

## Town Administrator Annual Report

July 2021- June 2022

I am pleased to submit this report for Fiscal Year 2022, my first year as Town Administrator and Chief Procurement Officer. Thank you to the dedicated employees, volunteers, and residents of the Town of Cheshire for welcoming me as your first full-time administrator.

### Financial Management Review

The Board of Selectmen engaged a team from the Department of Revenue Financial Management Resource Bureau to complete a Financial Management Review. This report was completed in September of 2022 and can be found on the town website. It is a valuable tool for helping Cheshire move down the path of modernizing local government. While the report recognizes the work over the last decade to build healthy reserves, it also addresses some of the deferred capital needs. Additionally, the report speaks to the use of Free Cash within the General Fund Budget. As the table below shows, the town has used an average of \$211,000 in Free Cash each year for the purpose of funding the General Fund Budget, representing 3.61% of the total. This is a practice the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee are looking to move away from moving forward.

#### Free Cash Used to Support the General Fund Budget, FY2013 – FY2022

Fiscal Year	General Fund Budget	Certified Free Cash (FC) Amount	FC Used to Reduce Tax Rate	Tax Rate*	% of GF Budget Supported by Free Cash
2013	5,449,515	410,368	295,000	10.62	5.41%
2014	5,155,156	246,339	172,000	11.16	3.34%
2015	5,360,363	235,630	188,000	11.94	3.51%
2016	5,304,507	266,367	170,000	12.26	3.20%
2017	5,453,729	626,834	170,000	12.39	3.12%
2018	5,950,259	416,620	170,000	13.06	2.86%
2019	5,945,018	339,776	170,000	13.10	2.86%
2020	6,227,316	790,952	140,000	13.44	2.25%
2021	6,739,397	533,756	376,000	13.37	5.58%
2022	6,618,483	656,474	260,000	12.76	3.93%
<b>Averages</b>		<b>452,312</b>	<b>211,100</b>		<b>3.61%</b>

### Personnel Policies

A Personnel Policies Committee was formed and Personnel Policies were reviewed and adopted by the Board of Selectmen. The policies are a guide for the Town of Cheshire and its employees, appointees, and volunteers. The set of policies are intended to provide a fair and equitable system of personnel administration which outline the expectations and benefits maintained by the town. Through the adoption of the policies, the Board of Selectmen moved to align all Town departments with the newly created guidelines.

## Grants

Numerous grants were awarded to the Town. With noted exceptions below, all grants were written and submitted by the Town Administrator.

### **Fire Department Grants \$20,292**

The Fire Department received two grant awards: 1) Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) - \$2,480 and 2) Communications - \$4,212. A third grant was written by Amalio Jusino and the award was received for Ballistic Equipment - \$13,600.

### **Community Compact – Best Practices Financial Management and Operation Policies \$13,500**

The Town contracted with the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center at the University of Massachusetts in Boston to develop financial policies and procedures to guide the Town in its decision-making and financial management. The policies are intended to provide local officials with the ability to demonstrate to the residents their commitment to stewardship of the Town’s assets and guide the Town on the impact of current decisions on the future in order to plan accordingly. These policies have been adopted by the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee and can be found on the Town website.

### **Community Compact – Best Practices Planning Board Bylaw Review \$15,000**

The Planning Board received funding and continues to work on a Zoning Bylaw Change which will be presented at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting.

### **Route 116 Engineering Funds \$60,000**

With a **\$200,000 allocation of funds from the State** the top section of Savoy Road (Route 116) was paved in the summer of 2022. The remaining section of Savoy Road to the Adams line will be paved during the 2023 construction season along with Henry Wood and Stafford Hill Roads. This work will be done with the **FY23 Mass Works awarded grant of \$633,000** and Chapter 90 funds.

An additional \$60,000 was allocated to the Town from the State for engineering of the Upper Section of Savoy Road. Phase 1 of this project has begun, however an additional \$200,000 is needed to complete the study and the Town will be applying for funding through various sources.

### **Municipal Small Bridge Grant \$100,000**

MassDOT awarded the Town a grant in the amount of \$100,000 and Gill Engineering has been contracted by the state to do the engineering and design work on a bridge on West Mountain Road. Once the engineering work is complete, we will apply for round 2 for construction.

### **Municipal Vulnerability (MVP) and Hazardous Mitigation (HMP) Plans \$32,000**

The Core Team for the Town includes: Tom Francesconi, Fire Chief; Michael Alibozek, Police Chief; Corey Swistak, Highway/Assistant and EMD; Liseann Karandisecky, Hoosac Lake District; Jennifer Morse, Town Administrator; and the late William Lewis, Harbormaster. Together, the team worked diligently with Courteney Morehouse of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to develop the Municipal Vulnerability and Hazardous Mitigation Plans, both plan for the impacts of climate change and will allow the Town to access state funds to mitigate its effects. After months of meetings and public forums we hope to have approved plans by the Spring of 2023.

**Community Compact – IT Grant****\$40,561**

Through the Community Compact IT Grant, the Town was able to upgrade its IT networking and security throughout all Town systems. The IT infrastructure improvements have enabled the Town to become compliant with insurance requirements and protect Town assets. The Town has contracted with Northeast IT to provide monthly services and continues to build upon the program.

**Green Communities****\$134,000**

The Green Communities Grant was extended from Fiscal Year 2021. The Police Station and Town Hall Annex were weatherized utilizing the funds. A new heat pump for the Police Station will be installed in the spring of 2023.

**De-Weeding Funds****\$50,000**

The Town received an allocation of \$50,000 to work with the Hoosac Lake District on De-Weeding services and studies at Hoosac Lake. The Prudential Committee and the Board of Selectmen entered a three-year contract with Solitude Lake Management.

**Personnel Changes**

Council on Aging: Brenda Caufield was hired by the Board of Selectmen to be the Council on Aging Director. Brenda previously served as Interim Director and as the Meals Coordinator. Dawn Krutiak was appointed as the Meals Coordinator. I encourage residents to stop by the Community Center – Center for Active Living, to have a meal and participate in events and crafts. Brenda, Dawn, and the amazing volunteers are doing wonderful things for the seniors in Cheshire.

Police Department: Chief Timothy Garner retired after nearly forty years of service on the Police Department. He continues to serve the Town as a Special Police Officer and volunteer extraordinaire. A Police Chief hiring committee worked with the Board of Selectmen and Chief Michael Alibozek was hired as Police Chief effective July 1, 2022.

Accounting: Hilltown Accounting Services replaced the retired former accountant in November 2021 and a new chart of accounts was created for the Town. Working with Hilltown Accounting Services and their staff has streamlined many processes and improved the efficiency of our accounting procedures.