

Fiscal Capacity

Fiscal Management

Comprehensive plans are not meant to dictate the town's day-to-day financial decisions but rather to highlight long-term trends and needs that may arise from growth and development. While larger municipalities may respond to these needs with expanded facilities and services, Brighton Plantation operates with a limited scope of public services, primarily road maintenance and a transfer station.

The town's ability to sustain these essential services depends on careful fiscal management, especially given its small tax base and reliance on property taxes. Challenges such as gradual population changes, evolving state and federal mandates, and the need to maintain infrastructure must be balanced within the town's limited financial capacity. Strategic planning ensures that Brighton Plantation remains fiscally responsible while continuing to meet its residents' basic needs.

Local property values were last assessed in 2024.

Brighton Plantation, as a very small and rural municipality, provides only a limited number of public services and therefore has a minimal need for annual capital improvements. Because of this, and due to its clear and responsible accounting and budgeting practices, the Plantation has been able to operate without incurring any debt. Brighton remains in full compliance with 30 MRSA, Section 5061, as amended, which limits municipal debt to no more than 15 percent of the state valuation. From 2019 through 2023, the Plantation maintained a debt-free status, with no outstanding financial obligations during that time

TABLE 2: LIST OF TAX-EXEMPT PROPERTIES AND EXEMPTION AMOUNTS

| Tax Exempt Properties | 2024 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Total Value Government and Municipal | \$119,110 |
| Literary and Scientific | \$0 |
| Total exempt churches and parsonages | \$25,670 |
| Fraternal Organizations | \$0 |
| Property leased by hospitals | \$0 |
| Pollution control facilities | \$0 |
| Quasi-governmental organizations | \$0 |
| Total Value Veteran exemptions | \$45,360 |
| TOTAL | \$190,140 |
| STATE VALUATION | \$14,850,000 |
| Percent Exempt | 1.2% |

Source: 2023 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary

With only 1.2% of Brighton Plantation’s properties classified as tax-exempt, nearly all landowners contribute to the town’s property tax revenue. This indicates a strong and stable tax base, as the town is not significantly impacted by non-taxable entities such as government buildings, churches, or nonprofit organizations. Unlike larger municipalities that may struggle with a growing number of tax-exempt properties, Brighton Plantation’s financial burden is shared almost entirely by its residents and landowners. Given the town’s small size and minimal public services this stable tax base is crucial for maintaining essential functions.

TABLE 3: SIX YEARS OF STATE VALUATIONS FOR BRIGHTON PLANTATION

| Year | State Valuation |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 2019 | \$13,450,000 |
| 2020 | \$13,400,000 |
| 2021 | \$13,550,000 |
| 2022 | \$13,900,000 |
| 2023 | \$13,600,000 |
| 2024 | \$14,850,000 |

Source: Municipal Valuation Statistical Summary

TABLE 4: FIVE YEARS OF BRIGHTON'S BUDGET INFORMATION

| YEAR | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023* |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| STATE VALUATION | \$13,450,000 | \$13,400,000 | \$13,550,000 | \$13,900,000 | \$13,600,000 |
| COUNTY TAX | \$32,250.78 | \$31,607.00 | \$30,204.04 | \$31,193.05 | \$30,330.83 |
| EDUCATION APPROPRIATION (Special Assessment) | \$120,768.00 | \$133,566.00 | \$105,465.00 | \$134,250.00 | \$51,937.66 |
| MILL RATE | 0.01850 | 0.02000 | 0.01750 | 0.01750 | 0.01550 |
| REVENUES | | | | | |
| General Fund (taxes, fees, etc.) | \$266,345.86 | \$276,708.38 | \$246,102.95 | \$239,396.25 | \$229,549.47 |
| Intergovernmental | \$133,170.42 | \$92,280.10 | \$126,276.74 | \$182,999.41 | \$121,428.14 |
| Charges for Services | \$999.72 | \$1,176.88 | \$1,264.72 | \$644.72 | \$156.48 |
| Interest | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$336.33 |
| Miscellaneous | \$1,718.89 | \$4,389.45 | \$2,023.34 | \$394.13 | \$5,264.90 |
| TOTAL REVENUES | \$402,234.89 | \$374,554.81 | \$375,667.75 | \$423,434.51 | \$356,735.32 |
| EXPENDITURES | | | | | |
| General Government | \$46,900.00 | \$41,500.00 | \$32,600.00 | \$37,200.00 | \$53,500.00 |
| Public Safety | \$3,850.00 | \$5,000.00 | \$5,000.00 | \$5,000.00 | \$5,125.00 |
| Public Works | \$84,500.00 | \$84,500.00 | \$82,000.00 | \$87,500.00 | \$107,500.00 |
| Health and Sanitation | \$10,500.00 | \$20,000.00 | \$13,500.00 | \$16,500.00 | \$28,500.00 |
| Leisure Services | \$1,200.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Social Services | \$1,200.00 | \$1,200.00 | \$1,700.00 | \$1,700.00 | \$1,700.00 |
| Special Assessments (Education) | \$110,070.53 | \$113,654.10 | \$94,385.04 | \$81,522.66 | \$85,107.49 |
| Unclassified | \$4,900.00 | \$6,100.00 | \$1,200.00 | \$2,200.00 | \$200.00 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURES | \$263,120.53 | \$271,954.10 | \$230,385.04 | \$231,622.66 | \$281,632.49 |
| TOTAL DIFFERENCE | \$139,114.36 | \$102,600.71 | \$145,282.71 | \$191,811.85 | \$75,102.83 |

Source: Brighton Plantation Annual Reports

The town’s mil rate is a calculated value which means taxpayers pay the mill rate for each thousand dollars of their property’s assessed value. For example, for the 2022 tax year, property assessed for \$150,000.00, the assessed taxes were calculated by multiplying \$150,000.00 by the mil rate: $150,000.00 \times 0.01750 = \$2,625$.

Education appropriation is Brighton Plantation’s biggest expense, accounting for between 30 - 41 percent of the budget between 2019 and 2023. The education appropriation is beginning to become exceeded by the public works budget, mostly taken up by road maintenance. The public works budget accounted for 32 percent of the budget in 2019, but in 2023 that jumped to 38 percent.

Property taxes are the largest contributor to the town’s budget. Those are broken down by category in Table 5.

TABLE T5: REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY BY TYPE

| Year | Land | Buildings | Total Land and Buildings | Mil Rate | State Valuation | Total Taxable Personal Property | Motor Vehicle Excise Tax | Distribution and Transmission |
|------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|----------|-----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2019 | \$8,544,250 | \$3,721,260 | \$12,265,510 | 0.01850 | \$13,450,000 | \$33,460 | \$0 | \$548,100 |
| 2020 | \$8,525,120 | \$3,590,660 | \$12,115,780 | 0.02000 | \$13,400,000 | \$26,180 | \$0 | \$568,180 |
| 2021 | \$8,157,650 | \$3,518,300 | \$11,675,950 | 0.01750 | \$13,550,000 | \$20,470 | \$0 | \$601,510 |
| 2022 | \$8,724,940 | 3,608,100 | \$11,883,040 | 0.01750 | \$13,900,000 | \$20,470 | \$10,000 | \$601,510 |
| 2023 | \$8,723,150 | \$3,757,940 | \$12,481,090 | 0.01550 | \$13,600,000 | \$340 | \$13,000 | \$674,330 |

Source: Municipal Valuation Statistical Summary (2018-2022)

**Most recent data available*

Over the past five years, Brighton Plantation’s fiscal capacity has demonstrated a pattern of stability with modest fluctuations in valuation and tax rates. From 2019 to 2023, the total assessed value of land and buildings has remained relatively consistent, ranging from approximately \$11.6 million to \$12.5 million. Notably, the mil rate has decreased from a high of 0.02000 in 2020 to 0.01550 in 2023, signaling a reduction in the property tax burden on residents. This trend coincides with a steady increase in the State Valuation, which rose from \$13.45 million in 2019 to \$13.6 million in 2023, suggesting a gradual growth in the municipality’s overall taxable value. The assessed value of taxable personal property has declined significantly, dropping from \$33,460 in 2019 to just \$340 in 2023, while the motor vehicle excise tax has increased slightly from \$0 in earlier years to \$13,000 in 2023, likely reflecting changes in vehicle ownership or registration activity. Revenue from distribution and transmission lines also increased from \$548,100 in 2019 to \$674,330 in 2023, providing an important and growing source of municipal income.

Accounting Practices:

Brighton Plantation's financial records are audited annually, with audits from 2019 to 2022 conducted by Hamlin Associates, Inc. Each audit has been favorable, noting the town's sound financial management and transparent accounting practices, as detailed in the annual reports. The town has never needed to borrow money and has no foreseeable capital projects that would require debt. In recent years, with the support of a new combined town clerk/treasurer, Brighton has begun strategically investing its funds and generating additional revenue through interest earnings, further strengthening its financial position.

Tax Collection Rate:

Brighton Plantation strives to manage town finances as prudently as possible, keeping property taxes reasonable and broadly affordable. The current-year tax collection rate has remained stable. Despite relying on tree-growth classification, the town allocates a portion of its annual tree-growth reimbursement to help offset residents' property tax bills (though the precise dollar figure wasn't publicly specified in available annual reports).

Residents increasingly notice the imbalance between what corporate timber companies pay per acre under tree-growth valuations and what private residents contribute, an inequity felt more keenly as economic and demographic shifts unfold. Town officials, both elected and appointed, remain vigilant in efforts to minimize tax burdens, aiming to reinforce fairness while preserving fiscal stability.

Summary and Findings:

Brighton Plantation has demonstrated strong fiscal responsibility through careful budgeting and financial management. This is evident in the Plantation's consistent debt-free status and its adherence to both the Maine Bond Bank's recommended limits and state statute over the past five years. With limited public services and modest financial needs, Brighton has effectively maintained stable municipal finances. Notably, the mil rate has remained relatively steady between 2019 and 2023, reflecting the Plantation's prudent approach to taxation and spending.