



Budget Narrative FY 2021 – 2022

The past fiscal year presented a number of challenges, the most significant being the COVID19 Pandemic. The world of public health changed with the first call of suspected COVID19 the morning of March 11, 2020. It was reported that someone who had been at a house party about 6 days before had been diagnosed with COVID19 upon returning to their home country. On March 12th, the Health District's clinical staff set up Connecticut's first drive through COVID19 testing station for what was believed to be the extent of the potential contacts. The number of cases and associated close contacts has been on the rise ever since. To respond to the pandemic locally, WWHD has used volunteers as much as possible, and hired additional per diem and temporary part time staff as needed to conduct contact tracing (2576 individuals since May 2020), responding to numerous telephone inquiries, the setting up of vaccination clinics and inoculation lines.

The other significant development has been the negotiation to bring full time public health services to the Town of Easton. Concerns over COVID19 spread and the Governor's Directives restricting person to person contact has prevented Easton from having the required Town Meeting to formally join the Health District. Once a Town Meeting can be held and Easton officially joins, the WWHD will be eligible for additional state funding (about \$76,000) that will help lower the cost of public health service to both Westport and Weston. In the meantime, services are being provided via a contractual agreement which produces revenue in excess of the cost of providing service.

As a result of COVID19, the WWHD's traditional Community Health and Travel Clinic revenues took a steep decline and have not recovered. However somewhat surprisingly, other permit activity has skyrocketed to levels never seen before. Environmental plan reviews traditionally have averaged about 100 plans per month. In the last quarter of 2020 calendar year, that average is now closer to 200 plan reviews per month. The added revenue from plan reviews, state grants earmarked for COVID response activities, plus the savings from cutting expenditures such as not having to purchase travel clinic vaccines, have helped balance the budget.

Once again, there has been an increase in the Connecticut Municipal Employees Retirement System mandatory contribution; going up from 16.22% of payroll to 18.22%. According to the State, these CMERS increases are expected to continue to increase 2 to 2.5% each of the next few years to top off at 21.79% in 2024.

The CDC projects that COVID19 will remain a challenge throughout 2021 due to the number of people needing to be vaccinated, limited vaccine availability, and the number of new COVID variants being identified. The most significant issue is the national COVID19 vaccine shortage which has limited WWHD's supply to about 100 doses per week. This will hopefully increase as other sources of vaccine become available. The WWHD has been working closely with local government and school administrators from Westport Weston and Easton, day care providers, restaurants, and citizens to comply with mandated mitigation strategies to stop the spread of COVID. However, the CDC's and CT-DPH's policies remain in a very fluid state of seemingly constant evolution and change.

I am requesting a Public Health Assessment be the same as last year; no change at \$587,111.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mark A.R. Cooper, Director of Health
Westport Weston Health District