

**TOWN OF WALPOLE
MEETING OF THE SELECTBOARD
2020 ANNUAL BUDGET AND WARRANT ARTICLE HEARING
FEBRUARY 13, 2020**

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

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Dalessio called this 2020 Annual Budget and Warrant Article Hearing to order at 4:50 PM in the Walpole Town Hall. He advised that Mrs. Sarah Downing, Manager of Administration, and Mr. Rich Kreissle, Manager of Finance, are also present.

SUMMARY OF 2019 ACTIVITY: Mr. Dalessio presented a recap of where the Town ended on December 31, 2019. The operating budget for 2019 was \$3,896,691. Actual expenditures for 2019 were \$3,724,696 (95.6%) for a difference of \$171,995. This money will go into the Unassigned Fund Balance. It is used for future purchases so they do not have to go into the tax base for trucks, repairs on buildings, etc. That account is now at about \$1,700,000. This year they will be asking the voters to approve using some of that money.

EXPENDITURE COMPARISON SUMMARY: The handout just distributed shows the increase in the operating budget, 2020 versus 2019, is 3.05%. The bulk of the increases come from wages and benefits. Health insurance went up about 10%; a 2% cost-of-living raise for all employees is included. In the Police Department there was a part-time detective that retired; they have now made this a full-time position. We wound up saving a considerable amount of money because they recalculated some salary lines. It saved about 1% and was a positive step. The Election line is higher because there are four elections this year. A few building expenses have gone up like the elevator inspections, service contracts, etc. That is a summary of the 2020 proposed budget. A 3% increase is low compared to other towns around Walpole. Mr. Dalessio opened the meeting to questions.

A resident questioned the Highway & Streets line that shows an increase of \$53,247 or 3.40% increase. Mr. Dalessio explained this line is somewhat variable because of the over-time. If they have a mild winter, they do not have as much over-time expenses. Mr. Mike Rau, Road Agent, has done a very good job in controlling the cost of paving. They have been saving a little here-and-there. Any money left over goes into the Unassigned Fund Balance which could be used to reduce the property tax rate. Because Walpole's tax rate is fairly low, the Selectboard chose to use the Unassigned Fund Balance for large capital equipment or repairs. The State requires them to keep 7-to-10% in this fund all the time for emergencies. Ms. Mayberry advised that when the balance gets to about 15% the State will usually start to wonder why the Town is not passing some funds back to the taxpayers. Responding to a question on the decrease in the Recycling Center line, Mr. Dalessio noted it was because of a change in the mix of labor.

A resident asked about the Welfare Vendor Payments. Mr. Dalessio pointed out that the Town contracts this service to an outside source. It is on an hourly basis. They are estimating more hours will be needed as a couple of new areas have turned up. Example: When somebody dies without a family or are indigent we may have to pay for the cremation or burial.

Mr. Dalessio reported the Selectboard usually starts the budget process in September and Mr. Kreissle develops a base line budget which is level funded. They take a look at the bottom line. Then they schedule a one-day meeting at which they meet with each department manager. They have to explain any increases for discretionary spending and justify why they have to increase their budgets. They then go back to look at the numbers, make changes and meet with the department managers again.

Over time there will be changes like insurance numbers. It is a streamlined process. Of the budget, 56.30% is comprised of wages, benefits and payroll taxes.

WARRANT ARTICLES:

ARTICLE 2: To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of three million two hundred eighteen thousand five hundred sixty two dollars (\$3,218,562) for the purpose of furnishing, constructing and installing facilities and equipment to make available to residential and business locations in the Town of Walpole a “Fiber to the Premises” network by Consolidated Communications Enterprise Services, Inc. (“Consolidated”), with one million eight hundred fifty six thousand one hundred dollars (\$1,856,100) of such sum to be raised through the issuance of bonds or notes, under and in compliance with the Municipal Finance Act, RSA 33:1, et seq, as amended; and one million three hundred sixty two thousand four hundred sixty two dollars (\$1,362,462) of such sum as a donation from Consolidated; to authorize the Selectboard to apply for, obtain and accept federal, state or other aid, gifts and donations which may be available for said project and to comply with all laws applicable to said project; to authorize the Selectboard to issue, negotiate, sell and deliver said bonds and notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof and to authorize the Selectboard to take any other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto.

****2/3 ballot vote required****

The Selectboard recommends this article. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Mr. Dalessio felt most people had attended at least one of the three public meetings on the Bond. There were no comments or questions.

ARTICLE 3: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of four million six hundred seventy nine thousand, eight hundred four dollars (\$4,679,804) which represents four million, fifteen thousand, five hundred forty four dollars (\$4,015,544) for the Town operating budget to be raised from general taxation; one hundred eighty eight thousand four hundred ninety eight dollars (\$188,498) for the Water Fund Operating Budget and four hundred seventy five thousand, seven hundred sixty two dollars (\$475,762) for the Sewer Operating Budget, which includes two hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$230,000) for bond assessments. Such sum does not include special or individual articles or bonds found in the warrant.

The Selectboard recommends this article. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Mr. Dalessio advised that the Water and Sewer budgets are user funded as well as the bond assessments.

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) for updates, repairs and remodeling of Town buildings including the renovation of the Town Clerk’s office, painting in Town Hall, repair of the Town Hall entrance walkway and replacement of the Reuse Center at the Recycling Center at \$75,000 with \$29,634.82 to come from insurance coverage. The said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance.

The Selectboard recommends this article. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Mr. Dalessio stated the Town Clerk's office is badly in need of renovations. The layout is not conducive to working; it is crowded. They would like to get it done this year. Some painting will be done in the Town Hall including the bathrooms. The Town Hall entrance walkway and railing have been patched for the past five-plus years. We would like to put in some heated mats and/or an awning to keep the ice and snow off the walkway to make it safe for everyone. The Recycling Reuse Center was crushed by a fallen tree this past summer. We would like to put that back in but different than before by adding an addition to the Recycling Center so they will be connected. This will enable them to share services like heat, electricity, etc. It could be opened almost year-round. If the Reuse Center should close, the extra space will be used by the Recycling Center. The Reuse Center donates quite a bit of money to the Fall Mountain Food Shelf every year. The Selectboard would like to see this continue.

ARTICLE 5: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$130,000) for the purchase of a truck for the Highway Department. The said funds will come from the Unassigned Fund Balance. This is a non-lapsing warrant article.

The Selectboard recommends this article. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Mr. Dalessio mentioned we have to replace the Town's one-ton truck. Over the years they have been trying to replace the old trucks that have been giving them lots of problems. Last year we voted to buy a new dump truck w/plow but we still have not received it. It takes a long time to get some of these trucks. It is winter and we are now down one major truck until repairs can be made so it can plow and sand again. Mr. Rau is not only down a truck but one employee as well.

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be deposited in the Town of Walpole Highway Capitol Reserve Fund Account. The said funds to be raised through general taxation.

The Selectboard recommends this article. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Mr. Dalessio advised we have a number of Capitol Reserve Funds. When the time comes to order a piece of equipment, we will have some money to use. It takes hundreds of dollars to buy a new truck. We are just adding to these Capitol Reserve Funds. Years ago, these funds could only be used to purchase new equipment but last year it got changed to repairs as well. A resident asked how much is in this fund now. Mrs. Pschirrer answered; it is \$62,000 now plus the \$25,000.

ARTICLE 7: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of thirty eight thousand dollars (\$38,000) for a vehicle for the Walpole Police Department and to authorize the issuance of not more than thirty eight thousand dollars through a promissory note with Mascoma Bank at a rate of 2.99% or the lowest available rate at the time of the purchase of the vehicle in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33) and to authorize the municipal officials to issue and negotiate such bonds or other notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon. Further, to raise and appropriate the sum of thirteen thousand two hundred fifty nine dollars and four cents (\$13,259.04) for the first year's payment. The said funds to be raised through general taxation.

****2/3 ballot vote required****

The Selectboard recommends this article. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Mr. Dalessio pointed out that they will have to wait an hour before an announcement is made as to whether or not this Article 7 passes or is defeated. The price of \$38,000 comes from a NH State bid so we get a good price. They try to keep the rotation of police cruisers going.

ARTICLE 8: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to purchase a cage, console, other necessary equipment and installation in the new police vehicle. This article is contingent upon passing of warrant article 7. The said funds to be raised through general taxation.

The Selectboard recommends this article. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Mr. Dalessio advised if Article 7 for the new police cruiser passes, they will need to vote on this Article 8. The cruisers at \$38,000 are pretty much stripped out. We have to add all the equipment and lettering. Police Chief Paquette said they try to recycle as much equipment as they can from cruiser-to-cruiser but it does not always work. Sometimes it just does not fit.

ARTICLE 9: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$39,000 for the purchase of six (6) Motorola Dual Band portable radios. This will also include the radio programming costs. (These are State of New Hampshire bid prices.) The said funds to be raised through taxation.

The Selectboard recommends this article. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Police Chief Paquette displayed a radio they are using now. His radio is 12 years old. They cannot communicate with the Bellows Falls Police, Vermont State Police or Windham County Sheriff's Department. They go over to Bellows Falls to assist but they cannot communicate on the site. When the radios get to a certain age they have problems getting parts. The radios are covered by a warranty and the Town's insurance coverage. When they are on a dark road in the middle of the night, they want the capability to call for help when needed. Some calls are extremely dangerous. There was discussion relative to having Mutual Aid Agreements with other towns. Chief Paquette confirmed that they do have agreements.

ARTICLE 10: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to be deposited in the Town of Walpole Police Department – Capitol Reserve Fund Account. The said funds to be raised through general taxation.

The Selectboard recommends this article. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Mr. Dalessio noted that these Capitol Reserve Funds are not only being used for new equipment but for catastrophic reasons as well. A resident asked what the balance is in this account. Mrs. Pschirrer said \$49,000.

ARTICLE 11: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) for a study to determine the most economical approach to ensure the police station meets the needs of the Town. Said funds will be used to contract with an outside consultant, if necessary. The said funds will be raised through general taxation.

The Select Board recommends this article. (3 Yes, 0 No, 3 Abstain)

Mr. Dalessio stated that the Town's Police Station is out of compliance. It is too small for the number of people we have in there. Officers are handling many items such as evidence and guns on the same tables they are eating on. It should not have carpeting because it breeds many things that come in with suspects. They could be handling deadly drugs, etc. It does not have the proper exhaust system. This article is to give us the opportunity to hire an outside consultant who can help us research long-time needs. Chief Paquette advised they bring in youth who cannot be mixed with adults yet there is a space issue. There is no room for privacy, for interviews and many other cases. Chief Paquette said the building served its purpose about 25 years ago but they are no longer in compliance and have outgrown the building. Mr. Dalessio feels Chief Paquette and/or Lt. Sanctuary will give a tour of the building to someone if they call to make arrangements for a date and time. They would like to study if a new building or an addition is needed and what it should have. We would form a committee, start looking at possible options and hire a consultant to help us. Chief Paquette pointed out that they would like to be closer to the three (3) Villages; a central location. A resident was not sure \$20,000 is enough for the study. Mr. Dalessio stated they are not sure of the cost but felt this was a good number to start the study.

ARTICLE 12: To see if the Town will vote to pass an ordinance banning the distribution or sale of thin-film single-use plastic bags (defined as a bag, typically with handles, with a thickness of 4.0 mils or less that is provided at the point of sale for the transport of purchased products) by retail establishments. This ban will go into effect twelve months after its creation to allow retail establishments time to adjust.

By petition of 25 or more eligible voters in the Town of Walpole, NH.

The Selectboard recommends this article. (0 Yes, 0 No, 3 Abstain)

Mr. Dalessio introduced Ruby Frithsen and Sidney Curven, sophomore students at FMRHS, who brought this petition in to the Selectboard. The petition was signed by over 150 voters. They made their informational presentation on the reasons to ban thin-film, single-use plastic bags with a thickness of 4.0 mils or less. Mr. Dalessio thanked them for coming to this meeting. He has the obligation to tell the voters that if this warrant article passes, and he hopes it does, that the Selectboard will not be able to enforce it because the State has not yet given them the authority to create an ordinance for banning plastic bags. It is now in the Senate but its future is unknown at this time. A question and answer period followed.

ARTICLE 13: To see if the Town of Walpole will urge the Selectboard to write a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission require, via license article, the current and any subsequent owners of the Wilder, Bellows Falls and Vernon Dams to modify current dam operations to minimize peaking; provide for ongoing monitoring, to develop a shoreline adaptive management plan; and commit funding for riverbank restoration and/or property owner compensation to reimburse towns and landowners for any and all damages resulting from the deterioration of the riverbank.

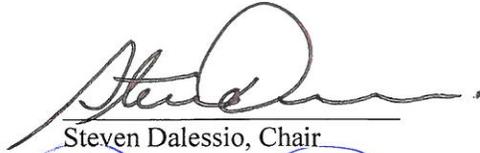
The Selectboard recommends this article. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Mr. Dalessio advised this request came to the Selectboard from Mr. Tom Beaudry who has been studying the erosion that has been taking place along the Connecticut River for several years. This year the dam is coming up for the renewal of their licensing. The next opportunity to do this commenting is about 40 years out. They hold the dam owners accountable for the erosion caused by the change in the flow of the Connecticut River.

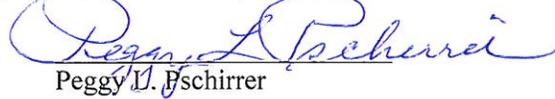
ARTICLE 14: To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Dalessio closed this Public Meeting at 5:48 PM.

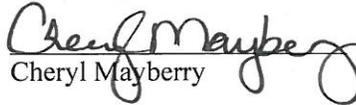
Respectfully submitted,
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary



Steven Dalessio, Chair



Peggy L. Pschirrer



Cheryl Mayberry

(**Note:** These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be found in the Minutes of the February 20, 2020, Selectboard meeting.)