



Town of Warner

Budget Committee – Public Hearing

DRAFT - Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2022 7:00 PM

At 7:02 p.m., Chairman Michael Cutting called the meeting to order and took the roll.

1 – Roll Call

Mike Cutting (Chairman); Diane Ricciardelli (Town Administrator)-via Zoom, Clyde Carson (Finance)- via Zoom, Dave Minton, Christine Frost (Select Board Representative), Harold Blanchette, Ray Martin, Robert Blake – via Zoom, Richard Bixby, Michelle Kendrick

Absent:

Also Present: Elizabeth Labbe, Michelle Courser, Clyde Carson, Marianne Howlett, Nancy Martin, Christine Perkins, Apryl Blood

The CIP discussion would be held at a later date.

2 – Review of Minutes of September 22, 2022

It was moved by Michelle Kendrick and seconded by Dave Minton to approve the minutes of September 22, 2022 as circulated.

The motion was approved unanimously.

3 – Warner Village Water District – Ray Martin

Ray said their budget is not part of the Town's budget but is separate. The overall budget is up 1.21% over last year. They are coming in lower in expenditures. The Water District has had one person out on Workman's Comp and have not been able to successfully fill the position as yet. They are going to try and fill it as a part-time position for now.

Chair Cutting asked what Ray was doing for payroll for the vacant person for the 2023 season. Ray said that they are putting it in as a full-time position. They don't know at this time about health insurance. The budget reflects 100% of the cost of a single person plan.

Robert asked what was driving the reduction in the water system. Ray said they had a lot of money in the account and wanted to do some additional testing for well #1. Some of this money was used for that. They also got \$21,000 for well-refurbishing, but the bill was less than they anticipated. Their Service Outside Contractor line has some anticipated maintenance included, but it is also the fund they have in case they have problems and must make emergency fixes. Most years they will spend it all, some years they go over. Freeze-ups happen every year that must be dealt with.

Ray said General Government includes employee expenses, insurances, legal, etc. Most are staying close to where they were except for the salaries which are up 3% and \$100 for each commissioner (added to their stipend); less than a 5% increase.

For Sewer, Ray said this was going up \$16,000 because their electrical, chemicals, and sludge costs are going up. They are getting a good rate for the electric from their solar panels, but it just provides electricity for their plant. The panels more than pay to run the plant, which can run \$1,800 to \$2,000 a month.

Truck maintenance is up a bit because they have older vehicles that need more maintenance.

Chemicals are up \$3,500 over last year's budget.

Mr. Leavitt asked if they had considered banking the electricity they make. Ray said they make more on a kilowatt hour by using it than they would if they sold it. Robert Blake asked if the Town owned the solar panels. Ray said that they pay \$18,000/year for 20 years and they are at about 6 or 7 years out. He added that the Town got a \$70,000 grant when they purchased the panels. He also said that the Town sells carbon credits and gets about \$3,000/year. The Town is frozen at 140kw hours since 2015, since installing the panels.

Ray explained the debts due. There is a 2016 truck that will be paid off in April, which will help the overall budget. They are not planning to replace it. They use it for plowing but it is in good shape.

Ray went through the revenues. \$30,000 came from Rural Development for their groundwater discharge planning, Aqua Funds provided \$21,265 that they haven't budgeted for yet for 2023. The rates were last raised three years ago. They will decide if they will raise them again before the March town meeting. When asked, Ray said that the sewage facility is rated to handle a max of 110,000 gallons/day and they are only at 30,000/day. The facility was designed so large because Bradford was going to pump their sewage to Warner, but that didn't happen. For the wells, they are authorized to use 230,000 gallons of water/day and they pump only about 60,000 - 70,000 gallons/day.

4 – Conservation Commission – Nancy Martin

Nancy said there hasn't been a change in their budget in seven years. They are able to operate within that amount and see no reason to ask for more. Chair Cutting said \$1,038 is the entire budget.

Chair Cutting asked where the Commission stood on projects. Nancy said there are some new projects this past year that aren't directly related to conservation easements. They have collaborated with UNH Cooperative Extension and were chosen as one of five communities

across the state to do a wildlife project. That project consists of five people in town from a variety of organizations that chose a project to rehab the old ski tow/ski hill. Ray Martin has mowed the hill several times and it will be a great sledding hill this year. At the base of the hill is the concrete pad that was the home of the former ski hut that burned down. It had a stove, snack bar, etc. and the ladies have decided to do events on the pad in the future. They would like to plant a pollinator garden around the pad to help educate others about pollinators. They have also rehabbed the nature trail on the Chandler Reservation that was damaged by the tornado five years ago. 10 stations on the Warner Trail will have signs up to explain a plant, or wildlife habitat, etc. There will also be QR codes on the signs that will take the hikers to the Warner website with more information. The only expense for these projects was \$600 for the seeds for the pollinator garden.

The acquisition of the blueberry farm is in process. There are legal issues that Five Rivers Conservation Trust is working on. The Town contributed \$30,000 towards the purchase of the conservation easement on that property. They have been offered a donated piece of land that she cannot speak any further on, but it has historical value. Another property they are considering doing a conservation easement on looks over Bagley Pond and is on the list of auction-able properties.

Chair Cutting asked what percentage of the Town is under conservation easements. Nancy said each of the Town's watersheds should have a particular amount under easement. The greatest has 30% suggested. Other streams and watersheds in the region are far less, such as 15%. It would be an average, but she guessed it was under 30% protected. She clarified that land under current use was not considered conserved land.

Mr. Leavitt said he did a rough calculation to figure out the amount of land in conservation or owned by the state and it was nearing 30%.

5 – Assessing

Diane confirmed that the figures shown are not including any wages or COLA for 2023.

Elizabeth Labbe said Outside Services is for their licensed assessor, Dave. He does the pickups and anything with values on it.

Tim Wallace is their forester who supplies the matrix for their timber harvests.

The have a line for the Registry of Deeds, Utilities, and Tax Maps. The last time these were updated was in August. She would like to get a complete overhaul of their maps done by CAI, which is a well-known mapping company. They will come in and take all the maps and take into consideration any problems and updates, and re-do the maps completely. The \$16,300 will pay for this preliminary portion of the job. When people come in now to use a map, they have to use the big paper maps or they can click on the maps online. They are both fairly outdated and it would be nice to have them updated. She has contacted Avitar and the Town's assessor about getting contacts to go out for bid on this project.

Christine said that this is not something that "would be nice" for the Town, it is a necessity. The maps they have now have been pieced together over time. By having them digitized and having this overhaul done, this would get them on track to being able to have them online and able to click on a property and see the owner, square footage, etc.

Elizabeth said phase one would be about 8 weeks long. From there, they will find all the mistakes that were missed and what they still may have to do to fix them. She shared that in 2017, the bid to do this was \$11,000 and a presentation was given at town meeting about this project. The next phase would include updating the maps with the amendments. The third phase is when they can get everything put up on the site and have the information about the properties in town be accessible.

Martha Mical said that up until 2018 when she left, the maps were updated and new paper sheets (large and small) were provided to the Town. Digitized updates were provided too and they were put online. It was noted that some of the maps online now are poor quality and hard to see. She knew that the Town of Salisbury has a website that shows what Warner might want. Also, Avitar is a software company, and isn't likely to do maps and not also require the use of their assessing services. CAI is a well-known company that most of the software companies use to make the maps they provide to the towns; the software companies don't make the maps themselves.

Janice Loz said they have difficulties using the current maps when trying to figure out the correct abutters lists. There seems to have been a lot of piecing together of properties to make maps. This is not sustainable and perhaps the company/person they are using right now isn't the best solution for the Town.

Office supplies came into question. Elizabeth said that she uses supplies from the Board of Selectmen's office. Diane said if a specific type of item is needed, it is charged to Assessing. Paper, pens and other usual items are covered by the selectmen's office supplies. The ink cartridges Assessing uses are very expensive, so they would be charged to Assessing.

The Meetings and Seminars line was \$500. Elizabeth thought that should remain. She has taken quite a few classes this year.

The whole budget is \$52,622 and the biggest increase is for the mapping system.

6 – Elections

Christine Perkins, Supervisor of the Checklist, was there to go over the budget. The 2023 budget will have a town election a town meeting, and training that is unknown based on what the legislature gives them for changes in voting rules and regulations. Also this past year was the first time they've had in-person training in 2-3 years.

The fee for the moderator is \$300 for the Town Meeting and Election. They will only spend \$540 for the ballot clerks as they will need fewer for the activities this year. The salary of \$1,920 is based on the current rate and includes training, work on 30-day letters, and election work. The 30-day letters are sent out during non-election years to people who may have moved out of the town in an effort to clean up their checklist. The state requires that they send such a letter and if the Town doesn't hear back within 30 days, they can take those people off the checklist.

Mileage is \$187.50 (200 miles). They did have two trainings last year they had to go to.

They are putting in for a new computer for \$1,000 which includes installation of it by Dan Watts. They have three employees and two computers and she used her own computer at the last election so they could get the work done.

Printing has a placeholder of \$1 for the coming year; they use the office printer for their printing.

Supplies is \$450. They have talked about getting new booths but Michelle Courser (Town Clerk) is trying to salvage the ones they have.

Postage is \$100 (for the 30-day letters), and Meals for the election is \$120. Michelle and Darcy have provided the meals at lunch and dinner instead of hiring a caterer and it has saved the Town thousands of dollars.

Advertising is for one ad that shows what offices are open.

7 – Parks and Recreation

Apryl Blood was there to present her budget. She said they lost their maintenance person in the middle of the year and their seasonal person got done at the beginning of the year. The Highway Department handles mowing.

Mileage stayed the same.

Equipment and Repair went up because all materials and labor has gone up. They aren't buying anything new.

Electricity is an unknown and she was guessing they would go over on it.

The winter ice rink is the department's biggest draw for electricity and the lights are turned off in bad weather. Chair Cutting thought a switch could be put in at the rink that can be turned on during certain hours and so won't be on if no one is there.

Diane said for safety reasons she didn't think they wanted the lights to go completely off at a certain time. If people are playing a game and then have to walk out of the area in the dark, that might be unsafe and motion detector lights offer more safety for residents.

Ice Rink Improvements are for replacing some of the board sides. These materials haven't been purchased yet.

Maintenance and Improvement went up again because of the cost of materials, labor, and trucking.

Chair Cutting said with the loss of the Recreation Department's maintenance person, he understood the Public Works Department has been taking care of Recreation's mowing. April said they have someone dedicated, hired outside of the department, for the mowing. The expenses are supposed to be charged back to the Parks and Rec budget. She wasn't sure if it had been or not. Diane said she thought the expenses were being charged correctly but she would check.

7 – Taxation

Marianne Howlett said it was her goal to keep the budget level this year. She has a deputy who is on an "on-call" basis and helps out during the busy time.

Computer expenses are for the licensing fee and support for their tax software system. She clarified that the bridge between assessing and the tax office are linked periodically as needed, it isn't a constant connection. But it works as it should.

The tax lien research is for searching at the registry. They have a person who does that research for them, and they have to pay \$2 each time each time a property redeems the lien. They only had 38 parcels liened last year which is unusually low. She'd like to leave the amount in the line at \$1,400 as that is the normal usage.

Printing is for the tax bills. \$796 is to pay for two sets of bills (preprinted portion) that they will need.

Office supplies is for binders and printer cartridges.

Postage is for two significant mailings and lien and deeds notices by mail. She purchased the postage-affixed envelopes that makes stuffing easier.

Marianne said that the budget is the same as it was last year.

8 – Finance

Clyde Carson said the budget has three items: Salary, Variable Events (finance accounting software), and Municipal Resources. Municipal Resources is for backup for when he is away.

\$57,350 is the total.

9 – Town Clerk

Michelle Courser said the computer expense is \$4,148.

Membership dues is \$25.

Supplies is \$800. They had to buy a new credit card machine last year, which is why it was higher last year. Ink has gone up a little in expense, so they've accounted for that.

Postage they will keep at \$1,000.

Meetings and Seminars is \$360. This pays for the spring conference, \$260 for Darcie to get certified as a Town Clerk. It is a week-long class and takes three years. The \$118 in mileage is for travel back and forth to Primex (Concord) for this class. The mileage amount may need to go up as the rates have also gone up.

Books and periodicals is \$10.

Robert Blake asked when the salary increases get factored into the budget. Chair Cutting said it will be after the Selectmen decide what to do for COLA and increases. Christine Frost said she thought this happened later in the year. A survey has recently gone out to the staff to give feedback on the whole process of how the increases went last year with the COLA and performance increases. Diane said the benefit costs will be looked at before November 15th.

She is working on modeling right now to find the different options and their costs. She said the costs at Healthtrust have gone up 11.7% across the board.

10 – Land Use

Janice Loz said she was hired for 10 hours a week and it has increased to 20 hours a week.

Outside Professional Services is for their Circuit Rider, which they haven't had to use due to her training from being on the Zoning Board for so long. The Planning Board will be redoing the Master Plan next year so they may be using the service at that time. They are also going to try and apply for a grant so may be enlisting their help.

Legal has been used more this year than in the past couple of years. There is a lot more happening in land use these days.

Registry of Deeds is a pass-through account as the applicants pay for the cost to have their deeds registered. Now and again they may be off a bit in their calculations and the town needs to "spot" the applicant until after the work is done.

Printing isn't something she generally uses; usually she can get the applicant's engineers to provide digital and/or printed copies to distribute and printing isn't necessary.

The supplies line was last used to purchase a credenza. She does use a lot of paper from the selectmen's supply.

Postage is something else that is in the Select Board's budget.

Mileage isn't really used; they don't make a lot of special trips to the Registry of Deeds any more now that Diane can bring them by on her way home.

Meetings and Seminars is for all board members, not just for her. They don't usually get a lot of members to attend conferences, but it is good to have the money in the line in case they want to go. Janice said she goes to almost all the meetings and seminars and gathers as much information as she can to give to the board members.

Advertising is down by \$1,500 mostly because they no longer advertise in the Concord Monitor but instead, the Intertown Record.

Meeting minutes has gone up again. She did a lot herself last year, because they had a transcriptionist who wasn't going to do it anymore. But now they are getting back to having three transcriptionists to do Zoning and Planning Board meetings. Planning Board has been meeting twice a month.

The next budget meeting is scheduled for November 3, 2022 at 7:00pm.

It was moved by Ray Martin and seconded by Christine Frost to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary

Town of Warner