

Town of Warner, New Hampshire

NEWS FROM THE TOWN

Winter 2016

Selectmen's Office
(603)456-2298 ext. 2
selectboard@warner.nh.us

Monday - Wednesday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Tuesday 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
www.warner.nh.us

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Town Administrator
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IMPORTANT DECISIONS TO BE MADE AT TOWN MEETING

Town Meeting is on March 9th and we strongly encourage you to attend. Topics discussed and votes taken at Town meeting has significant impacts on the effectiveness of Town services to the public, the preparedness of Town departments to respond to community needs and emergencies and how these votes impact the quality of life in the Warner community. There will be 19 warrant articles involving nearly \$3,970,000 to discuss and vote on. Here is a preview of some of the key warrant articles:

1. Article 3: Municipal Solar Array – we have all heard about the explosion of solar panels generating electricity for people and businesses and cutting their cost of electricity. Warner has a proposal to construct a municipal solar array to generate enough electricity to meet the usage needs of the town buildings and facilities and significantly reduce electricity costs for the town over the next 20 + years. The estimated cost of construction will be financed through long term loans along with anticipated grants and a rebate from the NH Public Utilities Commission.
2. Article 4: Lease to Purchase Agreement – the cost of purchasing heavy equipment for the Public Works Department can be astronomical and holding onto aging equipment that is costing more and more to repair, places Warner and other towns in a bind. This “Lease to Purchase” agreement for a new road grader helps Warner replace a critical piece of equipment and spreads the \$299,000 over 7 years with a 7 year warranty, after which the Town owns the grader.
3. Article 5: Operating Budget – this warrant article, addressing the annual operating expenses for the Town, represents the largest single expense for the town. The 2016 operating budget is \$3,026,049, which is 2.0%

(\$59,214) over the 2015 budget. This budget is developed by the Selectmen working with the Town Administrator, Dept. Heads and the Budget Committee from November to February to obtain a sound, responsible and cost-conscious budget that supports the basic town functions expected by the residents. Every year, the departments return unspent surplus to general fund and can be used to lower your tax rate.

4. Article 6: Roundabout – the voters approved construction of the roundabout at the last Town meeting with the plan to start the project in the fall of 2015. However, due to delays in obtaining approve of the design plan from NH Dept. of transportation the project is now scheduled for 2016. According to the NH Dept. of Revenue Administration Article 6 is necessary to re-authorize the project funding as this funding had lapsed as of December 2015. This article does not require any new tax dollars as the funding had already been raised in 2015.
5. Article 9: To purchase a site for a new fire station – Warner is in great need for a larger, code compliant fire station. The current fire station, built in 1960 with an addition in 1978, is too small and crowded and is creating a safety issue for the volunteer fire fighters. A very limited number of building sites are left in town that meet the requirements for a fire station. The longer the Town waits the more expensive the whole project becomes. The Board of Selectmen has two potential sites, but needs to act soon before these opportunities pass. This warrant article for \$100,000 added to the present fund will give the Selectmen sufficient funds to purchase one of these properties. The Board is beginning negotiations towards a conditional Purchase and Sales document for release before town meeting.

From Planning Board

Following a public hearing during the January 4th Planning Board meeting, the Planning Board approved placing one proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment on the Town Warrant Ballot for voters to consider at the polls on Tuesday March 8, 2016. The proposed Amendment deals with revisions to the Zoning Ordinance's Article XII Sign Regulations. The proposed Amendment wording is available for viewing at the Land Use Office, at the Selectman's Office, and on the Town Website under the Notices tab. For additional information see meeting minutes on the Website or in the Land Use Office.

Next month a subcommittee of the Planning Board expects to start assessing the 2011 Master Plan to determine if changes/updates would be appropriate at this time (see RSA 674:3). If so, they will then develop proposed wording. Proposed updates to the Master Plan could then be adopted by the Planning Board following a Public Hearing. The Master Plan Subcommittee meetings are open to the public with notices posted at the Town Hall, Post Office, and the Town Website.

Emergency Management

Are you prepared? Do you know what to do when a disaster strikes? Do you have a family emergency plan? Do you have 3 days of food, water, and medicine available in the event of a disaster? For more information, please go to ReadyNH.gov; or contact me for information. This site has been updated with more information on emergency planning for families as well as businesses. Additionally, this web site allows people to sign up for emergency alerts. You can sign up for NH Alerts notification on the ReadyNH.gov, or downloaded the app on your phone (or both).

Emergency Assistance Form

Do you or someone you know need special assistance during an emergency or disaster? Please complete the questionnaire from the Town's web site, then mail it to Town of Warner – Emergency Management P.O. 265 Warner, NH 03278. **All information received will be confidential.**

If you would like more information, please feel free to contact Ed Mical, Director through the Town office or by e-mail at emd@warner.nh.us

News from the School Board

This quarter the School Board approved a budget for the next school year, successfully negotiated a teachers labor contract, we were presented with the first Smarter Balanced Assessment test results and we have a major personnel departure at the SAU.

The Board and the Municipal Budget Committee approved a \$40,896,661 budget for the 2016-17 school year. This reflects an increase of \$825,983 or a 2.06% increase. Health Benefits

were \$449,260 higher or 10.19%, Other operating Costs were \$176,377 or 4.58% increase, Wages and salaries were \$81,238 higher, Out of District placement were \$23,238 lower or 1.58%. See attached graphs for the total changes. This budget was not changed at the Deliberative Session held at our newly remodeled High school auditorium on January 9th. The Citizens of Warner will have the opportunity to vote on the budget and the warrant articles at the Town elections in March. The school board completed negotiation with the Kearsarge Regional Education Association. An agreement was reached with the KREA which resulted in an increase of wages of \$393,297 in year 2016-17. This is about a 3.09% increase. The KREA accepted a new Consumer healthcare plan that allowed the District to avoid a Cadillac tax mandate by the Affordable Care Act at the time of this negotiation. Avoiding this tax saved the taxpayers about \$98,000 in the first year of the tax and hundreds of thousands of dollars in the ensuing years of the ACA.

The results of the Smarter Balances Assessments test were presented on November 12, 2015 to the public. If parents have not received the results of their children yet, please contact the school for those results. The tests were given to grades 3, 4, 5,6,7,8 and 11. The subject tests were English Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics. The Kearsarge elementary school grades for both English and Math scored better than compared to the State of NH. . The Middle School grades and the 11th were better than the State as a whole in English Literacy. In math the 7, 8, and 11th grades were better than the State as a whole. The 6th grade was below the State average in Math.

Submitted by Joe Mendola - School Board Rep.

From the Conservation Commission

The Warner Conservation Commission seeks your vote to pass the warrant article below at this year's Town Meeting. An explanation of the language required for the warrant by the State is included.

PROPOSED 2016 WARRANT ARTICLE RE EXECUTORY INTERESTS

Shall the town vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 36-A:4-a, I(b) to authorize the conservation commission to expend funds for contributions to "qualified organizations" for the purchase of property interests, or facilitating transactions related thereto, where the property interest is to be held by the qualified organization and the town will retain no interest in the property?

EXPLANATION

Adoption by warrant article of RSA 36-A:4-a, I (b) allows the town the option to assist in the acquisition of conservation easements within the town by "qualified organizations," without

requiring the town to retain a property interest in the easement, with its associated responsibilities for monitoring.

Ordinarily when the Warner Conservation Commission (WCC) recommends that the selectmen approve acquisition of conservation interests in land under RSA 36-A:4, I the town must retain an interest in the property. Adoption of this warrant article will give the selectmen some added flexibility with regard to those interests. The term “qualified organizations” under the statute means non-profit entities whose purpose it is to conserve land.

For example, the Ausbon Sargent Land Trust in New London, a “qualified organization,” has in the past requested town Conservation Fund money to pay exclusively for a survey on behalf of a local landowner working with them to place a conservation easement on their land. Currently, the WCC would only be able to agree to provide such funds if it retained a back-up interest (i.e. executory interest) in the easement. This would usually require the town to agree to monitoring responsibility in perpetuity, if Ausbon Sargent failed for some reason to monitor the easement.

With adoption of this article the Selectmen could choose, on a case by case basis, to approve an expenditure from the Conservation Fund for a related expense like a survey of the property, without the legal obligation to take on the responsibility of an executory interest in the property. Typically the WCC would only agree to recommend such an expenditure if the property were one which would further the aims of the town’s Conservation Plan. This would broaden the town’s ability to help facilitate desirable conservation efforts by private landowners.

The Warner Conservation Commission seeks voters’ support to pass this warrant article.

From the Pillsbury Free Library

The Circle of Friends of Pillsbury Free Library: This year’s **Wine & Cheese/Silent Auction Fundraiser** will be Saturday, **March 19 from 5 - 7 PM**. All proceeds will benefit the library’s interior restoration project which includes revealing the stained glass windows in the fiction area. They are currently seeking donations for the Silent Auction: special items, services, gift certificates, gift baskets and donations toward expenses are all welcomed! If you have something to contribute, please call Joan at 456-3664 or contact any member of the Circle of Friends. If you would like to join the Circle of Friends in planning this event, please call Carol at 456-2393. Hope to see you there! **Thank you also** to the Circle of Friends for **decorating the library for the holiday season** and taking down the decorations in January.

Municipal Solar Array

Warner voters will be asked to approve a Municipal Solar array at the March town meeting. Warner Village Water District voters also will have a similar proposal before them at their March meeting. Both arrays will be sized to 100 Kw and utilize NH’s net metering law for small generators, they will save taxpayers money and reduce our carbon footprint.

The proposed site for the Town solar array is at the Transfer Station. It would produce enough power to offset the electric usage of the transfer station and several other town-owned locations, including the Town Hall, the Pillsbury Free Library, the Old Graded School, the police and fire stations. The Village District array is to be located at the waste water treatment facility and would be used to offset the electric usage of that location and the pumps located at the district wells.

If approved, the solar arrays will be constructed by Harmony Energy Works of Hampton during 2016. The projects will be financed through a combination of state rebates, grants and low cost rural development loans. The result is that the cost to both the Town and Precinct for electricity after loan payments will be lower than current costs, starting in the first full year and every year going forward. There are two public information sessions on the projects. If you missed the one on February 3rd, please consider attending the one for 7 pm Thursday, March 3rd at the Warner Town Hall.

From the Budget Committee

As of the date of this article’s the Budget Committee is nearing the end of it’s preparation of Warner’s 2016 operating budget. Our anticipated final operating budget for 2016 is projected to increase by less than 2%. However, it may exceed \$3,000,000 for the first time in our history. At the time of this writing we were still working on our final numbers.

This whole process inspired many lengthy, thought provoking, conversations, opinions and ideas. There were disagreements most of which were resolved by consensus. However, everyone’s primary concern is always what is in the best interest of the town.

At the conclusion of our preparation a public hearing is scheduled to convene on February 4th. Immediately following the public hearing, the committee will consider changes and then finalize the budget to be presented at town meeting. We will also decide our recommendations on the warrant articles. Our final results will be published in the Town Report and then presented at Town Meeting on Wednesday, March 9, 2016.

Mark Your Calendars

Tuesday ~ March 8 ~ Town Elections from 8:00 am to 7:00 pm

**Wednesday ~ March 9 ~ Town Meeting beginning at 7:00 pm
Located at the Town Hall (5 East Main St.)**

Saturday, May 14 ~ Spring into Warner

Come out to support the Arts in Warner

MainStreet Warner Scholarship Used Book Sale

MainStreet Warner Live Auction Fundraiser in the evening

Something Wonderful is Happening in Warner

~ Jim Mitchell ~