

**Town of Boscawen
Select Board
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 6:00 PM**

In Attendance: Lorrie Carey, Matt Burdick, Paul Dickey, Kate Merrill, Katie Phelps, Dean Hollins, Kearsten O'Brien, Sarah Gerlack, Kellee Easler, Jason Killary, Kevin Wyman & Tim Kenney.

Guests: Tama Tillman, Bill Bevans, Gary Tillman, Ray Fisher, Sherlene Fisher, Mike Fisher & Loren Martin

Roll Call: completed and guests introduced.

Chairwoman Carey called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Chairwoman Carey noted grammatical changes to the 02.02.23 minutes.

Selectman Paul Dickey motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Seconded by Selectman Matt Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairwoman Carey clarified misinformation discussed after the Advisory Budget Committee public hearing on February 2nd. Chairwoman Carey stated the town does not buy firetrucks every 5 years. Chief Tim Kenney noted prior to the mini pumper, the last truck bought was in 2014 and before that was 2004. The town sold the previous 1975 mini pumper in order to get the new one. The trucks last about 25 to 30 years. Chief Kenney said equipment is updated on a rotated basis. The 2004 truck is scheduled to be replaced in 2029. Chairwoman Carey asked Lieutenant Jason Killary to clarify the amount of police cars the town has. EMD Killary noted they have 6 police cars. Chairwoman Carey noted the Police Department (PD) does not have a boat or a 3-wheeler. Lt. Killary said they do have a M-1 Gator completely funded by the military. The PD has an officer who served in the military. The equipment was donated from a program where municipalities enrolled can get surplus military equipment. Lt. Killary noted the Fire Department also received an M-1 Gator, fully funded for use in their operations.

Community Services Director Sarah Gerlack clarified questions on the welfare budget. The budget went up 75% because last year the department was able to use ARPA funds and grant money that they applied for in order to bring the budget down. CS Director Gerlack said they lowered it back down since they still have some ARPA funds and grant money to use. However, next year the budget will be increased. The Community Services Department brought in \$16,000 in grant money last year to be used by March 2023 and \$45,000 in ARPA funds.

Chairwoman Carey asked Lt. Killary to clarify how the police dog was funded. Lt. Killary stated the police dog, and his handler were fully funded by grants. The police dog and his handler have since retired. Chairwoman Carey asked if there were any police standards that the PD is failing to achieve. Lt. Killary noted there is no such thing as a height to weight ratio. Police officers in the State of NH must pass a physical fitness exam every three years to achieve and maintain their

certification. The test is administered by the NH Police Standards and Training Academy which includes various timed physical tasks dependent on age and gender. Grooming standards are individual to each department and can vary during the time of the year. Lt. Killary noted the PD participates in Beards for Buck's. Officers are allowed to grow beards during a certain time of the year and contribute donations towards different charities.

Planning and Community Development Director Kellee Easler clarified a question on the growth in housing permits. Any type of code enforcement or building inspection that pertains to the town's building permitting process, is paid for through homeowners. Property owners have to pay for their own permits and inspections. It is not funded by tax dollars. Chairwoman Carey asked if the town has a limit on the number of housing permits. PCD Director Easler noted there is no limit. Currently there is a housing shortage. Chairwoman Carey asked if legally, there could be a limit to the number of houses built in Boscawen annually. PCD Director Easler said the State law does not allow a limit on the number of houses being built.

Chairwoman Carey clarified a misunderstanding with veteran's credits. The community thought the town was removing veteran's credits, but Boscawen has endorsed 10 times the minimum rate of \$50 that was offered by the state. The state asked all communities that offer more than the minimum veteran's credit, to readopt their credit. Chairwoman Carey noted the Town of Boscawen reaffirmed the veteran's credit because the residents of Boscawen have no interest in reducing the credit. Currently the veteran's credit is \$500.

There was a question on town-related meeting hours. Chairwoman Carey clarified town-related meetings start no earlier than 5:30pm so working individuals can attend. Most meetings start at 6:30pm.

There was a question about a Selectperson developing land. The Board clarified that no members of the Select Board are developing land in the Town of Boscawen.

Chairwoman Carey clarified a question on Union agreements. The Police Department and Town employees are not unionized.

There was a question on what the funds for the King St. Improvements could be used for. Chairwoman Carey noted some improvements could include street lighting, sidewalks, landscaping, crosswalks, signage, and benches. PCD Director Easler noted they could use the funds for a blinking stop light at a pedestrian crosswalk which is an expensive purchase. They could also use the funds for bus stops. The improvements will be determined by the public.

Chairwoman Carey clarified a question on the number of employees in town office. Not all employees are full-time. The town has a lot of part-time employees. Chairwoman Carey said they could put everyone in full-time positions but then the town would be paying benefits. Part-time employees save the town money. Chairwoman Carey noted if an officer is sick in the PD or if they have to request military service there is backup. The PD finally has enough officers to go to 24 hours, which has been their goal for years.

Chairwoman Carey appreciated the public's feedback. The Select Board chose not to increase their stipend for 2023. She noted the Select Board agreed that the employees deserve what they were offered in the original budget however they do consider the public's feedback. For the public's knowledge, each department head spent months creating their budget from zero. The budgets went through numerous revisions over the months before the final budget was presented. Chairwoman Carey noted there were a number of discussions in previous meetings regarding what could be adjusted and what could be deferred.

CS Director Gerlack noted there was a concern about some of the Community Services programs taking away from the food pantry at the Boscawen Congregational Church. CS Director Gerlack clarified that the backpack program was created 5 years ago. A school board member in Boscawen made the town aware that other schools were offering the program. CS Director Gerlack said the town started the program from scratch for Boscawen. There was also concern about how much time staff devotes to the program. CS Director Gerlack clarified that they spend about 10 hours a month on the backpack program. Another concern was that the programs were taking away from the holiday food baskets. CS Director Gerlack clarified that the town has been doing holiday food baskets for about 40 years. The church has always put together the Thanksgiving food baskets. CS Director Gerlack noted it is not the town's intention to take away from the food pantry's efforts. The Community Services Department works collaboratively with the food pantry throughout the year. CS Director Gerlack noted for the first year of the backpack program they budgeted \$3,500 and used it all. In the next year, they budgeted \$1,500 and didn't use any of it. Since then, the program has been fully funded by donations and ARPA funds. CS Director Gerlack noted any money not expended in her budget goes back to taxpayers. Chairwoman Carey clarified that any money left in the overall budget at the end of the year goes back to taxpayers. The town has to expend the money or make sure it is encumbered for a specific purpose.

There was concern about the granite benches. Selectman Burdick clarified that the benches, labor, and installation were fully funded by donations. Chairwoman Carey noted there was previous concern about people sitting on the front stairs, causing a potential tripping hazard. The solution was to install benches for individuals to utilize. There were 10 benches paid for entirely by businesses and individuals in the community. Chairwoman Carey noted the ice rink and lighting were also donated by an anonymous individual.

There was a concern received about the number of solar exemptions and the impact of that on other taxpayers. Chairwoman Carey noted the Board addressed the public's feedback and will be revisiting their concern.

Department Head Updates: Finance Director Kate Merrill noted the Select Board must complete the Audit questionnaire together. Chairwoman Carey deferred completing the questionnaire until the next meeting.

PCD Director Easler said there are a number of properties in town that have ongoing building permits. There have been multiple code changes, since the permits were pulled. She will be meeting with Code Enforcement and Building Inspectors to create a policy for building permit renewals to present to the Select Board for approval.

PCD Director Easler updated the Board on 20 High St. She will be sending out a second letter, reviewed by legal. The owners were supposed to close up the windows and fix the garage. The garage itself is falling apart. The current owners have not reached out to PCD Director Easler. Both the Fire Chief and Police Chief are still having issues. The owners have a week to respond or come into the office.

PCD Director Easler presented the Land Use latest bill status on different pieces of legislation. She noted SB 44 asked for all residential lots be allowed to have 1 to 4 family dwelling units on it. This includes single family, duplexes, 3-family, or 4-family. PCD Director Easler said NHMA is not supporting it because it takes away from local control, but it is being addressed due to the housing shortage. Chairwoman Carey asked if yard sale permits required permits or a fee. PCD Director Easler said permits are not required for yard sales and it is no cost to have one.

Deputy PCD Director Kearsten O'Brien presented an abatement in the amount of \$204.45 for an assessed value change.

Selectman Burdick motioned to authorize Town Clerk Nicole Hoyt to abate \$204.45 for 27 Gage St, property located at Map 183D, Lot 24, Sublot T1 due to a change in assessed value per recommendation from Avitar Associates of New England. Seconded by Selectman Dickey. All in favor. None opposed.

Deputy PCD Director O'Brien presented a solar exemption in the amount of \$19,200 for Tax Map 83, Lot 43.

Selectman Dickey motioned to approve the solar exemption for Tax Map 83, Lot 43 in the amount of \$19,200. Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Deputy PCD Director O'Brien presented a solar exemption in the amount of \$18,600 for Tax Map 47, Lot 36, Sublot 1.

Selectman Burdick motioned to approve the solar exemption for Tax Map 47, Lot 36, Sublot 1 in the amount of \$18,600. Seconded by Selectman Dickey. All in favor. None opposed.

Deputy PCD Director O'Brien presented a veteran's credit for Landowner W in the amount of \$500.

Selectman Burdick motioned to approve the veteran's credit for Landowner W, Tax Map 47, Lot 49 in the amount of \$500. Seconded by Selectman Dickey. All in favor. None opposed.

Deputy PCD Director O'Brien presented a veteran's credit for Landowner B in the amount of \$500.

Selectman Dickey motioned to approve the veteran's credit for Landowner B, Tax Map 47, Lot 37 in the amount of \$500. Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Deputy PCD Director O'Brien presented an Intent to Cut for Operation 22.049.09T for Tax Map 94, Lot 37.

Selectman Burdick motioned to approve the Intent to Cut for Operation 22.049.09T for Tax Map 94, Lot 37. Seconded by Selectman Dickey. All in favor. None opposed.

CS Director Gerlack received a letter from the Boscawen Congregational Church Food Pantry Manager Linda Patton, reading "The pantry's mission is to serve anyone in the community having food insecurities, needing nutritious food or personal care products. At this time, we are serving 96 families. We have had a lot of things happen this year. For example, our big expense was we had to have the inside of our building repainted and a new floor put down. Also we had to replace 3 of our freezers. We are asking for a donations in any amount to help us continue to serve the residents of the community". Chairwoman Carey noted with regret, that the town will not be able to donate. The town has no more money in their donations budget following budget cuts. CS Director Gerlack will send them a letter next week.

Fire Chief Kenney noted they will not have enough time to collect all the data needed for the grant. There is 3 years of data required and they don't have the equipment. The grant should open again in the fall, and they will reapply. Selectman Dickey noted there were comments from the public about the fire department only taking the trucks out for the parade. The department had a total of 273 calls of service in 2022 and 242 in 2021. Chief Kenney noted they picked up more EMS calls in 2022. Chairwoman Carey asked if the parade counted as a service call. Chief Kenney clarified it does not count as a service call. The firefighters know that they will not be paid for the parade. They join as part of the association. Chairwoman Carey asked if there was a mutual aid agreement. Chief Kenney said Boscawen has a mutual aid agreement with 23 towns in the capital area. In addition, they also have a mutual aid agreement with the Lakes Region.

FD Merrill presented a donation from Mr. Rodney Sewall Jr. in the amount of \$50 for the Town Beautification fund.

Selectman Dickey motioned to approve the \$50 donation from Mr. Rodney Sewall Jr. for the Town Beautification fund. Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

PCD Director Easler said Planning Board agreed to look into adding Fire Department Impact Fees. They will be working with Central NH Regional Planning Commission to create a new fee to include the Fire Department. No further discussion.

Town Administrator Katie Phelps noted on the master budget, they've had a total reduction of \$183,333 in the operating budget. The 2023 operating budget totals \$4,863,268 which is a 6% increase over 2022. The Capital Reserve contributions were reduced by \$164,000. The overall contributions to Capital Reserves previously established is \$351,000. Chairwoman Carey noted concerns with the deferments. She asked Chief Kenney how much a fire truck costs. Chief Kenney said a fire truck last summer cost \$550,000 to replace. The Fire Department is scheduled

to replace their next fire truck in 2029. If the town only puts in \$65,000 this year, the department will have to ask for more money next year. Currently the balance of the Fire Truck CRF is \$257,000. If the Fire Department doesn't get the money to buy a new truck and the current one breaks, the town would have to borrow money at an added cost. Chairwoman Carey noted for the Public Works Building, there is only a CRF balance of \$271,000. Public Works Director Dean Hollins estimated the cost to replace his building to be approximately \$4 to \$5 million depending on the design of the building. If the town contributes \$25,000 a year, the building will never get built. Chairwoman Carey said the Construction & Demo Debris landfill closure will be a problem in the next five years. At some point between the time of closing and the actual design, they will have to create a closure plan. PWD Hollins said when they priced it out 2 years ago, it was over \$2 million. Chairwoman Carey noted that the longer they wait to invest in these projects, the more expensive they will become.

Selectman Dickey asked for clarification on the Parks and Recreation budget. The salary line increased from \$21,000 in 2022 to about \$26,000 in 2023. TA Phelps clarified that a portion of Deputy PCD Director O'Brien's time was moved from the Executive budget to Parks and Rec. They removed the previous stipend for the Parks and Rec Coordinator. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien will be working on the program during her normal work hours. She is not getting a pay increase to add that role. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien noted they added a late fee for parents if they do not pick up on time in order to avoid overtime. Also, the Merrimack Valley School District will not be providing buses. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien researched other bus companies, but the pricing is too expensive for field trips. She is researching events that could come to the Parks and Rec program.

Chairwoman Carey stated there were public comments on what there is to do in the Town of Boscawen. There are a lot of outdoor activities to do in Boscawen. It is a riverside community with a beautiful boat launch. People can walk the Town Forest, Boscawen Town Park or various farms and conserved land in the community. There are also newly refurbished tennis courts and basketball courts. An ice skating rink was just donated for the wintertime, free of charge. CS Director Gerlack noted the Town Clerk's office has Hunting and Fishing licenses so residents can enjoy Walker pond or the river.

Chairwoman Carey noted for the public that the employees care about the residents of Boscawen and because of that, they made the necessary cuts to their budgets. Additionally, they increased their health insurance costs from 5% to 10%. They reduced cost of living adjustments from 6% to 4.6% and will not be taking merit increases that they deserve.

TA Phelps presented the revised warrant. Article 6 with the new 2023 operating budget in the amount of \$4,863,268 is still awaiting recommendation. Chairwoman Carey clarified the budget process. The department heads put together their budgets and present them to the Select Board. The Select Board then preliminarily approves the budgets, and they go to the Advisory Budget Committee, who advises the Select Board on changes. The Select Board acts on the advice and then holds a public hearing. The Board listens to public feedback and acts on it. After feedback, the Select Board can finalize the budget. Chairwoman Carey said this year it was confusing because they added another layer of sending it back to the Advisory Budget Committee for their recommendation on each article that pertains to money.

Selectman Dickey motioned to recommend Article 6 for the warrant to see if the town will vote to raise an appropriate the sum of \$4,863,268 for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations containing special or individual articles addressed separately. Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

TA Phelps noted that Article 7 was still awaiting board recommendation and has been reduced by \$164,000.

Selectman Dickey motioned to recommend Article 7 for the warrant to see if the town will vote to raise the appropriate sum of \$351,000 to be contributed to the town capital reserve funds previously established as follows: Fire Truck - \$65,000; Fire Station - \$50,000; FD Safety Equipment - \$10,000; Highway Heavy Equipment - \$50,000; Public Works Building - \$25,000; Municipal IT - \$30,000; C&D Landfill Closure - \$32,000; Municipal Buildings - \$49,000; Police Cruiser - \$40,000.

Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

TA Phelps requested a board recommendation on Article 14.

Selectman Burdick motioned to recommend Article 14 for the warrant to see if the town will vote to rescind the solar energy systems exemption adopted at the March 8, 2011 meeting and readopted at the March 9, 2021, town meeting. If passed, the rescission shall take place and effect on April 1, 2023. Seconded by Selectman Dickey. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairwoman Carey opened the public comment period.

Ms. Tama Tillman, resident of Boscawen, stated the Select Board should give the public a copy of the personnel pay study the town completed. It would show the public that Boscawen employees are being paid less than the average employee in the State of NH. Ms. Tillman noted pay is one of the reasons the town has issues with employees leaving. She said it takes a lot of effort from everyone to replace a position and the town ends up spending more money. Ms. Tillman said salary lines were increased in the budget to catch employees up to what other towns are paying for similar positions. Chairwoman Carey agreed that one of the Town's most difficult retention areas is the Police Department. The town spends a lot of money to train officers who end up leaving because they can't afford to stay. Ms. Tillman agreed with the original recommended budget which included merit increases and 6% COLA.

Ms. Tillman noted that an individual running for the Select Board position works for a company that works for the town. Ms. Tillman said it was a conflict of interest. She would like the information to be presented to legal and/or the state. Chairwoman Carey said they will contact the Secretary of State's office. In the past, the Board has contacted the Secretary of State about Town employees running for a seat on the Select Board. There has been part-time town employees who have served on the Board. Full-time employees are not allowed to serve on the Board.

Ms. Loren Martin, the candidate running for Select Board, addressed Ms. Tillman's concern with there being a conflict of interest. Ms. Martin noted she works for Avitar Associates. They have had a contract with the town long before she ran for Selectperson. Ms. Martin noted there would be no conflict of interest as long as she recuses herself from anything that would have to do with the Avitar contract, and all information must be disclosed to the public. Selectman Dickey asked if she was a member on other Boards. Ms. Martin said she is a member on the Planning Board.

Ms. Martin noted legislation bills that the Board should be aware of. Senate Bill 63 is being discussed to enable towns to adopt a tax credit for qualified private community property owners. Ms. Martin said a taxpayer who lives on a private road voiced concern about paying the same taxes as other residents on town roads. The legislation heard the concern, and it will be introduced to the Senate next week. If the bill is passed, it would allow anyone on a private road to receive a tax credit. Ms. Martin also made the Board aware of House Bill 403 which seeks to reduce the authority that Selectmen have by removing good cause from abatements and limiting that to only clerical and administrative errors. Another is House Bill 423, relative to ADU's being allowed by right which NHMA is not supporting because it takes authority away from local Planning Boards.

Ms. Martin asked if the Advisory Budget Committee will have the opportunity to approve the newly revised budget and put it on the ballot. Chairwoman Carey clarified that the Advisory Budget Committee will have enough time to revisit and vote on the new revised budget.

Ms. Martin commented on the discussion of growth within housing permits. There are mechanisms in the law that could allow the town to put some limitations on how many houses are built in the year. Ms. Martin said the town could adopt a growth moratorium on building under RSA 674. It would limit how much could be built annually. Chairwoman Carey said the town did have a moratorium in place at one point, but it expired. They were told they couldn't continue without a specific end date. Ms. Martin noted there is a proposed plan being discussed for a large development. If they meet the requirements for zoning, the Board can't restrict them from building as much as they want. Ms. Martin recommended the moratorium as a way to limit the number of building permits annually.

Ms. Martin clarified the health insurance increase for employees. The Select Board increased the employee contribution for insurance from 5% to 10%. That means if an employee was paying \$28/wk., they are now paying \$63/wk., which is a 125% increase in their overall health costs. Selectman Dickey noted that two years ago employees were paying 10%. Chairwoman Carey said the increase has been discussed in public meetings, but people chose not to listen. Selectman Burdick took time to look at how they could offer employee's COLA in order to offset their insurance costs. Ms. Martin applauded TA Phelps for her efforts in the transparency project. Ms. Martin stated for the record that the total revised budget increased 6% but the total increase to raises would be \$133,527 which is a 2.7% increase over last year. Selectman Dickey strongly encouraged the public to attend a Select Board meeting at least once a month in order to understand everything that goes into the town. Discussion ensued. Ms. Martin suggested including a potential tax impact on the warrant. FD Merrill will research how they can include it in the warrant. TA Phelps said they can have the information regarding the impact of articles available at town meeting.

Mr. Ray Fisher of 200 Water Street apologized for previously insinuating that employee's did not work on Fridays. Mr. Fisher recommended putting the \$50,000 Capital Reserve contribution for a Fire Station into the Public Works building contribution. He stated the town has needed a Public Works building since he was on the Board. Mr. Fisher also voiced concern about the number of non-profits in town. He said non-profits are making a lot of money. Chairwoman Carey said there was public concern about why the tax rate is so high in town. There is \$78 million dollars' worth of property not being taxed in Boscawen. Chairwoman Carey agreed that the town is losing more of their taxable property to an untaxed status which is why we are one of the top 13 property poor towns in the State of NH. Boscawen does not have the taxable property they should in order to support the population, which makes the tax rate higher. Chairwoman Carey said there are a number of ways they can address the issue and they will be moving forward with it. Ms. Martin noted for the record that there are non-profits that pay taxes. There are certain categories pursuant to the state law that allow non-profits to qualify for charitable, religious, or educational exemptions. Ms. Martin noted one of the pending house bills pertains to charitable exemptions. With charitable housing projects, there are provisions in statute that allow charities to collect a Payment in Lieu of Taxes. Ms. Martin said the definition of charitable is vague and the legislator is trying to refine it.

Mr. Mike Fisher of 4 Circle Drive heard numerous times tonight that the public should attend meetings every Thursday night. Mr. Fisher used to attend meetings every Thursday night and felt it made no difference. Mr. Fisher stated people do pay attention to what's going on in town. He reads the monthly Newsvine and volunteers a lot of his time at the fire station in which they discuss the information. Mr. Fisher suggested having more accurate note keeping. He felt there were more concerns expressed by the public that were not included in the notes or phrased incorrectly. Chairwoman Carey noted the Newsvine is edited by the editor. The entirety of the minutes is not included in the monthly Newsvine. TA Phelps noted to refer to the website for minutes of meetings. Mr. Fisher also felt there was disrespect from employees when receiving feedback from the public. CS Director Gerlack said the hearing went great. The aftermath is where the disrespect came. CS Director Gerlack said the public was calling, emailing, using social media and coming into the office sharing their displeasure. Discussion ensued. Chairwoman Carey noted they need to do a better job with communicating to the public. She said Select Board members are restricted to what they can do, and they have to follow processes. Mr. Fisher suggested having a second public meeting in between town meeting so they can discuss and revise the budget before finalizing. Chairwoman Carey said they can't do anything this year due to the public notice, but they will in the future. CS Director Gerlack noted there is a statute for the Town report. The report has to be out so many days before town meeting. The corrected budget should be in the Town report. Chairwoman Carey said the Town report must go to the printer next week, so they are holding the Advisory Budget Committee meeting on Monday.

Deputy PCD Director O'Brien gave an update on the Economic Development Committee meeting. Mr. Matt Taylor attended the meeting and discussed a potential TIF district. It could help with commercial building and sewer infrastructure. Chairwoman Carey clarified they are looking to apply the TIF district to Commercial St. It is a town owned property that could be valuable if they develop it, which could help with the town's tax base to lower taxes.

PCD Director Easler gave an update on the Planning Board meeting. They approved the 5th phase of GMI. They also approved 109 High St for a sober living facility. The Planning Board discussed the prior Piontkowski gravel pit on High St, now owned by Building & Loan LLC. There was confusion about what people can and can't do with their property. There was an application for a 4-lot subdivision. Chairwoman Carey said the Planning Board can only act on what they are presented with which was a 4-lot subdivision.

Chairwoman Carey gave an update on the Penacook-Boscawen Water Precinct meeting. The rates increased to \$6.27 per 100 cubic ft. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien stated the public hearing was held at 5:30pm. She asked the Commissioners to hold future public hearings later in the evening for working families. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien asked if the commissioners will be working on filtering the water better due to her experiences with high iron within her home. The Water Precinct clarified that they cannot run Well 2 by itself. They need to run the other two wells in order to minimize iron content. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien said they are working with DES on grants to add a new tank in 2030. She asked how long the tank would last after installation but as of now there is limited information. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien also asked about their public notices. Currently, they post them on the Penacook-Boscawen Water Precinct website and in the town offices. Chairwoman Carey obtained a copy of their 2023 budget. She asked questions about the 50% increase in salary for the commissioners. They noted the increase was justified due to all the work they do. Chairwoman Carey said anyone on a Commission or Board knows there is a lot of work that Commissioners don't get paid an hourly wage for. She suggested reducing their salary back to the stipend which was used to offset expenses. The Commissioners did not approve her suggestion. Chairwoman Carey asked about their miscellaneous budget. It was \$500 for their Christmas party. Chairwoman Carey noted there are three commissioners. She does not believe it costs that much when the town spends that amount for all employees to attend an event. The commissioners would not eliminate the budget. Chairwoman Carey suggested reducing their office supplies in which they did not agree with. She also discussed the life of the meters. The Commissioners started an ongoing replacement plan for the meters. The Commissioners discussed ARPA money, the well repair and getting an agreement with Briar Hydro for net metering. There was discussion on their debt service for the meters. The debt will be paid off in 2025. Chairwoman Carey questioned their \$3,600 fuel stipend. The fuel stipend allows each commissioner \$1,200. In total, each commissioner would receive a \$7,200 stipend. Chairwoman Carey was concerned that it was too high. PCD Director Easler was concerned with how expensive it was to run the Precinct building. She noted was a plan recently completed in order to look at the property for future expansion of the Public Works building. The Precinct building is right in the middle of it. It would leave no room to build. PCD Director Easler asked about the lease at the Precinct but only Commissioner Murphy knew about it. She asked for a copy of the lease and Commissioner Murphy said he would send it over. Chairwoman Carey said they do need to discuss where to put the Public Works building and how it will be cited. She noted in the future they could allow the Precinct to use the building at no charge or move them to the Torrent Station if they can't find a use. CS Director Gerlack noted the 1% increase for one department doesn't seem like a lot, but the Water Precinct employees are part time. The town presented 21 budgets at an 11% increase.

TA Phelps noted there are two public hearings next week on Thursday, February 16th. They are for the Municipal Transportation Tax and Sewer Project Bonds and Notes. Chairwoman Carey noted an individual asked about the transportation tax. She clarified that it will be used by the Public Works budget for sidewalk and road maintenance. It is an incremental savings plan that allows the town to complete necessary projects. PWD Hollins said if they had the money, their next project would be paving the sewer district. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien asked if the Public Works budget has money for repair and paving for sidewalks. PWD Hollins said they have \$30,000 left from side walk improvements but it will not pay for much of a repair. Selectman Burdick clarified that the tax is diversified amongst all individuals that register a vehicle which includes owners and renters. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien noted it is \$5 a year, per vehicle.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 7:57 pm under RSA 91-A:3 II(a). Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to close a nonpublic session at 8:00 pm under RSA 91-A:3 II(a). Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Public meeting reopened at 8:00 pm.

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 16, 2023, at 6:00 PM.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted by Hannah Gardner