

**TOWN OF WALPOLE
2019 ANNUAL WARRANT ARTICLES AND BUDGET
PUBLIC HEARING
FEBRUARY 7, 2019**

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

CALL TO ORDER: Mrs. Pschirrer called this Public Hearing to order at 5:30 PM in the Walpole Town Hall on the 2019 Annual Warrant Articles and Budget. This meeting is being recorded. She asked anyone wishing to speak to identify themselves for the record.

Mrs. Pschirrer welcomed everyone. It is so nice to see so many department managers present plus the Town Moderator, Town Treasurer and so many members of the public who are not required to be here. Last year we had six members of the public. We have exceeded that number. Mr. Leroy Watson, Moderator for the Fall Mountain Region School District, is present. He did a great job last night at the SB2 meeting. It was a very long night. No decisions will be made tonight. The Selectboard prepares voters for Town Meeting which will take place on Saturday, March 16th at 1:00 PM in the Town Hall. For the first time this year, voting will open at 7:00 AM instead of 8:00 AM. During the elections in November, there were many people here at 7:00 AM to vote before they went to work but were unable to do so. Town Moderator, Ernie Vose, talked to the Selectboard and the decision was made to open at 7:00 AM. Copies of the "General Fund Expenditure Detail Budget for Year Ending 12/31/18" and the "2019 Warrant Articles" were available.

Mrs. Pschirrer began an overview of this proposed budget. The Selectboard started their process last September which is their usual practice. They asked department managers to hand in a budget by September 1st that was essentially based on their 2018 budget. They asked that there not be an increase unless it is something they feel is absolutely necessary for the following year. On a day in September, Rich Kreissle - Manager of Finance, Tom Goins - Town Treasurer and Mr. Mark Houghton who oversees Water and Sewer operations, meet with the Selectboard to go over and evaluate these budgets and talk about what they want to achieve in 2019. They did not meet again until December. At that time, they also know what is happening in the rest of the county; Cheshire County taxes went up 17% this year. It puts a burden on the Town as the taxes need to be paid in December before the Town is able to collect the property taxes. They also have some idea of what the school budget will be. This has a significant burden on the property taxes. This proposed budget they are presenting tonight is about a 4.72% increase. There are a number of factors the Selectboard cannot control. One is that the health insurance coverage has gone up 10-1/2%. Water costs are going up minimally. Employees will be given a 2% increase. They look at salaries every year because they need to remain competitive. The Town has been lucky in that they have a steady work force. Employees are loyal and work very hard. We do not pay them as much as some other towns pay their employees. Where they find a big discrepancy, they do compensate. This year there were no big increases in life and disability insurance coverages. The big staff increases were in the Recycling Department. Mr. Paul Colburn retired at the end of 2018. He had been with the Town a good many years and they all knew him well. Mrs. Pschirrer introduced his replacement, Mr. Ben Hoy. They also made sure there was a full staff there. They did something this year that they did last year in the Highway Department. That was to add an administrative assistant which frees up the department manager to allow him to be more involved in day-to-day operations. These employees answer the phone, do filing, write letters, etc. It was helpful and successful in the Highway Department. A staff change was made in the Town Hall. Mr. Jerry Brady worked part-time for the Town faithfully for years as the Custodian. They now have a full-time employee, Mr. Brad Nash, who not only takes care of the Town Hall but is cleaning at the Library and doing a super job plus is working at the Police Department. They have not increased legal fees but are now spreading these fees over the departments because they wanted to know where they were spending this money. There is a small amount in the Planning Board

and the Zoning Board budgets. The Selectboard uses most of the legal fees. The Planning Board budget has been increased as it is time to update the Master Plan. This \$8,000 line will hire a consultant from the Southwest Region Planning Commission, Lisa Murphy. It might take a few years to get the Master Plan done. The Landfill budget has gone up. We now have a new company doing that. They found out that some money will have to be spent this year because they discovered some things that are broken and, in their testing, discovered a high level of arsenic. Plus there is evidence of other contamination. It has to be monitored regularly and taken care of. There is an increase in the Recreation Department and that is because Justin Cassarino and the Recreation Committee are doing great jobs in finding more activities for both children and adults. They had good results with their “Trivia” adult program. There will be a “Daddy and Me” dance this weekend. People are participating and enjoying the programs/events. We need a new police cruiser and are way behind in replacing trucks. They had delayed buying a new truck for the Highway Department. Mr. Rau explained what type truck and accessories they plan to buy outright. It will be replacing a 13-year old truck that will be used as back-up. Mrs. Pschirrer said the Town was fortunate this year to have an Unassigned Fund Balance in the amount of \$1,700,000. Therefore, they can afford to buy this truck for \$200,000. It will not have to come out of tax money or through a loan. They are still paying off the loader bought in 2017; this is the third year of payments. Next year will be the last year and they will need to buy another truck as the Town is way behind in equipment. They are also on a rotating plan for police vehicles. They are currently making two payments on police vehicles because they have loans.

Mr. Tom Goins, Town Treasurer, has been successful in finding a good price for the new police vehicle loan. Mascoma Bank is going to give the Town a municipal loan at 2.95% interest which is superb. A few years ago they started sweeping money into a PDIP account which Mr. Goins found and negotiated. This year the Town earned \$66,465.20 in interest. Mr. Goins works closely with Mr. Kreissle. Mrs. Pschirrer noted they are being physically prudent of the taxpayer money they collect.

Mr. Vose asked how Mr. Rau bids out the trucks. Mr. Rau does the specs and makes calls; they usually wait until they have three bids. International is a reliable truck. He does not have a solid price yet but will have all the prices and discounts they received for Town Meeting. Mr. Vose asked about going through the State bid process. Mr. Dalessio replied that we do buy police cruisers through the State bid. Mrs. Pschirrer noted there is another \$200,000 item that will be coming up. The Unassigned Fund balance will take care of a number of things in the Town Hall and they plan to buy a generator for the Highway Department. Should there be power outages, that department must function.

Mr. Don Sellarole asked about the \$1,700,000 Unassigned Fund Balance. Mrs. Pschirrer advised this is for a rainy day. The State requires the Town to have an Unassigned Fund Balance. They set limits on how low it should go. By using the \$400,000, they will still have \$1,300,000 in the event of a catastrophe. Mr. Dalessio clarified it is what was not spent from the previous year’s budget.

Mr. Adrian Basora thanked the Selectboard for their thorough explanation. How will they summarize this at the Town Meeting? What were the drivers above the cost-of-living? Mrs. Pschirrer would point out that the health care costs increased 10-1/2%. We have increased the staff. Each department has their own figure. Mr. Dalessio advised the health insurance is in a municipal “pool”; next year it could go down. They need to look at a 2-to-3 year amount to get an average. Mrs. Pschirrer thanked Mr. Basora for his suggestion and stated a summary might be very helpful; it could be the top sheet.

Mr. John Peska noted the 4.2% overall – does this include the county. Mrs. Pschirrer replied this is just for the Town. The county went up 17%. Mr. Peska mentioned a letter the Selectboard had sent to the

county several years ago; how do they get the county under control. Mr. Dalessio said they put pressure on the elected officials. A big help to the Town would be if the county would move their payment due date from December to January. This would help from a cash flow perspective. December is when their cash flow is at the lowest point. Mr. Peska asked where the FMRSD is at. Mr. Dalessio said a 2.4% will be on the ballot. Mrs. Pschirrer mentioned the FMRSD Deliberative Session was last night. Only one warrant article was amended. One warrant article came in by petition. It allocated \$30,000 to do an independent study of the Articles of Agreement. Charlestown would like to withdraw from the FMRSD. It was amended by Mr. Beam to \$150,000 who said if they are going to do this, let's do it properly. This is a complicated agreement. It would be difficult to amend but needs to be done. Mr. Dalessio mentioned Walpole pays \$560,000+/month to the FMRSD. It will pay to do the study and be done with this.

Mr. Ray Boas asked about the reduction on the executive salaries. Mr. Dalessio felt it was Mrs. Daigle whose salary is spread out into the Water and Sewer budget. Mrs. Pschirrer noted that Mrs. Daigle has done a great job and is responsible for those accounts. They are now doing quarterly billing. Mr. Dalessio clarified that water and sewer is a user supported department. Bond funds are also user fees.

Mrs. Pschirrer briefly reviewed the Warrant Articles 7 through 13. She reported they will have a new basketball court from taxpayer money and the Recreation Department's Revolving Fund. If the voters accept this idea, \$20,000 will come from their Revolving Fund. These things will be voted on separately. The Warrant Articles total \$142,511.00. The taxpayers will make these decisions.

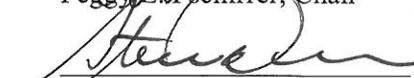
Mrs. Cheryl Watson encouraged everyone to look at Article 8 of the FMRSD Warrant; the Feasibility Study for Withdrawal. It generated a lot of discussion during the Deliberative Session. There are concerns about costs. Ms. Mayberry advised withdrawal is a lengthy process. It goes to the State but still has to come back for a five town vote. Mr. Leroy Watson, FMRSD Moderator, reviewed some of the discussions generated during the Deliberative Session last night. A short public comment period followed.

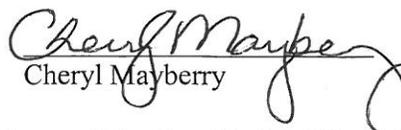
There were fourteen members of the public in attendance.

Mrs. Pschirrer hopes to have a big crowd on Saturday, March 16th for the Town Meeting. There being no other discussion, she closed the Public Hearing at 6:30 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 14, 2019, Selectboard meeting.)