

TOWN OF GROTON  
PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED BUDGET  
February 13, 2024

**In Attendance: John Rescigno, Tony Albert, Ron Madan, and Sara Smith (Administrative Assistant)**

**Audience Members Present**

**John called the Public Hearing on the Proposed Budget and Warrant Articles to order at 7:36pm.**

John explained that this public hearing is to go over the budget and warrant articles. We will start with the budget.

***Budget***

John reported that the Operating Budget of \$920,474 which increased by \$66,539. John said we will just go through the budget and over some of the highlights of the budget.

***General Government***

John mention that the General Government totals \$364,508 which increased by \$37,853 from last year.

***Executive***

The proposed budget is \$86,990, an increase of \$14,205.

***Town Administrator/Administrative Assistant***

The Town Administrator/Administrative Assistant wage line increased by \$12,745.00. John explained that the biggest increase came from changing the Administrative Assistant position to the Town Administrator position and there are a couple of things going on here. Sherry asked why there was an increase in the wages. John explained there was a title change from Administrative Assistant to Town Administrator so this budget line is now Town Administrator/Administrative assistant. The first thing is that it is a title change so with that comes an increase. Celine wanted confirmation why a title change required an increase of over 20%. Sherry asked what else is being piled on Saras shoulders to warrant this increase. John said he will explain all of this if everyone can let him do his explanation and then ask questions after. He said they decided to change the title. There was a wage study that was done years ago and they recommended this change back then and stated back then that the job that she does it is Town Administrator not an assistant and also recommended the increase at that time. This was presented back then and nothing was done with that but it was shown that her job is an administrator not an assistant. She does all of the things that an Administrator of other towns does. When you consider how much money she has saved the Town through grants and working with FEMA, etc. it is hundreds of thousands of dollars, we can get the exact amount. He said that working with a grant and FEMA it is not easy work and is not something that the Selectmen are able to do on their own. Sara is committed to the Town 100% to do all of the things that need to be done. She is there to answer the phone, answer the questions from the Townspeople, vendors and others. She puts all of this together for the meetings. When you look at someone of Sara's caliber, this is someone that you cannot replace. When we looked at the increase of wages, we did look at what other towns of the same size and what they pay their Town Administrators, which was actually more than this. John said that he runs a store in West Lebanon and has spent over two years trying to find an employee. You cannot find employees anymore You certainly cannot find someone that that you can leave and trust to run the business or run the Town the way that Sara does. Sara is not replaceable. Miles and Pam said that everyone is replaceable. Miles said that he doesn't mean that as a

derogatory comment towards Sara. Sara said that she is not taking any of this personal, she did not come up with this or the salary. The Select Board are the ones that did which is why they are discussing it. John said that everyone is replaceable but can you replace them with the same caliber is the question and the answer is no. John said he knows that first hand because he works in the real world running a business in the world we live in today and he knows what it was like 25 years ago when he could hire someone and trust they were going to do the job. The person I could hire today which is my best employee is equivalent to what my average employee was 20 years ago. We cannot take the chance of losing Sara to another Town for the same position or to another company. But more importantly what she does for the Town warrants that money.

Celine asked if there was a way to see the job description. She said she worked for the government which was different but they all had job descriptions that were available to anyone that would like to see them. John said that we do have that. Celine said that also did point by point all of the tasks that they were required to do. The budget shows \$64,480 which if you divide that by the average work it is about \$31 per hour. She said that she knows that everything is expensive but when you have such an increase like this it is a heck of a jump and never in her job, even when she got a new job title or a promotion, it was never a 20% increase granted life and things have changed since then. She said this is a big shocker and she would like to see what exactly what she does and exactly what she did because she would never get a promotion unless she had already accomplished everything for the next step. She would like to see what she has accomplished that warrants this change in title and this salary. We are the tax payers and we are paying her salary. This is not about Sara personally.

John said that none of this is taken personally and understood that we were going to have sell this. John said that he has thought about this over the last couple of years and there were other things that have taken place in town so he did not feel it was the right time. He has discussed it with the Select Board this year again and they all agree that the work that she does is that of an administrator and we put that work study out there and he believes it is still out there. Sara said it is online. Celine said you know what she has been doing the past few years and what her tasks are and what she has accomplished. She would like to see this so that she knows this increase is warranted. John said that is fine and a lot of work that is done in town such as the grant work for the building, for Sculptured Rocks Road, the box culverts, the vehicles, etc. is all stuff that Sara went out and sought. He can tell you right now they put that grant money out there with full anticipation that once they are done working you over that you are not going to finish filling out the paperwork and you are going to let the money slip away. It is extremely frustrating to do that. That goes above and beyond what an Administrative Assistant should do. She doesn't have to do those things. Celine said that she understands that. She looks at it like the Town are the Select Boards employers just like when she worked for the government the people in the country were her employers and who paid her salary. John agreed. She said she knows what she accomplished was open to anyone and there was freedom of information acts. She just asks that this information is provided to the public whether it is put online or somehow released to the public. John said that we will compile all of this and we always have a follow up meeting and will go over it at that meeting.

Stacey wanted to confirm that the Town does have detailed job description for the administrator versus the administrative assistant. John said we do. Sara explained that MRI completed full job descriptions when they did the wage study but since the Town Administrator position is new and wasn't a position when the wage study was done, it is a work in progress and they are currently working on finalizing that. Sara also explained that the Selectmen all agreed to not have this go into effect until after Town Meeting so it is not active right now and is being worked on. Celine said she has already done the work so because she is already doing this work which is why she is entitled to the raise so she wants to know what she has accomplished. John said we can do that.

Tony said that a lot of the Towns around us have an Administrator and their salaries are well above what we are willing to pay here. Sherry said but they are probably bigger. Tony and John said that they looked at Towns that are similar and same size. Hebron was given as an example. Sherry said Hebron is a totally different ball of wax, they have money people. John said we just had that conversation and they really don't. It was stated that Hebron Town Administrator also makes a lot more than what we are asking for. Celine said she is not questioning it; she is just stating that as a tax payer they would like to know. Tony said part of it was to look around and to hire someone else we would need to be competitive as well.

John said that before he moves to the next question, he wants to say one more thing. When he first ran for selectmen, it was asked of him what his qualifications were, he said Pam actually asked him that. He said that he views running the Town as running a business. He sells paint, that is how he gets money in. He gets money here through taxation. He has to be wise how he spends his company's money just as he has to be wise on how he spends the Towns money. He has to make smart decisions because he doesn't want to unnecessarily drive up the Towns taxes or not spend money properly. He understands where everyone is coming from and he has a background in all of that. You can apply one thing to another. We will definitely get the items that everyone is asking for because they want everyone to see what they see in Sara.

Pam said that small communities are very unique in that they have all of the same basic responsibilities as larger communities, just on a smaller scale with fewer employees. This is a situation that we have here in Groton. This Town must still file all of the same paperwork with the Department of Revenue, higher assessing company for property assessments, have a welfare department, do IRS quarterly filings, work with FEMA applications, have a Highway Department, etc. We have to do all of the same things. The big difference is the scale. Pam said the Administrative Assistant in this town has always done the same things. She said the only thing we are mentioning that is different is grants in the role. She said that someone has pointed out that there are things that she doesn't do anymore that former assistants used to do. Now all of the sudden we are going to change this to a town administrator. Pam said that we have three elected Select Board Members that she thinks should be handling more than they are handling. If her role is to continue with all of her same duties, with the only thing they have mentioned that is different is that she has written more grants. John said which has saved the Town around a million dollars. Pam said regardless, does that make the position change. Once you make this position change, it is changed and once she leaves you have a Town administrator position that is open. John said not necessarily. She said she thinks they are creating a position for a valued employee, and she understands that Sara is a valued employee but we do not create positions for valued employees. We create positions when the tasks warrant it and the only task she has heard them say that is different is grant writing. She has looked at communities our size and larger and they have Administrative Assistants and not Town Administrators such as Danbury, Piermont, Bridgewater, Wentworth, Goshen, Dorchester, Orange, Grafton, Lempster, Hill. They all have Administrative Assistants and do not have Administrators. She doesn't think this is a wise thing. She said that from 2020-2023 the salary in that office went up 12% and yet we want to increase it again over 20% and the only job change has been grant money. Bubba said that is not the only change. John said that he wants to make a point on something that was said. He said that just because we make Sara a Town Administrator does not mean that if we rehire that if the person does not come with the same experience that they will be an administrator. They can still be an Administrative Assistant. It is based on the qualification. Bubba stated that we have had three major floods in the last five years and just doing the FEMA work on these is nowhere close to what you did back with FEMA. You have to constantly follow up with the people from the State and the Feds. John said that FEMA work requires not submitting the paperwork once, or twice but five times because they cannot find it even though it is submitted, they change the people in the office and you have to resubmit. Then to get the final payment it is another task.

This is a lot of stuff that even if her title changes, she still deserves and increase because of what she does for the Town. Our building right now that is going up, they were so gung-ho to give us the money but they are putting us through the ringer to actually get the money. If it wasn't for Sara constantly follow up with them that money would be lost.

Stacey said that John indicated that running this is a business. She has a business background and when you have your job descriptions then you allocate your wages according to what the tasks are for that job description. On the job description, for the Administrator, showing the additional tasks and what you verbally just indicated written out in detail and how it would justify the increase from the rate being made for the hourly wage as the Administrative Assistant to the Administrator, that needs to be shown before we vote on this. John said that they will have this information.

John said that he wanted to point out that the past nine years that taxes have remained pretty stable, other than the school, even with all the improvements that have been made in Town. We have Sculptured Rocks Road which would flood constantly and that road has been repaired. Pretty much every road in Town have been repaved or repaired such as North Groton Road, Province Road, River Road, and more. We have a Town Garage that is finally going up. There have been a lot of improvements in this Town while stabilizing the taxes at the same time. We do not want to jeopardize these things.

Miles stated that the reason we have the ability to do all of the things that has been done is because of the work that the Select Boards have done in the beginning in 2008 which all led to the building of the windfarm and the money generated from the wind farms. Miles said he thinks Sara is a really nice person and does an outstanding job. His issue is really the title. Having worked in government as a police officer for the Town of Derry for twenty years, his understanding is that generally Town Administrators have decision making authority. His question to the Board of Selectmen is does Sara have decision making authority and if she doesn't then she is not the Town Administrator. John said we will get the job description. Pam said she that she believes they elect the Select Board to be the decision makers. John said they do make the ultimate decisions.

Slim said this isn't really related to this but he has been asked why the Town Garage hasn't been built so he wanted to know what the latest on the shed is. John said that USDA has been having us jump through hoops and there is always a new hoop. Right now, what it looks like is hopefully within the month we should be able to go out for bid. Every time we satisfied one of their requests, they would give another but we believe right now we have satisfied all of their requests. Sara mentioned that she has a meeting on Thursday regarding the bidding with the architects and engineer to finalize and figure out who is doing what with the bid process so hopefully the request for bid will be posted within the next few weeks. Slim said he hopes we will not be building next winter. John said he will not give any guarantees but hopefully it will be out for bid within the next 30 days. Tony said it has been a very frustrating process. They ask for documents and Sara submits them all or works with the engineer to submit them all and then they come back with four more requirements. We submit those four and they come back with another two or three. John said that Sara has reached out to the senators to see if they can get involved to help speed up the process. They are very quick to want to give us the money but are slow with actually doing so. John said with his experience for all grants and government money is that they put it out there to look like all of this money is available but then make it so difficult that most towns give up and don't collect the money. Tony said we are not giving up.

#### *Minute Taker Line*

John said this is a new line this year. This was presented originally from the Planning Board but this will be a position that will be available for any and all board or committee meetings that require minutes to

be taken. Pam asked if that would include the Select Board. John said that Sara will continue to do the minutes for the Select Board meetings. Virginia said that the Conservation Commission gladly accepts a minute taker.

#### *Election, Registration, Vital Statistics*

The proposed budget is \$69,990, an increase of \$8,439. There was an increase here were for merit increases as well and now that we have a deputy that line needed to increase as well due to Hilary now being here. The workshops and seminars are going up some due to extra seminars that they will both be required to attend. The ballot clerks and checklist supervisors increased because there are more elections this year and due to an increase in election wages.

Pam stated that mileage was really high and went over with \$1,800 so she asked if the \$1,200 will be enough. Sara explained that she asked Ruth this same question and Ruth said that Hilary won't have to travel as much for trainings as she did this year so Ruth feels this will be enough. Hilary said that there was one training that she had to travel to Concord every day for that she will not have to do this year.

#### *Financial Administration*

The proposed budget is \$25,575, which increased by \$410 due to an increase for the cost of the Town report and e-filing requirement for the IRS that the Auditor is taking care of for us.

#### *Legal Expenses*

The proposed budget is \$13,000, which stayed the same as last year.

#### *Personnel Administration*

The proposed budget is \$94,618, which is an increase of \$9,518 due to increase in Health Insurance.

There was a question if the FICA line is enough with Hilary being here the entire year and salary increase. The Select Board said they believe it will be enough. They can look into it but believe it is good where it is.

#### *Planning/Zoning*

The proposed budget is \$8,072, an increase of \$860 due to the increase for the Planning Board legal costs.

#### *General Government Buildings*

The proposed budget is \$26,100, which stayed the same as last year.

#### *Cemeteries*

The proposed budget is \$8,182, an increase of \$2,030 which was Cemetery repairs and maintenance.

It was asked what was the increase was for the repairs and maintenance. They thought it was for River Road but there is a line for River Road. Sara looked at the cemetery notes and it was for the Bailey Hill cemetery needs to have work done and trees removed.

Pam asked what licensing is. It was advertising. Sara will look at this to see why it shows licensing.

Slim said that he has pointed out to John before that the posts are getting broken and moved. He said this was due to snow removal. Bubba said that it is not due to snow plowing, they do not plow that close to the fence.

### *General Insurance*

The proposed budget is \$20,239, an increase of \$2,391 which was an increase in costs for 2024 for Property & Liability Insurance which went up \$2,380 and the Unemployment Compensation line went up \$157. Virginia asked if the insurance is already renewed at that rate. John said yes.

### *Advertising and Regional Associations*

The proposed budget is \$4,450, which stayed the same as last year.

### *Other General Government*

The proposed budget is \$7,292, which stayed the same as last year.

### *Police*

The proposed budget is \$79,439, an increase of \$1,435.

### *Fire and Ambulance*

The proposed budget is \$114,935, which increased \$4,331 which was for equipment and for the increase in the Lakes Region Mutual Aid costs.

Tony mentioned that fire equipment needs to be upgraded for the radio equipment and other equipment and there was little money in there before. He said Jeremy Haney is the new Fire Warden.

The Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid increased this year as well and that is not something that we have control over. That is their set bill.

Tony wanted to give the residents a warning to be prepared that Hebron and Rumney lines will be going up next year because they have gotten new vehicles such as ambulance and fire trucks. The costs of these vehicles have gone up significantly and continue to go up. This year will stay how it is listed but then next year we can count on the increases. Tony said we have one more year on the current contract with Hebron and then we can expect that to increase. John said we have a meeting with Rumney sometime after March to discuss their increase.

### *Emergency Management*

The proposed budget is \$1,278, which stayed the same as last year.

### *Highway Administration*

The proposed budget is \$90,352, which stayed the same as last year.

### *Highways and Streets*

The proposed budget is \$119,301, which is an increase of \$5,000 which is due to increases in vehicle maintenance and in salt costs.

David asked wanted to talk about the Groton Road Repair and Maintenance line for \$25,000. He feels this is a slush fund. He said there is a warrant article that looks like it is for the same thing so he wants it explained why the crack sealing is listed separate as a warrant article and is not coming out of this line. Tony explained that this used to be a warrant article that the Town recommended it become part of the budget since we had it on there every year. He explained that the Groton Road Repair maintenance is for the work that we need to do on our roads every year and also includes the gravel roads. The chip seal would be for an entire road. Bubba said this is from Halls Brook to almost near John Faucher's. Bubba said any crack sealing on other roads does come out of this line. John said that the Groton roads is for what

we need to do and the chip sealing is something we would like to do, so it is a warrant article. Bubba said everything has gone up like the salt for example has gone up. David said that is a different line. Bubba said he is giving an example since he just added them all together.

Virginia asked how the Town can spend exactly \$25,000.00 last year on that line item. Sara explained that a lot of the items we did on the road also were contracted services so it really came out of both lines so one line was maxed out and you can see we went a little over on the contracted services line. She explained that a lot of the projects go hand and hand with the road repair and contracted services. David said that is because it is a slush fund. Sara said it is not a slush fund and is clearly needed which is why we went over in this line. Sara said she can give them a print out of every item that was spent on these lines if they would like they can just let her know.

Miles asked about the chip sealing process. It was explained that they will go over this when we get to the warrant article.

#### *Streets and Lighting*

The proposed budget is \$1,540, which stayed the same

Stacey asked where the street lights are in town. John stated that we have one out here on top of the hill, there is one by Halls Brook, there is one on the corner of Sculptured Rocks Road and North Groton Road. Sara said there is also one at the Town Garage. A resident stated that is not there anymore. Bubba said it is.

#### *Sanitation – Monitoring*

The proposed budget is \$12,800, which is an increase of \$10,300 due to changing the company that handles our monthly and yearly reporting and additional testing for this year. Virginia asked if this was state or federal. John said State. Pam said that they thought this was going to go down at some point. Tony said that is what we thought too. Sara explained that Suzanne Wall who did most of our reporting is retiring so we had to change to new company which is Credere associates and they are the only company that still does this and unfortunately the rates are high. There are also years where more reporting is required and this is one of those years so next year shouldn't not be as much although there is reporting required every year.

Norm said that Sara basically said it all but he wanted to add a few things. They were supposed to be ramping down on the testing but last year we based the budget on the year before so it went down but then they came out with another test last year to test for arsenic which was never required before. That is why it was over budget last year. He also said that there is only one company that does this so they can basically charge what they want and we are stuck paying it. He said there really is no good answer for this.

Stacey asked why the transportation costs went up \$6,000. Sara explained it didn't go up; it stayed the same as last year. The number you are looking at is that it is \$6,000 more than what we actually used last year. Norm explained we had a new contract and the prices went up part way through the year and we thought it was going to be the entire year. This year it will be the entire year so it should be closer to this amount.

#### *Solid Waste Disposal*

The proposed budget is \$109,650, an increase of \$1,555 which is mostly due to wage increases.

### *Health Administration*

The proposed budget is \$2,803, stayed the same.

### *Health Agencies and Hospitals*

The proposed budget is \$6,196, an increase of \$1,330 which was because a lot of the agencies went up.

Sherry asked why we give money to Midstate Health. John explained that they assist our residents in Groton with health services including transportation. Deb said that Midstate Health has a van that will come pick you up and bring you to appointments. Sherry asked if the resident doesn't pay for it but the Town does? Deb said technically no one does. John said that the Town makes donations towards the services they provide. Pam asked if this is different from Transport Central. Sara explained that Transport Central will transport residents to the grocery store, to get prescription, etc. John said that under the agencies all of those agencies that ask for money we make sure they do provide services to our town and if they do then we do give them money. Sara said that when the Town report comes out there is a section from the agencies that we donate to that list what services they provide and most give actual information on what was provided to Groton in the last year.

Amy asked why did CADY go up. John said they asked for more for that last few years and we didn't do it so the Select Board decided to this year. Amy said we shouldn't. Cecile said she will defend CADY; she is a volunteer and a panel member. She knows what they do and they do a lot of good work for children. Amy said she knows what goes on in the office, her daughter worked there.

### *Welfare*

The proposed budget is \$4,951, an increase of \$250 which was due to Grafton County Senior Citizens going up.

### *Culture and Recreation*

The proposed budget is \$12,721, an increase of \$4,485 which is mostly due to Old Home Day.

### *Parks and Recreation*

The proposed budget is \$10,524, an increase of \$4,485 which is due to the increase for the porta potty, Tapply Thompson Community Center and Old Home Day.

John wanted to discuss Old Home Day. He said that increase is that they wanted to put this out to the people to vote on. Every year we have people ask for the fireworks so we need to increase this line for fireworks. David said that there have been collections for this. John said that money in the past was used for fireworks once enough was raised. Sara said anything that is collected is given to the Treasurer and put into a separate account that is not the budget. It was asked if this would be enough money for fireworks. Sara said that with that money and with the budget they will have enough to do the fireworks. There is also Groton Wind Community Support that we apply for every year. Virginia said that she heard it has been submitted already and Sara confirmed that she has submitted this application this year already.

### *Library*

The proposed budget is \$2, which stayed the same as last year.

### *Patriotic Purposes*

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

### *Conservation*



The proposed budget is \$2,095, which stayed the same as last year.

*Other questions on budget:*

- Miles said the PILOT we have with Groton Wind could end in 2028, which is a little over 4 years. He believes it is in the best interest for the Selectmen to reach out to meet with them to see what their plan is, if it is recommission or decommission. He said we should hope for the best but prepare for the worst. If we lose that revenue, it would be a huge amount of revenue and we could get hammered with a tax bill. He said he hasn't done the math in a while but he believes it should be between \$600,000-\$700,000. Sara said it is was around \$680,000 but will be more this year. John said we will definitely reach out to them but the good news is most of the work has been done.
- Sherry asked what capital lay consists of on the budget spreadsheet. Sara explained that is the warrant articles which we are going over next.

***Warrant Articles***

John mentioned that we are going to go over the warrant articles. Article 1 is a ballot article that will be voted on at Town elections. John explained we will start with Article 3 because we had the public hearing on Article 2 and discussed this in length already.

*Article 3: Operating Budget \$920,974*

This was already gone over above.

*Article 4: \$147,500 for previously established Capital Reserve Funds*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **one hundred forty-seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$147,500)** to be added to the previously established Capital Reserve Funds. (Majority vote required)

Public Works CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2023 balance: \$170,952.23): \$50,000  
Disaster Relief CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2023 balance: \$136,936.36): \$50,000  
Police Cruiser CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2023 balance: \$27,064.58): \$10,000  
Town House CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2023 balance: \$31,678.27): \$10,000  
Truck/Sander CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2023 balance: \$22,020.32): \$10,000  
Heavy Equipment CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2023 balance: \$11,674.92): \$10,000  
Assessing Reval CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2023 balance: \$18,908.05): \$7,500  
**Total Capital Reserve Funds \$147,500**

John said that the we put \$50,000 in the Public Works due to the building costs increasing since we were not able to build last year.

Dave asked if any money has been removed from the Capital Reserve Funds last year. Sara mentioned that the only thing that was taken out was the Town House Fund for repairs to the Town House. Pam had the information with her and said that \$14,300.00 was taken out of the Town House Fund. David asked if we should put \$15,000 back in. John mentioned the Select Board will discuss this.

*Article 5: Paving Transfer Station and new Public Works Department*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **eighty-five thousand dollars (\$85,000)** for the purpose of paving the driveways and parking areas at the Transfer Station and the new Public Works Department with **forty thousand dollars (\$40,000)** to come from the Grafton County ARPA funding and the remainder of **forty-five thousand dollars (\$45,000)** to be raised through taxation.

Stacey asked for clarification regarding the section about paving the Public Works Department which is not there yet. It was explained that the paving will be done once the building is up and we are required to pave and paint handicap lines and such. If we can get it up this year then we will pave this year.

*Article 6: December 2022 Storm Damage Repair*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000)**, toward the repair of damages caused by the severe storm in December 2022. FEMA has already awarded the town \$145,394.25, which the selectmen have accepted pursuant to RSA 31:95-b. These funds will be combined to repair the damage.

David asked if we have already spent this money. Sara said no we have not. The work has been done yet. It was explained emergency work was done but not all of the road repairs yet. When we finally got the money the winter weather was already here so this will be done this year. Tony said that we have awarded the project already they are just waiting for weather to allow. Sara explained there were damages on North Groton Road, River Road, Province Road and Edgar Albert Road.

*Article 7: Chip Sealing*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **fifty-five thousand dollars (\$55,000)** for chip sealing. (submitted by the Highway Department)

Sherry asked Bubba what chip sealing is. Bubba explained that chip sealing is when they actually put down an emulsion that is a tar based and take small chips of stone and put it into it. It is a way of making the pavement better again instead of actually paving. When they used to pave 30 years ago, they only pulled out about 10 materials out of it so you got a really good asphalt. Today they pull about 25 ingredients out of it so there is not as much elasticity left in the asphalt that they make. They actually have to put in a percent of ground up asphalt or shingles in it. So today it doesn't last as long. Putting this chip sealing down is almost like painting your house. Pavement goes down hill after a few years. If you do this every 5-7 years then your pavement should last the 20 years. It is a maintenance coat. They will not come out for less than a mile and what we are actually getting will be 1 1/3 miles. Stacey asked what section of the road. Bubba said they will start at Halls Brook and go to just about right before John Fauchers.

*Article 8: Compactor and Converter at Transfer Station*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **thirty- six thousand dollars (\$36,000)** for a new compactor and converter for the Transfer Station. (submitted by the Transfer Station)

John mentioned that the compactor is old and it is getting hard to find replacement parts. It is more economical to replace it then to rent one. The converter is because the new compactors require three phase for electric and we don't have it so we have looked into running three phase and it is very expensive. This one will come with the converter is for the phase. Tony said it would cost \$180,000 to run the three phase to the Transfer Station. Sara said this is just for about a mile or less, from about Frank Harris' to the Transfer Station.

Norm said compactor is 23 years old and it is a maintenance nightmare. It is almost impossible to find parts for it so when it is down, we have to put household trash in the other dumpsters which can be a hazard. The new compactors require three phase which we don't have. We need this compactor because we are having trouble getting parts and the compactor is down when we need to replace parts which is taking longer to get or to have rebuilt because they do not make them anymore.

Virginia asked if the new building required three phase. Tony said no it doesn't.

*Article 9: Equipment Trailer for Highway Department*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **seventeen thousand five hundred dollars (\$17,500)** for an equipment trailer for the Highway Department. (submitted by the Highway Department)

Bubba said this would be a trailer to move equipment such as when we rent equipment, we have to hire someone to move the equipment for us. This would also be to move culverts.

David asked what we pay right now for rentals. Bubba said it is probably around \$1000 but Bubba also lets the Town use his trailer. Pam said we should not be using personal equipment; it is not a good idea.

*Article 10: Mower for Highway for Highway Department*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **eleven thousand five hundred dollars (\$11,500)** for a new mower for the Highway Department. (submitted by the Highway Department)

Bubba said the mower we have is from 2012. Norm said it has about 2100 hours on it. Bubba said there is not hour meter on it so they figured it out based on 10 hours a week, for the weeks we mow from June-September. The average mower life is 1500 hours and some places said 1000 hours. The old mower has seen its days. They mow the park, town garage, town house and the hill at the Transfer Station. The plan is to leave the old mower at the Transfer Station and use for the Transfer Station and the Town House to save hours on the new mower.

*Article 11: Transfer Station Garage Door*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **four thousand eight hundred dollars (\$4,800)** for a new garage door at the Transfer Station. (submitted by the Transfer Station)

Norm said that when the building was originally designed and they have the big doors on hinges that the wind gets under them and makes a wind tunnel. If the wind is blowing and you go to open that door you have to hold on. They want to put an overhead door in which will get rid of these issues. They will take the doors off, frame this in and put in a new overhead door.

*Article 12: Security System for the Town House*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **four thousand two hundred dollars (\$4,200)** for a new security system for the Town House.

Sara explained that the security system is older and it has been having more issues lately and just like everything else that is older it is getting hard to replace the parts on this and we have issues with the panic buttons. The new system will be updated and hopefully should have less issues. This is what they recommend. Virginia asked if there would be on going fees. Sara said we currently have a contract with the company which will be the same one and the rates are the same.

*Article 13: Conservation Commission portion of Timber Tax*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **one hundred four dollars (\$104)** for deposit in the Conservation Fund. Fund to be offset by **one hundred four dollars (\$104)** from unassigned fund balance. This sum represents 3% of the Timber Tax revenue for 2023. (Submitted by the Conservation Commission) (Majority vote required)

David asked for the balance of this fund. Pam said that as of 12/31/23 it was at \$10,396.88 but there have been some deposits made this year so it is probably closer to \$11,000.00.

*Article 14: Bridge Capital Reserve Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to change the name of the Atwell Orange Brook Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve Fund to be named Town Bridges Capital Reserve Fund, to change the purpose to cover construction, reconstruction, replacement and maintenance of all Town Bridges, and to raise and appropriate **nineteen thousand three hundred thirty one dollars (\$19,331)** to be placed in the fund, which amount is the same as the one-time payment made to the Town of Groton by the State of New Hampshire in 2022. This amount to come from the unexpended fund balance with no amount to be raised by taxation. Further, to keep the Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund. (2/3 Majority Vote Required).

John mentioned the main reason for this change is that the three open bottom box culverts are considered bridges so we would want them covered under this. Tony said anything over 10 ft is considered a bridge.

*Article 15: Transact any other business that may legally come before the Town*

Miles asked what the amount in our unreserved fund balance is. Sara didn't have it with her but will have it at the next meeting. Miles said he doesn't need the exact but a guess would do. Sara said she knows it is around \$300,000.00 but will get the exact information.

Pam shared the following:

- The Parks and Recreation Fund currently has \$2,988.39.
- The Police Fund current has \$1,801.12.
- The Old Home Day Fund has \$3,379.04.

*Deliberation*

The Selectmen deliberated on the following items.

- The Select Board agreed to not make changes at this time and that if the townspeople want any other changes to the amounts, then they can do an amendment at Town Meeting.
- It was agreed that Sara will make the changes to the warrant once we have all of the answers and she will let the Select Board know when it is ready to be signed. Also, the MS-636 will need to be signed. **John motioned to come in and sign the warrant and the MS-636 once it is ready, Tony 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

**Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to close the public hearing on the Proposed Budget and Warrant Articles at 8:45pm, Tony 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith  
Administrative Assistant