



Administrator or Road Foreman to sign excess weight permits, seconded by Bill. Motion passed: 3-0.

### **FY'22 DRAFT BUDGET PRESENTATION**

Nanette and Greg updated the budget presentation slideshow. They had expanded on the challenges slide due to the unusual year had by everyone and they wanted to recognize the very exemplary work done by town employees during this difficult time.

Julia mentioned that we held elections in a way we never have before even though it's not mentioned on the slide. She is proud of how the Town has overcome the challenges of COVID-19. In the past year the Town added a fourth road crew member, completed work from the October 2019 storm, worked on the 1705 Route 128 Property Project and the community wastewater system, and began updating the 5-Year Town Plan.

Julia mentioned that a victory lap should be taken by all the town organizations. The Board asked for flat or reduced budgets this year and everybody did that. This has a major positive impact for the Town. The total proposed FY'22 budget is \$2,020,310 and total anticipated revenue is \$265,170. The surplus being applied from the FY'20 budget is \$20,000. The amount to be raised by taxes in the coming year is slightly lower than the current year. The Grand List has also slightly increased. This results in a tax rate decrease of \$0.0094. It was noted that this rate does not include the school tax rate.

Expenses of note in the Highway Department include a slight increase in salaries despite adding a fourth crew member; decreasing funds for ditching and culverts, budgeting more for equipment rental and a reduction in roadside mowing due to locking into a three year contract with the current vendor.

Expenses of note in the non-highway part of the budget include a slight increase in the Admin. Capital Budget Reserve and a decrease in Lister salaries. Currently the Town has three residents that fill this complex job; however, one is looking to retire. The Town is now looking to hire a part time assessor, who will be staffed by a part time employee to do the day-to-day work.

Julia explained that the current tax rate is \$0.7107 and the anticipated tax rate for FY'22 is \$0.7013. She thanked Greg, Nanette and MJ for their assistance with drafting the proposed budget. Julia opened the floor for discussion for the public. George Lamphere was present. He pointed out an error with the formal name of what used to be the White Church. The correct name is the Westford Common Hall.

### **DOG WARDEN APPLICATION**

Kristin LeClair submitted an application for the Dog Warden position. She has a pet sitting business and is already familiar with a lot of Westford's dogs. She also has a background in office administration and venue/bar security enforcement.

Julia thought Kristin's application was very compelling and she has a great mix of somebody that cares for animals but also has a bit of muscle just in case. Kristin was present in the meeting. Bill made a motion to appoint Kristen LeClair as Dog Warden, seconded by Allison. Motioned passed: 3-0.

Allison explained a dog issue that was recently brought to the Selectboard's attention. Dogs are leaving one of the Maple Shade Town Forest trails and intruding on the Baczewski's property. Recently a dog severely injured one of the Baczewski's chickens which had to be put down. Allison was curious when this issue would pop up since she has noticed a lack of appropriate behaviors and manners from local dog owners walking the trails. Allison noted that the chickens are way over on the other side of the Baczewski's property from the trail. When Rebecca Baczewski confronted the dog's owner, the owner stated that Westford does not have a leash law, which is untrue. Allison thinks a follow up with the resident would be helpful. The Baczewski's are requesting that leashes be required on the section of trail that passes their property.

Kristin is not familiar with the town trails. Julia thinks that if the individual can be identified another hearing, if not for anything other than education, would be warranted since the Baczewski's have made a formal complaint. Allison would like Kristin to follow up with the Baczewski's as her first assignment.

Kristin asked if there is a person she reports to. Nanette Rogers explained that she can set up a time to talk and they will work through the details. Allison also feels that the Board should talk about Rebecca's recommendations for signage. Allison is not a huge fan of over signage but people do need to understand that the Town does have an ordinance. Bill asked if we have anything in the Dog Ordinance for restitution for damages and if not how quick of an adjustment would that be? Allison floated the idea of bringing in the Conservation Commission. Julia thinks it makes perfect sense for dogs to be on leash there. She thinks it is common courtesy. Bill is also not a fan of signage; he thinks education over public forums is a better choice. Nanette explained that not everybody that uses the trail are from Westford. It is possible people need an additional visual reminder. Kristin thinks signage would be helpful. Julia agreed with Bill that putting things on Front Porch Forum is a great idea. Bill thought it would be a good way for the new warden to introduce herself to the community.

#### **REQUEST TO USE GROOMED TRAILS FOR NORDIC SKI GROUP**

Caitlin Smith, the Nordic Ski Coach at BFA Fairfax, submitted a request to use the Town's groomed trails near the school. She praised the quality of the trails and groom job. She would like to use them with her team on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. There will be about thirty skiers broken into two groups and they will wear masks and social distance.

Caitlin was present in the meeting. Bill had no issues with the request but reiterated if we approve the request it does not give Caitlin exclusive use to the trails and he wants her to understand that residents may be on the trails. If they wanted to donate to the Recreation Committee or Conservation Commission for the use of those trails that would be appreciated. Caitlin explained that if this became a regular thing that they would participate in maintenance of trails. Julia came to a similar but different place; she wouldn't want a financial contribution to come between the students using the trails or not using the trails. If this works out well and they want to do it again next year they would talk about something more formalized because this represents a huge increase in formal trail use overall.

Allison had a few questions. As a daily user of the trails, she thinks this is a lot of users and that it is likely to be off putting for Westford residents to have that many people on the trail on a Saturday morning. She was also curious how the students are getting to the school? Caitlin wasn't sure at the moment; they may drive themselves if they have a license, parents may drop them off or a bus may drop them off. Allison just wanted to make sure that Caitlin

coordinates when they are there during the week so that they are not there when children are being picked up because traffic is already congested during that time. She has trepidations, it's a lot of use for the morning on a Saturday. Caitlin explains they can be flexible with their time on Saturday. Allison explained that it is their duty as board members that if they agree to this that they notify residents about the increase in use via Front Porch Forum. Bill wasn't comfortable approving unless they heard from the Conservation Commission since they are the ones that do the trail maintenance. Julia thinks that it's more important to allow kids to get out during the pandemic. She thinks that we should approve this and if there are issues the Conservation Commission can circle back with Caitlin.

Allison made a motion to allow BFA Fairfax Nordic Ski Club to use the Westford Town Trails near the school on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings pursuant to all restrictions for COVID by Governor Scott, and that the Selectboard will email the Conservation Commission with any concerns, seconded by Bill. Motion passed: 3-0.

#### **FY'22 BUDGET – DISCUSSION**

Julia asked the public if they had any concerns or comments about the presentation. There was none.

#### **APPROVE 2021 TOWN MEETING WARNING & PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

Nanette explained that this was the time for the Board to discuss if it wanted to move the Town Meeting date to the same date of the school vote. We don't have authorization to move it currently, however there is legislation at the state house that is currently being discussed that will allow towns to do so. There was a lot to think about, this would be a one-off situation. Allison thinks it would save the Town time and money if we only had to do all voter mailing in April. Nanette explained that the school is billed for the expenses of their elections. Julia keeps coming back to the fact it seems like since we separated town budget and school budget votes, there has been a decrease in voter participation, but she isn't sure changing it back this one time would do anything. Bill felt that the traditional date for Town Meeting of was best. Julia felt the will of the Board was to stick with March. Allison didn't think there was any compelling reason to switch it, however lots of the cost saved by combining the elections would be absorbed anyways by the school sending out to all voters.

Nanette asked if we wanted to reduce the hours of the polling place. Bill was ambivalent. Allison would love for poll workers to work less that day, but limited access to voting right now doesn't feel like the right move. Julia's thoughts were that so many people are working from home that they don't need to be there at the crack of dawn. Allison pointed out that many essential workers still have those early hours.

Bill made a motion to approve the Official Warning for Town Meeting for March 2, 2021 and the public informational meeting for March 1, 2021, seconded by Allison. Motion passed: 3-0.

#### **UVM NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATIONS GRANT COLLABORATION LETTER**

Melissa has been sending the Board information about this grant. The grant would partner Westford with UVM as they want to place this smart technology in this town. It is Julia's understanding that this smart tech would help us if we were going to build a wastewater system and monitor flow. George Lamphere was present and confirmed that to be correct. UVM is looking at working with two towns, Westford and Bristol. Julia asked if the unthinkable happens and we don't move forward with wastewater is there any implications for the Town from UVM if this happens. George does not think so. The only thing the Planning

Commission would need from the Town would be support from town staff and others to gain access to their buildings so that the properties can be assessed. Allison made a motion to authorize Julia to sign the support letter on behalf of the Selectboard, seconded by Bill. Motion passed: 3-0.

#### **WESTFORD STORE & CAFÉ LIQUOR & TOBACCO LICENSES**

The Westford County Store & Café submitted their liquor and tobacco licenses for Selectboard approval before being forwarded to the State. Bill made a motion to approve the license renewal applications, seconded by Allison. Motion passed: 3-0.

#### **REQUEST FOR TITLE CHANGE – PLANNING COORDINATOR**

Melissa sent a request to change her title from Planning Coordinator to Town Planner. Allison explained that the role of the job has changed drastically. Melissa's pay has changed accordingly, however this title change would put her in the group of her peers that do the same work. She is a Town Planner and she deserves to be recognized as so and her title updated. Bill made a motion to change Melissa's job title to Town Planner, seconded by Allison. Motion passed: 3-0.

#### **CORESPONDENCE**

The correspondence Allison had with Rebecca Baczewski discussed earlier in the meeting.

Nanette wanted to point out that the Town received its Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) from the state and it went down slightly. Bill asked what that means. It means the state has done a review of our sales for the past few years and have noticed that properties are selling higher than the Town has them assessed for. If this trend continues it means we will have to reappraise. It is Nanette's understanding that many of the reappraisal companies are backlogged so it would be important to get on a list. Bill thinks that the CLA being low is likely true for all Vermont towns since there is a lack of real estate. Julia explained that we do need to be assessing properties at their actual value.

#### **COMMUNICATION**

Kristin will put out her introduction on Front Porch Forum (FPF) and post about Maple Shade Forest trails.

Allison is going to print the Dog Ordinance and post it at both kiosks. She will forward the email about the Fairfax X-Country skiers to the Conservation Commission and will post on FPF about the X-Country Ski group.

#### **ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS**

Greg Barrows, Town Treasurer, went over the Accounts Payable and Payroll Warrants. Currently the Town is in good shape. Bill asked if there is a way with the computer program to take out the seasonal expenses to get us in better alignment where we should be? Greg explained that could be done on a spreadsheet.

#### **AFFIRM FY'20 TRANSFERS**

There were three transfers made from various reserve funds. The auditors didn't see motions in minutes to approve the transfers, thought the transfers were discussed at meetings. Greg is asking for a formal motion for those items. Allison made a motion to reaffirm the Selectboard's intent to authorize the following transfers: \$44,000 from the Equipment Reserve Fund for the

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John Deere Excavator, \$20,250 from Salt Shed Reserve Fund, and \$109722.92 from the General Fund to retire the Highway Deficit. Seconded by Bill. Motion passed: 3-0.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Bill made a motion to move into executive session to discuss a personnel matter at 8:49 p.m., seconded by Allison. Motion passed: 3-0. People in attendance were Julia Andrews, Allison Hope, Bill Cleary, Nanette Rogers and John Roberts. The Board exited Executive Session at 8:57 p.m.

**ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julia Andrews, Chair  
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy  
Assistant Town Clerk

**GUEST LIST**

Buddy Meilleur  
Kristin LeClair  
Glenn Rogers  
Lee McClenny  
Ryan Bouffard  
George Lamphere  
Anne Brown  
Caitlin Smith  
Dave Lavallee

**TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.**  
**ROAD SCHEDULE**  
**Dec. 18, 2020 – Jan. 14, 2021**

Work to be done

- Plow, sand and salt when needed.
- Roadside brush cutting.
- Receive the new one ton from Iroquois.

Work completed

- Plowed, sanded and salted roads several times.
- Cut brush on Chapin Rd and Old Stage Rd..
- Worked on the trucks.
- Fixed the F550 dump hoist.
- Hard faced grader blades and loader bucket.
- Changed out many signs.

Approved at the 1/14/21 Selectboard Meeting.