

Tammy Hodgman

From: Robert J. Burns
Sent: Monday, July 21, 2025 9:51 AM
To: Tammy Hodgman
Subject: FW: Windham's Future - One person's perspective

For Council Correspondence

Robert Burns
Town Manager | rjburns@windhammaine.us
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From: JAMES BRIGGS <jdbriggs1@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 17, 2025 9:26 PM
To: Robert J. Burns <rjburns@windhammaine.us>
Cc: TownCouncil <TownCouncil@windhammaine.us>
Subject: Re: Windham's Future - One person's perspective

External sender <jdbriggs1@msn.com>

Make sure you trust this sender before taking any actions.

Bob,

Thank you very much for an informative response to my concerns. I'm only one of many Windham residents, but just wanted my voice heard with your new leadership as Town Manager.

I somehow missed the more recent poll I wish I had seen it. I think it's an excellent way of getting the pulse of the town residents. I looked it over...it was very comprehensive, and overall good marks for the town I'd say.

I too see that growth (traffic a result of growth???) and taxes remain a big concern for the participants..... again. Hopefully, the town will earn higher marks in these categories in the future, and honor the voice of the residents. As you pointed out, our taxes have exceeded inflation by a considerable amount. We could use a break. We have many retirees on essentially fixed incomes.

You mentioned land zoned for farm is to be spared from further encroachment of business and housing. I hope residential growth is curbed too. I used the term "semi-rural". Windham's residential areas seem to be becoming less and less "semi-rural". I'm guessing the people polled were thinking reduced growth in more than land zoned for farming. And as far as the State dictating minimum permits, this seems like it should be very Town specific, and Towns should make those calls.

I've shared the news with some neighbors about the possibility of paving Smith Rd. Needless to say, we are all hopeful!

Thanks again to you and the Town Council for your efforts!

Regards,

Jim Briggs

Sent from my iPad

On Jul 17, 2025, at 5:44 PM, Robert J. Burns <rjburns@windhammaine.us> wrote:

Mr. Briggs,

Thank you for your email. I hear your concerns and share with you the following:

There was a poll/survey conducted last year that over 800 residents participated in. The details can be found here: <https://www.windhammaine.us/836/Community-Survey-Results>
Your two points about growth and taxes are referenced in the survey and were a dissatisfaction to the majority of participants.

In the recently approved FY2026 budget the municipal increase was 5.8% from FY2025. As a comparison the County budget increased by 7.2% and the RSU14 school budget increased by 8.8%. Your tax bill will show the apportionment of the cost amongst the three, but in general it is about 60% for RSU14, 36% Municipal and 4% County. As you are likely aware, the municipal budget is only piece that the Town Council can control...the RSU14 and Cumberland County are separate. The US inflation index for 2024 for comparison was at 2.9% and for the northeast region it was 3.4%.

Some of the major expenses in the FY2026 municipal budget are public safety radio system upgrades, a plow truck, a new North Windham Public Safety Building (replaces the north Windham fire station and includes space for Cumberland County Sheriffs Office who will be paying rent for the space and assisted with utility construction costs) and road paving funds.

Coincidentally enough Smith Road is a likely candidate for paving this year...you are correct, it is needed!

In regards to land development, the Town Planning Board remains very busy reviewing the various applications and ensuring that they are conducted in accordance with our Land Use Ordinance. This ordinance has been frequently amended by the Town Council over the last several years to improve the quality of development and to ensure improvements to the public infrastructure through impact fees.

Recently the Town Council has been busy working on amending our Growth Management Ordinance which limits the number of residential building permits that can be issued in various areas of the town by building type. They remain aggressive in steering growth towards the growth areas in Town and limiting it in the rural areas (Farm zoned). This ordinance is trumped by State statute which controls the minimum number of permits that can be issued in a calendar year. Recently State statute has been passed that will reduce the effectiveness of our Growth Management Ordinance unfortunately.

This is a very complicated topic and if you would like to discuss it further I am happy to talk with you in more detail about it.

Like you, I am also fortunate to live in a State and County that I love.

Sincerely,

Robert Burns

Town Manager | rjburns@windhammaine.us

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From: JAMES BRIGGS <jdbriggs1@msn.com>

Sent: Thursday, July 10, 2025 6:37 PM

To: Robert J. Burns <rjburns@windhammaine.us>

Cc: TownCouncil <TownCouncil@windhammaine.us>

Subject: Windham's Future - One person's perspective

Warning: Unusual sender <jdbriggs1@msn.com>

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Hi Bob,

I want to congratulate you on your new position. I'm glad it's someone who is familiar with Windham.

I have live on Many Oaks Lane for almost 30 years now after living on the Raymond side of Gray for 13 years. I love where I live and love Maine and greater Portland. My taxes were high but not unreasonable back then.

I read recently a quote from a small local publication this excerpt:

Windham is poised for some business growth and some real nice residential growth," said Tibbetts.

I was not pleased to hear that! I vividly remember years ago the town did a poll on what residents wanted for the future. It basically said keep its semi-rural character, fix the traffic congestion on the 302/115 corridors, and grow slowly, if at all. I thought that was great and was glad so many others felt the same. I think it's time for another poll again!

Many years later, Windham is finally addressing the traffic problem! Better late than never. Good! The water treatment system is much needed too. The center of North Windham just got to be too much for the current infrastructure.

But residential growth appears to be skyrocketing with single family homes (Cross Ridge Drive off Smith Road in my area for example) housing developments, and apartment complexes (near 302/115 intersection, near Lowes, near Domino's for example) going up all over. This is not what people wanted. It's certainly exacerbated the traffic problem. Say goodbye to the semi-rural feel. Is this one of the reasons why we need a new middle school? Increased population? It hasn't help my taxes. It sure looks like many other school districts are more needy than Windham.

Business growth has been ok from my perspective, but we don't need much more. We have all the big box stores and large grocery chains we need.

My taxes have gone through the roof the past few years, first with the re-evaluation, and then yearly rate increases, topped off by this year's recently approved budget (12+% if I remember correctly, I might be wrong here), and that was after an unethical (my opinion, but apparently legal) approval at the town meeting, after it was voted down (article 8 I believe) by many many more people, but who were unable or unwilling to stay after 4+ hours. Don't blame them. The huge increase in school budget is unreasonable in these times. Smith Road, which my family and I drive every day, is in major need of repair, but neighbors have told me not this year, as more and more patching is done. Money being spent elsewhere I guess, despite being a healthy tax revenue source. The 60 or 70 residents in the Association at the

end of Smith Road recently paved the private portion, on our dime. We wish the town portion was nearly as good.

Bob, hope you keep this in mind, and I truly count on you and the councilors. Nobody said it was easy. I appreciate all your time and efforts.

Regards,

Jim Briggs

Sent from my iPad