School Tax Formula Change May Hit Roxbury Hard
Residents should attend meeting in Swanzey on February 3

Taxpayers in Roxbury should be alarmed by a move to change how local school taxes are figured in the Monadnock School District. As has been reported in The Keene Sentinel, some residents of Troy want to change the formula by which the district’s multi million-dollar operating budget is funded by the six towns in the district. Those towns are Fitzwilliam, Gilsum, Richmond, Roxbury, Swanzey and Troy.

If the change is approved by district voters, local school taxes in Roxbury will soar; local school taxes would also go up in Fitzwilliam, Richmond and Gilsum; taxes would inch down a small amount in Swanzey and would fall sharply in Troy.

How all this would happen is complicated – tax policy usually is – so it helps to know how local school taxes in regional school districts such as Monadnock are computed. In most cases, local school taxes are based on a combination of: (a) how many students an individual town sends to school and (b) the value of property in individual towns.

The current system in Monadnock is similar in an important way to system used in most of the other regional or cooperative school districts in New Hampshire – in these districts the major factor is how many students each town sends to school.

In the Monadnock district, for example, local school taxes are based 75 percent on each town’s student enrollment and 25 percent on property values in each town.

The change that’s being proposed by residents of Troy would base local school taxes 50 percent on enrollment and 50 percent on property values. The impact of such a change would be big: most property owners in Roxbury would see tax increases in the many hundreds and even thousands of dollars (see chart on page 6).

The Monadnock School Board isn’t supporting the proposed change. Nick Mosher, Roxbury’s representative to

(Continued on page 6)

Celebrating the Natural Wonders of Roxbury

Have you seen any bobcats in Roxbury lately? Come upon any new trails? Know anything about the soils in town?

The Roxbury Conservation Commission has begun work on a project that will describe the various natural features of our town – fauna, flora and geology included. The goal is to develop a natural resources inventory that’s designed to help all residents get a complete feel for the natural settings of their special community.

The photographs that accompany this article give you a sense of the wide variety of wildlife in Roxbury. There are quite a few varieties of vegetation, wetlands and land forms in town, too. Ultimately, images and descriptions of those natural features will be presented in a print and

(Continued on page 4)
Babbidge Dam Work Begins
State has concerns about safety of existing dam

A few years ago the City of Keene received word from state officials that it would have to make some safety-related changes to the two dams in Roxbury that are basic parts of its water supply. The dams hold back the 150-acre Woodward Pond and the 30-acre Babbidge reservoir. The two bodies of water are connected by Roaring Brook, which gets its start at Woodward Pond. Recent changes in the intensity and frequency of rain storms have apparently raised concerns about the dams’ not being able to handle increased flows of water to the point of overflowing — and worse. Such events could pose real threats to homes downstream of the dams and could also severely impact Keene, which relies on the reservoirs for the majority of its water.

Babbidge Dam (which was named after Paul Babidge, the long-serving superintendent of Keene’s Department of Water, Sewer and Drains) was built in 1931. Work on upgrading the dam was originally scheduled for 2017, but that project was shifted to this year. Work on the Woodward Pond dam will be undertaken at a later time.

The Babbidge project became a subject of considerable local interest after city officials initially described a reworking of the intersection of Middletown Road and the Dakin Road to accommodate the coming and going of hundreds of trucks. That reworking was later reduced in size and scope, and last November Donald Lussier, Keene’s city engineer, met with interested Roxbury citizens to describe that aspect of the project. He explained that only one mature tree will be taken down, along with a few very small saplings. He said that those clearings would provide adequate visibility for trucks exiting The Dakin Road and coming onto Middletown Road. Further, he said that The Dakin Road, which leads directly to the reservoir, will not be widened or built up or otherwise altered to handle truck traffic. “We don’t need a super highway in there,” he said. Lussier said that work on the dam, which principally includes the provision of a spillway at the middle of the structure, will begin in the spring and proceed into September.

Regarding truck traffic on Middletown Road, that will occur in spurts, he said, as different stages of the project will come into play. During different stages of the project the dam might be vulnerable to damage from severe weather. On Feb. 6 the city will hold a meeting with representatives of various agencies, including representatives of Roxbury, to discuss such matters as communications plans and evacuation procedures in the event of emergencies.

The Roxbury Report

is an annual publication created by the citizens of Roxbury, NH, for the Roxbury community.

Submit news, stories, story ideas, and photos to: editor@roxburyreport.net.

Don’t miss the
POTLUCK SUPPER
immediately before the Town Meeting
TUESDAY, MARCH 13 at 5 PM
Bring a plate, utensils and a dish to share.
The selectmen’s office was busy in 2017 with subjects large and small:

A longstanding requirement that property owners annually report household populations of humans and pets and other information was formally suspended. Fewer and fewer communities around the state are issuing what’s known as the PA-28 property inventory form for residents to fill out and return, and the selectmen saw no reason to continue the practice.

***
On other matters, the selectmen welcomed an offer from the Southwest Region Planning Commission to conduct a survey of all culverts that carry water beneath town roads. The inventory, which was supplied to the town without cost, identified a startlingly many 75 such pipes running under public roads. The Commission is conducting such surveys partly in response to concerns that increasingly heavy rainstorms are overwhelming under-size and aging culverts generally. (Recognizing concerns about storm water drainage, Road Agent Ken Buffum has gradually been replacing culverts – and always installing pipes that are larger than the originals).

***
A number of improvements and important upgrades to town computer equipment were handled by Selectman Tim O’Brien in association with Town Clerk and Tax Collector Robin Buffum and also Police Chief Rob O’Connor. Some of the upgrades were financed by a Homeland Security grant. The work also involved considerable time and software expertise related to state government reporting requirements for towns.

***
The selectmen received a draft of a proposed franchise agreement from Time Warner Cable, now known locally as Charter Communications. The agreement is up for renewal. The selectmen initiated discussions regarding possible expansion of cable services to unserved addresses.

***
The selectmen received a Hazard Mitigation Plan Update for 2017. The plan provides guidance on how to deal with emergencies in town.

***
Additionally, the selectmen met with representatives of the city of Keene to discuss aspects of the city’s planned redesign of the dam that holds back Babbidge Reservoir. The discussions touched on watershed protection regulations that govern activity on town-owned roads that run through Keene-owned lands.

***
The selectmen and Police Chief O’Connor worked with Keene officials regarding patrolling of city-owned reservoir watershed lands in Roxbury by the Roxbury police department. The patrolling will generally be limited spring, summer, and fall months.

***
In anticipation of the 2018 annual Town Meeting, the selectmen began studying changes regarding property tax relief for military veterans.

Your Selectmen:
Gerry Davis
Tim O’Brien
Jim Rousmaniere

IMPORTANT: BE THERE TO VOTE!

ROXBURY TOWN MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 13
POTLUCK SUPPER STARTS AT 5 PM
VOTING FROM 6 PM—8:30 PM
TOWN MEETING STARTS AT 7 PM
Individual towns compile such inventories for different reasons. For example, some conservation commissions aim to identify properties that town voters might consider acquiring for public conservation purposes down the line. There’s no such ambition here. Rather, the Roxbury Conservation Commission simply wants to paint a picture of the town’s natural bounty, the intended effect of which would help make everyone more aware of their surroundings.

This is the first undertaking of the conservation commission, the formation of which is due largely to the efforts of Amy Bodwell. The commission’s chairman is Michelle Drogue. She set out to compile a natural resources inventory in part because having such a document is a requirement of all conservation commissions in New Hampshire. She explained, “From this inventory we will know where our different naturally occurring resources are located, what condition they are in and why they are important to maintaining a healthy ecosystem.”
Other members of the commission are Alice Funk, Dream Tardiff and Leith Robidoux; Jim Rousmaniere represents the selectmen on the commission. In preparation for the project, members of the conservation commission met with officials in other towns and also the Southwest Region Planning Commission to get a sense of what’s involved in putting together such a study. They’ve also explored possible sources of outside funding in the event that it seems appropriate to hire professionals for one or another aspect of the work.

Fortunately, some inventory-associated work has already been conducted by other parties. The city of Keene, for example, is now completing an extensive watershed land-use management survey of its considerable holdings in Roxbury that are associated with Keene’s water supply. Also, state highway officials have recently carried out studies of the natural settings alongside Route 9 in connection with their upcoming road-improvement work there. The results of both these studies can help inform the drafting of Roxbury’s natural resources inventory.
School Tax Formula, continued

(Continued from page 1)

the school board, isn’t supporting the proposed change. Nor are Roxbury’s selectmen. Such a change would worsen a situation that’s already unequal and unfair. Under the formula that’s in use today, Roxbury taxpayers already pay more anyone else in the district to send students to school. For example, under the current cost-sharing formula, Roxbury effectively pays $16,200 for each student that it sends to Monadnock Schools; Troy pays $7,600 for each student that it enrolls in those same schools. If the proposed formula revision were put in force, Roxbury would pay $20,400 for each of its students and Troy would pay $5,600 for each of its students. These comparisons are arrived at by dividing the number of students that each town sends to Monadnock schools into the amount that each town pays in local school taxes. A full comparison of school taxes in the district appears in a chart on page 8 of this publication.

Question: What’s a Roxbury taxpayer to do?
Answer: Attend the school district deliberative session on February 3, and vote against the proposed formula as it is now written. The deliberative session is scheduled from 10 a.m.-noon at the high school auditorium in Swanzey Center.

Roxbury NH Scholarship Fund Form

Each year the citizens of Roxbury award financial recognition to graduating seniors at Monadnock High School. Please use this form if you would like to contribute for next year.

Name: _______________________________  Enclosed is my donation of $10.00
Address: _______________________________  Enclosed is my spouse’s donation of: $10.00
Town, State, Zip: _____________________________  Enclosed is an additional donation of: $_____

Total enclosed: $_____

Please make checks payable to: Roxbury Scholarship Fund.
And mail to: Roxbury Scholarship Fund, c/o Carol White, 8 Middletown Rd, Roxbury, NH 03431

Our only hope of keeping our local school taxes from rising sharply is if residents show up to these meetings.

Historically Roxbury taxpayers have been willing accept some disparities in local school taxes in the Monadnock district. Roxbury Selectman, Jim Rousmaniere was quoted in a recent Keene Sentinel article as saying: “We understand that in any kind of regional setup involving a number of different towns, some towns will pay more than other towns per student. We accept that fact.” But, he added, “there ought to be limits to how wide that disparity should be.”
**Town Hall is Up to Snuff**

Many exciting, new improvements last year

In recent years Roxbury’s Town Hall at 3 Middletown Road has undergone some pretty big changes, the most visible among them being the addition of an historic steeple atop the building. The steeple had previously graced the top of a since-demolished meeting house at the end of Middletown Road that had been fondly known as “God’s Barn.”

There have been quite a few changes inside the building as well, thanks to (a) the initiative, skills and persistence of Chip Drogue, previously a selectman, now the town’s emergency management director, (b) Roxbury taxpayers and (c) the New Hampshire Department of Homeland Security, which issued almost $16,000 in grant funding. An important result of many of these interior changes has been the formal designation of our town hall as our emergency operation center that the Red Cross will soon outfit with cots, bedding and emergency rations.

The installation of a well-equipped first aid station has made an important difference; Drogue remarked, “We didn’t even have band-aids before!”

Here’s a listing of changes:

- A well-appointed and fully functioning kitchen on the first level.
- The creation of storage for emergency supplies.
- The addition of a second handicap bathroom on the main level.
- The installation of air conditioning.
- Storage on the main floor that holds tables and chairs
- The installation of a large flat-screen monitor that has already been put to use during various public presentations, including budget discussions.
- The addition and upgrading of communications equipment for emergency services.
- Several new computers/software for our Police Dept.
- A bulletin board and display racks for local notices.

More changes may be coming. Space has been set aside for additional items down the line, including the possibility of a shower that would be of use in case of emergency. The bottom line is that our Town Hall has been transformed for the better.

---

**School Board Representative Report**

The district received a five year grant worth more than $1 million to help fund ACES, the before and after school program in our district. ACES provides a safe environment for children before and after school during the hours which many parents are still working. The state legislature also passed additional funding for kindergarten based on revenue from the lottery game KENO. We should see the effects of this next year.

All of the district infrastructure received a thorough engineering assessment, and reports on the buildings have been provided to the public. This information will help to inform everyone about the physical environment in which our children spend their day, and steer decision making from facilities administration to the voting booth.

Safety in our schools has continued to improve this year with fewer recordable incidents. Our School Safety Officer has played a major role in de-escalating situations before they get out of hand.

This year also saw complete compliance with all standards for Special Education led by our new Director of Student Services. I continue to push for greater community feedback on the academic proficiency of our children, which always seems to get sidelined in the face of finance and politics.

On Saturday, February 3, the school district deliberative session will be held at the Monadnock Regional High School. The session, during which the warrant will be discussed, begins at 8 a.m. The language for a petitioned warrant article will be voted on that seeks to change how each town is assessed. As the current language of that warrant article stands, Roxbury property tax payers could face a significant increase in taxes if the article goes to vote and is passed. **ALL Roxbury residents are encouraged to attend the deliberative session to make their voices heard and vote.**

Nicholas Moser,
Town of Roxbury Representative to the SAU 93 School Board
The Monadnock School District Cost Sharing Formula

There are 29 regional or cooperative school districts in New Hampshire that raise funds in a variety of ways. Most of them follow a method that is based mainly on how many students a town sends to school — as is our current method in the Monadnock School District — rather than on property values.

Our current formula, which voters approved in 2013, is based 75% on how many students a particular town sends to school, and 25% on the property valuation in each town.

A small group of Monadnock District residents wants to change this formula to one that would be based 50% on how many students are in a town, and 50% on the property valuation. This proposed formula change would raise taxes on residents of four district towns: Fitzwilliam, Gilsum, Richmond, and Roxbury. It would negligibly lower taxes in Swanzey — and give a very large tax break to the residents of Troy.

The result of this proposal would clearly be uneven and unfair.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWN</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EXISTING 2017 STUDENTS</th>
<th>50-50 FORMULA</th>
<th>75-25 FORMULA</th>
<th>TOTAL PAYMENT / COST PER STUDENT</th>
<th>CHANGE IN PAYMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fitzwilliam</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>$3,944,060</td>
<td>$4,650,518</td>
<td>($706,458) (+17.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilsum</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>$743,928</td>
<td>$820,940</td>
<td>(+$77,012) (+10.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>$1,387,191</td>
<td>$1,420,108</td>
<td>(+$32,917) (+2.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxbury</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$324,268</td>
<td>$409,749</td>
<td>(+$85,121) (+26%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swanzey</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>$9,187,801</td>
<td>$8,855,813</td>
<td>($331,988) (-3.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troy</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>$2,207,299</td>
<td>$1,637,420</td>
<td>($569,879) (-25.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the proposed formula survives the school district deliberative session Feb. 3, it will likely be voted on during town meeting season in March, 2018.

Here's the impact on the district's $17.8 million operating budget:

- Fitzwilliam: Resident taxes would increase by $706,458 (+17.9%)
- Gilsum: Resident taxes would increase by $77,012 (+10.4%)
- Richmond: Resident taxes would increase by $32,917 (+2.4%)
- Roxbury: Resident taxes would increase by $85,121 (+26%)
- Swanzey: Resident taxes would decrease by $331,988 (-3.6%)
- Troy: Resident taxes would decrease by $569,879 (-25.8%)

The result of this proposal would clearly be uneven and unfair.