



# 2023-2024 Citizens' Guide to the Board of Selectmen Proposed Budget



Volume 1 ★ Issue 2 ★ April 12, 2023

Dear Preston Residents:

We continue to make great strides in many areas of our Town operations. We will continue to be forward-thinking in our operations, data-driven decision-making, and budgeting as our budget is a reflection of our values. The overall arching theme in forward-thinking is the ability to gain momentum by creating actionable steps and goals with effective execution, based on strategic planning including forecasting and communicating.

Our proposed budget is impacted by external influences. The environment we are operating in is very uncertain with high inflation of 6.5% in December 2022, slightly slowing for the sixth straight month which is a positive sign, following 7.1% in November from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Although certain industries and sectors are higher and lower than these averages, these highs and lows are reflected in the various budget categories. There continue to be economic pressures concerning supply chain and demand issues, rising interest rates, and the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, just to name a few.

There is good news, the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency will end on May 11, 2023, but it does remain a public health priority and there will still be guidance and recommendations. Unemployment remains low at about 3.5% on average over the past year, down from the peak of 14.7% in April 2020 (US. Bureau of Labor Statistics).

The Board of Selectmen held several budget meetings to prudently review requests. We believe our proposed budget is a reflection of our values and will continue to position us to be prepared, to be poised for growth, and to make our community the best it can be.

Key budget drivers are:

- ◇ Salaries and employee benefits
- ◇ Departmental staffing changes to implement best practices and auditor recommendations
- ◇ Utilization of SCCOG code enforcement grant to

offset costs for building and zoning enforcement and the continued partnership with Ledyard for a shared Assessor

- ◇ Continued Public Works improvements for routine and preventative maintenance for the many miles of Town roads
- ◇ Contracted services for grant writing—we have been very proactive in pursuing grant opportunities (please see next page)—and we would like to enhance our capacity for future opportunities

We invite you to view the Board of Selectmen budget detail on our website: [www.preston-ct.org](http://www.preston-ct.org) (you may also use the QR code below to be taken to the town's website for budget documents and information). Please also check the website for any budget updates.

Important budget dates are as follows:

★ **Board of Finance** ★

Wednesday, April 19, 2023

★ **Board of Finance** ★

*If necessary*

Thursday, April 20, 2023

★ **Budget Public Hearing** ★

Thursday, April 27, 2023

★ **Budget Town Meeting** ★

Thursday, May 11, 2023

★ **Budget Referendum** ★

Thursday, May 25, 2023

We look forward to working with the Board of Finance and hearing from the community as we move forward through the budget process.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier, First Selectperson  
Kenneth Zachem, Second Selectman  
Gerald Grabarek, Third Selectman

## BUDGET SUMMARY

Description	2022-2023 Budget	2023-2024	
		Proposed Budget	\$ Change
General Government	\$ 1,983,069	\$ 2,276,107	\$ 293,038
Public Safety	1,154,182	1,136,968	(17,214)
Public Works	940,759	1,010,844	70,085
Health and Welfare	169,007	186,815	17,808
Culture and Recreation	333,556	357,870	24,314
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 4,580,573</b>	<b>\$ 4,968,604</b>	<b>\$ 388,032</b>





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We continue to proactively pursue competitive grants that enable us to provide improvements for our community without issuing debt or adding to the tax burden. We have been awarded/pre-approved approximately \$11.1 million on grants. We have a competitive grant application success rate of 89.3%.

According to our municipal financial advisor, Mark Chapman of Munistat Services Inc., if we were to issue debt for these projects, the cost of interest to the Town for the debt would be \$4,260,600.



Listed below are competitive grants that we have been awarded or preapproved, grants pending and grants we applied for but did not receive.

We are pleased with these achievements as we continue to work in a forward-thinking manner where we are gaining momentum utilizing creative actionable steps and goals with effective execution, all based on our strategic planning.

### Competitive Grants Awarded/PreApproved

Description	Source of Funds	Amount	Town Match
Poquetanuck Village Traffic Calming Master Plan	LOTICIP	\$ 2,850,578	\$ 11,500
Poquetanuck Village Traffic Calming Master Plan	Community Investment Fund 2030	400,000	-
Mathewson Mill Road Improvements and Reclamation	TRIP	1,084,224	In kind
Transfer Station Improvements Phase I	STEAP	498,452	41,514
Cooktown Road Bridge	CT DOT/Federal	2,707,000	-
Parks Road Bridge	CT DOT/Federal	2,866,000	-
Comprehensive DUI Grant (Nov 2022)	CT DOT	24,406	-
Comprehensive DUI Grant (Jan 2022)	CT DOT	19,518	-
Rural Road Grant	Emergency Services and Public Protection	5,000	In kind
Summer Enrichment Grant	State Department of Education	30,294	In kind
Firehouse Upgrades Preston City	State Bonding Commission Department of Emergency Services and Protection	150,000	-
Firehouse Upgrades Poquetanuck	State Bonding Commission Department of Emergency Services and Protection	150,000	-
Poquetanuck Village Plan Extension	DEEP Recreational Plan	59,400	In kind
Public Works Town Garage Facilities Improvements	FY 24 Congressman Courtney Community Project	279,000	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 11,123,872</b>	<b>\$ 53,014</b>

### Competitive Grants Pending

Description	Source of Funds	Amount	Town Match
Summer Enrichment Grant (K-5)	State Department of Education	\$ 46,546	\$ In kind
Summer Enrichment Grant (6-8)	State Department of Education	42,933	In kind
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 89,479</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

### Competitive Grants Applied for Not Awarded

Description	Source of Funds	Amount	Town Match
Transfer Station Improvements Phase II	Community Investment Fund 2030	\$ 692,000	\$ -
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 692,000</b>	<b>\$ -</b>



# 2023-2024 Citizens' Guide to the Board of Education Proposed Budget



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## Reengage, Reenergize, and Renew!

In FY 24, **nothing will be more important than sustaining staffing** and creating programs that support students and staff. Our recent shared experience has reinforced the need to focus on well-being, mental health, and academic recovery. **The Board of Education unanimously requested an increase of \$1,321,283 over FY 23.**

Increasing costs are everywhere, with a 7-8% inflation rate. Fixed costs account for 85% of our budget. There are 265 state mandates for schools. These mandates do not include federal mandates like IDEA, 504, or Title programs.

**Recovery academically is about effort, teaching, curriculum, commitment and is just below our highest priority of student safety.**

An increase in student population is moving the district from two sections to predominantly three sections per grade. All tuitions went up, generating a cost of \$3,950,624 for high school and special education placements. Intensive cybersecurity is now an operational norm. There is a continued demand for quality classroom **environmental** conditions.

Here are some proactive **interventions we have taken:** The ClearGov financial package will clarify the financial systems of the town and district easier. Fixed fuel costs at \$2.87 a gallon for gas and \$3.05 for heating oil. Fixed healthcare at 8.2%. We have moved into more robust standards of practice. We created important instructional supports and coaching to address complex student needs. The recognition for our summer school

programming validates the crucial support for recovery.

1. We recommend that all **staff and programming** remain in place for next year.
2. **Physical and Mental Health:** Our response to the pandemic has strained the district and our students, employees, and our families.
3. **Social-Emotional Equity Learning-SEEL:** We all worry about the well-being of employees, families, and children. A grant-funded part-time School Social Worker will be added to the SEEL Team.
4. **Reading Mandate:** The Department of Education has mandated school districts update their reading programs.
5. **Technology:** The district must be vigilant about maintaining technology enhancements and responding to technology safety and security upgrades.
6. **Access, Equity, Opportunity:** The district is expanding the circle of engaged staff, parents, and students in diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts.
7. **Shared Services:** The district works with the town and local districts to develop various shared service strategies. The above priorities are essential for continued improvement-student success.

**Thank you for your continued support**

Sean Nugent  
Preston Board of Education, Chair  
Roy M. Seitsinger, Jr.  
Superintendent

Please SCAN QR Code below for more information!

BUDGET SUMMARY			
Budget Category	2022-2023 Budget	2023-2024	
		Proposed Budget	\$ Change
Salaries	\$ 6,383,963	\$ 6,986,179	\$ 602,216
Health	1,687,573	1,827,615	140,042
Utilities/Supplies	290,788	450,474	159,686
Special Education	1,367,113	1,646,847	279,734
Plant Operations	194,060	182,619	(11,441)
Secondary Tuition	2,239,822	2,279,777	39,955
Transportation	189,200	179,200	(10,000)
Administrative	623,663	669,715	46,052
Operational Support	230,819	276,636	45,817
Instructional Technology	252,493	281,715	20,222
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 13,459,494</b>	<b>\$ 14,780,777</b>	<b>\$ 1,321,283</b>

BUDGET DRIVERS		
Salaries	\$6,986,179	47%
Health	\$1,827,615	12%
Special Education	\$1,646,847	11%
Secondary Tuition	\$2,279,777	15%
		<b>85%</b>





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## THIS IS WHO WE ARE!



- ◆ **450 students: 439 last year**
- ◆ **207 high school students/8 high schools**
- ◆ **44 504s/ 86 IEPS**
- ◆ **33% free and reduced lunch**
- ◆ **Spanish, Portuguese, German, Arabic, Italian, Farsi, Japanese, Cantonese, Mandarin, French, Polish, and Russian**
- ◆ **16% BIPOC students**



## Budget Realities

- ◆ Costs are going up!
- ◆ 265 state mandates—many unfunded
- ◆ Recovery academically
- ◆ 2 sections to 3 sections per grade—steady increase
- ◆ Increased substitute teacher costs
- ◆ All tuition is up: Now at \$3,950,624
- ◆ Increased standards for cleaning, air quality and mitigation strategies
- ◆ 10-25% vendor cost increase
- ◆ Intensive cybersecurity expectations
- ◆ Vendor cost increases range from 10-26%



## PROACTIVE!

- ◆ HVAC reimbursement \$55,208.37
- ◆ ClearGov (Transparency)
- ◆ Fixed fuel costs at \$2.87 and \$3.05 heating oil
- ◆ Fixed healthcare at 8.2%
- ◆ Upgraded lighting at both schools for greater efficiencies and cost savings
- ◆ Reduced \$281,067 from original budget requests
- ◆ Human Resource LEARN reorganization
- ◆ Mental Health Grant: \$226,316.97 over 3 years
- ◆ LEARN Technology partnership
- ◆ Title/IDEA Grants: \$239,969



For budget questions or comments—

CALL: 860-889-6098 or

EMAIL: [BOEbudgetinquiry@prestonschools.org](mailto:BOEbudgetinquiry@prestonschools.org)