

**TOWN OF WOLFEBORO
BUDGET COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
DRAFT MINUTES
January 9, 2024**

I. Call To Order

Chairman MacDonald opened the meeting at 7:04 pm at the Great Hall, Wolfeboro Town Hall.

Members Present: John MacDonald, Chairman, Bob Tougher, Vice-Chairman, Bobbi Boudman, Bob Loughman, Tom Bell, Paul O'Brien, Matt Plache, Members, Brian Deshaies, BOS Representative, Linda Murray, BOS Alternate Representative.

Members Absent: Brian Black, Bob Moholland, Members (both excused).

Staff Present: Jim Pineo, Town Manager, Kathy Carpentier, Finance Director, Lee Ann Hendrickson, Administrative Assistant.

The Committee participated in the pledge of allegiance.

II. Public Hearing – 2024 Operating Budget and Warrant Articles

Jim Pineo stated three Petition Warrant Articles have been received. He stated one of the Petition Warrant Articles requires funding; noting he is awaiting guidance from NH Department of Revenue Administration (NH DRA) and Town Counsel. He stated the BOS is meeting on January 17 to review the petition warrant articles and requested the Budget Committee schedule a meeting on January 18 to address the matter.

Bobbi Boudman stated she signed one of the Petition Warrant Articles and asked if she is required to abstain from voting on said article.

Jim Pineo stated he would seek guidance regarding such.

2024 Operating Budget; \$34,372,097

John MacDonald reviewed the proposed 2024 Budget; noting the 2024 Operating Budget request is \$34,372,097. Referencing Union wages, he confirmed that such was voted on last year.

Jim Pineo stated the AFSCME Collective Bargaining Agreement last year was 5% (3.5% this year) and the NEPA Police Union was 5.5% (3% this year); noting nonunion for this year is 3.5%.

John MacDonald confirmed the contracts will be renegotiated for 2025. He questioned the number of elections in 2024.

Jim Pineo replied five.

John MacDonald reviewed health insurance costs and asked the Town Manager to speak to such.

Jim Pineo stated the Town has experienced an increase of 10% in health insurance expenses this year; noting a Healthcare Committee will be established to review the issue; noting the review is included as part of the collective bargaining agreements.

John MacDonald confirmed the increase does not add benefits rather, it maintains the existing benefits currently received. Referencing the cemetery budget, he questioned the number of cemeteries the Town maintains.

Brian Deshaies replied 40.

John MacDonald requested the Town Manager speak to ambulance services.

Jim Pineo stated the Town's contract with Stewarts Ambulance expired at the end of 2023; noting earlier in the year a Request for Proposal (RFP) was developed for ambulance services. He stated 2 bids were received; noting the incumbent did not intend to bid on the project. He stated the bids varied from \$300,000 for a single ambulance to \$1.47 million for two ambulances 24/7. Following receipt of the bids the BOS, Fire Chief and he reviewed the option of the Town taking on ambulance services. He stated discussions occurred with Stewart's Ambulance (incumbent) regarding moving forward in a manner to provide a similar service to what the Town currently has today until the Town makes a decision with regard to ambulance services. He stated options include continuing to maintain contracted service or take on the service as a fire-based ambulance service. He stated the budget reflects the cost to maintain the existing ambulance services. He stated the Town has put forth a warrant article for an ambulance service evaluation and recommendation.

John MacDonald confirmed the best way to proceed is to approve the budget so that Stewart's ambulance can continue to provide services while the Town reviews options relative to ambulance services. He requested the Town Manager speak to the increase in the Sanitation budget.

Jim Pineo stated the increase is associated with contracted service for tipping fees. He stated there has been substantial increases in tipping fees over the past several years; noting the BOS are reviewing the matter. He stated the BOS at their last meeting took under consideration increases to disposal fees and stickers; noting such would project offsetting revenues.

John MacDonald requested the Town Manager speak to the Electric Generation budget.

Jim Pineo stated such is the Town's purchase power agreement; noting there are four years remaining on the existing contract; noting the Town entered a 5-year contract last year.

Referencing the Assessing budget and the note on page 5 relative to the revaluation for \$212,000, Tom Bell asked whether such is money set aside for the Town's revaluation.

Jim Pineo stated the \$212,000 reflects the cost for the revaluation.

Kathy Carpentier stated the money for the revaluation is included in the budget.

It was moved by Tom Bell to recommend the 2024 Operating Budget of \$34,372,097. Bob Tougher seconded the motion.

Discussion of the motion:

Bobbi Boudman stated she would like to discuss the budget in context with also discussing the default budget; noting a difference of \$1,071,298. She stated there are two outstanding expenses that are included in the default budget that would have to be removed if a default budget occurs. She stated one of those outstanding expenses is approximately \$500,000 for ambulance services. She stated the other expense is the revaluation for \$212,000; noting with those two expenses removed from the default budget that there is a difference of \$371,298 (\$0.53). She stated she wants the taxpayers to understand that if the Town defaults that the 911 ambulance service is part of the default budget that will go away.

Bob Tougher stated the operating budget is \$34,372,097 and the default budget is \$33,300,799; noting the difference between such is approximately 3.1 %.

John MacDonald stated the Committee worked hard on the budget and feels the Department Heads did an excellent job providing their proposed budgets. He apologized to the Highway Department regarding his comments about the grater at the January 8 meeting.

Bobbi Boudman stated she would be voting against the budget because she believes there is room in the budget to cut. She stated she proposed cuts to the Budget Committee however, the Committee voted those cuts down. She stated she is hoping the citizens propose additional cuts at the Deliberative Session so that she may vote in favor of the budget at a later time.

Paul O'Brien thanked all the employees of the Town. He stated he recommended at last night's meeting to vote on the BOS approved budget and would be voting in favor of this budget because the difference between the two budgets is \$60,000 (\$0.04 for every dollar that is spent). He stated he hopes the citizens will vote for the budget as well.

Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – no, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - yes. The motion passed (7-1-0).

Town Road Upgrades; \$700,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Paul O'Brien to recommend the Town Road Upgrades warrant article. Bobbi Boudman seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - yes. The motion passed (8-0-0).

Police Vehicle Replacement; \$74,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

John MacDonald asked if the vehicle is for the detective.

Jim Pineo replied no, a patrolman.

Mark Livie stated the detective takes a vehicle that is available.

It was moved by Paul O'Brien to recommend the Police Vehicle Replacement warrant article. Tom Bell seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – no, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – no, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – no, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - yes. The motion passed (5-3-0).

Public Works Vehicle and Equipment Capital Reserve Funding; \$380,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

John MacDonald confirmed the funding request increased by \$80,000.

It was moved by Paul O'Brien to recommend the Public Works Vehicle and Equipment Capital Reserve Funding warrant article. Bob Tougher seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - yes. The motion passed (8-0-0).

Building Maintenance Capital Reserve Funding; \$50,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

Paul O'Brien requested clarity regarding which buildings will be worked on. He stated the way the language of the warrant article is written addresses emergency repairs rather than preventative maintenance. He noted he would vote in favor of the warrant article.

It was moved by Paul O'Brien to recommend the Building Maintenance Capital Reserve Funding warrant article. Tom Bell seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies – yes. The motion passed (8-0-0).

Water Resources Non-Capital Reserve Funding; \$50,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Bob Loughman to recommend the Water Resources Non-Capital Reserve Funding warrant article. Paul O'Brien seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies – yes. The motion passed (8-0-0).

Abenaki Ski Area Capital Reserve Funding; \$25,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Bob Loughman to recommend the Abenaki Ski Area Capital Reserve Funding warrant article. Matt Plache seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies – yes. The motion passed (8-0-0).

Tree Removal and Replacement Expendable Trust Fund; \$25,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Bob Loughman to recommend the Tree Removal and Replacement Expendable Trust Fund warrant article. Bob Tougher seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – no, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies – yes. The motion passed (7-1-0).

Municipal Electric Bucket Truck Replacement; \$400,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Bob Loughman to recommend the Municipal Electric Bucket Truck Replacement warrant article. Paul O'Brien seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies – yes. The motion passed (8-0-0).

Maplewood and Highland Terrace Water Main Installation; \$200,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Bob Tougher to recommend the Maplewood and Highland Terrace Water Main Installation warrant article. Matt Plache seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi

Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - yes. The motion passed (8-0-0).

Wastewater Treatment Plant Capital Reserve Funding; \$175,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Tom Bell to recommend the Wastewater Treatment Plant Capital Reserve Funding warrant article. Paul O'Brien seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - yes. The motion passed (8-0-0).

South Main Street Center Street to Smith River Bridge Sewer Engineering; \$200,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Paul O'Brien to recommend the South Main Street to Smith River Bridge Sewer Engineering warrant article. Bob Tougher seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - yes. The motion passed (8-0-0).

Parks and Recreation Tractor Purchase; \$100,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Paul O'Brien to recommend the Parks and Recreation Tractor Purchase warrant article. Bob Tougher seconded the motion.

Discussion of the motion:

John MacDonald stated he would not support the warrant article; noting he does not feel the equipment is necessary.

Bobbi Boudman agreed with Mr. MacDonald and stated she would not support the warrant article.

Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – no, John MacDonald – no, Tom Bell – no, Matt Plache – no, Bob Loughman – no, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - yes. The motion failed (3-5-0).

Ambulance Service Evaluation; \$20,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Paul O'Brien to recommend the Ambulance Service Evaluation warrant article. Bobbi Boudman seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – no, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - no. The motion passed (6-2-0).

Jockey Cove Engineering; \$20,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Paul O'Brien to recommend the Ambulance Service Evaluation warrant article. Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - yes. The motion passed (8-0-0).

Port Wedeln Drainage Upgrade; \$1,200,000

Jim Pineo read said warrant article.

It was moved by Bob Loughman to recommend the Port Wedeln Drainage Upgrade warrant article. Bob Tougher seconded the motion.

Discussion of the motion:

Paul O'Brien recommended supporting the warrant article due to the impact on the lake. He stated there is some financial complication in the conversation that needs to be understood; noting the Town does not have an agreement with the Port Wedeln Association for any contribution at the moment. He stated the original understanding is that there would be one third of the monies provided up front and the Town would effectively front the other \$70,000 over a ten-year period non-discounted; noting he is not comfortable with such. He stated his advice to the voter would be to approve the article with the predicate understanding that the Town may never receive the \$100,000 from the Association.

Bobbi Boudman questioned the status of the easements and MOU following this evening's BOS meeting and asked if the BOS would be altering the warrant article at the Deliberative Session.

Brian Deshaies stated he will probably ask at the Deliberative Session to include in the verbiage that there is a signed MOU with the specifics as to how and when the Town would be collecting the \$100,000 and that all the easements are in place prior to the expenditure of any appropriations.

Bobbi Boudman confirmed a motion would be made at the Deliberative Session.

Tom Bell asked if interest would be included in the change to the language of the article.

Brian Deshaies replied and interest based on the bond interest for payments on the \$70,000.

Linda Murray stated the \$100,000 is not included in the warrant article figure; noting the Town is not promising that money.

Jim Pineo stated it is similar to loan forgiveness; noting such is not guaranteed.

Bobbi Boudman stated she supports the project but not the warrant article until it is revised at the Deliberative Session.

Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – no, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – yes, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - yes. The motion passed (7-1-0).

Bobbi Boudman informed the public that the reason the Budget Committee is not engaging in dialogue and discussion on the warrant articles is because the Committee has discussed the articles in their regular meetings. She stated the articles have also been discussed at the BOS meetings.

John MacDonald stated the articles will be discussed at the Deliberative Session as well.

Bobbi Boudman recommended checking the Library numbers noted in the presentation. She asked if the Committee voted an additional \$2,000 or \$2,500 for Meals on Wheels.

Jim Pineo replied \$2,500.

It was moved by Paul O'Brien to continue the 2024 Operating Budget and Warrant Articles to January 18, 2024 at 6:00 pm at the Great Hall, Wolfeboro Town Hall. Tom Bell seconded the motion.

Bob Loughman and Matt Plache stated they are unable to attend the January 18 meeting.

John MacDonald opened the public hearing.

Bobbi Boudman recused herself. Referencing the 911 Ambulance Municipal Operations Contract Petition Warrant Article, she stated that should the Town's operating budget fail there is one item that cannot be comprised, the ambulance service. She stated the ambulance service has to be protected; noting the service is needed. She requested support of the article.

Linda Murray stated that if the Town has a default budget there is \$276,000 in the budget and as one of the needed services of the Town the BOS would have to fund that service and other things would have to be cut. She stated there is no way the BOS would not have an ambulance service.

Jim Pineo stated at this time the Town is operating under an assumed budget therefore the funding would go away retroactively to January.

John MacDonald recommended supporting the budget.

Jody Persson recommended supporting the budget. He recommended when the Budget Committee cuts budgets to cut budgets from departments that are not safety oriented (Police and Fire) and referenced the School Resource Officer position.

Suzanne Ryan stated although the proposed operating budget and default budget figures are known, the total warrant article figure is not known and, the operating budget in addition to the total warrant articles is not known. She questioned the percentage of such on the tax rate.

Kathy Carpentier stated the warrant articles total \$37,991,097, the warrant articles standing alone are \$0.75 if all were to pass, and the operating budget is \$6.33 which is an increase of \$1.06 of the current tax rate for the municipality.

Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, Bobbi Boudman – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – abstain, Bob Loughman – abstain, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies - yes. The motion passed (6-0-2).

III. Other Business

None.

IV. Public Comment

None.

V. Adjournment

There being no further business before the Committee, the public hearing adjourned at 8:44 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Lee Ann Hendrickson
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