

TOWN DEPARTMENT FUNDING

(Adopted 2004)

The League of Women Voters of Westport supports funding town departments other than the Department of Parks and Recreation* primarily through taxes. Charging reasonable fees for services is an acceptable way to supplement/augment town revenue, but should not become a significant funding mechanism.

Explanation:

The LWV believes that services provided by town departments which directly or indirectly benefit all Westport residents should be paid for by all residents through their property taxes. Funding departments primarily through taxes is justified because those residents who do not directly use specific services benefit indirectly from these services. Charging reasonable fees for services can help offset costs, but should be considered a supplement, not an alternative, to taxes. Many services provided by town employees promote the welfare of all residents and cannot be cost analyzed. The LWV believes that it is appropriate to increase existing fees to improve staffing levels and department resources.

Because income from fees may be erratic due to fluctuations in the economy, or other unforeseen circumstances, the LWV believes the Town should avoid relying on fees for funding for town services.

It has been traditional for the Town to charge user fees for those services which directly benefit individuals or organizations. Over the years only certain departments have charged fees. In order to control increases in existing fees, consideration should be given to instituting fees in other areas.

Large capital expenditures should be paid for through taxes, not user fees, since such major capital improvements benefit every resident of Westport either directly or indirectly.

* Please refer to the League of Women Voters of Westport's position on Parks and Recreation.