



Town of Warner

Budget Committee – Public Hearing

DRAFT - Meeting Minutes

February 7, 2023 7:00 PM

At 7:02 p.m., Chairman Michael Cutting reconvened the meeting from February 2, 2023. He then took the roll.

1 – Roll Call

Mike Cutting (Chairman); Dave Minton, Christine Frost (Select Board Representative), Ray Martin, Michelle Kendrick, Richard Bixby

In attendance: Judy Newman-Rogers (via Zoom), Janice Loz (Land Use Coordinator), Clyde Carson (Finance), Chief Chandler (Police), Tim Allen (via Zoom)

Absent: Robert Blake, Harold Blanchette

2 – Review of Minutes

February 2, 2023

It was moved by Dave Minton and seconded by Ray Martin to approve the minutes of February 2, 2023 as amended.

Michele said that the records retention expenses were supposed to go out until 2025, which was not what was indicated in the minutes. Chair Cutting asked that the record preservation going out until 2025 be changed in the minutes.

Christine asked that page 3 it is “ARPA.”

The motion was approved unanimously.

3 – Public Hearing for the Precinct

There were no questions from the audience about the Operating Budget or the Revenues from the Precinct. Chair Cutting said the only warrant article for the Precinct is to accept the Operating Budget as listed. There were no questions from the audience about this warrant article.

4. – Public Hearing for the Town of Warner Budget Process

Chair Cutting opened up the floor to anyone with questions about any of the departments. Mr. Leavitt said the budget passed out the week prior didn't have a date on it. He suggested dating each revision to avoid confusion. Mr. Leavitt asked why the salaries for the Board of Selectmen and the Finance office aren't listed. The salaries should be listed so people can comment on the salaries if they wish. Chair Cutting said the lawyer for the Town of Warner suggested not posting individual salaries for confidentiality reasons. He agreed with Mr. Leavitt, however, and thought the amounts should be listed. Looking at positions, not names, the Board of Selectmen's total salary is \$9,300. The Town Administrators salary is \$86,822. Mr. Leavitt said he can find these numbers himself, but didn't think he should have to hunt for them. They were not listed on the sheets provided to the public.

Judy said the reason the information is on two different sheets is because the long sheet is the Excel spreadsheet that is being maintained by Diane. The software report will hopefully replace this spreadsheet for 2024. The two reports are just to show the difference between the two and the Excel spreadsheet won't be going away. Christine said for people to understand the budget, it would be helpful to put the budget that comes from the software as a PDF on the website, so everyone has access to the same thing. Mr. Leavitt said the totals were accurate on the sheets, but the lines don't add up. Christine agreed with Mr. Leavitt that the salaries listed throughout the entire budget were not being showed consistently. For instance, all the police officer salaries are present, but the Finance Office salary was not. Mr. Leavitt said it isn't right to have inaccurate information for the public at a public hearing. Christine said the operating budget is accurate, but she assured him that next year, the spreadsheets that are given to the public will have all the details and will also be posted online. It was noted that this was a working document. Ray said that unless Mr. Leavitt is complaining about the salary, they should move on. The salary information is accessible even though not on the sheet right in front of him.

Conservation Commission:

Mr. Leavitt said before any conservation budget is approved or more land is added, that they have a complete list of the conservation land in the town. He didn't know what the impact would be on the Town if they kept just approving conservation projects without knowing how much is already conserved. Martha Mical said the Conservation Commission is working on a set of maps that shows which lots are in conservation.

Highway Department:

With regards to reducing the paving line, Richard Bixby suggested that the Town may not use all the funding being suggested; last year they were unable to get \$100,000 of the work done. Chair Cutting said he was wary of getting too far behind in the paving of roads, so didn't want to reduce those lines. Michelle asked if going forward Mr. Bixby thought they should put less in the line as they could only physically do a certain amount per year. Christine said that the reason the paving couldn't get done was because of an understaffed department. Sam said that the department is almost fully staffed and is hoping to move more towards full-time help. Part of doing the construction loan was so the Town could hire out crews to do the paving, while the Town does the grinding and other prep work, etc. He would like to pave three miles of roads

each year, so every ten years, all the roads have been tended to. Outside contractors were supposed to be part of the process.

Tim said if they want to reduce the budget by \$50,000 he would prefer that it be done in a different way. He thinks to reduce the paving line by \$50,000 is false economy. That's a minimal part of the budget and next year it will cost the Town more to do the work. He thought the paving line should stay as it is. Mr. Bixby said last year they didn't get the \$200,000 in paving done last year. Tim said that he didn't get a chance to do the work. He ran out of time for two projects which would have used the funds. He would like to encumber the funds to do these projects next year.

Chair Cutting asked if the department would be able to do \$200,000 in paving in 2023. Tim said he would.

Revenues:

There were no questions about this section of the budget.

Warrant Articles:

Mr. Bixby asked if Tim would get two box culverts done in 2023 with what they had in the budget. Tim said they could, if everything falls into place.

Mr. Leavitt said looking at the notice for the public hearing, it says "review warrant articles." It doesn't say anything about the warrant articles that didn't include funding. Some people would like to review the articles that don't include spending money. Chair Cutting said this was discussed at the last meeting on the 2nd of February. Mr. Leavitt said the notice says that warrant articles would be discussed and last week people were present to discuss those articles and were not able to.

The public hearing closed at 7:44pm.

Chair Cutting asked the Budget Committee if there were any comments or suggestions before going into the voting the following night. Ray thought they were within unusual circumstances and if they can get things down to 8-9%, everyone has done a decent job without having to cut a lot of services and get behind. The budget is ongoing forever. The current budget committee serves for a short period of time. They have to consider how this current budget will affect future years.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:48pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of Warner