

chunks. Bill and Dave had no objections if John will get use out of it. Dave Baczewski made a motion to sign the Municipal Roads Grant in Aid letter of intent for a stone screener, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed 2-0.

CHLORIDE TANKS

Somebody is interested in purchasing the old chloride tanks. Steve Willard mentioned he repaired a similar tank for a sugar maker, which was purchased for \$1,700 in used condition. Greg asked if the cost would be affected due to its use for chloride? Dave recommends getting fair market value, which would need to be researched. Bill asked if John sees any use down the road for the tanks, such as a situation where our current tank fails. John explained the company we get our chloride from would provide us with another tank in that instance; he will do some research on the matter.

WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT FY'23 BUDGET REQUEST

The Highway Department is proposing an increase of approximately \$14,000 more than the current fiscal year. Some highlights from the budget were: fuel prices had increased by \$1.20 per gallon from last year; this will also increase chloride, salt, and sand prices due to the trucking cost, reduced seed and mulch, increased sign total because many of our signs are not up to code and need to be replaced, increased tree removal as there had been a couple of potential problem trees that needed to be dealt with, decreased repairs and maintenance for the sander, as it is a new piece of equipment, and decreased education and workshops as there was a lack of these due to COVID.

Dave had no specific questions and feels it is reasonable. Most of the increase was due to the increase in fuel costs. Bill agreed, some increases are inevitable, and John has worked to offset it the best he can. Bill asked about any upcoming revenues. FEMA had said they would give us a partial draw down for our clean up of the October 2019 storm. Bill and Dave discussed if they could put a line item in the budget to account for the money they would receive from FEMA and weighed the pros and cons.

WESTFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT FY'23 BUDGET PROPOSAL

The Fire Department is proposing a level funded budget of \$49,000. Last year they reduced their budget by 3%. Bill thanked the Fire Department for not having an increase. Steve Willard, the Fire Chief, explained they had a tough year in FY'22 due to some unexpected equipment costs.

WESTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY FY'23 BUDGET PROPOSAL

Vicky Ross, Bree Drapa and Pat Hechmer were present. The Library is proposing a 1.87% increase to their budget, a total of \$81,834 from last year's \$80,334. This increase was due to merit increases for the Library Director, Library Assistant and substitutes, and increased expenses for insurance, utilities, and custodial services. To help keep their increase modest they have kept discretionary spending at or below FY'22 levels, which includes materials, programming, and supplies.

Over the summer they completed a major repair and painting of the building exterior with funding from the accumulated Library General Reserve balance. Funding for future painting projects will be included in the Town Capital Budget. They still have money in the Library General Reserve.

Last year they had level funded, but staff merit increases and utility costs, which they do not control, make it difficult to do the same for FY'23. Bill asked about an anonymous grant the Library had received. Vicky explained the Library is assuming Michael Kirick will come to the Town asking for funding for the Music Series. The Library finds itself with some donated funds and would like to donate \$2,000 to cover the cost of the Music Series. They feel they must be responsible with letting the Board and taxpayers understand what is being done at the library. They are working as a Board of Trustees to figure out how to deal with donated funds that have come their way and are working on a program to publicize that. Bill applauded their efforts. Dave wanted to be careful from a Selectboard perspective that we do not let it factor into our budget as it is not permanent money. Bree reiterated that it is useful for the Selectboard to know what it costs to run the Library and are glad the Board is happy.

TOWN CLERK AND TREASURER FY'23 BUDGET PROPOSAL

The Town Clerk and Treasurer are proposing an increase in their budget to total \$71,614 from the current fiscal year's budget of \$69,740. This is due to salary increases.

A modest increase of \$400 is proposed for the Board of Civil Authority and elections. This was due to an increase in the cost of ballots, voting machine, and supplies.

Bill thinks it is clear the Board needs to have a bigger discussion about the salaries because there will be a new Town Clerk in 2022. Nanette suggested coming up with a range for the salary. Dave thinks Lee should also be present for those discussions.

REQUEST FOR TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE FOR BURN PERMIT SYSTEM

Dennis Angiono, Fire Warden, was present. Dennis explained his involvement with the burn permit system. Problems sometimes occur with the computer program; over the weekend he had four separate instances where there were issues. Dennis sometimes gets assistance from a neighbor. Dennis feels odd asking the neighbor to come over on his own time every time there is a problem and would like to provide compensation for the help. Dennis asked the neighbor what his rate would be; it was \$25 per hour. Dennis explained he has never spent an entire hour on an issue.

Bill asked if we had a separate budget item for the Fire Warden. There was no budget item, and the state pays the Fire Warden's stipend. Nanette feels this would fall under IT services and the contract with the Town's IT provider does not include help with the website. Bill understands Dennis' frustration; he is not against what is being proposed. Dave thinks the intent is that the system can be improved and made more dependable when the current website is improved. He felt the Board can approve the request with a "not to exceed" dollar amount. Dave Baczewski made a motion to approve up to \$250.00 for compensation for tech assistance when needed for the burn permit system, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

TOWN COMMON COMMITTEE REQUEST FOR PROCEDURAL CHANGE FOR EXPENDITURE REQUEST

Caroline Brown was present. The Common Committee was requesting permission from the Selectboard to use money from the Town Common Fund for repairs and improvements on the Common up to \$500 per request and not to exceed \$2,000 a year after review and approval by the Town Administrator and Town Treasurer instead of requiring Selectboard approval. Any larger items or items which the Town Clerk and Treasurer question, would still require approval by the Selectboard. Bill and Dave both felt this was fair. Dave Baczewski made a

motion to approve the Town Common Committee's request to expend funds from the Town Common Fund up to \$500 per request not to exceed \$2,000 a year upon approval of the Town Administrator and Town Treasurer, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

GOODRICH TRAIL USE

Jamie Hazen was present. He had sent a letter wondering how the Town may discourage use by non-permitted users on the Goodrich Trail. He owns property, which the trail goes through. Jamie explained that he would not be able to drive on the trail with a Jeep with a lift kit, non-permitted ATVs have gone up the trail and ripped up Jamie's property. He wants to find a solution to deter this use while still allowing those that have lawful permission to use the trail by motor vehicle. He previously placed two stones on the trailhead on his property and it deterred ATV trail use. Where Jamie had previously lived an individual had lawful access to property via a trail and there was a gate with a combination lock so that only those with lawful permission for motor vehicle use could only access it by motor vehicle.

Ben Bornstein was present. He explained that the three court orders give him and his successors access for all uses and would love to coordinate with people and produce creative solutions. Bill did not think the gate with lock access was unreasonable. Jamie argued that the impassability of the trail is more due to the natural features of the trail than the stones placed at its entrance. Ben did not think it was unreasonable but felt it was a slippery slope but encouraged Jamie to contact him so they could come up with a solution. Bill feels that those that have legal access should be able to access the land and feels the gate with lock would keep unlawful users out while still allowing legal uses. Bill has hunted on A. Johnson lands where there are similar set ups with a combination lock. Nanette clarified that whatever solution the two parties produce that must come to the Selectboard. Both Ben and Jamie agreed.

Ben asked that the information below be added to the minutes for clarification. The Board amended the minutes to include his clarification.

1. Whatever A Johnson may be doing elsewhere doesn't require them to automatically agree to the same here. And I said that I would contact and update them;
2. The obstructions were not mere "stones" but, BOULDERS and were placed there in violation of the July 23, 2020 selectboard decisions and other decisions and a town trail ordinance; and,
3. As I stated three times for emphasis, that I am glad to discuss and work with Mr. Hazen and show flexibility, but the flexibility has to be reciprocal.

REQUESTS FROM TOWN PLANNER – FOLLOW UP

Melissa Manka, Town Planner, was present. Melissa had requested the Board approve the hiring of an assistant and permission to modify her work schedule. Melissa explained there has been monies through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund which would reimburse for some of Melissa's time spent on the Community Wastewater project. In theory this would free up money from her regular budget, which could then be used to hire an assistant. Regardless the need for assistance is there.

Bill asked how many hours are they looking at hiring the assistant at and what would she believe e is a reasonable pay? Melissa replied that she imagined 6-8 hours a day, 2-3 days a week. She doubts we could go below \$20 an hour. If the Selectboard decided to proceed and nobody answers one could adjust accordingly. Melissa hopes to hire an assistant as soon as

possible. Dave explained he would only approve a temporary assistant for now but acknowledges that she clearly needs the help. He does not feel the Selectboard has time to put out the ad and do the interviews so if somebody were dedicated to doing that it would be preferable.

Melissa thinks that it is going to be difficult to find somebody. She does not know how we would go about advertising and interviewing, etc. It seems like all the boards are maxed out right now. She thinks this should have been done a couple of years ago; the only thing she knows is that she needs help. Vicky Ross was present. She suggested the idea of structuring it as an internship and asked Melissa if that is a possibility. Melissa explained it does happen, but it would mean more work for her because she would be mostly training, and she would be doing most of the items she needs help with. Nanette wanted to be careful what a temporary position is and if it triggers a permanent position if they work for a certain amount of time.

Bill explained in the past they have nominated a hiring committee to figure these things out but feels we have run out of volunteers. Nanette explained that many of the roles of recruitment fall under the Town Administrator. Melissa explained that every pay cycle that goes by that she works overtime that cuts into money available for assistance. Dave and Bill had no issue with a zero-sum solution. If Melissa has found that money, they can spend that money. But he worries that this is a band-aid. Bill suggested Melissa think about reaching out to other towns and prospective towns that may want to do this on a temporary basis. He is also not opposed to the CCRPC assistance. Melissa will work with Greg on the account work and the Town's accounting.

Bill reiterated his past thought that a lot of Melissa's workload is related to Planning Commission projects which may or may not be there after a bond vote on Town Meeting Day. Melissa is concerned that if things do move ahead and something is not put in the budget, she will still need the assistance past the part time work. She does not think the Town will be able to pay regional planning \$60 an hour long-term and the upcoming projects are multi-year projects. Bill asked Melissa to keep the Board up to speed on her search through email.

Ten years ago, Melissa was approved to have a flexible schedule working one day a week at home and there was some flexibility to work around her children's schedules. As things have been going over the past few weeks and months, she feels she needs to have a bit more flexibility since it does not matter if she is in the office or not, but she is working either way. She feels if she continues the current course she will burn out, it is not sustainable. She could keep it to business hours, but its not realistic. She needs to be able to feel like she can have a house and family she can take care of amongst juggling everything else she does.

Bill feels that that there needs to be an office presence. Melissa agreed, however since she has come back to the office, 99% of the people she meets with are still via Zoom or phone. Dave agreed, ideally one would schedule the flexibility with an assistant, but until then, he thinks we can provide her the flexibility she needs. Melissa is proposing two to three days in the office but is not sure what days those would be. She feels she should be there at least one day that Kate is there so they can confer on things and when Greg is there because there is going to be a lot more going on with the Treasurer. Bill thought establishing consistency is important. Melissa agreed that she would have set office hours open to the public and asked what the Selectboard was comfortable with regarding how many days that should be? Bill would prefer three days of office hours. Melissa believes we could try this schedule and see how it works for her. It would Monday through Wednesday in the office with Sunday and

Thursday being remote. However, Melissa explained a big part of being remote depending on need she can work on any of the other days that are not Monday through Wednesday and shift those hours appropriately.

Dave would like to start with one more day remote and see where it goes. The bottom line is there is more work than Melissa can accomplish which is driven by heavy priority outside of her town planner priorities and the timeline those projects are on. Dave feels the compromise of three days in the office with the rest of her hours being flexible is a good place to start and thanked Melissa for the hard work she does. Melissa felt that was reasonable and appreciated the Board's understanding. Bill thinks a post on Front Porch Forum about her new hours alerting the residents would be a good idea, she should also change her voicemail to reflect the new hours. Dave Baczewski made a motion to approve an assistant for the Town Planner with a cost not to exceed \$7,270 before the end of this budget cycle, and for Melissa to work remotely on two of her workdays, having three in office hours, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

Bill corresponded with a resident. We had motioned to improve the access for hunting on Maple Shade and it was supposed to be gravel as you pull in, but it was misinterpreted so it improved the driveway into the field. We were trying to discourage people to park on the field and the access looks like one is to park there. He will collaborate with John to get the correct gravel access improved.

COMMUNICATION

John will communicate with John about the gravel pad for forest access. Melissa will communicate her new office hours on Front Porch Forum. Nanette will put a Front Porch Forum post out about the Town Clerk position.

FY'21 AUDIT REPRESENTATION LETTER

Dave Baczewski made a motion to approve the Audit Representation Letter as drafted, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, reviewed the accounts payable and payroll warrants.

AUTHORITY FOR SELECTBOARD TO APPROVE WARRANTS

Dave Baczewski made a motion to designate Lee McClenny to sign the warrants between November 11 and December 2, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Dave Baczewski made a motion to enter Executive Session at 9:52 p.m. to discuss personnel, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0. People in attendance were Dave Baczewski, Bill Cleary, and Nanette Rogers. The Board exited Executive Session at 10:26 p.m. No action taken.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:27 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bill Cleary, Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy, Assistant Town Clerk/Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Vicky Ross
Bree Drapa
Steve Willard
Pat Hechmer
Dave Lavallee
Jamie Hazen
Lori Johnson
Ben Bornstein
John Quinn
Caroline Brown
Jim and Kati Anderson
Dennis Angiono
Melissa Manka

**TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.
ROAD SCHEDULE
October 29, 2021 – November 11, 2021**

Work to be done

- Grade roads as weather allows.
- Start brush cutting.
- Service the last truck and loader.

Work completed

- Graded a section of Old Stage Rd., a section of Cambridge Rd, a section of Woods Hollow Rd. Brookside Rd., Osgood Hill Rd.
- Changed the worn out cutting edges on the plows
- Serviced 2 of the trucks.
- Fixed potholes on several roads.
- Picked up some tires on Rollin Irish Rd.
- Had repairs done to the grader.
- Installed the dog waste bag dispenser on the common.
- Installed the new ballot box at the town office.

Approved at the 11/11/21 Selectboard Meeting.