



## Town of Island Falls

# *Growing Into Modern Times*

### Where Do Our Tax Dollars Go?

A major question we are often asked is “Why are our taxes so high?” An excellent question. So, where does the money go? The attached graph may help explain. Values are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Nearly half of our money goes to the school and county (49%). Residents should vote on the annual school budget as well as the county taxes.

The next biggest expense is running the Town Government (19%). This is what it takes to run the Town, and short of cutting services there is very little discretionary spending in this account.

Third biggest is Roads (12%). This account is totally discretionary and can be controversial. As Selectmen we set a roads maintenance budget and do our best to follow the recommendations of our Roads Committee. This year the bulk of the money goes to paving Walker Settlement Road. Snow plowing and general road maintenance, such as cutting brush and filling pot holes, is also included in this account.

Fire and Ambulance (9%) is pretty much self-explanatory. Operating an Ambulance Department is expensive, but a very critical part of the service we expect from our Town. As you saw in the recent referendum, we are working to expand our ambulance service to surrounding communities and reduce our operating cost.

The remaining costs are negligible, but it seems Recreation (0.4%), which is a major community asset and underfunded, always seems to be a major topic at Town Meetings.

We certainly have a number of amenities our surrounding communities don't have. It is these amenities that define our town (town office, gym, ball field, paved streets, fire hydrants, street lights, snow plowing, ambulance, fire protection, library, etc.). As Selectmen we feel cutting amenities is not a viable option, however at each year's Town Meeting the residents ultimately decide.

The best method of reducing our taxes is to increase the tax base. This involves growth and more importantly attracting new businesses. Our initial focus has been on recreational based businesses (motel, restaurant, guide service, etc.) by developing a number of projects linked to a Comprehensive Plan. We are involved in the Maine Working Community Challenge Grant aimed at bringing young adults into the recreational based work force. Ultimately, our goal is to attract a forest products or agricultural based company utilizing our area resources and provide a larger base of employment opportunities.

In future newsletters, I'll discuss the Comprehensive Plan projects and show how we, as your Selectmen and the members of our various committees, are planning for our future. Please get involved. We can certainly use your help and ideas.

**Tony**

Anthony Binotto

Selectman – Town of Island Falls

