

while providing more educational services. This in turn will generate more income. They now have a year of income and expense data and can therefore project expenses better. The WHS is well on their way to becoming sustainable and more helpful to the community.

Bill noted that the WHS building was staffed through most of the Summer Concert Series. He saw a lot of interest in what was happening at the WHS building. He stated that he is inclined to not fully fund many of these applications because the Town can use some of that money to defray some tax issues and buy capital property for the Town. Glenn advised that the projects are listed in order of priority. Money would be used first to complete the building and restore and mount the Town Hall Curtain. They also need to do some landscaping and install security cameras. The items lower on the list could be funded by charging an admission fee if needed.

Dave would like to include the covered bridge and asked if this could be moved up the priority list. The covered bridge is on town land; therefore, maintenance is the Town's responsibility, not the Historical Society's responsibility. The ask for the bridge ranged from \$6,200 to \$8,350. It would be good to have security cameras in this area, which would need to be solar powered and Wi-Fi.

Bill Cleary made a motion to allocate the Westford Historical Society \$50,000 in ARPA Funds, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

WESTFORD COMMON HALL – VT0255-08, ENERGY EFFICIENCY & SAFETY INITIATIVES

Dave explained that the Westford Common Hall (WCH) is requesting \$121,211. This project scored twenty-seven and tied for second place. The project includes installation of heat pumps, solar, etc. Approximately \$4,000 is duplicated in the WCH's ADA application for a door. Ten to twelve thousand dollars (\$10,000-\$12,000) will be used for grant match requirements.

Amber Haller said that the WCH is a usable building, but not in a sustainable way. ARPA Funds can transform the building to make it more energy efficient and safer and expand its usefulness to the Westford community. It would also help fulfill the Town Plan goals to encourage the use of community buildings for Town Center revitalization. The plan for the WCH is to be able to provide a fully functional, high-quality option for event venues. It could be a hub for everything from wedding and music events to Town meetings and business gatherings. The Funds would allow the WCH to move away from the use of fossil fuels to an energy-efficient heat pump and solar system. They will be able to combat substantial heat loss with attic air sealing and insulation and by replacing aging or non-existent storm windows. A video conferencing system will allow the WCH to serve the community in a more vital and accessible manner. The installation of a new emergency exit and fire alarm system will be much needed safety improvements. All these components together will help the WCH achieve the goal of self-sustainability.

Bill stated he is not in favor of the solar panels. Pat Haller advised that the solar panels would defer 100% of the electricity use, including heating requirements from the heat pump. Bill thinks that the heat pump and weatherization would be the biggest "bang for the buck." He is not in favor of funding \$47,932 for the solar panels. Amber Haller, Pat Haller, and Heather Armata made points that the upfront installation cost is high, but the benefits are extensive.

Dave asked about the video conferencing system request of \$12,000. Maura explained that it would be a multi-purpose system for video conferencing as well as larger events. Professional musicians have stated that the WCH has remarkable acoustics and has great potential as a recording studio. The video conferencing system could help bring in revenue with high-definition large screens and a high-quality sound system. Julia added that the facility would be an optimal venue for large meetings due to the good acoustics.

Lee agreed that a video conferencing system is important for any venue hosting large Town gatherings, but he wants to remove the solar aspect from this funding request, which would reduce the ask by \$47,392.

Bill Cleary made a motion to allocate \$73,819 of ARPA Funds for the WCH application, which excludes the solar cost, seconded by Lee McClenny. Motion passed: 3-0.

WESTFORD COMMON HALL – VT0255-13, ADA COMPLIANCE

The Westford Common Hall (WCH) is requesting \$25,434 to help achieve ADA compliance. This project scored 25.7 and tied for fifth/sixth place. This ADA compliance proposal adds in-depth specificity to the overall mission of inclusiveness by becoming a fully functional ADA accessible gathering place for all members of the community. The proposal includes the construction of an outside temporary ramp, a covered platform, an emergency exit door, the installation, and rental costs for two years of an ADA compliant temporary portable toilet system, and funding to assist with the design development of a future attached addition. This proposal presents an interim plan; achieving a permanent solution will require a WCH driven capital campaign effort to provide an attached addition with accessible bathrooms and an upgraded ADA compliant entrance. Bill Cleary asked why a temporary bathroom? The answer is that there are no funds/no room for permanent bathrooms. The temporary solution would allow the WCH to become immediately compliant. The ultimate goal is to design an addition for a permanent solution. Fifteen hundred (\$1,500) can be subtracted from this ask for the ADA door.

Dave Baczewski made a motion to allocate \$24,000 of ARPA Funds for the WCH ADA application, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

BRICK MEETING HOUSE SOCIETY – VT0255-14, FRONT & REAR ENTRANCE IMPROVEMENTS

The Brick Meeting House Society (BMHS) is requesting \$48,000 for improvements to the entrances. This project scored 25.7, which tied it for fifth/sixth place with the WCH ADA compliance project. This proposal involves the rear entrance to the Brick Meeting House to provide a safe and functional entrance/exit. The rear entrance is a priority. The front entrance is more easily delayed as it is currently functional and usable, though not fully ADA compliant. The back entry is inconvenient and dangerous. This project is a historical reproduction of the entrance that was there in 1912. The historical and functional design aspects are complementary.

Dave Baczewski made a motion to allocate \$48,000 for the BMHS application for improvements to the front and rear entrances, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

BRICK MEETING HOUSE – VT0255-16, NUMEROUS PROJECTS

This project scored twenty-five and tied with three other applications. The Brick Meeting House Society (BMHS) is requesting \$14,500 - \$22,000 for numerous projects. The list of

projects includes funding for repairing the floor in the Jackson Hall (the main hall in the building), replacing the propane hot water tank, installing heat pumps, and installing sound dampening panels to improve acoustics.

Dave Baczewski made a motion to allocate \$48,000 for the BMHS application for improvements to the front and rear entrances, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

Dave Baczewski made a motion to allocate \$21,250 for the various improvements to the Brick Meeting House, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

PLANNING COMMISSION REQUEST TO USE FUNDS FOR GRANT WRITER SERVICES

The Planning Commission submitted a request to the Selectboard to use up to \$2,000 of the grant writers' budget to apply for additional funds for the community wastewater project.

Lee McClenny made a motion to approve up to \$2,000 of the grant writer budget as requested, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0

FOLLOW UP TO PC'S RESPONSE REGARDING TRAFFIC PATTERNS, TRAFFIC VOLUME, AND TRAFFIC STUDIES – JOE FRANZ

Joe and Sheila Franz have reviewed the Planning Commission's (PC) response to their memo about traffic patterns, and they have prepared a rebuttal. They feel that the PC did not adequately address their question and instead focused attention on speed. The Franzes said that the PC response ignored the question of wastewater and town development on traffic patterns. They believe that the PC response made ineffective recommendations. The Franzes prepared a list of recommendations. Their suggestions for short-term goals include increasing law enforcement and implementing traffic calming measures on our thru gravel roads. Their long-term suggestions include commissioning a study of traffic flow, consideration of a survey or ballot item to gauge Town sentiment for development of the Town Center, and broader input on major Town Plan changes. They also expressed concern about a lack of turnover in PC commissioners.

Carol Winfield commented that she agrees with the Franzes. She feels that the PC does not address the issues of traffic as it stands and the potential impact of development in the future. She said that in the Notice of Intent to file FONSI, there is language that proves that wastewater and development are connected. Carol said that increased development will cause a change in traffic flow, which needs to be addressed.

Larry White commented that he thinks the Town should table the wastewater project until everyone is on the same page. He does not want Westford to turn into downtown Essex Junction. He likes the character of Westford and does not want it to change.

Barb Peck had comments about traffic calming. She said that there is a requirement by the State of Vermont regarding safety. Barb said that VTrans can conduct a Traffic Flow Safety Audit when a town builds out their Town Center. This needs to be requested by the PC or the Selectboard. Barb has asked the PC if they have contacted the Selectboard or the State of Vermont and was told that there are no plans to contact the State about a Traffic Safety Audit for this project. She believes that the PC has ignored this. She supports the Franzes and said that one of the objectives of traffic calming on Route 128 is to force traffic off the State Road onto auxiliary roads. She does not understand the reluctance to have a safety audit conducted.

Dave Baczewski thanked the Franzes for a well thought out response. He said that there is a problem with our backroads.

Lee McClenny added that a report from the Chittenden County Sheriff has been published concerning tickets issued. The report cited five tickets issued on Woods Hollow Road during early morning "rush hour." All five tickets were for speeds 11-20 mph over the posted speed limit. Lee said that we can all agree that the Town's back roads have a traffic speed and traffic safety problem.

Dave agrees with the Franzes' short-term recommendation and thinks that the Town is taking steps in that direction with increased law enforcement, but this will not solve the problem. There are certain "flash points" and topics that may need to be elevated to Town Meetings, as these topics cannot be resolved during Selectboard meetings alone.

Joe Franz reiterated that what happens in one part of town can have a severe effect on another part of town.

Pat Haller commented that wastewater is not a new idea or plan. Each of our Town Plans from the past say we want to stay rural but there are housing and wastewater issues that need to be addressed. Each Plan has gone through several public hearings and boards. There has been ample opportunity to provide input and get feedback. Rural character, affordable housing, and wastewater have been in the works for 30 years and we now have an opportunity to do something about it cost effectively.

John Doane added that the reason Westford is not like surrounding towns is that we have planned to stay a rural town for the past 30 years. Committees have been working to realize the potential of venues such as the Westford Common Hall and the Brick Meeting House. Both facilities are "septic handicapped." Wastewater is part of maintaining and realizing the assets of our community.

Seth Jensen said that it is important for everyone to understand that not wastewater but changes in Form Based Code Regs would allow more development. Seth stated that the lack of wastewater infrastructure does not prevent development, it limits the types of investment that private property owners can make to their property. There are a host of high traffic volume, low wastewater demand uses that could be constructed in settings with septic limitations such as the Town Center area. These uses include office space, dry good retail and box stores, storage, and some automotive-based uses. Westford residents have consistently rated these uses, such as self-storage, box stores, and automotive uses as less desired. As such, it is the Town's form-based code, rather than septic limitations that prevent undesired uses from locating in the Town Center. If the Town were to vote against wastewater and relax some of the form-based code restrictions, that would open the Town Center up to buildings such as Dollar General. The wastewater system, in concert with Form-Based Code, allows Westford to plan for the best future to maintain its rural character in a way that works for the people of this community. Mathematically, the wastewater plan would not allow Westford to turn into Essex Junction.

Bill Cleary was impressed with the Franzes' thorough presentation. He agreed with much of it but feels that it is starting to feel like an anti-wastewater propaganda technique. He said it

shows the divisiveness of this subject in the Town. The sooner this is voted on the better. He added that hopefully there will be room in the budget for increased law enforcement.

There will be discussion about re-forming a Road Committee at the 12/28/22 SB meeting. This committee, which has existed in the past, could address the question of how we manage the roads.

John Roberts added that the Town has been working on ditching on back roads and narrowing the roads back to twenty-two feet. This is one of the things that Regional Planning says is a major traffic calming measure.

REQUEST TO SET UP VENMO ACCOUNT FOR REC REGISTRATION FEES

The Rec Committee wants to set up a Venmo account to enable them to accept payments and fees for various activities. The Rec Department would have access to make deposits but not to make withdrawals.

Bill Cleary made a motion to approve set up a Venmo account for Rec Department fees, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

FY '24 BUDGET WORKSHOP

John Roberts, Road Foreman was present to discuss the budget for the Highway Department. There is a vacant position in the department; the budget includes a salary for that position. Lee McClenny asked how well the Highway Department can operate with a position vacant. John replied that it has always been a three-man crew. One winter, four or five years ago, there were only two employees, and the workload was a lot to take on. The expectations are higher now than they were twenty years ago, it takes a lot more to keep the roads maintained and roads are seeing much more traffic. While a three-man crew can be sustainable, the Highway Department is budgeting for a fourth crew member. They are hopeful to fill this position for safety reasons, for coverage if a crew member takes time off, and for more help during storm events. It is not safe to work solo. John is recommending a 10% raise for the Substitute Road Foreman. Higher responsibilities warrant a higher salary. The Selectboard is inclined to accept John's recommendations.

Bill Cleary stated there are compactors that can attach to the back of graders, which would go a long way toward improving the quality of our dirt roads. John agreed that you cannot get good compaction with the grader alone, so potholes re-appear often. The price of a compactor is around \$35,000. This could possibly be covered by ARPA money. Carbines on the grader blade cost about \$9.40 a piece, and there are about fifty of them on the grader. They need to be replaced after four days of grading, so they are a big expense totaling \$4,000-\$5,000 per year.

The proposed budget includes increases for several line items, such as diesel fuel, chains, sand, and tires due to increased costs. Some items were reduced such as hot mix and cold patch/crack sealing because Old Stage Road is being repaved and equipment maintenance because a new truck and grader are being purchased.

The Selectboard asked John if there are any areas where the budget could be cut back. John said that gravel-rebuilding and road fabric to redo Brookside Road along with gravel-road resurfacing could be reduced if not as much gravel is put on the roads. Building improvements

includes a storage shed, redoing the pads in front of garage doors, a new dumpster pad, and potentially a gate. Money could possibly be taken from this line item.

The Board reduced the amounts for the Westford Common Hall, Brick Meeting House CUSI, Hope Works, and Essex CHIPS. These organizations will be notified of the reductions.

There is a significant increase in the Rec Coordinator's salary due to prior discussions of this salary being low. The Bookkeeper's salary request was not fully granted because there are no added responsibilities.

CORRESPONDENCE

Bill provided an update on the distribution meter box located on the common. He spoke with Green Mountain Power (GMP). GMP will allow the box to remain on the pole. Bill spoke with the electrician to advise that a meter socket with a breaker is needed. Kevin will also put in a socket for the ice rink lighting. The Town Common Committee has been updated.

COMMUNICATION

There was no communication to report.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lee McClenny, Chair
Selectboard

Harmony Cism
Substitute Minute Taker

GUEST LIST

Ira Allen
Kim Guidry
Barb Peck
Sheila Franz
Joe Franz
John Doane
Wendy Doane
Glenn Rogers
Maura O'Brien
George Lamphere
Caroline Brown
Julia Andrews
Heather Armata
Katie Harris
Lori Johnson
Andy Fulton
Seth Jensen
Carol Winfield
Larry White