

**TOWN OF WALPOLE
MEETING OF THE SELECTBOARD
NOVEMBER 24, 2021**

Selectboard Present: Cheryl Mayberry (Chair); Steven Dalessio; Peggy L. Pschirrer

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Mayberry called this Selectboard meeting to order at 8:30 AM in the Walpole Town Hall. This meeting was being recorded. Also present was Mrs. Sarah Downing, Manager of Administration, and Mrs. Regina Borden, Recording Secretary. There was one member of the public in attendance: Mr. Ray Boas.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE:

There was no Accounts Payable Check Register due to the short week.

PAYROLL:

Mrs. Pschirrer moved to accept the Payroll Check Register for the week ending November 20, 2021, in the amount of \$28,483.10 for checks dated November 26, 2021, and for the 941 Payroll Tax Transfer in the amount of \$5,588.34. Seconded by Mr. Dalessio. With Mrs. Pschirrer, Mr. Dalessio and Ms. Mayberry in favor, the motion was approved.

PHONE CALL With Executive Counselor Cinde Warmington: This call is to discuss the Vilas Bridge and the Ten-Year Transportation Plan. Mrs. Warmington advised they conducted a hearing in Keene, heard feedback about the Vilas Bridge and the desire to have that bridge rehabilitated. That item is currently in the Ten-Year Plan #41720. It was entered with a total cost of \$17,786,000. The problem is the assumption that New Hampshire (NH) would fund 50% of the bridge replacement and the other 50% would come from other sources presumably Vermont (VT). She proceeded to have discussions with the Department of Transportation (DOT) about whether VT had agreed to fund this bridge at 50% and the response she got was "No, they had not". They believe that VT would be willing to fund the bridge at 7% based on where the state line is on their side of the River. There is a significant gap between 50% and 93%; her question was how is this bridge ever going to be built if they do not increase the funding? She thinks everyone she was talking to at the VT DOT felt like that was a legitimate question to ask. It did not seem like that 50% was forthcoming. Therefore, while this project was in the Ten-Year Plan, it was not going to get built. She then asked for the historic documents documenting the original agreement for NH to maintain that bridge and also asked for the justification that the department is using for the 50% funding number. She reviewed that information and then sat down with the department last week to say she really does not think there is any legitimate reason why NH is not funding this bridge at 93%. There is no justification for the 50% number. The department does understand. They take the position that VT and Bellows Falls in particular, benefit from this bridge and has vigorously advocated for the bridge repairs. However, there is no legal reason why VT would be responsible for 50% of the funding for the bridge. She asked why not now, while we have some additional funding in the budget, increase the allocation for funding the Vilas Bridge to 93%? They said they would be willing to put that in as a proposed change to the draft of the Ten-Year Plan. The way the process works is the department meets with the Executive Counselors who take into consideration all of the projects they want done. There is a list with the changes that comes back to the counselors, and they are voted on. If there is enough money to fund all the changes, there is a greater likelihood that the council will approve all changes, but not necessarily. The council can opt to approve the changes all together or take them line-by-line. Historically, Councilor Wheeler, who is Chair, has wanted to take them line-by-line. If we ask for and are allocated additional money in the Ten-Year Plan, it will bring attention to this item and the Council will have the opportunity to vote on it; that result could be the item is taken out all together from the Ten-Year Plan. That is the risk with proceeding to ask for full funding and it would be deleted all together from

plan by a vote of the council. That is likely if there is not enough funding to cover all of the projects that are proposed by all the Executive Counselors. At the time she met with the DOT, she was the second counselor to meet with them. They still did not know what the total cost would be of all the counselors' preferred projects. Her response was would they put it in there at least for the sake of calculating whether there is enough money or not and once they have met with all the Counselors would they contact her to let her know so she can make a final decision; it would give her the opportunity to discuss it with the Town of Walpole Selectboard to see what they want to do. Her sense is it is good to have the Vilas Bridge in the Ten-Year Plan. However, if only funded at 50% it would likely never be built. She thinks with the infrastructure money they have coming this is the best chance they have of getting 93% funding for this project. It is up to the Selectboard to decide whether or not they want to take the risk that it may get deleted all together from the plan. It is much different than having it on the plan at 50% but she understands that people are glad to have it at least recognized in the plan. It is up to the Selectboard to decide if they wish to move forward. She wants their input on this question. Would they like her to request that the full funding be in the Plan? She does not yet know what the numbers are. She would like to keep the sewer line separate for the moment.

Mr. Dalessio advised that whether it is in at 93%, 50% or even 10%, he believes that Walpole should continue to look at the options of putting in a bypass sewer line or maybe even a permanent fix for that. This is the biggest impact on that bridge. If the sewer line fails, they would have a regional environmental catastrophe. It would be an enormous burden for the people all of a sudden. Ms. Mayberry noted the question Mrs. Warrington is asking is if they are okay with her putting it in at the 93% with the risk that it might come off the plan all together.

Mrs. Pschirrer is in favor of Mrs. Worthington trying to put it in at 93% but, like Mr. Dalessio, if it goes in at 93% or if it gets dropped, their mission is to get those sewer pipes out from underneath that bridge. The 93% demonstrates to Bellows Falls that they have made an honest effort to try to do something to restore that bridge. As good neighbors they understand their desperate need to have this bridge repaired/replaced. She knows at 50% it will never be done; at 93% NH might never repair that bridge.

Mrs. Warrington stated there is infrastructure money now. The NH DOT does not prioritize this bridge because they feel this bridge is redundant as there is another bridge a short distance up the road. From a transportation perspective, they feel this bridge would not rise to the priority in competition with the many transportation needs in the state. She agrees this would not be considered a priority bridge. With the extra funding now available this may be the best time to try to get it funded. Mr. Dalessio, Mrs. Pschirrer and Ms. Mayberry all agreed with this statement. Even with the risk, it may come out all-together.

Mrs. Worthington began the discussion about the sewer line. She had some discussion with DOT, but they indicated the sewer line was not their problem. The Town of Walpole needs to take care of that. They said if they rebuild the bridge, the Town will have to re-route the sewer line anyway. She asked them when they usually rebuild a bridge with utilities on it what do they do. They said they could do a number of things including building a temporary bridge that just carries the utilities across the River while they do the bridge work and then put the utilities back on the rebuilt bridge. Even if it gets funded it is scheduled for 2028/2029 construction at this time. She does think there is money available for water and sewer infrastructure projects through ARPA and this new Infrastructure Bill. It may be a good opportunity for the Town to take a look to see if there is any funding available that would allow them to reroute that sewer line a different way over to Bellows Falls.

Mrs. Pschirrer asked for clarification. When Mrs. Warmington said the people at NH DOT said this is not their problem but the Town's problem, the Town will need permission from the DOT to go up Route 12 to move the line. She does not have a problem with accepting this as the Town's problem and finding the money to do it. Will DOT cooperate with the proper permitting? In talking with folks, Mrs. Warmington feels it will be very difficult to reroute that line up to the next bridge. She heard feedback about there being a lot of ledge, blasting, etc. She asked DOT about what if it is cost prohibitive for Walpole to run that line up the road. They asked if Walpole had done any engineering or looked at options and, if so, they would like to see that and work with them. It is up to the Town to come up with the solution and then talk to them so it is too soon to say will they cooperate. Mr. Dalessio replied that the Town has done survey work and is considering a bypass line. As long as the Vilas Bridge line is capable, they would continue to use that line. Only if it should fail would they switch over to the bypass line. There are other options to move that line in a permanent way. That might be to move that line over to the railroad bridge that is next to the Vilas Bridge. We are not at that phase yet, but they need to start looking for money to do the engineering phase. They have been funding the survey work from surplus funds in the Sewer Fund. It is not sustainable to continue doing that. There is still a lot of engineering work to be done before they go to the DOT or whatever bureau they should go to. Mrs. Warmington said there are funds available for the kind of engineering work he is talking about. She does not know all the details of ARPA or the Infrastructure money. She suggested going to Mr. Bob Scott at DOT next to ask for someone to work with the Town to look at what the options are. Mr. Dalessio mentioned they are looking to hire someone from the Municipal Resources group (MRI) to help the Town navigate through the opportunities. Mrs. Warmington said it is the people who are ready that will get the funds. Do not miss this opportunity to move forward. In her district there are some projects that people are not in agreement on and that is frustrating. They will miss the opportunity. Mrs. Warmington will make the call to Mr. Scott. The Selectboard would designate Mr. Mark Houghton, Director of Water and Sewer plus the Emergency Management Director and Fire Chief /EMS Director as the Town's contact person. If all five counselors' projects add up to more money than they have available, do they still want to go forward with the 93%? Vilas Bridge could be a target to be cut. If they have enough funding, it is clear they should go forward. If there is not enough funding do the Selectboard members want her to keep the Vilas Bridge in at 50% or go ahead with the 93% and take our chances? Mr. Dalessio, Mrs. Pschirrer and Ms. Mayberry stated to go ahead with the 93% and see what happens. The Selectboard thanked Mrs. Warmington for this information and wished her a happy holiday.

NON-PUBLIC SELECTBOARD SESSION:

Mrs. Pschirrer moved to enter into a Non-Public Selectboard Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II to discuss (d) Acquisition, Sale or Lease of Real or Personal Property. Seconded by Mr. Dalessio. With Mrs. Pschirrer, Mr. Dalessio and Ms. Mayberry in favor, the motion was approved at 8:53 AM.

The regular Selectboard meeting resumed at 9:16 AM.

Mrs. Pschirrer moved that the Minutes of the Non-Public Selectboard Session of November 24, 2021, will be sealed. Seconded by Mr. Dalessio. With Mrs. Pschirrer, Mr. Dalessio and Ms. Mayberry in favor, the motion was approved.

Mr. Ray Boas left the meeting. Mr. Richard Kreissle came into the meeting.

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES:

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES – November 18, 2021: Mrs. Pschirrer moved to accept the Minutes of the Selectboard meeting of November 18, 2021, as submitted. Seconded by Mr. Dalessio. With Mrs. Pschirrer, Mr. Dalessio and Ms. Mayberry in favor, the Minutes were approved.

NON-PUBLIC SELECTBOARD SESSION MINUTES – November 18, 2021: Mrs. Pschirrer moved to accept the Minutes of the Non-Public Selectboard Session of November 18, 2021, as submitted. These Minutes will remain sealed. Seconded by Mr. Dalessio. With Mrs. Pschirrer, Mr. Dalessio and Ms. Mayberry in favor, the Minutes were approved.

STAFF MEETING MINUTES - November 18, 2021: Mrs. Pschirrer moved to accept the Minutes of the Staff Meeting of November 18, 2021, as submitted. Seconded by Mr. Dalessio. With Mrs. Pschirrer, Mr. Dalessio and Ms. Mayberry in favor, the Minutes were approved.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

The Selectboard acknowledged receipt of the following Committee reports:

- North Walpole Village District Board of Commissioners Meeting – October 19, 2021;
- North Walpole Village District Board of Commissioners Meeting – October 26, 2021;
- North Walpole Village District Board of Commissioners Meeting – November 2, 2021;
- Zoning Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes – November 17, 2021.

OLD BUSINESS:

2021 Preliminary Tax Rate: Mr. Kreissle had distributed information regarding last year's decisions to the Selectboard. He reviewed those calculations. North Walpole has their own tax rate. Ms. Mayberry pointed out that the Selectboard needs to make a decision on the Overlay for the Abatement amount and the fund balances so it can be sent to the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA). Mr. Kreissle noted the DRA will not allow spending more than what is voted on by the voters. Mrs. Pschirrer said they are looking at the \$1,832,805 figure. She would not take any money out of the Unassigned Fund balance to reduce their tax rate because people should know what things cost. The abatement requests come because people get their tax bills and they feel they are being taxed excessively. They sold a lot of property this year. Mrs. Pschirrer feels the Overlay (Abatement) figure should be set at \$65,000. They over-spent the Highway Department budget because they had not included the \$80,000 for paving Elm Street. This amount will be taken out of other line balances. Mr. Dalessio mentioned their responsibility is not to over-spend the total budget. Mrs. Pschirrer noted that last year they put in money to paint the Town Hall, etc. but they were not able to do all the projects so they are encumbering those funds. What would they be doing next year that they potentially would have spent out of the Unassigned Fund balance? The Library has chimney problems that need to be taken care of, a new roof is needed on the Town Hall, the Highway Department needs a new sidewalk plow and the Police will need a new vehicle. The pool repair is a potential as they do not know where that leak is coming from. Tennis courts were repaired temporarily this year but eventually they will need to be replaced. Mr. Kreissle advised the DRA likes towns to maintain the Unassigned Fund balance between 7% and 17%.

Mr. Dalessio moved to make the following changes to the preliminary tax rate: Change the Overlay figure (Abatements) to \$65,000 and move \$500,000 from the Unassigned Fund Balance for Capital Projects in 2022. Seconded by Mrs. Pschirrer. With Mr. Dalessio, Mrs. Pschirrer and Ms. Mayberry in favor, the motion was approved.

Reservoir Dam Meeting Update: Mr. Dalessio reported the Reservoir Dam has been reclassified as a High Hazard Dam. That requires certain modifications to the dam but there are options: 1) modify the dam structure in a way that they can reduce the level of the dam and still maintain the recreational properties. That is what they are pursuing at this point; and 2) they contacted an engineering company; Fuss & O’Neill, who will work up a proposal and cost estimate to bring the Dam into compliance but keep the recreational aspect. It will be determined by cost and what the voters will want to see happen.

Mill Pond Dam: Mr. Dalessio advised the Town received the Letter of Deficiencies on the Mill Pond Dam. It will be tied into the Mill Pond Bridge.

Pending Further Actions:

Houghton Brook Bridge, Generators, Three Phase Power for Industrial Park Drive and Bensonwood, Tree Plan for Common, Wooden Chairs in Town Hall

Bench On The Common: Ms. Mayberry mentioned when the Selectboard was walking with Arborclimb they talked about where the bench would be placed. A decision was made to put it on the far end of the Common near the Church in line with Middle Street; the bench will face the Common. Following this meeting the Selectboard will meet with Mr. Brad Nash to put a stake in the ground where the bench will be placed.

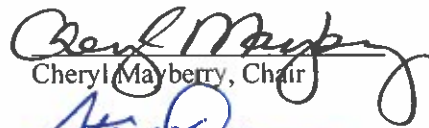
NEW BUSINESS:

Memo re: Drainage Deficiencies on South Street: A memo was received from Mr. Chas Street regarding drainage deficiencies on South Street. Mrs. Pschirrer pointed out that South Street is a State road. They repaved that street so should take care of this problem. The Town now plows that street which is the State’s responsibility. Ms. Mayberry noted he did send a copy to the State. Should the Town follow-up with the State to advise it is their problem? Mr. Dalessio suggested they ask Mr. Rau to take a look at the area before contacting the State.

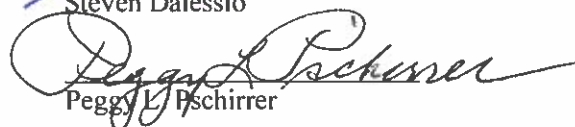
ADJOURNMENT:

Mrs. Pschirrer moved to adjourn this Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Mr. Dalessio. Ms. Mayberry asked if there was any other discussion. There was none. With Mrs. Pschirrer, Mr. Dalessio and Ms. Mayberry in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 10:02 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary


Cheryl Mayberry, Chair


Steven Dalessio


Peggy L. Pschirrer

(Note: These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be found in the Minutes of the December 2, 2021, Selectboard meeting.)

