

Wallingford Selectboard
Annual Informational Meeting Minutes

March 6, 2023

Selectboard Members Present: Bruce Duchesne, Kathy Luzader, Justin Jankus, Carolyn Behrendt, and Mark Tessier.

Others present: Sandi Switzer, Julie Sharon, Dave Seward, Rob Carey, Maria French, Carol Tashie, Peg Soule, Tammy Heffernan (moderator), Gary Fredette, and Jane Duda.. There were about 35 people in attendance. Only Town officials and those who addressed the Board were listed as present.

Selectboard Chair Bruce Duchesne called the meeting to order at the Wallingford Elementary School at 7:00 p.m. Moderator Tammy Heffernan welcomed everyone to the annual Informational Meeting. B. Duchesne introduced Board members. Attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Heffernan asked if anyone new to Town Meeting would like to introduce themselves. Marie Sheehan said this was her first Town Meeting

Article I. Ms. Heffernan read Article I related to elective offices. No public input.

Article II. Ms. Heffernan read Article II related to scholarships. No public input.

Article III. Ms. Heffernan read Article III regarding property tax payments. No public input.

Article IV. Ms. Heffernan read Article IV of the Informational Meeting Agenda: Shall the voters of the Town of Wallingford appropriate a sum not to exceed \$1,426,795.24 for the General Operation of the Town, with an amount not to exceed \$1,051,133.39 to be raised in Property Taxes for fiscal year 2024? B. Duchesne provided an overview of revenue and expenses for the coming fiscal year as follows:

Social Security Cost of Living (COLA) is 8.7 percent. The Board approved 5 percent employee raises. The zoning administrator is putting in more hours each month, so there was an increase to zoning salary line 5004. Note, line 5008 transfer station salaries was level funded- we budgeted for a new employee taking the place of a longtime employee so hourly rates were adjusted, but transfer station employees would also receive 5 percent increases. The overall Administration budget is up about 4.6 percent.

Legal expenses line 5115 was reduced from \$5,000 to \$3,000 to offset increases elsewhere including line #5155 Rutland County Tax (up about \$3,000 and which the Town has no control). The overall Town Government spending is up just under \$1,400.

Most line items were level-funded. Gilbert Hart Library requested a \$2,000 increase from \$38,000 to \$40,000. The total Appropriation increase was less than \$3,300.

Increased prices for fuel and materials impacted the proposed Highway budget. Town garage operating expenses line 5301 is up \$3,550 (heating fuel, etc); Diesel fuel line 5315 is up \$6,875; we reduced winter sand line 5318 from \$38,100 to \$35,000; level funded

winter salt line 5319 at \$60,000; increased gravel line 5323 by \$17,500 as a result of a projected 30 percent material increase; paving line 5325 is up \$10,000 also due to rising material costs. The overall Highway budget is up \$35,185 mainly due to gravel and paving.

With feedback from residents, the Board increased line 5406 Special Officer Contract for sheriff patrols from \$46,000 to \$57,900. This will give us 24 hours of coverage a week rather than 20 hours. We had discussed even more hours with Sheriff David Fox, but he indicated staffing could be an issue. The overall public safety budget is up \$11,900.

Capital budget was reduced slightly - \$235.

Salary increases for the Summer Recreation program and Elfin Lake are reflected on lines 5801 and 5901. Most other lines items are up slightly due in large part to the rising cost of doing business. The overall Recreation budget is up \$4,750.

The Selectboard begin working on the proposed budget in mid-November. Highway, Recreation, Conservation, Energy, Zoning, Gilbert Hart Library, Wallingford Rescue, Mt. Holly Rescue, the assessor, and the Rutland County sheriff were all given the opportunity to attend meetings or provide input. Agendas were posted to alert residents which sections of the budget would be discussed at meetings. After a lot of input, the Board presents the Fiscal Year 2024 budget that will meet the needs of the municipality while keeping in mind the impact on taxpayers' wallets. We urge citizens to support this spending plan.

Dave Seward asked about Communication Group expenses and B. Duchesne responded the line item was for the monthly newsletter. Mr. Seward asked about cell tower income and B. Duchesne said it was including in the Building Fund for building maintenance and upkeep.

Article V. Ms. Heffernan read Article V regarding M. Moriah Masonic Temple tax stabilization. No public input.

Article VI. Ms. Heffernan read Article VI regarding Wallingford Rotary tax stabilization. No public input.

Article VII. Ms. Heffernan read Article VII regarding Maple Valley Grange tax stabilization. Rob Carey asked if the Grange was still operating. Ms. Heffernan responded state Grange officials requested tax stabilization.

Article VIII. Ms. Heffernan read Article VIII regarding a Wallingford Day non-binding article. B. Duchesne said it was intended to gather input from residents. Mara French urged residents to support the article and noted Wallingford Day has been a Recreation Committee event for the past several years and relied on municipal insurance coverage. She said the Wallingford Day group raised all the funds needed for the annual event and no taxpayer dollars had been spent. Peg Soule indicated Ms. French's explanation helped clarify the article. B. Duchesne said the Town had acted in the capacity as a bank for the

event and were cautioned by Vermont League of Cities and Towns not to handle money unless it was officially a Recreation Committee subcommittee. He noted the fiscal year 2024 budget included \$1,750 for the annual event. Ms. French said members of the Wallingford Day group wanted to be sure any unspent funds raised did not roll into the general budget at the close of the fiscal year. Gary Fredette said he fully supported Wallingford Day and it should be under the Town's umbrella. Carol Tashie asked if the Wallingford Day group wanted to be part of the Recreation subcommittee and Ms. French confirmed they did especially for insurance purposes. Rob Carey commented this discussion showed why annual Town Meetings were important to attend for informational reasons. He asked if Wallingford Day was similar to Little League. J. Jankus responded Little League became a part of the Recreation Committee over a period of time. Jane Duda said the connection between Wallingford Day and the Town's Recreation Committee would add continuity.

Article IX. Ms. Heffernan read Article IX related to Other Business. Town Administrator Sandi Switzer reminded residents the Town Hall Concert Series featured Extra Stout playing Irish music on March 15.

Dave Seward asked for an ARPA update.

Peg Soule responded there were 27 applicants and the ARPA Committee would likely make recommendations to the Selectboard in April.

By consensus, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Submitted By: Sandi Switzer/Town Administrator

APPROVED THIS 20th Day of March, 2022

WALLINGFORD SELECTBOARD

Carolyn Behrendt _____

Bruce Duchesne _____

Justin Jankus _____

Kathy Luzader _____

Mark Tessier _____