

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Town of Middlefield

1961 ANNUAL REPORT*

This report is presented to you in the present makeshift and incomplete fashion because your elected town officials, almost without exception, did not provide the finance committee with their budgets and other information in sufficient time (prior to December 21, 1961) as required by Chapter 41 Section 59 of the general laws.

The purpose of this report is to point out to the citizens of Middlefield the precarious financial position in which we find ourselves today. Even necessary expenses tend to increase from year to year, but when extravagances and waste are piled on these our taxes may soon be unbearable.

The various main items of town expense will be considered individually:

Total Town Expenditures: This reached an all time high of \$115,631.49 for 1961 as compared to \$101,860.16 in 1960.

Roads (Chapter 81 & 90): A total of \$28,462.95 was spent in 1961 as compared to \$23,315.00 in 1960.

Snow Removal (Chapter 81): In the year of 1961 \$8,659.47 was spent for snow removal. This compares to \$6,764.90 expended in 1960.

Schools: School appropriations have risen continuously since 1956 by a minimum of \$2,063.00 and a maximum of \$4,900.00 per year. The present 1962 appropriation request of \$44,727.00 represents a new high. Actual total expenses during the 1955 to 1961 period have increased by 78% (from \$24,053.11 to \$42,912.61) whereas teachers' salaries, in the elementary school, have increased by 41%. These two are generally considered to parallel one another, but do not in this case. However the gross per pupil cost has only increased from \$394.00 to \$435.00 from 1957 to 1960 or 10 1/2%.

Due to incomplete figures the finance committee is unable to state the tax rate for 1962, but indications point to an increase.

The finance committee's 1962 budget recommendations appear in the town report. Although it is higher than for 1961 the committee has been able to reduce the originally proposed budgets substantially.

It may be well to point out that road maintenance (including snow removal) at 27.0% in 1960 and schools at 40.3% in the same year, account for the very greatest part of town expenditures. Obviously the finance committee does not

*This report has been prepared at no cost to the town.

wish to curtail these essential services, but it is interested in seeing that the taxpayers' money is wisely spent and that needless and extravagant expenditures be eliminated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The selectmen and school committee make a study of fire and liability insurance to see if a savings may be made by a "package deal".
2. The town should give consideration to the establishment of a stabilization fund to act as a cushion against unforeseen expenditures and as a tax stabilizer.
3. Land of low value, taken by the town for taxes, be retained and developed as town forest land for purposes of raising lumber, for selective cutting under supervision of the state forester.
4. The town garage should be used exclusively for town owned equipment.
5. In fairness to all taxpayers the school committee should study the possibility of formulating a policy for use of the school building, to help in defraying operational expenses.
6. All town officers should be careful to follow the by-laws of the town by asking for bids for all purchases of materials, manufactured articles and services costing \$100.00 or more.

Alton M. Sternagle, Chairman
John E. DeLoss, Sect.-treas.
Richard A. Waite
Leon A. Gardner
Perley B. Boyer