

TOWN OF GROTON
PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED BUDGET
February 6, 2018

In Attendance: Christina Goodwin, John Rescigno, Kyle Andrews and Sara Smith (Administrative Assistant)

Audience Members Present

Christina called the Public Hearing on the Budget and Warrant Articles to order at 6:00pm.

Christina reported that the Operating Budget increased by approximately \$19,924.

The proposed budget was discussed by the following sections:

Executive

The proposed budget is \$59,944 an increase of \$2,269. Christina explained that there was a proposed merit increase as part of the evaluation process. Merit increases ranged from 0% to 3% for staff. The Selectmen's Stipend increased to reflect the Chair getting \$50.00 more a month. The Moderator increased due to more elections. Workshops and seminars increased to allow the moderator to attend more workshops.

Pam Hamel asked about merit increase. It was explained that it is 1-4% and it is based on the policy that was adopted last year. Pam said that companies are not giving increases of 4%, a lot of places are giving less than that. Sara explained that the numbers in the budget are not reflecting actual raises because the raises have not been given as of yet, it is just an estimate for the budget. The Administrative Assistant wages are an estimate of 3% increase but that doesn't mean that that is what she will get. The board approved an increase this year based on evaluations across the board. It was asked if there was a cap on salaries. It was explained that there is and we follow the information from the wage study which showed the minimum and maximum each position can make. Each year an evaluation will be given but that doesn't mean a merit increase will be given every year.

Miles asked if there is an immediate increase pending evaluation. Christina explained there have not been any increases given at this point but the wage lines have been increased in case there are increases received. Miles said that he did the math and he got the increase at 3.76% increase for the Administrative Assistant. Christina asked for just the Administrative Assistant wage line and Miles said yet. It was explained that this is only a 3% increase but we can double check the numbers. The numbers were double checked later on in the meeting and it was only a 3% increase, not 3.76%. Miles agrees that at some point the job should only be worth so much money and then going forward they would only get a cost of living increase and asked if this is what the cap would represent. John explained it would mean that they would have to move into the next position for an increase and gave the example that a Police Officer would have to move to a Police Chief.

Election, Registration, Vital Statistics

The proposed budget is \$55,307, an increase of \$332. The increases here were for workshops and seminars to allow both the Town Clerk/Tax Collector and the deputy to attend and to the ballot clerks since there are more elections this year.

It was asked why we didn't spend all that was budgeted. It was explained that the deputy resigned and there was no deputy for a while so this line wasn't spent. It was also explained that there was a spending freeze at the end of year.

The ballot clerks increased because there was only one election last year and there are three this year.

The Town Clerk didn't request an increase. Miles said the Select Board did a very good job scrutinizing things and making adjustments where they felt necessary. He told Ruth that all other departments are receiving increases and he wanted to make sure she understands that she should receive one as well and he wasn't sure what her motivation was to not request one. From his perspective she is doing a good job and does deserve a raise. He also said that at one point the Administrative Assistant and the Town Clerk wages were almost the same so he asked about the difference between these two lines. It was explained that the current Administrative Assistant has been here a few years longer than the current Town Clerk, there are other tasks that were added into the Administrative Assistant duties, and the Administrative Assistant is based on 40 hours per week and the Town Clerk is only based on 32 hours per week. There were also times that Laura didn't take an increase when the Administrative Assistant received one.

The Select Board will revisit this and will discuss an increase.

Financial Administration

The proposed budget is \$19,560, a decrease of \$10.

Legal Expenses

The proposed budget is \$11,000, a decrease of \$2,000.

Personnel Administration

The proposed budget is \$78,550, which is a decrease of \$1,450. The Health Insurance costs went down for 2018.

Planning/Zoning

The proposed budget is \$23,552, an increase of about \$15,050. It was explained this increase is on the line for Planning Board Master Plan & Zoning due to the zoning ordinance.

Ann Joyce asked why the Planning Board supplies increased. It was explained that they need to purchase a fire proof cabinet.

Ann also asked about the increase in master plan. Christina explained that the cost for a one year project includes:

- community informational meetings
- public hearings
- postage
- copies, labels & envelopes

All costs/expenses relating to Town Planning for consultants, (professional & legal) is also included under this line-item. These expenses are off-set by a grant from the NLRA equaling \$6,000.

Deb Johnson asked Pam Hamel to speak as she is the Chair of the Citizens Planning Committee. Pam mentioned that everyone should have received an invitation to open house that is coming up. With the recently adopted master plan, the Planning Board thought it prudent to look to members in the

community and to form the Citizen's Planning Committee (CPC). Their goal is to reach out to the community, to engage the community and to maintain the lifestyle we have in Groton. In order to do that, they are having open houses, informational sessions and have contracted with a planner named Steve Whitman, who everyone can meet at the open house. Proper planning is a roadmap for the community and is a way to move forward to make sure the residents, citizens and property owners in Groton make decisions on what Groton is going to be and what do the residents want to do. In order to do this, it costs money to do this right. It costs money to learn about it, to get information, have meetings, draft the proposals, etc. They want to hear from the community and they want to be transparent through the process. We cannot do this without having these funds. Pam asked if anyone could reach out to the community on their own and draft a potential zoning ordinance on their own and everyone said no. She said she cannot do this on her own and no one on the committee can which is why they need professional help. This is a one-time deal and they would like the support. It is a learning curve for everyone. Deb wanted to add that some of this is based on requirements that are outlined in the RSA for mailings, public hearings, etc. that they have to follow.

Pam said that they are thankful to NLRA and fortunate for the grant. Deb added that they did secure the promise of the grant and there will be other grants that they will apply for. Christina explained that even if grants they have to gross budget and it is offset by the grants.

General Government Buildings

The proposed budget is \$23,705, an increase of \$25 in cleaning supplies.

Miles asked if we are expecting more for contracted services. It was explained we kept it the same because we are not sure of what additional costs we may have. Christina explained that the security company changed again. The one we had before wasn't helpful, wouldn't come out, etc. but we went back to the local company we used to have that reopened his business again.

A resident asked why we didn't come down more for this budget. It was explained the Town Hall has to have the roof looked at and a small deck out back. For the Town garage we had to have wiring replaced from mice chewing, the garage doors had to be fixed and it needed additional repairs. Slim asked what was done to avoid this from happening again with the mice. Kyle explained that they did a spray in insulation which won't allow the room for the mice to run along the wires. Bubba also explained that they are taking preventative measures to keep the mice out. Christina explained that since we are planning on a new Town Garage it is our intent to put as little money as we can into the building but we do have to keep it running.

Cemeteries

The proposed budget is \$7,126, a decrease of \$2,234 in the site work for River Road cemetery. Miles asked why there is only \$1.00 for the fuel line. It was explained that the Cemetery Trustees will be contracting the lawn services out this year so the fuel will be included in that.

General Insurance

The proposed budget is \$14,040, a decrease of \$1,295 which was a decrease in costs for 2018 for both the Property & Liability Insurance and the Workmen's Compensation line.

Advertising and Regional Associations

The proposed budget is \$2,775, an increase of \$325 in the advertising line due to some positions that still have to be advertised and we were way over last year.

Pam asked why we were over in the advertising line. It was explained that there were a few jobs such as part time Police Officer, Highway attendant, Transfer Station Supervisor, Public Works Director, etc. that we had to advertise for and some we needed to advertise a few times since we haven't filled the position. The cost of advertising has also increased.

Other General Government

The proposed budget is \$5,071, an increase of \$1,199 and this is due to the forester charges estimated to be \$1,200. It was explained this will be our first year using the Forester so we estimated the best that we could.

It was asked if anyone was doing the Forester duties the year prior and what the Forester will do. There was a logger years ago that did it and then the Administrative Assistant has been doing what they can. The Forester will compare the report to what was cut, confirm the quality of the cut and the timber, etc.

Police

The proposed budget is \$123,192, a decrease of \$4,935. There are increases and decreases throughout the budget.

Ann asked EJ what the other equipment repairs and maintenance line covers. EJ explained this is for computers, scanners, copiers, etc.

Miles asked why the Police Chief wages reflects a 5% increase. It was agreed that this should be adjusted and will be lowered. We will use the 3% increase. Miles said that he is on a fixed income and isn't getting a 5% increase. The Select Board will make sure that in the future it is always 3% that is budgeted.

Pam said she assumes this has a salary cap as well and it was explained that it does.

Pam mentioned that the part time police officer has always been a problem. She said we have spent a lot of time advertising, interviewing and training and we can't keep a part time police officer. Pam said that the Town should look at this and if we need to have this line at all or even at the \$25,000.00 an how long will we keep budgeting for this. John mentioned that the intent of the Select Board was to try one more year to fill the position and if not it will be removed next year but they trust the town if they do decide to remove it.

Pam asked if the Select Board is willing to send anyone else to the academy. The Select Board previously discussed this and it was agreed that we would want to get someone certified. EJ confirmed that we will be looking for certified. Miles said to EJ that certifications used to last three years but he thought that now they last only 30 days. EJ said you can go to training counsel if under the three years and you wouldn't have to go through everything again.

Miles asked when the last time we advertised for the part time position. It was in October. There were three applicants but all of them didn't show up for PT test. Miles asked when we were going to advertise again. EJ mentioned he is working on it now and is reaching out to some retired officers. Miles said that if there are no new changes by Town Meeting we should look at reducing this. Slim said that EJ is doing the job and is doing a good job so he doesn't see why we need a part time officer. Slim asked if they can discuss this at Town meeting or tonight. It was explained that it can be discussed tonight and at Town Meeting. The Select Board is at the point that this needs to be filled or we will not put it on next year. Miles said that it isn't just Groton; it is happening all over even at larger Police Departments are having recruitment issues. It was asked why the number went down and not up if we are trying to get

people in here. It was explained that since we currently do not have anyone in the position and it would take a while until we do that this was budgeted for only $\frac{3}{4}$ of the year, not a full year. If someone is in the position next year this will be increased as it will be budgeted for the entire year.

Fire and Ambulance

The proposed budget is \$73,796, an increase of \$350 in the Lakes Region Mutual Aid (LRMA) line. Pam inquired if the LRMA contract ever reduced after the first year with the Wind Farm. Christina reported that it did but it was only reduced by a couple thousand.

Miles asked about the contracted services for Rumney and why it was so low for last year. He asked if there was a typo or if it was accurate. We have been informed that Hebron is responding to more and the calls were lower on this side of Town. Miles asked what the next step is if Rumney doesn't respond. It was explained we are watching it this year and will decide what the next step should be if they don't respond. Elizabeth asked if it is a flat rate for Hebron. It was explained that for Hebron we are in year two of a three year contract and it is a set amount, not by call.

A resident stated that her home owners insurance goes by her location and her distance from Fire/EMT so her home owners would go up if we didn't contract with Rumney. Ruth said she wouldn't want to wait for Hebron to respond if she had an emergency. These are all things we would have to keep in mind.

Emergency Management

The proposed budget is \$903, which stayed the same as last year.

Highway Administration

The proposed budget is \$70,775, an increase of \$240 which is in the telephone/internet line. Internet is needed at the Town Garage for emergency purposes relating to the weather.

Miles wanted to thank Bubba for stepping up when the Town needed him. He is doing a great job. Bubba has worked 50 out of the last 54 days. Everyone thanked Bubba for his hard work.

Pam said that it has been a struggle with the manual labor on the job and asked if we are looking for younger people with no offense to the current employees. The only younger person we have is Jeremy Haney and he is only here for the winter. It was explained that we have advertised and Bubba had an idea of reaching out to the college kids for summer work but it is hard because it isn't guaranteed hours.

Miles said that when they were perambulating the Groton/Orange town line, Scott Sanborn said that they contract out some of the road and plowing services. Kyle mentioned that we have been talking about this and that this year is a trial year on contracted services so we can gauge how to do this, the costs, etc.

Highways and Streets

The proposed budget is \$74,901, an increase of \$11,250. The vehicle-equipment maintenance and repair line was increase by \$5000.00 because we went over last year and we know of tires, brakes, etc. needing replacement. The other increase was to the equipment rental line which is now called contracted services/equipment rentals and was increased by \$10,000.00. Now that Glen is no longer here we will have to rent more equipment and contract out services. We will have to contract more out which is why this line increased. This line may be low because we haven't done this before.

Deb asked if we have looked into grants for Culverts. Sara explained that she is currently working with FEMA on a potential Hazard Mitigation Grant and has an upcoming meeting with North Country Council on areas the Town could use grants and this is one of them. Deb said that NLRA has some funds for culverts that they had originally reached out to Glen on. Sara will follow up on this.

Streets and Lighting

The proposed budget is \$1,100, which stayed the same as last year.

Slim said that he got a letter about assessment of electric bill and there is a bill that Slim doesn't think we should vote for. We don't have the bill with us but Christina will look into this. Christina will get an update for the February 20th meeting.

Sanitation – Monitoring

The proposed budget is \$6,875, which stated the same as last year.

Solid Waste Disposal

The proposed budget is \$61,385, an increase of \$1,939 attributed to wages and mileage. Also recycling costs went up to show the charges from Gilpatric's for the steel but this will be offset by revenues.

Norm mentioned that Gilpatric's will cost us monthly but the Town will make money off of this by revenues. Miles asked if he is licensed and Norm said he is federally licensed.

Health Administration

The proposed budget is \$1,588, which stayed the same as last year.

Pam asked who is getting the health stipend and it was explained that right now the Select Board is acting as the Health Officer so they are.

Health Agencies and Hospitals

The proposed budget is \$4,211, an increase of \$267 for Mid-State Health and we added Transport Central since the town has used them a lot over the past year.

Miles asked what Transport Central does. It was explained that they are a company that brings elderly and disabled residents to appointments, grocery shopping, etc. In 2017 they did 108 trips for Groton and are only asking \$1.00 per trip.

Welfare

The proposed budget is \$7,044, which stayed the same as last year. It was explained that even though we didn't use the entire budget last year for the vendor payments that we still didn't decrease the vendor payments. If someone qualifies for assistance we are required to provide it and are not able to predict what each year will bring.

Elizabeth asked about Grafton County Senior Citizens. Their report stated that they gave \$5,509.68 to Groton residents in 2017.

Culture and Recreation

The proposed budget is \$8,561, a decrease of \$1,398.

Parks and Recreation

The proposed budget is \$5,989, an increase of \$610 which covers the porta potty at Spectacle Pond and the electricity at the Park.

Pam said that she heard that the Select Board wants to post no swimming at Spectacle Pond. It was explained that the Select Board was instructed to post no swimming at the boat launch due to liability. It was suggested to put a swim at your own risk sign instead. The Select Board will revisit this at the next meeting since this isn't a budget meeting.

Miles asked if the money that was spent last year was for the installation of electricity at the park. It was confirmed that it was. He also asked if the amount budget this year is for the monthly charges for usage of the electricity. This was confirmed as well.

Library

The proposed budget is \$501, a decrease of \$1,999.

Ann asked what is covered under library-other. It was explained that this is for supplies. The residents still use computer and internet so this is for paper, ink, etc.

Patriotic Purposes

The proposed budget is \$100, which stayed the same as last year.

Conservation

The proposed budget is \$1,971, a decrease of \$9.

The proposed Warrant Articles were reviewed:

Article 1: The Town Officials

The open positions are:

Selectman: one position for 3 years- John Rescigno

Town Clerk: one position for 3 years- Ruth Millett

Trustee of the Trust Fund: one position for 3 years and one position for 1 year- Gina Rescigno (3yr)

Town Auditor: one position for 1 year- Otto Jespersen

Supervisor of the Checklist: one position for 6 years- no candidates

Planning Board: three positions for 3 years and one position for 1 year – Forest Blake and David Labar (3yr)

Zoning Board: two positions for 3 years- no candidates

Cemetery Trustee: one position for 3 years and one position for 2 years- Elizabeth Jespersen (3yr)

Library Trustee: one position for 3 years and one position for 1 year- Elizabeth Jespersen (3yr)

Article 2: The budget.

Article 3: Establish an Office Equipment Capital Reserve Fund & 5,000 into it

The Board thought it would be best to create a fund for the purpose of replacing and maintaining equipment such as copiers, computers, printers and other office equipment as when these things break down they can be expensive to fix.

Miles asked if this is covered in the budget. It was explained that there is for maintenance but not if a computer or copier goes down.

Pam said that she is in full support of this as we are a digital and technical growing. Deb seconds this and said that we hold a lot of Town information and it is important to use up to date equipment.

Miles asked if there is a max for how much money would be put into this fund. This would be determined when we realize how much we are using or not.

It was agreed to change this to Electronic Equipment and software.

Article 4: \$25,000 for support of The Nature Conservancy conservation easement

This is to support of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in New Hampshire's acquisition and permanent protection of the 2,709 acre Kimball Hill Forest, Map 3 Lot 14, Map 3 Lot 16 and Map 4 Lot 1.

Pam said it is her understanding is that ultimate end of what is going to happen to this property is up in the air which is her concern. She has heard some rumors that she doesn't like such as ATV Park, etc. and she could not support this if there isn't something definitive.

Jim O'Brien from TNC of NH introduced himself. He explained that there was a sealed bid in August and they won the bid. Normally they raise funds first but since it was a sealed bid so they were not able to. The purchase price was around \$1.8 million, with a total project cost of \$2.1 million, which they had to borrow the money. They have been fund raising since and they have raised about \$725,000 to date. Their intention is to conserve the land so the rumor is not true; they are not going to open an ATV park. They will conserve the land for recreational access and for the wildlife that is out there.

The \$25,000 on the warrant article would go towards the money raised to conserve the land and would show the Town does support this which goes a long way for other companies to donate. All land that the TNC owns is open and accessible to the public and the snowmobile trails would remain open. They have had conversations with State of NH Fish and Game that they have interest. If they purchase the property, TNC would retain a conservation easement. They believe that Fish and Game would manage the property the same way they would.

Pam asked about the easement. Jim explained that if they were to sell the property, they would retain an easement on the property which would make it so no development could take place.

Deb said Fish and Game does allow trapping and ATV use. Also, DRED has expressed an interest in other land along with some of this land to open an ATV park as they wanted to do 10-15 years ago. Deb also said a conservation easement includes prohibition of wind farms. She was told that prohibiting an ATV Park cannot be written into the easement like the wind farms can and wanted to know if this was true. Jim said his knowledge is that Fish and Game doesn't open their properties to ATVs. They could but their understanding is that they don't. TNC properties are closed to ATV access but they haven't had any detailed conversations on this with Fish and Game yet but it is not the intention to make this an ATV Park. Deb said that she fully supports this warrant article but would like more information by the March meeting to have more information on what the easement will cover in regards to ATV use. Jim doubted that they will have any language on the easement by March as this is a longer term process.

Bubba said that after the last meeting he thought it was a definite with Fish and Game. Jim explained that it is still the intention but there is no paperwork and it is not a done deal, they are interested but it isn't a sure thing.

Miles confirmed that TNC currently owns the property and they do. Miles said he also felt that at the first meeting it seemed it was a definite that Fish and Game was buying it the property. Originally there were talks that they were going to sell it to the Town if they were interested but at that meeting it seemed like an absolute that it was being sold to Fish and Game so it seems like things have changed.

Jim said that nothing has changed. He apologizes if the impression was given that it was a definite because it wasn't and still isn't and he doesn't think it was presented that way.

Ted asked that if the town donated the \$25,000 what the Town would get out of it. This would be a donation which would help them achieve the conservation easement goal. It would allow open recreation access. Ted does not support this.

It was asked if they are selling the property any way, why would they need this money from the Town of Groton. It was explained that right now they own the property and are fund raising to pay off the money borrowed. If they sell it, they would retain an easement on the property which does cost.

Slim said that he also thought that Fish and Game was a definite as well. He attended other meetings where it seemed positive this was going to happen as well. They do have to come up with different parameters for the easement. The idea is that the easement would protect the conservation and not let more development come in.

Pam wanted to clarify that it is a privilege to go on that land because the owner could post the land as no trespassing even if it is in current use. Ted disagreed because he was told he cannot tell people they cannot hunt on his property since it is in current use. Christina confirmed that current use is different than an easement. Current use can be posted but you won't receive the recreation discount but if there is an easement there are specific rules that are agreed on.

Pam also pointed out that there is a Town cemetery on this property.

It was asked where the number \$25,000 came from. Jim explained it can be any amount but when they met with the Select Board previously it was discussed and felt like it was a fair amount. Every project is different and there is no standard amount.

The minutes were pulled from the meeting on November 21, 2017 with TNC and the Town and Christina read the minutes out loud. The minutes state *"Since they got the contract on the property they have talked to NH Fish and Game and they are interested in the property and were looking at the property too but they couldn't move quickly and it would take at least a year for them to be able to. They would like to establish this as the State's newest wildlife management area and are willing to put a significant amount of funds towards the project and their goals are consistent with the goals that were discussed in July which are to protect property, prevent development and subdivision, keep it open for hunting, fishing and snowmobiling, manage it for wildlife habitat, etc. What they are proposing right now is to transfer land to Fish and Game Department, establish the new wildlife management area and The Nature Conservancy would hold a conservation easement on the property which will be written into deed which states the restrictions and assures the reason The Nature Conservancy purchased the property will be guaranteed over time. The state owning the property will accomplish most everyone's goals and interests."*

Jim explained that he was there that night and this is what they want to do but it is not a definite and he apologized again if this was the impression that was given. It is still the intention but it was not a guarantee.

Deb added that if the Town supports this it will make other funders more apt to contribute. Deb thanked TNC for doing this.

It was asked if Fish and Game purchases the property if they are able to do logging on the property or if this is part of the easement. Jim said that in a lot of their easements there is language regarding forestry and forest management. He knows that Fish and Game wants to manage this for wildlife so any harvesting would be done for the benefit of the wildlife. He did say that if the State does a timber cut they would pay a timber tax that the Town received payment on.

Miles asked what Plan B is if Fish and Game doesn't buy it. He said that TNC would keep the land and manage the property as they do other land; they currently own about 28,000 acres of land in the State.

Ted asked if TNC is like the Society for Protection of Forests. He said yes. They are a non-profit organization they rely on private individual donations and have foundation dollars. They do have some government contracts that they work on. They are different by the fact that they are a global organization and have offices in all 50 states and some in other countries. They have been in NH for about 55 years.

Jim explained that their representative Jan will be at Town Meeting.

Article 5: \$200,000 for repair/reconstruction of North Groton Road

This would be to continue work on the section that was reclaimed in 2017. This will complete somewhere between half to three quarters of what was done last year. We received quotes from three different companies but these were just quotes to know how much money to ask for on the warrant but we would get bids if this passes for the actual work. The quote that made the most sense to match the project the way we have been doing it was a lot more money than we anticipated it would be. The base proposal was 3500 linear feet for \$360,000.00 which doesn't include if ledge needs to be hydraulic hammered out, any culverts that need to be replaced, etc. There was an alternate quote for 1700 linear feet which would be \$180,000.00 so we are thinking that \$200,000.00 would get half to not even three quarters.

Miles said that he doesn't take the road that often but when he did it was easier going down than back up. He knows that Slim has said that he doesn't want to repeat this kind of work again with the extent of wash boarding. Miles thinks it is a mistake to open the road up if you cannot repave it quickly. Miles asked if this will be done again. John said it seemed like a good suggestion at the time but with the wash boarding they are learning is not a good idea but he doesn't think that we should have let the road deteriorate that bad in the first place. Miles said the Town has been battling this forever. Christina said that when this was decided the Select Board reached out to people that have experience with this and were told that if we were to do this that it should be left to set for a year to let it pack down and it should get better with time but in this case it doesn't seem to have gotten better.

Ted said that he doesn't live in North Groton but he is sure that those that do want to see that road paved.

Bubba explained that the road committee is going to have to meet to revisit how we are currently doing the roads as what we have been doing may not be the best way. He has talked to other companies about this. Christina stated that this should be brought to the road committee and if anyone is interested in joining the road committee they would be welcomed. At the time they started these projects there was an engineer on the road committee and the recommendations came from him.

Pam said the road seems better in the winter since the snow has filled it. She said that there were some parts of the road that was better reclaimed than it was before with the pot holes.

Jim asked if the paving would pick up where it was previously left off or over the worst wash boarding section. It was explained that no final decision has been made but we have been told that we should for a smoother transition instead of digging up different sections.

It was asked if there is any grant money or any other state money. It was explained that we get some state highway funds. Sara mentioned that this is also one of the items she is meeting with North Country Council on.

Article 6: \$65,000 Atwell Orange Brook Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve Fund

The original estimate to replace the bridge was lower than what it will cost. When the sealed bid meeting took place there were 8 companies that put in bids and they were anywhere from \$292,390.00 to \$709,620.00. M.E. Latulippe was selected for his bid amount of \$292,390.00. At the end of 2016 there was \$56,330.98 in the Capital Reserve Fund and it was voted to put \$225,00.00 in the fund at the 2017 Town Meeting. This is \$281,330.98 in the fund and the project total including the engineering costs is \$345,990.00 which means we still need \$64,659.02.

The companies that put in bids were:

Neil H Daniels INC= \$433,300.00

Jeremy Hiltz Excavating Inc= \$398,000.00

EARTH- Northeast Earth Mechanics, Inc.= \$588,000.00

Hansen Construction LTD= \$426,000.00

Cold River Bridges, LLC= \$655,655.00

E.D. Swett Inc= \$709,620.00

K.A. Stevens= \$435,550.00

M.E. Latulippe Construction, Inc. = \$292,390.00

Sara explained that this is also one of the items she is meeting with North Country Council on. She tried for a Hazard Mitigation Grant on this but since we have already budgeted and started the process on this it does not qualify for that grant.

The easements are in, the bids are done, and a bid has been accepted conditional upon funding which was the lower bid now we just need the funds to cover the rest so the project can get started. The plan is to do the bridge this year if the funding is approved.

Article 7: \$34,000 repair of Groton paved roads, with \$14,000 coming from the general fund balance and remainder from taxation.

This is for the repair of Groton paved roads. Last year there was \$14,000 that wasn't used in this line so that amount would come from the unassigned fund balance and the remainder to be raised by taxation. This would take care of other paved roads besides North Groton Road, such as Sculptured Rocks Road, River Road, etc.

Miles asked why it the funds were not spent the year before. It was explained that some of this is because of time management, some is because of the storm in October, weather etc.

It was asked if the work would be contracted out. It was explained that some would be contracted out but that all hasn't been decided yet.

Article 8: \$10,750- move the money received from Primex for the 2006 Ford F350 to the Truck/Sander Capital Reserve Fund.

The Town received a check from Primex for the 2006 Ford F350 that was totaled in the storm due to flooding. We are requesting that this amount be moved from to the capital reserve fund to put back into a highway truck since that is where it came from.

Article 9: \$12,635 for new truck with plow for the Highway Department

This is to purchase a new truck with plow for the highway department with twelve thousand six hundred thirty four dollars and eighty one cents (\$12,635) from the Truck/Sander Capital Reserve Fund. (SB38 funds of \$22,365 received in 2017 will complete the \$35,000 purchase.)

The intent is to use the SB 38 funds since we have to use these towards equipment or project for roads/highways but cannot be an existing project. We confirmed they can be used for this. There would be no taxation for this vehicle.

Ted asked how many trucks we need that take the chance of getting flooded out by leaving it at the Town Garage. Bubba explained that the truck that got flooded was the old truck and he has been moving them when there is a flood warning. He has moved the trucks twice already since he has taken over. He explained that the previous Road Agent used his personal truck a lot which helped but he isn't here anymore. There have been cases where the Dodge has broken down quite a bit and we cannot use the 6 wheeler for smaller projects so we have had to contract work out or have employees use their own vehicles to get parts which is costing a lot in mileage. The pick-up truck would be beneficial for all projects, especially in the winter time. You cannot plow all the roads with just the big 6 wheeler.

John mentioned that regarding the flooding, it shows even more so that the Garage needs to be moved but we haven't been collecting enough each year to build a new building even though it has been known this is a problem.

Pam agreed that the employees should not have to use their own vehicles, even if they are paid mileage.

It was asked if it has been looked into to raise the building that is down there. It was explained that it has been looked into but this cannot be done and there would still be issues with the salt, sand, etc.

Miles asked if this was a brand new truck. It was confirmed that it is. He wanted to point out that other than the last few years the Town has been able to do all it needed to do with two trucks. He understands it would be nice to have an extra truck but isn't sure the Town needs the additional expense. He said maybe we could do something else with the SB 38 funds such as more miles on North Groton Road. It was explained that it cannot be used towards and existing project such as North Groton Road.

Bubba explained that we have actually had three or more trucks. We had the 6 wheeler, the Dodge, the F350 and then the previous Road Agents truck was used a lot. Miles said that he doesn't count the previous Road Agents truck since it was his choice to use. Miles said we should be able to contract out the work if needed. We are working towards that but it is hard to go directly towards that.

Miles addressed John that he has lived in Town for 20 years and the Town has not neglected what needed to be done. They have always had discussions of what needed to be done but also had recognition of the financial limitations. Miles said we are in a better situation now so we can allocate more funds. John said he feels it is neglect when something has been in disarray for so long and you allow it to continue to deteriorate without putting much money aside to fix it. He has been in the Town for three years and now he has to put his tax

money into a road that was never done, a bridge that wasn't done, a garage that needed to be replaced, etc. John loves the Town and wants to do what he can to fix these things. He wants to look forward instead of back but the reality is that there are a lot of things that haven't been done in the Town that should have been. Miles said the Town did the best they could with what they had and you cannot raise the taxes to fix everything. These discussions have been going on for a long time but they have only been able to do what they can. John said that when the windfarm money came in we shouldn't have lowered the tax rate, we should have put it back into the Town. Christina moved on since this topic is not relevant to the warrant article.

Article 10: \$100,000 for the Public Works Capital Reserve Fund.

The Select Board explained that the amount has been increased because of the urgency to get the new building built. There have been a few floods with one being recent in which we had lost salt, sand, a truck and had to do repairs to the building. We have contracted with a company to help with the process of designing a building, provide costs, etc. We are in negotiations about the plans and were feeling rushed so we didn't feel comfortable moving forward with putting it on this year's budget.

It was asked if there is any penalty for not doing it this year. There is not but the prices could change year to year. It was presented that this will be done in stages and we will meet with them after Town Meeting to discuss our direction.

Miles asked what the balance was prior. It was about \$65,000 which has been moved out of the Capital Reserve Fund to cover some charges for the plans, meetings, etc. that has been done so far. We have received an estimate and a plan but we need to meet more because the cost was a shock to everyone. We had gathered information about a bond, had numbers and a warrant article written but decided to withdraw it until we meet more on this.

Article 11: \$5,000 – Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund

Money is put into this account in the anticipation for the future. We have done this for many years so that the money is put away so we do not have to come up all at once for a lump sum for a new vehicle.

It was asked what the turnover for a vehicle is and when we are thinking we will need a new one. The current vehicle is a few years old so we shouldn't need a new one for a few more years as long as there are no issues. We do try to stretch it out as long as we can.

It was asked how many miles are on the cruiser we have now. EJ said there are about 20,000.

It was mentioned that we may not need to put \$5,000 into it every year. It will determine how much money is in there and when we are thinking we will need a new vehicle. It was also explained that it costs money to outfit the vehicle as well when a new one is purchased.

Article 12: \$7,000 - Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund

Every five years the Town is required to redo the valuation. We recently did it in 2016 and will have to do it again in 2021. Money is put away every year so that we do not have to come up with the lump sum every five years.

Article 13: \$5,000 – Heavy Equipment Capital Reserve Fund

This is for the purchase of larger equipment such as if we needed to replace the backhoe, if we needed an excavator, etc. Since we are looking at contracting out work we may not need to put money in this every year but since we do not know how this will work out right now we wanted to put money into this.

Article 14: \$5,000 – Disaster Relief Capital Reserve Fund

With the last storm we are working on getting FEMA funding and we are anticipating that we will be getting the funding but this fund is for these types of situations. We had to use some of these funds until we get the FEMA funding and we have used this in the past with past storms such as on Edgar Albert Road. If we get FEMA funding our intent is to put some money back into this fund.

Miles asked if in the event we don't get FEMA funding, is there money allocated to put towards the damage on Sculptured Rocks Road from the last storm. At this time there is not unless we took more money out of this fund or use the Groton Paved Roads money but it could cost more than that so we may need to look into a plan B,

Article 15: \$5,000 – Townhouse Capital Reserve Fund

This fund was established for the Townhouse for over and above regular maintenance. For instance, if the roof has a problem or anything should happen to the heat this fund would cover that.

It was asked how old the roof is. It was estimated it went on around 2002 so it is almost at the end of the life of the roof. There has been some cupping of the shingles so we are having someone come look at it in the spring to see when it needs to be replaced.

Article 16: \$3,000 – Replacement of two portable emergency radios

The last storm we had no phones and because we only have analog radios it made it difficult. This was requested from the Fire Chief/Emergency Management Director Roger Thompson and he is only asking to replace two at this time.

Miles stated that digital and analog are two different technologies. Analog is the older technology so he is hoping that we are not purchasing any analog radios. The new ones will be digital/analog radios so that we can communicate with the state services that only have digital radios but we will also still be able to communicate with the analog radios we currently have.

Jim asked whatever happened with the cell phone towers that a gentleman was trying to do a few years ago. It was explained that he no longer lives in Town and we have reached out to a few companies to see if they were interested but it isn't cost effective for them to install one for a Town of 593 people. They have put us on a list and will look for cell phone companies that are willing to or want to test new services out but at this time there are not any. Jim said that there is an issue for public safety if there is an accident on Halls Brook Road. We tried to push that issue.

We are getting a booster installed at the Town House to help with better service since there was no service with the last storm.

Slim said that Campbell Lane property would be the perfect place for a cell phone tower. We will keep that in mind if they come back to us and are willing to install one.

Miles said that a few years ago they did draft a warrant article to put a cell tower at the Transfer Station and it passed but nothing ever happened with it. That company was no longer in service so we have since reached out to others. We reached out to Rumney since they are having one put in and got the information from them of who to contact.

Article 17: \$1,000 – Groton Historical Society (GHS)

This is the same as last year. We have discussed adding this to the budget instead of warrant articles for next year.

Article 18: \$1,000 – Newfound Lake Region Association (NLRA)

This is the same as last year. We have discussed adding this to the budget instead of warrant articles for next year.

Article 19: Contract with Hebron for Library Services pursuant to RSA 202-A:4-b for one year

This was submitted by the Library Trustees which is for the same contract as last year. There will be no funds from the Town's budget for this; the funds will come from the Library Trustees account. There was a typo; the Select Board does recommend this article so this will be changed.

Article 20: Demolition of the Old Library and Town Office building

There has been talk for quite some time about tearing this down. This is an advisory article only and we will not be spending money at this point. The Select Board wanted to get the Town's opinion and permission to move forward with removing this building.

Elizabeth thought that there was a previous warrant article for this already a few years ago. This was for the old library only so this was submitted for clarification to combine them both and to go back to the Town and get their input. If the Town does want to demo it we need to know so we can move forward. Miles said that the article from a few years ago was to take the library down if it didn't cost any money.

It was asked if the Town insures the building. There is insurance on it for liability reasons. We have chained the building, removed the stairs, nailed the doors shut, etc. to keep people out but the intent is to remove it.

It was asked if the Hebron Fire Department had interest in the building. They had asked them before but they couldn't do fire training as it is too close to the power lines, to the road, etc.

Miles said that he had heard some talk about the cost for the new building but wasn't sure if the Select Board wanted to share this. It was in previous work session minutes so the Select Board shared this information again. The first quote was almost 2.3 million. The Select Board cut some things out of the building and asked for a new quote, which they received of 1.9 million which was still way higher than the Town was expecting. These numbers were still very high. The site work alone for the new project was going to cost over \$400,000 so we wanted to hold off to do more research to make sure that there are no added costs down the road and that we are getting the best price for the Town. Miles asked if there is anything that can be salvaged from what is there now or if it makes any sense to move the building to a new location. We have looked into this but there are so many codes now that you need to follow and this building does not meet code. Also there have been many floods of the garage and this last flood is the first time that we removed and replaced the insulation and sheetrock so who knows how much other damage is behind the walls. When we looked into moving the building the cost and the way you would have to take the building apart wasn't feasible. Miles said that he was in Town when they built the building and he believes it was done for around \$100,000.

Deb Johnson asked if there are any federal dollars that paid for Hebron and Bridgewater is available. We have applied for Hazard Mitigation Grants through FEMA and Homeland security but we didn't qualify because we already have this in the works. This is something that Sara will be meeting with North Country Council on. She had reached out to USDA and was directed to North Country Council but can

also reach out to Hebron and Bridgewater to see who they went through. Deb Johnson said that she writes grants so if we need any assistance to let her know and she would be happy to volunteer.

Ted asked what would happen with the old garage if a new one is approved. The intent would be to destroy the old garage when a new one is built.

Article 21: Transact any other business that may legally come before the Town

Deliberation

The Selectmen deliberated on the following items.

- The Town Clerk/Tax Collector Salary line was revisited since there was no increase submitted. The Select Board agrees she should get an increase. She gets salary but if you average it out she gets \$17.53/hr. for 1600 hours which is the minimum because she was new. If we gave her \$0.50/hr. would be \$18.03 which would be an additional \$800.00 per year so it was agreed to do this. This would raise the Town Clerk/Tax Collector salary line to \$28,848, which increases the Election/Registration budget to \$56,107. **Christina motioned to amend the Town Clerk/Tax Collector salary line to \$28,848, John 2nd, so voted. Christina motioned to amend the Election/Registration budget to \$56,107, Kyle 2nd, so voted.**
- The Police Chief wages were revisited since the increase reflected a 5% increase and should only be 3%. A 3% increase would be \$1,691.25 which would bring the wages to \$58,066.25 per year, so it was agreed to change this to \$58,067. This would lower the Police Chief Wages line to \$58,067, which decreases the Police budget to \$122,065. **Christina motioned to amend the Police Chief Wages line to \$58,067, Kyle 2nd, so voted. Christina motioned to amend the Police budget to \$122,065, John 2nd, so voted.**
- It was agreed for Sara to make the changes to the typos in the warrant articles and for Sara to let the Select Board know when it is complete so they can come in and sign the warrant. **Kyle motioned to approve the changes to the warrant articles and to come in and sign the warrant when ready, John 2nd, so voted.**

Having no other business to conduct, Christina motioned to close the public hearing at 9:30pm, Christina 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant