

Town of Warner, New Hampshire

NEWS FROM THE TOWN

Winter 2017

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Monday - Wednesday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Tuesday 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
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On Wednesday, MARCH 15, 2017 @ 7:00 P.M., the residents of Warner will come to the Town Hall to vote on eighteen warrant articles presented by the Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee, including the operating budget for the next year. Here is a synopsis of the warrant articles and appropriations the voting residents of Warner are asked to decide on:

Article 5 – The voters are asked to appropriate a total of **\$338,530** to construct a municipal solar panel array near the transfer station. **\$64,935** will be a rebate from the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). **\$10,000** will be raised to pay for the loan payment (interest charge only) during the year it is constructed. The balance of **\$263,595** will be financed through a loan from the NH Community Development Finance Authority (NHCDFEA). It is estimated that the town will be “cash positive” wherein the revenue from electric power generation will be greater than the annual loan payment starting in the first full year of power generation. Upon full payment of the loan in 12 years, the town will see revenue from the generation of solar power that should well exceed its cost of electricity for town facilities. This is a vote on issuing a long term bond or loan so 2/3 of attending voters must vote in favor of this article for it to pass.

Article 6 - The 2017 proposed Operating Budget for general municipal operations will be **\$3,070,486**. This budget is \$44,436 (1.47%) over last year's budget. This year's budget includes, for the first time, a lease payment of \$42,750 for the new road grader and an increase in annual cemetery maintenance costs of \$8,500 as funds from a trust account for the Pine Grove Cemetery have been depleted. The budget also calls for a 2% increase in employee wages. The town has a new health insurance provider which saved the town a \$42,000 increase in anticipated premium costs and a reduction of workers comp annual insurance cost from \$60,000 to \$37,000 due to reduction in injury claims and increase in safety awareness programs. Starting in 2017, town employees participating in the health insurance plan are now paying 8% rather than 7% of the monthly premium.

Article 8 – This article calls for **\$7,000** to be placed in the previously established Employees Expendable Health Trust Fund. This Health Trust Fund was established several years ago so that the Town could select higher deductibles on the employee health insurance plans, which significantly reduced the town's share of health premiums. This year, employees pay a greater share of the premiums and co-pays for office visits and prescriptions, etc. The town continue to assist the participating employees by covering 50% of deductible expenses that they submit. Since deductible expenses, such as hospital stays, are used only occasionally, the actual cash outlay for the town has often been low compared to the town's savings in premiums.

Article 10 – The voters approved funding for Phase I of the design and construction of Warner's proposed new fire station at the 2016 town

meeting. Phase I included purchase of the land, surveys and deed recordings, environmental and early land assessments, and hiring an architect and construction manager to analyze the lot for potential building sites and to develop conceptual renderings of the new facility. This Phase will be complete for presentation at the 2017 town meeting.

Phase II will develop final design plans, engineering specifications and provide a detailed cost breakdown for the construction of the new fire station. Phase II will require **\$182,000** to be added to the New Fire Station Construction Capital Reserve Fund. Of this amount, **\$82,000** will come from the Unassigned Fund Balance and the remaining amount of **\$100,000** to be raised by taxes.

Article 18 – To establish a contingency fund for the current year for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and appropriate the amount of **\$10,000** to be placed into the fund? This sum is to come from the General Fund. Any appropriation left in the fund at the end of the year will lapse to the General Fund. Due to the legislation that created this special fund each town has to renew this fund annually. Since the funds are drawn from the general fund no increase in taxes is needed.

Article 21 - The Board of Selectmen is asking the voters to establish a Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) for the purpose of setting aside Town funds to use as “matching funds” for transportation improvement grants from state and federal agencies as well as for repairs and improvements to town walkways. Nearly all grants from the state or federal government require the local governments to “match” their grant money with town funds approved by the voters. The municipalities that demonstrate access to such funds are favored to receive the grant. This allows a town to make needed improvements in walkways at a portion of the full cost. The Board is asking for **\$5,000** to start this fund.

Article 22 - The Warner Fall Foliage Festival (FFF) Committee was offered a portion of land adjacent to the Simonds School parking lot to be developed for the woodman competition and oxen pull as part of the plan to bring the Fall Foliage Festival back to the center of the village. The property owners later offered to grant a permanent ROW easement to the Town to use this developed section of their property for additional public parking while not being used during the Fall Foliage Festival. Lack of parking in the village is a large concern and this easement provides real relief for the town. The FFF Committee asked the Board to present this article to the voters to approve **\$20,000** to help the committee pay off the cost of site development. The KRSD will be asked to contribute as well.

The following warrant articles below are presented to voters to appropriate funds into Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) Accounts, which are held by the Trustees of the Trust Funds. Each CRF is set up for a

specific purpose which allows the town to gradually save up each year for planned, high cost equipment and projects. This avoids the high price “surprise requests” for tax dollars in a single year that voters don’t like and enables the Board of Selectmen and Budget Committee to better plan and manage the town tax rate through these “savings accounts”.

Capital Reserve Funds (CRFs)

Article 7 – Property revaluation conducted every 5 years — \$20,000

Article 9– To replace police vehicles – \$25,000

Article 11 – To replace aging fire engines - \$90,000

Article 12 - For new fire fighter equipment - \$10,000

Article 13 - For road construction - \$100,000

Article 14 – For highway vehicles and equipment - \$100,000

Article 15 – For bridge repair and maintenance - \$20,000

Article 16 – For DPW buildings improvements - \$25,000

Article 17 – For preservation of town records - \$10,000

Article 19 – For equip. maintenance at the Transfer Station - \$10,000

Article 20 – For maint. and improvements in library building - \$24,000

The following articles are non-appropriation articles.

Article 23

Shall the Town vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:28-b, All Veterans Tax Credit? If adopted, the credit will be available to any resident, or the spouse or surviving spouse of any resident, who (1) served not less than 90 days on active service in the armed forces of the United States and was honorably discharged or an officer honorably separated from services and is not eligible for or receiving a credit under RSA 72:28 or RSA 72:35. If adopted, the credit granted will be \$500, the same amount as the standard or optional veteran’s tax credit voted by the Town of Warner under RSA 72:28. (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen).

Article 24

“Polling hours in the Town of Warner are now 8:00 am to 7:00 pm. Shall we place a question on the state election ballot to change polling hours so that polls shall open at 7:00 am and close at 7:00 pm. for all regular state elections beginning in 2019 (To go into effect)?

From the School Board

Most of this year’s last quarter has been dedicated to reviewing and finalizing the budget for the 2017-18 school year. In 2016, the administration used the funds wisely and we returned over \$1,600,000 back to the taxpayers. However, for the taxpayers of Warner, it did not reduce our tax rate contribution to the school district. The school tax rate on our December tax bill increased \$1.06 per thousand dollars of assessed value because Warner sent 17 more students to our schools in that time period and our assessed valuation increased by \$2 million. The apportionment costs of each town in the district are determined by the increase in student enrolled and the change is assessed valuation of our real estate. These 2 points accounted for the \$1.06 increase in Warner school tax.

The school district has done a wonderful job of saving money for unexpected events that could blow a hole in our normal budget. We have had over \$800,000 sitting in the “unassigned balance fund” that is a “rainy day fund.” We have not had to use this fund for the last several years.

I made a motion to return \$400,000 of the \$800,000 “rainy day fund” to the taxpayers to give a break on the increased taxes for Warner. That motion was defeated by the School Board by a 6 to 2 vote. It was explained that the funds needed to be retained for the possible increase in expenses due to a large, unforeseen expense.

A month later our Director of Facilities announced to the Board that the septic system at the High School has failed and needed to be replaced at a cost of \$350,000. This expense was going to be added to the budget and increase our tax bills to over \$1.2 million or over a 3% increase from the 2016-17 budget. I approached the Board to revisit the use of the “rainy day fund” for the septic system. This time the Board agreed and Superintendent Feneberg moved to get approval from the State to release these funds this year without impacting our tax rate. On December 8, the State DOE granted KRSD permission to use their “rainy day funds” for the septic system, which not only saved us from increased taxes, it enabled the administration to begin developing the new septic system this year. Please do not vote for budgets #1 or #2 approved by the School Board and the Municipal Budget Committee respectively. Vote only for Budget #3 as this budget is the only budget with the \$350,000 reduction in the septic system cost. The budgets #1 and #2 were approved before we had approval from the State to use our own saving for the system. So all 3 budgets need to be on the ballot.

Another approved expenditure was the demolition of the 1941 building (The old Middle school) to increase parking for the SAU offices and the NL elementary school. The Board also updated the sexual harassment policies JBAA and GBAA to be aligned with the State regulations. We also reviewed the new Hockey program for the High School. The high school is planning a student trip to Spain and Portugal this next year.

Also, the Board reviewed the Smarter Balance Assessment test results and how Kearsarge compared with the other districts in the State. We did real well in the language arts piece and we left room for improvement on the Math tests. If parents want to see how their own children did on the tests, you can contact your child’s teacher to review the tests.

I cannot believe that my first term as your representative to the School board has come to term. The time went by like a breeze and I have enjoyed every minute as your representative to the Kearsarge Region School Board. Thank you for your support.

Joe Mendola, Warner Representative to the KRSD.

Warner’s Future Fire Station

Warner’s current fire station was built in 1961 - 1962 on a site donated by Clarence "Cy" Hyde of Webster. The original two-bay single-story structure was constructed entirely by the firemen and other town volunteers under the leadership, diligence and patience of Fire Chief Maurice Randall. It was a huge task with many pieces and parts of the building donated by townfolk. Cost for the project, not including volunteer labor, was approximately \$10,000. Some of the funds were raised by the Fall Foliage Festival. When the Fire Station was completed, the fire department held an open house and dedication ceremony on Memorial Sunday in 1962. The building was dedicated to Warner Veterans of all Wars.

Thirty years later, in 1992, a large addition was constructed, almost entirely by the department membership under the direction and tireless efforts of Fire Chief Richard Brown, himself a carpenter and jack-of-all-trades. This massive effort involved countless hours of volunteer labor, which, once again, provided tremendous savings to the taxpayers of Warner.

For several years, it's been evident to many that Warner Fire & Rescue has outgrown its fire station both in terms of space and functionality. Warner is currently keeping fire equipment in 3 different buildings.

Due to the limited space capacity in the building as well as the small,

outdated bay doors, the Town is required to purchase new fire trucks and apparatus that are custom built (both in height and length) at premium prices as standard sized vehicles can not fit in the building. These higher cost vehicles have a direct impact on taxpayers.

The building has other limitations. The ceiling is too low, limiting access to the engine compartments; vehicles have to be rolled out onto the small parking area out front for servicing. Inside the building, vehicles have to be parked extremely close together making it difficult to open side hatches on the vehicles. And, there's very limited parking for the firemen for emergency calls or meetings.

The building is not up to current building and fire code. It's not ADA accessible. The staircase to the second floor administrative area is too steep and narrow. There are egress issues. The meeting room upstairs is insufficient for department meetings and training. There's no real office space. When the Emergency Operations Center is activated and outside support comes to the station, space issues become even more pronounced. And, as visitors may discover, the bathrooms are quite basic and inadequate.

In 2010, a Fire Station Building Committee was assembled to address these issues, which led to the purchase of 136 E. Main Street (Map 29, Lot 1) along the Warner River as a new building site and the hiring of Warrenstreet Architects to design a building on that site. Drawings for a 13,486 square foot building were presented at Town Meeting 2014. However, the project failed to gain full support and the Board of Selectmen never requested funding for construction of that building on that site.

At Town Meeting 2015, citizens took an important step towards addressing the needs of the Fire & Rescue Department by voting to establish a Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for the purchase of a new fire station site, and design and construction of a new fire station on that site and provided \$165,000 in funding to get started. Since then, a lot of work has taken place.

A new Fire Station Building Review Committee (FSBRC) was established in August 2015. Chaired by Selectman Allan Brown, the committee consists of fire fighters, experienced architects & builders, a budget committee member, and citizens at large. The FSBRC has held 35 meetings to date, including visits to fire stations in Meredith, Henniker, Hopkinton and Sunapee, as well as our fire station in Warner. Committee members spoke with Fire Chiefs and firefighters, learned about the requirements and needs of fire and rescue departments, asked specific questions about all aspects of fire stations, and learned about fire and rescue operations in general.

Progress has also been made on Warner's future fire station, including the purchase of an ample building site at 148 West Main Street, on the corner of Split Rock Road and Route 103, from the Gordon Smith Trust for \$215,266. The lot provides a good sized level area to build the station and ample room behind to provide parking for 40 firefighters. Up beyond that, there's a pretty little wooded area with woodland paths.

In October 2016, the FSBRC reviewed nine proposals from architectural firms, interviewed four firms, selecting two firms to present to the Board of Selectmen. The Board hired SMP Architects. Anthony Mento from SMP Architects is the Project Manager. Anthony is a taxpaying resident of Warner. A similar process was repeated in November to select a Construction Manager and North Branch Construction, LLC. was hired by the Selectmen.

The FSBRC spent many hours defining "the program". That's the list of

rooms and areas within the fire station and dimensions. The FSBRC discussed and debated many aspects of the program. The process felt messy at times, yet in the long run proved to be very productive. In more recent meetings, the FSBRC agreed on several key concepts, many of which were based on direct feedback from residents who had attended listening sessions and committee meetings. Citizens shared their concerns, as well as their suggestions. These included insuring that the fire station will be aesthetically pleasing and fit into the neighborhood; that the building address the needs of the fire department and be energy efficient; that it be durable over 25 years; that the footprint of the building be kept as small as possible while still providing required functionality and include adequate space for Emergency Operations; and that costs be carefully and continually considered in terms of construction, long term maintenance and financial impact on taxpayers.

Abutters have had a strong voice in this project. Aside from emphasizing an attractive building, they have expressed concerns about light pollution, noise, traffic patterns and privacy barriers. These are all key considerations that the FSBRC is addressing in the design plans as work continues. Fire Chief Ed Raymond, a member of the committee, says it's important that the Fire & Rescue Department be good neighbors.

In January, the FSBRC, along with some of the site's neighbors, viewed the latest conceptual drawings of the fire station and a flyover animation provided by SMP Architects. Both the floor plan and the flyover earned thumbs up around the room. These have since been shared again in additional listening sessions. Over 50 citizens attended a listening session held on February 15 and applauded the work presented.

On March 15 at Town Meeting 2017, the Board of Selectmen will be presenting a warrant article requesting funds to continue this important project. The requested funds will be used to complete the detailed engineering / design drawings. The FSBRC will continue to work with SMP Architects and North Branch Construction in this process making decisions about materials, sub-contractors, building features, energy systems, landscaping and budgets. Grant funding from FEMA will be sought as part of this work. In January 2018, North Branch Construction will use the design and engineering plans to solicit bids. By February 2018, the committee will have a "guaranteed maximum price" (GMP) for construction of the fire station. SMP will also prepare a budget to cover furniture, fixtures, computer, phones, etc.

At Town Meeting 2018, citizens will vote on whether to support and fund the final phase of the project: Construction. If approved, construction would commence immediately with a goal of having the new fire station opened and in use by the end of the year, early 2019 at the latest.

A lot of information about the ongoing fire station project can be found online at the Town of Warner's website as well as on the Warner Fire & Rescue Facebook page.

Note: [1] Excerpts of an article submitted by Paul Violette in 1999 were used here to share some history about Warner's current fire station. Paul's full article makes for interesting reading. You can find it on the Warner website at <http://www.warner.nh.us/?page=firehist>

Solar Array Project



Rebates and Incentives

1. NH Commercial & Industrial Solar Rebate
(Cash) - \$0.65/W - \$65,000
2. SRECs (Solar Renewable Energy Credits)
Redeemable for \$50 each
3. 1 SREC “earned” per MWh produced.
Resulting in \$7,500 in revenue per year.

Technical Specifications

- 378 - Solar World Panels (Made in USA)
- 3 - 33.3 KW SolarEdge Inverters
- 25 Year Extended Warranty for Inverters

Financial Analysis (Annual)

Solar Array Loan Payments at 2% for 12 years	-\$25,664
Insurance	-300
Revenue from SREC Sales (paid quarterly)	7,500
Revenue from Eversource for power produced	<u>19,500</u>
Year 1 projected savings	\$1,036

Once the bond is retired, savings for years 13 - 25 is expected to exceed \$250,000. The project site has been reviewed by the Conservation Commission and coordination with the Planning Board is on-going. A Public Hearing was held on February 7th. **A Public Information Meeting is scheduled for March 8 beginning at 7:00 pm located at the Town Hall.**