

**TOWN OF WALPOLE  
PUBLIC HEARING  
2021 ANNUAL BUDGET and WARRANT ARTICLES  
FEBRUARY 4, 2021**

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

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mrs. Pschirrer called this Public Hearing on the 2021 Annual Budget and Warrant Articles to order at 5:30 PM. This meeting is taking place virtually online via Zoom. The Selectboard members are in three separate locations. This meeting is being live-streamed on FACT-TV and is being recorded.

Mrs. Pschirrer called for a voice roll call of the Selectboard present: Cheryl Mayberry was present; Steven Dalessio was present and Peggy Pschirrer was present.

Mrs. Pschirrer called for a voice roll call of the Staff members present as follows: Sarah Downing, Manager of Administration, is in the Walpole Town Hall; Meghan Hansson (Interim Town Clerk/Tax Collector), is in the Walpole Town Hall; Regina Borden, Recording Secretary, is by telephone at a separate location.

Richard Kreisle, Administrator of Finance; Chief Michael Paquette (Police Department); Lt. Justin Sanctuary (Police Department); Ben Hoy (Recycling Director); Michael Rau (Road Agent/Highway Department); Kraig Harlow (Recreation Director); Jane Malmberg (Library Director); Helen Dalbeck (Hooper Institute Executive Director)

Mrs. Pschirrer reported that Mr. Jack Wozmak (Town Moderator) and Mr. Ray Boas (a member of the community and Publisher of the Walpole Clarion) had accessed this Public Hearing.

If anyone would like to ask a question, raise your hand to be recognized or go to the website and write your question in so that Mrs. Downing will bring it to their attention. Mrs. Downing will display some documents as they are being discussed.

Mrs. Pschirrer began by providing an overview of the proposed 2021 Annual Budget and Warrant Articles Public Hearing. Those of you who read the article in the Walpole Clarion will recognize that the Operating Budget is different than listed here tonight. After January 22<sup>nd</sup> when her article was due, some amendments were made. The correct Operating Budget is \$4,151,177 with all to be raised by taxes. In addition, the Water Fund Operating Budget to be raised by user fees is \$189,269. The Sewer Fund Operating Budget to be raised by user fees is \$476,569 and this includes \$230,000 bond payments that will be collected over the course of the year. The Total Warrant is \$4,817,011. For the most part this budget was flat lined by every department, but it includes increases in health care costs of 1.7% (original increase was to be 6.4%). They received a refund from HealthTrust which they spread among all their users of the insurance plan. Therefore, after they received the rebate, the actual increase is 1.7%; New Hampshire Retirement costs will go up July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. This year that represents 25.87% (six months for non-police) and 19.16% for Police. Salaries were generally increased 2% for all employees (some rounded up).

There were two changes in Department Heads. Town Clerk/Tax Collector: Mrs. Sandy Smith retired as of December 31, 2020. They gave her a nice Drive-By and Mrs. Meghan Hansson became, by statute, the Interim Town Clerk/Tax Collector who will remain in this job at the same salary as Mrs. Smith until she is elected in her own right which will be March 9, 2021. At that time, she will have her own salary. The Police Department will also see a change. At the end of March, Chief Paquette, who is with us tonight,

will step down. In his place Lt. Justin Sanctuary will take over as the Chief of Police. This means there are two positions in that department to be filled; this is reflected in the new budget.

**Warrants:**

The Town has an Unassigned Fund Balance that is close to \$2,000,000. From this Unassigned Fund Balance the Selectboard decided to take out \$400,000 this year.

Town Hall - \$200,000: This is set aside for building repairs. It will include painting Town Hall. If you drive by and look at Town Hall, you will think “why should we paint that building?” Once the snow melts, Mrs. Pschirrer is inviting you to take a walk around that building. The back side is in terrible shape; the front side is not great. They feel it is prudent to paint the building at this time and have bids. To do all the preparation that includes removing mold, it will cost \$89,000. The Town Hall second floor ceiling has a sag in it. Some people will remember when the first-floor ceiling had a sag and it collapsed. They do not want this to happen so have included repairs in the \$200,000. Money is also set aside for the Walpole Library and North Walpole Library which has not had attention paid to it in quite a while. They want to re-open the North Walpole Library as soon as possible. This also includes changing the water meter at the Town pool. This will come out of the Unassigned Fund Balance and not property taxes.

Highway Department - \$200,000: A rotation of purchasing trucks and equipment was started several years ago in the Highway Department. The \$200,000 for the new truck will be comprised of \$100,000 from the Unassigned Fund Balance and \$100,000 from the Highway Block Grant. It will not be paid for from property taxes.

Police Car Loan: Another rotation of cars is for the Police Department. A loan was secured from the Mascoma Bank for \$38,000. The first payment is \$13,225.76; all payments will come out of General Taxation.

Police Car Equipment: The Police car equipment will cost \$15,000 and will come from General Taxes.

Unassigned Fund Balance: Mrs. Pschirrer pointed out that three more projects will come out of the Unassigned Fund Balance: 1) Addition to the Highway Garage in the amount of \$60,000. This is necessary for safety reasons; 2) Recycling paving and adding a concrete slab near the compactor - \$35,000; and 3) The Pool House needs a new roof - \$20,000.

**Capital Reserve Funds:**

Highway Department Capital Reserve Fund: \$25,000 will be put into this fund. There is \$88,000 in this fund but it costs at least \$200,000 for a new truck.

Police Department Capital Reserve Fund: \$15,000 will be put into this fund. At this time there is \$15,000 in this fund. There were more funds in this account. However, after an accident where the cruiser was destroyed, this money was used to replace that car. There was another accident with a Police car late last night on the icy road when the officer was responding to a call. Insurance will help cover this car. In the Selectboard meeting following this Public Hearing, Mrs. Pschirrer will ask Ms. Mayberry and Mr. Dalessio to put the insurance money from the first accident back into this Capital Reserve Fund. The \$22,000+ is in the Town’s General Fund at this time.

**Non Budget Related Warrants:**

Mrs. Pschirrer pointed out there are Non Budget Related Warrant Articles:

Notice to Dog Owners: This is an amendment to an existing older ordinance that was first accepted in 1992. The revised Notice includes fines.

Scenic Road: A petition was received to designate Old Drewsville Road as a Scenic Road.

Carbon Pricing Legislation: This petition was introduced by Tara Sad.

Mrs. Pschirrer opened up the Public Hearing to questions, clarifications and/or comments from the public.

Mr. Wozmak did walk around the perimeter of the Town Hall and is glad to see that money budgeted because there are issues with deterioration of the wood near the bottom.

Mrs. Hansson asked about the Notice to Dog Owners. Does this elaborate further than the RSAs? Mrs. Pschirrer replied that it does but it is very specific to Walpole. The Police can verify the Town has had increased issues with dogs over the past year. They decided there was a need to reissue that and to "up" the fines for people who are allowing their dogs to run free. People have been bitten this past year. Some people are not paying attention to the regulations already in place. Mrs. Hansson said it would be nice to encourage more people to license their dogs so when someone gets bitten, it is easier to check the records. People coming in from other towns are quick to license their dogs. Mrs. Pschirrer mentioned the Town Clerk always sends a list of Unlicensed Dogs to the Selectboard once a year. There could be 100 people who do not license their dogs.

Mr. Boas asked if the Selectboard was going to go over the proposed budget line-by-line. Mrs. Pschirrer said "no" because they do not usually do that. Mr. Boas had highlighted some increases and decreases; there are some big percentages. He would welcome an article on the Dog Ordinance for the Clarion. Mrs. Pschirrer replied that he would get one.

While walking around the back of the Town Hall, Mr. Wozmak was struck by all the tree moisture on the property line. It is a hefty area and should be opened up. Mr. Dalessio said the neighboring property owner is steadfast about his property. Mr. Wozmak noted it is on the Historic Register. Mrs. Pschirrer mentioned they will have a discussion with the property owner because there is not enough space to erect scaffolding or put up ladders on Town property. They plan to have the Town property surveyed. It will be interesting to learn about their actual property line.

Ms. Mayberry reported they worked hard on the Budget and tried to address safety concerns. Some increases were necessary but basically the Budget is level-funded. Mr. Dalessio said they are using the Unassigned Fund Balance in the way it was intended. Mrs. Pschirrer added this was the second year they used this Fund; there is enough money left in the event of a catastrophe. Replying to a question Ms. Mayberry said the recommended retained balance by the Department of Revenue Administration is 16%.

Relative to the addition to the Highway Garage, Mr. Rau explained they are running out of room. It will be an extension of the parts and tools room; it will make the garage a safer place with more functional space. In past years they have just put a roof on the garage. It will make it a better place to work in. Mr. Dalessio noted they are putting in heat detectors. Mr. Rau said at the moment they have no fire protection so they are working with Mr. Mark Houghton on safety features to be added this year.

Mr. Ben Hoy reported they will be paving in the work area. It will make a difference with dust and the new pavement will make it a nice surface to work on. The concrete will allow them to move the trailer overflowing with trash bags. Both items are important to the operation of the Recycling Center.

Mrs. Jane Malmberg advised they are working on getting the North Walpole Library open soon. They plan to expand the hours and the children’s area for programs. They want to brighten it up with new carpeting and curtains. Make it welcoming and more of a community center for North Walpole.

Mrs. Pauline Barnes joined the meeting. She stated that given the difficult year we have had are there any unexpected positives to the year plus were there any negatives. Mr. Dalessio advised the extra money they needed to spend for the safety of the employees came from the Federal CARES Act. Mr. Kreissle said these were for costs over and above our Operating Budget. Mrs. Pschirrer noted it was all 2020 money. Mrs. Barnes thought there was another funding program that was passed toward the end of the year. Mr. Kreissle replied under the Biden Package, the report has funds that will be allocated but the final document has not yet been worked out or passed by Congress. Ms. Mayberry pointed out there is a CARES allocation for education at this time.

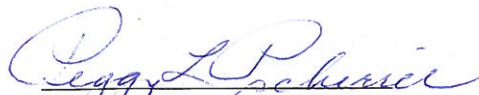
Mrs. Barnes had some questions on the Brownfields Project. Mrs. Pschirrer advised that is an entirely separate budget. It is represented by the EPA Grant of \$500,000; \$100,000 will come from the DES and when the Town bought the property they negotiated \$175,000 which they hold in escrow from the seller of the property. It will affect the 2022 Town Budget as they will be asking for money to pave that new parking lot. There will also be a green space with benches where the old red shed sits. There will also be electric stanchions in the parking lot. Mrs. Barnes hopes it will be a permeable type of paving.

**Town Ballot:**

Mrs. Pschirrer advised that Articles #2 and #3 on the Warrant will either be voted on at the polls on March 9<sup>th</sup> or voted on by absentee ballots. They are requests to separate the position of Town Clerk/Tax Collector. These were combined in 2002. As the Selectboard evaluated the office of Mrs. Sandy Smith they realized how many extra hours she was working doing extra work by one person with Mrs. Hansson as an assistant. The Selectboard felt the two positions should be separated. They will be asking voters to vote “NO” on Article #2 so they can be separated but the RSAs are specific that they cannot be separated until the next election in 2024. They are asking voters to vote “YES” on Article #3 because it gives the Selectboard the authority to appoint a Tax Collector but not until after 2024. The Selectboard feels there is enough work for two full-time positions. They also feel the Tax Collector should be more in-line with the Administrator of Finance because they work together all the time. It is a complex job. There will be an article in the next Clarion edition in March.

Mrs. Pschirrer thanked everyone for attending this meeting. She also thanked everyone including the department managers who have been working on this budget for several months.

ADJOURNMENT: Ms. Mayberry moved to adjourn this Public Hearing. Seconded by Mr. Dalessio. Mrs. Pschirrer asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none. On a voice roll call vote with Ms. Mayberry, Mr. Dalessio and Mrs. Pschirrer in favor, Public Hearing adjourned at 6:15 PM.  
Respectfully submitted, Regina Borden, Recording Secretary

  
Peggy L. Pschirrer, Chair

  
Cheryl Mayberry

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Steven Dalessio

(Note: These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be in the Minutes of the February 11, 2021, Selectboard meeting.)