

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 12, 2024

At the Selectmen's Meeting held on Monday, February 12, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. the following Board members were in attendance: Shawn White, Abbey Querrard (via conference call), John Tholl.

Chairman Tholl called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Chairman Tholl led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The following people were in attendance: Bob Loiacono; Margo Sullivan of AV Home Care; Rob Larson, DPW Director; Edward Samson, Police Chief; John Ross, Jr., Fire Chief; Scott Burns; Sondra Brekke; Suzy Colt; Jeanne Robillard, Tri-County Community Action Program; Duncan Nevers

Rob Larson, Public Works Director, asked if we can advertise for the part-time transfer station attendant position. The Board is ok with this.

Public Budget Hearing – 6:30 pm

John Tholl called the Public Budget Hearing to order at 6:30 p.m., and welcomed everyone. Shawn White will review the budget handout

General Government

2024 Appropriation: \$683,705

2023 Appropriation: 636,049

When are we going to see the savings from the solar? Shawn said we left the electrical line items the same for 2024 because we are waiting to see what our costs will be for a year. We are still waiting on Eversource to hook up the transformer to make the switch over. Suzy Colt said with the mini-splits at the library that they are lowering the cost of the heat for the library.

Sondra Brekke had questions if the line items for the moderator, ballot clerk, supervisors, are high? There are four election days in 2024. The people who work the election days are paid \$10 an hour.

Duncan Nevers asked what we are paying for heating oil. Rob Larson said \$2.69 a gallon, but it was noted that we don't use heating oil that much. We are using pellets to heat the fire station and town office and use wood at the highway garage.

Public Safety

2024 Appropriation: \$1,250,690

2023 Appropriation: \$1,125,376

Highways, Streets, Bridges & Sanitation**2024 Appropriation: \$1,111,498****2023 Appropriation: \$1,057,763**

Shawn explained that we eliminated the \$24,000 from street sewer maintenance and repair. We are going to do a capital reserve appropriation instead and create a Waste Water and Water Maintenance and Repairs Capital Reserve Fund so if we don't use it next year, that it is available to use if needed in future years.

Health & Welfare**2024 Appropriation: \$39,345****2023 Appropriation: \$32,345**

Public Assistance is increased by \$7,000.

Culture & Recreation**2024 Appropriation: \$122,125****2023 Appropriation: \$108,925**

The increases are in the recreation department and parks, playground, common, maintenance and electricity.

Conservation Commission**2024 Appropriation: \$2,500****2023 Appropriation: \$2,500****Economic Development****2024 Appropriation: \$6,000****2023 Appropriation: \$6,000**

What was the \$6,000 spent on in 2023? Shawn said we appropriate the \$6,000 to the WEDC, and we can double check with them to see what it is being used for. She had told us at a meeting. Bob Loiacono said that is \$6,000 of town funds, and the town should know what it is being spent on. Bob noted that the WEDC no longer posts their meeting minutes on the town web site. In checking with Katy Kopp, she said the money was used to hire a grant writer to write a second grant for the Economic Modeling project. She said they will have two major projects in the works simultaneously, one for the industrial park and one that will benefit the downtown business area.

Principal Long-Term Notes**2024 Appropriation: \$50,565****2023 Appropriation: \$58,711****Interest Long-Term Notes****2024 Appropriation: \$10,032****2023 Appropriation: \$11,307****Tax Anticipation Notes****2024 Appropriation: \$7,500****2023 Appropriation: \$7,500**

Special Revenue Funds**2024 Appropriations:****Library: \$80,000****Cemetery: \$40,000****Airport: \$9,000****Band Concerts: \$6,000****2023 Appropriations:****Library: \$65,000****Cemetery: \$32,000****Airport: \$9,000****Band Concerts: \$3,000****Total Operating Budget****2024 Appropriation: \$3,418,960**

An increase of \$263,484.

2023 Appropriation: \$3,155,476**Water Department****2024 Appropriation: \$566,075****2023 Appropriation: \$543,165****Sewer Department****2024 Appropriation: \$646,463****2023 Appropriation: \$643,638**

Shawn explained that we were able to have a savings on the Treatment Plant budget this year as we used to have an outside contractor operate the plant, but we were able to hire the two employees to come on as town employees, which resulted in large savings to the town.

Capital Reserve Account Appropriations:**2024 Appropriations:****Highway Equipment Replacement: \$50,000****Fire Dept. Equipment Replacement: \$80,000****Revaluation: \$0****Bridges/Town Buildings: \$11,000****Sidewalks: \$0****Ambulance: \$30,000****Road Projects: \$60,000****Police Cruiser: \$30,000****Emergency Services Building: \$0****Sewer Collection System: \$0****Recycling Center Eqpt. Rplcmt.: \$30,000****Hwy Garage Repair/Rplcmt: \$25,000****Waste Water/Water Mnt. & Repairs: \$25,000****Reval/Tax/Utility System: \$100,000****Cemetery Mnt. & Repairs: \$500****Solar Energy: \$1,000****Total: \$389,000****2023 Appropriations:****\$85,000****\$40,000****\$15,000****\$0****\$20,000****\$30,000****\$60,000****\$0****\$20,000****\$10,000****\$5,000****\$25,000****\$0****\$0****\$0****\$1,000****\$311,000**

It was explained that the Revaluation/Tax Utility System will be done in four warrant articles. The first article will be to raise and appropriate the sum of \$35,000 to perform a town-wide revaluation as required by RSA 75:8-a, with the money coming from the Revaluation capital reserve fund. The second article will be to discontinue the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund and the remaining funds of approximately \$100,000 will be placed in the general fund. The third article will be to establish a Revaluation & Tax/Utility Systems Capital Reserve Fund and use the \$100,000 from the discontinued Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund. The fourth article will be to raise and appropriate the sum of Forty Thousand Dollars for the purpose of acquiring new tax billing and assessing software funds with funds to come from the prior article to establish that capital reserve fund.

Warrant Articles:

Waste Water Holding/Metering Station - \$100,000

This is a loan forgiveness article.

Property Revaluation - \$35,000

This will be coming from the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund.

Tax Billing/Assessing Software - \$40,000

This will be coming from the Tax Billing/Assessing Software Capital Reserve Fund.

Sidewalk Maintenance Equipment - \$78,000

Total Warrant Articles: \$253,000

Petition Warrant Articles:

Ammonoosuc Community Health Services: \$4,500

North Country Home Health & Hospice: \$14,913

AV Home Care: \$5,500

Tri-County CAP Programs - \$6,225

Second Chance Animal Rescue: \$1,000

St. Pauls Backback Program: \$1441

White Mountain Mental Health: \$2919

Pathways Pregnancy Care: \$250

Total Petition Warrant Articles: \$36,748

Margo Sullivan reviewed the Town of Whitefield Report of Home Care Services in 2023 from A.V. Home Care Services. She said they are a licensed home care agency serving the needs of senior and debilitated adults across Coos County who wish to live independently at home. Whitefield residents received a total of 369 visits, resulting in 1,898 hours of service. Nurse Supervisors made 17 RN assessments visits to Whitefield residents. Margo said that staffing is a major issue and they have had a hard time finding staff from Whitefield. They have been successful in getting people from Lancaster and Groveton to come over. They advertise for help via Indeed, or in the local newspapers and work with some of the residents' own family members. Margo said they appreciate all the support from Whitefield.

Jeanne Robillard, CEO of Tri County Community Action Program and a Whitefield resident, said that they are asking for \$6,225 same request as last year do it by a formula so they ask all the towns equitably. Last year they served over 500 residents about ¼ of the population. Last year they started the cold weather shelter funds which assists with shelter for homeless folks during cold weather events as well as providing tents and emergency supplies. The service programs provided for Whitefield are: Transportation, Energy Assistance, Weatherization, Guardianship, Head Start, Homeless Intervention and Prevention, Service Link, Senior Meals, Tamworth Dental Center.

Closed the public hearing at 7:05 p.m.

Shawn said that during last week's planning board meeting they have a local business in town trying to become a commercial business, Meat On the Run, located on Jefferson Road. They are currently doing commercial business without being a commercial site. People have expressed concerns with sound, smell, and the business going on. Shawn said he would like approval from the Selectboard to enforce this violation by sending a letter to them issuing a cease and desist. John and Abbey were in agreement to move forward. Judy will get the materials from the Planning Board for citing the violation then the Board will contact the town attorney to move forward with enforcing the violation.

A motion was made by Abbey Querrard to approve the January 22, 2024 Selectmen's Meeting Minutes. Shawn White second. Roll call vote: Querrard: Yes; White: Yes; Tholl: Yes. Motion passes.

The Board reviewed the 2024 Town Meeting Warrant. NHMA Municipal Services Counsel informed us that the Selectboard must put their recommendation on any article containing an appropriation. The Selectboard may also put their recommendation on any other separate warrant article. The Board reviewed the petition warrant articles submitted by outside agencies and decided to recommend all the petition warrant articles containing an appropriation. Shawn said the Board realizes residents have their own opinions on these, and they may vote the way they want. The Board feels these outside agencies contribute a lot of good services to the residents of Whitefield. Sondra Brekke said she feels the Board should remain neutral. It was explained again that the Selectboard must put their recommendation on any article containing an appropriation, which is what the Board has done.

It was asked what the wording for the Dunkin Donuts relocating to the municipal parking lot was going to be? "To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to convey the municipal parking lot located behind Cumberland Farms (Tax Map 103/Lot 51) to another party on such terms as the Selectmen determine appropriate, so long as the transaction results in a substitute location for municipal parking?" If this warrant passes the plan will be required to go through the approval process with the Planning Board and Conservation Commission. Concern was voiced that the article is not very specific. Shawn said the town attorney wrote the article.

Duncan Nevers asked for a copy of the legal opinion. The Board will check to see if we can give out the legal opinion.

Shawn said at the PB meeting last week there was a hearing about a business coming in on a parcel of land up behind Stiles Fuel and the salon. The Fire Chief noticed that the way they want to name the road and number the road isn't correct. Between the hair salon and old mini mart there is a road there and there is going to be a business going in behind there. The company is proposing to build a building with 3000 square feet of office space and 3000 square feet of storage with parking. This would be for a communications business. After discussion, the Board decided to rename Tower Drive, Bob's Way.

A motion was made by Abbey Querrard to enter non-public session at 7:25 p.m. pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3, II (a). The motion was seconded by John Tholl. Roll call vote: Querrard: Yes; White: Yes; Tholl: Yes. Motion passes, 3-0. The board entered non-public session at 7:25 p.m.

The Board adjourned from non-public session at 7:55 p.m.

A motion was made by Shawn White and seconded by Abbey Querrard to seal the non-public session meeting minutes because it is determined that divulgence of this information likely would affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this Board. Roll call vote to seal the minutes: Tholl: Yes; Querrard: Yes; White: Yes. Motion passes, 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.