from Free Cash to keep the debt amount relatively stable each year.

**20. Allow the Treasurer and Collector to enter into compensating balance agreements?** This is a required article which allows the Treasurer and Collector to enter into agreements with banking institutions,

which is a basic function of the position. Technically a yes vote grants three years permission to do so; in reality rather than track this every three (3) years, it is added annually to the warrant.

**21. Set aside funds for future revaluation work?** We do this every year. State law requires that all property in the town be assessed within ten percent of market value every five years, so one third of the cost of the revaluation is set aside annually.

**22. Support our local library?** This is the least amount required to allow Field Memorial Library to participate in the state CW/MARS system.

**23. Rescind a previous vote to pay for July 2023 storm damage?** A formality; we voted to borrow up to \$1.5M for road repair at a previous town meeting, but the state has since awarded us \$1.245M so the money is no longer needed. YES means the town can not take out loans up to \$1.5M without a new town meeting vote; NO means town is still technically able to take out loans up to \$1.5M.

**24. Allow the Selectboard to apply for grants?** A formality; allows the Selectboard to pursue any and all grants that don't explicitly require a town meeting vote or appropriation of town funds. YES means the town can apply for grants outside of town meeting; NO means all grant applications have to be approved by town meeting vote.

**25-26. Accept the donation via easement of certain parcels of private land?** A YES vote allows the town to accept this donation from private citizens, which will then allow the town and state to conduct necessary repair work on North Poland Bridge.

**27. Spend money from the Community Preservation Fund on pickleball courts?** A YES vote would fund the project, to be located behind the Grammar School. **Allocate Community Preservation Fund revenue to specific reserve accounts?** A YES vote would apportion revenue among the accounts specified by the Community Preservation Committee.

**28. Amend the existing revolving funds bylaw to add a Transfer Station Revolving Fund.** This fund was not included in the original revolving fund limit bylaw, so needed to be added.

**29. Amend the general bylaws to allow *appointed associate* members of town boards and committees be *non-residents* and allowed to vote?** For all practical purposes this applies only to the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, since those are the only boards that statutorily have associate members. A YES vote would allow associate members of boards and committees to vote even if they are not Town of Conway residents.

**30. Amend the zoning bylaws to set the size/composition of the Planning Board?** A YES vote would add an appointed associate member to the Planning Board—this member could, depending on the vote on 29, be a non-resident voting member.

**31. Ask the state to enact legislation that would allow us to set up a special fund for Festival of the Hills receipts?** See below.

**32. Establish the Festival of the Hills Committee as an official town committee?** The FOH currently operates as an independent 501(c)(3) apart from the town, although the Festival of the Hills is largely a town event. For various reasons the current committee would like to be an official town committee (e.g., as a town committee the event would be covered under our existing insurance policies). However, as a revenue-generating and scholarship-awarding body, for extremely complicated (and frustrating!) legal/technical/accounting purposes this *isn't actually possible without a special act of the legislature*. A YES vote on 31 would allow us to petition our representatives for this special legislation; a YES vote on 32 means that once that legislation is enacted (we're optimistic, it's just going to take time) the FOH committee can do all of the things it's traditionally done, but this time under the umbrella of the town.

#### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **BOH** - Board of Health
- **COLA** - Cost of living adjustment

- **CPA** - Community Preservation Act - a 2000 law that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing and develop outdoor recreational facilities through a surcharge of not more than 3% of the tax levy against real property
- **CGS** - Conway Grammar School
- **FCSO** - Franklin County Sheriff's Office
- **Free Cash** - funds the town 'receives back' which is certified annually in September. These funds come from what is not spent out of the previous year's budget, plus funds when revenues exceed what was predicted (among other sources)
- **FRCOG** - Franklin Regional Council of Governments - a regional service organization and the former county government, which was abolished in 1997 and re-established as a voluntary membership organization
- **MGL** - Massachusetts General Law
- **OPEB Trust Fund** - Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund - fund for town employee retirement benefits
- **Revolving fund** - a fund or account that remains available to finance a town's continuing operations without any fiscal year limitation
- **Stabilization fund** - a mechanism set up by governments to insulate budgets from large and unexpected expenditures, like capital improvements or purchases