

**Wallingford Selectboard**  
**Annual Informational Meeting Minutes**

**March 4, 2024**

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

**Others present:** Sandi Switzer, Julie Sharon, Rodney Ward, Rob Carey, Rob Barker, Barbara Boucher, Carol Tashie, Tammy Heffernan (moderator), Gary Fredette, Sandra Hochberg, Eric Davenport, Art Peterson, Jill Burkett 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. There was no response.

**Article I.** Ms. Heffernan read Article I related to elective offices. Rodney Ward asked about the school director races and Ms. Heffernan responded by listing the elective posts.

**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 as follows: Shall the voters of the Town of Wallingford appropriate a sum not to exceed \$1,450,419 for the General Operation of the Town, with an amount not to exceed \$1,080,388 to be raised in Property Taxes for fiscal year 2025? B. Duchesne provided an overview of anticipated expenses for the coming fiscal year as follows:

On page 10 of your annual Town Report is the Administration budget of \$565,720, which is up \$27,270. Most line items were level funded. We budgeted across the board 3 percent raises for employees with Social Security cost of living adjustment (COLA) set at 3.2 percent. The assessor expense total on line 5002 is up mainly due to adding \$2,800 for an eventual reappraisal. The Town has \$91,777 in a reappraisal fund and will budget small amounts over the next few years to pay the full cost. Line 5025 encompasses all of the various municipal insurances including liability, workers compensation, health etc. That line is up about \$10,000.

Page 11 in your annual report is the Town Government Operations budget of \$185,100, which dropped by \$11,750. Transfer station costs are projected to go down \$10,000 from \$110,000 to \$100,000 due to all of the great work by our employees – Art Nemeth and Jerry Reynolds – along with Conservation Commission efforts to collect plastics and keep them out of the solid waste stream as well as all of the recycling by Wallingford citizens.

Page 12 Appropriations is up just \$2,869 to \$77,164. Nearly every line was level funded with a couple of exceptions. Gilbert Hart Library requested an additional \$2,000 for a total of \$42,000 on line 5205; and Wallingford Rescue requested an additional \$2,500 for a total of \$23,500 on line 5210. Mt. Holly Rescue line 5211 was \$2,500 last year and they have closed down operations so that \$2,500 was shifted to Wallingford Rescue since they will cover that region.

Page 13 Highway Department went down by \$3,275. Most lines were level funded. Winter salt line 5319 was dropped from \$60,000 to \$45,000 based on prior year's spending on salt; paving line 5325 was increased from \$75,000 to \$85,000 to keep up with the roads; the 2019 Milton CAT line 5342 dropped from \$21,325 to \$1,000 just for maintenance as that piece of equipment has been paid off; and we budgeted \$28,000 for the new CAT grader on line 5346. Thanks to the Revenue Augmentation Trust and voter approval to use a portion of trust funds for a Capital purchase, we put \$160,000 toward the grader purchase substantially lowering the annual payments over the next 5 years.

Page 14 features the Public Safety budget is up \$5,810 due to increased hourly rates set by the Rutland County Sheriff Department for the 24 hours per week coverage. The Capital budget is nearly level funded at \$80,850. And the Recreation budget is up just \$2,100.

He said the Total Fiscal Year 2025 budget of \$1,450,419 is up just \$23,624 or 1.66 percent.

Jill Burkett asked whether the Town purchased a new grader and what happened to the old one. J. Jankus confirmed the new grader had been purchased and the old one was traded in to reduce the purchase price.

Rob Barker asked which roads would be paved this summer. B. Duchesne said the road foreman and road commissioner had not made those decisions yet.

Sandra Hochberg asked about rumors that Ludlow Rescue would take over coverage of East Wallingford now that Mt. Holly Rescue closed. Wallingford Rescue member Eric Davenport said Wallingford Rescue would provide coverage for East Wallingford.

**Article V.** Ms. Heffernan read Article V related to the establishment of a Wallingford Asset Fund. B. Duchesne explained the federal government required ARPA funds to be obligated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026. He said following VLCT's advice, the Town moved the ARPA funds into the general account for municipal operations. The Town, he said, could then report funds obligated and spent ahead of federal deadlines. The onetime surplus created by the transfer of ARPA funds into the general account would be moved to the Wallingford Asset fund at the end of this fiscal year with voter approval, he said. Those funds would be used for ARPA projects, including sidewalk repairs and the purchase of a vehicle for the East Wallingford Fire Department. He noted some of those projects would not be completed by the federal deadline risking

the money. The Town wanted to protect those funds and use it for ARPA projects, he explained.

Jane Duda asked if the funds could be used for other purposes. B. Duchesne responded in the affirmative, but he added the intention was to spend the funds on ARPA projects. Gary Fredette asked about passage and rejection of Article V. B. Duchesne said the money would be used for special projects if the article passed and to reduce taxes for the next budget if it failed. Rob Carey asked why the Town was involved with sidewalks. B. Duchesne said Fire District #1's charter required them to plow sidewalks but not maintain them. Rob Barker asked if the Board discussed placing funds in an interest bearing account and Town Clerk and Treasurer Julie Sharon confirmed funds had been in an interest bearing account. J. Jankus said the Board's intent with Articles V and VI were to make sure we have funds available for special projects beyond the federal deadlines. K. Luzader said this topic was detailed in three newsletters mailed to residents and was also on the municipal website, in the annual Town Report and posted on Front Porch Forum.

Ms. Heffernan introduced Rep. Art Peterson who gave an overview of his voting record and how bills become law. A number of residents – Jane Duda, Barbara Boucher, Carol Tashie and Justin Jankus posed questions or offered input.

**Article VI.** Ms. Heffernan read Article VI regarding the fiscal year 2024 surplus to go into the Wallingford Asset Fund. B. Duchesne said the article amount of \$466,789.51 was the ARPA total transferred to the general account the Town wanted to reserve for special projects.

**Article VII.** Ms. Heffernan read Article VII regarding Wallingford Rescue, Inc. tax stabilization. No public input. Eric Davenport said townspeople have been approving the tax stabilization for over 14 years.

**Article VIII.** Ms. Heffernan read Article VIII related to Other Business. Jill Burkett asked about a tax credit for unspent education funds when the schools were closed due to COVID. B. Duchesne said that was a good question for school directors.

By consensus, the meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Submitted By: Sandi Switzer/Town Administrator

APPROVED THIS 1st Day of April, 2024

**WALLINGFORD SELECTBOARD**

**Carolyn Behrendt** \_\_\_\_\_

**Bruce Duchesne** \_\_\_\_\_

**Justin Jankus** \_\_\_\_\_

**Kathy Luzader** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mark Tessier** \_\_\_\_\_

