

2022 DELIBERATIVE SESSION MINUTES FEBRUARY 12, 2022

Moderator Eileen Meaney called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and asked everyone to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ricky Hippler, Chairman, Board of Selectmen, introduced the Board of Selectman: John Van Loendersloot, Jon Osborne, Sherry Burdick and Jack Meaney.

Moderator Meaney recognized Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, Jane Murchie, Deputy Town Clerk, Naomi Bolton, Town Administrator, Beth Rouse, Finance Administrator, Fire Chief Bob Vezina, Police Chief Chris Moore, Benji Knapp, Department of Public Works Director, Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, Tom Downing, Chairman, Finance Committee along with members of the Finance Committee including Jeff Spring, Tom Clow, James Drury, Bill Anderson, and Liz Evans, Supervisors of the Checklist, Colleen Couhie and Nancy Christian, Librarian, Clay Kriese and Janeen Lentsch from Parks and Rec.

Moderator Meaney recognized those residents of Weare who passed away in 2021.

Moderator Meaney explained the guidelines for the deliberative session – right to speak: all eligible residents in attendance have the right to speak to the articles or amendments on the floor. Without objection, the moderator may also permit non-resident staff for their subject matter expertise. All speakers and members of the assembly are expected to engage in civil debate and will refrain from personal attacks. Please be courteous with one another when speaking and please be respectful of others' opinions and their right to express them. All discussions will be held through the moderator and if someone wishes to speak, they will approach the microphone, state your name and address and address the moderator; if someone is unable to approach the microphone, let the moderator know and one will be brought to that individual. After being recognized, please clearly state your full name and address for the minutes. Normal order of discussion: a motion to consider a warrant article must be made and seconded before any debate begins on the subject of the article. Both the mover and the seconder must provide their name and address. After the motion has been moved and seconded, the maker of the motion will be given the first opportunity to speak provided the motion is not ruled out of order. After the mover of the motion has spoken, other eligible members of the assembly will be provided an opportunity to speak. Appropriate proposals to amend the main motion may be offered by eligible residents during debate but may only be discussed after they are moved and seconded. Any amendment which changes the subject matter of the main motion or makes changes to contract warrant article or attempts to create a wholly new warrant article will be ruled out of order. If any amendments to motions are adopted, debate will return to the main motion as amended; if any such amendments fail to be adopted, debate will return to the main motion without changes. The moderator requests that any member of the body proposing an amendment to make a motion provide a legible written copy to the moderator before they move it. Once debate is completed, the moderator will read aloud the motion to be voted on before calling the question asking for a vote of the residents. The moderator will also indicate the effective voting for and against each motion. After the vote, the moderator will announce the results to the assembly.

Moderator Meaney proceeded onto the Warrant Articles beginning with Article 3.

ARTICLE 3

Shall the Town raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling Seven Million Four Hundred Sixty-Four Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety-Three Dollars (\$7,464,993)? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be Seven Million Two Hundred Twenty-Seven Thousand Nine Hundred Eighty-Three Dollars (\$7,227,983), which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. (Recommended by Board of Selectmen)

Vice Chair Meaney moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Vice Chair Meaney explained that the voters approved an operating budget in 2021 of \$7,136,435 and approved three warrant articles that had recurring costs – warrant articles for non-union raises, full-time firefighters/EMS, and Parks and Recreation wage increases; combined, these three, increased the future budget by \$93,191 to a total of \$7,209,626. He noted that in 2022, they continue to see state mandated New Hampshire Retirement contributions increase as well as voter approved collective bargaining agreement and pay increases in which these two items would've increased the default budget by \$122,460, however, they are fortunate to see that their debt services interest decreased as well as a decrease in the health insurance premiums. He added that they also acquired other decreases in wages and salaries retirees, rehiring and restructuring. Overall, they are only increasing by \$18,357 to \$7,227,983 which is the 2022 default budget.

Vice Chair Meaney noted that the Board of Selectmen are proposing a \$237,010, 3.28 percent, increase over the voter approved operating budget. These include: 1) an increase of \$59,762 in the Police Department in which many programs were underfunded in 2020, the \$78,000 contract for the Prosecutor ended and because they received a default budget in 2021, the monies were not transferred to the new budget; the police department now fulfills the responsibilities of the Prosecutor within their operating budget. He stated that other programs such as tasers, body worn cameras and the ballistic equipment are all underfunded with no maintenance or replacement plan accountability; 2) an increase of \$132,339 in the Highway Department due to the rising fuel and salt costs which is the largest increase to the Highway Department's budget. He noted that the Highway Department is proposing on an added account line for guardrails explaining that there was a previous account for signs, posts, and rails, however, it was never funded properly to replace broken guardrails. The increase in the gravel road maintenance account is to allow the purchase of calcium chloride for the gravel roads during the dry months; 3) an increase of \$50,358 in the Transfer Station, the largest increase is to Wheelabrator and the hauling of municipal trash account lines. He indicated that, in the past two years, the municipal trash hauling has increased from two trips a week to three. There is also an increase in the account for the Household Hazardous Waste Day in which, due to an overwhelming amount of

hazardous material that arrives during this event, there needs to be an increase to the account to cover the costs of disposing these materials.

In regards to surplus expenditures, Vice Chair Meaney stated that the Board has heard concerns regarding the year end expenditures and how it relates to the proposed budget. He explained that due to staff shortages for multiple months in the majority of the departments (Police, Fire, Transfer and the Town Office), the town's expenditures were under budget; many positions have been filled but there are still vacancies. At year end, there was a surplus in payroll related accounts of \$444,247. He indicated that in August, the Federal Government awarded the town with ARPA funds totaling \$950,000, split over two years, and the Board of Selectmen generated a list of projects that fall under the strict requirement of the use of these funds. He added that in the fall, the Board of Selectmen started conversations with Motorola to upgrade the public safety radio system and received a projected cost of \$1,500,000. As the end of year came near, the Board of Selectmen reviewed the surplus from the operating budget mostly due to the payroll vacancies and the board decided that the entire ARPA funding would be best used as a complete offset to the radio project and, as part of that decision, it was opted to purchase those projects slated for ARPA from the year end funds as well as other one-time expenses requested by Department Heads. He noted that this still leaves a balance of approximately \$324,748 going to the unreserved fund balance at year end.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. The committee supports the proposed budget, which is a 4.6 percent increase over the current year. The default is a 1.3 percent increase. The \$237,000 difference between the proposed and default budget results in about a \$45 tax increase on a \$350,000 property. The majority of the \$237,000 difference, \$182,000, is in the Highway and Transfer Stations budgets. With high inflation, the committee wanted to ensure these critical services to the town have sufficient funds for repairs, parts, trash removal, fuel, sand and salt. Approving the proposed budget will also more accurately align budget line items with expenditures.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, referenced the dollar amount on page three of the handout. He feels they need to add an additional 18 cents to the tax impact for the both the default and the proposed. He explained that it comes not necessarily from a line item in the budget that is seen but when the selectmen set the tax rate at the end of the year, there is an expense called overlay pointing out that the veteran's credit is 16 cents and the overlay is 2 cents. In reference to trash hauling going up, Mr. Campana pointed out that this is a contract and believes that, with the obligation of a contract, they can make that adjustment in the default budget.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, responded that it depends whether town meeting has approved the contract or not; if town meeting has approved the contract, it can go in the default budget but if it's a contract that the selectmen have entered into when town meeting has not approved, it cannot go in the default budget.

Mr. Campana, feels that the town did well last year living under a default budget. He questioned what did not get done or accomplished with the default budget last year noting that the selectmen ended the year with over \$468,000 budget surplus.

Vice Chair Meaney responded that it was due to salaries in which staff left and positions were not filled – this is where some of that money came from.

Mr. Campana noted his confusion as to why the Police Department returned \$190,000 and is now looking for \$50,000 in year end purchases because they didn't have the money. He feels that the town can do well with the default budget. He doesn't feel that there is a good reason to vote for the proposed budget because the default already has dollars to the selectmen's benefit which includes \$63,000 within insurances, \$13,000 for roadside mowing and another \$8,500 within the Police Department for accreditation. He pointed out these three items total over \$84,000 within the default budget in which the selectmen have to play with.

Vice Chair Meaney feels that Mr. Campana's statement is misleading pointing out that the roadside mowing is reduced by \$11,000 within the proposed budget.

Richard Butt, Old Town Road, asked, in regards to surplus, if there are any restrictions as to how the money can be used. His understanding is that the money can only be used for those items that are listed within the operating budget.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, responded that if there is a surplus at the end of the year, it all lapses back into the general fund; items at the end of the year that can come out of last year's budget include encumbered funds for contracts that are entered into before the end of the year and purchases that would fall under general purposes of the budget. As long as there's some sort of line item in the budget that covers it, she stated that the selectmen can move the money around.

Mr. Butt asked for example whether the town could purchase a truck with the operating budget surplus dollars.

Ms. Spector-Morgan responded most likely yes. She explained that DRA defines purpose broadly so as long as the purpose which is shown on the DRA form and as long as this meeting has not voted to zero out that line item or do not appropriate that line item, money can be moved there.

Mr. Butt asked if there is no line item within the budget for a new vehicle, can one be purchased.

Ms. Spector-Morgan responded that if there is no purpose in the budget for a new vehicle, they couldn't spend money on that.

Mr. Butt questioned whether they couldn't buy the truck if there was no line item in the budget.

Ms. Spector-Morgan assumes that whatever department the town is going to buy a truck for is in the budget so that would cover it. She pointed out that would be last year's budget and not this year's budget noting that she would be happy to discuss this with Mr. Butt after the meeting.

Neal Kurk, Mt. Dearborn Road, indicated that he would like to discuss this article in the context of taxes. He pointed out that the Finance Committee is recommending various articles for both

the schools and the town that would raise their tax rate by 19.8 percent which is \$1,029 on a typical \$350,000 home. In calculating this increase, he noted that they have to assume the estimates of revenues are accurate and know historically that is not the case – the estimates of revenue are very conservative and the actual revenues come in significantly higher. He asked for the assumption that it cuts the tax rate in half from roughly 20 percent to 10 percent if the Finance Committee recommendations were approved; that would be \$515 on a \$350,000 home at a time when the inflation's latest number is 7.5 percent and residents in town are not receiving 7.5 percent raises. He feels that every voter needs to look at every budget and ask whether they can afford, at a minimum, a 10 percent tax increase and, theoretically, a possible 20 percent tax increase.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, corrected himself from his previous statement in regards to the Police Department returning money; at the end of 2021 the dollar amount was \$168,000 and not \$190,000. He highlighted a list of year end purchases by the Police Department for approximately \$50,000 pointing out that over \$160,000 was returned when the department could've funded those lines.

Police Chief Chris Moore indicated that year end purchases are available on the Police Department's website noting that it specifically goes through where the budgetary shortfalls were and why the current budget does not meet what they needed at the end of the year. He provided an example referring to his \$1,300 ballistic budget; one ballistic vest is approximately \$1,500 and only good for five years. He has twelve officers and needs to purchase three per year; there is a shortfall and he is asking for the budget to be corrected.

In regards to year end purchases, Mr. Campana referred to the transfer station and \$10,000 in surplus to do renovations in the office pointing out that the town has a capital reserve fund for building maintenance and questioned why the board didn't take the money from this fund. Referencing the air conditioning replacement with hepa filters in the town offices for \$70,000, he feels that this is one of the allowed dollars from the ARPA funds, the government dollars.

Chair Hippler responded that the air conditioning funds could indeed come out of the ARPA funds but pointed out the dire need for improvements for the communication system for Fire, Police and Highway. He explained that the board decided to use the ARPA funds for the communications and, with the surplus, they decided to update the ventilation system in a building that everyone has to walk into at some point in time.

Vice Chair Meaney responded, in regards to the transfer station, stating that the Public Works Director came to the board with a proposal of \$6,000 to upgrade the building and was going to add an additional \$4,000 for the upcoming proposed budget. He stated that the money was in the account and the building was in dire need and a safety hazard; the board opted to give him a full \$10,000.

Richard Butt, Old Town Road, thanked the Moderator for her service to the town. He noted that the presentation by Vice Chair Meaney indicated what the budget drivers were which was basically two departments: the Highway Department and Police Department. He stated that the third driver of increase in costs is \$66,276 that the Board of Selectmen gave out in wage

increases to individuals which is not discussed in public. He is not questioning the justification but feels that the board continues to fail to mention this as a driver within the budget.

Jack Dearborn, Gould Road, feels that there is a lot of commentary today regarding what happened to the budget that was spent for this year. He understands that there are some issues that could be polished a bit more but feels that this has been an extraordinary year for trying to manage a budget; one would expect these types of challenges throughout the year. He stated that a budget is anticipation going forward and is something that the selectmen manage within the constraints of that budget. He urged the passing of this article.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 3 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 4

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Sixty-Two Thousand Three Hundred Seventy Seven Dollars (\$62,377) to be used for raises for non-union Town and Library personnel? If approved, this addition would become part of the annual budget. (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.05

Selectman Burdick moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Burdick explained that this would be a 3 percent pay increase for all non-union, seasonal, part time, per diem and full time employees. She noted that 63 percent of this warrant article is going to first responders and, although the cost of living will increase by 5.9% in 2022, the Board of Selectmen feel that the employees should at least receive 3 percent. She added that most of the employees in this pool are raising their families and subject to today's economic increases and, while other businesses are able to offer sign on bonuses and larger hourly rates, they are behind but trying to keep up with the competitiveness while continuing to provide town services.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. Noting current inflation, the committee supports a 3 percent increase for these employees. The committee expressed concern about recent difficulty in hiring and retention at the junior and entry levels. Warrant articles such as Article 5 and 6 this year, and with Parks/Rec and Public Works in previous years, have resulted in a piecemeal approach. The committee encourages the town to look at adjusting this article in the future to consider setting a higher rate for employees and a lower rate for supervisors.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, is trying to look for some consistency between the articles. Referencing Article 5, he pointed out it gives an estimated cost while this verbiage is absent in this article. He requested an estimated annual cost for Article 4 pointing out that this figure should be for nine months.

Chair Hippler responded that because they vote in March, the \$62,377 is reflective of nine months so the annual cost would be \$83,169.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 4 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 5

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Six Thousand Forty-Seven Dollars (\$6,047) to cover the cost of increasing the hourly wages for the Weare Public Library Staff by One Dollar (\$1) for each employee? This represents wages, payroll taxes, and New Hampshire System contributions for nine (9) months. If approved, this addition would become part of the annual budget with an estimated annual cost of Eight Thousand Sixty Dollars (\$8,060). (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.005

Selectman Burdick moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Burdick explained that this article is similar to the warrant article brought forward by the DPW in 2019 to adjust the wages of the staff by \$1.00 per hour. She pointed out that this does not include the Library Director.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. This raise is in addition to the 3 percent raise in Article 4. The committee supports an additional \$1 per hour raise for library staff who are currently paid less than their counterparts in many towns throughout the state. Current pay for seven of eight library staff ranges from approximately \$11 per hour to \$16 per hour.

John Lawton, Oak Hill Road, clarified that the tax impact is half a cent impact.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 5 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 6

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Two Thousand Six Hundred Ninety Two Dollars (\$2,692) to cover the cost of increasing the hourly wages for the returning Parks & Recreation Staff by One Dollar (\$1) for each employee? This represents wages and payroll taxes for one (1) year. If approved, this addition would become part of the annual budget. (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.002

Selectman Van Loendersloot moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Van Loendersloot explained that the majority of employees that work at Chase Park, which this is mainly in reference to, are high school students. He noted that they can easily find other jobs that pay much more than what their starting wages are; this is to help align and return some of their past employees.

Janeen Lentsch, Parks and Recreation Chair, indicated that they would like the increased wages to retain their current trained staff while being competitive with other entry level jobs in the area. She added that other jobs in the area are starting off between \$10.25 and \$12.50 per hour; with the \$1.00 increase, sixty percent of the returning staff would be going from \$8.00 per hour to \$9.00 per hour.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. This raise is in addition to the 3 percent raise in Article 4. Part time Parks and Rec positions have traditionally been hard to fill. A similar article passed last year but it only provided partial relief. This provides an additional \$1.00 per hour incentive for returning staff.

Richard Butt, Old Town Road, feels that this sounds like it's applying to personnel as opposed to the job itself. He inquired whether there is a wage scale associated with these positions noting that it appears to apply to returning employees. He questioned as to why it wouldn't apply to new employees.

Selectman Van Loendersloot responded that this is to help incentivize returning employees explaining that it takes a while to train them and the training costs add up so they are trying to retain the trained employees.

Mr. Butt asked if there was a minimum dollar per hour rate to hire a new employee.

Selectman Van Loendersloot responded that the starting rate for a new employee is \$8.00 per hour.

Mr. Butt inquired whether new hires should be hired at a higher rate as well.

Selectman Van Loendersloot replied that this is to incentivize returning employees and not new employees.

Mr. Butt feels that this is wrong and feels that it should be written for the job classification noting that if the minimum hourly wage is \$8.00 per hour it should increase to \$9.00 per hour and should be done now.

Luke Drake, Duck Pond Road, feels that the comparisons in which they are paying their public service employees is terrible noting that they are willing to pay for items but not the people that do the work that we need them to do all year long. He appreciates the increase that is being suggested and feels they really do need to incentivize people to start at these jobs, continue with these jobs and have a reason to be public servants. He implores the town to pass this and seriously consider bringing the wages for the workers up to a living wage.

Sarah Button, River Road, proposed an amendment to Article 6 noting that she would like to strike the word “returning”.

Luke Drake, Duck Pond Road, seconded the amendment.

Moderator Meaney pointed out that this would also change the dollar amount of the article to include new hires.

Moderator Meaney read the amendment on the floor “Shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of Three Thousand Sixty Four Dollars (\$3,064) to cover the cost of increasing the hourly wages for the Parks & Recreation Staff by One Dollar (\$1) for each employee? This represents wages and payroll taxes for one (1) year. If approved, this addition would become part of the annual budget”.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, noted that it appears that the committee is in favor of supporting this but can’t say that they voted to recommend. He stated that, in all confidence, they would likely recommend this article and are in support of it.

Clarence Gardner, John Connor Road, inquired whether the increase happens every year.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, responded that it’s not that there will be a dollar increase every year but this dollar increase will carry forward in the future years and because it’s being approved by town meeting it can go in the default budget.

Chair Hippler asked for an estimated tax impact from the Finance Administrator. The estimated amount of tax impact is \$0.004.

There being no further discussion on the amendment, Moderator Meaney announced that the vote on the floor is on the amendment. The amendment passed. Moderator Meaney stated that the article moves as amended. Article 6 would be placed on the ballot as amended.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 7

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Ninety-One Thousand One Hundred Three Dollars (\$91,103) to hire two (2) full-time Firefighter/EMTs? This represents the wages, taxes, and benefits for twenty-five (25) weeks, and certain one-time expenses. If approved, the Fire Department Operating Budget will be reduced by Ninety-One Thousand One Hundred Three Dollars (\$91,103); and this addition would become part of the annual operating budget with an estimated annual cost of One Hundred Eighty Thousand Seven Hundred Dollars (\$180,700). (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.00

Chair Hippler moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Chair Hippler explained that this program started in 2019 in which the Fire Chief put in effect as a four year plan to fully staff the Fire Department; this is the fourth year of this plan.

Fire Chief Vezina indicated that this is final year of a four year plan which has been extremely successful in the continuity of operations.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. The committee supports this article which will add two full time EMT/FF completing the four year plan of having eight full time EMT/FF positions in the Fire Department. This will provide a more stable, uniformly trained workforce avoiding the uncertainties of depending on per diem staffing.

Luke Drake, Duck Pond Road, noted that he is not clear as to how adding positions reduces the department's budget.

Fire Chief Vezina explained that in each of three previous years, the warrant article has had a reduction in the operating budget because they have money that was in part time and per diem wages. As they convert those positions, he noted that money is moving from one part within the budget to another but at the end of the day, is being applied back to the new positions.

Mr. Drake inquired whether there is a corresponding reduction in the number of volunteer staff that is on hand.

Fire Chief Vezina replied that the reduction is the amount of people that they use part time and per diem; this workforce is being reduced but their call force is still the same number as it was over the last eleven years since he's been there.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 7 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 8

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Three Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$350,000) for the purchase to replace one (1) fully-equipped ambulance for the Fire Rescue Department with said funds to come from the Fire Department Equipment and Vehicle Special Revenue Fund? (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.00

Chair Hippler moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Chair Hippler explained that this replaces the 2019 GMC two-wheel drive ambulance that has approximately 85,000 miles. He noted that, in the past six years, the town has spent over \$20,000 in maintenance and repairs on this and if they get a new ambulance it would come with a patient loading system. He pointed out that this would be 280 days after receipt of cab & chassis which would mean it wouldn't be in service until 2023; this would have no tax impact

since the monies for this ambulance will come from the Fire Department Equipment and Vehicle Special Revenue Fund.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. Approving this article will result in replacement of one of our two ambulances, a 2009 GMC, which is nearing the end of its service life with less reliability, increased maintenance and downtime. There is no tax impact. The Fire Department Special Revenue Fund has a sufficient balance and will be used for the purchase. Annual ambulance reimbursements and the remaining balance in the fund are projected to be adequate for future planned major apparatus procurements.

There being no discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 8 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 9

To see if the Town will vote to join the Capital Area Mutual Aid Fire Compact. The Capital Area Mutual Aid Fire Compact is a District Fire Mutual Aid System established under NH RSA 154:30- a. Membership will convey to the Town of Weare and the Weare Fire Rescue Department all rights and responsibilities contained in that statute and by the Capital Area Mutual Aid Fire Compact by-laws; and further to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty-One Thousand Sixty Dollars (\$21,060) for the purpose of the membership for one (1) quarter in fiscal year 2022? If approved, the Fire Department Operating Budget will be reduced by Eleven Thousand One Hundred Fifty-Two Dollars (\$11,152); and this addition would become part of the annual operating budget with an estimated annual cost of Eighty-Four Thousand Two Hundred Thirty Seven Dollars (\$84,237). (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.01

Selectman Van Loendersloot moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Van Loendersloot explained that one of the primary benefits of the Capital Area Mutual Aid Fire Compact is that it offers fire dispatch and is a group of dedicated people that work for Concord Fire Department which always has two dispatchers on 24/7; their entire role is for fire dispatch for 23, hopefully 24, communities. In addition to this, he noted benefits is that there is training within the mutual aid area, access to a hazmat trailer and additional special equipment.

Fire Chief Vezina stated that their public safety radio system is in need of a major rebuild in excess of over a million dollars; the Fire Department's portion of this are several hundred thousand dollars. He noted that, if they were to join Capital Area Mutual Aid Fire Compact, they would not need any of that input from the radio rebuild thus avoiding spending \$200,000 to \$400,000 on the Fire Department's portion of the radio because with Capital Area comes not only a dispatch center but comes a radio network system that they own and maintain. He added that other components include a chief coordinator, a hazardous material team and special

equipment. He indicated that if they move in this direction, there is a real financial savings and large capital expenditures that they could avoid.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. The committee agrees that this move will provide the Fire Department a better, more reliable, and more cost effective communications support system. We will use Capital Area's infrastructure, towers and dispatch, which they maintain. The committee believes this move will be more cost effective in the long term as we'll avoid any larger capital improvements in our existing communications infrastructure related to Fire. Additional support services, not currently provided through Goffstown dispatch, are also provided by Capital Area. The committee notes the recurring \$84,000 annual cost for Capital Area will be partially offset by an approximate \$40,000 reduction in cancelling the current contracted services through Goffstown.

Clarence Gardner, John Connor Road, pointed out that this mentions the savings from the Goffstown contract and that he was unaware that there was also a contract with Nashua. He questioned whether they would be saving on this also.

Fire Chief Vezina explained that they are pro-rating in 2022 because they would be looking to start in the final quarter of the year; there would be a pro-rated dispatch savings from Goffstown of \$6,100, the maintenance piece of \$4,000 and the Souhegan Mutual Aid, which are dues paid at the end of the year, of \$1,000. The offset would be approximately \$11,000 in the 2022 budget.

Mr. Gardner stated that he thought, based upon previous meetings, that their communication system issues were not necessarily the equipment but the geography.

Fire Chief Vezina responded that it probably includes both of those issues. He indicated that the system is at the end of its useful life and doesn't work well.

Mr. Gardner asked if this mutual aid compact would work for all of Weare. He pointed out that it includes other benefits of avoidance of large capital expenditure questioning whether this is the communication or includes other items too.

Fire Chief Vezina responded that it would work for all of Weare. He indicated that the large capital expenditure that is on the horizon is that there is going to be a rebuild of the radio system infrastructure that the police use and have a hard time communicating with; the Fire Department also uses the same system. The benefit of this article is that the capital expenditures related to fire being on this new system would go away because they wouldn't be on the new system, they would be on the Capital Area system.

Mr. Gardner inquired whether it's known that this system will work if they switch over.

Fire Chief Vezina responded yes stating that they tested over 26 different sites within town over the summer.

Tom Flaherty, Sunrise Lane, questioned whether switching adds any expenses communication-wise or any other. The response from the Fire Chief was no. Mr. Flaherty noted his confusion when talking about future radio expenses; it was indicated that the future ARPA funds was helping both.

Selectman Van Loendersloot explained that the radio system that they are looking at doing at a board level, estimated as of right now with Fire, Police and Highway, is approximately \$1.5 million. He stated that with Fire potentially moving to the Capital Area Mutual Aid Compact, that reduction would be between \$200,000 to \$400,000 that they will not need to spend to upgrade their current infrastructure to support the Fire Department.

In reference to reducing the budget by \$11,152, Mr. Flaherty inquired whether this is a quarterly number. The response to this question was yes.

John Lawton, Oak Hill Road, asked whether the \$11,152 is a quarter of what Goffstown dispatch is paid.

Fire Chief Vezina responded that it's a combination of Goffstown, the maintenance, and dues for Souhegan Mutual Aid.

Referencing the final line of an estimated annual cost of \$84,237, Mr. Lawton questioned whether this was over and above what is currently paid.

Fire Chief Vezina responded noting that this would be in place of what they are paying now. The \$84,237 is the total amount in lieu of the \$40,000.

Mr. Lawton pointed out that the estimated tax impact for the \$84,000 should be roughly seven cents and not the one cent inquiring as how they came about this tax impact.

Fire Chief Vezina clarified that it's just for the quarter in 2022 and, in the 2023 budget, it would include the full year cost.

Tom Downing, Winterberry Lane, asked if the Police Department's officer related shooting was due to a communications breakdown in which radios were not going through.

Police Chief Moore responded yes explaining that it took multiple attempts before they were able to establish contact.

Mr. Downing noted that it seems to him that this move for the Fire Department allows fire to be on a system that is much more reliable especially in life and death situations. He reminded people that, since he remembers, they have had communication issues in their emergency response systems.

Tom Flaherty, Sunrise Lane, asked for more detail noting that the current system which is currently used by Fire, Police and Highway and, if fire wasn't using it anymore, the replacement

cost would be significantly less. He feels like the cost to replace it wouldn't be that much based upon how many users it had.

Selectman Van Loendersloot responded that it's not so much the users as it is the type of equipment, different frequencies, etc. He explained that all three departments don't use the exact same radio so it is three separate systems. With Fire potential moving to Capital Area, that is one that would no longer be in the financial equation of rebuilding the current radio system.

Liz Evans, Oak Hill Road, asked when looking ahead when considering perhaps the cost of a full year being an approximate tax impact of seven cents to please note that unwinding this type of implementation could take up to 18 months. She supports this because she feels it's necessary but feels that they need to set appropriate expectations for the future that this isn't a system that can be implemented and unwound.

Fire Chief Vezina noted that they have to give 18 months' notice in order for membership into Capital Area. He added that the cost to get in, other than the dues, is that they need to reprogram their radios at a relatively minimal cost; there's not hardware to buy or infrastructure to build. He stated that there is no large cost getting in and the large cost coming out is not from being penalized by Capital Area but from who would then dispatch them.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 9 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 10

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy-One Thousand Thirteen Dollars (\$71,013) for the purchase of one (1) fully equipped front line police cruiser? This would replace a vehicle that has already retired. (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.06

Selectman Van Loendersloot moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Van Loendersloot explained that last year, the voters approved the purchase of a new Tahoe; that request was to replace one of two vehicles that were retired and scrapped due to rust and other mechanical failures. He stated that this request is to replace the second vehicle which would continue with the life cycle program that the Chief put in place last year.

Police Chief Moore indicated that the Chargers are currently at 75,000 to 80,000 true mileage, however, they idle their cars a lot and per the manufacturer, every idle hour is equal to 33 miles of driving. In reality, he pointed out that they have closer to roughly 150,000 to 170,000 miles. He added that if this passes it would still take between 15 to 18 months before they actually get the vehicle out on patrol.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. The committee supports this article to replace a cruiser which has previously been placed out of service and sold for scrap. The current fleet has four Dodge Chargers and a Tahoe for patrol. The Chief uses our 2013 Explorer. The current situation is undesirable, as it requires using a marked patrol vehicle for administrative needs such as going to court and transferring evidence to an out of town storage facility. Approving this article would move the new vehicle into patrol and remove Weare PD markings from a Charger, which would then be used for administrative needs. Ensuring the full availability of five patrol vehicles will also provide the Chief more flexibility in patrol now that the department has a full complement of officers.

Richard Butt, Old Town Road, questioned the differences in costs throughout the past few years - \$50,000 in 2020, \$61,000 in 2021 and \$71,000 this year.

Police Chief Moore explained that the increase from \$50,000 to \$61,000 was a manufacturer increase because the Tahoe was redesigned. He pointed out that there were three items they did not include in the warrant article last year – the computer, hotspot/external antennae, and spotlight.

Mr. Butt indicated that he noticed that the board is putting a lot of unreserved fund balance money toward another article and wonders why the board hasn't used any of this money to offset the cost of this article.

Selectman Van Loendersloot responded that they elected to bring this forth to the voters as a warrant article.

Mr. Butt proposed an amendment to Article 10 and read "Shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy One Thousand Thirteen Dollars (\$71,013) for the replacement of one (1) fully equipped front line police cruiser with Forty Thousand Dollars (\$40,000) withdrawn from the unreserved fund balance and the balance of the Thirty One Thousand and Thirteen Dollars (\$31,013) to be raised by taxation" with an estimated tax impact of \$0.02. The amendment was seconded.

Moderator Meaney opened discussion on Article 10, as amended.

Mr. Butt feels that this is a critical vehicle and believes that putting money towards it to offset the tax impact will maybe influence the voters to approve it.

Neal Kurk, Mt. Dearborn Road, reminded people that they can't spend money twice explaining that if they take the dollars out of the unreserved fund balance then there is \$40,000 less at the end of the year for the selectmen to use to lower the tax rate.

Tom Downing, Winterberry Lane, stated that he is not in favor of the amendment.

In regards to a point of clarification to the amendment, Moderator Meaney stated that there is some concern about the language and asked Mr. Butt if he would be willing to amend the

language within his amendment to replace the word “replacement” with “purchase”. Mr. Butt accepted the change to his amendment.

Luke Drake, Duck Pond Road, noted his support of the vehicle but questioned whether they are taking a block of money that is already allocated to one vehicle and some other things or are they talking about reserve that is not yet allocated to reduce the tax burden for this vehicle.

Moderator Meaney responded that she believes it would be taking money that is a balance in a fund and applying it towards the purchase of this vehicle, thereby, reducing the tax impact, initially.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, stated that this is taking an additional \$40,000 out of a fund balance to apply here.

Mr. Butt feels that if they currently have money in reserves they should apply it reiterating that it would be an easier sell for the taxpayers to support a vehicle that is needed.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, supports the amendment and understands the consequences. He added that he has no idea, as a taxpayer, how much money the Board of Selectmen have at their disposal.

Brent Dickinson, Dels Way, inquired as to how the Police Department budgets annually for each vehicle to maintain it.

Police Chief Moore responded that there is \$20,000 total for general maintenance and repairs/damage.

Mr. Butt spoke in regards to reducing the amount in an upcoming warrant article.

Moderator Meaney noted that Mr. Butt’s hope in this warrant is that, later on, he might amend another warrant so that there wouldn’t be a change in the total dollar amount.

In response to Mr. Campana’s and Mr. Butt’s statements, Selectman Osborne noted that the unaudited fund balance at the end of 2021 was \$1,959,603. He indicated that if they take out the \$40,000 now and the other \$260,000 later on, they will still have just over \$1.65 million in this fund.

Mr. Butt asked if they are above the 5 percent requirement number to meet their obligation with the number just quoted. Mr. Butt received an affirmative to his question.

Moderator read the amendment for a vote “Shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy One Thousand Thirteen Dollars (\$71,013) for the purchase of one (1) fully equipped front line police cruiser with Forty Thousand Dollars (\$40,000) withdrawn from the unreserved fund balance and the balance of the Thirty One Thousand and Thirteen Dollars (\$31,013) to be raised by taxation” with an estimated tax impact of \$0.02.

The amendment failed on a vote: yes – 24, no -26.

Moderator Meaney stated that they will return to Article 10 as written and opened up discussion.

Liz Evans, Oak Hill Road, noted that with regard to the unmarked vehicles, for transparency, she would like to see the vehicles marked. In terms of the cost of equipment being upfitted for the new cruisers, she asked if the older equipment could be used for the new to reduce the costs.

Police Chief Moore responded no because they are different vehicles. He explained that should the life cycle management program continue, then yes this would offset the price because they could be reusing the equipment.

Ms. Evans inquired whether the unmarked vehicle would be a non-patrol vehicle.

Police Chief Moore responded that everything is technically a patrol vehicle within the department. He added that there are command vehicles and that they went with the terminology of the other five being front-line vehicles. He clarified that it will be marked but it will be similar to what the State Police has on some of their vehicles called ghost graphics; it's reflective but not as obvious.

Marjorie Burke, Merrill Road, inquired that if the voters say no on this article does that mean that selectmen cannot use unreserved fund balance to purchase a new one at the end of the year.

Laura Spectrum-Morgan, Town Counsel, responded that they can never use unreserved fund balance at the end of the year to purchase. She added that if this article is defeated, there will be a no means no situation and they will not be able to buy one.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, noted his confusion with the wording stating that they are not replacing a vehicle that is gone but a new one would be replacing a vehicle coming out of service.

Police Chief Moore explained that they previously had two vehicles that wouldn't pass inspection so both vehicles had to retire because they were no longer serviceable vehicles. He still has a vacancy not being replaced.

Mr. Campana stated that he is against any town vehicle being unmarked.

Brent Dickinson, Dels Way, stated that he is in favor of having an unmarked cruiser noting that it sometimes comes to an officer's safety.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 10 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 11

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) for the purchase of three (3) skate park features? (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.004

Selectman Van Loendersloot moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Van Loendersloot explained that the equipment that was at the skate park had rotted and failed and became a safety hazard so it was removed this past Spring. This area is currently an asphalt pad with a chain link fence around it.

Janeen Lentsch, Parks and Rec Chair, indicated that Parks and Rec repaired the fence and added a second pedestrian entrance; the next logical step is to add elements and features back into the skate park. She stated that three elements were recommended for the park: a flat rail, a manual pad and an A-frame. She noted that these are basic staples in any skate park and would be able to accommodate beginners but also entertain intermediate and advanced users. She pointed out that the features could be used by skateboarders, scooters, and bmx riders.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. He noted that when an article is very close or close to a tie on both sides, that they agreed to present both sides. The Finance Committee recommends this article. Parks and Rec has identified features requiring replacement at the skateboard park in the center of town. A majority on the committee supported the article, noting limited resources in the Parks and Rec operating budget and the article's very small impact on taxes. The minority opinion of the committee supported replacing these features through alternative sourcing such as a local fundraising effort.

Luke Drake, Duck Pond Road, spoke in support noting that the town needs something for the youth to do and feels that one of the functions of a community is to provide for the individuals that can't vote and who are looking for recreation.

Kyle Parker, Old Francestown Road, inquired whether insurance liability is covered through the town's policy or whether there is an additional cost. It was relayed that it is covered under the town's umbrella liability.

Tom Flaherty, Sunrise Lane, asked if Parks and Rec is prohibited from using donations.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, responded yes noting that the donations would have to be accepted by the selectmen.

Bruce Fillmore, Gould Road, asked that if a business donates and it is received by the selectmen, would it still need to come to this body.

Laura Spector-Morgan responded that if the town has adopted the proper statutes, the selectmen can and expend without coming to this body.

Tom Clow, Concord Stage Road, spoke in support of this article for the physical health of both the children and adults.

Selectman Van Loendersloot, in regards to fundraising, clarified that if this article fails at town vote, fundraising cannot happen this year.

Janeen Lentsch, Flanders Memorial, is under the assumption that Parks and Rec is unable to fundraise themselves and would be relying on the community.

Brent Dickinson, Dels Way, pointed out that the previous equipment was donated and asked if Parks and Rec could accept a donation of equipment as they did before.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, responded that she is not 100 percent sure but she would think that they can accept the equipment as a donation.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 11 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 12

Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 31:95-c to restrict Fifty Percent (50%) of Recyclable Revenues to expenditures for the purpose of Transfer Station Equipment and Capital Projects? Such revenues and expenditures shall be accounted for in a special revenue fund to be known as the Transfer Station Recyclable Special Revenue Fund, separate from the general fund. Any surplus in said fund shall not be deemed part of the general fund accumulated surplus and shall be expended only after a vote by the legislative body to appropriate a specific amount from said fund for a specific purpose related to the purpose of the fund or source of revenue.
(Recommended by Board of Selectmen)

Selectman Osborne moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Benji Knapp, DPW Director, indicated that he's been thinking about how he could do some upgrades to the transfer station without jeopardizing the every year equipment that he asks for. He stated that there are some fairly large projects and feels that, if they could save some recycling money and bank it until it comes time for one of those large expenses, it might ease the burden on the taxpayers. He pointed out that the dollar amount changes every year because of the price of recycling; in 2021 it was almost \$84,000 and in 2019 it was approximately \$53,000.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. Currently all revenues from recyclables at the transfer station go into the General Fund. Approval of this article will allow 50 percent of those revenues to go into a special revenue fund, which can then be used to help fund future needs in equipment and facility upgrades. A similar fund has been effective for the Fire Department using ambulance revenues

for equipment and apparatus needs. The committee supports this approach of targeting revenues to directly support the facility generating that revenue.

Chair Hippler clarified that the voting body would be the agents to expend this so even if there was money in that account, similar to the Fire rescue account, the voters would have to approve any monetary that comes out of there; it would not be the selectmen to be agents to expend this fund.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, feels that it's a slippery slope when they see an article with no tax impact but feels that it does cost the taxpayers.

Clarence Gardner, John Connor Road, asked if it would be reasonable to say that they would try to use this fund to promote recycling as opposed to other projects.

Mr. Knapp responded yes stating that the intention would be to fund anything but one of his biggest projects he'd like to do is build an indoor recycling facility. He added that the compacter is going to need to be rebuilt within the next few years and that the building is going to need some repairs.

Brent Dickinson, Dels Way, asked what type of numbers are gained from the recycling.

Mr. Knapp responded that in 2021 it was \$83,839; 2020 it was \$43,811 explaining that this was due to the markets; 2019 it was \$53,661; 2018 it was \$84,999; and 2017 it was \$83,795. He pointed out that recycling is derived strongly off the price of fuel.

Mr. Dickinson inquired as to why they are only asking for 50 percent noting that some transfer stations throughout the state and country are self-sustainable when they do this.

Mr. Knapp replied that he really wants this to pass so feels that they should start somewhere.

Kevin Cahill, Reservoir Drive, is in favor of this article with the caveat that they somehow ensure the mandatory recycling.

Richard Butt, Old Town Road, pointed out that there is no tax impact and this revenue is revenue that can be used to offset taxes. He questioned as why there isn't an estimated tax impact on this article.

Mr. Knapp responded that it's hard to gauge based upon the differences in revenues over the years.

Mr. Butt indicated that they can base it on an average and asked if an estimated tax impact could be placed on the warrant article.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, indicated that normally estimated tax impacts is when you are spending money not receiving as a revenue.

Brief additional discussion occurred in regards to an estimated tax impact being made available.

Angela Drake, Duck Pond Road, noted that there was a time when they received their property tax bills which included the recycling revenue. She feels that this seemed to have had an impact because they saw how much they could save and she wouldn't mind seeing something like this again in the future.

Mr. Knapp noted that he welcomes ideas that people bring forth and stated that there is always room for improvement. He feels they do a good job with recycling with the small crew that they currently have.

Liz Evans, Oak Hill Road, noted that if they can recycle to increase revenue then they can help to reduce their tax rates. She asked what is the amount of revenue that has been generated based on the mandatory recycling order since inception.

Mr. Knapp was unsure of the amount since inception but based on the past five years they have averaged \$70,000 per year.

Ms. Evans inquired in regards to fines imposed to people from the mandatory recycling order.

Mr. Knapp doesn't believe there has ever been a fine noting that they strongly encourage residents to recycle.

As discussion continued, Moderator Meaney stated that they are getting outside of the scope of what is being discussed in regards to this warrant article.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 12 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 13

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$260,000) for the purpose of purchasing a new fully equipped 10-wheel plow truck for the Highway Department? The entire Two Hundred Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$260,000) will be withdrawn from the unreserved fund balance. (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.00

Selectman Osborne moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Osborne indicated that this article would replace a truck that was not voted on last year; last year the amount was \$230,000 and has gone up to \$260,000. He added that the delivery time for these trucks is approximately a year and a half out.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. The town needs to replace two plow trucks. It has a 2004 and a 2005 rusting Volvo 6-wheeler plow truck both of which require high maintenance and have well in

excess of 10,000 hours and 135,000 miles. This article will allow replacement of one of the two. The town is still feeling the effects of not purchasing any plow trucks for six consecutive years from 2009 to 2014, and then again in 2021. This 10-wheeler is the replacement vehicle of choice because of its 50 percent increased load capacity, allowing for more efficient operation of winter plowing, sanding and year-round gravel hauling. This will allow a “catch up” for the vehicle that was needed but not purchased last year. There is sufficient funding in the unreserved fund balance to purchase this truck.

Clarence Gardner, John Connor Road, inquired whether the unreserved fund balance is for the town as a whole or for that department. It was confirmed that it was for the town as a whole.

Kyle Parker, Old Francestown Road, noted his concern that there could be a price shift difference between now and when they purchase if this article is approved.

Benji Knapp, DPW Director, responded that there is a concern there but hopes it will be fine.

Brent Dickinson, Dels Way, asked whether they would be replacing a 6-wheeler with a 10-wheeler. He further questioned whether they would consider glider kits for replacement.

Mr. Knapp responded that they would be replacing a 6-wheeler with a 10-wheeler. He further responded that they looked into glider kits a few years ago and feels that a glider kit works all right if there's a donor truck already. For the public, he explained that a glider kit is a truck that has been totaled and you can make it in to what you want.

Mr. Dickinson noted that his definition of a glider kit is a brand new chassis in which you would put your drivetrain, etc. into that new chassis.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, inquired as to where the \$260,000 came from to go into the general fund.

Naomi Bolton, Town Administrator, explained that there was \$441,000 from the salary part but they did spend some year-end money. She noted that after the audited fund balance in 2020, there was \$2.2 million and they gave back \$600,000 when they set the tax rate in 2021 bringing it down to \$1.6 million; after they purchased the year end surplus they are adding \$324,000 to bring this year's unaudited balance to \$1.9 million. She explained that the \$324,000, at the end of the year, is money from unfilled positions, less the year end expenditures, of which, they would like to spend \$260,000. She stated that this still puts money back in the unreserved fund balance so when they set the tax rate in October, that's when they can decide to put money back for the taxpayers as well. She pointed out that there's still money left from 2021.

A brief additional discussion ensued, Moderator Meaney pointed out that discussion was heading off the topic of the article.

Tom Downing, Winterberry Lane, noted that Finance Committee members were able to look at the equipment and based upon his own observations, as a resident, the equipment was deteriorating and the need for the trucks were obvious. He noted that what was much more

obvious was the time and effort the DPW team spends on building, rebuilding and fixing these trucks. He feels that many of the vehicles have become safety issues due to their conditions.

Liz Evans, Oak Hill Road, is concerned with the liability of someone becoming injured noting that a lawsuit to the town would cost more than \$260,000.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 13 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 14

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$260,000) to be added to the previously established Highway Truck and Equipment Replacement Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of purchasing a new fully equipped 10-wheel plow truck for the Highway Department? (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.21

Selectman Osborne moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Benji Knapp, DPW Director, indicated that this is a mirror of the last article. He explained that when he first started in 2016, department heads were asked to put together an updated equipment replacement plan and he stated from day one, that they needed a new plow truck every year; they have eleven big ones and two little ones. Mr. Knapp pointed out that a truck in this business at eleven years old begins to become unreliable. He noted that he tries not to ask for more than one truck per year but felt that it was necessary to try to get the truck they didn't get last year along with the two they had planned for this year.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. The town needs to replace two plow trucks. Article 13 will replace the first; this Article 14 will replace the second. The relative justification for this purchase is cited in Article 13 above with the only difference between the two being the funding source. Article 13 will be funded by the unreserved fund balance and Article 14 will raise funds through taxation. Even if both articles are approved and the trucks are purchased, supply chain issues are likely to delay delivery until next year making it all the more urgent for approval this year.

Kyle Parker, Old Francestown Road, inquired as to how long it may take to get this vehicle if approved.

Mr. Knapp responded that the anticipation of the truck will be close to a year and approximately eight months for the plow equipment. He stated that if these articles are both approved, the trucks they are going to replace are going to plow next winter also.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 14 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 15

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Ninety-Five Thousand Dollars (\$95,000) to be added to the previously established Highway Truck and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of replacing one (1) fully-equipped medium duty highway vehicle? (Recommended by Board of Selectmen)

Selectman Osborne moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Osborne explained that they received a quote for the truck itself for \$68,000 and \$67,000 for the body, plow, etc. for a total of \$135,000. He stated that what they are planning on doing is taking \$40,000 out of the current Capital Reserve Fund towards the purchase which is why they are asking for \$95,000. He pointed out that these medium duty trucks are used daily in the summer to perform cold patching, brush cutting, sign repair and used to pick up and deliver parts; in the winter they plow snow – one medium duty does parking lots and the other does a route that has a lot of small turnarounds that the big trucks have difficulty performing. He pointed out that one of these trucks is currently out of commission and employees are using personal vehicles for pickup and delivery of parts; this is replacing a truck that did catch fire and has been out of service for over a month.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. Approval of this article will add sufficient funding to give the Highway Department a replacement for the 2009 medium duty vehicle, which was used for lighter and more restrictive road and plow work unsuitable for the larger fleet. The 2009 truck had been slated for replacement this year due to age, condition, and expensive repairs. It has since been taken out of service early due to a vehicle fire rendering it a total loss. Approximately \$40,000 in Highway Capital Reserve Fund is being used to offset part of the cost.

Chair Hippler added that 2009 doesn't seem like it's that long ago as far as a vehicle but, unfortunately, they no longer manufacture this particular model and chassis.

Marjorie Burke, Merrill Road, complimented Benji Knapp and his crew for the fabulous job they do keeping the roads clean and safe. She supports all the articles for the Highway Department.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, clarified that he is not against the vehicles. He stated that he would like to amend the article.

Upon review of a written copy of the amendment by Mr. Campana, Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, stated that the problem with the amendment is that the proposed article on the warrant is to put money into a capital reserve fund and the amendment is to purchase the truck. She noted that while it may not seem like it, DRA has ruled that those are two separate purposes

because one is putting money into a savings account with the designated purpose of buying the truck and the other is purchasing the truck. She stated that it would be an illegal amendment that would not be permitted. The amendment was rejected.

Clarence Gardner, John Connor Road, asked if you can't change putting money into an account with purchasing something now or does it say that you can't put something into the account and restrict it for future use.

Laura Spector- Morgan, Town Counsel, responded that once it goes into the account it can be used for any purpose that the account was set up for.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, inquired as to what the tax impact of eight cents is attributed to.

Chair Hippler responded that it's from the \$95,000 that's being raised by taxation to put into the fund.

Mr. Campana stated that the article doesn't indicate the total cost of the truck and doesn't say that there is \$40,000 coming from the Capital Reserve Fund to offset it. He feels that it's misleading not to have the breakdown within the article. He referenced previous articles.

Moderator Meaney clarified Mr. Campana's point that his concern that the wording of this warrant article does not reflect the entire cost this particular vehicle that is being funded.

Mr. Campana questioned whether an article has to reflect the total dollar amount raised.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, responded yes but here the total amount being raised is \$95,000 which is going into the Capital Reserve Fund of which, in addition to whatever funds are already in there, the selectmen appear to be agents to expend. She added that if they were purchasing it outright, they absolutely would need to have the complete amount.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 15 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 16

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Five Hundred Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$575,000) for road reconstruction and resurfacing of roads with up to Two Hundred Eighty Thousand, Nine Hundred Two Dollars (\$280,902) anticipated to be received from the State of New Hampshire Highway Block Grant (pursuant to RSA 235) and the remaining balance of approximately Two Hundred Ninety-Four Thousand, Ninety-Eight Dollars (\$294,098) to be raised by taxation and added to the previously established Road Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund? (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.23

Selectman Osborne moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Osborne explained that this is an every year occurrence for DPW to reconstruct, resurface and maintain the roads.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. The 2019 road reconstruction bond provided critically needed resources to reverse the deteriorating condition of town roads. The town is now in a much better position to target recurring resources on maintaining roads before they require a complete and costly restoration. The increased amount over last year's article is reflective of increased costs for materials used in road maintenance. State reimbursement is expected to provide just under 50 percent of the total cost.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, pointed out that this article is laid out to be self-explanatory and transparent to the taxpayers as opposed to others noting that there are inconsistencies as to how articles are written.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 16 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 17

To see if the Town will vote to establish a Master Plan Update Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 to begin funding the update of the master plan and to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000) to be placed in this fund? Further, to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund. (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.02

Chair Hippler moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Chair Hippler explained that the Master Plan was last updated in 2005 and this Capital Reserve Fund is the first of a three year plan. He indicated that typically, every five years, the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission prepares and updates a comprehensive plan for the region; additionally, the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission regularly works with member communities in developing and updating local master plans. He noted that it is the duty of every Planning Board, as established by RSA 673:1, to prepare and amend a master plan to guide the growth and development of the municipality; the master plan acts as a guide for the future. He stated that it identifies the most appropriate future development of the community and aids the Planning Board in designing ordinances that achieve the Master Plan's vision and result in smart growth, sound planning and wise resource protection.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee does not recommend this article. This article would establish a Capital Reserve Fund to update the Town Master Plan; it would also provide the first of three years of funding to support updating our current plan which is from 2005. The committee majority believes there are more critical funding priorities this year. Committee members in the minority believe having a current master plan is a useful tool for the Planning Board and that upgrading the master plan is overdue considering the changes in town over the past 15 years.

Bruce Fillmore, Planning Board Vice Chair, noted that they recommend this because as stated the master plan is very outdated. He stated that they would really like some guidance, in which they get from the master plan, on what to do with their current zoning ordinance which needs some work.

Tom Clow, Concord Stage Road, spoke in favor of the article noting that one of the advantages that he sees is through this process which is more than short term and the process itself is that it will stimulate a lot community discussion as far as what they want their town to look like in the future.

Brent Dickinson, Dels Way, supports this article indicating that, within the master plan, they need to look at increasing their tax base to include industrial and commercial because they need a broader tax base to support the school budget.

Luke Drake, Duck Pond Road, supports this article because the master plan is a guiding document for the town and lacking an update in this, they are using outdated information and/or relying on one body in town to determine what the town is going to do. He pointed out that these master plans tie into other communities as well and thinks that whether there should be more industry, less industry, development changes, non-development changes, this is where this needs to happen. He feels that this is far too old not to have been updated.

Clarence Gardner, John Connor Road, inquired as to what the \$20,000 times three is for.

Bruce Fillmore, Planning Board Vice Chair, responded that the plans are created by consultants who send out questionnaires asking what direction they think the town should go in. He added that it also involves a lot of community input in the process.

Eileen Meaney, Quaker Street, stated that one of the things she feels is important to consider when looking at this as a community, is that regional planning commissions are the sources of how planning happens not only at the community level but with infrastructure. For example, if they know that their community has expanded to the point where maybe a current state road is not sufficient to meet the traffic needs of the constituents, that is how it is determined through regional planning and through a master plan. She stated that is how you determine that expanding would need to happen or that's how funding is directed to accommodate infrastructure changes. She feels that this is something to consider if they want to be a part of that consideration; a ten year plan is established and, in order to become part of that ten year plan where funding is directed, you have to have current information and be able to demonstrate a need.

Heleen Kurk, Mt. Dearborn Road, questioned what the total cost would be since this is just money being placed into a fund.

Moderator Meaney responded that it is for three years so it would be a total of \$60,000.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 17 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 18

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) for cemetery improvements and fund this appropriation by authorizing the withdrawal of said sum from Cemetery Trust Funds Cy Pres Account? (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.00

Selectman Burdick moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Burdick explained that this is an annual request to pay for the repairs and damages to stone walls, fencing and boundary markers. She stated that this warrant is required to allow a withdrawal from the Cy-Pres accounts for the Cemetery Trustees to utilize; monies not required will not be withdrawn from the account. She added that they only can use income from Cy-Pres accounts and cannot touch the principal; Trustees of the Trust Funds have custody over fund.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. These funds are used to maintain the interior of town cemeteries. This is funded through withdrawal from the Cemetery Trust and has no tax impact.

There being no discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 18 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 19

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$30,000) to allow the Conservation Commission to secure contracted services -with a Licensed Forester for forestry services including plan updates, harvest layout, harvest management, forest inventory, invasive species control and other related services, and to allow the Conservation Commission to contract or purchase materials or services for maintenance and upkeep of town forests and fund this appropriation by authorizing the withdrawal of that sum from the Town Forest Account? (Recommended by Board of Selectmen) Estimated tax impact = \$0.00

Selectman Burdick moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Burdick explained that this is an annual request noting that they contract with a licensed forester. She added that this is funded out of the Town Forest Fund so there is no tax impact.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. The committee supports the contracting of professional services to manage and ensure the best use of the town's forests. This article is funded out of the Town Forest Account and has no tax impact.

Bruce Fillmore, Gould Road, highlighted the forestry services and asked if it would be all right for him to amend the article to include layout trails within the services.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, believes it would be fine because the purpose of the article is to secure contracted services for a licensed forester and it would just add an additional service.

Andy Fulton, Conservation Commission Chair, pointed out that the resources that are used for this work is generated by the harvest of town forest land. He indicated that part of the commission is to manage the town forest in a comprehensive fashion and the better they manage for multiple uses, including trails, the more resources they have to work with.

Chair Hippler understands the intent of the amendment that is coming and asked Mr. Fulton if this is something that is in the umbrella of the town forester.

Mr. Fulton responded yes explaining that they rely on the contracted forester to help them with any similar type uses of multiple stakeholders in the town forests. He doesn't believe that adding this language changes plus or minus the intent of the article. He added that it's an expansive list of items that the town forester can do for them that is very critical to the health of their forests and to having a comprehensive plan for town forest lands.

Moderator Meaney read the amendment to the article provided by Bruce Fillmore: "Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$30,000) to allow the Conservation Commission to secure contracted services -with a Licensed Forester for forestry services including plan updates, harvest layout, layout trails, harvest management, forest inventory, invasive species control and other related services, and to allow the Conservation Commission to contract or purchase materials or services for maintenance and upkeep of town forests and fund this appropriation by authorizing the withdrawal of that sum from the Town Forest Account?" The amendment was seconded.

The amendment passed on a vote: 33 - yes, and 1- no.

With the amendment to Article 19 passing, Moderator Meaney opened the discussion on Article 19, as amended.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, noted that although they are not in a meeting, based on some nods from members it's likely that the committee would support this change.

Heleen Kurk, Mt. Dearborn Road, asked if this would cost more with this amendment.

Andy Fulton, Conservation Commission Chair, doesn't see that it changes allowance as this was something that was allowed before the change in language and is more explicitly included now. He doesn't feel it changes the intent of the article or the funding needed to conduct the work that is anticipated.

Clarence Gardner, John Connor Road, asked, in regards to the funding coming from harvesting revenue, how much that revenue is and where the rest of the money goes.

Mr. Fulton responded that the revenue generated by town forest harvest activity is irregular; some years the market is up and you get more income from a harvest, some years the properties being managed through harvest encounter stands of valuable timber, and some years it's a maintenance project with the anticipation of revenue generation decades down the road. He stated that it's a moving target explaining that a good harvest can easily pay for this article and then some and other years it may be zero. He added that all the money goes into the town forest account and is only unlocked by the vote of the town body. Mr. Fulton stated that other uses, in which they are not requesting this year but have in the past, include property purchase to create additional town forest land when working with interested sellers.

James Drury, Oak Hill Road, asked what the total amount is currently in the forest account.

Selectman Burdick responded that the current amount in the account totals \$48,221.24.

Andy Fulton, Conservation Commission Chair, pointed out that the amount currently in the account is a low balance for them because over the past 18 months or so they've had a very significant acquisition work but the amount is adequate to cover what is being requested in this allowance.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 19 would be placed on the ballot as amended.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 20

Shall the Town designate town owned parcel map 401, lot 117 containing 31.94 acres as Conservation Land to be managed by the Weare Conservation Commission?

Selectman Burdick moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Selectman Burdick explained that this property was taken by tax deed in 2016 and connects to six contiguous lots of land currently managed by the Weare Conservation Commission.

Bruce Fillmore, Gould Road, questioned as to where this property is located.

Chair Hippler responded that it's across from John Stark off of Hemlock Drive.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 20 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 21

Shall the Town adopt the provisions of RSA 72:28-b, All Veterans' Tax Credit? If adopted, the credit will be available to any resident, or the spouse or surviving spouse of any resident, who (1) served not less than 90 days on active service in the armed forces of the United States and was honorably discharged or an officer honorably separated from services is not eligible for receiving a credit under RSA 72:28 or RSA 72:35. If adopted, the credit granted will be Five Hundred Dollars (\$500), the same as the veterans' tax credit adopted by the Town under RSA 72:28. (Recommended by Board of Selectmen)

Vice Chair Meaney moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Vice Chair Meaney explained that the Board of Selectmen felt the need to include this warrant article this year after it came to fruition that a few applications were denied based on a resident not serving in a qualifying war or conflict or not having a required medal to earn the standard veteran's credit. He noted that the State of New Hampshire recently adopted the all veteran's credit to allow more residents the benefit of this credit. He stated that the Board of Selectmen feels that the Town of Weare should also adopt this credit.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. Under RSA 72:28 the current \$500 annual tax credit is limited to those veterans who served during war or period of armed conflict. It is based strictly on when you served, regardless of whether you were actually in combat or a war zone. This article would extend the exemption to anyone who honorably served and otherwise meets the criteria. The committee supports this article based on one simple principle – when you sign up to serve, you have put your life on the line for your country not knowing what the future holds. The committee believes the tax impact will be minimal.

Luke Drake, Duck Pond Road, feels that if they are going to recognize veterans for their service that they recognize veterans and don't discriminate among them based on when they served.

Brent Dickinson, Dels Way, supports this article and stated that just because someone isn't classified in a conflict of war doesn't mean that they didn't experience something that is similar just on a limited basis.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, noted his support of this article.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 21 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 22

Shall the Town modify the provisions of RSA 72:39-a for elderly exemption for property tax in the Town of Weare, based on assessed value, for qualified taxpayers, to be as follows: for a person 65 years of age up to 74 years of age, increase the exemption from \$70,000 to \$90,000; for a person 75 years of age up to 79 years of age, increase the exemption from \$90,000 to \$120,000; for a person 80 years of age or older, increase the exemption from \$300,000 to \$400,000? To qualify, the person must have been a New Hampshire resident for at least 3 consecutive years, own the real estate individually or jointly, or if the real estate is owned by such person's spouse, they must have been married to each other for at least 5 consecutive years. In addition, the taxpayer must have a net income of not more than \$33,000 or; if married, a combined net income of less than \$44,000; and own net assets not in excess of \$80,000 excluding the value of the person's residence. (Recommended by Board of Selectmen)

Vice Chair Meaney moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Vice Chair Meaney explained that during the revaluation in 2021, the property assessed values increased between 40 percent to 60 percent and the Board of Selectmen feel that this exemption should reflect a comparable increase (approximately 30 percent). He outlined that this warrant article will increase the exemption as follows: from \$70,000 to \$90,000 for a person 65 years of age up to 75 years of age; from \$90,000 to \$120,000 for a person of 75 years of age up to 80 years of age; and from \$300,000 to \$400,000 for a person 80 years of age or older. He pointed out that this article does not change the income limits nor the asset limits to qualify. This is an effort to keep the elderly available to stay on their own while in their own home.

Tom Downing, Finance Committee Chair, was recognized to speak. The Finance Committee recommends this article. Approving this warrant article will make adjustments to the current exemption program to bring it in line with the recent town wide property revaluation. Last year, senior citizens who qualify for the program saw their tax bills disproportionately increase as the entire increase in valuation was taxed. This would proportionately increase the exemption to reduce any undue tax burden on our most effected senior population, many of whom rely on fixed incomes. The committee believes the tax impact will be minimal.

Luke Drake, Duck Pond Road, is in support of the article but is concerned that the income hasn't changed. He feels that this would be reducing the number of people that will be eligible. He

feels that if what they are trying to do is to protect some of the elder community from losing their homes through the taxation, they need to adjust the income levels upwards as well.

Liz Evans, Oak Hill Road, did not support this article based on the sheer process of valuing assets explaining that assets can be moved into trusts and income can be adjusted based on how it's taken – if its dividends and interest that is fed out of an investment portfolio. She stated that this could make it be perceived that income is below a particular range while assets can be held in an irrevocable trust outside of the owner's name. To be transparent, she does not support this because she believes that there are way too many abilities to store assets and reduce your income based on sources.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 22 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 23

Shall the Town delegate the duties and responsibilities of the cemetery trustees to the Board of Selectmen? If approved, the delegation shall take effect 90 days after adoption and shall continue until rescinded by vote of Town meeting. (Recommended by Board of Selectmen)

Vice Chair Meaney moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Vice Chair Meaney explained that due to existing vacant, unfilled elected positions, the town may assign the duties of the Cemetery Trustees to the Board of Selectmen per RSA 289:6. He noted that this is an essential duty of the town and they have both a moral and legal obligation to take care of their cemeteries.

Clarence Gardner, John Connor Road, questioned whether this should be amended to say that the trustees would regain that power when they are at full membership.

Vice Chair Meaney responded that nobody had signed up for the vacancy. He stated that this abolishes it for the time being unless they bring it back.

Mr. Gardner inquired as to what would be the process if people were interested in this position.

Vice Chair Meaney responded that they could turn around and take the legal action to bring it back.

Tom Clow, Concord Stage Road, noted that it appears that the RSA already assigns that duty to the selectmen if it can't be done by the trustees and inquired whether this article is necessary.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, replied that the statute starts by stating every town shall elect a Board of Cemetery Trustees and goes on to say that any town with a town meeting form of government may adopt to have a board of selectmen serve for the elected office of the

cemetery trustees. She indicated that the default is that they have an elected body and then this body has to decide to assign those duties somewhere else. She stated that this article is necessary.

Heleen Kurk, Mt. Dearborn Road, questioned whether this will continue to be on the ballot every year to see if people want to sign up.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, responded that this question will not have to be on the ballot every year but what she is hearing is that if there is suddenly an upswelling of people that want to be cemetery trustees to go talk to the selectmen who will happily hand the duties back over.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Meaney announced that Article 23 would be placed on the ballot as written.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 24

To see if the town will vote to reinstate the Ethics Committee abolished in 2014, with members to be elected by vote of the town beginning in 2023 for terms of office as set forth in the Code of Ethics adopted by the town in 2006. The Code of Ethics is available on the Town website.
(Recommended by Board of Selectmen)

Chair Hippler moved the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Chair Hippler explained that an Ethics Committee and a Code of Ethics was previously established in 2005; in 2014, the town discontinued the committee by ballot due to unfilled vacant elected positions. He noted that there have been inquiries as to the establishment of an Ethics Committee which requires a vote by the town.

Heleen Kurk, Mt. Dearborn Road, provided a brief history of the previous Ethics Committee. She proposed an amendment to the article.

Moderator Meaney read the amendment “To see if the town will vote to reinstate the Ethics Committee abolished in 2014, with members to be elected by vote of the town beginning in 2023 for terms of office as set forth in the Code of Ethics adopted by the town in 2006.”

Mrs. Kurk stated that the reason for her amendment is because she felt that way the article was written was just to have a committee and it didn’t indicate how they would go about getting the committee and hopes this clarifies it.

The amendment was seconded.

Liz Evans, Oak Hill Road, supports the establishment of an Ethics Committee along with the amendment. In terms of ethics being defined within the terms of a committee, she feels it will be

valuable to reduce corruption and fraud, increase accountability, and reduce the tax rate over time.

Luke Drake, Duck Pond Road, believes the town needs an Ethics Committee because of issues raised about ethical concerns. He doesn't believe that people are intentionally violating things but that ethical guidance or training may be needed. He added this is needed to add objectivity even if it's an incidental or inadvertent ethical conflict. Referencing committee vacancies, he feels that the town needs some "outside the box" thinking as to how to get residents to participate in some of these committees. He strongly supports the amendment as proposed.

Clarence Gardner, John Connor Road, inquired whether the article could include a reference to the Code of Ethics.

After brief discussion in regards to the steps of amending an amendment, Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, clarified that they do not operate under any particular rules of order and it's the moderator's rule; if the moderator's rule is that an amendment cannot be amended, then the amendment cannot be amended.

For lack of confusion, Moderator Meaney noted that they move forward with the proposed amendment and if Ms. Kurk would like to add on to her amendment, it would be her decision.

In regards to the ruling, Neal Kurk, Mt. Dearborn Road, indicated that it's possible that once this amendment is either adopted or not adopted, that a further amendment by Mr. Gardner could be offered.

James Drury, Oak Hill Road, pointed out that all the other articles begin with "shall" and this begins with "to see if the town will vote to reinstate". He questioned whether this was for informational purposes or to create the Ethics Committee; will the wording, as it stands, actually create the committee.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, responded that whether the warrant article says "see if" or "shall", it all means the same thing so it can be either.

Heleen Kurk, Mt. Dearborn Road, stated that she has no problem adding on Mr. Gardner's request to her amendment.

Moderator Meaney explained that all Mr. Gardner wants to do is add a reference that the Code of Ethics can be found on the website.

Ms. Kurk amended her amendment in which Moderator Meaney read: "To see if the town will vote to reinstate the Ethics Committee abolished in 2014, with members to be elected by vote of the town beginning in 2023 for terms of office as set forth in the Code of Ethics adopted by the town in 2006. The Code of Ethics is available on the town website."

Brief discussion occurred in regards as whether the Code of Ethics was adopted in 2005 or 2006; it was determined that it was voted on in 2006.

Frank Campana, Quaker Street, supports the amendment noting he feels that it's unfortunate that people need a committee to oversee them to make sure they do things that are ethical. With this committee, he is concerned with the ethics of the Ethics Committee.

Bill Alleman, Helen Dearborn Road, stated he previously served on the formation committee and then on the Ethics Committee. He noted that they uncovered a number of concerns which he believes ultimately resulted in the formation committee being relatively ambivalent on the whole matter. He wonders why the Board of Selectmen now feels that won't be an issue.

Chair Hippler feels that it's a valid concern but unfortunately they don't know unless they put it out there.

Heleen Kurk, Mt. Dearborn Road, mentioned that, within the Code of Ethics, it brings out other items that would make for harmonious government. She added that it's a double edged sword – people that run could have a vindictive streak and cause other problems. She feels that the concept of this committee could be good. She pointed out that this article has no money to it right now but it could come to the fact that they do need money for it if it moves forward.

Tom Clow, Concord Stage Road, pointed out that this warrant article doesn't include the number of members on this committee. He questioned whether this is on file somewhere so that it could be referred to.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, responded that the membership is included within the Code of Ethics.

Brent Dickinson, Dels Way, noted that it's his understanding that, if this article fails, people can go to the Secretary of State's office if they have a problem with an elected official or an ethics violation.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, responded that the Secretary of State's Office has a public integrity unit but does not enforce local Code of Ethics, they enforce state law.

Luke Drake, Duck Pond Road, indicated that he has dealt with the state but they are not interested in local town issues. He pointed out that the state will cite statutes versus what the town has determined, independently, in its ethics statement. He is more strongly in favor of local control.

There being no further discussion, voting occurred on the amendment to Article 24. The amendment passed with voting: yes – 28, no – 2, abstain – 1.

Moderator Meaney announced that Article 24 would be placed on the ballot as amended.

Moderator Meaney recognized Andy Fulton, Hemlock Drive, to speak.

Andy Fulton, Hemlock Drive, asked what the activity, action and purpose of this reinstated committee should it be approved. He questioned what the vision as to what the body would do and how would they help the town through the issues of dealing with disagreements, etc. How would it function to help the town out?

Moderator Meaney responded that she believes that the entire framework for the committee, including terms of elections, terms of service, framework they use to operate, their internal process is all imbedded within the town's Code of Ethics.

Laura Spector-Morgan, Town Counsel, confirmed that it is all within the Code of Ethics and the documents relating to the Code of Ethics. She pointed out that the town currently has a Code of Ethics with no enforcing body. She explained that this would be the body that hears ethics complaints and take whatever action might be appropriate.

Maureen Billodeau, Town Clerk, moved to restrict reconsideration. The motion was seconded and passed.

ARTICLE 25

To transact any other business which may legally come before this meeting?

Chair Hippler announced that Vice Chair Meaney is not running for selectman again. He stated that the board and the body would like to thank him for his six years of service as a Board of Selectman for the Town of Weare. They presented Mr. Meaney with a plaque of appreciation.

Vice Chair Meaney thanked everyone in the town for their support of himself and the board.

Tom Downing, Finance Chair, announced that Moderator Eileen Meaney is not running for Moderator. He thanked her, on behalf of himself and the town, for work that she has put in and wished her the best.

Chair Hippler moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and passed.

*A true copy; I attest:
Michelle Mulholland*

Maureen Billodeau
Town Clerk