



# TOWN OF WARNER

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## Select Board Work Session DRAFT Minutes

**Tuesday, 6:00 pm November 14, 2022**  
**Lower Meeting Room Warner Town Hall 5 E Main St**

### I. Open the Meeting/Roll Call

Chair Sam Bower opened the meeting at 6:01 p.m. and recognized the presence of fellow Board members Christine Frost and Lois Shea.

Also present: Martha Bodnarik; Nancy Ladd; James Gaffney; Peter Bates of the Warner Snowmobile Club; Tim Blagden, a resident and member of the Friends of the Concord/Lake Sunapee Rail Trail Board of Directors; Tax Collector Marianne Howlett; Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Tim Allen; Transfer Station Foreman Varick Proper; Select Board Administrative Assistant Judith Newman-Rogers; Town Administrator Diane Ricciardelli; other residents. (Recording Secretary Ray Carbone worked from a recording of the meeting.)

### II. Peter Bates, Warner Snowmobile Club - Request permission to cross Town property for grooming. Location: Judy Town Road, Bound Tree, Warner-Hopkinton town line.

Chair Bower introduced Peter Bates of the Kearsarge Snail Trails Snowmobile Club; the club maintains miles of trails in Warner and several surrounding communities.

Bates said he was making the club's annual request for permission to cross over Town-owned lands with equipment used for trail grooming. He said the process normally occurs over two fall weekends. He said Judy Town Road is Trail No 5; the adjacent Hopkinton Trail is Trail No 5A.

Bates told the Board that much of the Town's trail system is on Class VI roads and in recent years, the Town has given the Club permission to use these roads only as a verbal agreement. He asked if the Board would consider making the agreement more formal by signing an official State-issued permission form.

**Chair Bower made a motion to grant access to the Kearsarge Snail Trails Snowmobile Club to allow maintenance work on trails between Judy Town Road and Bound Tree Road by the Warner-Hopkinton Town line for one month.**

**Board member Frost seconded the motion. In a voice vote, the Board unanimously approved the motion.**

After a brief discussion, the Board members asked Bates to submit the form to Town Administrator Ricciardelli. Chair Bower said he would also pass the information onto the Mink Hills Recreation Committee.

### **III. Pedestrian travel way connecting Intervale area to Warner downtown village**

#### **i. Pedestrian Travel Way Research Committee – Mission, Tasks, Deadlines**

The Board reviewed an outline about the new Study Committee, prepared by Select Person Frost who is chairing the group.

Select Person Shea asked if the plan was to limit the Committee to eight members. Select Person Frost said she wanted to be flexible, but didn't want the group to be too large to manage effectively over the necessarily brief time it has to complete its work.

Select Person Shea noted that among the goals listed was outlining the "need to connect" the Downtown Village area with the Interval Commercial zone adjacent to Interstate 89's exit 9. Since the goal was noted in the Town's Master Plan, it may not be necessary to review it again. Select Person Frost agreed.

Chair Bower proposed going down the list of work for the Committee. It was noted that, given the brevity of time to complete the Study Committee's work before the upcoming 2023 annual Town Meeting, all committee members should be ready to do research and thoroughly participate in the group's work. Chair Bower suggested the Committee meet once a week; Select Person Frost concurred.

Committee members should: be somewhat well versed about the project idea; support and respect public input; be willing to serve until the annual 2023 March Town Meeting and be willing to consider new or alternative approaches to the issue of connecting the two areas of Town. All meetings will be open to the public and input from the public will be welcome if it doesn't interrupt the Committee's work

Chair Bower suggested information about serving on the Committee be posted on the Town's website, and information mailed specifically to residents who own property along the section of Rte. 103 noted in the TAP grant as soon as possible.

The Board discussed timing related to the new Committee, e.g., when should: the Board review volunteer applications; the Committee begin its work; present its recommendations to the Select Board, etc. The Board decided to announce the formation of the Study Committee tomorrow and post the application for serving on the group on the website at the same time. The deadline for submitting an application will be Nov. 22 at 6 p.m.; the Board will review the applications and announce the Committee members at a work session on Nov. 29.

Chair Bower asked the Board if its goal is to present a warrant article at Town Meeting asking voters to approve funding engineering/design work on the project. Select Person Frost said it was too early to consider that question.

Martha Bodnarik asked that the Study Committee look at some specific issues, including: will utility poles along the proposed route have to be moved; what exactly is the Right-of-Way (ROW) on that section of Rte. 103; what would be the upkeep and its costs; is there a way to preserve stonewalls that might be disrupted by the project. Select Person Frost made notes.

Tim Blagden said he's investigated the ROW on that section of Rte. 103 and the establishment of the road goes back to the 1700s when it was considered a "three-rod" road; it may be difficult to determine the exact ROW dimensions.

#### **IV. Proposed 2023 Department Budgets**

##### **i. Department of Public Works (DPW)**

DPW Director Tim Allen reviewed the "Wages" line, noting that he's short-staffed at this time and he is using this opportunity to consider staff reorganizing. He's looking at all areas of the DPW's responsibility, including Buildings and Grounds, Parks and Recreation, and its regular Highway Department duties. As a result, that line is not yet complete.

Allen also said he'd like to find an employee who could serve as an in-house mechanic for the DPW. Other towns in the area have someone in that role, and it could save time and resources; when there are no specific projects, the employee would be able to shift to other Department projects.

Other mentions:

Eversource has been extremely helpful with tree removal work during the last year.

Allen wants to use a different company to do Line Striping in the future. It will cost more, but the work will be done much more quickly.

Electrical costs are estimated to rise but the cost of heating will remain roughly the same price per gallon as last year because of the Town's inclusion in a Group Contract purchase of propane fuel.

It's impossible at this time to estimate the costs of gas and diesel due to current fluctuations in those markets.

There was a brief discussion about snow removal and how it impacts the DPW, i.e., cost of sand and salt, staff hours, etc. Allen said in some local communities, this work during major storms typically terminates around midnight and resumes some time after 4 a.m. Chair Bower asked Allen if he could initiate that policy for Warner.

Allen said he could but Select Person Frost suggested the Road Committee review the idea. Allen said he would bring it to that group.

##### **ii. Transfer Station/DPW**

Transfer Station Forman Varick Proper began by stating that the Town has failed in its obligation to keep up the Transfer Station facility and its equipment. He said service to

equipment is routinely delayed until the “last minute,” and suggested that “We’ve drifted a reactionary stance,” where repairs and service only occur when there’s an emergency, i.e., the compactor problems this spring. Even this proposed annual operating budget is not ideally suited to deal with the problems.

The facility’s two part-time employees are not being “compensated at what’s considered a living wage” Proper said. “I think we can do better than that.” He suggested moving to a multiyear compensation package.

Select Person Frost said she is also “very concerned about what we’re paying people,” suggesting a Town-wide conversation involving various departments. She asked Proper to focus on the Transfer Station budget at this meeting.

Proper said the costs of maintenance and supplies are increasing but some of that is because, “We’re running equipment much longer than we should.” The recent problem with the compactor is a reflection of this, since it is 35 years old. “I think there’s an under-investment in equipment (so) we’re seeing an increase in equipment [and related liability issues].”

Of particular note is the Skid Steer, now over seven years old and beginning to experience electrical problems that could prove costly to repair and result in service delays, Proper noted.

Almost all the issues in the budget are related to “deferred maintenance,” Proper said. “We’ve deferred maintenance for so long (that) we’re at a point now where we can replace everything.”

Select Person Frost asked Proper if he could prioritize cost items and set up a schedule but Proper said he’s tried doing that in the past but things have not worked out as planned. Back in 2010, the Town Meeting agreed to put aside \$12,000 annually, but the plan “faded after a few years” after “people got distracted,” he said.

James Gaffney, who serves on the Planning Board which annually reviews the Town’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) requests, said Town residents have “demonstrated they want the shiny new toy,” and some are not willing to stay committed to a long-term maintenance project like the one Proper proposed. “As a result, we’ve leapfrogged from one crisis to another, without any discipline,” Gaffney concluded.

Chair Bower said the Board should work to get the Town back on a plan to responsibly maintain the Transfer Facility, working with the Capital Equipment Reserve Fund. He asked Proper to meet with DPW Director Allen and the Board at the group’s Nov. 29 meeting to come up with a plan. Proper agreed.

Proper added he has some concerns about the recent recommendations from CMA Engineers, Inc., of Manchester, the company contracted to do a study of the Transfer Station. The Board agreed to review those.

The conversation turned back to the Transfer Station’s proposed Operating Budget. Proper reviewed the line items, noting both expenses and income streams.

James Gaffney asked if the Transfer Station could do Hazardous Waste Disposal Days every year, rather than on alternate years. Proper said that was a good idea.

## **V. Easement Request**

Chair Bower suggested the Board hear from Tim Blagden, a member of the Friends of the Concord/Lake Sunapee Rail Trail Board of Directors, about an easement request discussed at earlier meetings.

Blagden stated additional research showed Town ownership and the easement request from the Rail Trail group for Map 18, Lot 9 would be 30-feet wide across the entire lot.

Because the Board voted on and agreed upon the easement at an earlier meeting, the members proceeded to sign the official request document.

## **VI. Proposed 2023 Department Budgets (Cont.)**

### **iii. Select Board**

Town Administrator Ricciardelli reviewed the budget, starting with the new telephone system that became operational today. She said it was great.

Ricciardelli noted the significant increase in public meetings over the last year, which is partly related to the creation of three new committees during that time. Saying she expected there would be more public meetings in 2023, the budget asked for an increase in meeting costs.

Select Person Frost suggested cutting that back to last year's \$7,000 and noted the budget included a request for a "Meeting Coordinator." Ricciardelli said the position was necessary to keep up with issues like minutes and recordings without interrupting the daily work of other Town Hall staff members.

Chair Bower suggested leaving the line item as is and returning to the issue at a later time.

This led the Board into a general discussion about Board minutes. Select Person Shea asked if meeting minutes must be as detailed as they currently are. Select Person Frost agreed they seem to be uncommonly comprehensive. It was suggested this is the result of times when some citizens felt the minutes were not complete enough. Ricciardelli said when minutes are "cut back, there's pushback" from some citizens.

Select Person Frost said she did not think she could defend the new position to the Budget Committee, and Chair Bower suggested cutting the line item in half, to \$7,400.

Ricciardelli said she would support the idea of having each committee keep its own meeting minutes and post them to the Town website, but she wasn't sure those tasks would be done.

James Gaffney said if the Select Board were considering making a change in how meeting minutes are kept, it should be cautious. As a member of the Planning Board, it's sometimes difficult for that Board to move forward when former meeting minutes don't record how the body came to a decision. "We're struggling to see the level of detail, (and) there's stuff that's

wholesale missing... From a Planning Board point of view, it's very important to capture the discussion and how that Board came to a decision. It's crucial for future Planning Boards to (understand) the rationales."

Chair Bower said, as a former member of the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA), he's seen the same problem. Details are needed to show the ZBA's "intent" and to clarify "precedent." There's a need to have some minutes with details.

Gaffney suggested that if the Board made a change "without significant public input, it would be perceived badly" by some citizens.

#### **iv. Employee Health Benefits**

Administrator Ricciardelli had more information about the proposed health plan and said the Board needs to decide the percentage split between Town and Employee contributions.

Select Person Shea noted there are still questions about other issues, including dental and eyesight considerations. Ricciardelli said the deadline for all decisions is Dec. 15.

### **VII. Other Select Board Business**

Select Person Shea asked about the Town's upcoming winter holiday events and related activities. After some discussion, the Board agreed to undertake the annual tree decorations on Sunday, Nov. 27, beginning at 8 a.m.

### **VIII. Adjourn**

With no further business to come before the Board and, without objection, Chair Bower adjourned meeting at 10:23 p.m.