

**WINOOSKI VALLEY PARK DISTRICT  
FY2020 BUDGET**

**BUDGET OVERVIEW**

This budget supports the FY20 (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020) operations of the Winooski Valley Park District (WVPD), an incorporated Vermont municipality and 501(c)(3) non-profit supported primarily by annual allocations from seven member towns: Burlington, Colchester, Essex, Jericho, South Burlington, Williston, and Winooski. WVPD owns and operates 18 properties with a combined total of over 1,750 acres of land, managed for conservation and passive recreation, with its operations governed by a Board of Trustees. The Winooski Valley Park District’s mission is to plan, acquire, and manage lands and waters within the boundaries of its member municipalities in the Winooski River Valley for purposes of conservation, preservation of natural areas, establishment of parks, and resource-based education and recreation.

**New/Adjusted Budget Line Items**

WVPD has made some adjustments to the format of the budget as follows: 1) added a line under salaries for Payroll Fees; 2) separated Grant Income and Expenses from operating budget to better reflect project expenses; 3) included list of expenditures from capital improvement.

These changes reflect the shift towards tracking program income, a more standardized nomenclature, and ease of communicating the budget relative to operations.

**Revenue Streams:**

WVPD’s largest source of operating revenue derives from annual formulaic payments from member municipalities. In the past three years, WVPD has increased the percentage of revenues garnered from programs, events and lease income which kept municipal costs level from FY18 into FY19 – and despite FY20’s 6.5% increase in operating revenues, towns are being asked for a 4.8% increase.

**Ethan Allen Homestead Museum:**

WVPD owns the Ethan Allen Homestead property and buildings on the 294-acre campus in Burlington’s Intervale. This includes the Historic Allen house and Hill-Brownell Education Center which houses the Ethan Allen Homestead Museum, two classrooms, office space, and a ‘Tavern’ room for programming and events. An independent non-

profit runs the Museum under an operations agreement providing lease and utility income to WVPD.

### **Grant Revenues:**

Grant income is utilized for projects and programs, and is not relied upon for operating expenses. These revenues are generally offset by the costs of the projects, often with an in-kind match of labor/materials. Some indirect and administrative costs are built in to support WVPD's operating budget. Typically WVPD applies for grants supporting trail construction, facility upgrades, safety equipment, and to support educational programs. Grants are aggressively pursued to offset any large projects/expenditures whenever possible.

### **Debts/Loans:**

Outside of the use of a credit card (which is paid off monthly), WVPD carries no mortgages or loans, or has any liens against any property or asset.

### **Financial Audit:**

WVPD completed a full financial audit for FY16. Each year the WVPD undergoes an annual Financial Reviews (conducted by the same auditing firm), with full audits scheduled on a five-year cycle. WVPD is utilizing the accrual method of accounting, and abides by GAAP and GASB standards. WVPD also releases an annual IRS 990 form which tabulates the overall financial status of the organization, including a full list of assets and liabilities. This also functions as an annual review of WVPD's financial practices and position.

## **FY2020 BUDGET NOTES (by budget category)**

### **1. Municipal Support of Operations from Member Towns**

Dues from member municipalities are based on the most current available data for 1) Population and 2) Equalized Municipal Property Tax Grand List. These two variables are given equal weight in a formula that determines the portion asked of each municipality.

As an inter-municipal form of government, the WVPD has been supported by its member municipalities for the last 46 years. Elected officials signed an Agreement to create an inter-municipal conservation district in 1972. After that, a majority of voters from each member community voted to create the WVPD.

The FY2020 budget is the third WVPD consecutive budget to utilize new revenues to accommodate increased costs. The operations budget in FY20 is 6.5% higher than FY19; WVPD is requesting an increase of 4.8% in dues from member towns for FY20. The balance of the increase will be covered by increased program and lease revenues. WVPD continues to seek new and enhanced revenue streams to decrease reliance on municipal support while increasing program services.

## **2. Interest Income**

High interest rates are pursued when possible by investing in FDIC insured Certificates of Deposits. However, in recent years these rates have been very low.

## **3. Caretaker House Rentals/Rebates**

On-site caretakers provide site security and rental income at the Colchester Pond Natural Area and at the Ethan Allen Homestead. Each caretaker residence pays \$7,800 per year for rent. In exchange for below market rent, each caretaker is available on weekends and after office hours to educate park visitors about park rules, open and close the park entrance gate year-round at dawn and dusk, monitor parking lot use, shovel snow for pedestrian access to information boards and fire hydrants, manage the picnic shelter at the Ethan Allen Homestead, and monitor the WVPD's other parks throughout the winter when the WVPD's seasonal maintenance crew is laid off. With increases in park use at both facilities, the value of our caretaker's work increases over time.

Caretakers are paid in pretax dollars at \$8/hour in the form of a rental rebate for additional services above and beyond routine services, as they arise. These expenses are included as a parks maintenance expense.

## **4. Facilities Rentals**

This line item includes rental income from leasing Farm Fields, lease income from the Ethan Allen Homestead Museum and Burlington Forest Preschool, meeting space rentals in the Education Center at the Ethan Allen Homestead, and picnic shelter rentals at the Ethan Allen Homestead. WVPD has negotiated an increase in classroom space for the Burlington Forest Preschool with an associated increased rent payment.

**Farm Fields:** The WVPD owns and leases farm fields at Colchester Pond in Colchester, the Ethan Allen Homestead in Burlington, and Muddy Brook Park in South Burlington. An additional farm field is managed for free in exchange for services at the Macrae Farm in Colchester. The first three farm fields are leased to farmers in a "break even"

operation, where rental income is used to maintain the health of the soil. The benefits to the public are scenic vistas, full pedestrian access to the fields, and management of the timing of hay cuts to maximize bird habitat. The farm roads and bridges are maintained by the farmers and are used by the public. These acres are kept open and fertile, and could easily be converted to food production at a later date.

**Ethan Allen Homestead Museum:** Per an operations agreement, the Museum provides a yearly lease payment for space in the Hill-Brownell Education Center at the Ethan Allen Homestead based on a sliding scale formula.

**Rental of Education Center/Picnic Shelter/Pre-School:** There are two classrooms in the Hill-Brownell Education Center at the Ethan Allen Homestead. Both classrooms are now rented to the Burlington Forest Pre-School, which has expanded to full-year operation with two classroom groups.

During the summer months of June – August, one classroom is used for the WVPD’s Sustainable Outdoor Leadership Education – S.O.L.E. Camp.

The Ethan Allen Homestead’s open air picnic shelter tends to be reserved during most summer and fall weekends. Rental rates are as follows:

- **Non-Special Events\*: \$75.00 refundable damage deposit required.**

- **Small Groups** (35 people or less)

Half day (4 hours or less)	\$35
Full day	\$70

- **Large Groups** (36-65\*\* people)

Half day (4 hours or less)	\$65
Full Day	\$125

- \*Non-special events may be subjected to impact fees on a case-by-case basis as determined by the WVPD.

- \*\*The capacity of the picnic shelter/large group events is 65 people. Larger events are allowed with special permission on a case-by-case basis as determined by the WVPD and subject to additional fees.

- **Special Events:** This is defined as any event, regardless of the number of people attending, that will be serving catered food and/or alcoholic beverages served by a licensed vendor, and/or require additional equipment/amenities, including, but not limited to, catering service equipment, food trucks, port-o-lets, recreational structures, etc. Fees for Special Events are based on size and type of event as determined by the WVPD.

Group sizes influence income so if smaller groups predominate, projected revenues may be overestimated. This figure does not account for operating expenses such as administration, electricity, water, and trash removal, which can amount to as much as 50% of the income for a smaller group rental, depending on their usage.

## **5. Program Revenues**

This includes revenues from registration of the *Sustainable Outdoor Leadership Education* (S.O.L.E.) and February vacation day camps, along with other education programs including school field trips and afterschool enrichment programs. WVPD has significantly expanded its afterschool programming and continues to do so each year.

S.O.L.E. Camp and the February vacation camp provide conservation and environmental educational programming in a day camp setting to children ages 6-12 year olds. S.O.L.E. Camp will operate its six year in 2019, and runs eight weeks during the summer.

## **6. General Income**

This includes nominal donations, typically unsolicited by park users expressing their appreciation with a small donation.

## **7. Prior Year Refunds**

None expected.

## **OPERATING EXPENSES** (vendors were contacted about expense projections where noted):

### **1. A. Staff Salaries – Year Round**

The WVPD has three salaried, year-round positions: Executive Director, Park Superintendent, and Programs Director. A Programs & Project Coordinator works on an at-will hourly basis.

### **B. Staff Salaries – Temporary**

The WVPD hosts an AmeriCorps Member to serve as Environmental Educator and Resource Specialist sponsored through the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board that currently serves for a full-time, 11-month service term. The WVPD provides 45% of the Members living allowance. The Member serves a critical role in planning and leading the WVPD's various education programs and camps.

The WVPD hires three seasonal employees to maintain the parks April – October. They receive a \$330 incentive for staying through the end of the season.

The WVPD also hires up to three seasonal camp counselors for the S.O.L.E. Camp.

The WVPD's gate tender at Delta Park in Colchester receives \$75/month to open and close the park gates, and two caretakers receive rental rebate of \$8/hour.

### **C. Payroll Fees**

This line was added to better reflect the WVPD's actual bookkeeping procedure and more accurately report the cost of salaries for year-round and temporary employees.

#### **2. FICA**

This is calculated as 7.65% of salaries per federal law.

#### **3. Workers Compensation**

This is covered through the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) and is dependent on VLCT classifications and rates. It is anticipated to remain relatively stable for FY20, as VLCT has already indicated that at most there will be a small single digit increase.

#### **4. Unemployment Insurance**

This is covered by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. It is also anticipated to remain stable for FY20.

#### **5. Dental Insurance**

WVPD provides dental insurance through the Vermont League of Cities and Towns for permanent, full-time staff. There is a slight increase in rates anticipated for FY20.

#### **6. Health Insurance**

WVPD offers the Blue Cross Blue Shield menu from Vermont Health Connect. Each Full Time Year-Round employee is offered \$667 per month for single coverage, \$1,018 per month for two-person coverage, or \$1,285 per month for family coverage. A \$1,200

per year incentive is provided for Full Time Year-Round employees who opt to be covered by a partner's health insurance instead of the WVPD's insurance.

With few employees covered, a change in one individual's coverage status (i.e., from one person to two person coverage) can dramatically increase this line item. Employees have a \$1,200 annual incentive to be covered by their partner's health insurance.

Insurance rates have increased, however one WVPD staffer has removed themselves and their family from coverage and another is able to remain on their families insurance, creating some savings for WVPD.

## **7. Retirement**

The WVPD has a 457 plan (similar to a 401K) through the State of Vermont. Maintenance and administrative costs to the WVPD are minimal. Contributions by employees must be voluntary, by law. Assets are the property of the employee. The total contribution by the WVPD for the Programs Director and the Parks Manager is 3% of their salary, for an anticipated total of \$3,500.

An annual contribution of 5.125% of salary is made to the Vermont Municipal Employees Retirement System for the Executive Director. The total contribution by the WVPD is anticipated to be \$3,500.

## **8. Programs**

This is level funded from FY19, reflecting expenses directly offset by revenues from the camp and education programs.

## **9. Liability/Fire Insurance**

This is level funded from FY19. Coverage is provided by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. This line item includes a mandatory \$700 management fee.

## **10. Travel/Auto**

This is level funded from FY19. The WVPD owns a 2003 Ford pickup truck and a 2002 Dodge van, both in good condition. This category includes preventative maintenance for those vehicles. Employees who use their own vehicles for the WVPD's business are reimbursed for mileage at the federal rate. WVPD is enrolling in the Federal Surplus

program, and is actively seeking a replacement van sometime in the next 2 years at vastly reduced cost or as a donation.

## **11. Utilities**

This is level funded from FY19. The WVPD will maximize the use of wood heat for its office in an effort to reduce costs. On-site caretakers pay for their own utilities, except for City water in Burlington for the Ethan Allen Homestead Caretaker House.

## **12. Buildings Maintenance**

Overall, the WVPD's 10 buildings\* have been kept in good condition. More maintenance to the buildings is being done by the WVPD's seasonal crew as *preventative maintenance* instead of being contracted out as *repairs*. Even with more wear on the trails, increased park use, and more structures to maintain, only a small increase is included for FY20.

\*Building Inventory:

- a. Ethan Allen Homestead (6 structures total): 1 historic structure (Ethan and Fanny Allen's restored farmhouse), 1 caretaker residence, 1 picnic shelter, 1 outhouse, 1 administrative building (the WVPD's office, public restrooms, and maintenance garage), and 1 large barn (converted to offices, classrooms, exhibit space, and public restrooms).
- b. Colchester Pond Natural Area (4 structures total): 1 caretaker house (historically significant), 1 detached garage/workshop, 1 milk house, and 1 barn.

## **13. Parks Maintenance**

This is level funded from FY19. Vandalism is the single biggest factor that could unpredictably drive up this expense. Flooding also has a substantial impact on this expense. Significant repairs and improvements are often covered through grants.

This category covers materials and equipment for work performed by the WVPD's seasonal crew who maintain its 18 parks. This work includes mowing lawns, maintaining 28 miles of trail, picking up litter, building and installing park signs, picnic tables, foot bridges, fences, beaver baffles, gates, water bars, benches, canoe access stairs, and informational boards.

#### **14. Snow Removal**

This has decreased from FY19 based on actual need. Two parks require snow removal and sanding – Ethan Allen Homestead in Burlington and Colchester Pond in Colchester.

#### **15. Contracted Work**

This is a decrease from FY19. With the purchase of new equipment and training, WVPD crew is able to perform maintenance tasks that use to require hiring a contracted service. This line item includes routine work that must be done by a professional because it requires equipment or expertise beyond that possessed by the WVPD's staff, for example:

- a. Hazardous Tree Removal: Removal of dead, standing trees that cannot be safely removed in-house. Heavy duty equipment is often required when the tree is close to a structure.
- b. Routine Services: This includes services for the WVPD's fire extinguishers, 3 furnaces, 2 septic tanks, 1 office woodstove, 1 vault toilet, 4 overhead doors, 2 vehicles, 1 water filtration system, 1 alarm system, and 1 sprinkler system.
- c. IT Budget: Computer network maintenance, updates, and recommendations on new hardware and software purchases.
- d. Park Signs: Fabrication of one new park entrance sign per year at \$1,000.
- e. Bookkeeping: WVPD retains a professional bookkeeper to prepare bills for payment, to update the WVPD accounting system, and help prepare for audits.
- f. Accounting: Preparation of the Form 990 and a compilation or review by an accountant.

#### **16. Rubbish Removal**

This increase from FY19 reflects increased rates from rush removal hauler service. Illegal dumping can cause this expense to jump unexpectedly. This expense mainly covers garbage pickup by the WVPD's crew at its 18 parks. It also includes office rubbish and recycling.

#### **17. Telephone/Email/Internet/Fax**

This is a decrease from FY19. WVPD has switch email and website hosting provider with a reduction in monthly costs for this service, and is eliminating one of the cell phones used as a backup due to redundancy.

## **18. Postage**

This has been decreased from FY19 based on actual costs and need.

## **19. Supplies**

This has increased from FY19 based on actual costs and need. This line item covers supplies for the printer, fax, and copy machine, which are now greatly reduced due to a new machine with a lower cost maintenance contract covered in the “copies” line item. It also includes items for events that are not covered by outside sources. WVPD will seek grant funds and/or donations to upgrade the overall computer system in FY20.

## **20. Copies**

This has decreased from FY19. This covers the cost in a yearly service contract for the copy machine. This category also includes the cost of color and/or oversized copies.

## **21. Newspapers**

This is level funded from FY19. Subscription to the Burlington Free Press will be reduced to digital, with subscription to the Williston Observer maintained.

## **22. Employee Trainings**

This is level funded from FY19. This provides funding for employees to learn new skills and complete voluntary trainings. Grants are being sought to add new training opportunities.

## **23. Membership**

This has decreased from FY19. Memberships are retained for the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council, Vermont Statewide Environmental Education Program, and the Vermont Recreation and Parks Association – all organizations directly related to WVPD’s programs and activities.

## **24. Events**

This has decreased from FY19. This includes fees for exhibit booths, distribution of event posters, general supplies, volunteer enrichment events, and supplies for the annual Conservation Field Day.

## **25. Printing/Advertising/Exhibits**

This has decreased from FY19 based on actual need.

## **26. Conferences**

This is a decrease from FY19. WVPD staff participates in multiple professional development trainings in order to expand and build increased quality into programming and events. In addition, mandatory attendance of conferences is a condition of some grant sources which often translates directly into enhanced revenues for WVPD.

## **27. Legal Services**

The WVPD mostly engages pro-bono legal counsel each year, this amount reflects the need for recording fees and other small expenses. Project-specific legal expenses (such as land acquisitions) are often covered with grant income.

## **28. Capital Improvement Program Transfer\***

This money is transferred to a separate capital improvement program fund to provide a stream of revenue for major repairs to buildings, the purchase of major equipment, and/or the scheduled upkeep of a concrete dam at Colchester Pond.

## **29. Operating Reserve Fund\***

This fund was established in 2001 to offset any unforeseeable shortfalls in the operating budget. Eligible uses include 1) an increase in routine, essential expenditure beyond amounts budgeted for the year, 2) a decrease in grant income budgeted to supplement operations, 3) mechanical failure of essential equipment, or 4) extensive damage to essential park facilities.

## **30. Audit Fund**

This line item builds resources for regular audits. Annual financial reviews are conducted with full audits completed every five years.

\*Four sources fund the Capital Improvement Program and the Operating Reserve Fund: 1) Staff finding reductions in actual expenses compared to those proposed, 2) dedicated grants that allow the limited use of their funds for routine operating expenses, and 3) salary savings due to employees taking unpaid leave and 4) year-end operating surpluses.

## **Non-Operating – Other Income and Expenses from FY2018**

### Grants Income/Expenses

This is a new category for WVPD's annual presentation. It is a summary of last fiscal year's grant income and expenses.

This report is a means of showing the importance and scale of grant income for projects and programs at WVPD. Next year's (FY19) report will have significantly higher numbers, as we just completed a park acquisition with two large grants (VHCB, Burlington Legacy), and will be developing the new park using primarily grant sources (FEMA and other potential sources).

The "NET Other Revenue – Grants" line item summarizes 1) the matching costs associated with FY18 grants; 2) monies expended to supplement programs/projects; and 3) monies expended for income awarded in prior fiscal years. Thus, this is shown as a negative number. This amount is "carried" under the appropriate line items in our operating budget totals for FY18.

Note: All project, program, acquisition, and development budgets are tabulated in our bookkeeping systems and are tracked over time for easy access, reporting and grant match tabulation.

### FY18 Capital Expenditures

Also a new feature of WVPD's annual reporting, this category summarizes all expenditures booked as "Capital" during last fiscal year (FY18). These do not include capital improvements made using grant funding (e.g., Wolcott Family Natural Area trails and parking lot).

WVPD's largest capital expenses were a new zero-turn mower which has dramatically improved the efficiency of our crew; inspection of our septic systems to ensure long-term system viability; a detailed financial audit that has led to improvements in our accounting systems, a new copier replacing a failing 28-year old machine, and option payments for our new park which was closed on in August 2018.