

TOWN OF WALPOLE
STAFF MEETING
February 16, 2023

Selectboard Present: Peggy L. Pschirrer, Chair; Cheryl Mayberry Excused: Steve Dalessio

Staff Present: Sarah Downing (Manager of Administration); Jordan Cannon (Recording Secretary); Richard Kreissle (Administrator of Finance); Ben Hoy (Recycling Director); Helen Dalbeck (Hooper Institute Executive Director); Jane Malmberg (Library Director); Meghan Hansson (Town Clerk/Tax Collector); Mike Rau (Road Agent); Kraig Harlow (Recreation Director); Justin Sanctuary (Police Chief)

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Pschirrer called the staff meeting to order at 5:00 PM in the Walpole Town Hall. There were no members of the public present. She introduced the new Recording Secretary, Jordan Cannon to the staff members in attendance.

Ms. Pschirrer called upon Mr. Kraig Harlow to give his departmental report.

RECREATION:

Hockey Rink

- The hockey rink extension was delivered on 2/7/2023.
- Unfortunately, due to the warm weather all winter we asked the highway department to store it for us until spring.
- He discussed the winter weather being warm, and thus not good for hockey.

Soccer

- Recreation Committee approved the purchase of 4 new soccer goals for \$3,280 to replace the old goals that are 15-years old.

Age in Motion

- Recreation Committee endorsed the support of Age in Motion program. Classes begin 2.2.2023 in Town Hall on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9am to 10am.
- We had 34 people attend the first week and 24 people attend the second week.

Winter Basketball

- We had 90 children who signed up for basketball from grades 1st-6th grade. This is almost 40 more children than last year.
- Our last game was held on Monday, 2/13/2023 with most teams having wrapped up their season on 2/11/2023. All participants received a certificate and medal for their participation.
- We had Diamond Pizza, EE Houghton, ServPro, Hubbards LLC, Home Away From Home, Kelly Lawn Care, Latham Electric and WW Building, all sponsoring teams this season. All of the sponsors received a plaque with their team photo.

Pickleball/Tennis

- Recreation is working with David Kuniholm and Toni McDougal on ways we can expand the use of our facilities to include more pickleball courts.
- The recreation committee agreed to paint two pickleball courts on the already existing tennis courts.
- We are currently discussing times and usage for both tennis and pickleball for the upcoming summer and a sign-in to collect data on who is using the courts.

Recreation Committee

- The recreation committee last met on Saturday, 2/11/2023.
- We'll be hosting another meeting in March; the time and date is still to be determined.

FINANCE:

Mr. Kreissle highlighted items from his report:

- He stated that all employees should have received their W-2s.
- Accounting software (AccuFund) updated promptly in the 1st week of January with the intention of getting employees W-2s out shortly thereafter.
- He stated there was a software problem involving organizations who issue W-2s to two states. This problem wasn't resolved until the weekend of 1/28-1/29. AccuFund had to be updated on 1/30 before it could be successfully run.
- 1095s: Information return simply showing that employees have health insurance for the year. No tax implication. Due 3/2/23. AccuFund is trying to figure out why I can't run the 1095s.
- Entered the Town's budget into the Department of Revenue's portal. Fixed all issues as indicated by the DRA.
- Worked on the exposures for Primex for unemployment and workers' compensation. They go towards the determination of future rates.
- Dental: All questions involving dental claims should now come to Richard Kriessle.

RECYCLING:

Mr. Hoy stated that the Walpole Recycling truck passed inspection. The Bobcat is going to be serviced this month. Slow business at the recycling center in the winter, so we are catching up on some interior painting, cart repair, and basic machinery maintenance.

Northstar Pulp and Paper in Springfield, MA was purchased by Casella. They provide us with extra pallets and gaylords on top of what Mr. G's can give us. We have a large stockpile of gaylords and pallets, enough where we can use them as sleds for the Hooper kids' program.

New York City artist, Michael Albert is putting on a crafting experience open to the public at Walpole Reuse Center on Saturday, 3/4/2023. Mr. Hoy stated they were shipping plastics load to TABB plastics this month in Michigan. Metal prices are going up, as aluminum is up to .45/lb. Last year we were able to ship aluminum at \$1.08/lb. Cardboard prices are down, we are currently making \$1,000 per baled truckload of cardboard to APC Paper in Claremont. Last summer our cardboard truckload was going out for \$4,500 per truckload.

Our Walpole trash bag order from Boxes and Bags Unlimited is going to be available soon.

LIBRARY:

Mrs. Jane Malmberg presented her report.

Building and Grounds: A letter was sent to Mark McGill informing him of the Selectboard's cancellation of our agreement/request for the return of our deposit, due to his not completing the work in a timely manner. The check was received this week and remitted to Town Hall. The building subcommittee reached out to Terry Cox, Adam Vose, and Grant Taylor to invite them to submit proposals for a new door. Terry Cox submitted a proposal, but Grant Taylor declined to submit. Adam Vose submitted a revised quote.

Donations: We received a donation of Kindle from a patron that we hope to be able to circulate to patrons. A patron from the North Walpole Branch has donated two books in memory of her neighbor's dog who died recently.

Programming: Saturday, 2/4/23 was “Take your child to the library day”. We had special goodie bags to hand out to kids in celebration of the day. One of our patrons, Bob Grenier, will be leading a singalong program featuring 20th Century French songs on 2/15/23. We are hoping this will be the first in a series. The library will host a virtual Roblox program for kids in grades K-5 during winter break on 2/24/23. Our stress reduction program was rescheduled to 2/13/23, due to snow.

We are running a Winter Challenge in February and March. Patrons can pick up a bookmark with a list of library related challenges: attending a program, reading a newspaper from NewsBank, borrowing a museum pass, taking a class through Universal Class, etc. Anyone who completes all of the challenges will win a gift certificate for a hot chocolate at Burdick’s.

Staff: The Library staff have begun to work on their self-evaluations. I expect to have them all in hand by the end of the week and to finish up the evaluation process by the end of February/beginning of March.

TOWN CLERK-TAX COLLECTOR’S OFFICE:

Mrs. Meghan Hasson presented her report.

- Abatements from negative tax bills due to reassessment have proven to be complicated in terms of proper procedure. Much research has been done and much discussion with veteran tax collectors and with the following people weighing in on the topic: Loren of Avitar, Jamie Dow of DRA, and Bernie Campbell attorney for NHTCA.
- Delinquent notices were sent out 1/25/2023, which brought in a lot of payments.
- Of the 2022 fall tax warrant, only about 224K remains to be collected, which is about 3% of the warrant. For ALL warrants the amount outstanding is 506K.
- There is steady interest in being able to pay taxes with a credit card.
- Next important tax date is 3/30 when we send out the Intent to Lien notices.
- Since our last meeting, the Town Clerk has collected over 98K, 75K belonging to the town and 23K belonging to the State.
- We have processed about 63 online registrations since the last meeting.
- So far this year we have licensed 84 dogs. By this time last year, we registered 78, and the year before that 53.
- We continue to prepare for the upcoming election 3/14/23. The Accuvote card has been sent back to LHS for programming for the Town Election. We have had several absentee ballot requests so far.

HOOPER INSTITUTE:

Mrs. Helen Dalbeck gave a recap which included the following activities.

School Programs and School Gardens: To date in gr. 5, winter wildlife has been featured with the three strategies for survival plus a lesson on the three true hibernators we have in NH. Black Bear study was next with a comparative look at life cycle, anatomy, natural history of the other two North American bears, the brown bear and polar bear. The natural history of raccoon and opossum, fisher and porcupine was taught. The weasel lesson focused on river otter, mink, and ermine plus we created in class a wiggly weasel craft. NH wild dogs were this week's classes. Sixth grade has been all about the Earth Sciences with the study of the 4 earth spheres, a geological timeline, earth origins and modeling plate tectonics with wooden blocks and Oreo cookies. Most recently we made super continent party flags and Pangea puzzles which brought home the work of Alfred Wegener (continental drift theory) and plate tectonics. Exploring the difference between an island and a continent was the lead into the amazing drift of the

Indian plate into the Asia plate, creating the Himalayan Mountains lo these 50 mya.

Becky Whippie has been focusing on winter animal behavior (hibernating, migrating, being active or dormant), bear studies in pre-K, farming in K, 2, and 4th with a 4th grade visit to Malnati Farm 2/2/23. There have been tracking activities in 3rd and 1st plus butter making in K and 4th. Soon she will be tapping a maple tree or two at the Primary School and visiting a Sugar House with 4th grade. Lucky students!

Outreach and Marketing: Clarion, flyers, Facebook, school newsletter, school posters, Town Report

Administration: Ongoing, in every way. Our 2023 budget has been Board and Trustee approved. Two new board members are pending as we wait for their letters of interest (Brad Nash and Will Grossman). Liz Collinsworth is completing her term on both the Hooper Scholarship Committee and the Hooper Institute board this March. She will be missed. The TOWN REPORT article for the Hooper Institute was submitted as well as some fun photos from the year. My theme for 2022 was gratitude.

Special Events, Programs, Scholarship and Friends: Winter Fun Day, February 11, 2023 @ 2pm - 5pm. We had 50 or so people attend, with lots of young children and their parents. Board members and volunteers helped with refreshments, sled making, the sled hill, judging and awarding prizes. Cardboard was delivered thanks to the Recycling Center. Duct tape was provided by the Walpole Parent/Teacher Group. The popcorn maker was loaned from the schools and all else donated by Hooper board and staff members. We had a sunny day, a bluebird sky, sufficient snow, with moderate temps. The day was a success! Thanks to all.

NEW!: We are planning to be a community partner with the Walpole Library this fall as they host a BIG READ around the novel "The Bear". The Hooper Institute has offered to teach a bear-based natural history program for adults and a children's program with crafts. More details to follow.

Planning prep has begun for the 2023 Flower CSA and school gardens, the high tunnel repair project and the high school work program. My plan for the high school program is to hire students for Malnati Farm, Abenaki Springs, and Hooper Camps and introduce a new opportunity for a Garden Assistant to help with the school gardens and the Flower CSA. I've reached out to Carol Malnati and Bruce Bickford to gauge interest and I'm sure I will hear from them soon.

Development/Fundraising: Lend a Hand gifts and some end of year 2022 donations spilled over into 2023. I am gearing up to begin again with a spring campaign in April. Looks like we will host a Dahlia Day in May at the Hooper Institute to celebrate GL Hooper's Birthday and support our programs. This is a community led project with up to 100 pots of dahlias grown to be sold.

Scholarship The total awarded for the school year 2022-23 is \$15,000.

Other news: Our building was closed on Dec. 22 for the winter and will reopen late March, weather dependent. I've noticed some of the trim is lifting off the east side of the building, right below the roof line; an upcoming maintenance project.

HIGHWAY:

Mr. Rau stated this year there has been minimal snow. On 1/20, 1/23, 1/26, 2/7, there were winter weather call outs. The following was also included in his report:

- Winter weather call outs: 1/20, 1/23, 1/26, 2/7.
- Winter vehicle maintenance and repairs: Throughout winter operations, vehicles and equipment experience excessive workloads and harsh conditions. After most winter call outs, there is usually the need for repairs of all types and sizes. We do our best to care for these repairs in the shop. Each unit is also routinely maintained after use which includes greasing to help prolong the life of the truck or piece of equipment.
- Cold patching: As winter continues, we see an increase in potholes in various locations in town. We care for these holes with a special mixture that we obtain as needed that can be applied to the road at any temperature. When patching is needed, we do our best to pick dry and sunny days to help the material cure correctly and help the mix set and harden. Unfortunately, the cold patch is a temporary fix.
- Roadside brush, tree, and debris chipping and clean up: After heavy winds, the need to clear and chip brush on roadsides was needed. This keeps ditches clear and creates more room for snow plowing when the time comes.
- Fixed gravel roads experiencing muddy conditions. With warming conditions during the day, gravel roads are becoming muddy in areas that receive a lot of sunlight and then freeze at night. This causes less than desirable driving conditions.

SELECTBOARD OFFICE:

Facilities Update

- A solar power light for the flagpole was ordered to reduce light pollution to residences bordering the Common. A strapping kit was ordered since the pole is wider than the strapping provided with the lighting package. The current floodlight will be shut off as soon as possible. The request was made to Liberty Utilities
- The card reader scanner for Elm Street door was replaced.
- The painting of the Town Hall hallway has been completed. The map table height was adjusted since the floor is now higher after the new tile was installed.
- The Town Hall's elevator failed its inspection due to a lack of a "flashing hat" sensor. This violation will be corrected as soon as possible. There is a new State elevator inspector.

Assessing

- The deadline for filing property tax abatements is approaching quickly. The deadline for filing is March 1st. The Selectboard Office is expecting increased submission activity as the deadline approaches.
- There are two warrant articles for changes to the Elderly Property Tax Exemption and the Veterans' Tax Credit.

Human Resources

- Paid Family Medical Leave or PFML open enrollment ended on February 15th. There was low interest in the optional insurance.

Town Meeting

- Town Meeting is being held on March 18, 2023, at 1:00 PM in the Walpole Town Hall. Department managers are expected to be in attendance.
- The Town Report is almost ready to be sent to the printers. The goal is to have printed copies on or before March 7th.

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

Mr. Sanctuary presented his report.

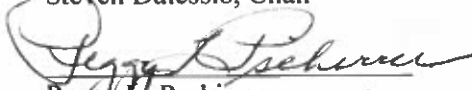
- Increase in mental illness calls. We try to watch someone until services can be utilized.
- A parade was held for a deceased K-9 this past week at Drewsville and ended at the Charlestown Animal Shelter.
- The K-9 program has been voted down in Bellows Falls, Vermont.
- Ms. Pschirrer stated butts of cannabis are being consumed by dogs and this is affecting their health.
- Ms. Pschirrer stated that she was told by a resident that the police were visible in town where people were speeding.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Pschirrer declared the meeting adjourned at 6:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jordan Cannon, Recording Secretary

Steven Dalessio, Chair


Peggy J. Pschirrer


Cheryl Mayberry

(Note: These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be found in the Minutes of the February 23, 2023, Selectboard meeting.)