



# TOWN OF WARNER

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## Selectboard Meeting DRAFT Minutes

Tuesday, December 5, 2023, 5:00 pm

Continued to December 6, 2023

Lower Meeting Room Warner Town Hall 5 E Main St

### Open The Meeting and Roll Call

Chair Harry Seidel opened the meeting at 5:02 PM.

Present were Harry Seidel (chair), Faith Minton, Allan Brown, and Butch Burbank (Interim Town Administrator).

Also present were Judy Newman-Rogers, Clyde Carson, and Georgia Flanders.

### Warner Special One-Time Highway Payment- Public Hearing

A public hearing was required regarding a special one-time highway payment request in accordance with House Bill (HB) II. The payment was for the maintenance, construction, and reconstruction of Class IV and Class V highways. Faith Minton opened the public hearing.

HB II went into effect in June of 2023 and directs the department to divide and distribute a \$10,000,000 one-time payment between all New Hampshire municipalities in the state fiscal year of 2024. The distribution method is based on the distribution of block grant aid apportionment A. The one-time payment is also separate from regular quarterly payments and was anticipated to be available to the town of Warner in the month of November 2023. In November 2023, the town received an actual payment of \$36,658.74. The amount of the payment was based on mileage of Class IV and Class V highways in Warner, as well as the town's population.

Allan Brown questioned whether there was a caveat attached stating the payment had to be used for highway maintenance. Clyde Carson clarified that yes, the money had to be used for that purpose. Butch Burbank added that after conversing with the town's auditors, it was determined that the town should accept this money as unanticipated revenue. The money can then be used at any time in 2024.

Questions were raised as to the definition of Class IV and Class V highways. It was clarified by the board that these roads can be paved roads, and that most of the highways in Warner fall into this category. The question of using the funds to improve Class VI roads was also raised, but Allan Brown pointed out that tax dollars

cannot be spent on Class VI roads. The board agreed that the payment was going to be good for the town, and Chair Seidel closed the public hearing.

**Chair Seidel moved to accept and expend unanticipated funds for Warner special one-time highway payment in accordance with HB II 2024 state fiscal year block grant aid apportionment A. Faith Minton seconded the motion, and the motion passed.**

### **Moose Grant- Public Hearing**

A public hearing was required in order to accept and expend up to \$20,000 from the New Hampshire Conservation License Plate Moose Grant Program. Chair Seidel opened the public hearing.

The town of Warner applied for this grant with the intent of using the funds to repair the slate roof of the town hall. If the funds are accepted, the town agrees to apply the grant funds to the project described in its grant application and approved budget. Butch Burbank clarified that the project was to repair portions of the roof, not to replace the entire roof, as there had been some previous confusion regarding the scope of the project. The bid to complete the work came in at around \$15,000, which would be completely covered by the grant funds. The Moose Grant offers 100% coverage through grant funds of projects costing less than \$20,000. If the project had cost more than \$20,000, an LCHIP grant would have been more viable. LCHIP grants offer an 80/20 split of coverage rather than complete coverage of cost.

There were questions from the public as to whether the town of Warner would receive the full \$20,000 of the grant. It was clarified by the board and Butch Burbank that the grant would be invoiced for the work completed, and no extra money would be provided beyond what was needed to cover the project detailed in the grant application. The time frame required to complete this project was also asked about, and Faith Minton noted that it was September 30, 2025. Butch Burbank added that the company who would be completing the repairs planned to come and work on the roof in January.

At that time, the public hearing was closed. The board noted that the grant could be applied for multiple years in a row. The letter of intent for the grant was typically due in May, and the full application was typically due in June.

**Allan Brown made the motion to accept the grant funds, Faith Minton seconded the motion, and the motion passed.**

### **Homeland Security and Emergency Management Reimbursement- Public Hearing**

A public hearing was required to accept and expend a Homeland Security and Emergency Management Reimbursement. Chair Seidel opened the public hearing.

Ed Mical advised the board during the public hearing regarding the funds received. Warner applied for an emergency management performance grant for the emergency operations center so that security cameras and a buzz-in system could be installed. The original motion to accept the terms of the emergency management performance grant as presented in the amount of \$22,000 for the purchase and installation of this equipment was made on July 5, 2022, and was approved by the select board at the time. The project

would cost \$44,000 in total, with the town being responsible for a 50% match to the grant funds. However, delays occurred because the grant had to go to governor and council, and the COVID-19 pandemic was ongoing. \$18,000 had been put into Emergency Management in order to match the grant, but the required amount the town was expected to match was greater than that. In order to make up the difference, the select board at the time made the motion to encumber \$7797.50. Additional funds became available through America Recovery Plan Act (ARPA), and the encumbrance was withdrawn accordingly in January of 2023. In the end, the grant was received for \$21,860.65, and the deadline for the work to be completed was September of 2024. The work to install the systems has already been completed, the grant money has been spent, and the systems are up and running. The current board only needed to vote on the grant because of the year change from 2022 to 2023.

The board discussed whether or not ARPA would need to be reimbursed. ARPA had not yet requested reimbursement, and it was decided that a future motion may be needed in case reimbursement ended up being necessary.

Chair Seidel closed the public hearing. **Faith Minton made a motion to accept the funds, Chair Seidel seconded the motion, and the motion passed.**

#### **Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Funds- Public Hearing**

A public hearing was required to request and expend the highway equipment capital reserve funds. Chair Seidel opened the public hearing.

Tim Allen advised the board during this public hearing. In 2022, the highway department planned to replace their 1998 Mack dump truck with a newer model. When ordering the new truck, the department was told that it couldn't be ordered until autumn of 2023, and wouldn't arrive until 2024. Mr. Allen then received a phone call in November of 2022 that a space had opened, and in May of 2023, the new truck arrived. However, a few months passed before the necessary equipment could be added.

The original plan when the new truck was ordered was to use the stainless-steel spreader from the 1998 truck, and trade in the old one. It was believed at the time that the truck without this equipment attached could be traded in for somewhere between \$15,000 and \$20,000. The trade-in value for the truck alone has since dropped to \$10,000.

The spreader previously attached to the 1998 truck is from 1993. It is a stainless-steel highway model and has lasted 30 years. Currently, the bottom half of it needs to be rebuilt. It also needs bearings and a shaft, which is a \$5200 expense. Mr. Allen recommended leaving the 1993 spreader on the 1998 truck and using it as a spare this winter, and then purchasing a new stainless-steel spreader to put on the new truck. The cost of a new spreader would be around \$20,000. He hoped that keeping the old spreader attached to the old truck might increase its value so that it could be sold. Mr. Allen had already consulted with a few sellers who suggested that including the spreader with the truck might add anywhere from \$3000 to \$5000 to the value. Instead of spending money on repairing the old spreader, he believed that it would be better value to replace it and sell it with the old truck.

Chair Seidel closed the public hearing. Allan Brown noted that a stainless-steel spreader was a good investment, as regular steel spreaders typically have a much shorter lifespan (5-7 years). Faith Minton agreed.

**Allan Brown made the motion to take up to \$20,000 from the capital reserve fund for the purchase of a new spreader. Faith Minton seconded the motion, and the motion passed.**

#### **CIP- Karen Coyne**

Karen Coyne, Planning Board Chair, came before the board to present the Town Departments multi-year plan for expenditure requests for future capital purchases in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), 2024 - 2029.

**Town Hall Roof Repair:** The select board put in a CIP for town hall roof repair in the amount of \$30,000, based on an initial estimate of cost and preceding the town's receipt of a Moose Grant. There was some discussion among the board as to whether this particular line item needed to be specific to roof repair, or should be generalized to "town hall repairs" or something similar.

Clyde Carson explained that the board was not tied to the CIP in terms of warrant articles brought forward at town meeting, and as such, didn't need to make the request if they felt it wasn't necessary. A CIP provides guidelines on what may be a good candidate for a warrant article, but not every item on a CIP automatically becomes a warrant article. He also noted that this CIP is a planning board document and has been voted on. The select board can make notes of changes they'd like to make while crafting warrant articles, but cannot change the this CIP at this time.

**Reevaluation of the Capital Reserve Fund (Reval):** This line item was \$32,287 in 2023 and will remain the same for 2024 and 2025.

**Town Clerk- Records Preservation:** \$20,000 was requested to finish the current backlog. There is no projection following this, but the Town Clerk's office is discussing how to move forward.

**Warner Police Department:** \$25,000 was requested. The department intends to trade in their 2016 sedan for a new vehicle.

**Public Works:** The Public Works section of the CIP was broken down into three sections- bridge, road construction, and highway equipment. The projected bridge repair in 2024 is for Red Chimney, North Village Road at Silver Lake Culvert, and the North Village Road bridge over the Warner River. The request for bridge repair in 2024 is \$125k, an amount that has stayed consistent through the years.

The projected highway and road construction for 2024 is for Pumpkin Hill Road at Mason Hill, North Village Road at Depot Street, and North Road Route 103 to the beginning of the new pavement. There is no CIP request for this section because the work has already been covered by other funds.

For highway equipment, the department intends to replace the 2013 dump truck's cab and chassis. The request for this section is \$175k.

**Transfer Station:** This CIP reflects the cost of replacing and relocating the compactor. \$120,000 is being requested for the project, with an additional \$80,000 for new equipment, bringing the total to \$200,000.

**Warner Fire Department:** The fire department requested \$37k for the purchase of structural gear and 29 portable radios. The radios, once purchased, have a ten-year lifespan. There was also a request for the replacement of the 1984 Forestry One vehicle, which came in at \$175k.

**Library:** The library did not request funds this year.

**Emergency Management:** Emergency Management also did not request funds but asked to be left in the CIP as a placeholder just in case.

**Totals and Conclusions:** In 2023, \$652,487 was the amount funded. The total for 2024 based on the requests in the CIP is \$819,287, and reflects an increase of nearly \$200,000 from last year.

Discussion then moved to the request by the transfer station to fund future plans of compactor replacement and relocation. Butch Burbank noted that there had not previously been a CIP line item requesting funds for this project, and questioned whether the transfer station might be better served by requesting the amount in pieces over multiple years. As the situation currently stands, these funds will not be available unless the request is voted on favorably at the annual town meeting.

Currently, the transfer station has a capital reserve fund for equipment, and a capital reserve fund for facilities. All told, they have about \$100,000 available to work with. Tim Allen noted that the new compactor alone would cost \$80,000. The board expressed a desire to discuss matters further with him as they worked to craft the capital budget.

A work session with the board and the department heads is pending. The budget committee requested that the operating budget be made available to them by December 7, so that they would have time to review it before their next meeting on December 14.

**At this time, Faith Minton made the motion to enter into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A: 3 II c. Allan Brown seconded the motion, and the motion passed.**

The board came out of non-public at 6:32 PM. **Allan Brown made the motion to seal the non-public minutes for two years. Faith Minton seconded the motion, and the motion passed.**

#### **Proposed Assessing Budget 2024- Elizabeth Labbe**

At this time, Elizabeth Labbe came before the board to present the 2024 Assessing Budget. She noted that changes had been made to the budget, and pointed out where the changes were marked in gray on the materials given to the board.

Firstly, there had previously been a line in the assessing budget for computer expenses, but the money in that line was actually being used for the annual Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) software expense. As such, the name of the line was changed to CAMA expenses, as there would continue to be an annual maintenance fee for this software. A separate line for computer hardware was also in the budget, but only

\$100 was placed in that line. Ms. Labbe also lowered the budget for office supplies and postage, as those costs were being handled differently and it was unclear how usage of these items was meant to be tracked.

The main focus of the assessing budget was the town's ongoing search for a contracted and licensed assessor. Ms. Labbe budgeted \$35k for the assessor, but noted that this was an estimated expense rather than an actual cost as the town is still in the process of receiving bids from potential candidates. She provided copies of a bid from Vision for their CAMA system, and noted that by the end of the week, a bid for the actual work of assessing would also be made available. Additionally, Avatar- another assessing company- was expected to be sending in a bid the next morning. Each company has its own unique CAMA system. Both Avatar and Vision have assessing divisions, so they can provide the town with an assessor as well as assessing software and training.

Both these companies have expressed interest in Warner due to the upcoming reval in 2025. This impending work makes the town a more attractive prospect to a potential assessor, especially as there have been several court-ordered revals in other parts of the state scheduled for 2024. Additionally, Warner has dire need of an assessor. Issues with assessing in town have been raised at multiple other meetings by multiple members of the public. As the situation currently stands, the town will be able to pick between at least two firms bidding for assessing work. Due to pending bids and approaching budget deadlines, Butch Burbank raised the possibility that a warrant article may be necessary.

Chair Seidel referenced a prior conversation he'd had with an assessing professional regarding a deal for new assessing software and training together during a reval year, and asked whether this would be possible to obtain. Ms. Labbe explained that when the CAMA software is purchased, training is also purchased automatically. Training is not a separate cost, and the system cannot be purchased without it. Additionally, a licensed assessor will not only be needed for the reval in 2025; there is still assessing work to be done in Warner in 2024. As such, the estimate of \$35k is meant to cover the cost of getting an assessor to begin their work for the town on January 1 of 2024. This estimate is deliberately high.

A town-wide assessment must occur during 2025, with every property visited, every property card pulled, and office hours open so that the assessor can discuss their progress. This will yield a more accurate assessment rate. In the past, the town would begin the assessment the year preceding a reval, and then complete the reval by spring of the year it was due. Under the previous assessor and assessing system, this was allowed. Now, the entire reval must be completed by September of 2025. In addition to the reval, assessing will continue to be needed throughout 2024.

Almost all of the numbers related to the new assessor, assessing firm, and CAMA system in the budget were estimates, as bids were still pending or not yet complete. Ms. Labbe noted that as with the \$35,000 figure, she estimated high to be safe. The assessing budget for the next two years is projected to be abnormally large, but is likely to decrease following that. There was some discussion between the board and Clyde Carson regarding using ARPA or Capital Reserve funds to potentially help with the cost.

The budget also covered assessment of utility poles and conduits. The town has a contract for roughly \$7200 a year for this service.

### **Proposed Welfare Budget 2024- Elizabeth Labbe**

Elizabeth Labbe also came before the board to present the welfare budget for 2024. She expressed a desire to return at a later date with a more detailed presentation and more information. This would allow the board to review guidelines and data, as well as make decisions as to what kind of coverage will be provided.

By and large, the welfare budget for 2024 was very similar to the welfare budget for 2023. Ms. Labbe combined training and memberships together under administration. She discussed her intent to request on-demand training from the New Hampshire Municipal Association. While annual training is offered, the on-demand training would focus on the work completed by overseers of public welfare rather than city welfare systems and as such, would be more useful to Warner and other towns in the area. Ms. Labbe expressed an interest in getting other towns involved with the training as well. If the training were to be successful and there was interest in it happening a second time, she would push for the cost to be shared between the towns.

The budget also included a one-time expense for software training. Ms. Labbe had taught herself to use the software to a degree, but felt that further instruction was required so that she could utilize it to its full effect. Also included was the \$30 annual membership to the New Hampshire Local Welfare Administrators Association (NHLWAA).

Direct assistance was increased, though Ms. Labbe noted that she did not believe it would be that high again. Allan Brown noted that the welfare department's expenditure for 2023 was at nearly 135%, and Ms. Labbe said that the percentage was likely to increase further. She had previously presented a request for ARPA funds to help with this, and added that the funds would likely be partially recouped due to liens on property.

Butch Burbank pointed out that most of the ARPA funds are currently allocated elsewhere. Of the sum of money previously in ARPA, only \$60,000 remains. Additionally, two committees have been promised ARPA funds already- the Warner 250<sup>th</sup> committee, and the Agricultural Commission. Decisions will need to be made by the board on who will receive ARPA funds, and those decisions will be difficult. Assessing may need to take precedence due to the current vacancy, and a dire need for equity in assessing. Clyde Carson added that there is a \$10,000 contingency fund available that exists for services like welfare, and may be useful in this case.

### **Proposed Transfer Station Budget 2024- Tim Allen**

At this time, Tim Allen came before the board to present the transfer station budget for 2024.

**Wages:** There was an increase in both full- and part-time wages. This was to bring the foreman of the transfer station's wages closer to that of the highway foreman, and to entice more part-time help on the weekends. Additionally, more backup is needed for the current part-time staff in case someone decides to leave.

**Transportation:** The increase in this line item was due to wait times and longer lines at Wheelabrator where the compactor materials are delivered. A further increase of up to 4% is possible.

**Hazardous Waste:** There is an increase in this line item of nearly \$30,000.

Other than these areas, the budget changed little from the previous year. Butch Burbank expressed a need for future planning regarding staffing on the part of the transfer station. The current part-time staff, while effective and hardworking, are aging out of the workforce. It would be beneficial to the transfer station to begin training new staff now while still having the resource of more experienced workers. Mr. Allen agreed and noted that this is what he was seeking to do by hiring a new part-time staff member. The older crew can then train and mentor them, and they can absorb some of the existing expertise at the transfer station.

At this time, the board made the decision to continue the meeting the following day (12/6) at 10:00 AM. A few housekeeping items were addressed before the meeting was continued.

**Whiteboard:** There was need expressed for a whiteboard in the downstairs meeting room by the Planning Board. Tim Allen offered to provide one at no cost. The option of using whiteboard paint on one of the walls was also discussed.

**Planning Board Alternate Resigned:** Dan Emanuele, an alternate for the Planning Board, resigned. A notice that a new alternate is needed will be posted on the town website.

**Permitting Process:** There was some discussion between the board and members of the public regarding the permitting process in Warner. Recently, a number of issues have come to light, and further discussion was desired. The issue is on the board's radar, but will need further attention after budget season.

**Administrator's Report:** Butch Burbank informed the board that the bucket truck would likely come the following day to hang lights and wreaths in front of the town hall.

### **Manifest Motion**

Motion for the Select Board to approve the following previously signed manifests:

- Accounts Payable check numbers 7798 through 7799, dated 11/28/2023, in the amount of \$53,514.14 Federal Tax and Payroll deposits for the November 30 payroll.
- Bi-weekly payroll checks numbers 3520 through 3529 and direct deposit check numbers E01242 through E01661 dated 11/30/2023 for a net payroll of \$41,270.11.

Motion to authorize the Select Board to approve and order the Treasurer to sign the following manifest:

- Accounts Payable check numbers 7800 through 7831, dated 12/5/2023, in the amount of \$652,068.99, which includes the November Kearsarge Regional School District payment of \$550,000.

**Faith Minton made the motion to continue the meeting the following day at 10:00 AM. Chair Seidel seconded the motion, and the motion passed. The meeting closed for the evening at 7:30 PM.**

### **12/06/23: Continued 12/05/23 Meeting and Roll Call**

Chair Seidel reopened the meeting at 10:10 AM on December 6.

Present were Harry Seidel (chair), Faith Minton, Allan Brown, and Butch Burbank (Interim Town Administrator).

Also present were Judy Newman-Rogers and Clyde Carson.



## **ARPA Status and Expenditure Detail Report**

Butch Burbank approached the board with an update regarding the state of ARPA funds, as the topic had come up the previous evening at the meeting. Decisions needed to be made on which committees and departments would receive ARPA funds before the board proceeded with the budget. Many committees and departments had either been promised or requested these funds for various projects, but it seemed as though the total requests would exceed the amount of funds available. As such, not every request could be fulfilled and the board would need to decide where the funds were needed most.

The ARPA funds were initially received in two pieces- one in August of 2021, and the other in August of 2022, totaling at \$305,000. \$243,000 has been booked in expenses, leaving around \$62,000 left over in ARPA. Clyde Carson confirmed that the previously- discussed emergency management grant could be used to reimburse the ARPA funds spent on that particular project.

He also pointed out that the previous board had committed \$15,900 to the Warner 250<sup>th</sup> committee, and \$3,000 to the agricultural commission. This can be found in the minutes of their January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. So far, \$449 has been granted to the agricultural commission, and \$1,500 has been granted to the Warner 250<sup>th</sup> committee. \$14,400 remains of the commitment to Warner 250<sup>th</sup>, and \$2,500 remains of the commitment to the agricultural commission. Taking these remaining commitments out of the \$62,000 still available in ARPA, \$45,253 remains available to be used for other requests. Adding the emergency management grant to this sum would bring it above \$50,000. He added that it would be best to carry over a balance of ARPA funds to the following year in case of unanticipated need.

Clyde Carson also provided an update on the town's budget expenditure for the year 2023. At the time of the meeting, the town had spent 87% of its budget. Around \$500,000 remained to be spent, and despite several other upcoming expenses, would not be fully spent before the end of the year. It was suggested that assessing should take priority as a target for these remaining funds to avoid having this process significantly increase the 2024 budget.

It was suggested by Butch Burbank that the various departments could be asked to invoice certain expenses previously added to their 2024 budgets during 2023 if possible. This would help to reduce the 2024 budget.

Funds left unspent in 2023 could be applied the following fall to the 2024 tax rate. Given the rising cost of living and the high tax rate in 2023, this would ease financial hardship on residents of Warner.

The creation of new office space in the town hall was another expense suggested as something to be taken care of in 2023 rather than adding to the 2024 budget. A capital reserve fund exists for town hall improvements and contains just over \$20,000. Allan Brown pointed out that there is a great need for this office space, especially in the case of welfare. As the situation currently stands, there is no truly private space in the town hall where meetings related to welfare can occur. This could cause potential legal issues for the town and may lead to them being forced to construct a welfare office anyway further down the road. Allan Brown believed that it would be better for the town to undertake this project willingly than to be put into a position where they were left with no other choice. He had already handed the plans Chair Seidel drew to a contractor but wished to converse with other local contractors as well.

**At this time, Faith Minton made a motion to reimburse ARPA \$2,497.50 and \$8,251.65 for the Arcom Communications charges. Allan Brown seconded the motion, and the motion passed.**

## **Proposed 2024 Operating Budget**

At this time, the discussion shifted to the town budget for 2024. Clyde Carson noted that some budget amounts needed to be confirmed, as some of the budgets heard the previous evening included items that would not necessarily be a part of their operating budgets. Assessing was of particular concern in this regard. The total proposed operating budget for 2024 was \$200,000 over the current year budget at the beginning of the work session, but the board believed that sorting out the issues with the assessing budget would help to lower this. Clyde Carson clarified that the assessing budget had not been factored into the total budget yet, so the \$200,000 increase came from other areas.

The board elected to review the budget page by page.

**Page 1:** Chair Seidel noted that most of the numbers on the first page had been examined previously by the board. He also pointed out that postage was up \$2,000. Butch Burbank added that Judy Newman-Rogers had received a message from the U.S. Postal Service regarding the postage meter. The meter is outdated and needs to be replaced, as it would become obsolete in 2024. He also noted that the USPS is planning to raise the cost of postage again. As such, the current increase reflects these anticipated expenses.

At this point, the board had no further concerns regarding the first page of the budget.

**Page 2:** Faith Minton had a question regarding how certain part-time employees of the town were being paid. Clyde Carson explained that this was being entered into the temporary services line. The board then discussed whether this amount was adequate, as the actual current year expenditure was already double the amount that had been budgeted. The temporary employee in question, Georgia Flanders, had already been called on quite a bit in 2023 and further need was anticipated in 2024. Additionally, the board agreed that the office was one full-time person short of being fully staffed. Many of the difficulties the town has been facing- particularly with permitting and other work- would be exacerbated by adding another full-time employee.

Allan Brown noted that these difficulties would also be exacerbated by hiring a new, permanent town administrator. There has been a great deal of turnover in staffing, and having that key position filled for the long term would be beneficial in helping to address these issues.

Chair Seidel suggested putting \$6,000 in the line of temporary services to help cover the cost of paying part-time staff. Clyde Carson clarified that this line was separate from the line reflecting the cost of taking meeting minutes, which had increased significantly. Allan Brown suggested that the budget line for temporary services be increased to at least \$5,200 to bring it in line with the YTD expense from 2023. He added that increasing it further would reflect on the total budget, which was already significantly large. If the board wished to avoid increasing the budget further, they would have to balance the increase to an individual line by cutting funds from another line item.

Ultimately, the board decided to change the line to \$4,000 to bring it closer to the actual YTD expense.

The board also examined the line items related to the cost of hiring the town administrator. The contract voted on by the board set an hourly rate, and the cost is adding up accordingly. Butch Burbank added that the interviews for the position of town administrator will begin the following week. While most of the cost of

hiring a town administrator is expected to be part of the 2023 budget, the process may extend to 2024. However, Clyde Carson noted that the hiring expenses were very likely to be wrapped up in 2023. As such, to avoid further significant increases to the budget, the board decided to leave the line item at \$0.

Chair Seidel questioned why the moderator line had increased from \$600 to \$1200. Clyde Carson explained that this was due to there being more elections in 2024.

At this point, the board had no further concerns regarding the second page of the budget.

**Page 3:** The board had nothing to discuss on page 3.

**Page 4:** Chair Seidel noted that wages and postage had increased on page 4, but the board had no further concerns in relation to this page and did not alter either line item.

**Page 5:** Chair Seidel noted that the town budgets a stipend for the Trustee of Trust Funds, but the current person filling the role never accepts the funds. He questioned whether it was necessary to continue budgeting for it. Allan Brown suggested that the line be left as a placeholder, as another person who fills the role in the future will accept the stipend. Ultimately, the line remained unchanged.

At this point, the board reached the line items related to assessing. One of the most significant additions would be that of assessing utilities, which had not been in the budget the previous year. However, there would be a decrease in the line item related to tax maps as that expense would be reflected in the budget for 2023 rather than 2024. The initial amount was \$16,300, but it would be decreased to \$2500.

The line item related to assessing wages was also discussed. \$26,541 was budgeted in this line. Clyde confirmed that it reflected the previously established increase in employee wages, as well as the rate of pay for that particular position.

\$5,000 was budgeted for outside services in relation to assessing. The board discussed whether this should be increased due to the impending purchase of new assessing software. Previously, a possible increase to \$30,000 had been discussed. However, due to the surplus in 2023's budget and concerns regarding the financial impact of the 2024 budget, the decision was ultimately made to make this purchase using funds from 2023 rather than 2024. The shift to a new assessing company would also result in changes to the structure of the assessing budget. Some line items would be removed or consolidated, depending on how the new assessing firm operated. Additionally, the services provided to the town in 2024 by this new assessing firm would be paid for in 2023. The board decided to leave the \$5,000 in the budget as a placeholder to cover the cost of pick-ups, which would be necessary before 2025's reevaluation.

Clyde Carson also noticed that the budget for assessing included budgeting for the upcoming reval, but the reval was not an item typically paid for out of an operating budget. There is a capital reserve fund designated specifically for reval that would be used to cover those expenses. How much money would be put into this particular fund would be determined by the capital budget. Butch Burbank noted that while reval is a significant expense, it is recurring on a regular schedule- and easier to manage if the town gradually saves up for it.

Additionally, Clyde Carson asked for the board's confirmation on decreasing the office supplies line of this particular budget section to zero. The budget was originally \$800, but none of the money was spent. The board decided to decrease the amount to \$200 instead.

At this point, the board had no further concerns regarding the fifth page of the budget.

**Page 6:** The beginning of page 6 dealt with further line items related to the assessing budget. Due to the inclusion of the reval costs and other capital items that would be paid out of 2023's budget, Clyde Carson noted that the assessing section of the total budget would decrease from the initial estimate.

The line item for legal on this page was decreased from \$20,000 to \$15,000. 2023's legal expenses were unusually high due to unforeseen circumstances, and it was anticipated that 2024's expenses would be greatly decreased.

The most significant change in this page was consolidating insurance and retirement under "personnel", but this change had no impact on the actual funds attached to these categories.

At this point, the board had no further concerns regarding the sixth page of the budget.

**Page 7:** Chair Seidel had a question regarding the Central New Hampshire Planning grant line item, which totaled at \$12,000. He wished to know whether those funds had been spent already, or if they were annual. Butch Burbank left briefly at this time to inquire about this in the land use office.

The board also discussed the line item for office supplies for land use. Chair Seidel expressed surprise that the line item had decreased despite how much paper and folders were used in the town hall. Judy Newman-Rogers explained that most of the expenses for office supplies were reflected in the budget for the select board rather than individual departments.

At this time, Butch Burbank returned to update the board on the planning grant line item. It was decided that this item would be decreased to \$8,000, reflecting a decrease at the state level.

The line item for custodial wages was also discussed, but ultimately remained unchanged. The board confirmed that the town does currently employ a custodian who visits once a week.

Chair Seidel noted that with Community Power, the cost of electricity would likely decrease. The budget remained unchanged at this point, but more information regarding this decrease would be available by the end of December.

At this point, the board had no further concerns regarding page seven.

**Page 8:** Allan Brown noted that the water bill amount seemed low, and Clyde Carson added that there were still water bills to be paid upstairs.

Faith Minton pointed out that the fire alarm amount also seemed low in light of recent inspections to the system. Butch Burbank noted that it was possible that the bills for these services had not come in yet. Clyde Carson confirmed that they had been billed for most, but not all of it. Ultimately, the board decided not to alter the number due to the possibility it might have pertained to a contract for regular servicing.

The line for propane in the town hall was also discussed. Faith Minton noted that it was primarily for the stove, and dependent on use. It hadn't been used recently, but it was expected that the kitchen facilities in the town hall would be used for the upcoming staff holiday gathering.

Chair Seidel asked for confirmation that \$50 was being carried for propane use in the Old Grade School (OGS) building, despite propane not being used there. The stove in the OGS cannot be used due to inadequate

ventilation and the valve has been shut off. The ventilation would need to be redone if the tenants of that building ever wished to use the stove. At present, this work has not occurred, and there are no plans to complete it in the immediate future. The board discussed reducing the line to \$0, but ultimately decided it was prudent to leave the line open just in case.

At this time, the board had no further concerns regarding page eight.

**Page 9:** Clyde Carson pointed out that tree removal in the local cemeteries had been added to the budget. This would be a more proactive solution to the problem of aging headstones being damaged, as giving them new frames is not always effective in repairing them.

Chair Seidel questioned whether the town was still paying the American Legion, as he had heard that there were no Legion members at present who were able to continue its work. Allan Brown confirmed that they continue to purchase and put flags in the cemeteries each year. It was also noted that the money was a gift to the American Legion rather than a payment for services.

Line items related to Primex, the town's insurance company, were also present on this page. These figures came from Primex directly.

Chair Seidel noted that in the police's section of the budget, there was only financing in the public safety line for four officers and a chief. He questioned whether that number was correct, or if another officer was going to be hired. Police Chief William Chandler confirmed that this number reflected the current staff of three full-time officers, one full-time civilian, and a part-time chief. Clyde Carson also noted that he and the chief had discussed the numbers previously and they were in line with the conversation that had occurred. Chief Chandler added that there had also been a decrease in wages, as the budget had initially figured for a 5% increase rather than 3.2%. 3.2% was also added to the custodian's wages.

Fuel had also been cut down in the police budget, as the DOT prices for fuel had come in and it had decreased from the previous year. Other lines, including detail, were also lower.

The hiring of a new officer was also discussed. It was confirmed that this officer would be the third full time officer reflected in the budget, and not an additional officer to the ones already budgeted for. This new hire would allow the department to more easily manage vacation and sick time, as well as bring Warner's police department closer to New England-wide statistics of number of officers per section of the population.

There were also some questions regarding the placement of the wages line, and which line was being hit with the total wages value. Clyde Carson confirmed that these numbers would be moved to the wages line.

At this time, the board had no further concerns regarding page nine.

**Page 10:** The board had nothing to discuss on page 10.

**Page 11:** The board had nothing to discuss on page 11.

**Page 12:** The board had nothing to discuss on page 12.

**Page 13:** Clyde Carson noted that the stipend for the position of compliance officer had been increased according to a previous conversation by the board. It was the board's hope that an increased stipend might make the position more enticing for a potential candidate.

Chair Seidel pointed out that a possible change might be forthcoming in relation to building permits. At this point, the cost of a building permit in the town of Warner is far below the cost of a building permit in other towns. The select board has been seeking to raise the cost of building permits. He clarified that this would not affect the operating budget directly, but it would potentially offset some of the expenses therein.

Judy Newman-Rogers questioned whether the fire department budget would be reviewed again. The board stated that they had no concerns regarding that particular budget. Chair Seidel clarified that the only question he had was regarding the vehicle the department intended to purchase, which at \$175,000 would be better suited to a CIP request than a line item. The board confirmed that this expense was not present in the department's budget.

Faith Minton raised a concern about the building maintenance line item in the fire department's budget. She noted that the amount requested in the line was higher than the actual expenditure from 2023. Allan Brown questioned whether this was something to do with the heating system. It was confirmed that the department had to have their heat pumps serviced in an effort to be more energy efficient. The board also noted that not all of the year's expenses had come in yet, and the fire department's expenses typically didn't arrive until the end of December.

The fire department budget had numerous lines where the actual expenditure for 2023 was significantly less than the budget amount requested for 2024. One particular line was related to radios. Butch Burbank confirmed that the cost came from regular servicing and updates to keep them in line with national emergency frequencies. Judy Newman-Rogers questioned whether there was a capital reserve fund for radios. Allan Brown explained that the fire department used multiple types of radios- radios back at the station, radios on the trucks, and portable radios- and that not all of them were covered by a capital reserve fund.

Chair Seidel proposed lowering the radio line item to \$1,500 and the building maintenance line item to \$4,000. The rest of the board agreed and felt this still gave the fire department enough funding to meet its needs. However, they elected to call the fire chief to ask for confirmation. Fire Chief Jonathan France confirmed that the \$5,000 currently placed in the budget for building maintenance would be spent, but he was comfortable with the radio line item being decreased to \$1,000.

Chair Seidel questioned whether the board was planning to raise the wage for the building inspector, as the stipend for the compliance officer had been raised. Allan Brown clarified that because the building inspector's wage was based on visits to buildings, it would remain the same.

At this time, the board had no further concerns regarding page 13.

**Page 14:** Allan Brown noted that the wages line on this page was a guess, as it was impossible to predict how many storms would occur in 2024 that would require snow removal and cleanup. Clyde Carson pointed out that another factor affecting this section of the budget was the fact that a piece of equipment that the highway department had purchased was paid off more quickly than expected. He clarified further that when equipment is leased by this department, the first lease payment comes in the form of a warrant article. All following payments are part of the operating budget.

Concerns were raised about the hydrant line item regarding whether the funding could be reduced. The board wished to know how many hydrants could be purchased with the amount currently budgeted. Butch

Burbank confirmed that the cost of one hydrant was close to \$3,000, and the budget reflected the cost of purchasing one hydrant. As budgeting for a partial hydrant wouldn't be a logical decision, the board decided to leave this line item untouched.

It was noted that the highway department's budget had decreased from the previous year. Clyde Carson clarified that part of this was due to items such as insurance and retirement being moved to other budgets, as well as the end of payments on the grader.

At this point, the board had no further concerns regarding page 14 and elected to move on to page 17, where the highway department budget ended.

**Pages 17 and 18:** The board reiterated previous discussion of the transfer station's budget regarding wages and rising costs at Wheelabrator. Many expenses, such as the latter, were out of the town's control and could not be reduced.

Chair Seidel questioned whether the town received any revenue- such as from recycling- that could potentially help to offset transfer station expenses. Allan Brown confirmed that there was revenue there, but it was minimal. The labor committed to sorting garbage at the transfer station mainly saved costs at Wheelabrator, which charges by tonnage. Additionally, glass can be ground up for use in roads, and other waste types such as aluminum can be valuable. Ultimately, no changes were made to the transfer station budget.

The budget for health services and the health inspector remained the same as the previous year. Allan Brown wanted further discussion on the payments made to outside services such as River Bend and VNA. Clyde Carson pointed out that the number of people they service in Warner makes these payments worthwhile. In addition, these companies also frequently service those in town who do not have insurance, and these payments help to offset the costs of these services. It was confirmed that these services do track how many people access them in Warner, and update the town on these numbers in the town report.

In the line for direct assistance in the welfare budget, \$26,936 was budgeted. However, during the previous night's discussion, it was expected that the actual number would exceed this. Clyde Carson noted that this would be a good opportunity to tap into the town's \$10,000 contingency fund, as there has been a greater need for welfare services this year than in previous years. Ultimately, because of the existence of the contingency fund and extenuating circumstances in recent years, the board decided not to alter this line item.

The welfare administration line was increased from \$533 to \$783.

At this point, the board moved on to discuss the budget for parks and recreation. They noted that the budget had increased slightly, but not by much. The main reason for this increase was an increase in wages.

At this point, the board had no further concerns regarding pages 17 and 18.

**Page 19:** Chair Seidel suggested that the ice rink improvements line item needed to be increased from \$500 to \$1600. The liner for the rink needed to be replaced every other year. The board noted that when weather permits, the rink is very popular and gets a lot of use.

The library budget was also present on this page, but could not be altered or changed.

At this time, Allan Brown brought up future plans for the \$600,000 that would be received from the 99-year easement on the North Road cell tower. Potential options included investing it, or continuing to pay down

the town's debt. One concern expressed by the current board was that a future board might potentially use most of the funds to decrease the tax rate for a single year. While this would ease the financial burden on Warner's residents for one year, the following year's tax numbers would reflect a steep increase and the long-term impact would be minimal. Ultimately, the decision would fall to the following year's board.

Much of the final page was occupied by budget items that could not be changed, such as those relating to debt.

At this time, the board decided that the budget was ready to be sent to the budget committee for review after Clyde Carson made the changes they had decided upon over the course of this meeting.

### **Select Board Records**

At this time, Chair Seidel raised an issue with the location of select board records. Currently, these records are located in the attic, which makes it difficult to access them. These records may contain sensitive information, and also need to be accessible for the new Town Administrator. Chair Seidel believed that obtaining filing cabinets rather than boxes would make it easier for these records to be accessed. This would also help keep the records more secure.

Butch Burbank confirmed that filing cabinets had been ordered, and the records will be moved once the cabinets arrive.

### **Budget Paperwork**

Allan Brown noted that some of the budgeting paperwork was received very late this year. He suggested that it would be beneficial for a future board to set firmer deadlines regarding when everything needed to be submitted. If all department heads were given the same date to complete their CIPs or budgets by, it would greatly expedite the work of the select board. He noted that CIPs are not set in stone, and represented a "best guess" in terms of expenses, and that budgets remain live documents for a significant period of time. Changes and alterations continue to be made throughout the entire budgeting process.

Butch Burbank added that it wasn't an option to continue to receive budgets so late, and that the town administrator must drive the initiative to make sure department heads and committees stick to deadlines. Additionally, receiving budgets late creates a domino effect where other departments must rush to compile and review the budget in a reduced time frame.

Chair Seidel noted that the planning board, who is responsible for preparing the complete CIP, had been upset at how late many of the departments' CIPs came in late. They had planned to employ a more aggressive strategy to complete everything, but were hampered by turnover in committee membership- as were many other committees and boards in the town of Warner. Faith Minton suggested a communal calendar to aid in planning across all committees and boards. Allan Brown also suggested reinstating a previous system where the planning board members split up, each taking a few departments and sitting down with them to review their CIPs. This would make it easier for the various departments to navigate the forms required for CIPs, and increase accountability.

Additionally, Butch Burbank noted that if a department head did not provide a CIP, it might be necessary to prepare the total CIP without their input. While this would obviously be a last resort, it would provide strong motivation for department heads to be timely with their CIPs. He also clarified that while completing the CIP



is primarily the job of the planning board, the select board and town administrator are the ones able to enforce deadlines and ensure they are followed.

### **Safety at the Oddfellows Building**

Chair Seidel conversed with Nate Burrington regarding the status of the Oddfellows Building, as there had been safety complaints by members of the community regarding the lack of a fence around the property. He invited Mr. Burrington to come before the board to discuss the building. Additionally, Mr. Burrington has an RSA-79E form he wishes the board to sign that will defer taxes on the building for five more years. He then explained in brief to Chair Seidel what work he had completed in the building thus far, which was more significant than previously believed. Among other improvements, he had replaced the foundation and roof. Additionally, Mr. Burrington had previously had a fence around the property, but this was removed during the Warner Fall Foliage Festival to make room for rides and improved traffic flow. The fence would also have impeded wintertime snow removal.

Chair Seidel expressed an interest in having Mr. Burrington appear before the board in order to discuss potential solutions to the fencing problem, as well as provide more detailed updates on the work being done. Butch Burbank cautioned the board to be conscious of the precedent that may be set by offering Mr. Burrington another five years of deferred taxes. Allan Brown pointed out that this particular building may constitute a special case. The Oddfellows Building has sat empty for twenty years, and progressively deteriorated for that period of time. The town was unable to interest anyone in improving it until Mr. Burrington came forward. The board intended to continue discussing this issue at their next meeting.

**Allan Brown moved to adjourn the meeting. Faith Minton seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:33 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Georgia Flanders  
Zoom Administrator  
Edits, Judy Newman-Rogers,  
Selectboard Administrator Assistant