

**UNAPPROVED**

Town of Warner  
Budget Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 30, 2020

7:00 PM Warner Town Hall



**I. OPEN MEETING at 7:00 PM and ROLL CALL**

Martha Bodnarik  
Jonathan Lord  
David Minton

Mike Cutting (Chair)  
Ray Martin (Water District)  
Judy Rogers (BOS)

Alfred Hanson  
Martha Mical (V. Chair)

***In Attendance:*** Diane Ricciardelli (Town Administrator), Clyde Carson (BOS)

**II. APPROVAL OF JANUARY 9, 2020**

***Motion to approve the minutes of January 9, 2020 made by Martha M. and seconded by Ray.*** Discussion: Committee members made edits to the minutes. *The Chair moved the motion for a vote to approve the January 9, 2020 minutes as amended. The motion passed with unanimous approval.*

**III. PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE 2020 OPERATING BUDGET (7:08 PM)**

The Chair opened the public hearing at 7:08 PM. He started reviewing the budget from the back of the budget working forward to accommodate the department heads who are present for a limited time at tonight's meeting. He will review the budget by category.

The total budget is \$3,481,484 which is a 5.15% increase over last year. The Chair said 40.4% of the budget is wages and 20.3% is benefits, 7.1% is debt. Insurance represents 2.7%, the Library represents 5.5% which is calculated by a percentage formula. That formula was originally set up by Pillsbury when he gave the Library to the town. They can add funding to it but cannot subtract from it. The Chair said 77.2% of that budget is what he refers to as limited controls. That leaves 22.8% of the budget they can actually control. He said town's people want the services and that comes at a cost.

**A. Indebtedness**

The Chair said indebtedness for the town is \$246,429. Martha M. said the indebtedness is the fire truck principle and interest, the fire station building principle and interest, the solar array principle and interest, and the Hopkinton Landfill closure expense. The Chair said the Hopkinton Landfill closure will go on in perpetuity.

Charlie Albano asked of the indebtedness items which is the first to be finished. The Chair asked the Town Administrator last week for the maturity dates for those debts. Diane said she does not have them. The Chair said the Fire station principal and interest are 20 years. The fire truck may be three to four years ago. Ed M. thought it may be 2025 for the fire truck.

**B. Conservation Commission Budget**

The budget total is \$1,038. Nancy Martin stated that money represents no increase from last year. There were no questions or further discussion.

### **C. Memorial Day 2020**

The total budget is \$1,500 for the flags on Main Street, cemeteries, town buildings. No questions or further discussion.

### **D. Library Budget**

The Library gets 1/15<sup>th</sup> of 1% of the assessed value of the town. The budget total is \$190,246. The Chair said the town added \$3,300 to help cover the cost of the 27-pay periods. Michael S. stated that 2020 has 27-pay periods which happens approximately every 10 years. This represents a big increase in their budget of between \$5,000 and \$6,000. They source money through donations and fund raises to balance their budget but, they just couldn't make up the full increase of that expense.

Bob LaFrance asked why they didn't give those people two weeks' vacation? He suggested giving them two weeks' vacation and not paying them for it. No further questions or discussion.

### **E. Parks and Recreation Budget**

The total of their budget is \$40,566. Apryl B. said their budget is mostly maintenance and improvements this year. They need to replace some things that are broken like their leaf blower. They have some insurance compliance issues which need to be resolved for the playground and the swing set. They need to fix the water line at the bath house on Silver Lake.

The Chair noted they have one part-time individual that works 775 hours a year. They also have a seasonal budget of \$2,600 to pay for a second seasonal person. Charlie A. asked if their budget increased? The Chair said it went up by 12.52%. Their wages went up 11% for the maintenance person, mileage went up by 16.67%, or \$150. Repairs and purchase of equipment went up by \$600, improvements and maintenance went up by \$2,272. The Chair informed the public of the department's request for a new tractor. The Highway department has a tractor used for snow removal of sidewalks. It was suggested Parks and Rec. share that tractor to get maximum use of the vehicle. He said the town does have to buy a bucket for the front of the tractor noting this would be well within budget.

Charlie A. asked Apryl if they have written or sought any grants? Charlie said 15 years ago he wrote a very large grant for \$75,000 for the parks area for a skateboard park, basketball and new dugouts. There is grant money available he would suggest that people on the committee review those opportunities. Apryl stated that grant money doesn't usually cover maintenance. Nothing she is seeking is new, just replacing what has broken. Charlie A. said there may be some sources available to them from the private sector not necessarily nationally or federally. Apryl said they do have programs to raise money which they put back into the parks each year. They are coed softball in the spring, women's softball in the summer and football in the fall.

Ray said Parks and Rec. works with Warner Youth Sports Association. WYSA also works with the festival and are very proactive.

Elizabeth Labbe asked for clarification on the connection between WYSA and Parks and Recreation. Apryl said WYSA is the youth sports association in town and they use the facilities. They work with us to split the costs of equipment, for instance a soccer net could cost up to \$5,000. They are separate entities because the cost of having full employees to blend the two entities would be cost prohibitive.

The Chair said the two entities work very closely and well together. Rachel de Thomas from WYSA has been on the board for 15 years. She said the department and WYSA have always had a cooperative relationship.

Their fund raising is specific to scholarships and their operating budget in terms of sports and equipment. They do fundraise for things that become a permanent part of the parks in town. They were given by the generosity of the festival permanent new soccer nets and soccer goals. Parks and Rec. maintain those things and the public uses it as well as WYSA.

James Gaffney clarified there is a 12.52% increase and asked if that is a temporary increase? Or, is this the baseline for next year's planning? Apryl said it is hard to answer that question. Although, this should be an increase for just this year. Since she has taken over the department they have been trying to catch up. Things that have broken have not been replaced. Last year they had to do resurfacing that was a big bump in expenses. James said it sounds like specific things need to be addressed maybe there needs to be a roadmap in place. He asked if there was a reason why those things were not submitted as a warrant? The Chair said they are setting up a capital reserve fund for projects. Because they realize the Operating budget cannot take these big hits in expenses. The Chair said they will be discussing that warrant article later in the meeting. James' concern is in increasing the Operating budget of a department and sometimes money gets spent somewhere else. A warrant article could ensure that it is spent as intended.

Martha B. said Apryl has brief the committee extensively as to the needs of the department. They houses a tennis court, basketball court, skate park, softball field, baseball field, soccer field, attendants, snack shack and toilet facilities. All items under the Operating budget. She said they need a new liner for the skate rink, damage due to floods, resurfacing tennis courts, lighting, these are all operating costs. These are necessary operating costs this budget is not as costly compared to a vehicle in another department. Diane added that Apryl is a volunteer and the time she puts into the job is amazing.

Apryl said she is working developing a maintenance schedule. The resurfacing costs she is now aware of and can develop a CIP plan in the future. She is trying to be prepared for these expenses. Currently they are catching up and taking care of things that are breaking. James doesn't have a problem with what the department is doing but, how it is done. He is not a fan of increasing operating budgets for temporary fixes. No further questions or discussion.

#### **F. Health and Welfare Budget**

The budget total is \$18,863 which is a decrease of 5.03%. The Chair said last year they put in the budget \$2,500 for Riverbend community health. This year it is not in the operating budget but in a warrant article. A new Welfare Director line has been added. In the past, the Town Administrator was the director and that will no longer be the case. The town's people felt that responsibility should be a separate entity.

Sue Hemingway asked what services were Riverbend providing? The Chair indicated those services will still be provided but, the payment for those services will be in a warrant article. Martha B. said they service 80 members of the Warner community for over \$700,000. No further questions or discussion.

#### **G. Transfer Station Budget**

The budget total is \$250,270 which is an increase of 4.6%. The Chair said the largest portion of the increase is for a hazardous water disposal event which is a \$8,000 expense, \$7,000 over last year. Varick said Sutton participates and they pay \$1,000 for their share of the event. Martha M. said Warner hosts this event every other year. No further questions or discussion.

#### **H. Street Lighting Budget**

The budget total is \$11,500. Christine Perkins asked if LED lighting is used? Clyde said it may be recently that Eversource offers an LED alternative. They haven't come to us and said they have an alternative. The Chair said they updated the lights in the past six-to-eight years with energy efficiency lighting. He noted the technology has changed drastically. Apryl said all the lights in Park and Rec. have been changed to LED except for the security lights. Christine asked if the BOS could contact Eversource to see if an alternative is available? Clyde, said yes.

Andy Bodnarik inquired about a comment on the budget that says check list? The Chair said they were checking to make sure the figure was accurate. Street lights are not metered like a residence. Eversource charges by the number of street lights, it is a flat rate.

Darren Blood said Eversource charges by the light. They would like to use LED's, but, the energy usage doesn't translate to the cost for the street light. The Chair said Eversource sets the price it is non-negotiable. No further questions or discussion.

#### **I. The Highway Department Budget**

The total budget is \$1,069,776 an increase of 2.38%. Martha M. said it is an increase of \$24,845. No questions or discussion.

#### **J. Emergency Management Budget**

The total budget is \$14,125 an increase of 55.2% or \$5,024. Ed M. said they have a new fire station and the local emergency plan hasn't been updated since 2016. There is a grant available to update the plan and a continuity of operations plan. The town's commitment is \$5,500 and we will be reimbursed for that amount. He said all other items in budget are the same. James clarified they are going to raise and appropriate that additional money and will be reimbursed for it. What happens to that money? The Chair said it goes back into the general fund. Revenue money cannot be spent you can only spend money from expenses. Those funds will go back into the general fund at the end of the year. This year we have roughly \$150,000 left over that wasn't spent last year. That money goes into the general fund and is used in September to determine the tax rate. This past year, 2019, there was \$140,000 in the general fund and it was used to lower taxes.

The Chair said the State of New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) requests they maintain a general fund between 7%-and-17% of the total operating budget. This is in case of a disaster the town has funds. The general fund is used throughout the year to pay the bills. Taxes are paid twice a year, which means revenue only comes in twice a year. Although, the town pays bills throughout the year. He said the general fund is used as cash flow to pay expenses. No further questions or discussion.

#### **K. Building Inspector Budget**

The total budget is \$4,700 with no increase. The wages for the Building Inspector are offset in revenue from the fees. No further questions or discussion.

#### **L. Fire Department Budget**

The total is \$195,435 which is an increase of 16.9% or \$27,089. The town has operated as a volunteer Fire department, they are now classified as on-call. Mr. Monahan said when he was on the department they were always classified on-call and they were paid for every call. The Chair said the Fire Chief has indicated the

Labor Department has instructed him the town has to pay for all on-call hours instead of a minimum amount of two hours. Mrs. Monahan said her husband did get paid for on-call time. Martha M. said they were paid for two hours and not the entire time on a call. The Chair equated it to working for a company for an eight-hour shift and being paid for only four hours. He said when the dispatch alerted members fire fighters would respond and then when they left the scene they were no longer paid. They would go back to the station and put away their equipment and not get paid for that time and they should have been. James clarified they are not paying on-call they are paying while you are on the call. Clyde said they haven't paid for training and according to the Labor Department they should pay for training. The Chair said most of the \$27,000 is a result of the increase in pay.

Martha M. said also the wages need to be brought up. It has been decided to split that cost over the course of two years. Marianne asked if the Fire Chief was present to discuss this issue? The Chair explained the Chief is a Fire Marshall with the State of New Hampshire and was not present at the meeting. Ray said the department was volunteer and then we started paying for a portion of the time. They were volunteering the rest of the time when not being paid. That was what the Department of Labor had an issue with. The fire fighters were either all volunteer with no pay or being paid for when they were on duty. Also, the training was a big issue because we were paying for two hours of training no matter how long the training sessions were.

The Police Chief said there was an issue with labor laws due to canine officers. Canine officers were caring for their canines even when they were off the job. That opened the door to other labor law issues.

John L. said he has attended a lot of the BOS meetings and Budget meetings. He feels the information on this issue isn't adequate to make a good decision. He is not against the raises; he feels they were not adequately explained. He noted one Selectman voted against the raises for that reason. There are several things that are unclear to him. When they are on-call they get paid for every hour they work. Although, he has been told when they are at the Fire Station for other reasons, such as, sweeping the floor, open houses, doing a tour they are considered on-duty and have to be paid. He feels this limits the department to what they can spend on actual volunteer work. In the past, they spent time doing carpentry at the old fire station to make room for a new truck, now they cannot do that. He asked how many people go out on the call that may only need four people. The Chief told him they all go out on the call. John said if 20 people show up, they all go on the call and they all get paid. His concerned nothing has been done by the Fire Department to help mitigate those costs.

Diane had a conversation with the Fire Chief about this issue. He told her that if four people show up and they only need two, they get paid a minimum of one hour and they go home. He told her they are sending people home if they don't need them. John was concerned the Chief had said at a BOS meeting that if there are 20 people, they all go on the call. The Chair said they will need to speak with the Chief.

John said the Fire department should be treated fairly. They were not included in the wage study. The Fire department have their own rules and are on-call not considered part-time. He believes they were excluded from the wage study for good reason. He noted the only job description they have is for the Fire Chief. According to their bylaws there are 43 fire fighters. He said there wasn't any mention of EMT's and how they figure into this issue. Also, the stipends are not included in the hourly wage. John said the Chief had said the stipend doesn't cover all the hours that he works. This did not surprise John and he felt that is not the purpose of a stipend. He wondered if the department has to be paid for all hours worked and why is a stipend even necessary. He said he doesn't know all the facts but feels there are unanswered questions. He recalled a meeting when a Selectmen voted for the increase and later commented they should rethink the handling of the Fire department. John felt it could be a 16% raise this year and another 16% next year. Originally it was a 30% increase this year. He agrees there are some areas that have to be increased but, they should try to mitigate costs. He said the town is paying for a very expensive fire station. He stressed his support for the fire

station and the fire fighters. He believes the timing of this raise may be ill advised. The Chair said part of the timing is due to the Labor Department mandate to the town. John said the department runs almost independent of the town. They have their own bylaws and elect their chief. He said they are a separate entity of the town; he questions how the state can say the town has to pay them.

Martha M. said the Fire department was a separate entity at one time. It is coming over to be a town entity, it is a process. John said details have to be ironed out before jumping into a 16% raise. He said the BOS need to get more involved in how the department is run.

Mrs. Monahan asked why is there six telephone lines at the department at an increase of 42%. Martha B. said they cannot account for all the lines. The Chair said there are a couple of phone lines, a line for the alarm system and then capitol area requires a separate line. Martha B. said they had talked with TDS about coming in and tracking the lines which would cost several thousand dollars. It's a brand-new building and every line should be accounted for. She said the BOS should have followed up.

Marianne said she understands the Fire Chief cannot be present. This is a 39-member department and she feels someone should have been present to answer questions from the public.

James G. said the consequences of the wage increase of a year ago are still fresh in his mind. While this was forced on the town by the state and we all agree we need a fire department. He feels there wasn't transparency on this issue. He asked if the wage study goes to town meeting to be voted on? The Chair said Thornton was the independent company hired to do the wage study at a cost of \$10,000. James recalled the wages were implemented without the town voting on them. The Chair said the wages were implemented by the BOS on December 15, 2018, three months before Town Meeting. James said this feels like we made a change in policy on spending money without it being approved by the voters. The Chair said this committee does not control wages. The BOS control wages, they decide wage rates and when they are implemented. James said those things are supposed to be voted on by the tax payers.

Martha B. said the BOS deal with personnel through the department heads. She said when the Police department hires a new officer, he does it with BOS permission. He tells the BOS what he wants to pay the officer. She said the committee watch the budget very closely, but do not tell them to cut personnel or wages across the board.

Charlie A. said he agreed with John L. and his comment that this issue needs to be looked at. He asked if the committee knows what Contoocook does with their firemen? Clyde said the town is fortunate to have 40 fire fighters and they get paid when they are on a call. Contoocook has a full-time fire department at full-time wages. If we had four full time fire fighters on staff it would probably equal the total budget we have for their fire department. Charlie asked do we have something that is more comparable? The Chair said Hopkinton pays their fire fighters \$12.50 and Warner pays their fire fighters \$13.82. Hopkinton pays their fire fighters/EMT's, meaning a person who has a certification for both, \$14.00. He noted these figures were given to the committee by Sean. Warner in comparison is paying fire fighters/EMT's \$15.56 in the 2020 budget. Hopkinton is paying EMR/EMT's \$17 and Warner is paying \$17.87.

Charlie said this is a Budget Committee presentation of the budget. The committee has heard there are a number of concerns relative to this issue. He asked if the committee will review this and discuss it? The Chair assured Charlie that Mr. Toomey, Fire Chief, will be in attendance at the next meeting before a final decision is made. Charlie believes there needs to be more review and commented they all support firemen and women. He is looking for standards and fair comparability to provide consistency from year-to-year.

Martha B. said the committee is concerned. The only complaints she has heard have been relative to the fire fighter wages. The wages need to be addressed with the BOS. She said the Budget Committee cannot touch wages, they can cut the amount the department gets and the bottom line of the entire budget. She suggested that if someone has a problem with how the BOS are compensating, they should contact the BOS office. Alfred said the budget has not yet been approved by this committee. We will not approve it until after the Public Hearing.

James said the Fire department is important and people should be treated fairly. He is concerned about the process. He thought they had learned their lesson after the wage study process.

Judy said the presentation of the increased wages was made in December by the new chief to this committee and the BOS. After almost every meeting was a different set of criteria, information and calculations. Every week there was a different document. Martha M. said the numbers weren't changing. Judy said they were in different formats. They were not part of the wage study. These wages were set by the Fire Chief. That may imply a biased which is something they tried to avoid by having Thornton conduct the town wage study. An outside service doing a study is definitely preferred. That was one of the objections she had to the numbers that were presented. She doesn't believe there was enough time for the BOS to see most of the issues involved in setting the wages. In the past, the wage line was a number. The BOS did not set the wages for the people who work at the Fire department. The BOS were working with information they were given solely from the firemen. She believes they need outside information. Judy said Sean did submit a study from Newport. The Chair said it was a comprehensive study conducted from the town of Newport which included the towns of Bow, Concord, Hopkinton, Newbury, Sunapee, Claremont, Franklin, Hanover, Hooksett, Keene, Lebanon and New London. Judy said which were not the towns which Thornton used. They used only four of the 12 that Thornton used. She said they should put this on hold and do it right. It should be the same strategy used for the other employees in town.

James offered to help the department trace the phone lines, he has a toner at home that could identify the lines.

George Packard asked what is the trend in the Fire department calls? The Chair said they had between 410 and 413 calls this last year. Mr. Monahan said probably 80% is rescue calls and fire trucks aren't involved. Mrs. Monahan said and yet, we are buying new trucks. Diane said Sean will be at next Wednesday's committee meeting. She is working with him to put together a presentation. Mrs. Monahan had issue with the comparison towns used, most of them are cities. The Chair said that was his comment to the Fire Chief when he discussed this with him on the phone. Mrs. Monahan asked if we need 40 fire fighters? Martha M. said when a call comes in they get potentially four-to-six fire fighters. Mrs. Monahan said there are two to three tones for every call. She said there is no need for that with that many fire fighters. Martha M. thought the reason for two to three tones was the difference between it being Concord or the state. The Chair said that is an operational issue the BOS would handle and he thanked Mrs. Monahan for her comments.

John said that Martha B.'s comment about hiring and firing of employees in town was accurate. Except he said relative to the Fire department they run under a separate set of rules. John said the Chief's wage study is based on a median not an average. He has read the BOS minutes and they always refer to an average. He disagreed that is not what the wage study was, the study was a median. It takes away the high's and low's. John said he did a study last year and used an average. He then used the median of the same towns. There was a whole lot of difference in the hourly rate. The wage study came out with wages for each individual in the town. The fire department never did that. He had heard the Fire Chief got a \$10 raise and asked if that is true? Martha B. said that is true. The Chair said the Fire Chief is paid at the rate with no certification of \$33.66 an hour. Then it depends on the Chief's certifications, whether he is a fire fighter he would get \$34., if he is an EMT he would get \$35., if he is an EMMT he would get \$35.72, if he is a Paramedic he gets, \$36.43. Judy

said the Fire Chief based on the stipends used an hourly calculation to arrive at \$30 per hour and his wages for calls. Judy said she does not agree with this. They are paying for hours worked. Within the documents received the increases for the Chief, Deputy Chief and Clerk Treasurer those increases of \$9.00 and \$10.00 were put into the hourly wages they receive when they go on calls. Consequently, the Chief went from \$20 an hour to \$30 an hour.

John asked if there was a differentiation between an on-call pay and an open house pay or maintenance pay, or training pay. Judy said, no. John said it is not an on-call rate it is an hourly rate. Those are the things that have to be changed. John feels the fire fighters are underpaid. He is concerned there should be a difference in pay for maintenance, washing trucks, open house and attending a call.

Harry Seidel stated he is not a fire fighter. A lot of towns in this region of New Hampshire have a hard time finding fire fighters. He doesn't think they are going to resolve this tonight. He appreciates they have a strong Fire department in town. It sounds like they are being paid within a dollar of the surrounding towns. He supports the judgment of the BOS that they need to be paid. The Chair said in a recent conversation with the Fire Chief he is three positions short on the department. The Chair said this conversation will continue at the next meeting and he moved on to the next section of the budget.

#### **M. Ambulance Budget**

The total budget is \$82,000 which is an increase of 6.9% or a \$5,000 increase. We get our ambulance service from Hopkinton. They determine how much they bill based on the prior year. They cover our town 24-hours a day, seven days a week. The Chair cautioned the cost of our own ambulance could be as much as \$500,000 a year. Mr. Monahan asked if we pay Henniker. The Chair said, no. James said they shouldn't expect Hopkinton to respond to somebody who is closer to the Bradford or the other end of Warner. The Chair said that area is covered by mutual aid by Henniker. Varick said Hopkinton covers the town of Warner, and the town of Webster. Sometimes they even respond into Henniker. There is a shortage of EMS in the area, that is why you will hear so many re-tones. When you get Henniker and sometimes New London servicing the town of Warner it is because both of the Hopkinton's ambulances are busy. No further questions or discussion.

#### **N. Police Department Budget**

The budget total is \$554,150 an increase of 4.84% or \$25,570. Chief Chandler said they had an increase in the festival manpower expenses. That was an increase of \$2,000. He said a few years ago they were underspending that line. Through the budget process they ended up reducing that line. The weather dictates the festival participation and in turn the police detail. The numbers budgeted were based on previous years and weather conditions. If the weather is good and the crowd is not at capacity then he starts releasing people. Last year there was a great crowd and they stayed longer and we were at full capacity. Ray and the Chief are going to discuss consolidating some areas this year in an effort to get a better handle on it. They want to get a better handle on it instead of overspending. Ray said the \$11,000 or whatever it ends up being is completely reimbursed by the festival. They will get a bill from the town after the event. The Chair said the money goes back into the general fund.

The Chief said the hiring pool for police is a tough category and even tougher for part time. They were fortunate a couple of years ago to have a retired officer work part-time. He said they have tried to fill the part-time slot and have been unsuccessful. The department was a part of the 2017 wage study. They removed the part-time line funded at approximately \$15,000 in an effort to ease the burden on the tax payer so he could finalize their wage situation based on the wage study. They did have an increase in benefits and retirement. Those are the items that equate to the 4.8% increase. No further questions or discussion.

**O. Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) Budget**

The total budget is \$20,989 or an increase of \$169. The Chair explained the town uses services from them as they develop land use projects. Diane, Town Administrator, said they are supportive if you have any questions about Land Use or any government issues. For that price they can go to conferences and they are available through email or phone. Martha M. said out of the \$20,989 CNHRPC is \$3,488 and the CAP building (Community Action Program) is \$17,500. No further questions or comments.

**P. Insurance Budget**

The total budget is \$93,784 which is an increase of 17.68% or \$14,000. The Chair said that covers property liability, unemployment and workman's compensation. Workman's compensation was an increase of \$11,000 property liability was an increase of \$3,000. Part of the property liability was because we ended up adding a fire station which had to be insured for property liability. Workman's compensation is based on the employee payroll. It is a fee set by the state of New Hampshire and the insurance commission based on payroll. Diane said in 2019, they called it a holiday because it was a savings a lot of people didn't use, so it came back to the town. She said we don't get that this year. No further questions or discussion.

**Q. American Legion**

The total is \$26,001 of that \$23,000 is for town cemeteries which is an increase of \$2,000. The Chair said in the past the outlying cemeteries were maintained by the American Legion. Most of the American Legion gentlemen have reached the age where they can no longer do the work. Paul Violette from the American Legion submitted a letter to the town stating they were no longer going to do this task. The budget has gone up by \$2,000 to cover the work necessary to maintain the remotely located cemeteries. Martha M. said the gentlemen who does our cemeteries agreed to take on the remote locations.

The Chair said there is a \$2,000 increase in monument repair and of that \$1,000 is for headstone restoration. Also, \$2,000 is to remove a tree in a cemetery. Mrs. Monahan asked why were they paying for headstone restoration? The Chair said this is for headstones hundreds of years old that have deteriorated or been vandalized. This has been done for 15 to 20 years. Martha B. said if a single stone 200 years old is broken in half it can be repair with cement. She said they are not getting new replacement monuments and are not sandblasting they are repairing existing stones. No further questions or discussion.

**R. Old Fire Station Budget**

The Chair said the old Fire Station is being rented. The BOS are in the process of talking to them about purchasing the property. He said they get revenue in terms of rent. There is \$800 budgeted this year for building maintenance. He explained that in 2019 about \$6,000 was spent on building maintenance in preparation for the tenants moving in. Ray, a Water District representative, said the maintenance included converting the water system from filling fire truck to servicing domestic water needs. Mr. Henley asked what is the expense of that building to the town? The Chair said \$800 is budgeted. Diane noted the annual amount for rent is \$18,000. No further questions or comments.

**S. Old Graded School Building**

The Chair said the budgeted expense is \$17,159, zero increase over last year. The committee spoke with the BOS and Town Administrator about the \$8,000 revenue from the tenants in the building. The committee suggested adjusting the rent fees. Although, he said a substantial tenant in the building is CAP. If they raise

the rent on CAP, then in turn CAP could raise the amount they get from the town to cover expenses. He noted a lot of entities that function out of that building do provide services to Warner residences.

David Bates said the homeschoolers operate out of the building. It is not expensive comparatively and a way to educate kids and provide them with public space.

James asked if there was any open space in the building? The Chair thought there was some. Martha M. said the festival no longer occupies a space in the buildings and she believes there are a couple of available rooms. The Chair said rent amounts haven't changed in that room for a number of years.

Mr. Henley asked if the town pays for snow removal and building maintenance? The Chair said, yes. The amount budgeted for maintenance is \$2,500. Mr. Henley asked if they pay for increased wages for people to do work at the building. The Chair said, yes. Mr. Henley wondered why rents don't go up. The Chair said that was a point which he communicated to the BOS.

Elizabeth Labbe said she is part of the homeschool group. She stated the group hasn't had heat for several years and the condition of the building is deteriorating. James said didn't we just replace the furnace in that building? Martha B. said, yes, and the fuel line for that building runs over each year. The Chair said last year \$8,380 was budgeted for fuel oil for that building and we spent \$9,243. He suggested Elizabeth meet with the Selectmen and find out why they are not getting heat. Elizabeth said the heat is being repaired and they are removing the old thermostats. She said the group uses it one afternoon a week and they pay \$400 a year, it is a huge benefit. She said the board is thankful and every child is thankful especially because of the playground out back. It is an excellent opportunity and a wonderful benefit for the town. They try to clean up after using the building and she said they can absolutely do more. Their entire budget for the year is \$2,000. The Chair said he is not trying to be heartless when he suggests increasing the rents, but the town has to be fiscally responsible. Elizabeth also said she would like more space available for donated coats space for the CAP office. Our low-income families need warm clothing and there is no space available to house everything they are doing. The Chair encouraged Elizabeth to get with the Town Administrator, Diane to follow-up on these items.

David B. said homeschooling families are paying taxes for schools in this district. The community needs to stand behind every kid in this town. The other people in the building are Head Start. He said the states day care system is in collapse, 20% of day care closed last year. He is frustrated that all of the public services come out of our pocket. The town needs to raise the rent and yet all the public services come out of our pocket. He said if the kids aren't getting educated through Head Start they are not ready for elementary school, which impacts all of us. He questioned the need for a dispute over getting \$3,000 extra if rent rates are raised. He feel it is not right approach and they need to stand behind what the CAP building does for the community.

Rachel de Thomas said that it is definitely a valid point the rents need to be reviewed. It is a huge expense and it is a very old building and it is dilapidated. However, there was a precedence set in that building. The Warner preschool and kindergarten did not pay rent for many years. Those programs could not have run if they had to pay rent. They gave many of our children the skills they needed to go on to our public schools.

Mr. Henley said improvements have been made to that building. The town has spent money on new windows, energy improvements, a new fire escape. He does not argue that it is a necessary thing to have in our town, he just thinks maybe we should look at the rents.

Bob Prince asked if there was extra space available in the building? The Chair said they have been told there are empty rooms in the building. Bob suggested renting them out and bring in more money. No further questions or discussion.

## **T. Land Use Budget**

The total budget is \$27,788 which is a decrease of 18.66% or \$6,374. He asked Diane to speak about Land Use because in her prior role she was Land Use secretary. Diane said two positions were combined the Assessing and Land Use position which saved about \$12,000 overall. The two positions have been combined into a 35 hour a week job.

Janice, ZBA Chair, said the professional services line was originally to fund a planning position shared with other towns. That position was not to be pursued. The ZBA did not want an added layer between the board and the applicant. The Planning Board is using that money for a parking study for the village.

Diane said there is \$3,000 for legal expense, hopefully we won't need that. The registry is a \$100 which has been decreased by \$100, registry is handled in Concord. Printing has not changed and funded at \$200. That is for printing big documents like the ordinances. Also, they print site plan reviews. Postage is rolled into the BOS budget. Mileage went from \$200 to \$100. Tax map line is for printing of the large tax maps. Meetings and seminars are for members of the Planning and Zoning Board training. The advertising line, is for anything printed in the Concord Monitor, it gets paid for by the applicants as does the site plan review. Most of that expense comes back to us, not all of it. If the Planning Board has a hearing for ordinance changes the town pays for the notification.

John asked about the Assessing and Land Use combination into one position. Is that position going from two part-time jobs to one full time job? Diane said, correct. He said you save \$12,000 in wages. He asked what did it cost us in benefits? Diane said that includes the benefits and is the overall savings. They were both 26 hours a week jobs and were combined into one full time 35 hour a week job. No further questions or comments.

## **U. Benefits Budget**

The total for benefits is \$176,969, which is an increase of over 11.5% or \$17,000. No further questions or discussion.

## **V. Legal Budget**

The budget is \$11,000 which is the same as last year. The Chair said last year \$11,000 was budgeted and we spent \$19,449. James asked if there was a time when funding for legal was not spent? The Chair said in 2018 they budgeted \$10,700 and spent \$6,613. In 2017, they budgeted \$12,000 and spent \$4,738. The Chair said yes, some years we are definitely under. The Chair said they are still involved in a case with Eversource in regards to assessing the telephone poles. A case has been settled with them for \$53,000. James asked if the budgeted amount is realistic? Diane said they have \$11,000 plus the \$3,000 in Land Use. Clyde said this year may be a quiet phase of the Eversource case, next year may be more crucial.

Mr. Henley asked if Land Use is a cost to the town, why isn't the cost passed along to the applicant. Diane said the cost is charged to the applicant, for printing and advertising. The Chair explained what he thought Mr. Henley was asking was if the charge for advertising is \$500 why don't we charge \$750. Diane said we don't do that. Mr. Henley said he is not necessarily looking for the town to make a profit. Rachel said much of those expenses may be for public access to town knowledge? Janice said Land Use doesn't want the fees to be a huge burden on the applicant and all applicants have a different ability to pay. The ZBA tries to take that into consideration. No further questions or discussion.

**W. Assessing Budget**

The total is \$28,317 which is a decrease of 25.91% or \$9,900. The Chair said of that decrease \$8,200 is a result of the combining the Assessing and Land Use positions. There was a \$2,000 decrease in outside services from the prior year. He said this year is a revaluation year, money is in the capital reserve for that purpose. No further questions or discussion.

**X. Trustee of the Trust Funds Budget**

The total is \$550 no change from the year before. The Chair said there are three trustees that manage the trust funds. These are elected positions. No further questions or discussion.

**Y. Town Clerk Budget**

The Town Clerk's budget total is \$79,513 an increase of 7.25% or \$5,374. Michelle said the major increase was with the Deputy Town Clerk's salary. Last year the hours were cut they have put 30 hours a week back in. Also, there is the 27-pay periods expense. The deputy also gets a step increase this year. Meetings and seminars were removed from the budget last year and replaced this year for \$750. The Chair explained last year when the budget was tight that line item was removed. There are two meetings/seminars in the Spring and Fall.

Mrs. Monahan was concerned with a 19% raise in one year. Martha B. said that may be due to the increase in hours. Michelle said last year the Deputy Town Clerk was 15 hours a week. Michelle said the hours really need to be 30 hours a week. Ray said the deputy did not work a full year last year. No further questions or discussion.

**Z. Treasurer Budget**

The budget total is \$5,000, no change from last year. No further questions or discussion.

**AA. Tax Collector Budget**

The total budget is \$53,890 an increase of 0.02% or \$9.80. No further questions or comments.

**BB. Finance Department**

A total budget of \$70,608 an increase of 2.92% or \$2,000. The Chair said the increase is in wages and in office support and meeting and seminars for \$270. No further questions or comments.

**CC. Elections**

The total budget is \$7,151 an increase of 180.76%. Martha M. said there was one election last year and five this year. No further questions or discussion.

**DD. Board of Selectmen (BOS) Budget**

The total budget is \$159,576 an increase of 12.54% or \$17,785. Clyde said last year they went part of the year without a Town Administrator. This year we have a Town Administrator and will be compensating that person. Martha B. referenced line 40 noted in 2019 we budgeted \$7,300 instead of \$9,300. Do we know what we actually budgeted and spent? The BOS representatives are paid stipends of \$3,100 a year. Clyde said

when the budget was reduced last year the Town Administrators line was reduced to meet the increase. This year that figure is being fully funded, that is the biggest reason for the increase. Martha M. said it was not spent but the amount for the Town Administrator of \$74,222 was raised. She said this year the amount being funded is \$78,852. Judy said the original request for that position was \$78,000, she believes that is what Clyde was referring to. Clyde said that represents the first grade-step for the Town Administrator. No further questions or discussion.

## **EE. Miscellaneous Operating Budget Discussion**

The Chair asked for any questions relative to the Operating Budget.

John L. made a reference to the beginning of the meeting and the \$150,000 going back into the general fund at year end. In his experience on the committee, at the end of the year the surplus is spent on optional items the town wants. John believes that is how the wage increase was paid for in December. He proposed at the Town Meeting last year a \$32,000 cut to the overall budget. This year he believes the BOS took that \$32,000 cut into consideration when expending money. Even with the \$32,000 there still was a \$150,000 surplus. He complimented the department heads ability to do a good job at expending funds. Where there is room for improvement was creating a budget and guarding against planning for worst case scenarios.

The Chair said if their budget is too conservative and the worst-case scenario happens, they have to go to the state and request another Town Meeting to appropriate additional funds. That process is expensive. The Chair believes the Town Administrator and the BOS need to be able to do their job. They do a good job at controlling expenses. The Chair said in general they have very responsible department heads who are looking after the finances for the town.

Clyde said the departments do spend responsibly. He said \$150,000 on a three-million-dollar budget is 5%.

James asked what does this number represent in terms of the town's tax rate? The Chair said he is not going to present the tax rate at Town Meeting, this year. The town is going through a revaluation. Last year he could estimate the revaluation close to accurate. After speaking with real estate agents he has learned house values have potentially risen. They do not know the result of the revaluation. In order to set an accurate tax rate, they need an accurate value of the town.

John felt the surplus should be closer to \$75,000. The Chair said they will be discussing capital and a \$10,000 contingency fund. Mr. Henley said that it is the same amount it was 15 years ago and asked why? The Chair said the state of New Hampshire can only appropriate up to 1% of the budget. He said for a three-million-dollar budget the most they could put in is \$31,000. Mr. Henley said what ever is not spent would go back into the general fund. The Chair said, correct. He said they felt \$10,000 was appropriate and the only amount necessary. Mr. Henley said why burden the tax payers with the increase in payroll, when they can use the emergency fund? The Chair said the contingency fund has to be for expenses unintended. The Chair said we already knew what the wages are so they are not unintended. James said is the actual wording an emergency fund? The Chair said it is a contingency fund.

Alfred asked Diane about the percentage of the wages in the overall budget. He asked if she compared that to other towns? Diane said she has not, but, is on a list with state Town Administrators. She is going to ask them to send her their final budgets. She is going to do a study to see where they fit compared to other towns. David stressed it needs to be similar towns. Diane said once they have all the data, they can compare to the whole state in order to find similar towns. She said they can pick any demographic they want once they have all the data.

#### IV. CAPITAL BUDGET – WARRANT ARTICLES (9:15 PM)

**The Chair read the articles to the public. No votes were taken only questions.**

**Article 3** - \$3,481,484.72 2020 Operating Budget for general municipal operations. Martha B. asked to round the figures without the cents being noted. No questions or comments.

**Article 4** - \$20,000 Property Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund. Presently funded at \$74,127. Martha M. said most of the \$74,000 will be gone by the end of the year to pay for the revaluation. No further questions or comments.

**Article 5** - \$3,000 for the Employee Expendable Health Trust Fund. The Chair said the current balance is \$6,203 the goal is to get the fund up to \$10,000. The Chair said the fund is to help for reimbursement of employee deductible expenses. No further questions or comments.

**Article 6** – Establish a contingency fund to raise and appropriate the amount of \$10,000 placed into the fund. This sum is to come from the general fund. Any appropriations left in the fund at the end of the year will lapse to the general fund.

Natalie Wells asked if they are getting some unanticipated money from the state for potentially \$27,000? The Chair said they received \$37,000 in 2019. He cautioned there is no guarantee how much we will get, if or when. Clyde said we will get one more payment. The Chair confirmed the money comes in as revenue, they cannot spend that money. He said that money will show up in the general funds. Clyde said the money comes in as block grants or rooms and meals tax it is just another revenue stream. Natalie wanted to know why we needed that \$10,000 if we were getting money from the state? Martha B. said even if they received money that could be where the \$10,000 comes from because we are not raising and appropriating this money. She said it is pulled out of the general fund and put into the contingency fund. At the end of the year whatever we haven't spent goes right back in. Martha M. pointed out the article does have the wording to raise and appropriate money. Martha B. said the article states the money comes from the general fund, we should not be raising and appropriating it. Martha M. asked Diane to check the wording. Clyde said they have taken other things from the general fund in the past and they have used that language. The Chair recommended checking with the DRA (Department of Revenue Administration). Martha B. said if you raise and appropriate \$10,000 as well as taking \$10,000 out of the general fund suddenly you have \$20,000. John said while he was on the committee, he studied this issue and he feels it should be to raise and appropriate. Noting then if it is not spent it goes back into the general fund. He said it would never come out of the general fund. Martha B. said the line which reads comes from the general fund should not be there? Diane said this is right from DRA and is how it was worded in the article last year. John felt the wording stating the sum comes out of the general fund is wrong. Kelly said the explanation she got from DRA is they don't actually move the money; they reserve the money for an emergency. The don't have to take it out and put it in the capital reserve, we just have to say that if needed it was in the general funds. Diane and Clyde said this is exactly how it was worded last year and in previous years. Alfred recalls the previous Town Administrator went to the DRA for the wording. No further questions or comments.

**Article 7** - \$15,000 to be placed in previously established Police Department Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund. The current balance is \$47,129. The Chief said they were slated for a vehicle in 2019 but pushed it forward and are purchasing one in 2020. After purchasing the vehicle there will be a new balance of \$28,000. The Chair said roughly \$15,000 will be put into that fund ever year to maintain it and eliminate fluctuations in funding. The Chief said when it is cut, that throws them off track for planning for vehicle replacements. Mrs. Monahan asked how old is the vehicle and how much mileage does it have? Chief said it is a 2013 and will have over 100,000 miles when they get rid of it. The Chair said with police cruisers the wear is not in mileage but in hours. There is a two-to-one ratio, 100,000 is equal to 200,000 mileage on any other vehicle. He said idling takes a toll on these vehicles. No further questions or comments.

**Article 8** - \$100,000 to Fire and Rescue Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund. The current balance is \$31,938. The Chair said the purpose of this is to buy a new rescue vehicle. The new plan is to buy a cabin chassis and box vehicle as opposed to the previous larger vehicle. The larger vehicle would have originally needed \$150,000 this year and \$150,000 next year for a total of \$300,000. That is no longer the plan. No further questions or comments.

**Article 9** - \$6,300 Fire Fighters Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. They currently have \$14,683 in that fund. The Chair said it is to be used for the purchase of fire fighter equipment, coats, helmets, etc. They are on a replacement schedule of every 10 years. No further questions or comments.

**Article 10** - \$170,000 Highway Construction Capital Reserve. Presently there is \$156,081 in the fund. The Chair said they are rebuilding roads, for instance this last year they did Pumpkin Hill. Ed M. asked if the \$156,081 is an accurate figure? Kelly said, no, due to the December balances she gave them it has gone down. The Chair said that figure needs to be adjusted. No further questions or comments.

**Article 11** - \$125,000 Highway Equipment Capital Reserve fund. The Chair said presently they have \$159,867 strictly to buy new trucks. The Chair said the department head had stated the cost of a 10-wheeler is less than the cost of the six-wheeler. Going forward they will have two six wheelers, two 10-wheelers and two F550's. The 10-wheeler can carry bigger loads of sand and decrease frequency of trips. No further questions or comments.

**Article 12** - \$50,000 Bridge Repair/Replacement fund. The Chair said presently the fund has \$153,248. Ed M. said that figure should probably be checked because they just painted two bridges. The Chair said they will probably check on all the articles. No further questions or comments.

**Article 13** - \$10,000 Preservation of Town Records. The Chair said presently there is \$40,183 in the fund. David B. asked if digitizing the records was ever explored. Martha M. said they do digitize. David B. asked if they get rid of the paper records. Martha M. said, no. David said they are legally allowed to get rid of them on a schedule when they are digitized. The just changed the law to allow it last year. Are we exploring that? Martha M. said no because most people like to have the books. No further questions or comments.

**Article 14** - \$10,000 Library Building Renovation and Repair Capital Reserve fund. The Chair said presently there is \$146,683 in that fund. Michael S. said that number is not correct. The Chair said the whole HVAC system has to be replaced. They also need to replace the carpet. David said they have \$14,683 in that account. No further questions or comments.

**Article 15** - \$10,000 Town Hall Improvement Capital Reserve Fund. The Chair said the balance is \$22,199. Clyde said they may be doing something in terms of record preservation and space for that. Martha M. thought the money was for the sprinkler system. Ray said it sounds like they are establishing a fund for big projects. Clyde said money was put in last year, 2019, for the sprinkler system. It will be installed this year. Martha B. asked if they have money to pay for it entirely? Clyde said, correct. Clyde believes this fund is for general improvements. Marianne said they hope there is enough money for the sprinkler system. She said there may be unknown electrical issues with the building. She said they are asking for an additional \$10,000 so they can truly complete the sprinkler system. Martha B. said even though there is \$22,000 in there already. Marianne asked if the cost of the contract with the company for the sprinkler system was approximately \$59,000? The Chair said, yes. Martha B. asked where is the money that has been set aside for the sprinkler system? Is it in the \$22,000 in the capital reserve fund? Clyde and Marianne both said they encumbered it. Martha B. said they already have \$22,000 to cover a contingency if needed. Is there really a need for the extra \$10,000 this year? The Chair said they need to get accurate information on this.

David Hartman asked if that money have anything to do with dividing up the downstairs conference room space. The Chair said, no, that is not going to be done. No further questions or comments.

**Article 16** - \$2,500 to help fund Riverbend Community Health. The Chair said this has been removed from the Operating Budget. This will go before the Town Meeting for a vote for funding. No further questions or comments.

**Article 17** - \$25,000 Transfer Station Equipment Fund. The Chair said it is funded at \$40,540. Varick said the replacement value of heavy machinery is about \$250,000-to-\$300,000. A lot of the machinery is old. The compactor will need to be replaced next. If we replace it, we would relocate it and buy a second compactor. This would give them dual compaction capacity. On a Sunday afternoon the box is getting overwhelm more frequently, 20 years ago that would only happen a couple times a year. Now it is happening a couple times a month. Two compactors are expensive. The prices range between \$30,000-and-\$60,000 to cover that expense. Relocating will involve site work, which would involve repaving the facility which is long overdue. This appropriation would cover most of the equipment needs for that project. The site work may have to fall under another capital reserve fund. He said at one time there was a Transfer Station improvement fund, he is not sure if it still exists.

Alfred asked if the old compactor can be rebuilt? Varick said they already did a service life extension overhaul about seven-to-eight years ago. It cost about \$8,000. It is at least 30 years old and has the tendency to stop working. It has to be turned off and restarted the next day before it is operational again. In order to avoid two new compactors becoming obsolete at once there may be an advantage to keeping the old one for a while longer. They are averaging \$2,000-to-\$3,000 a year in transportation costs. They wouldn't have that if they had a fully functioning compactor. They have loads that are a maximum of 14 tons to a minimum of 5 tons to be removed so they are ready for the weekend. No further questions or comments.

**Article 18** – Discontinue the Capital Reserve fund created in 2015 for the new Fire Station site and design fund. Return balance of \$827. No further questions or comments.

**Article 19** – Capital Reserve fund for Kearsarge Mountain Road alternate route project for \$5,000. Ed M. said it has been a CIP item for 20 years and they are finally starting to look at it. The Chair said if you live on Kearsarge Mountain Road past the village there is only one way in and out. They are looking at alternative routes in case of emergency. Diane said a tree fell three years ago, blocking that road.

James was concerned when a new capital reserve fund is created, we are giving authorization to do it whether or not there are plans in place. He wasn't addressing the merits of this project. If they approve the creation of a capital reserve fund that is costly. He thought they should have a discussion in advance about what the plan is. Ed M. said this funding is to start a plan. Martha B. asked if this is the first time a CIP has been developed for this project? Ed M. said yes. Martha B. questioned whether they needed to say they are using the money for investigation and planning opposed to just building. The article says this is to establish a fund for the alternate route project. It only has \$5,000 in the fund, does any one see the necessity to state it would be used for research planning? The Chair said the problem with using the word planning is they do not want to write the capital reserves so restrictive that you can't use the money. For instance, a capital reserve for Highway department equipment does not specify the make and model of equipment. If they change their mind they are locked into a brand. James said when there is a capital reserve for something new the town should note they need a study and expenses related to come up with a plan. Once they have a plan then start appropriating money to execute the plan. The Chair said the BOS will decide on wording. This committee will either recommend or not recommend the article. John felt that if the word "project" was replaced with the word "study" that should resolve the issue. Martha B.'s concern was a whole new Capital Reserve will have to be opened for a project. Whereas, a study is part of a project.

David B. said when saving for a project the whole project isn't always funded. Sometimes you have an opportunity to get grant money. Whether there is approval for that money can hinge on if a commitment has been made. He said stating that \$5,000 was put aside for a study to possibly do a project is not the kind of commitment to bring in outside funds. He understands James' point but there is another aspect to this when qualifying for outside funds. James said he is suggesting the article be worded to handle the planning aspect and not the execution aspect. No further questions or comments.

**Article 20** – Parks and Recreation Commission to raise \$22,000. Martha M. asked Apryl what is this fund for? Apryl said it is for renovations to the snack shack. John L. asked if all the funds were to be expended this year, 2020. Apryl said, yes. John said it shouldn't be in a capital reserve fund, it should be in the operating budget. He said capital reserve is for an extended period of time. For it to be expended in the same year as it is being established it should be in the operating budget. Clyde said the intention was there may be future projects they will need to save for. This will get them in the mode of thinking in terms of a capital program. Martha M. said this may not be built this year so at least we wouldn't lose the money and have to raise it again.

Ray said several years ago the town had three capital reserve funds. They made a decision to set up capital reserve funds. He said the money was more than likely going to be spent in the same year. For instance, they may want to spend \$100,000 on a bridge. They would pull that money out of the budget and put it into capital reserve. He said they have a history of spending most of the funds in the year it was established. While appropriating the money every year to go into the funds.

Judy said this also allows the towns people to have a discussion about these funds. They can reduce it, or increase it and ask for details. Michael S. said dealing with relatively small projects they think they can get done on time doesn't always happen. Alfred said a good portion of this money was in the operating budget for this department and it was moved out. No further questions or comments.

**Article 21** – RSA 35:1 for Main Street Sidewalk Project to raise the sum of \$10,000. The Chair asked participants to be short and not repeat what someone else has said.

Martha B. asked Diane if she was aware that at the 2017 Town Meeting, they had already established a fund for this? Diane said she had a conversation with Clyde and is aware of that fact and will fix it. Martha B. said there should be \$5,000 in the fund. She recalls the fund was for matching funds for a grant as well as improvements and repairs to town walkways. Martha B. said the Highway has set aside \$25,000 to fix the sidewalk in front of the Library, it has sunk and is a hazard. There is also a new full time hire who will be maintaining sidewalks in the winter and repairing them in the summer. She just wanted people to keep those factors in mind when considering this article.

Harry Seidel said climate change is happening and there will be more walking in the future and less driving. The population is aging. They should create safe sidewalks that will benefit people in town. Walking from the town down to the stores and back is something that is critical. He said it is good for local business, it raises the image of a town. They just have to put a little money in to start planning for this project. Towns in NH need to recognize a future where we burn less fossil fuels. Walking more and having a pedestrian aspect in the town is really good.

Sue Hemingway is on the Energy Committee and read a letter. (See attachment)

Mrs. Monahan said if they continue the sidewalks down to Exit 9, there will have to be a lot more business's than are currently there. Otherwise, people are still going to need a car. She was concerned that when new business tries to develop at Exit 9, they are discouraged and we lose them. She felt there wasn't the type of business there to warrant building sidewalks to access them.

James said his understanding is there isn't a plan for sidewalks. He said the road agent would have to be consulted on how to execute this project. It could cost a million dollars to do this. He is concerned there are houses within six feet of the white line of the road. People have relayed to him they are concerned of the placement of the sidewalks encroaching on the privacy in their homes.

Clyde said to get a plan you have to spend money. The goal is not to spend all town money but to get a grant to help with the planning. A grant is going to happen in either later 2020 or in 2021, the state would pay 80% and we would come up with 20% of the money. The first part would include an engineering study to determine the best route and come back with alternatives for the town to consider before the next step.

James said the details are what is at issue and that is what the town has to vote on. He said there are over a dozen telephone poles and utility poles that have to be moved. The Chair said 31 poles. James said we need a study of how this will be done so people can make an intelligent decision based on an estimate and the potential consequences. So, people who live in that area understand what will happen.

David Bates said telephones poles are in the right-of-way. When there is a DOT (Department of Transportation) project with a DOT grant the utilities are required to move the poles. This does not fall on the town. Also, he believes the engineering study is part of getting the grant. The engineering is done when they have the grant. In regards to the difficulty in maintaining the sidewalks. Brick sidewalks he has heard are a problem. If they are not brick, he believes they will not be as difficult to maintain. He used to belong to a nonpartisan public policy researcher at the House of Representatives. He has done research on this subject. The two biggest proponents of sidewalk construction are AARP and the US DOT. AARP points out when you build sidewalks people use it and walking increases. It is a cheap form of exercise and the lowest impact form of exercise they can get outside their house. It builds communities. People who live on roads where it is only accessible by car have a 90% lower chance of knowing their neighbors. This is the densest settled area in town. He said kids could walk to school. The community looks out for them because there are more eyes on the street. When people walk on the street your whole town is safer. He said a lot of town's designed around ensuring lower crime involve getting more eyes and ears on the street. Isolation makes it easier for people to commit crimes. Pedestrians, he says, spend more. Being able to walk into town can alleviate parking during big events and during school drop-offs. In doing research he combed through everything that wasn't applicable to Warner and these were the main points. He is on the school district budget committee. In 1990 someone made a smart choice to save over 3% on the school budget that year and now we are in trouble because of it. He asked the committee to make a decision as if they were looking back to now from the future. This represents 0.03% of the budget, we are just trying to get started in order to get a study done.

Tim Blagden is Warner's representative on the Transportation Advisory Committee to Central NH Regional Planning. He sees sidewalk projects come before the TAC. Bradford is desperate to get their Main Street sidewalk project built. Henniker has received sidewalk money to go by the Elementary school. These are coveted projects which make communities stronger. Unfortunately, Warner has two children that are not going to age with us because they went out the end of their driveway into Main Street traffic. There is no sidewalk to practice a bike on. He believes sidewalks send a message to motorists to slow down, expect there to be people. This distance between the Town Hall and where the commerce is at Exit 9 is a very walkable distance. He would help write the TAP grant for Warner. He sits on the complete streets advisory committee at the DOT as well. It is a good project which will make the town stronger.

Darren Blood this project was presented to the Planning Board and they did support this project moving forward. Elizabeth Labbe said there are a couple of apartment houses on Main Street. They are within walkable distance to commerce where jobs are available for those without a higher education. It creates a way for low income people to get to a job easier and safer.

Diane said she received calls, emails and letters and asked for them to be added to the minutes. (see attached)

Andy Bodnarik felt it wasn't appropriate to speak for the Planning Board, as a member of the board that is something he wouldn't do. There was an item presented to the Planning Board with a message noting it was something that had to be done soon. It had the designation of "U" on it. He said the theory was if it isn't done this year, they will not have the money. They won't get a grant. When he looked at the application, he did not see a plan. There was a picture that was difficult to interpret as to which side of the street this project was to be placed. Andy felt this article needs to be reworded similar to what James Gaffney was proposing. If they are asking for planning money then don't ask for money to do a project when you don't have a design. He said there are plenty of places in town to get exercise. If they want to create safe spaces for exercise, we have places in town where they could do that. He has exercised to prepare as a soccer referee on town roads effectively for years. He is concerned about the numerous telephone poles on either side of Main Street and the slopes on either side of the road. There is a DOT project coming that will go up Main Street effecting the manhole covers. He recommends to the BOS they change the word "project" to "plan."

Alfred asked Clyde about the initial project for this and the \$5,000 raised. Where is that Capital Reserve? Clyde said they will fix that issue. Alfred said now they are asking for \$10,000. He asked what does the grant require for a commitment? Clyde said if we were awarded the grant, we would have 12 months or less until the next town meeting to raise the full amount for the study. For a one-million-dollar project 10% of that along with the design would be \$100,000 so the town would need \$20,000 for a 20/80 match. Alfred asked if \$15,000 is enough for the commitment? Clyde said not yet. We would have to apply for the grant. Get awarded the grant and go to the next town meeting for the remainder. Alfred said so they have enough to apply for the grant to show the town is committed. Clyde said, yes.

Alfred said we did this before? Clyde said we did not get to that point. Alfred asked, why? Clyde said we didn't fulfill all the requirements of the grant. They had to have a 10-day training and someone didn't go to the training. Alfred said they are putting another \$10,000 in. They will apply for the grant and what if they don't give us to us, again? Clyde said they are going to need the money. If they had the training, they would have received the grant. He said they need to put a little bit away to get this thing done.

Martha B. was concerned this project would cost about as much as the round-about. She said this would mean dealing with land that isn't ours. There is a state right-of-way and Eversource and private property and the potential for moving boundary walls. She didn't see how this would benefit the town.

Rachel de Thomas said it seems the grant is being operated by the DOT for every reason just stated. Coordinating with all those entities requires this type of grant to work with towns like ours. It is the only way this would happen. She believes where the sidewalk would go is already a right-away. She understands why that may upset a homeowner on Main Street. In terms of planning, part of the grant is to do the planning. They cannot get access to the grant until they save the money. The availability of sidewalks actually increases the likelihood that businesses will invest in our community.

Martha M. asked Clyde if the BOS are willing to change the Main Street sidewalk "project" to the Main Street Sidewalk "plan"? Martha B. didn't think they could because there was a previously existing fund. Clyde said it is the infrastructure capital reserve fund. Clyde said the BOS doesn't approve businesses coming into town the Planning Board does.

Caren Baldwin Dimeo lives on Split Rock Road. They use the sidewalk on the corner of North Road to go to the Liquor Store and to Market Basket. They try to walk to town sometimes and it is extremely dangerous. Her family enjoys walking it is good exercise and makes them feel like part of the community. She believes there would be

more local businesses if there was a sidewalk connecting Main Street to Exit 9. It is so dangerous they cannot walk it that often. She fears someone is going to be hurt.

James felt there are going to be eminent domain issues that need to be addressed. He believes people are going to be impacted in a profound manner by this project. Martha M. said to start with they need the money to do the plan. He felt that Tim, the road agent would be helpful and a good place to start.

Clyde said last year the regional planning commission had a staff contract engineer accompany Tim and they walked the whole route. They got an initial feeling for which side of the road they would want to do it on. Although, an engineering study would give us a look at the alternatives and give us the true impact of what the various alternatives are. Martha M. said the information they came up with should be presented to the public. Clyde said they walked down there and wanted it to go on the right side of Main Street as you walk down to Market Basket. He said it wasn't really a study.

Alfred asked if the BOS had visited the land owners on the road and ask their opinion. Clyde said they are not to that point yet.

Tim B. the town of Warner residents were surveyed a few years ago as part of the Charette. There was overwhelming support for a sidewalk. The Planning Board supported the sidewalk and the Energy Committee support the sidewalk. The safe walks to school plan called for a sidewalk to be developed. He believes the community has communicated numerous times to the town boards and committees the desire to have sidewalks.

Mrs. Monahan didn't understand why the school board gets involved in this project, the school bus seems to drop kids off at multiple houses along Main Street. Mrs. Monahan commented that it seems the Budget Committee already voted for this warrant article.

Ken Bartholomew Chair of the School Board isn't involved in this project. The reason the bus stops on Main Street is it is not safe to stop in less places. It is hard for the children to congregate in those places. They cannot walk to those places certainly not in the winter with snow banks. If we could reduce the number of stops that would mean faster transportation and less time on the bus for our children. He believes this is a beneficial infrastructure improvement for the town. On the School Board they try to get improvements they can get leverage money for. The middle school took three tries to get bonded but the state paid 55% of the cost. If they had got it the year after the district would have paid 100% of the cost. They would have paid for it for years to come. He believes when they have an opportunity to leverage tax payer money from the state DOT they should take advantage of it to improve our town.

Martha M. clarified that even though the warrant articles say recommended by the BOS and recommended by the Budget Committee. The committee has not voted on any of these articles. The BOS have voted on them, the Budget Committee has not.

Marianne discussed the safe routes to school project. During that time, they rushed into applying for a grant. She thinks they spent \$28,000 for a sidewalk. The planning wasn't in place. They tried to put sidewalks in but some locations were difficult to address. She was concerned that money was spent without results.

The were no further questions or comments on the Warrant Articles.  
The Chair asked Diane if she had the revenue sheets. Diane said, no.

#### **V. THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 10:38**

The Chair said the public hearing will continue next Wednesday, February 5, 2020 at 7:00 PM.