

Highway Department Truck Information
For July 25, 2023, STM, Art. 1

The Town currently has \$104,000 in the Equipment/Vehicle Stabilization account. This money was placed in this account by voters over the last handful of years for the purpose of replacement of Town owned vehicles and equipment when needed.

The Finance Committee, based on recommendations made by the Highway Superintendent, requested that the Select Board schedule a Special Town meeting as soon as possible to ask voters to transfer a sum up to the \$104,000 to be transferred from the Equipment/Vehicle Stabilization Account to a Truck Purchase Account to give the Town the opportunity to purchase a cab and chassis and any related costs should an opportunity to purchase present itself.

The Select Board discussed this recommendation and voted to accept the recommendation and schedule a Special Town Meeting for July 25, 2023, at 7:00 PM.

By approving Article 1 at the July 25th Special Town Meeting, it makes the funds available for purchase of an affordable and more reliable truck with no additional cost added to the FY24 tax rate.

Currently Owned Trucks and Replacement Schedules:

2003 International 7400 (Truck #1) Requires CDL driver. – Due for replacement 2023.

2012 International 7400 w/MaxxForce engine (Truck #2) Requires CDL driver. – Due for replacement now due to continued mechanical issues.

- Based solely on the year, this truck should have been ready for replacement in approx. 7 years from now, however the truck has had mechanical issues starting not long after its purchase in 2012.
- Since 2018 alone, approximately \$50,000 in repairs have been completed. Overall repair costs since taking ownership are much higher.
- This history of mechanical issues has been the case for many owners of this specific truck model and engine type.
- The Town has been advised that this truck will continue to see issues requiring additional money to be spent on repairs, if not replaced.

2021 Freightliner 108sd (Truck #3) Requires CDL driver. – Due for replacement in 15 years (+/-).

2016 Dodge 5500 (Truck #4) – Due for replacement in 3-4 years.

Note - Replacement dates based on the town's 18-20 year replacement schedule for larger (Freightliner and International) CDL trucks, and approx. 10 years for smaller (Dodge) non-CDL trucks. All dates are approximate. Most other towns have a 5-10-year replacement schedule.

Town's Fleet Needs:

For budget reasons, the Select Board voted to accept a Finance Committee recommendation to decrease the number of highway department personnel from four crew members to three crew members for the 2024 fiscal year.

During the discussions about the decrease in crew size, it was agreed that the Town would continue to work with four people for snow removal services, requiring four trucks. At the ATM in May, the Town voters agreed with this decision by voting in additional money to be spent on hired seasonal help. Hiring a 4th driver as seasonal help is often easier than trying to hire a driver with their own equipment that is suitable to plow roads.

The Town will continue ownership of four trucks, to be staffed by four people. Three people will be full-time crew members and the fourth will be winter temporary help.

It was determined that the savings in the budget seen from the decrease in one full time crew member would be larger than the cost of temporary winter help for snow removal services.

Snow removal services with four trucks will continue as in previous years. If one truck goes down, the length of time required to clear the Town roads is temporarily extended until the truck is repaired. The grader can be used on a temporary basis to assist in road clearing.

Snow removal services with three trucks lengthens the time required to clear the Town roads permanently. A new snow removal road plan will be developed. The grader cannot be used as a permanent fourth vehicle for snow removal.

Possible Future Scenarios if one or more trucks are down:

Despite routine maintenance, both the 2003 and the 2012 trucks break down on a regular basis. Much of the time the repairs needed are such that the vehicle needs to be sent out for repair.

If a truck, or two, are not operational during a snowstorm, it will take the crew longer to clear the roads. Highway employees are limited by state regulations as to the number of consecutive hours they can work, even in a blizzard.

Looking at the storm patterns over the previous few years, Heath is experiencing more severe weather when there is a storm. In winter that means intense work and long hours to return the roads to a condition of safe travel. Even with the manpower, without enough highway equipment, that time will lengthen.

The highway equipment continues to age and become less reliable, more prone to expensive repairs. To gradually adopt a replacement schedule, including a replacement this year, will avoid the situation of having to replace and raise funds for several large pieces of equipment during the same year. It will even out the amount spent each year on capital purchases.

By approving Article 1 at the July 25th Special Town Meeting, it makes the funds available for purchase of an affordable and more reliable truck with no additional cost added to the FY24 tax rate, thus striving to avoid any of the possible scenarios described above.