

1 Councilor Wright stated that the Communications Committee was making a request to be added
2 to the Budget. She presented flyers that the Communications Committee had prepared regarding
3 the Website and the Town Hall Times. They were requesting a \$2,000 budget to support their
4 efforts in promoting Town initiatives and ensuring that the information reaches all citizens. The
5 budget would allow for the printing of flyers and signage related to the voting regarding a new
6 police station and banners to support other efforts to enhance communication within the
7 community. The money would be spent with a fiscally conservative approach.
8

9 **4. Approve Consent Agenda**

10 Manager Dillon stated that the packet had a list of the Consent items.

11
12 **MOTION:** by Councilor Stacey

13 *Move to approve the October 16, 2023 Consent Agenda.*

14 **SECOND:** by Councilor Sweeney

15 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

16 **The motion passed unanimously.**
17

18 **5. Additions and/or Requests by Public or Council by Vote**

19 Zachary Crowell, Reverend, Centerpoint Church, stated that he wanted to pay respect to the
20 Town Council for their work as public servants for the betterment of the town on behalf of the
21 community. The Centerpoint Church has been around for over 150 years and their purpose was
22 to proclaim Jesus to a lost and dying world and to provide resources to the community. They had
23 always been tax exempt. They were taken aback this year when the Town Assessor came out to
24 assess ways in which they might be subject to taxes. Questions were asked about their trees. He
25 asked how it would work if the Church did not pay property taxes on their woods and if that
26 meant that the Town would put a lien on the property every year until the Town owned the
27 property. Every year they mobilized hundreds of volunteers to help the community in a number
28 of ways. There was a mental health crisis and the number one thing that reduced anxiety and
29 depression was involvement in a local community church. The Church provided free programs
30 for youth every midweek. They had senior lunches and brunches for forty to fifty seniors each
31 month. They had mom's groups, bereavement groups, and provided space for clubs and
32 organizations, Red Cross Blood Drives, free tax services for the poor and elderly, and in the last
33 year their volunteers had built two houses and an access ramp free of charge. Mostly people
34 came into their Church because they had lost hope and the Church spread the word about Jesus
35 being there for them and that they had a way into Heaven. Reverend Crowell asked the Council
36 and the Assessor to reconsider how they were applying the tax law to local churches.
37

38 Councilor Bettencourt asked if they could have the Assessor come up to speak on this matter. He
39 did not understand why these people had to come here to justify their mission. Councilor
40 Bettencourt asked what this was about.
41

42 Joe Lessard, Interim Town Assessor, stated that any religious, charitable, or educational
43 organization needed to file annually for an exemption. When he arrived last July, he found that
44 most of the exemptions had not been dealt with. He visited most of them and explained what was
45 eligible for exemption. The property needed to be owned, occupied, and used according to the
46 Statutes. Based on the cases and the Statutes, it was proper for some organizations to have a

1 partial exemption which was the case in some of these instances. The exemptions were left alone
2 last year. A letter went out in February to all of the organizations explaining what needed to be
3 done. They had to use the form from the Board of Tax and Land Appeals which was the body
4 that heard appeals from the Town's assessments. Mr. Lessard told them what needed to be
5 provided and in some cases the organizations provided the information and in some they did not.
6 Additional letters were sent to those that did not provide all of the requested information
7 regarding use, non-use, or use by others of various portions of their property.

8
9 Councilor Bettencourt stated that Mr. Lessard said that there was a Superior Court decision that
10 led to the inquiry. He asked if that was a State or Federal Court.

11
12 Mr. Lessard stated that there was no recent decision. These guidelines have been in place for
13 years and some towns have abided by them, and some towns have not. Last year there was a
14 Board of Tax and Land Appeals decision involving Ossipee, Center Harbor, and some other
15 towns where they reviewed what those towns had done with regard to exemptions. The BTLA
16 found some properties that should not have been exempted and ordered the properties to pay
17 some back years' worth of taxes. The case dealt with things that had been in place all along but
18 the BTLA scolded municipalities that they were not doing their job in reviewing the exemptions
19 with the same care used for elderly and veteran's exemptions.

20
21 Councilor Bettencourt stated that he wanted to know what court brought this forth.

22
23 Mr. Lessard stated that the BTLA and the Superior Court decisions were New Hampshire courts
24 not Federal courts.

25
26 Councilor Bettencourt asked if that decision had been appealed to the Supreme Court.

27
28 Mr. Lessard stated that he was not sure about the Ossipee decision.

29
30 Councilor Bettencourt stated that seemed to be the case that prompted this review.

31
32 Mr. Lessard stated that was a Board of Tax and Land Appeals decision and to his knowledge it
33 was not appealed to the New Hampshire Supreme Court. The decision cited prior State Supreme
34 Court decisions.

35
36 Councilor Bettencourt stated that it made sense that they would cite Supreme Court precedence.
37 The whole point of that was to see if there were appeals coming.

38
39 George Preston, 12 Norwood Road, asked what had changed. They had civic organizations
40 giving back to the community. He asked why they were looking at wetlands and easements to
41 highways as taxable events. Using imputed costs as a basis for taxes did not make sense. He read
42 the section of the law regarding taxation of charitable organizations. Mr. Preston stated that he
43 could see organizations paying taxes for the services they used, but there needed to be
44 consistency and things like wetlands buffers. The voters would remember that. The Churches
45 and civic organizations should be treated equally. There should not be taxation just because
46 space was given to the Boy Scouts for a meeting or to seniors and no rent was charged. They

1 were finding out that there was taxation for those events. Consistency was all that they were
2 asking for.

3
4 Katherine Babine, Granite State Baptist Church, stated that she was there on behalf of the
5 churches in Salem to speak about the change in the interpretation of RSA 72:23 and 72:23-c. For
6 many years the filings and acceptance had been the same, but this year something different had
7 taken place. It appeared that certain words or phrases had taken more importance than others as
8 they pertained to the law when all phrases should be equally important. It appeared that the
9 phrase from RSA 72:23(III) “and the lands appertaining to them owned” was not applied in
10 many instances. The word appertaining meant connected to as a rightful part or attribute.
11 Wetlands, trees, grass, parking lots, etc. should fall under this definition. She then read RSA
12 72:23 (V) and stated that income from the rental of the parking lot, parsonage, or building should
13 be included in this section so long as the income was used for religious activities as established.
14 Ms. Babine then read RSA 72:23-c regarding filing Form A-9. She asked if a change of board
15 members who did not realize they had to file the form but rectified the filing once they were
16 aware of it or thinking that a filing was made when it was not and then rectified constituted
17 mistakes. They all had stories as to how these changes had affected their organizations, but the
18 one thing they had in common was that it was undue financial strain. These changes in the
19 application of the law may have helped fill the revenue shortfall for the year but at what cost to
20 the community. She prayed that the Town Council would use their authority to make a change.

21
22 Owen Hurley, 8 Clifton Avenue, stated that he was opposed to this, viewing it as the camel’s
23 nose under the tent. There was nothing in the statutes that said they should not be exempted. He
24 wondered if the land tax authority could override the Legislature that wrote the RSA. That was
25 his question to the Town Council. Mr. Hurley stated that he was against taxing church property.

26
27 Paul Drury, 12 Veronica Avenue, stated that he was on the board of one of the local churches
28 and had been a small business owner in the past. He thanked Councilor Bettencourt for asking
29 about the legal decision. In looking at the decision, the organization in Ossipee should never
30 have been given an exemption. It seemed like the town missed something in granting the
31 exemption in his opinion. He thanked the Council members for serving the community and for
32 giving him the opportunity to express his concerns about this new, unprecedented tax that the
33 Town has decided to impose on the churches of Salem. Mr. Drury stated that he wanted to know
34 what had motivated the Town to start taxing churches now after decades under the current laws.
35 If the Town wanted to work with the churches that served the Salem community, the Town
36 would not have been so hasty to push this tax on the churches this summer with very little notice
37 and subsequently churches did not have the opportunity to meet with the Town as a group to
38 discuss this issue. In closing, the churches had discussed this and felt that it was an opportunity
39 where the Town would encroach on churches to generate revenue unfairly. This could possibly
40 jeopardize the existence of the churches in town.

41
42 Betty Gay, 10 Woodmeadow Drive, stated that she was there as a concerned citizen after
43 becoming aware that charitable organizations in Salem like in several other towns were being
44 taxed, not only on the space they rented out for income, also on their wetlands and treed areas of
45 their property. They were being told that if they allowed non-503c organizations to meet in their
46 buildings with or without donation, they will be taxed on that portion of their property too. Ms.

1 Gay stated that when she met with the Town Assessor on the 12th to ask him about the new tax
2 assessments, he cited RSA 72:23 (III). That had not been used as a reason to tax charitable
3 organizations since at least 1994. The Assessor also cited the BTLA's 2022 decision that the
4 Ossipee Masonic Hall owed taxes on their hall rentals; however, the case stated nothing about
5 trees or wetlands or grass or allowing citizens to meet on their property. Organizations are also
6 being charged 100% of their property tax if their exemption forms are received three or four
7 weeks late despite RSA 73:23-c allowing for forgiveness for an unintentional late filing. This
8 new tax fulfilled Justice Marshall's observation that the power to tax was the power to destroy.
9 The Assessing staff gave her the property cards for the churches in Salem. Four were being taxed
10 on their wetlands which she named. After COVID shutdowns, churches were struggling even
11 more than usual to pay the costs of keeping open their doors, pay their minister's salaries, and
12 fulfill their mission to serve the community. AA and Scouts traditionally met in churches and
13 their small donations might pay for heat or lights that they used. They were 501-c(3)
14 organizations. Other community organizations also deserved a place to meet and most did not
15 have a 501-c(3) designation. Organizations like the Knights of Columbus and the Boys and Girls
16 Club used every dollar of rentals to charitable programs. Last year's BTLA decision is likely to
17 seriously harm their budgets. A new New Hampshire State Law will be needed to address that
18 policy. Thankfully, the Council already had the authority to continue exempting the trees and
19 wetlands of charitable organizations and allowing those organizations to let other small
20 organizations use their space without fear of taxation.

21
22 John Janigian, 25 Liberty Street, stated that he was there as a State Representative because
23 several churches had reached out to him and as the moderator of the Ararat Armenian
24 Congregational Church. He had announced this change at the last church meeting and received a
25 lot of questions from people who were extremely concerned about the change. They were a small
26 church and were struggling to come back after COVID. They received lots of calls from people
27 needing assistance and every dollar spent on taxation was a dollar that could not be spent on
28 assisting the community. The Church had a small strip of land between their parking lot and
29 Route 93 that they could not do anything with, but they had to justify how that was used for
30 Church business and how much of the yard was used for Church business. They should not have
31 to justify whether or not the whole yard was needed when they had outside activities. The
32 parsonage was being taxed because they rented it out, but Mr. Janigian did not believe that was
33 right either because the rental income was only used to further the Church's mission. Everyone
34 involved with the Church was a volunteer. There was no one being paid. He asked the Council to
35 vote to limit the assessments of church property.

36
37 Carolyn Stevenson, Reverend, St. David's Episcopal Church, thanked them for serving the
38 community. She believed that they were all on the same page in wanting to serve the community.
39 Reverend Stevenson stated that she was not going to address the taxation of the woodlands
40 because the Diocese had told it might not be appropriate legally, but they had not yet been able
41 to consult with a lawyer to see if that particular section was something that could be taxed. Her
42 big concern was on taxing rooms used for meetings by groups which did not have a 501-c(3)
43 designation. She understood taxing for-profit organizations that might use the building; however,
44 there were many support groups that needed a place to meet to help the community that did not
45 have a 501-c(3) designation nor was it appropriate or possible for them to have one. They had a
46 group of high school students who wanted to meet to discuss coping with eating disorders a

1 woman who used the church for reunification visits with her baby until she could find housing. If
2 they had a group of high school students who wanted to meet to discuss addressing climate
3 change, would they have to turn them away? Would they have to turn away groups that were
4 501-c(3) groups but not religious organizations? Churches needed to be able to respond to the
5 needs of the whole community, especially those who were the most vulnerable. They did it all
6 the time as an expression of their faith. Reverend Stevenson was concerned that churches were
7 being put in a position where they had to carefully scrutinize every use of every square foot of
8 the building making it difficult or even a deterrent to respond to the needs that came before them
9 and requests for help. The Church was not making money off these groups and any money
10 received was just used towards the operational costs.

11
12 Councilor Sweeney asked if the staff had an understanding of what the exemption denials
13 represented to the tax base. He asked if they had that number.

14
15 Mr. Lessard stated that he did not have that number. One of the churches that was denied due to
16 late filing was in excess of \$3 million. The majority of those that were partially exempted were
17 less than \$50,000 each with some as low as \$700. He could get the total for the Town Council. It
18 was not a significant amount. It did not change the amount of money that the Town raised, it just
19 shifted who was paying the tax.

20
21 Councilor Sweeney stated that keeping that in mind and given that there would be a longer
22 conversation on this matter he wanted to make a motion.

23
24 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

25 *Move to reopen the application window for all religious and charitable organizations that were*
26 *granted exemptions in Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022 but denied an exemption for Fiscal Year*
27 *2023 for the purpose of reconsideration by the Town of Salem pursuant to RSA 72:23.*

28 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stramaglia

29
30 Councilor Withrow stated that she had no problem reopening this, but she was concerned that
31 they would just be denied the exemption again. She felt that something had been misinterpreted
32 and wanted to see if the criteria could be used from prior years instead of what was done this
33 year.

34
35 Councilor Sweeney stated that he thought that would be under the Town Council's purview to
36 grant exemptions as they came in.

37
38 Chairman Bryant stated that was correct.

39
40 Councilor Bettencourt stated that he strongly supported this motion for a number of reasons. The
41 first he became aware that this was an issue was when former Representative Betty Gay left him
42 a voicemail about it a few days ago. They had forced these leaders of faith to come out and push
43 back on a policy that he had nothing to do with and would have had some strong things to say
44 about it if he had been aware of it. What he had been able to understand from this meeting was
45 that there was a court case that had compelled this to happen. Councilor Bettencourt stated that
46 they needed this pause. He needed to review the decision so that he could understand it's

1 applicability to the faith leaders in this town. The only decision he could find involved a church
2 campground and that was a wholly distinguishable case. The information provided by Ms. Gay
3 included an order to show cause which was not a court decision. It involved the Masonic Lodge,
4 which was not a religious institution and one religious organization that might apply. He needed
5 to understand what was happening. It was crazy to require these religious organizations to jump
6 through these hoops without the Town Council having more information than what they had now
7 about the change.

8 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

9 **The motion passed unanimously.**

10
11 Chairman Bryant stated that they would study the issue and bring it back in a public forum so
12 people could attend and speak to it again.

13
14 **6. Present Certificate of Achievement to Peyton Acker for Eagle Scout Project of**
15 **Installing Informational Kiosk on Rail Trail**

16 Manager Dillon stated that at the April 4th meeting, the Board of Selectmen approved a proposed
17 Eagle Scout project from Eagle Scout candidate Peyton Acker. The packet had a memo from the
18 Municipal Services Director.

19
20 Roy Sorenson, Municipal Services Director, presented a picture and turned it over to Peyton
21 Acker to speak about his project.

22
23 Peyton Acker stated that the kiosk was located behind the Tuscan Kitchen, and he saw it every
24 day when he ran by it during cross-country practice. The kiosk had posting with the history
25 behind the Rail Trail and rules for using the Rail Trail. There was also a plaque for the Salem
26 Elks Lodge who helped sponsor the kiosk.

27
28 Chairman Bryant read a Certificate of Achievement in Recognition of the Achievement of the
29 Eagle Scout Award presented to Peyton Griffith Acker. The Salem, New Hampshire Town
30 Council wishes to recognize your outstanding accomplishment of achieving the rank of Eagle
31 Scout and your special project of constructing and installing an informational kiosk along the
32 Salem Bike-Ped Corridor. The Town Council also wishes to recognize your scouting career
33 which began in 2012 as a Tiger Cub Scout. You have received a notable 31 merit badges prior to
34 receiving your Eagle Scout Award. You have earned the ranks of Tenderfoot, Second Class, First
35 Class, Star, and Life. You have also served your troop in the leadership roles of Patrol Leader,
36 Troop Guide, and Senior Patrol Leader. On behalf of the Town of Salem, New Hampshire, the
37 Town Council wishes to recognize your efforts and hereby salutes you on this 16th day of
38 October 2023 for your special achievement of the rank of Eagle Scout.

39
40 **7. Municipal Services Department – Accept Donation of \$2,000.00 from Friends of Salem**
41 **Bike Ped Corridor for Signage on Rail Trail**

42 Manager Dillon stated that the packet had a memo from the Municipal Services Director.

43
44 Mr. Sorenson stated that this was a project that was done for the Friends of the Salem Bike Ped
45 Corridor. The project was funded by donations and done by the Municipal Services Department.
46 Plantings were done by the Friends and the Salem Area Women's Club.

1 Dave Topham, 2 Townsend Avenue, thanked the Town for supporting the Friends of the Salem
2 Bike-Ped Corridor since 2006. The progress was great and something the community could be
3 proud of. This donation came from the Granite State Rail Trail which wanted to enhance what
4 they were doing already. The granite wall along the trail was beautiful. This was started by a
5 donation to connect with the trail in Methuen. There was a ribbon-cutting on Wednesday for this
6 section of the trail.

7
8 Chairman Bryant thanked Mr. Topham.

9
10 **MOTION:** by Councilor Wright

11 *Move that the Town Council a graciously accepts with gratitude a donation in the amount of*
12 *\$2,000.00 from the Friends of the Salem Bike-Ped Corridor to help fund costs associated with*
13 *establishing signage at the rail trail section from the Hampshire Road to the Methuen town*
14 *line, and further authorize Municipal Services through Public Works to help with labor and*
15 *materials as necessary to complete the work.*

16 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stramaglia

17 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

18 **The motion passed unanimously.**

19
20 Larry Belair, 55 Hawkins Glen Drive, thanked them for accepting the grant that Mr. Topham had
21 worked so hard on. He wanted to share some of the volunteerism that made the Bike-Ped
22 Corridor a success. They appreciated Peyton Acker's project which helped enhance the trail. He
23 listed some of the volunteers who assisted them this year starting with people who maintained
24 the flowers, did the weeding, monitored the trails, and donated flowers and benches. There were
25 individuals including seasonal volunteers and the Salem Area Women's Club. Since 2016, tens
26 of thousands of dollars had been provided to the Rail Trail along with hundreds of volunteer
27 hours. They were blessed to have such support in the community.

28
29 **8. Community Consider Offer by NH Department of Transportation to Purchase Parcel**
30 **on Shadow Lake Road**

31 Manager Dillon stated that the Town received a letter from the New Hampshire Department of
32 Transportation where the State was looking to sell a parcel of property after someone reached out
33 to the State to see if they would be interested in selling it. The State was required to offer it to the
34 Town first. He was looking for direction from the Town Council.

35
36 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

37 *Move to direct the Town Manager to notify the State of NH, Department of Transportation*
38 *that the Town is appreciative of the offer but finds no future use for the property and the State*
39 *is free to accept any other offers.*

40 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stacey

41 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

42 **The motion passed unanimously.**

1 **9. Meisner Brem Representing John Hines and Jennifer Ratto - Request Release of**
2 **Dedication of a Portion of Elmwood Avenue Between 9 & 11 Kayla Avenue**

3 Manager Dillon stated that the Town had received a request to release a portion of the dedication
4 of Elmwood Avenue between 9 and 11 Kayla Avenue. The packet had a memo from the
5 Municipal Services Director regarding the request along with a letter from Meisner Brem and a
6 plan map of the area to be released.
7

8 Kurt Meisner, Meisner Brem, stated that his firm was the engineer for the project. The subject
9 parcel was about 7,500 square feet, was dedicated in 1992, and has been completely undeveloped
10 since then. The intent of the dedication was to access the parcel behind those lots which have
11 now been developed with houses. There was no need for this segment any longer and so the
12 abutters were looking to have the dedication released.
13

14 **MOTION:** by Councilor Wright

15 *Move in accordance with RSA 231:51 that the Town Council hereby releases the dedication of*
16 *the portion of Elmwood Avenue between 9 & 11 Kayla Avenue as shown on plan D-22327*
17 *recorded at the Rockingham County Registry of Deeds.*

18 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stramaglia

19 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

20 **The motion passed unanimously.**
21

22 **10. Public Hearing – Meisner Brem Representing Sharon Capozzi - Request to Unmerge**
23 **Lots at 19 Seed Street**

24 Manager Dillon stated that they received word earlier today that the party was requesting to drop
25 this item from the Agenda.
26

27 Councilor Wright asked if this would come back.
28

29 Manager Dillon stated that he did not know if it would come back before the Council at a future
30 date.
31

32 **11. Public Hearing - NH Department of Transportation – Local Concerns Meeting for**
33 **Public Comment on Route 111/Ermer Road Intersection**

34 Chairman Bryant opened the Public Hearing at 7:37 PM.
35

36 Mr. Sorenson stated that this was a Public Hearing for the intersection between Ermer Road and
37 Route 111 which was a State-owned intersection. Greg Bakos from VHB, the engineering
38 consultant, was there to present. The Town was under a Local Public Agency agreement to do
39 something at this intersection. The funding was in place for the work. The Town had a 10%
40 match which at the time of the agreement was about \$98,000. They were in the engineering
41 stage, and this was the first of a couple of public hearings that needed to be held.
42

43 Councilor Wright asked if the Council could recognize that they had received a letter from
44 Dianne Paquette on this topic.
45

46 Chairman Bryant stated sure.

1 Greg Bakos, VHB, stated that this was the first of two scheduled public hearings. The purpose of
2 this meeting was to review the project limits and context, review program funding requirements,
3 review project considerations, discuss next steps and schedule, and accept public input on the
4 project. This was the Local Concerns Meeting where they documented what the public felt about
5 the project. The project was focused on the intersection but could include the approaches from all
6 four directions. Pictures of the intersection were presented. The LPA process was laid out with
7 several steps that had to be followed. The project had to follow the manual, but it was a Town
8 project as Salem would administer the project with the assistance of VHB, the engineering
9 consultant. NHDOT would provide oversight and review while the Federal Highway
10 Administration provided most of the funding. They were still in the engineering phase. The
11 project considerations started with motorist safety and then reviewed factors such as traffic
12 operations, bike and pedestrian safety, cultural and environmental resources, rights-of-way, and
13 cost. The data gathering was complete which included nine years of crash data, traffic counts, a
14 Topographic and Right-of-Way Survey, and Environmental Resource Mapping of the wetland
15 adjacent to Route 111. The history of project went back to 2016 when a fatality at the
16 intersection prompted the Town to request assistance from the NHDOT in addressing the
17 intersection. A Road Safety Audit was done in 2017 which considered nine countermeasures.
18 The current LPA was initiated in 2022 for the preferred solution alternative. An overhead picture
19 of the intersection was presented with skid marks noticeably visible. The issue was the high
20 speeds on Route 111 combined with the high volumes on Route 111 which meant it was difficult
21 to exit the side roads during peak traffic times. Additionally, there were two lanes on the side
22 roads so two vehicles next to each other restricted the sight lines for the other vehicle. The final
23 issue was that the Ermer Road approaches were slightly skewed to the right making it harder to
24 see traffic coming from the left. Over the years from 2016 to 2022, there were 36 crashes
25 according to the Salem Police Department although not all crashes were reported. The crash
26 severity included one fatal accident, nine non-fatal injuries, and 22 probably serious property
27 damage only accidents. The largest number of crashes occurred during the peak afternoon travel
28 time with thirteen crashes. The traffic counts showed that most of the traffic was on Route 111
29 and going in one direction depending on the time of day. There was very little traffic on the side
30 roads during the peak travel times. They projected volumes out 20 years to determine whether a
31 traffic signal was warranted or not. There were certain requirements that needed to be met to
32 warrant a traffic signal. The volume-based signal warrant requirements were not met even
33 projecting out twenty years. They then looked at Warrant #7 which was a safety-based warrant.
34 They expected that the crash data would allow for a signal to be placed at the intersection. The
35 crash numbers met the warrant criteria, but there were three stipulations which had to be met.
36 7(A) which was that adequate trial of alternatives with satisfactory observance and enforcement
37 has failed to reduce the crash frequency was not met. The Town or the State would have had to
38 have spent money on attempting to reduce the number of crashes through enforcement trials first.
39 They had the ability to model out the data to see the effectiveness of the countermeasures
40 instead. The analysis was just completed and presented to the NHDOT. They were not able to
41 share the results tonight, but they were mixed results. They would look at what was best for the
42 intersection even if the warrants were not met. They would share the results once the State
43 completed their review of the data. They were not supposed to talk about solutions at these
44 meetings, just get public input. The countermeasures considered included reducing the number of
45 lanes on Ermer Road to one lane on each approach, changing the alignment to a ninety-degree
46 intersection, making Ermer Road right-turn exit only roads. They reviewed the concerns with

1 NHDOT. Some of them had major safety benefits but either created new problems or had a high
2 cost. They would have a shorter list of countermeasures at the next meeting. The immediate next
3 steps were to complete the evaluation with NHDOT and come back to present alternatives. They
4 hoped to select a preferred alternative after that meeting with a Council vote on it and then go
5 into design. Mr. Bakos stated that they wanted to hear from people next, but he did have a
6 question regarding whether or not people were avoiding this intersection because it was difficult
7 to get out of Ermer Road.

8
9 Councilor Stacey stated that she had a question as to whether or not the State had looked at the
10 timing of the traffic lights on either side of this intersection to create more space for people to
11 exit Ermer Road. It was a terrible intersection.

12
13 Mr. Bakos stated that they had looked at that, but the lights were somewhat far apart. If they
14 were closer then that might work, but at these distances cars spread out more, so they didn't have
15 the gaps that they hoped for.

16
17 Councilor Pelletier stated that he was concerned about there being one fatal injury there per year.

18
19 Mr. Bakos stated that it was a serious injury per year not a fatal injury per year.

20
21 Councilor Pelletier stated that one fatal injury was enough. He wanted to know about the analysis
22 about the signalization of Zachary Crossing and Route 111 because there seemed to be a lot less
23 traffic at that intersection than at Ermer Road. He had a conversation with Ralph Ermer who
24 lived on Ermer Road and had witnessed a number of accidents there over the years. An example
25 was a motorist taking a left onto Ermer Road and the car behind them turning into the breakdown
26 lane to pass them and then t-boning another vehicle as a result. Councilor Pelletier also had a
27 letter from a concerned citizen who had asked the Police Department about temporary controls in
28 this intersection. The Chief of Police had indicated that a temporary signal could be allowed
29 upon an application to the Traffic Board at the State level. It would allow the Police Department
30 to put up a warning sign telling people they were entering a dangerous intersection until the State
31 made a decision on what to do there. Those were a couple of the citizen requests that he had
32 heard.

33
34 Mr. Bakos stated that he appreciated those because observations like that helped reinforce what
35 they were thinking about. One of the alternatives was to put in left-turn lanes on Route 111 to get
36 the left-turning vehicles out of the through traffic. Another alternative was an advanced detection
37 system that would trigger a warning light alerting vehicles on Route 111 that there were cars at
38 the Ermer Road intersection as a possibility.

39
40 Chairman Bryant asked if there was any public input.

41
42 Donat Aubuchon, North Salem Village, stated that he had owned the property that was at the
43 corner of Ermer Road and Route 111 since 1993. There were hard facts and soft facts. The soft
44 facts were the braking and the horns that were heard and the swerving of cars that were not
45 recorded as accidents but were seen quite often. Mr. Aubuchon had seen and heard them. There
46 was one time where there were three young dirt bikers waiting to cross the intersection where he

1 prayed that they did not try to cross without waiting for a proper gap. They eventually were able
2 to cross safely after waiting three to five minutes for an opportunity. He felt that a traffic light
3 was needed at that intersection. The activity there was growing. His daughter was here with a
4 troubling story about the most recent crash this year.

5
6 Suzette Aubochon stated that she helped manage the property with her father. She was a witness
7 and the first on the scene for the accident that killed Terry Ware on August 3rd. Ms. Aubochon
8 gave the background of Mr. Ware. She stated that on that day, she put her car on Route 111 to
9 prevent Mr. Ware from being run over a second time or other people from being hurt further. Ms.
10 Aubochon started administering CPR until others took over. She wanted a light at the
11 intersection to prevent further deaths at that intersection and pleaded with the Town Council to
12 not stop until the job was finished. There was a daycare and Easter Seals on Ermer Road by the
13 intersection so it could be a child the next time. There was a cross from the 2016 accident at the
14 intersection.

15
16 Larry Belair thanked Ms. Aubochon for her message. He stated that Mr. Bakos brought up
17 something that he had an issue with. There were two turning lanes and if there was a big pickup
18 or SUV waiting to turn left and his wife came up in her little car that now she could not see the
19 traffic coming at fifty or sixty miles an hour. Mr. Belair stated that they should consider
20 removing the second lane and preventing cars from sneaking around so that cars had a fairer
21 chance to exit the road.

22
23 Michelle Federico, 389 Route 111, stated that everyone in the area was just waiting for the next
24 accident. There was a day when there were two Medflights from that intersection for different
25 accidents. After the 2016 fatal accident, they had meetings to get a light put up, but they were
26 still waiting for it to happen. Traffic was getting faster now, and people were not paying
27 attention. It would ruin people's lives if there was another serious accident. She wanted to know
28 what it would take and if the public needed to do something to make it happen.

29
30 Beth Gagnon, 37 Green Haven Road, stated that she was a business owner at 15 Ermer Road and
31 was present when both fatal accidents happened. The 2016 victim was a friend of hers from
32 church. It was a dangerous intersection and she avoided it by taking a long detour because it was
33 safer. You have to make a rush for it at that intersection because you could be waiting for fifteen
34 or minutes in order to get across. The visibility there was not good. She told her clients not to use
35 Route 111. That was not okay. Ms. Gagnon wanted a light there.

36
37 Joan Tavares stated that she co-owned the counseling business with Beth Gagnon. She came
38 from Fremont and learned pretty quickly not to stop to take the left onto Ermer Road because
39 you would be rear-ended. People will not see you and make it a two lane even if it was not a two-
40 lane road. Barriers might help but she went around and told clients to avoid that intersection. Her
41 mom had fought for a light in the past and asked how many people needed to die. It was a wire
42 and a light.

43
44 Councilor Bettencourt stated that this intersection had weighed heavily on everyone, and they all
45 agreed that it was a dangerous intersection. He stated that the statistics did not capture what the
46 folks living in the area witnessed, which were the close calls that did not make the reports. This

1 Board's opinion has been for quite some time that a light was needed there. He had personally
2 relayed that message to the State. The trouble was that there were hoops that had to be jumped
3 through and it was incredibly frustrating. The first thing he heard was what could they do to
4 mitigate the situation in the near term. If that meant trying temporary solutions in order to check
5 boxes off to get to the real solution, then they should do that. Mr. Sorenson would need to look at
6 whatever Mr. Bakos and VHB recommended to give the Council his opinion on those
7 suggestions.

8
9 Mr. Sorenson stated that they would. They had some ideas in the meantime. The
10 recommendations would come back for the next meeting in two to three weeks and the Council
11 should review the suggestions then.

12
13 Chairman Bryant stated that a traffic light needed to be on the list of solutions when they came
14 back or there was no point in coming back.

15
16 Mr. Sorenson stated that he agreed, and the Board had been saying that since 2017. These were
17 the federal highway hoops that they had to go through.

18
19 Chairman Bryant stated that the State owned the road. It was the NHDOT was taking their time
20 to review the options but there was nothing low-cost about that intersection.

21
22 Councilor Sweeney stated that they would only see further development on Route 111. He
23 appreciated the projection, but he felt that the development along the road would cause it to get
24 busier. He knew a lot of residents from area towns who avoided Route 111 because of that
25 intersection. Every major intersection along the route was signalized except for this one. He was
26 in favor of the traffic light.

27
28 Councilor Stacey stated that they knew the intersection would only get busier because there was
29 a plan to develop the large lot for commercial use. It would have people coming and going. The
30 light needed to be put in there and she was tired of waiting on the State to act.

31
32 Chairman Bryant stated that a light should be there now.

33
34 Councilor Wright stated that it took the DOT, and they were waiting for the DOT.

35
36 Mr. Belair stated that they had a nine-member State delegation plus a State Senator, and they
37 needed to put some pressure on the State to get this done.

38
39 Councilor Pelletier stated that the Planning Board approved a facility there which would involve
40 heavy trucks moving in and out of the units. The intersection would get busier.

41
42 Councilor Sweeney stated that he had filed legislation to direct DOT to put a light at that
43 intersection. It would probably have a public hearing in January if the issue was not resolved by
44 then.

1 Shane Smith, Deputy Police Chief, stated that the Salem Police Department supported a light at
2 the intersection. He personally avoided that intersection whenever he could.

3
4 Mr. Sorenson stated that something would be done here. They were pushing for a traffic light.
5 The funding was in place. They would come back in two to three weeks.

6
7 Chairman Bryant thanked everyone for coming out and speaking.

8
9 Nick Sanders, NHDOT, stated that he heard the testimony, and it was very moving. They would
10 be reviewing the traffic analysis that they just received and be back in a few weeks.

11
12 Chairman Bryant stated that it was the process not the people that was the issue.

13
14 Mr. Sanders stated that the DOT understood that this was a priority for the community.

15
16 Chairman Bryant thanked him for attending.

17
18 Chairman Bryant closed the Public Hearing at 8:24 PM.

19
20 Chairman Bryant called for a recess at 8:24 PM.

21
22 Chairman Bryant called the meeting back to order at 8:37 PM.

23
24 **12. 2024 Budget Votes**

25 Chairman Bryant stated that they would start with Revenues.

26
27 **MOTION:** by Councilor Bettencourt

28 *Move to increase Line GF-10000-3207 - Meals and Rooms by \$480,000 for a new total of*
29 *\$2,880,000.*

30 **SECOND:** by Councilor Sweeney

31
32 Chairman Bryant asked if they wanted to do the effects of the adjustments each time or just at the
33 end.

34
35 Nicole McGee, Finance Director, stated that they would do them each time.

36
37 Chairman Bryant asked for the impact of this change then.

38
39 Ms. McGee stated that it would increase the tax rate for next year over the estimated rate for this
40 year by \$.36 or a 6.51% increase. That was down from the Town Manager's original 8%
41 increase.

42
43 **MOTION:** by Councilor Bettencourt

44 *Move to increase Line GF-10000-3240 – Auto Permits by \$250,000 for a new total of*
45 *\$7,250,000.*

46 **SECOND:** by Councilor Sweeney

1 Councilor Bettencourt stated that he appreciated that they had to be conservative with budgeting
2 revenues. He saw more people coming into Salem than leaving and so they had to also recognize
3 what was happening on the ground. His proposal was to split the difference between the
4 proposed decreased amount for next year and the projected figure for the current year.

5
6 Chairman Bryant asked for the impact of that change.

7
8 Ms. McGee stated that the increase would become a \$.32 increase or 5.8%.

9
10 **MOTION:** by Councilor Bettencourt

11 ***Move to increase Line GF-10000-3333 – Auto Permits by \$100,000 for a new total of***
12 ***\$1,700,000.***

13 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

14
15 Councilor Bettencourt stated that he appreciated the issue and was working on some reform in
16 this area. He felt that they could increase this while still reducing the total from last year.

17
18 Ms. McGee stated that if that was voted in then the increase would be \$.30 or 5.5%.

19
20 Chairman Bryant asked for the total Revenues based on the proposed changes.

21
22 Ms. McGee answered that the General Fund would be \$18,766,991.

23
24 **MOTION:** by Councilor Stacey

25 ***Move to set the General Fund Revenues at \$18,766,991.***

26 **SECOND:** by Councilor Sweeney

27 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

28 **The motion passed unanimously.**

29
30 Councilor Sweeney thanked the staff for passing out a handout on the unassigned fund balance.
31 He asked what they projected it would be for the end of this year.

32
33 Ms. McGee stated that they measured it once a year. She could look at the General Ledger, but it
34 probably would not be favorable.

35
36 Councilor Sweeney stated that he would appreciate that.

37
38 **Town Council**

39 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

40 ***Move that the Town Council sets the Town Council Budget at \$74,410.***

41 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

42 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

43 **The motion passed unanimously.**

District Court

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the District Court Budget at \$111,504.

SECOND: by Councilor Wright

MOTION: by Councilor Bettencourt

Move that the Town Council reduce \$5,000 from the District Court Budget for a new total of \$106,504.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

Councilor Bettencourt stated that he felt that this budget had a big increase, and it could be run a little bit leaner. He felt it was better for every area to contribute to the sacrifice rather than one particular area. Councilor Bettencourt stated that he hoped these changes would amount to a substantial number over the course of the evening.

Ms. McGee stated that they would need to place the reduction somewhere. She asked if the Town Council was giving Staff the discretion to choose the line for the cut.

Councilor Bettencourt stated that was the intent behind his motion.

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Town Manager

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Town Manager Budget at \$577,976.

SECOND: by Councilor Wright

MOTION: by Councilor Stacey

Move that the Town Council reduce \$7,000 from the Town Manager Budget for a new total of \$570,976.

SECOND: by Councilor Bettencourt

Councilor Wright asked where they would find \$7,000 in this Budget.

Chairman Bryant stated that it could come from any of the lines.

Councilor Wright stated that they could not cut the salary lines, the taxes lines, or the benefits lines. She asked what they were cutting.

Chairman Bryant stated that it was a bottom-line budget, and they were telling the Town Manager that he had to be frugal and find the savings.

VOTE: 7-1-0

The motion passed with Councilor Wright opposed.

Legal

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Legal Budget at \$168,700.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

MOTION: by Councilor Bettencourt

Move that the Town Council reduce \$5,000 from the Legal Budget for a new total of \$163,700.

SECOND: by Councilor Pelletier

Councilor Bettencourt stated that he felt that a smaller increase here should suffice. They needed to reduce the use of legal services that they had been relying on over the past few years.

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Human Resources

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Human Resources Budget at \$410,041.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Employee Benefits

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Employee Benefits Budget at \$1,342,284.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Planning Board

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Planning Board Budget at \$3,916.

SECOND: by Councilor Pelletier

Councilor Stacey asked why they were budgeting for lines when nothing was expended from those lines. It included dues which were earlier in the year, but they were in October now.

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Board of Adjustment

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Board of Adjustment Budget at \$1,762.

SECOND: by Councilor Wright

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Budget Committee

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Budget Committee Budget at \$2,117.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Conservation Committee

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Conservation Committee Budget at \$2,182.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Trustee of the Trust Funds

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Budget Committee Budget at \$17,218.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Town Hall

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Town Hall Budget at \$225,681.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

MOTION: by Councilor Bettencourt

Move that the Town Council reduce \$7,000 from the Town Hall Budget for a new total of \$218,681.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

Councilor Bettencourt stated that this budget had a large increase and he understood why but they had to run the operation a little bit lean.

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Old Town Hall

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Old Town Hall Budget at \$13,707.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Hose House

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Hose House Budget at \$5,673.

SECOND: by Councilor Stramaglia

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Old Library

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Old Library Budget at \$3,687.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

School House #5

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the School House #5 Budget at \$1,315.

SECOND: by Councilor Pelletier

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Depot Train Station

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Depot Train Station Budget at \$17,590.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

MOTION: by Councilor Bettencourt

Move that the Town Council reduce \$11,486 from Line 4452 – Building Maintenance in the Depot Train Station Budget for a new budget total of \$6,104.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

Councilor Sweeney asked if the cut was from the Depot Train Station or from the Town Buildings in general.

Councilor Bettencourt stated that he meant to cut it from the Depot Train Station. He was looking at the camera system and cutting that. Councilor Bettencourt stated that he appreciated the desire to ensure that the building was secure, but he was not convinced that they needed these two systems to accomplish that goal. There was a lower cost option to get that done. He appreciated that something like Ring would not have the same bells and whistles that a system that plugged into the Town's network would, but it was a lower cost option. His understanding was that there was a camera on the Depot already but if not then they should evaluate whether or not impact fees were the appropriate way to fund that camera. Councilor Bettencourt stated that he felt they could pass on the camera system at this time.

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Department

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Financial Department Budget at \$1,142,150.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Information Technology

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Information Technology Budget at \$987,232.

SECOND: by Councilor Wright

MOTION: by Councilor Bettencourt

Move that the Town Council reduce \$15,587 from Line 4701 – Computer Acquisition Equipment in the Information Technology Budget for a new budget total of \$971,645.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

Councilor Bettencourt stated that he continued to have heartburn about the amount of computer equipment acquisition and how they determined which equipment to replace. It was a big number. He cut the amount requested by a quarter.

Councilor Withrow stated that her issue was the new Chief Technology Officer. She had gone back and forth on this one. Councilor Withrow stated that she thought outside contracted services was the way to go. Block 5 Tech was really good and countywide, but they did not have a chance to bid on this contract and she did not know why.

Manager Dillon stated that the company reached out to the Town and asked questions on the bid. This position would address the reason that the company did not bid which was the lack of staff personnel in-house. The issue was the way that they were currently structured. This position was added to the Budget at the direction of the Council.

Councilor Withrow stated that she understood but knowing that there was a company at the county level that she kept hearing good things about. They didn't even bid, which made her concerned about the position. They should be doing something. They reduced the IT Contract, but it was still \$250,000. Councilor Withrow asked if that was the time without the new employee.

Manager Dillon stated that the intent was still to contract out IT Services. The reduction was because they went out to bid and got a more favorable bid.

Councilor Withrow asked if \$250,000 covered the year.

Manager Dillon answered yes.

Councilor Withrow stated that she would leave it alone unless someone else felt it should go.

1 Councilor Stacey stated that she was not here for the discussion about this position as it
2 happened while she was away. She stated that the County used Block 5 and they were fabulous.
3 Councilor Stacey stated that she did not understand if they suggested that the Town needed this
4 position in order for them to bid on the contract. She explained how their services worked for the
5 County. Councilor Stacey stated that she had not been pleased with other vendors that the Town
6 had used. It would be an expensive position because it was a specialist. The concern was that
7 they would still be using a service that was not as responsive as she felt they should be.
8

9 Councilor Withrow asked if they should leave the position or pull it. She was okay with pulling it
10 because she had been on the fence about it.
11

12 Councilor Sweeney stated that he had gone back and forth about the position as well. He
13 supported it as long as they had a game plan that helped them reduce future costs. They needed
14 someone who could look at ways to improve services and reduce costs. It would open up the
15 bidding to more companies.
16

17 Councilor Wright stated that she had some IT background and had heard that if they did not do
18 something it was just a matter of when the Town was hacked again. She felt that they needed to
19 be careful and protect the Town.
20

21 Councilor Stacey stated that she did not know that this position would protect the Town because
22 they were still using the same contracted services that were around when the last issue happened.
23 The Town was not protected then. She hoped that whoever was hired would put together a plan
24 and implement it rather than have it sit on a shelf. It was a vital thing to have.
25

26 Councilor Wright stated that when Manager Dillon presented this position to the Board had a
27 multi-year expectation on this. She hated to pull the rug out on year one.
28

29 Councilor Withrow stated that she would leave the position. The Council would have to stay on
30 top of this and ensure that there was a plan that was followed, rather than get lost. It should not
31 be just a position that was not serving its best benefit.
32

33 Councilor Stacey agreed.
34

35 **VOTE: 7-1-0**

36 **The motion passed with Councilor Wright opposed.**
37

38 **Assessing**

39 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

40 ***Move that the Town Council sets the Assessing Budget at \$674,083.***

41 **SECOND:** by Councilor Bettencourt
42

43 **MOTION:** by Councilor Bettencourt

44 ***Move that the Town Council reduce \$210,000 from Line 4400 – Contracted Services in the***
45 ***Assessing Budget for a new budget total of \$464,083.***

46 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

1 Councilor Bettencourt stated that the motion spoke to the townwide revaluation that was
2 proposed here. His understanding was that that did not have to be done this year because they
3 were still within the five-year window. He appreciated Mr. Lessard's justification, but he felt that
4 they had a number of other priorities such that this could come up next year.

5
6 Councilor Stacey stated that she seconded that idea.

7
8 Councilor Withrow stated that she would have made the motion if Councilor Bettencourt had not
9 because she agreed. She had no interest in doing this early.

10
11 Councilor Stramaglia stated that he agreed.

12
13 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

14 **The motion passed unanimously.**

15
16 **Town Clerk**

17 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

18 ***Move that the Town Council sets the Town Clerk Department Budget at \$252,533.***

19 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

20 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

21 **The motion passed unanimously.**

22
23 **Elections**

24 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

25 ***Move that the Town Council sets the Elections Budget at \$202,460.***

26 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stramaglia

27
28 Councilor Withrow asked about the poll pads and if they were coming out of this year's budget
29 or the proposed budget for next year.

30
31 Manager Dillon stated that they would end up making that purchase this year.

32
33 **MOTION:** by Councilor Withrow

34 ***Move that the Town Council reduce \$75,150 from Line 4210 – Operating Supplies in the***
35 ***Elections Budget for a new budget total of \$127,310.***

36 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stacey

37
38 Councilor Wright asked if they had to authorize the Town to buy it this year.

39
40 Chairman Bryant answered no, they just had to find a line this year for it.

41
42 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

43 **The motion passed unanimously.**

Collections

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney
Move that the Town Council sets the Collections Budget at \$342,559.

SECOND: by Councilor Stramaglia

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Tax Collector

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney
Move that the Town Council sets the Tax Collector Budget at \$214,578.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

Councilor Bettencourt asked how they came up with the Step Increases for the elected officials because they were not part of a union.

Manager Dillon stated that traditionally the Town Clerk and Tax Collector, based on documentation going back to the 1980's, had followed the SPAA increases. SPAA represented the mid-level managers. It had been set at the equivalent of Step 8 in the agreement.

Councilor Bettencourt stated that it was tethered to a union contract.

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Debt Services

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney
Move that the Town Council sets the Debt Services Budget at \$710,388.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Insurance

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney
Move that the Town Council sets the Insurance Budget at \$523,196.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

VOTE: 7-0-1

The motion passed with Councilor Bettencourt abstaining.

Community Development

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney
Move that the Town Council sets the Community Development Budget at \$353,101.

SECOND: by Councilor Stramaglia

Councilor Withrow stated that this was proposing a new grant writer position. She had sent out some questions this morning because she wanted to know how many grants the Town received, how many did they not receive, and how many were missed. In order to support this position,

1 they needed to know what they missed to make it worth it. Councilor Withrow asked if the Town
2 Manager had answers to the questions.

3
4 Manager Dillon stated that he did not remember receiving that list of questions. He could not
5 answer for the grants that they missed out on applying for. They did not have anyone seeking
6 grant opportunities. The Town mainly responded to grant opportunity notices that they received.

7
8 Councilor Withrow stated that the Town got a good amount of grants. She asked how many they
9 applied for unsuccessfully.

10
11 Manager Dillon answered that he did not have that answer.

12
13 Councilor Withrow asked if it was part of the Assistant Town Manager's job description.

14
15 Manager Dillon answered that it was not. The position was created to oversee Community
16 Development and Community Affairs when it was set up.

17
18 Councilor Withrow stated that she was going to move to remove the position and asked the
19 Finance Director for the total cost of the position.

20
21 **MOTION:** by Councilor Withrow

22 ***Move that the Town Council reduce \$44,586 from Line 4090 – Regular Pay in the Community***
23 ***Development Budget for a new budget total of \$308,515.***

24 **SECOND:** by Councilor Bettencourt

25
26 Councilor Wright stated that she felt strongly that they needed to keep this position so that they
27 had someone looking for grants. If one year they do not bring in more than what they earned,
28 then they should let the person go. She felt that they could find someone. Other towns had grant
29 writers and they brought in more than what it cost to have the person on staff.

30
31 Councilor Sweeney asked if they would be able to let the person go under this position if they
32 didn't have a return on investment.

33
34 Manager Dillon stated that the Town had the ability to reorganize and eliminate the position.

35
36 Councilor Bettencourt stated that he felt this role had been a nomad and floated around. He
37 recalled it being under the Assistant Town Manager and under the Community Development
38 Director at various times. He did not know that bringing in a separate individual to run that was
39 the best way to go. There should be a way for someone already on staff to take on those duties as
40 they had done in the past.

41
42 Chairman Bryant asked if they knew what the total was yet.

43
44 Ms. McGee answered not yet.

1 Councilor Pelletier stated that they were at a state where they needed to sharpen their pencils
2 with this budget and the grant writer should be a job requirement of the current staff.

3
4 Councilor Wright stated that this was one way that they could creatively increase revenues. She
5 stated that the Community Development Budget was the appropriate place to add the \$2,000 that
6 the Communications Committee was asking for.

7
8 Councilor Sweeney asked if the issue was not having someone looking for grants or the inability
9 to complete the applications for grants in a timely manner.

10
11 Manager Dillon answered that it was probably a mixture of both. There were opportunities
12 missed because no one was searching them out. The reason that they received so many grants
13 was because they had a lot of talented employees who can complete the applications and explain
14 the need. The reason for failing to receive grants was more due to the criteria than how the
15 application was prepared.

16
17 Ms. McGee stated that the total reduction would be a total of \$84,241 with the salary plus \$6,032
18 for Retirement, \$464 for Disability Insurance, \$147 for Workers Compensation, \$3,411 for
19 FICA, \$28,528 for Health Insurance, \$132 for Life Insurance, and \$941 for Dental Insurance.

20
21 Motion adjusted to the new total.

22
23 **MOTION:** by Councilor Withrow

24 *Move that the Town Council reduce \$84,241 including \$44,586 from Line 4090 – Regular Pay*
25 *\$6,032 from Line 4170 - Retirement, \$464 from Line 4171 - Disability Insurance, \$147 from*
26 *Line 4172 - Workers Compensation, \$3,411 from Line 4174 - FICA, \$28,528 from Line 4176 -*
27 *Health Insurance, \$132 from Line 4178 - Life Insurance, and \$941 from Line 4179 - Dental*
28 *Insurance in the Community Development Budget for a new budget total of \$268,860.*

29 **SECOND:** by Councilor Bettencourt

30
31 Councilor Sweeney asked if this position would generate over \$90,000 in new grants to the
32 Town that they were not currently receiving.

33
34 Ms. McGee stated that a condition of employment could be that they had to bring in that amount
35 of money or the Town could terminate their employment. There were a lot of grants out there
36 and an experienced grant writer could do that. They looked at what other communities were
37 paying grant writers to determine what the salary should be. Fred Wallace had brought in a lot of
38 grants that they had never seen before which led her to believe there were more out there. It was
39 a fair question, and she did not have the answer but there were opportunities being missed.

40
41 Manager Dillon stated that he agreed with the Finance Director. He wanted to point out that the
42 success of meeting that goal would depend on when the person started versus the cycles of the
43 grants that they were applying for. There had been another community that structured their grant
44 writer position as contingent on bringing in the grants. The person was successful for many years
45 but left when grants started drying up during the Great Recession. He stated that some grant
46 opportunities had a match which the Town would be unable to meet this next year but could be

1 prepared for the following year's budget. A report on those could be provided to the Town
2 Council.

3
4 Councilor Wright stated that one of the reasons she was pushing for this was because they had
5 impact fees that they ended up returning. This grant writer position could look for grants to use
6 the impact fees for the Town's match.

7
8 Councilor Withrow stated that the \$90,000 was for nine months, not a full year. The town did not
9 have an appetite to fire people once they hired them. There was a lot more work that could be
10 done to prove this position out. They found them often and maybe if they just put a little more
11 effort into looking to see if they could find more grants.

12
13 Councilor Bettencourt stated that as part of the Charter Commission he was assigned to research
14 grant opportunities and how the Charter would impact the ability to get grants. The grant
15 opportunities ebbed and flowed based off the economy. They would be putting the person in a
16 difficult position if they expected them to get grants and the economy had a downturn that dried
17 up all of the grants. The other issue was that it would always be a challenge for Salem to meet
18 the particular criteria that a lot of grants were looking for. A lot of the big dollar grants were
19 looking for urban settings based on his research. The demographics they looked for did not
20 match the demographics of Salem nor would they in the near future. Councilor Bettencourt
21 stated that he did not know if there was this great windfall of money out there that if they just
22 had a person looking for it, they could find it.

23
24 **VOTE:** 7-1-0

25 **The motion passed with Councilor Wright opposed.**

26
27 **MOTION:** by Councilor Wright

28 *Move that the Town Council add \$2,000 to the Community Development Budget for the*
29 *Communications Committee for a new budget total of \$270,860.*

30 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

31
32 Councilor Withrow suggested that it probably be under Boards and Committees.

33
34 Ms. McGee stated that if they added the money to the Budget, she could create a section for the
35 Communications Committee.

36
37 Councilor Sweeney stated that he wanted some guardrails on the money because he did not feel
38 that taxpayer money should be used for election campaigning. There would be private funding
39 for signs. This could be the funding for the election notice that the Charter required be sent out.
40 He did not want taxpayer funds being used to advocate for or against Town election articles.

41
42 Councilor Wright stated that everything the Communications Committee did was run by either
43 the Assistant Town Manager or the Community Development Program Manager.

1 **MOTION:** by Councilor Wright
2 *Move that the Town Council add \$2,000 to the Operating Budget for the Communications*
3 *Committee for a new budget total of \$2,000.*

4 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

5 **VOTE:** 7-1-0

6 **The motion passed with Councilor Bettencourt opposed.**

7
8 **Planning**

9 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

10 *Move that the Town Council sets the Planning Budget at \$298,880.*

11 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

12 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

13 **The motion passed unanimously.**

14
15 **Police - Administration**

16 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

17 *Move that the Town Council sets the Police Administration Budget at \$763,598.*

18 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

19 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

20 **The motion passed unanimously.**

21
22 **Support Services**

23 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

24 *Move that the Town Council sets the Police Support Services Budget at \$2,957,430.*

25 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

26

27 Councilor Withrow asked if the new support clerk brought the total to four clerks or five clerks.

28

29 Ms. McGee answered that it would be four with the new position.

30

31 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

32 **The motion passed unanimously.**

33

34 **Patrol**

35 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

36 *Move that the Town Council sets the Police Patrol Budget at \$6,766,156.*

37 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stacey

38 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

39 **The motion passed unanimously.**

40

41 **Special Services**

42 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

43 *Move that the Town Council sets the Police Special Services Budget at \$1,250,233.*

44 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stacey

45 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

46 **The motion passed unanimously.**

Investigative Services

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Police Investigative Services Budget at \$2,499,353.

SECOND: by Councilor Stramaglia

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Animal Control

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Animal Control Budget at \$11,511.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Police Station

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Financial Department Budget at \$137,426.

SECOND: by Councilor Stramaglia

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Fire Administration

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Fire Administration Budget at \$1,154,135.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

Councilor Stacey stated that she had a couple of questions. Line 4412 – Training Expense was zeroed out. The total across all of the budgets was considerably lower and she wanted to know why.

Manager Dillon listed the training lines and stated that these lines had not been fully expended so the amount was reduced.

Councilor Stacey stated that a multitude of lines could be reduced based on what was not expended. They could apply that to a lot of lines across all of the budgets. She wanted to make sure everyone got the training they needed.

Ms. McGee stated that there was a trench rescue training that she thought was in the current budget but not in the proposed budget. They were having a hard time either finding a course or an instructor.

Perry Plummer, Interim Fire Chief, stated that the class had been delayed but they had found an instructor, and the money would be spent this year.

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Fire Suppression

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Fire Suppression Budget at \$12,503,663.

SECOND: by Councilor Stramaglia

Councilor Stacey stated that Line 4412 – Fire and EMS Training had only had \$8,390 expended so far this year and they were still asking for \$40,000 for next year.

Councilor Withrow asked what they expected to come in for that \$40,000.

Ms. McGee asked if she was asking about the 2023 estimate.

Councilor Withrow answered yes.

Chief Plummer stated that they had reduced the training request for next year by \$40,000. They had the upcoming class and they had someone in paramedic school, so it depended on when those bills were paid as to what showed as expended.

Councilor Withrow asked if all of that money was expected to be expended this year.

Chief Plummer answered yes.

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Communications

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Fire Communications Budget at \$912,979.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

Councilor Withrow asked about Line 4456 – Radio Maintenance and if it was a required contract or a warranty.

Manager Dillon stated that \$147,004 was the maintenance contract which was more for maintenance of the tower units and the dispatch units to keep the network functioning versus the individual radios.

Councilor Withrow asked if they were contractually obligated to this and if they were getting their money's worth.

Manager Dillon stated that he was told that they needed to sign the maintenance agreement now or they would not have that option when it first came up. The system was new so it shouldn't have major repair issues, but it still needed to be maintained.

Councilor Withrow asked if there was any way to track it to see if it was worth paying for.

1 Manager Dillon stated that they would work on that.

2
3 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

4 **The motion passed unanimously.**

5
6 **Fire Stations**

7 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

8 *Move that the Town Council sets the Fire Stations Budget at \$254,371.*

9 **SECOND:** by Councilor Wright

10
11 **MOTION:** by Councilor Withrow

12 *Move that the Town Council reduce \$5,000 from Line 4452 – Building Maintenance in the*
13 *Fire Stations Budget for a new budget total of \$249,371.*

14 **SECOND:** by Councilor Bettencourt

15
16 After lengthy discussion, the motion was determined to have been intended for the Central Fire
17 Station not the Fire Stations Budget.

18
19 **Amendment withdrawn.**

20
21 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

22 **The motion passed unanimously.**

23
24 **Central Fire Station**

25 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

26 *Move that the Town Council sets the Fire Central Station Budget at \$76,254.*

27 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stramaglia

28
29 **MOTION:** by Councilor Withrow

30 *Move that the Town Council reduce \$5,000 from Line 4452 – Building Maintenance in the*
31 *Central Station Budget for a new budget total of \$71,254.*

32 **SECOND:** by Councilor Pelletier

33 **VOTE:** 7-1-0

34 **The motion passed with Councilor Stramaglia opposed.**

35
36 **South Station**

37 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

38 *Move that the Town Council sets the Fire South Station Budget at \$49,940.*

39 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stramaglia

40
41 **MOTION:** by Councilor Withrow

42 *Move that the Town Council reduce \$5,000 from Line 4452 – Building Maintenance in the*
43 *South Station Budget for a new budget total of \$44,940.*

44 **SECOND:** by Councilor Bettencourt

45 **VOTE:** 7-1-0

46 **The motion passed with Councilor Stramaglia opposed.**

North Station

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Fire North Station Budget at \$50,322.

SECOND: by Councilor Stramaglia

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Inspectional Services

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Fire Inspectional Services Budget at \$970,473.

SECOND: by Councilor Stramaglia

Councilor Withrow stated that when this was discussed the other night there was discussion that the Health Inspector could not get to surprise visits of establishments. She asked if they would be freed up once Tuscan slowed down.

Manager Dillon stated that after the meeting he was informed that there were things like tattoo parlors that they were not inspecting. Once Tuscan slowed down, they would still have issues with the inspections and re-inspections as businesses move in and out of locations around town. The other part was that they currently contracted out the septic system inspections and this new position would be responsible for those inspections. The septic system inspections had an offsetting revenue.

Councilor Withrow stated that she did not want to be adding new positions and asked for the total cost of the new position so that she could reduce the full amount.

Councilor Sweeney asked what the offsetting revenue was.

Councilor Withrow stated that she thought the offsetting cost was to pay for the septic inspections.

Manager Dillon stated that was correct. They budgeted \$25,000 in revenue which would be from the inspections which would either be done by a contractor or by this position.

Councilor Stacey asked about Line 4092 – Temporary Pay and the two part-time inspectors budgeted at seven hours per week. They were not included in the total number of employees on page 185.

Manager Dillon stated that page 185 showed the full-time positions.

Chairman Bryant asked if the Town Manager had something for the Council.

Manager Dillon stated that Chief Plummer had pointed out that they reduced Line 4400 – Contracted Services by \$17,808 because they were adding the position. So, if they removed the position, they would need to adjust the Contracted Services line.

1 Councilor Withrow stated that she would rather restore that money than have a new position.

2
3 Councilor Stacey stated that she agreed.

4
5 Ms. McGee stated that it was \$42,917.

6
7 Councilor Withrow asked if \$17,000 turned into \$42,000.

8
9 Ms. McGee answered yes. It looked like the health and dental insurance were still in for six
10 months instead of three months like the salary was reduced to.

11
12 **MOTION:** by Councilor Withrow

13 *Move that the Town Council reduce \$42,917 from the Fire Inspectional Services Budget to*
14 *remove the Deputy Health Officer position for a new budget total of \$927,556.*

15 **SECOND:** by Councilor Bettencourt

16 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

17 **The motion passed unanimously.**

18
19 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

20 *Move that the Town Council increase Line 4400 – Contracted Services by \$17,808 in the Fire*
21 *Inspectional Services Budget for a new budget total of \$945,364.*

22 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stacey

23 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

24 **The motion passed unanimously.**

25
26 **Municipal Services Administration**

27 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

28 *Move that the Town Council sets the Municipal Services Administration Budget at \$543,459.*

29 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stramaglia

30 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

31 **The motion passed unanimously.**

32
33 **Garage**

34 **MOTION:** by Councilor Stacey

35 *Move that the Town Council sets the Municipal Services Garage Budget at \$106,327.*

36 **SECOND:** by Councilor Sweeney

37
38 Councilor Stacey stated that the building alarm upgrade was left out of the total.

39
40 **MOTION:** by Councilor Bettencourt

41 *Move that the Town Council reduce \$22,250 from Line 4498 – Building Repairs in the*
42 *Municipal Services Garage Budget for a new budget total of \$84,077.*

43 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

44
45 Councilor Bettencourt stated that this was the funding for the bid netting. He believed that there
46 had to be cheaper methods for addressing this problem than spending \$22,000.

1 **VOTE: 7-1-0**
2 **The motion passed with Councilor Stramaglia opposed.**

3
4 **Fleet**

5 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney
6 *Move that the Town Council sets the Municipal Services Fleet Budget at \$700,826.*

7 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

8 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

9 **The motion passed unanimously.**

10

11 **Streets and Shops**

12 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

13 *Move that the Town Council sets the Municipal Services Streets and Shops Budget at*
14 *\$1,686,367.*

15 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

16

17 Councilor Withrow stated that there were some large jumps under Line 4400 – Contracted
18 Services and Line 4462 – Tree Removal in the last year.

19

20 **MOTION:** by Councilor Withrow

21 *Move that the Town Council reduce \$17,000 from the Municipal Services Streets and Shops*
22 *Budget for a new budget total of \$1,669,367.*

23 **SECOND:** by Councilor Bettencourt

24

25 **VOTE: 6-2-0**

26 **The motion passed with Councilor Stramaglia and Councilor Stacey opposed.**

27

28 **Winter Weather Operations**

29 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

30 *Move that the Town Council sets the Municipal Services Winter Weather Operations Budget*
31 *at \$1,200,035.*

32 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stacey

33 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

34 **The motion passed unanimously.**

35

36 **Solid Waste**

37 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

38 *Move that the Town Council sets the Municipal Services Solid Waste Budget at \$1,781,467.*

39 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

40 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

41 **The motion passed unanimously.**

42

43 **Parks/Property**

44 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

45 *Move that the Town Council sets the Municipal Services Parks/Property Budget at \$739,704.*

46 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

1 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

2 **The motion passed unanimously.**

3

4 **Engineering**

5 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

6 *Move that the Town Council sets the Municipal Services Engineering Budget at \$954,145.*

7 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stramaglia

8 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

9 **The motion passed unanimously.**

10

11 **Lighting/Traffic**

12 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

13 *Move that the Town Council sets the Municipal Services Lighting/Traffic Budget at \$647,997.*

14 **SECOND:** by Councilor Pelletier

15 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

16 **The motion passed unanimously.**

17

18 **Human Services Administration**

19 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

20 *Move that the Town Council sets the Human Services Administration Budget at \$138,348.*

21 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stacey

22 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

23 **The motion passed unanimously.**

24

25 **Direct Assistance**

26 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

27 *Move that the Town Council sets the Human Services Direct Assistance Budget at \$34,900.*

28 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

29 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

30 **The motion passed unanimously.**

31

32 **Outside Agencies**

33 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

34 *Move that the Town Council sets the Human Services Outside Agencies Budget at \$106,300.*

35 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stacey

36 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

37 **The motion passed unanimously.**

38

39 **Community Services – Administration**

40 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

41 *Move that the Town Council sets the Community Services Administration Budget at \$560,565.*

42 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

43 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

44 **The motion passed unanimously.**

45

Ingram Senior Center

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Community Services Ingram Senior Center Budget at \$84,609.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

MOTION: by Councilor Stacey

Move that the Town Council reduce \$30,000 from Line 4452 – Building Maintenance in the Community Services Ingram Senior Center Budget for a new budget total of \$54,609.

SECOND: by Councilor Bettencourt

Councilor Stacey stated that she could not support doing a study at this time.

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Facilities

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Community Services Facilities Budget at \$41,427.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

MOTION: by Councilor Withrow

Move that the Town Council reduce \$30,000 from Line 4452 – Building Maintenance in the Community Services Facilities Budget for a new budget total of \$11,427.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

Councilor Withrow stated that she would like to work on a maintenance plan in the future once the budget season was over.

Councilor Bettencourt stated that there was a lot of discussion about the future of Hedgehog Park. There were successful volunteer groups for the Field of Dreams and the Friends of Recreation. He believed that there were volunteers who would help with planning for the future at Hedgehog Park and an assessment was not something they needed to spend money on at this time.

Councilor Sweeney echoed Councilor Bettencourt's comments.

Councilor Sweeney stated that the Friends did a lot of volunteer work.

Councilor Stramaglia stated that Friends did a lot at Hedgehog.

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Library Administration

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Library Administration Budget at \$1,586,673.

SECOND: by Councilor Pelletier

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Library Building

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Library Building Budget at \$ 87,050.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Community Contributions

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Community Contributions Budget at \$12,600.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Capital Improvements

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Capital Improvements Budget at \$1,959,973.

SECOND: by Councilor Stramaglia

MOTION: by Councilor Bettencourt

Move that the Town Council reduce \$144,493 from the Capital Improvements Budget for a new budget total of \$1,815,480.

SECOND: by Councilor Withrow

Councilor Bettencourt stated that he understood that Fleet Replacement had a long history. He appreciated that a plan was put in place, but he was not there when the plan was put in place to have input into it. His understanding was that the number represented seven vehicles. Councilor Bettencourt stated that he was looking to trim that back so that they could still replace the vehicles in the most dire need while spreading this project out over more time to allow for some savings here.

Manager Dillon stated that the vehicles they were looking to replace should have been replaced two years ago. They went over by \$400,000 in Vehicle Maintenance lines in the year that the Warrant Article failed. The voters and leadership did not support the plan that had been put in place in the past so staff was told to prepare a plan to level fund vehicle replacement. They were now looking to kick that program out the window and have to create a new program. They could not just keep kicking the vehicle replacement down the road. They had an engine die in one truck while another would not pass inspection. People were being put in these vehicles and they were breaking down.

1 Councilor Withrow asked how many vehicles they would be looking for next year.

2
3 Joe Devine, Assistant Town Manager, stated that he could look that number up. This year ten
4 vehicles were being replaced. The Police Department had seven vehicles out of those ten. Two
5 were for Municipal Services and one was for the Fire Department. He believed next year would
6 be a similar number of vehicles. The budget number only fluctuated between \$40,000 up or
7 down. The quotes for next year came in \$16,000 less than what they had quoted the previous
8 year.

9
10 Councilor Withrow stated that next year they expected the same number of vehicles.

11
12 Mr. Devine answered that he believed that was the case.

13
14 Ms. McGee answered that it was eleven vehicles.

15
16 Councilor Bettencourt stated that he did not think they were throwing the program out the
17 window when they were still giving over \$400,000 for this line. He then went over the history of
18 the failed Warrant Article for vehicle purchases. Councilor Bettencourt stated that the Budget
19 Committee Chairman had outreach from department heads that were willing to negotiate with the
20 Budget Committee prior to Deliberative Session. At Deliberative Session, they were told there
21 would be no negotiations and the Warrant Article failed. The taxpayer was not at fault for that.
22 That was who he was looking out for. Councilor Bettencourt stated that he did not buy that they
23 were throwing a plan out the window just because they were shaving it back a little.

24
25 Chairman Bryant stated that he would have to disagree. Mr. Devine put a plan together to try to
26 level fund the vehicle purchases. All of the vehicles were over 100,000 miles. He did not want to
27 risk safety or the plan that was put together.

28
29 Councilor Pelletier stated that he loved the departments. He did some research and found that
30 these were not front-line cruisers but the vehicles for the inspectors and other staff. Councilor
31 Pelletier stated that he would support the reduction with that in mind.

32
33 Councilor Stacey stated that she saw the note that the seven vehicles were front line and staff.
34 She had heard the Police Chief say that there were front line vehicles in this line.

35
36 Deputy Police Chief Smith asked Councilor Pelletier where he got his information from.

37
38 Councilor Pelletier stated that he got that information from the mechanic that serviced the Police
39 Department's vehicles.

40
41 Deputy Police Chief Smith stated that the K-9 vehicle and the remaining Chargers that needed to
42 be replaced, and the detective vehicles were the proposed replacements in this budget. It may
43 have been a miscommunication.

44
45 Chairman Bryant asked if they were going from Chargers to an SUV.

1 Deputy Police Chief Smith answered yes.

2

3 Mr. Devine stated that one of the goals from the program was to replace vehicles sooner to have
4 more trade in revenue to offset the cost of the program. They were turning the patrol vehicles
5 over every three years so even if they weren't doing them this year, they would be doing them
6 next year.

7

8 Chairman Bryant stated that the mileage added up quickly and the engines in the cruisers were
9 always running.

10

11 Councilor Stacey asked if the intent was to do it out of Line 4730 or of the bottom line.

12

13 Councilor Bettencourt stated that his intent was to take the money from the bottom-line.

14

15 Councilor Withrow asked if they were buying the vehicles outright now and if there was a reason
16 that they went away from leasing.

17

18 Councilor Bettencourt stated that it was probably because he complained about leasing vehicles.

19

20 Manager Dillon answered that it was several reasons including the fact that they would be paying
21 higher interest rates. This plan eliminated the carry costs from leasing vehicles.

22

23 Councilor Withrow asked if Councilor Bettencourt was willing to amend his motion to be
24 \$100,000 instead of the original figure.

25

26 Councilor Bettencourt stated that he was agreeable to that.

27

28 **MOTION:** by Councilor Bettencourt

29 *Move that the Town Council reduce \$100,000 from the Capital Improvements Budget for a*
30 *new budget total of \$1,859,973.*

31 **SECOND:** by Councilor Withrow

32

33 Chairman Bryant asked if they did not take it out of the line for the fleet vehicles, the other place
34 was probably document scanning but he felt it was a necessity.

35

36 Councilor Sweeney asked if they reduced the document scanning by \$100,000 would they be
37 able to start for six months this year and six months next.

38

39 Chairman Bryant asked which department that was for.

40

41 Ms. McGee stated that it was for all departments. They could get things scanned and it was better
42 than nothing.

43

44 Councilor Stacey asked if they were using a company or what the plan was. She did not see
45 anything budgeted in prior years for that purpose.

46

1 Manager Dillon stated that they had been talking about it for the past six years.

2
3 Chairman Bryant stated that they also talked about it the six years prior to that.

4
5 Councilor Stacey stated that there was grant money out there as well.

6
7 Ms. McGee stated that they did some document scanning with GOFERR funds.

8
9 **VOTE: 4-4-0**

10 **The amendment failed with Councilor Sweeney, Councilor Withrow, Councilor**
11 **Bettencourt, and Councilor Pelletier in favor.**

12
13 **VOTE: 5-3-0**

14 **The motion passed with Councilor Withrow, Councilor Bettencourt, and Councilor**
15 **Pelletier opposed.**

16
17 **Sewer Administration**

18 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

19 *Move that the Town Council sets the Sewer Administration Budget at \$3,025,847.*

20 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stramaglia

21 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

22 **The motion passed unanimously.**

23
24 **Sewer - Debt Services**

25 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

26 *Move that the Town Council sets the Sewer Debt Services Budget at \$593,646.*

27 **SECOND:** by Councilor Wright

28 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

29 **The motion passed unanimously.**

30
31 **Capital Projects**

32 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

33 *Move that the Town Council sets the Sewer Capital Projects Budget at \$1,060,000.*

34 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stramaglia

35 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

36 **The motion passed unanimously.**

37
38 **Water Administration**

39 **MOTION:** by Councilor Sweeney

40 *Move that the Town Council sets the Water Administration Budget at \$2,057,335.*

41 **SECOND:** by Councilor Stacey

42 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

43 **The motion passed unanimously.**

44

Water – Operations

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Water Operations Budget at \$2,646,846.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Water - Buildings

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Water Buildings Budget at \$166,362.

SECOND: by Councilor Stacey

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Water - Debt Services

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Water Debt Services Budget at \$1,056,505.

SECOND: by Councilor Wright

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Water – Capital Projects

MOTION: by Councilor Sweeney

Move that the Town Council sets the Water Capital Projects Budget at \$260,000.

SECOND: by Councilor Pelletier

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Bettencourt asked where they stood after all of the changes.

Ms. McGee stated that they were looking at a \$.22 increase or 4%.

Councilor Sweeney asked if they were able to get the fund balance figure.

Ms. McGee answered yes, it was currently negative \$2 million. There was a reason that it was only measured once a year. It would go up once the tax revenues for the next billing came in.

Councilor Sweeney stated that they had made a number of cuts this evening. The bond rating was impacted by fund balance usage. He would caution people against using more fund balance than what was presented in this budget.

Chairman Bryant stated that he appreciated the public coming out and everyone's input this evening.

1 **13. Town Manager’s Report/Questions from Town Council**

2 None.

3

4 **14. Old Business/Tabled and Pending**

5 None

6

7 **15. Upcoming Meetings**

8 • November 6, 2023

9 • November 20, 2023

10

11 **ADJOURNMENT AT 10:52 P.M.**

12 **MOTION:** by Councilor Withrow

13 ***Move to adjourn at 10:52 PM.***

14 **SECOND:** by Councilor Wright

15 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

16 **The motion passed unanimously.**

17

18 Notes/minutes taken by: Jeremiah Lamson

19

20 Approved: Board of Selectmen

21

22 Date Approved: November 6, 2023