

**APPROVED - FEB 5, 2019**

Town of Warner  
*Budget Committee*



**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, January 10, 2019**  
7:00 PM Warner Town Hall Lower Level

**1. Chairman Cutting opened meeting at 7:00 pm.**

**Members present:**

Selectmen - John Dabuliewicz, Ray Martin – Water Precinct Representative, David Minton, John Leavitt, Martha Mical, Martha Bodnarik, Alfred Hanson.

**Members Absent:**

None

**2. Discussion:**

Chairman Cutting reviewed the correspondence from Mary Whalen stating that she is no longer transcribing the minutes. The Selectmen are going to review this at their next meeting on Tuesday. Selectman Kimberley Edelmann has spoken with every department and clerical individual in the town hall about taking the minutes and no one volunteered to transcribe the minutes. Community member, Janice Loz has volunteered to take the minutes. It is not official until the Selectmen have approved this action at their January 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. The terms would be contractual, she would not be an employee of the town. The Selectmen would decide the details, whether it be temporary or on-going. I communicated to Kimberley that I liked the idea of having someone who could perform clerical tasks. Because at this time of year we get into a time crunch completing the town report and performing functions of closing out the fiscal year. It would be nice to have someone who could do minutes not only for the Budget Committee but, maybe for other departments as well. Nothing definitive we will see how this works within the next few days. If this goes forward remember that she will be a contract service member so we will have to adjust the budget accordingly although we do not currently know the dollar amount.

Alfred asked the Chairman, if we did something similar two years ago? We had a lot of things happening and we had an outside contractor for minutes? Chairman Cutting stated that we had Kimberley, who was not a Selectman at that time. He was not sure if she was a contract service or an employee. Kimberley was a temporary employee at the time. Martha M. stated that this discussion comes up every year at this time because the Selectmen's office get swamped. Martha B. commented that this is the only time of year that the committee is active.

Ray commented that no matter who we get that we should commit to soften the comments that are made in public. During the meeting of January 3<sup>rd</sup> there was a comment made that Mary was white-washing the minutes. I think those type of comments don't belong in public. He believes that type of commentary was the last straw for her and therefore, you wonder why we don't have someone to take the minutes.

The Chairman referenced Mr. Minton's comments of the previous week that we are not looking for verbatim minutes. We want an accurate account of the meeting. We understand that there will be an extensive learning curve in transcribing these minutes as every committee operates differently.

David commented that we need to sit down with Janice. Last year we discussed what was going to be put into the minutes and thought we had a consensus. He believes it behooves us to communicate what we are looking for in order to give her some guidelines. Martha B. stated that the majority of the committee has said that we just want the gist of what is going and don't want verbatim minutes.

Martha B. stated that she feels John L. wants verbatim minutes. Members stated that they did not sense that Mr. Leavitt wants verbatim. Martha M. stated that he does want more detail than other members.

(? speaking) Thought it is very difficult for Mary to transcribe our minutes because she is from the BOS office and we are an entirely different committee. This is not meant to be derogatory against the BOS office transcribing our minutes, but, I believe we need an independent person to record our minutes.

**3. Review of Minutes of December 20 and 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and January 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2019.**

December 20 minutes: Motion made by Martha M. to accept the minutes as amended. Seconded by Alfred. Minutes approved by unanimous vote.

December 27 minutes: Motion made by Alfred to table the minutes for further review by members. Motion to table the minutes was seconded and approved, with one opposing vote by Martha M. The committee made note that the minutes are available on the web site for the public in unapproved form.

January 3 minutes: Martha M. made a motion to accept the minutes. David noted a correction on the minutes. On page four, paragraph four, relative to the police vehicle and Hollis trades the figure \$70,000 should be changed to reflect 70,000 miles. The Chairman stated that a motion was made and seconded. Minutes approved as amended by unanimous vote.

**4. Further Discussion:**

Ray stated that comments and personal attacks that are referenced in our meetings and reflected in the minutes are inappropriate. Those comments are available to the public and that is concerning. Commenting on Mr. Bingham's memo being out of order is fine, although, he referenced comments made by Alfred as being inappropriate. Alfred inquired about which specific comment and Ray highlighted the comments.

Martha B. stated that she cannot open the minutes because they come to her in a zip format. Some board members worked with Martha to show her how the minutes can be retrieved, noting that it was cumbersome.

John D. stated Mary has faced a dilemma with the minutes, because of criticism as to what should and should not be included in the minutes.

John L. doesn't disagree with the minutes because the comments were really part of the substance of the conversation. He believes if it was said in the meeting it should be in the minutes.

John D. made a statement (reference attachment 1).

Alfred stated that he hears what John D. has to say. Alfred stated that he feels responsible for a lot of this situation. At the beginning of the budget process he had the opportunity to speak with the BOS office and with one individual. The conversation was about the relationship between the BOS and the budget committee. During the conversation he referred back to an article that was written a year ago about the relationship between this committee and the BOS. I don't know if anybody's has ever gone back and read it, it's very interesting. It's in the Intertown Record. During the discussion with this gentleman, Alfred had great concerns. He thought about it for a while and decided to suggest that we move wages off the bargaining table. So we could sit down at one meeting and talk about wages. Wages are a very hot topic and he believes we need to have a discussion with all the departments as to their needs. Not necessarily just wages but to determine how to supply each department with money they need. He believes the wage conversation overrides the needs of each department's operation. The problem was not so much the budget committee, because we offered ample time to talk about

wages. In a meeting we could all get together and would give ample time for the BOS office to tell us their reasoning's for the pay raises. Instead of starting at the beginning of November trying to explain the pay raises for each department which will consume a huge amount of time.

The problem that Alfred had was the decisions were made for the pay raises before the budget committee had a chance to review them. He does not understand their reasoning. He recollects that the budget committee and stated that we will sit down and talk with the BOS about wages. When our work sessions began that didn't happen.

He stressed that he does not believe the BOS office did something wrong. The BOS office made the decisions that they thought was correct. He stated there is a problem with the procedure. The budget committee could have understood the wage study and understood the need to make adjustments. But the way it was done, he thought was improper.

Ray expressed concern about John L. interviewing town employees and intimating that they weren't going to get expected increases in pay. Ray felt that budget committee members shouldn't be acting as a personnel committee. Ray stated that he is not a personnel person and he would not talk with people about their pay and how they get paid and why. He felt that was the Selectmen's job. Martha M. stated that she asks town employees questions and she feels that is not offensive to people. She stated that if you have a question it's better to get the answers directly from the person involved. Alfred said that he understands what Ray is saying, although, he felt this committee didn't get information from the BOS office explaining their decision relative to wages.

Martha B. stated that at the December 27<sup>th</sup> meeting she was quite emotional because she realized that in granting those wage adjustments we were locked into a long term debt. We now owe our employees more money forever because we raised their pay. Once the money is spent we can no longer say anything about it. Martha B. went on to express frustration with shifting budget numbers provided from the BOS office and frustration with being left out of the process and not being fully briefed or receiving justification about budget numbers by the BOS and the Town Administrator. In terms of Mr. Allen's portion of the budget the numbers say nothing about projects that were completed or money that was encumbered from year to year. Which leaves her with the impression that the Town Administrator is not going to justify the money to the Budget Committee. It would be useful to get department heads and the Bookkeeper to come before the committee to discuss details of the budget.

Chairman Cutting stated that we are not here to criticize individuals and Martha B. stated that she is trying to communicate in order to solve problems. John L. communicated that he needed to address some issues, he feels that it is important for people to state their opinions and that disagreement is to be expected. He went back over the previous 18 months of the minutes which concern wage study analysis. In his opinion, everything having to do with the BOS is filtered through Mr. Bingham. John L. stated that this is not an intentional slight toward Mr. Bingham, this is his opinion an interruption of events. John D. stated that communicating statements about Mr. Bingham without his ability to refute them in public is a problem. John L. said he has said statements about Mr. Bingham in front of him, giving him a chance to address the statements. John L. has completed an alternate proposal of what could have been done by the Selectmen and he discussed it with Kimberley. I think it is something that the Budget Committee should take into consideration before they approve the next budget. He clarified that he is not proposing wage cuts, but smaller increases. He spent time trying to talk with employees in the town hall to elicit their feedback because he knew his suggestions would affect them most.

Ray M. stated that John L. communicated with the town employees as a Budget Committee member. Ray feels that is not a sanctioned role of a Budget Committee member. Chairman Cutting clarified that as Budget Committee member we have the authority to talk with department heads or individuals. What is difficult is untangling your private citizen view from your Budget Committee member view. He has no problem with members soliciting facts from town employees. He continued to say that all members can make changes to the operating budget, make recommendations for line item changes and the membership will vote on it. Which does not mean that the Selectmen have to abide by that line item change.

Alfred stated his desire to refer to the Board of Selectmen as the BOS and not refer to individual names. Also, he is concerned that the BOS perspective is being concerned about operating the town with 28 people and that the Budget Committee perspective is more concerned with 2,800 people which make up the entire town.

## **5. Review and Make Recommendations on Warrant Articles**

Chairman Cutting redirected the committee to continue conducting business. The Chairman spoke with Mr. Allen and he has requested to appear before the committee next Thursday when he will be ready to discuss the Highway Department's budget.

The Chairman read the following Articles to the committee to clarify understanding and to make changes to wording as necessary. **Article 3** is to raise and appropriate the sum of \$3,388,468. **Article 4** shall the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000 to be added to the previously established Property Evaluation Capital Reserve Fund. **Article 5** is to raise and appropriate the sum of \$4,000 to be placed in the previously established Employee Expendable Health Trust Fund. **Article 6** shall the town vote to establish the contingency for the current year for unanticipated expenses that may arise in further to raise and appropriate the amount of \$10,000 to be placed into the fund. The Chair explained this is exactly what has been done in the past, although the wording is slightly different to align with the requirements of the Department of Revenue.

John L. would like to amend the bottom line of the Operating Budget to deduct \$31,379 which is a one percent deduction over last year's budget. He explained that we would take it out of the bottom line of the budget and move it to the contingency budget. Ray M. asked why he wanted to raise it from \$10,000 to \$31,379. John clarified that it is a vehicle to lower the Operating Budget. The Chair clarified that the \$31,379 would only be used for emergency situations on unbudgeted items, whereas if it was in the Operating Budget the BOS would have the right to spend it as they feel necessary. Clyde C. responded from the audience that the RSA says that the Contingency Fund is specifically for unintended items that happen during the course of the year. The Operating Budget is already based on everything that is already anticipated. Chairman Cutting asked if there was a second on the motion made by John L. The motion was seconded. The motion was defeated.

**Article 7** shall the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000 to be added to the previously established Police Department Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund. **Article 8**, shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000 to be added to the previously established Fire and Rescue Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund. Martha M. made a motion to change the recommendation from \$5,000 to \$180,000 in order to secure the fund for all future appropriations that will be coming in rapid secession over the next few years. Martha B. explained frustration with enlarging that fund in light of the expense incurred in building a new fire station. She felt this would not be acceptable to the voters. Alfred stated that he had no problem with this year's expenditures of the Fire Dept. but, he does have a problem with

jumping ahead and putting money in for future years. Mr. Hanley spoke from the audience and said the vehicle they are looking to replace next is a rescue vehicle not an engine. Alfred explained that last year we took money out of one department to cover the cost of the Fire Station. A discussion ensued about funding vehicles for the fire department and staggering the need for different vehicles in order to create level funding over a few years. Martha M. expressed concern with keeping up with inflation and increased costs of the vehicles, which is contrary to level funding. Alfred stated that we need to discuss with department heads to determine exactly what they are buying in order to have a better understanding of what we need to budget for and how. Ray M. stated that we have time to raise the \$180,000 over the next few years. The Chair related a conversation the committee had with Tim Allen last summer about vehicle purchases and the scope and type of vehicle that was needed changed and therefore the money has changed. The Chair moved the previous motion to the floor, it was seconded and voted on. The motion to make a recommendation of increasing the Warrant Article amount to \$180,000 passed.

The Chair read **Article 9**, shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$153,000 to be added to a previously established Highway Road Construction Capital Reserve Fund. John L. proposed taking the paving monies out of the Capital Reserve fund. The Chair stated that Capital Reserve funds were established with the concept of putting money in over a period of time and building up the fund. He is concerned about putting money in this year and taking it out next year. Alfred stated that the Highway Dept. has spent money working on roads. He was concerned that the Highway Dept. was \$60,000 short on projects that need completion, other than roads. This year they have to come up with \$100,000 for work that wasn't done. Alfred suggested cutting the departments operating budget, or maintenance budget by \$100,000 and put that money in their capital reserve fund for road construction. This will allow the department to get things done that were previously difficult because they were maintaining roads.

Martha B. discussed FEMA reimbursement for tornado damage. Ed Mical stated that we did not get FEMA money for tornado damage because the damage was to non-property. Martha B. asked if an emergency were to happen again, the road crew would have to spend all of their overtime budget. She inquired if they could use the \$10,000 contingency fund? John D. stated it would depend on the exact circumstances of the unanticipated expense. The Chair stated that there has been winter weather that was severe and has utilized a considerable amount of overtime pay early in the season. Alfred's concern about the Highway's Operating Budget is that it has been underspent every year. Tim stated that he is open to any suggestions to make the budget work because it is a challenge. Tim asked that we go through this in detail next Thursday when he presents his budget.

The Chair redirected the committee to discuss whether they wanted to make any changes to Article 9. There were no changes or recommendations suggested. He moved onto **Article 10**, shall the town raise and appropriate \$125,000 to be added to the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve fund. Martha M. suggested \$100,000. The committee decided not to make any recommendations to the article.

The Chair asked if there were recommendations on **Article 11**, shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$70,000 to be added to the previously established Bridge Repair Replacement Fund. There is already \$100,000 in that fund. Tim explained that this includes repairs to be made to Melvin bridge, North Village Reservoir, and Lang bridge. The committee made no recommendations to this article.

**Article 12** shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$240,000 to install a fire suppression sprinkler system at the town garage of this amount \$190,000 would come from the Capital Reserve Fund and improvement of highway facilities or \$50,000 from taxation. The Chair called for suggestions

or recommendations from the committee. Martha B. asked if this was just for the town garage did it include the transfer station. Tim A. stated that as far he knew it was for both. Martha B. made the recommendation that the BOS rewrite the warrant article so that the public is clear on that distinction.

**Article 13**, should the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$15,000 to be placed in a previously established Capital Reserve Fund for the preservation of town records. Martha M. moved to change that figure to \$10,000. Martha B. stated that we should have a better understanding of how we are going to preserve the records. Martha M. said we continue to preserve the books, but, it seems unclear how the rest is going to be preserved. The Chairman put the recommendation to vote, the recommendation was defeated and will not be passed onto the BOS.

**Article 14**, should the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be placed in a previously established Library Building Renovation Capital Reserve Fund. Alfred asked how much was currently in the fund, it was stated roughly \$600, and the library is going to need to replace the carpet at \$28,000. Martha M. stated that she believed the replacement year for the carpet was 2020 or 2023. The HVAC system is more of a priority. No recommendations on this article.

**Article 15**, should the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$40,000 to be placed in the previously established Town Hall Improvement Capital Reserve Fund. This is for a sprinkler system. Ray discussed the difficulty with getting water into the building for the sprinkler system. Alfred suggested that we appropriate the money to install the system in the building and then hook it up to the water outside the building later. No further recommendation were made to the article.

**Article 16**, should the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$200 . . . the Chair asked for recommendations. No recommendations on this article.

**Article 17**, should the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$11,000 to develop an online Geographic Information System (GIS) to be accessible through the town website. This amount covers converting town mapping information into digital format. Martha M. recommended that the proposal should be for \$10,000. Chair asked for a vote on recommending \$10,000 for the GIS system on the town website. The motion failed. No recommendations on this article.

**Article 18**, the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000 to be added to the previously established Transfer Station Capital Equipment Fund. Chair asked Varick P. from the Transfer Station what this money to be utilized for? Varick said it was for the replacement and relocation of the compactor which would cost in the range of \$30,000. No recommendations on this article.

Chairman Cutting asked John D. if the BOS were going to add a warrant article for \$5,000 for fire equipment. John D. responded affirmatively. The Chairman clarified that these are recommendations on the individual warrant articles which the BOS will review at their next meeting. The committee affirmed that they vote as a committee after the public hearing to recommend or not recommend the warrant articles.

Alfred made a motion to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded, and the motion to adjourn passed. The meeting closed at 9:19 PM.

Minutes Submitted by: Janice L. Loz

***Attachment***

## STATEMENT TO WARNER BUDGET COMMITTEE

John Dabuliewicz

January 10, 2019

Please note that I am speaking only for myself in this statement, which has not been authorized by, nor is it made on behalf of the Select Board.

The Chair has made clear several times during this year's Budget Committee meetings the behavior expectations for Committee members. Basically he has repeated that discourse is always to be civil and respectful. Members have been reminded to avoid singling out individuals and to refrain from personal attacks. Unfortunately compliance with these expectations has been less than stellar.

Let me first apologize for being unable to address this topic at the January 3 meeting because I was absent due to illness, as I informed the Chair by phone that afternoon. At the December 27 meeting of the Budget Committee where the Wage Survey and Compensation Study was discussed, there were declarations made that were far outside the realm of appropriate.

In section HH of the December 27 minutes Mr. Leavitt stated as follows concerning the Town Administrator's interactions with the Select Board with regard to the compensation study:

“All the information was going to the Administrator, he was only telling you what he felt you should know because he filters out what he thinks you don't need to know.”

and

“Leavitt said there is plenty of room in here for interpretation and manipulation.”

These statements, aimed personally at the Town Administrator, directly challenge his integrity and professionalism. They were uncalled for and made without any evidence to substantiate them. I am unaware of instances in which the Administrator either kept information from the Board or manipulated any data.

Therefore, I call upon Mr. Leavitt to apologize to the Town Administrator for these scurrilous statements. I also hope that we can conduct our business as a Committee in a manner consistent with the behavioral expectations laid out by our Chair, and that the Chair will call us out if we violate them.

Please include this statement in the minutes of this meeting. Thank you