

# The Falmouth Focus

SPECIAL PRINT EDITION

FROM TOWN COUNCIL CHAIR, AMY KUHN



the ease of virtual participation (and the resulting high levels of attendance), with the interpersonal benefits that come from time spent face-to-face. It is exciting to utilize this technology to achieve increased access, engagement, and transparency in our Town government.

The Council also wishes to thank residents for your dedicated participation in the Town’s year-long Vision and Values project. Through online surveys, virtual focus groups, an in person think tank, and more, Falmouth has truly come together to chart a course for our future. Over the next weeks and months, the Council and community will review the resulting vision statement and begin taking steps to update the Town’s comprehensive plan to ensure that Falmouth’s future planning is firmly aligned with the community’s aspirations today.

On behalf of the Council, I thank you for the opportunity to serve and wish you a warm and healthy Spring.

Take care, *Amy*

Dear Neighbors,

As I write this, the Covid-19 pandemic appears to be waning for the time being, with the easing of mask requirements and declining hospitalizations. Let’s hope this trend continues.

For now, the Town Council is pleased to return to in person meetings at Town Hall. We can’t wait to see you – in person if you prefer to come to Council Chambers, or via Zoom if you prefer the comfort of home. This hybrid participation model offers the best of both worlds, allowing us to continue

## FALMOUTH COMPLETES VISION & VALUES PROJECT

The Town Council, staff, and Future iQ would like to thank all the residents who participated in the Vision and Values project public process. A little over 1000 people responded to the Vision and Values Community Survey #2, which closed on January 31. This final survey was an important part in the year-long process to envision Falmouth’s future and help inform updates to the 2013 Comprehensive Plan. The data and analysis of Community Survey #2 responses has been added to the

project portal for residents to explore how their community responded on a range of topics. Future iQ CEO David Beurle presented the data and his final report at the March 28 Town Council meeting. The presentation and report can also be found on the project portal at: [lab2.future-iq.com/town-of-falmouth-vision-and-values-project](http://lab2.future-iq.com/town-of-falmouth-vision-and-values-project).



### TOWN HALL HOURS

- Monday: 7:00am-4:30pm
- Tuesday: 8:00am-4:30pm
- Wednesday: 8:00am-4:30pm
- Thursday: 8:00am-4:30pm
- Friday: Closed

### ONLINE SERVICES

[www.falmouthme.org/home/pages/online-services](http://www.falmouthme.org/home/pages/online-services)

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## BROWNTAIL MOTH

The infestation of browntail moth continues throughout parts of Maine. Fortunately, Falmouth has seen a reduction in nests and levels of infestation. In January, Davey Tree Experts assessed trees along public roadways and properties in Falmouth. The intent of the assessment was not to identify every tree within public ways with nests, but to identify high risk areas. Threshold levels used were approximately 8 to 10 nests per tree, or areas where there were multiple trees with six or more nests along or in a public way. The assessment found that no areas met the moderate criteria and found no nests at all along the majority of the community's public roadways. Based on this assessment, the Town will not proceed with a roadside spraying program this year. These findings do not indicate that browntail moth has been eradicated in Falmouth.

Residents are advised to assess their own properties for nests during the winter months. The best means of preventing an infestation on your property is to clip and destroy overwintering webs between October and mid-April. It is also best practice to treat trees before leaves have filled in, generally by the end of May or the first week in June. Residents will need to hire a qualified contractor to treat trees on their property. Please note, the poisonous hairs responsible for the rash that accompanies exposure to browntail moth can remain in the environment and toxic for up to three years after an infestation. Therefore, there is still a possibility of exposure this year. For additional information on browntail moth, visit: [www.falmouthme.org/home/pages/browntail-moth-o](http://www.falmouthme.org/home/pages/browntail-moth-o)

## FY2022-2023 BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Falmouth will hold the following meetings regarding the FY23 Budget.

- March 30--Joint Town and School Finance Committee Budget Presentation (Finance Committee)
- April 6--Public Hearing – FY23 Budget (Town Council)--**Opportunity for public comment**
- April 25--Council Vote to Approve (Town Council)

With the exception of the Public Hearing, public comment is not typically heard at these budget development meetings. Those who would like to offer input prior to the Public Hearing are encouraged to contact any Town Councilor or the Town Manager. Contact information can be found at [www.falmouthme.org/town-council-town-manager](http://www.falmouthme.org/town-council-town-manager).

### Ongoing Expansion of Fire-EMS

There are a few budget drivers impacting the proposed mil rate increase this year. The FY23 budget includes funding to implement Phase 2 of the Fire-EMS staffing plan by adding 12 additional full-time firefighter/EMS staff to achieve 10 people on duty, staffing two stations at all times.

A staffing study, completed in early 2020, concluded that the level of service provided by Fire-EMS was not sustainable with the staffing structure in place at that time. The study recommended a multi-year phased plan to substantially expand full-time staffing to meet the increasing demands of service and diminishing supply of part-time staffing and volunteer/call members. Learn more about the Fire-EMS expansion and its impact on the budget at: [www.falmouthme.org/finance/pages/fy-22-23-budget](http://www.falmouthme.org/finance/pages/fy-22-23-budget).

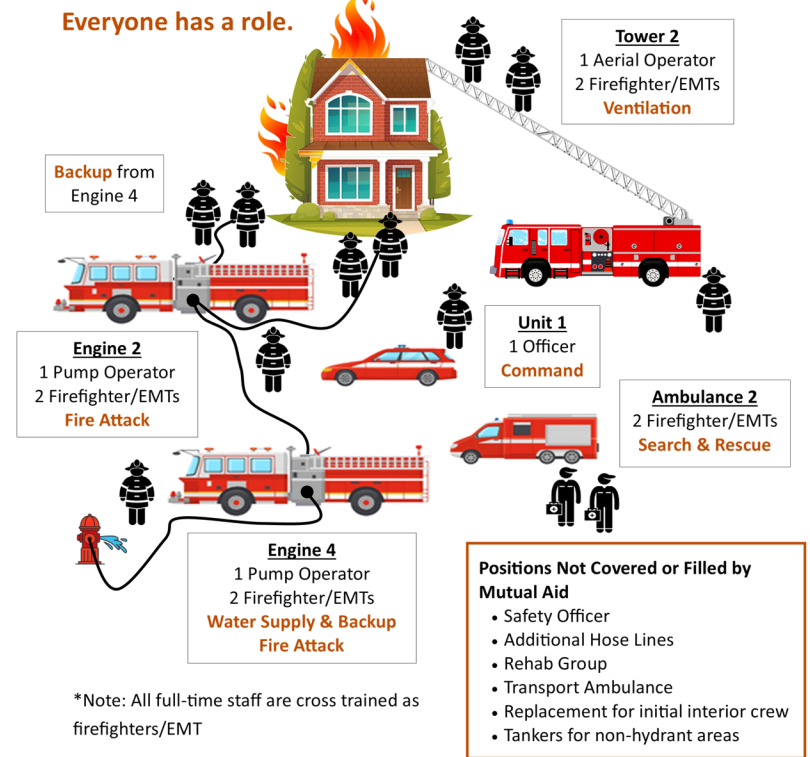
### Restoration of Capital Improvements

An additional driver for the proposed budget is restoring the substantial reductions to capital

improvements which were made to the FY21 budget. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, Town Councilors and staff revisited the FY21 budget, which had yet to be passed. The goal was to find areas where cuts could be made to reduce the increase to the mil rate while maintaining the planned Phase 1 expansion to Fire-EMS. This goal was accomplished through the elimination of positions, postponement of

### Why so many firefighters?\*

Everyone has a role.



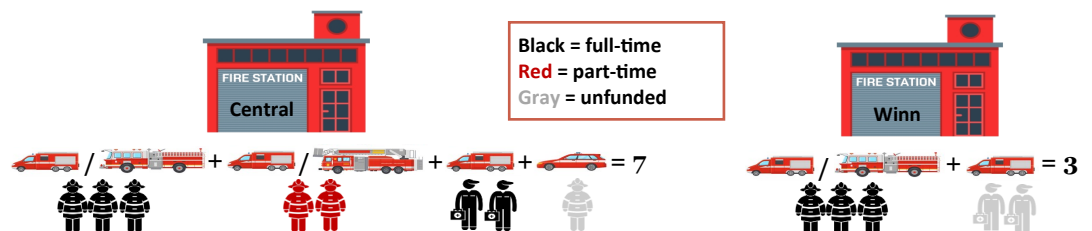
capital improvement projects, and delayed hiring. The FY23 budget will significantly restore the capital improvements cut in FY21.

### Revenue and Reductions

While these increases are substantial, they are offset by a projected increase in revenue, funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), reductions in spending, and the deferral of projects. As a result, the projected mil rate increase will be \$.60. The impact on a \$400,000 home (based on 2009 property valuation) would be \$240. This does not include the school budget. For more information, visit: [www.falmouthme.org/finance/pages/fy-22-23-budget](http://www.falmouthme.org/finance/pages/fy-22-23-budget).

### 2023 Phase 2 Fire-EMS Staffing Plan

Hire 12 additional full-time firefighter/EMS staff to achieve 10 people on duty 24/7.



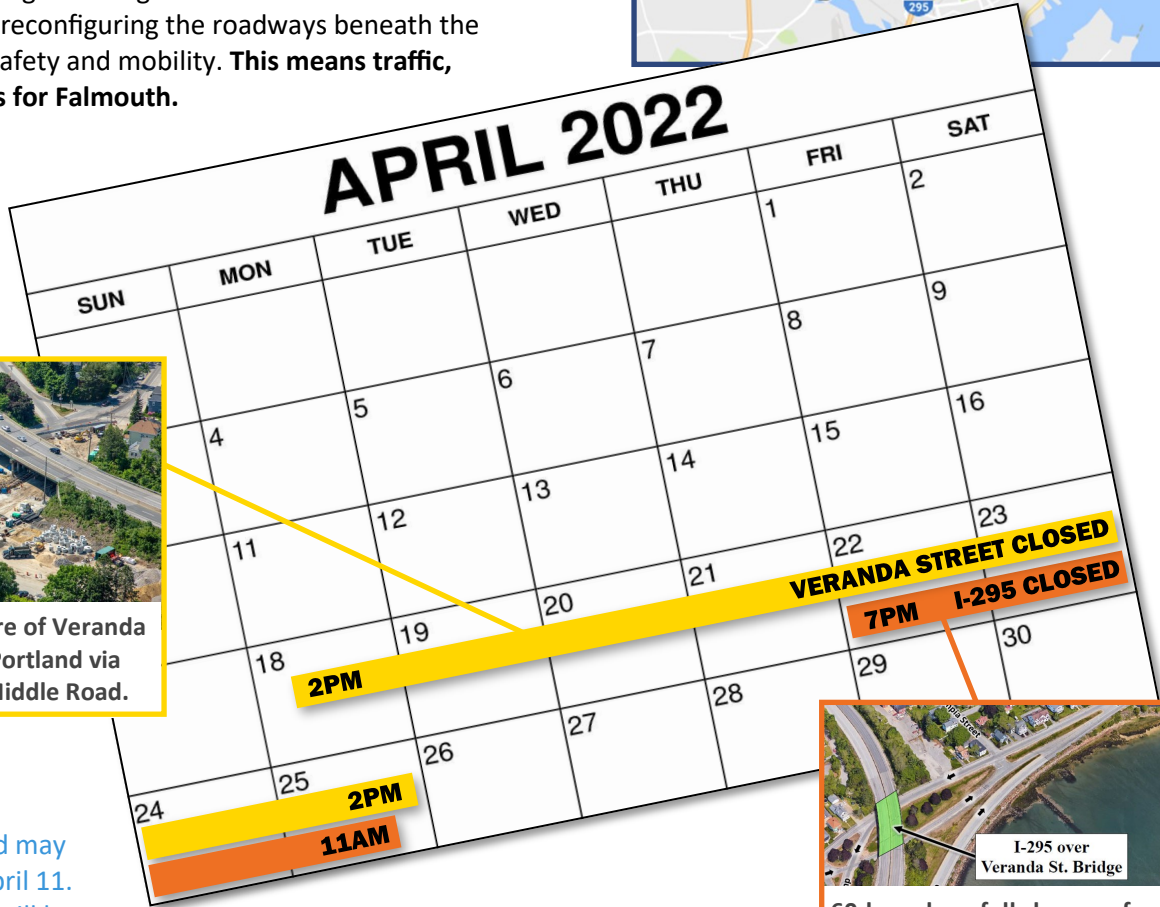
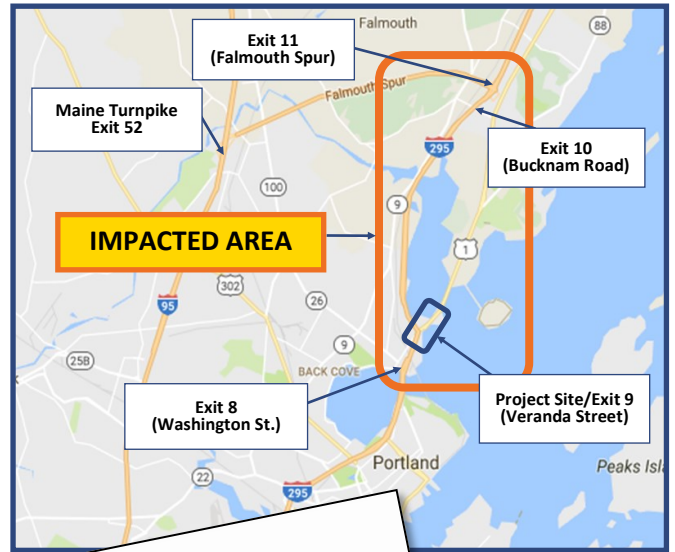
\*All staff are firefighters and EMS providers

# THE VERANDA PLAN

**CLOSING I-295 PORTLAND-FALMOUTH**  
 APRIL 22 AT 7 PM-APRIL 25 AT 11 AM, 2022

## VERANDA STREET BRIDGE PROJECT MEANS MAJOR TRAFFIC FOR FALMOUTH

MaineDOT is replacing the bridge that carries I-295 over Veranda Street at Exit 9 and reconfiguring the roadways beneath the bridge to improve safety and mobility. **This means traffic, delays, and detours for Falmouth.**



Week-long full closure of Veranda Street. No travel to Portland via Route 1. Detour to Middle Road.

\*Exit 9 Southbound may close as early as April 11. More information will be forthcoming regarding this potential closure.



I-295 over Veranda St. Bridge  
 60-hour-long full closure of I-295. Interstate traffic routed through Falmouth.

LEARN MORE AT:  
[VERANDAPLAN.ORG](http://VERANDAPLAN.ORG)



## PINE GROVE PRESERVE FORESTRY MANAGEMENT PLAN

To address safety concerns and improve the health of Pine Grove Preserve, located off Route 88, the Town of Falmouth will implement a forestry management plan in spring/summer 2022 that includes a substantial harvest of dead and dying pine trees on this property to create a safe environment for visitors to the preserve. This will significantly alter the look of Pine Grove Preserve in the short term and may be shocking to some residents, especially as dead trees and invasives are also removed from the forest floor.

For the health of the forest, however, this type of harvest is necessary. Heavy equipment is required for the project which will cause noise and increased traffic on Route 88. The preserve will be closed to visitors during the harvest. While it may appear extreme, this Forest Management Plan will improve the health of the preserve for generations to come. Learn more at: [www.falmouthme.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf556/f/uploads/focus\\_on\\_pine\\_grove\\_january\\_2022\\_final.pdf](http://www.falmouthme.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf556/f/uploads/focus_on_pine_grove_january_2022_final.pdf).

# TOWN-WIDE REVALUATION

The Town of Falmouth commenced its revaluation of all real estate beginning in January 2021. Under the supervision of Cumberland County Regional Assessing, the Town has contracted with Vision Government Solutions to perform this work. During a revaluation, all real property in the town is reviewed and assessments are adjusted to their fair market value. A revaluation equalizes the values of all properties within a municipality for the purpose of a fair distribution of the tax burden. The results of the revaluation will be applied to November 2022 property tax bills.

Data collectors from Vision Government Solutions began visiting Falmouth properties to conduct exterior evaluations in January 2021 and have moved from west to east through town. Within the coming weeks, residents who have already undergone exterior evaluations will receive letters with instructions on scheduling an interior evaluation of their home. While it is not mandatory for residents to allow inspectors interior access, the data collected is vitally important to the accuracy and uniformity of the assessments.



## Will my taxes go up? Not necessarily.

**Before Revaluation**

Property Value: \$400,000

Town-wide Valuation: \$2.4B

**Tax Rate:** \$17.43 per \$1,000 of assessed value

\$17.43 (rate) X 400 (thousands) = \$6,972 (tax bill)

Because homes have not been assessed in many years, values are likely to increase with the revaluation.

**After Revaluation\***

Adjusted property Value: \$567,000

Town-wide Valuation: \$3.4B

**Tax Rate:** \$12.30 per \$1,000 of assessed value

\$12.30 (rate) X 567 (thousands) = \$6,974 (tax bill)

In the box to the left, the property increased in value at the same rate as the average property in town, so property taxes remained virtually the same. But other scenarios will also occur.

**Value Increased More than the Average Rate**

Property Value: \$600,000

Tax Bill: \$7,380  
Increase in taxes

**Value Did Not Increase at the Same Rate as Average**

Property Value: \$525,000

Tax Bill: \$6,458  
Decrease in taxes

\*Note: These figures are examples and reflect pre-revaluation data. They are for illustrative purposes only. They should not be construed as predictive of the outcomes of the revaluation, nor do they include any proposed increase to the municipal budget. Final revaluation data will become available in the coming months.

In addition, Income & Expense form letters have been sent to all commercial properties. Business and property owners are asked to complete the forms to the best of their ability and return to the Assessor's Office promptly.

Find more information at: [www.falmouthme.org/home/pages/revaluation-project-2021-2022](http://www.falmouthme.org/home/pages/revaluation-project-2021-2022). General questions can be directed to the Assessor's Office at 207-871-8380.

**THE TOWN OF FALMOUTH**  
271 Falmouth Road  
Falmouth, ME 04105

Phone: 207-781-5253  
[www.falmouthme.org](http://www.falmouthme.org)

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MAINE

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[youtube.com/user/FalmouthMaine](https://youtube.com/user/FalmouthMaine)

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