



at \$400,000. The increase in the tax rate is growing slower than the CPI released in November.

The highway budget is decreasing by approximately 3%. John was commended for his understanding and managing the budget well. Salaries and benefits are increasing by approximately 21% due to adding a fourth member to the Road Crew. The highway department has been using Dick Stygles, who is semi-retired. The Board feels it is important to hire and train a fourth fulltime person because the workload is a lot for three employees. Also, a fourth person would ease the burden of the workload if another employee is out sick or on vacation. Roadside mowing is increasing by approximately 82% to allow for mowing to be done two times per year. The additional mowing will help with controlling wild parsnip and maintaining site distance at intersections.

Andre Roy feels there has been a dramatic improvement to the roads since John Roberts was hired. He feels John and the other Road Crew members are doing a stellar job.

The FY'20 highway budget includes funds to apply toward the highway deficit. Allison explained that no funds are being budgeted in FY'21. This is because the highway department ended FY'19 with approximately \$120,000 unspent funds. This amount, along with the funds in the FY'20 budget and some funds from the General Fund will eliminate the highway deficit ahead of schedule. Revenue for the highway department is decreasing by approximately 34%.

The administrative budget is increasing by approximately 4%. Major increases include funds for the Admin. and Fire Dept. Capital Budget Reserves, hiring or contracting a person to write grants, hiring a person to take the DRB minutes, allotting funds to resolve drainage issues at the library and increasing the budget amount for trash and recycling collection services. The contract for trash and recycling services expires at the end of June 2020. The Selectboard estimated the cost based on previous quotes and the fact that there are new rules in effect, such as the collection of food scraps, that may impact the cost. Julia feels the Town has missed out on grant funding opportunities due to volunteers not having enough time and/or skill set. Ideally, the revenue brought in from grants will offset the expense of the grant writer. The Selectboard agreed with the recommendation of hiring someone to take the minutes of DRB meetings. Currently Melissa, who is highly skilled, takes them. Hiring someone to take over taking the minutes will enable her to better spend her time on other tasks. The library has been experiencing water problems in the basement. An engineer looked at the building to see what needed to be done to resolve the problems. The Library Trustees are searching for grants to help with the cost. The money in the town budget would be used for matching funds. Admin revenue is expected to increase by approximately 3%.

Andre Roy feels the Selectboard has put forth a respectful budget. He appreciates that the increase in the tax rate is lower than the CPI from November. He mentioned that he is frustrated with the subscription service for Fairfax Rescue because a subscription does not cover a household, it covers individuals only. He feels that the funds allocated to Fairfax Rescue should be reduced to reflect the subscription rates.

Ira Allen asked that the Selectboard revise the Capital Budget format to include such things as the overall expense of the item and inflation. He feels that more information would be valuable in identifying if the cost of infrastructure is sustainable.

### **FOLLOW UP TO PROPOSED BUDGET**

Based on the feedback received from those who attended the meeting, no changes were made to the budget. A request to add funds for the Summer Concert Series was denied due to it being submitted late. In addition to the request being late, the Selectboard felt that the current funding from the Library, Rec Department and the Committee for Westford Children for the concerts is sufficient.

### **LEGAL OPINION REGARDING HUNTING ON TOWN TRAILS**

The Town's attorney provided a written legal opinion in response to an inquiry of hunting on town trails. The attorney advised that the Town, if it so chooses, can either enact an ordinance provision prohibiting the use and discharge of firearms on Town-owned trails, or post Town-owned trails in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 5201 to prohibit hunting and the use and discharge of firearms. With that said, even if an ordinance were enacted or the land was posted, the Town cannot directly regulate hunting on lands outside of the trails or regulate or otherwise prohibit the mere possession of firearms on Town trails. The Selectboard discussed the difficulty of enforcing an ordinance and, also felt that posting the trails would also be difficult to enforce. The person who inquired will be advised of the opinion and that the Selectboard has no plans at this time of enacting an ordinance or posting the town trails prohibiting hunting.

### **BROOMBALL TOURNAMENT INQUIRY FROM REC COORDINATOR**

Tonya Calley, Rec Coordinator, advised that the Broomball Tournament scheduled for Jan. 17 will need to be canceled due to lack of registrations. She has explored other options and has found a local group, Game On, who are willing to run the tournament on Presidents' Day weekend. It is estimated that the Town will receive approximately \$300-\$620 depending on the number of teams that register. Tonya is asking for feedback from the Selectboard on this option and also wondered about liability issues that need to be taken into consideration. The Board supported Game On running the event and views at it as a rebuilding year. Game On will need to submit a certificate of liability insurance naming the Town as an additional insured. The Selectboard expressed their appreciation for Tonya's efforts in finding an option and also for the Rec Committee's efforts in getting the ice rink up.

### **CHITTENDEN COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY AGREEMENT**

Bill Cleary made a motion to accept the annual agreement with the Chittenden County Humane Society, seconded by Julia Andrews. Motion passed: 3-0.

### **TOWN MEETING WARNING**

Nanette provided the Selectboard with a draft of the Town Meeting Warning, which included the proposed budget amount presented earlier in the meeting. Unless a petition is filed for the inclusion of an article, there will be no changes to the draft. Nanette is not aware of any petitions circling.

Bill Cleary made a motion to approve the Town Meeting Warning as drafted, seconded by Julia Andrews. Motion passed: 3-0.

If a petition is received, a new warning will be drafted for approval at the next meeting.

### **TOWN OFFICE FRONT DOOR**

In order for a key pad to be used with the new door, the door needs to open out not in. Nanette expressed concern with being able to open the door during winter months when snow

accumulates. She and the Board did not feel the number pad was crucial. Nanette will proceed with replacing the door as is. New hardware will be installed, and new keys will be distributed.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Julia received an email from Joe Franz regarding the speed and volume of traffic on Woods Hollow Road.

Bill was contacted by Linda Will. She is not satisfied with how the road is being maintained. It was pointed out that the Road Crew is doing what was requested, pushing the snow away from the end of the road. Bill will invite her to a future meeting to discuss the issue with the entire Board.

**COMMUNICATION**

John would like to remind residents that plowing across town roads is prohibited. He would also like remind residents that the metal dumpster is for metal items only. Lately a lot of non-metal items are being placed in the dumpster. The Selectboard would like the reminder to state that if the dumpster continues to be abused, the town will no longer provide the dumpster.

**ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS**

Accounts payable and payroll warrants were approved.

**ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison Hope, Chair  
Selectboard

Nanette Rogers  
Town Administrator

**TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.  
ROAD SCHEDULE  
Dec. 13, 2019 – Jan. 9, 2020**

Work to be done

- Plow, sand and salt when needed.
- Roadside brush cutting.

Work completed

- Plowed, sanded and salted roads several times.
- Work on the trucks.
- Worked on break room remodel.
- Fixed a few pot hole areas.
- Serviced the Cat excavator.

Approved at the 1/9/2020 Selectboard Meeting.

