



Town of Warner

Budget Committee – Public Hearing

DRAFT - Meeting Minutes

December 1, 2022 7:00 PM

At 7:00 p.m., Chairman Michael Cutting called the meeting to order and took the roll.

1 – Roll Call

Mike Cutting (Chairman); Diane Ricciardelli (Town Administrator), Dave Minton, Christine Frost (Select Board Representative), Ray Martin, Robert Blake, Richard Bixby

Absent: Michelle Kendrick, Harold Blanchette

2 – Review of Minutes

October 30, 2022

It was moved by Robert Blake and seconded by Christine Frost to approve the minutes of October 30, 2022 as amended.

The motion was approved unanimously.

November 3, 2022

It was moved by Ray Martin and seconded by Christine Frost to approve the minutes of November 3, 2022 as circulated.

The motion was approved unanimously.

3 – Selectmen’s Budget – Diane Ricciardelli

Diane said the Computer Expenses line went from \$25,000 to \$22,000. Everything else is pretty close to where they are in the current year with their expenses.

Diane said she checked the telephone expenses as they are over on that line. They have a new phone system and there were some expenses included to get them installed. She said that the transition from one phone to another entailed a lot of work and was seamless. She thanked Dan

Watts for all his work on this project. Diane said there are some Police Department phone charges in the Selectmen's expenses, which were there in error and would be moving. (Later in the meeting Diane said that this was not the case. The charges were assigned correctly). It was mentioned by Dan that the Water District should switch to this phone system next, then the library, and then lastly, the Fire Department. Those three areas have their own phone systems currently. Dan noted that the Emergency Management Department has this same kind of phone system (Voice over Internet) but it is an independent contract.

Diane said usually the IT budget is 10% of the total budget. She invited Dan to talk about the increase in computer expenses. She added that the selectmen did not want to replace seven computers, as was the original plan.

Dan Watts said they have 16 computers that run Windows 11, so by October of 2025 they have to be replaced as they will be considered a security breach. Instead of doing 16 at once in 2025, he thought they should replace a few each year. He thought that the Town did a good job getting the most time from their computers, but they should really be replaced every 3-5 years. The monthly fees for the programs that are used by those in the Town vary depending on which programs are needed. They have approximately 25 computers in total in the Town between laptops and desktops.

Diane said they are always looking for discounts and will try to replace four computers in 2023. Dan suggested that grants may be available to help purchase these computers. Over the next two years, they will have 12 more computers to replace.

Diane said they have had a lot more meetings (27%) than last year. All the meetings need to be transcribed. Shorter meetings are good because they have to pay less for transcription. Longer meetings cost more. There was one new person who came on board and did one meeting and resigned. Diane said it is hard to find people to do this work. Zoom videos are accessible until the minutes of that meeting are accepted. Chair Cutting asked if a digital transcription program would be worthwhile. Janice said that someone still has to edit these, as the technology isn't perfect and it doesn't do well with new England accents. Someone will still have to spend hours going through the transcription.

Diane said there is a reduction in the supply line total. This is largely due to Judy finding discounts. She has helped to save a lot of money for the Town.

John ___ asked what happens when the cell phone service breaks down, such as during a hurricane or snow storm. Christine said Emergency Management and the first responders have other ways to communicate, such as radios. He asked what the plan is. Ray said that it is still a physical line, it isn't a cell phone. It is Voice over Internet. Dan said it depends on where people live. The internet service is more reliable than the cell service. TDS is actively removing all the copper wire and being replaced with fiber. Chair Cutting said the emergency workers will be communicating through radios. Ed Mical, Emergency Management Department said if the telephone system goes down, and has happened in the past, eventually they get stuck. John said this is something they should think about and try and find a solution to. Ray said he didn't think that having a full backup system made sense at this point.

4 – Varick Proper, Transfer Station Budget

It was noted by Chair Cutting that wages had not yet been determined by the Selectmen.

Phone: \$380. Chair Cutting said he wasn't sure if this was an accurate number but it would be adjusted after one month of use.

Disposal: \$10,000. This covers everything that they throw into the trash or the demo can. It can reflect things such as freon extraction, and recycling of electronics. They are seeing a decline in this kind of disposal. He doesn't anticipate seeing the volume they once did with electronics disposal. The commodities market is taking a sharp turn for the worst although not an outright collapse of the recycling market.

Varick said that revenues were good this year but this would be covered further when revenues are discussed later in the budget process.

There was discussion about the newly imposed fees at the transfer station. Varick said that the complaints were much lower than they anticipated. He offered that the Town was comparable in price to what other area towns charge.

Electricity is at \$8,316. Chair Cutting asked Diane to provide a breakout of the money they receive from the solar array. He asked if that fund is being used to pay the electric bills. Diane said she would have Clyde work on this.

With regards to heating, Varick said last year's line did not have enough funding for what they needed. They have bumped up the line to \$4,300.

Building Maintenance: Varick said this has become the contingency fund for the transfer station. The building does need some work, but other catastrophic needs had to come first and they needed to use this funding. There are projects they would like to do but have been putting them off to see if there was money in the budget to do them.

Alarm Systems: Nothing has been spent as yet. Varick said there has been activity from their contractor so there may be a bill coming. He hasn't seen anything come through yet.

Uniforms: Varick said this is to pay for shirts and shoes as needed. The budget is \$300 and will remain as it is sufficient.

Office Supplies: \$1,500. This is for supplies that he asks Judy to order for the transfer station. They don't use supplies from the Town Office.

Equipment and Repairs: This is projected to be \$16,000 in 2023. They do preventative maintenance on a regular basis but some of the contractors they hire to do this work may not be doing the best job. Chair Cutting asked if anyone was checking behind these contractors to see if they are doing a good job. Varick said the vendor has told them that there are some issues with the tech. He said the tech that is working with them now to replace a motor is very good and he hopes he stays. Varick said he isn't a heavy machinery mechanic and would probably miss some things if he went behind the tech to check their work.

Varick said they are in the process of working with an engineering firm regarding the redesign options of the transfer station.

Ed Mical asked if the motor that was replaced was new. Varick said it was and confirmed there were concealed bearings.

Vehicle Fuel: Varick said he didn't have the numbers with him that Tim Allen had given him. Ray said the state fuel department is very late in their billing. Chair Cutting said here is no expense shown for fuel usage in 2021. Varick said there was fuel that was used and he was concerned that the bill for it, along with the expenditure for 2022 would come in at the same time. Diane said that Tim Allen told her that he gives the fuel to Varick and he keeps track of how much is used by each department. It was thought that this should be reported in a clear way so the breakdown can be seen between the departments.

Ground Maintenance and Improvements: Varick said they have an outstanding invoice still but he wasn't sure what the amount was. He thought it would eat up a good chunk of the total, which is \$3,000. For 2023 Varick anticipates maybe addressing some fencing issues and repairs around the gate. They could also replace some of their collection boxes for recyclables. He wasn't exactly sure which project he would do in 2023.

Meetings and Seminars: \$600. This covers staff training and recertification. Travel expenses have been low because over the last couple of years, trainings have been online.

Safety Equipment & Programs: This can be used for reimbursing employees for steel-toed boots, and chaps. It is unchanged.

Transportation: Varick said so far they have spent \$31,000. This means that they will go over the budget for this year. They still have the month of December to be billed for. He estimated the year to end at \$35,000. Naughten (who picks up the trash) has been getting stuck in lines to dump it, and charges the Town by the hour. It is generally 1.5 to 2 hours per trip but as it takes longer to dump, the Town is being charged more. Varick will talk about this with their cooperative, as this is becoming an issue. Chair Cutting wondered if the issue was timing. Varick said that he checked on this and found that they are just busy all the time now because other facilities in southern New England have closed. The amount for this line for 2023 has gone up \$9,000 to meet increasing fuel expenses and rising costs overall.

Christine said this conversation has come up before and she wondered what plans there may be for an educational program to reduce the amount of garbage. She thought if they did some education, they might be able to save the Town some money on waste that is brought to the facility. Varick wondered how much of the behavior of the American consumer they wanted to assign to the transfer station. They don't have an educational line in their budget and while it may be the Town's responsibility, he didn't know that it was the job of the transfer station; they have enough on their plate already. A lot of the grants that are available have an educational component. It was discussed that the amount of cardboard being used now has increased from just four years ago. Varick said it is a quandary as to how much cardboard is actually being recycled. Diane said in her town of Concord, they have to purchase trash bags and this encourages people to recycle more items. This kind of disposal causes a change of behavior in the consumer.

Chair Cutting wondered if it would be feasible to do some kind of signage that explains what the cost for disposal of things, such as cardboard, is for the Town. He didn't think this could hurt. Varick said they have done that in the past and it could help. They need to have it near the disposal area. He said that the Town Report may also be a good place to put this information.

Wheelabrator has increased to \$80,000. It is going up to \$85/ton. He anticipated that they would haul 950 tons in 2023. The compactor breakdown has skewed their accounting in 2022.

Tipping Fees: this line has been overspent this year. Varick thought the usual \$10,000 would be ok for 2023.

Recovery: this is a membership fee. It will not change.

Recycling: this is for bailing wire, which is \$1,600. They purchase this item once a year.

Hazardous Disposal Waste: They have spent over \$8,000 and the budget is \$3,000. Varick said they do the collection every few years. They didn't anticipate having a collection in 2022 but did. The previous year they spent just \$1,500 to remove materials from a site that was inappropriately dumped. The event this year for collections was about \$6,000 to \$7,000.

Christine thought it was good to hear that the compactor is no longer the priority. Varick said it is a continuum. If they aren't making capital investments as they should, it will show up in repair costs. The compactor has taken a back seat in the planning because their 35-year old machine, which broke down in 2022, was repaired with a new motor. So they don't feel that they should replace it. The Bobcat needs repair which was quoted at \$26,000. There are other pieces of equipment that need extensive repairs (graders) and it may be possible to get rid of the two and purchase a new one. They need to meet needs that are most important at the time. So for now, the compactor is not number one on the list.

Diane said the phones she referenced that were in the wrong place for billing (Police Department) were actually in the correct place.

The next budget meeting is scheduled for, December 8, 2022 at 7:00pm.

It was noted that the Selectmen will meet the following Tuesday to discuss wages. They have just completed the insurance and benefits discussion, which is included in the current spreadsheets. The insurance will be paid for 100% by the Town this year and is part of the employee's benefit packages. There was discussion about insurance being provided to the employees as a way to increase their wages, but also still not knowing what the wage increases were. Diane claimed that the surrounding towns are offering 100% healthcare coverage which helps retain employees, which are expensive to replace.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:59pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary

Town of Warner

