

**TOWN OF WALPOLE
STAFF MEETING
November 17, 2022**

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

Staff Present: Sarah Downing (Manager of Administration); 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)

Excused: Kraig Harlow (Recreation Director); Justin Sanctuary (Police Chief)

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Dalessio called this meeting of staff to order at 5:00 PM in the Walpole Town Hall. There were no members of the public present.

Mr. Dalessio started the meeting with a few comments. December 9th is day for departmental budget meetings with the Selectboard. This is the time to make your pitch to the Selectboard with special requests. Major purchases require three quotes. Mr. Dalessio said that discretionary spending should be stopped due to cash flow issues at the end of the year. The Town is in good shape. However, with the delay in tax billing, there is more pressure on cash flow.

Everyone should pay attention to the health insurance packets that are being distributed for open enrollment stated Mr. Dalessio. The Town is changing its health care plan. Mr. Dalessio encouraged staff to attend the HealthTrust presentation on Dec. 20th at noon. Pizza will be offered to the attendees.

Mr. Dalessio called upon Mr. Ben Hoy to give his departmental report.

RECYCLING:

Mr. Hoy contacted Clear Span (pole barn) supplier to give us a quote on storage possibilities. Our trailers are in very rough shape.

Christine Burchstead is going to help coordinate an arts and crafts activity at the recycling center with professional scrap artist Michael Albert.

The DES is conducting inspections across the state at transfer stations. We recently had the safety committee sweep Walpole recycling for infractions. Important to be prepared for an inspection at any time. (they may condemn more of our trailers).

Reuse volunteers would like to have a party at Walpole recycling. I am self-appointed to the party planning committee and would like to get together with this group on a Friday afternoon at Walpole recycling with the selectboard's approval. I would like to recognize the amazing efforts of our volunteers, who literally do not leave a shift open at any time that we are open. It is, in my opinion, the best reuse center in the state of New Hampshire with the help of our volunteers.

Mr. Dalessio asked what DES is allowed to look at? There was a discussion if the NH DES would be conducting a safety inspection. Mrs. Pschirrer asked what was the advantage of the pole barn design? It is very open to snow, wind, and water. Mr. Hoy would like a back wall and partial side walls on the front.

Mr. Dalessio questioned the arch roof which may not work as well with square shaped storage items. There was a general discussion of clean-up to occur before the DES inspection.

HIGHWAY:

Mr. Rau stated that winter is here. The seventy-degree weather will be missed. On 11/16/2022, there was a winter weather call out. The following also occurred in the past month:

- Finished paving in cuts prior to asphalt plant closing for season.
- Paving has been completed. Shouldering of these roads has been done successfully with the use of the new shouldering machine. Lots of positive feedback has been received. The new machine saves time and material. It also prevents breakdowns.
- Roadside ditching on gravel roads will begin next week.
- Sand piles have been placed out in various locations in Walpole and North Walpole for residence use throughout the winter. The locations are the Town Shop, the Old Town Garage, the junction of Watkins Hill and County Road, and the Recycling Center.

Winter blend vehicle fuel has increased \$.70 cents per gallon. The Highway Department is still involved with FEMA regarding disaster funding. NH DES had a reminder call from FEMA that they are waiting for their documentation. The Town has handed in all its documentation. The department is waiting for \$100,000 in total funding from FEMA for three projects.

FINANCE:

Mr. Kreissle deferred discussion on the particulars of the budget to the board. He highlighted a couple of items:

- The meeting with the department managers is 12/9 – Sarah is handling the scheduling.
- Every year the budget presents certain challenges. This year is no different than others and to further facilitate the board's decision-making process, I expanded my Excel knowledge by incorporating a drop-down box in one part of the format along with learning how to use the IFS function.

In regard to Tax Rate Setting:

- The signed MS-535, which is a report generated by our auditors for the DRA, has been signed and uploaded to the DRA's portal.
- Walpole, North Walpole, and the Walpole Fire District have uploaded all the necessary documents to their portal. (Just waiting for the school district to finish uploading their documents.)
- Once all the documents have been uploaded, the DRA will issue a *preliminary* tax rate which will be submitted to the board for their review.
 - The board will determine how much to allocate for Abatements (called an Overlay on the tax rate form) and how much of the Unassigned Fund Balance to use to either a) reduce taxes or b) fund warrant articles
- These amounts are entered into the portal and the DRA issues a final tax rate

HOOPER INSTITUTE:

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

School Programs and School Gardens: Raptor migration is center stage in 5th grade and about to wrap up with migration maps. Tree ID in the pond ecosystem with 7th grade has been in the forefront as well as data collection and defining pond habitats for wildlife. I move into teaching 6th grade earth sciences, beginning Dec. 2. School gardens are tidied and prepped for winter with spinach now growing in the high tunnel. My plan is to cover the bed inside the tunnel to increase the chance of not freezing this winter. For the younger grades tree and leaf ID, cider making, seed collecting, apple dissecting (and eating), pumpkin carving and garlic planting and more thanks to Becky Whippie.

Outreach and Marketing: Clarion, flyers, Facebook. Vital Communities Andrew Deaett visited with me, Mrs. Ronning and her 5th grade on 10/17. He was thrilled to see the kids in the gardens and to learn more about the Hooper Institute's programs and mission. A wreath-making invitation and save the date was published in the November Clarion. Plans are in the works with the WPTG for a Winter Fun Day in Feb, 2023. I meet with them on 11/16.

Walpole Community Garden: Garlic Saturday was October 22 with a garlic planting demonstration. A Walpole Community Garden member tea followed. The garden clean-up day and closing has been organized by members and they are mostly done with all of the chores.

Administration: Ongoing, in every way. Budget, Total Return Policy, reports, communication, maintenance, fundraising, land, building and gardens

Special Events, Programs, Scholarship and Friends: Garlic Saturday was 10.22 and I am setting up at the Thanksgiving Farmers Market on November 19th, making a free bird craft and selling make your own hula hoops. Wreath making is Dec 2 and 3. Save the date for Winter Fun Day, February 11, 2023

Development/Fundraising: This has been "The Year of the Hooper Institute". The Lend a Hand postcard was printed, processed and mailed. I had 1500 copies made via Vista Print. Friends of Hooper Institute will cover both the printing and postage cost for the appeal. The fall campaign is called "Lend a Hand to the Hooper Institute". A GoFundMe campaign via Hooper Facebook is being organized as I write this.

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

Other news: Hooper Institute logo cloth tote bags are available, yours for a \$10 donation.

Mrs. Dalbeck noted that wastewater pipe remains unrepaired. She is waiting for a return call from the contractor. There was a discussion about replacing the high tunnel at Walpole Elementary School.

LIBRARY:

Mrs. Jane Malmberg stated that October was a strong month for visits and circulation at both libraries.

Art Exhibit: We have a new art exhibit at the North Walpole Library of paintings by local artist Alice Maurer.

Building Maintenance: Progress on our front door has been slow due to the sub-contractor's involvement in an automobile accident. We have requested weekly status updates from our contractor until the project is complete.

Friends: The Friends of the Library have reported that they made \$6,448 from the book sale this year, which is \$749 more than last year.

Programming: We had a good turnout for our children's concert with Lisa Nichols on Saturday, November 5th. Staff and patrons alike enjoyed the music and audience participation. On December 7, we will host an author talk with Dr. Eric Cervini, who wrote *The Deviant's War*, about a pioneering astronomer who fought for gay rights a generation before Stonewall in partnership with NH PBS and the Nashua Public library. Jasmine Allen of NH PBS will moderate the discussion. In January, we will offer "Step Into the New Year with Less Stress", led by Naomi Hall, Ed D.

Staff Development: I attended many informative and engaging workshops at the NHLA/NELA conference in Manchester. The highlights were sessions on grant writing, sustainable thinking for small/medium size libraries, conducting diversity audits for small/medium size libraries, media manipulation and media literacy, and communicating with the press about book challenges. The keynote speaker on Tuesday was Chris Bohjalian, who gave a fantastic talk!

Volunteer Dinner: The library Board of Trustees hosted a lovely dinner last week for volunteers and staff. We enjoyed delicious food and lively conversation.

Mrs. Malmberg added that the chimney is to be wrapped. She is checking with the contractor. There was a discussion about finding a new therapy dog since Toby has passed away. A showing of the "Elf" movie will be a December afternoon event.

TOWN CLERK-TAX COLLECTOR'S OFFICE:

Mrs. Meghan Hasson stated that since the last meeting, the Town Clerk has collected about \$67,000, and about \$50,000 of that belongs to the Town. Additional updates included:

- Online transactions continue to stream in. There were about 100 last month. We average about 100 registrations a week; so, about 25% of registrations are done online. (It has been 4 weeks since the last meeting.)
- We continue to get requests from people to be able to pay property taxes with a card either online or in person.
- The State General Election was held on November 8th. There was a high voter turnout and a matched a high number of requests for absentee ballots. The election went quit smoothly. The total number of ballots cast was 1,893. (187 of these were absentee ballots.)
- There is Town-wide concern about the assessing update. Some people are going ahead and putting their houses on the market to sell them, figuring if their assessment has doubled, their tax bills will double as well. We encourage residents to talk to the assessing department (Selectboard Office).

We wonder if perhaps the Town could have notified residents that the re-assessment was happening and educate them as to what a dramatic change in a Town-wide assessment would mean to their tax bills. An enclosed letter with the assessment notice? An article in the Walpole Clarion?

- We have collected only about ten thousand dollars' worth of property taxes this last month. We have all our supplies ready for printing tax bills as soon as we have a warrant. Regardless of when we receive the warrant and can get it printed out and stuffed into envelopes and mailed through the post office, the property owners will have 30 days from the mailing date in which to pay their bills.

SELECTBOARD OFFICE:

Facilities Update: Mrs. Sarah Downing reported that the Town Hall Roofing project has been completed. On Veterans' Day, the staging was removed along with other construction equipment and materials. Much thanks to Brad Nash for sweeping the yard area with a magnet to gather fallen nails and screws. Melanson will return to shingle the Elm Street door entry roof, at no cost to the Town.

- The south entrance door has been experiencing locking issues. Repairs are ongoing. The north door on Westminster Street is sticking. The card scan/door locking contractor has been contacted to remedy that issue.
- The painting of the Town Hall hallway has been on hold this past month. The project will continue as time allows.
- New tiles will be installed in the Town Hall hallway, bathrooms and kitchen area. The current tile is over 23 years old and is breaking and cracking. The installation is to begin on Wednesday, December 14th. The installation will take 5 business days to complete.

Assessing

- Once the Town tax rate is set, a tax warrant will be created. The Town's reporting has been submitted to the DRA Portal as noted by Rich Kreissle. The tax rate is expected to drop given the overall increased Town valuation.
- There have been inquiries regarding property tax abatements. There are printed copies of the abatement form available in the Town Hall near the map table. The forms can also be downloaded from the Document Center page on www.walpolenh.us. Abatement forms will be accepted at the Selectboard Office AFTER the final 2022 tax bill is mailed.
- Veterans, Elderly, and Solar Energy property tax exemption forms (PA-29) will also be accepted after the 2022 tax bill is mailed. They are available at the same locations as the property tax abatement form.

Human Resources

- Open enrollment for healthcare is beginning. There has been a change in the health care plan offered to employees. Packets of information are being created and should be ready on Friday, November 18th.
- With the change in the health care plan, a HealthTrust presentation is scheduled for Tuesday, December 20th at noon. Free pizza and salad will be served to attendees. Benefited employees are *highly encouraged* to attend this presentation to learn more about the AB15/40IPDED Blue Cross and Blue Shield HMO plan.

- The lasagna and salad employee appreciation lunch is scheduled for Tuesday, December 12th from 11:45 AM to 1 PM. We are hoping for good weather so all can attend.

Mr. Kraig Harlow who could not attend the meeting submitted the following report.

RECREATION:

Whitcomb Park

- All park equipment down at Whitcomb Park was picked up on November 15th and stored in the shed and the pool house.
- Bob Whyte from Basketball Courts MA, LLC came down to the park on October 22nd and repaired the hole in the tiles. Work was done for a written formal recommendation.

Pool

- The Recreation Department will be asking for an encumbrance on last year's Article 10 for Pool and Pool House Repairs.
- The Recreation Department would like to extend it's the time to use the monies next season to hire a pool specialist under the guidance of Mark Houghton to repair the pool. We are hoping to use just this one company on any issues with the pool.

Hockey Rink

- Our hockey rink will be put up next week out on the field by St. John's Church. Members in the community have reached out to the recreation department and the select board in increasing the size of the rink.
- We are hoping to upgrade our 30ft x 60ft rink to the recommended recreational size of 80ft X 120 ft.

Winter Basketball

- We have 90 children signed up for basketball from grades 1st-6th grade. This is almost 40 more children from last year.
- We currently have three 1st & 2nd grade team, two girls 3/4 teams, two boys 3/4 teams, one girls 5/6 team, and one boys 5/6 team.
- Games will be held on Saturday mornings at Walpole Elementary School from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. and at North Walpole School from 10 a.m. -3 p.m.
- Practices will be held at North Walpole School for one hour between 5 p.m. - 8 p.m. We have Diamond Pizza, Houghton, ServPro, Hubbards LLC, Home Away From Home and WW Building sponsoring teams this season.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Mayberry moved to adjourn this Staff Meeting. Seconded by Mrs. Pschirrer. Mr. Dalessio asked if there was any additional discussion. There was none. With Ms. Mayberry, Mrs. Pschirrer and Mr. Dalessio in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 5:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Downing, Recording Secretary Pro Tempore


Steven Dalessio, Chair


Peggy L. Pschirrer


Cheryl Mayberry

(Note: These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be found in the Minutes of the December 1, 2022 Selectboard meeting.)

