

**TOWN OF WALPOLE  
2018 ANNUAL WARRANT AND BUDGET  
PUBLIC HEARING  
February 8, 2018**

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

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mrs. Pschirrer called this 2018 Annual Warrant and Budget Public Hearing to order at 6:00 PM in the Walpole Town Hall. She advised this Public Hearing is being recorded and asked anyone wishing to speak to identify themselves for the record. Most Department Managers were present. Mrs. Pschirrer thanked the public for attending. After the Selectboard have made their presentation the Public Hearing will be opened up to the public.

The following documents were available: 1) General Fund Expenditure Detail Budget for Year Ending December 31, 2017; 2) 2017 Water Expenditures and 2018 Proposed Budget for Year Ending December 31, 2017; and 3) A Word About Financing the Budget/ Budget Perspectives / 2018 Budget Breakdown Labor, Required, Discretionary.

Mrs. Pschirrer began this Public Hearing by explaining how they reach a budget. The Selectboard starts early in September and spends a full day working on the budget. They need to know what has not been taken care of in 2017, in addition to projecting and thinking ahead to 2018. The department directors are asked to draft budgets. In December they meet with each department director and review their budgets. At this time, they begin to get health care costs; in 2018 the rates went down 6.2%. This is based on usage. The life insurance and disability claims were down so those rates dropped about 32%.

They had a dramatic increase in legal fees in 2017. This was doubled in the 2018 budget. The Town was involved in some lawsuits which are now settled. Last year they made two decisions that affect this budget; 1) to buy a new loader through a lease-purchase plan; the second-year installment out of a four-year plan is \$56,863.00; 2) They also had a loan to buy a new police vehicle. The Police Department budget includes the second payment of \$10,650.00. The other lines were almost level funded. There is an increase in the asphalt/tar line. The Highway Department paved 10 miles of road this year and hope to do at least 10-to-11 miles in 2018.

A few years ago Revolving Funds were approved for the Recreation Department and Police Department. These funds have saved us money. This is money both departments bring in through their daily work. In the summer the Recreation Department sells food at the pool. Those funds go into their Revolving Fund. It buys equipment that is not budgeted for. At the end of 2017, this department had \$23,000 left out of almost \$70,000 taken in during the summer. At the end of the year the Police Department had \$27,000 left. The Revolving Funds have been very helpful.

Another helpful thing is the PDIP Program that Mr. Tom Goins (Town Treasurer) and Mr. Rich Kreissle (Manager of Finance) put together. The Town made about \$27,000 interest in 2017. This program enables them to make better money decisions.

At the end of the year the Town had an Unassigned Fund Balance of \$1,700,000. They have been trying to build this up because it is for the future. It could be used to offset property taxes and in past years had been used for this purpose. If it is spent, the Town could be in a bind when capital monies are needed for emergency projects. The Selectboard is going to spend \$200,000 of this fund to make repairs to the municipal buildings such as, to finish the Highway Department roof and to buy a much needed, new baler for the Recycling Center. There are lots of changes in the budget but these are the highlights. The Town employees will receive a 2% wage increase; it is not a big increase but gives the employees a little more income.

Mr. Dalessio advised that on the last page of the proposed budget there is a 6.72% decrease. This does not include Warrant Articles. The real decrease is 4.7%.

Mrs. Pschirrer mentioned that last year they had an unfunded mandate of \$130,000 that was taken out of the Fund Balance. It was for the Town-wide assessment. The Selectboard have now taken a contract with Avitar Associates to do assessing work over the next five years. At the end of the five years, they will not have another huge bill for a complete Town-wide assessment.

The Warrant Articles and costs are listed on the back page of the proposed budget.

- MUN Maintenance Town Facilities \$200,000; this will be paid from the Unassigned Fund Balance;
- POL Police Vehicle; the first lease-purchase payment is \$10,975;
- POL Police Vehicle – Equipment \$15,000; this is contingent on the passing of the Police Vehicle Article;
- POL Ductless Fume Hood \$5,500 – the Police Department needs a good exhaust system because of the many things they deal with;
- POL Speed Monitoring Trailer \$16,000; this can be moved, it will flash and take a picture of the speeding vehicle. In time we might be able to begin a Revolving Fund;
- HWY Capital Reserve Fund \$15,000.

Last year Mrs. Pschirrer told the taxpayers the Town would not buy a new truck this year and we are not. However, the Town's trucks are aging rapidly and we must buy one next year. A new truck costs much more than \$15,000 but we will begin to build this fund so something is set aside.

There are two other Warrant Articles that do not involve money. They are looking to change these Articles for the Police and Highway that were written back in the 1900s. They do not take into account the contingency of what happens when someone totals a police car, as happened in 2017. The Selectboard was not able to touch those Capital Reserve Funds. They now have permission from the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) to reword those Capital Reserve Funds so they not only speak to the issue of buying something, but should there be an emergency with either a police vehicle or highway truck, these funds can be used when needed. The Selectboard will now be the Agents of the Capital Reserve Funds but would have to hold two Public Hearings before the funds are used. Mr. Dalessio reported the total of Warrant Articles to be raised by taxes is \$62,000.

Mr. Mark Houghton asked what amount is recommended for the Unassigned Fund Balance. Ms. Mayberry replied the DRA recommendation is 8%-to-15% of the total budget. The Town is building up this amount. Mrs. Pschirrer mentioned the Town has an aging water system, sewer lines that need to be moved, etc. They all cost a lot of money.

Mrs. Lynette Johnson realizes the Town has a lot of things in need of repairs/replacements but is concerned about the Town's senior citizens. Every year the Town has given a small donation to the Bellows Falls Area Senior Center that covers Bellows Falls, Rockingham, Walpole, North Walpole, Westminster, and other area towns. She submitted a letter from the Bellows Falls Area Senior Center stating they have provided Meals-on-Wheels to Walpole and North Walpole for over 15 years. Due to the lowering of the federal subsidy toward the cost of meals, the projected cost of the Walpole route alone is \$14,650.00 for 2017-2018. It is important to invest in the Town's senior citizens now; it is a growing population. Mrs. Pschirrer can appreciate her statement and is happy Mrs. Johnson is a volunteer. The Selectboard received a letter from the BF Area Senior Center asking for a contribution; they assigned

\$2,500 in this budget. They also support other agencies such as Monadnock Mental Health, Home Health Care, Southwestern Community Services, Fall Mountain Food Shelf, Friendly Meals, etc. They also fund the Senior Citizens in Town. This is all taxpayer money. The Town's 2018 budget has been determined. Mrs. Pschirrer suggested she put up a display of the Senior Center's needs at the Town Meeting. Mrs. Johnson will do that.

Ms. Mayberry pointed out that the real purpose of the Unassigned Fund Balance is to lessen the impact of a catastrophic event or an urgent unanticipated need for funds. It is not like putting money into a savings account because the State recommends that towns have some money set aside so if anything should happen in the Town and there is a need for funding, it will not directly impact the tax rate the following year. They could use some of the Fund Balance to lessen the impact of the tax rate the following year but it is not to cushion the tax base. Mrs. Johnson mentioned a need to take care of our senior citizens as they had built our Town. Mrs. Pschirrer said they have seen an increase in the number of taxpayers who have applied for Elderly Exemptions, Veterans' Credits, etc. At last year's Town Meeting, they increased the amount of money to make people more eligible for these discounts. Mrs. Johnson just asked the Selectboard to look at her information. Mr. Paul Colburn, Recycling Center, added the Center takes in about \$2,500/year through the Re-use Center and it all goes to the food shelf.

Mr. Ernie Vose heard about extending the sewer line that currently goes across the Vilas Bridge to Bellows Falls by connecting it in North Walpole to go underneath the Arch Bridge. What are the plans? Mr. Mark Houghton advised that last year the engineering and survey work was started. They need Plan "B" in the event of a catastrophic event. The NH DES and State of VT are telling us the Vilas Bridge will probably not go anywhere. Concrete is loose and swinging over the Town's sewer line. Therefore it could damage the Walpole line so it is on the Town's radar. The Sewer Department has had their budget woes. The funding has not been there to go beyond the planning phase but at some point it will have to be addressed. It will be paid for by user fees. Mr. Dalessio advised if this gets to the point where it has to be done, there will be a whole set of other conversations that will happen with several agencies. We will continue to do preliminary work. We cannot forget we are crossing under the railroad tracks, there is an embankment, etc.; it is complicated. Mrs. Pschirrer said the State of NH has now put the Vilas Bridge back on their Ten-Year List. The Selectboard has been to numerous meetings. Ms. Mayberry mentioned should it become necessary to move the sewer line, she feels there will be opportunities for grants.

Mrs. Pschirrer asked everyone to attend the Town Meeting on Saturday, March 17<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM in the Walpole Town Hall. There were 8 members of the public and 9 Town employees in attendance.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Mrs. Pschirrer adjourned this Special Public Hearing at 6:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Peggy L. Pschirrer, Chair

  
Steven Dalessio

  
Cheryl Mayberry

(Note: These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be found in the Minutes of the February 15, 2018, Selectboard Meeting.) . .