

Bill Cleary made a motion to authorize Greenleaf Forestry to cross Schultz Trail for logging purposes this winter and if the work is not completed to submit a new request for next winter, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

REC COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION TO FILL VACANCY

The Recreation Committee recommended Maria Olsen to be appointed to a vacancy on the Recreation Committee. Bill Cleary made a motion to accept the Committee's recommendation to appoint Maria Olsen as a member of the Recreation Committee, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0. It was noted that there is still one vacancy on the Committee.

FY'24 PROPOSED BUDGET PRESENTATION

The Board presented the draft FY'24 proposed budget. Lee began the presentation by reviewing the past year including road projects, staff changes, and an update on the ARPA Committee process.

The total proposed budget is \$2,158,830. After reducing the budget using anticipated revenue and \$18,500 from the General Fund balance, the amount to be raised by taxes is \$1,858,163. Based on an estimated growth to the Grand List, the tax rate will remain the same. It was noted that this is the municipal tax rate only and does not include the school tax rate.

The highway budget is increasing by approximately \$80,000. Some major changes include an increase in salaries, gravel, sand, and diesel. Some items will see a decrease such as the amount that will be placed in the Equipment Reserve Fund for future equipment purchases. The administration budget is increasing by approximately \$31,500. Increases include salaries, financial audit, and law enforcement. Items such as trash and recycling, Planning Commission special projects fund and donations to outside organizations have been decreased. A slight increase of approximately \$4,000 is being budgeted for anticipated revenue.

It was noted that this is the third year in a row with an estimated tax rate that does not increase municipal taxes. The Selectboard thanked Nanette and Greg for their assistance in drafting the budget. The Board also thanked town staff and town officials for all they do for the community. The proposed budget and presentation will be available on the Town website.

LETTER TO ESSEX RESCUE REGARDING INCREASE IN BUDGET REQUEST

Lee explained that for the second year in a row, Essex Rescue has submitted a significant budget increase to the communities they serve. Representatives from each community met to discuss how there might be some oversight and more involvement with Essex Rescue. A letter to Essex Rescue was drafted expressing the communities' concerns, proposing communities having a voting member on the Board of Directors, quarterly financial reporting, financial audit, and an operational assessment. Essex Rescue is open to the ideas but wanted to engage in a discussion.

Lee noted that Westford is in a privileged situation in that there are two rescue providers, Fairfax and Essex. Most of the other towns do not have this option. Westford also pays the smallest percentage of the budget. Regardless, compared to the Town's budget, the increase is still significant for Westford. Lee stated that he and Nanette felt the letter could have been gentler, but the content was accurate and that everybody has gone through pains to make sure Essex Rescue understands the towns like the relationship they have with Essex Rescue and want to understand our financial obligations better.

Bill noted that Essex Rescue explained they had to do the large increases so in the future the increases will not be extreme. Bill also mentioned that dispatching is built into Essex Rescue's overall fee whereas it is not in Fairfax Rescue's fee. Bill's starting to think that there's a need for a regional dispatching service and it seems like this is something that should be taken care of at the state level. Although the contents of the letter have already been given to Essex Rescue, each Selectboard needs to vote on the letter. Bill doesn't mind approving the letter as long as Westford expresses their opinions on the harshness of the letter to Essex Rescue. Lee McClenny made a motion to approve and sign the letter to Essex Rescue, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

Nanette added that the Town Manager from Essex wanted to know if representatives from the towns could meet with Essex Rescue. Lee agreed adding we should hear what they have to say.

REVIEW/APPROVE 2022 GRAND LIST ERRORS & OMISSIONS

The lister, Caroline Brown, provided a list of the 2022 Grand List Errors & Omissions. None of these impacted the value of the grand list. Dave Baczewski made a motion to approve the 2022 Grand List Errors & Omissions as presented, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

RECONSIDER USE OF CSWD CLEANUP FUNDS TO AID IN CLEANUP ON LAND OF AT-RISK RESIDENT

Amanda Spector was present. She is part of a mutual-aid group in Westford and has been working with the homeowner. The ask is for a dumpster so volunteers, family, and friends can clean up the property. The property owner does not have money for the dumpster without aid. The mutual-aid group has been getting quotes for dumpsters and she predicts the second biggest size would be needed and to have it at the property for a month. It was noted that the Town would get the dumpster through Myers. Bill stated that a neighbor has offered to use his equipment to remove and transport metal items to the metal dumpster. The Board thanked Amanda for clarifying the needs and a plan for going forward and for the Mutual Aid Group's involvement.

CORRESPONDENCE

A request was received for the Robotics school group to attend a meeting to present a project they are working on, which is a shuttle bus for rural communities.

COMMUNICATION

There was no outgoing communications.

FY'23 GENERAL FUND STATUS REPORT

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, reviewed the FY'23 General Fund status report.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND PAYROLL WARRANTS.

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

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lee McClenny, Chair
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Ben Bornstein
Dave Lavalle
Jim Anderson
Adison Kasmarek (Greenleaf Forestry)
Vicky Ross
Francois Ross
Amanda Gifford
Amanda Spector
Maria Olsen
Sarah Pinto
Tina Shoup
Martin Messimer

**TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.
ROAD SCHEDULE
Dec. 22, 2022 – Jan. 12, 2023**

Work to be done

- Patch potholes if weather permits.
- Plow, sand, and salt when needed.
- Clean the shop.
- Remodeling work in the break room.

Work completed

- Plowed, sanded, and salted.
- Repaired/ filled potholes and rutted sections of several roads.
- Cut a few trees around town.
- Serviced the Cat excavator.
- Maintenance on the trucks. (grease, tighten chains)

Approved at the 1/12/23 Selectboard Meeting.