

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting
Waterville Valley Recreation Department - Gymnasium
Town of Waterville Valley, New Hampshire
March 12, 2024

Present: Moderator, Patty Furgal
Selectboard, Rich Rita, Board Chair
Selectboard, Robert Fries, Board Vice-Chair
Selectboard, Wendi Rathgeber, Board Member
Town Manager, Mark Decoteau
Steve Royer – Administrative Services Manager
Town Clerk Assistant, Sharon Charron
Town Department Heads
Community Members

Moderator P. Furgal called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

The Pledge of Allegiance is led by former Selectboard member, Margaret Turner, to whom the 2023 Town Report is dedicated. The Moderator thanked all the workers for the election, including the Supervisors of the Checklist, the Ballot Clerks, the Town Clerk Terry Waite, and Deputy Clerk Reggie Breeckner.

Moderator reviews the following items for conducting the meeting.

- All registered voters present should have checked in and received a red voting card and Ballot vote packets.
- Patty's (Moderator) Rules of Order are reviewed and are available on pages 23 and 24 of the Town Report.
- Those wishing to speak please wait your turn and use the microphone stand at the front and time is limited to 3 minutes at a time per person. Please announce your name and your street name.
- Cell phones and electronic devices should be turned to silent mode.
- The procedure for the Bond Articles votes was explained for Articles 12 and 13.
 - Articles 12 and 13 to be voted by written ballot, and the polls will remain open for 1 hour.
 - Article 12 - PINK Ballot
 - Article 13 - YELLOW Ballot
- Secret Ballots can be requested for any other Article on the warrant by presenting the Moderator with the request in writing signed by five voters who are present at the meeting.
 - Article 19 will be voted by Secret Ballot (BLUE) after discussion is completed. The votes can be counted immediately without waiting one hour.
- At any point, anyone can request a Point of Order if the Moderator misses a step in advancing a motion, an amendment to an article, or any else. Please raise your card and say "Point of Order" to the Moderator.
- At any point, a voter can request to "Move the Question" to vote on the article. The Moderator will determine if the discussion is over or more comments will be heard.

P. Furgal made the following introductions:

- **Seated at the Head Table:**
 - The Selectboard: Rich Rita, Chair, Robert Fries, Vice-Chair, and Wendi Rathgeber
 - Town Manager: Mark Decoteau
 - Administrative Services Manager: Steve Royer
 - Town Clerk Assistant: Sharon Charron
- **Department Heads in the audience:**
 - David Noyes – Director of Public Safety/Fire Chief
 - Patrick Payer – Police Chief
 - Dylan Tucker – Municipal Services Supervisor
 - Megan Boober – Public Works Director
 - Sondra Jones – Recreation Programs Manager

- **School Election Results from 3/12/24 are announced:**

- School Board Member – Mike Furgal
- School Clerk/Treasurer – Lori Fernandes
- School Moderator – Patty Furgal

Moderator: Mark Decoteau, Town Manager, is recognized.

Discussion: Mark Decoteau, Town Manager, provides updates on three significant ongoing projects.

Road Projects were completed on Valley/Tecumseh/ Snows Brook to Village Rd. The contractor will finish drainage work and a section of road topcoat this spring. The balance remaining available from previous years' authorizations is \$1,068,904. The next phase of road work will include design engineering by HEB Engineers for Boulder Path Road and Snows Mountain Road (article 17 today). A contract extension with Piper Construction for 2024 will include road work on:

- Jennings Peak Rd (complete rebuild)
- Osceola Road (reclaim/repave)
- Intersection of Jasinski Rd & Snows Mountain Rd (maintenance)
- Golden Heights Rd (reclaim/repave – a public/private project)

Wastewater Treatment Plant project has a new engineering firm, Black & Veatch, who has been reviewing previous plans, type and design of plant, permitting, town needs, and the overall scope of the project. Black & Veatch is currently working on the Basis of Design Reports and 30% of the Final Design is expected by April 2025. The project timeline has been delayed due to bringing on a new engineering firm. 2027 or 2028 is anticipated for completion of the project.

Transfer Station Project plan has been impacted by changes to the Wastewater Treatment Plant project. The transfer Station will continue to use the area adjacent to the Department of Public Works garage. There will be some improvements made to the area for operation efficiency and customer use. A Permit-By-Notification has been submitted to NH-Dept. of Environmental Services for operations of the Transfer Station for an estimated 4-5 years.

Community Electric Power Update is provided by Kim Rawson, Chair of the Community Power Committee. Kim explains what the Community Power Program is and that it provides the bulk purchase of electricity. The current electric rate is just over \$0.10/kWh with the mild winter. New electric rates will be set in July 2024 and this will determine whether or not there will be savings for customers by purchasing power in bulk. The goal is to save \$0.02/kWh. Kim also cautioned people to beware of scams and solicitors trying to sell electricity. Valid notices will come from either the NH Electric Coop or the Town of Waterville Valley.

Moderator: Mark Decoteau, Town Manager, is recognized.

Discussion: Mark Decoteau, Town Manager, reviews common terms and definitions which will be used in the presentation of the 2024 warrant articles. Mark reviews the 2024 Budget Summary totals as compared to 2023, the Tax Impact of the budget increases, and the Use of Fund Balance. Due to continued increases in property sale prices, the current sales ratio is 73.5%, which is below the acceptable range of 90-110%. A Statistical Update is required and is planned and budgeted as part of the full budget (Article 27) for 2024. Property values will be adjusted prior to Property Tax billing in October 2024. Property owners will have the opportunity to meet and discuss value changes with the Assessors before final values are set.

Moderator: The reads the remaining 3/12/24 Election results

- **Town Election Results from 3/12/24 are announced:**

- Selectboard Member – Rich Rita
- Moderator – Patty Furgal
- Supervisor of the Checklist – Margaret Turner
- Trustee of Trust Funds – Carole Flegel (write-in)
- Library Trustee – Gretchen Williams

- **Election Results from 3/12/24 for the Zoning Amendments under Articles 2-11:**

- **Article 2** – Flood Plain Language Added **PASSED** (111 Yes, 3 No)
- **Article 3** –EV Charging Stations Use **PASSED** (95 Yes, 18 No)
- **Article 4** – Clarify a/SE Use **PASSED** (94 Yes, 17 No)
- **Article 5** – Support Solar Energy Use **PASSED** (75 Yes, 39 No)
- **Article 6** – Support Wind Energy Use **PASSED** (75 Yes, 39 No)
- **Article 7** – Setback VC Zone **PASSED** (70 Yes, 44 No)
- **Article 8** – Accessory Dwelling/Parking **PASSED** (67 Yes, 44 No)
- **Article 9** – Parking garages/lots sizes **PASSED** (88 Yes, 23 No)
- **Article 10** – Planned Unit Dev. Density **PASSED** (68 Yes, 43 No)
- **Article 11** – Building Permit \$ Threshold **PASSED** (89 Yes, 22 No)

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 12?

Article 12: I move that the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$690,000 for the purchase of a new Fire Engine/Pumper; with \$645,000 of such sum to be raised through the issuance of Bonds or Notes, under and in compliance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33) and with \$45,000 to come from the existing Fire Apparatus Maintenance and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund; and authorize the Selectboard to issue, negotiate, sell and deliver such Bonds or Notes and to deliver the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; and authorize the Selectboard to apply for, obtain, and accept Federal, State, or other aid, if any, which may be available for said project and to comply with all laws applicable to said project; and to authorize the Selectboard to take any other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto.

Motion: R. Rita

Second: W. Rathgeber

Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommends approval of this article, and the article takes a 3/5 majority ballot vote to pass. The Polls will be open for 1 hour after voting begins.

Presentation:

M. Decoteau explains that the total appropriation is for \$690K. There is \$45K in the Fire Apparatus Maintenance and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund that will also be used along with the proceeds for the sale of the fire truck being replaced. A Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) will be used in the short-term for the initial purchase of the truck. The bonding of the total amount, less the Capital Funds and the truck sale proceeds, will be determined when the Bond is purchased through the NH Municipal Bond Bank.

Chief Dave Noyes explains that replacement cycle for fire trucks in Waterville Valley is 25 years. After this length of time most repairs are costly and parts become very difficult to find. Chief Noyes explains the department operations and the need for the truck for the department. The fire truck industry since COVID times

has been challenging with significant pricing increases and long delivery wait times. The new truck is the same truck design as the current Engine #1 and the same manufacturer as the Ladder Truck which helps to standardize training and maintenance of the fleet. Mark Decoteau added that the Bond Authorization is for three years.

Moderator: Are there any questions from the public for discussion?

Discussion:

A. Berko asks why the trade/sale of the old truck being replaced is not included in the warrant article.

M. Decoteau answers that the wording of the article is provided by Bond Counsel. When the article declares the authorization of the Selectboard to “take any further action or pass any to take any other vote relative thereto” includes applying proceeds from the sale of the older truck.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and there were none. She proceeds to the next Bond Article and states that voting will take place after Article 13 for BOTH Article 12 and 13.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 13?

Article 13: I move that the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$500,000 for the purchase of a new Ambulance and associated equipment; and authorize the issuance of \$500,000 of Bonds or Notes in accordance with the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33); and authorize the Selectboard to issue, negotiate, sell and deliver such Bonds or Notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; and authorize the Selectboard to apply for, obtain, and accept Federal, State, or other aid, if any, which may be available for said project and to comply with all laws applicable to said project; and to authorize the Selectboard to take any other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto.

Motion: W. Rathgeber

Second: R. Fries

Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommend approval of this article and the article takes a 3/5 majority ballot vote to pass. The Polls will be open for 1 hour after voting begins.

Presentation:

M. Decoteau stated that the authorization is for the total amount of \$500,000. The current ambulance will be either sold or used as a trade-in against the new ambulance. Short-term financing will be used until delivery of the ambulance when the plan is to use the NH Municipal Bond Bank for financing.

Chief Dave Noyes explains that replacement cycle of the ambulance is every 10 years. The current ambulance is 10 years old now and will be 11 years old when it is replaced. The new ambulance is the same design as the current ambulance and most of the internal medical equipment is being reused. The delivery timeline is similar to the Fire Truck though not as extended. A downpayment is needed once the chassis is ready and notification was received yesterday that the chassis is ready to be claimed. The average annual revenue generated by the ambulance is \$146K. The revenues produced will pay for the ambulance in 3-4 years.

Discussion:

M. Conlon asked if keeping the old ambulance as a backup has been considered.

Chief Noyes answered that he’s been asked the questions before. There is currently no garage space for it to be stored as every garage bay is full and there is not enough staff to operate it. Until there is additional garage space

and staff, Chief Noyes recommends that just one ambulance is operated by the department.

Rick Smith asked if the revenue generated by the ambulance can be put towards the bond payments for the ambulance instead of going into the general account.

Mark Decoteau answered that all revenues from the town go into the General Fund and are used towards the debt service of the Bond that is taken for the ambulance. Mark added that a report can be generated showing the ambulance yearly revenues generated as compared against the bond payment.

Mike Furgal asked if the ambulance revenues can be placed into a Capital Reserve Fund, which could then be used to pay for the ambulance when it needs to be replaced.

Mark Decoteau answered that placing the ambulance revenues into a Capital Reserve Account would have the impact of increasing the tax rate yearly as those revenues would not be included.

Moderator: After no further discussion the voters were reminded that the polls will be open for one hour after discussion of Article 13. The two bond articles (12 and 13) will be voted on all at the same time so the voters can cast all bond article votes into the individual ballot boxes that are colored coded for each article. Article 12 is a PINK Ballot and Article 13 is a YELLOW Ballot. The polls are opened at 6:49pm for one hour for voting.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 14?

Article 14: I move that the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$75,000 for the replacement of Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus for the Public Safety Department. \$71,250 of this funding will come from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Microgrant Program and the balance of \$3,750 from General Taxation.

Motion: R. Fries

Second: R. Rita

Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommends approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Chief Dave Noyes explains that this is a Grant Request. A FEMA Grant was applied for the last two years, and the field was very competitive and the Grant was not awarded to the department. This year, Dave attended a seminar to assist in the process and learned about a Micro Grant that takes into consideration the denied grant requests as part of the scoring for approval. During the last two years, the matching grant funds were used to purchase eight SCBA (firefighter air tanks) units.

Discussion:

Katie Smith asks if the appropriations for the same equipment for last years' Town Meeting were part of the 2023 Tax Rate.

Mark Decoteau answered that they were not. There was a Town match of \$34K to the Grant amount, if awarded, out of a total of \$160K appropriation. The \$34K was part of the tax rate and was used to purchase four of the SCBA units.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and then requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 14, followed by a show of red cards against Article 14.

Moderator: Article 14 PASSES with an overwhelming vote.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 15?

Article 15: I move that the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$62,000 to purchase and install a replacement Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus Compressor in the Public Safety vehicle bays. Funding for this purpose will come from General Taxation.

Motion: W. Rathgeber

Second: R. Fries

Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommends approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Chief Dave Noyes explains that the current compressor is 19 years old and has failed and cannot be repaired. The compressor itself is a steel vault used to fill the SCBA's. The bottles are used for training and in emergencies as needed. The used bottles need to be refilled and currently that is being done out of town at the Campton-Thornton Fire Department. This piece of equipment is not eligible for the FEMA Grant.

Discussion: There are no questions asked by the public.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and there were none. She then requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 15, followed by a show of red cards against Article 15.

Moderator: Article 15 PASSES with an overwhelming vote.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 16?

Article 16: I move that the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$62,000 for the purchase and equipping of a new Public Safety Cruiser. Funding for this purpose will come from General Taxation.

Motion: R. Fries

Second: R. Rita

Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommends approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Police Chief Patrick Payer states that the current cruiser #2 is six years old and has over 91K miles. The replacement plan used to be very five years and that has been extended to six years now. The current cruiser is out of warranty and will be replaced with the same vehicle as cruiser #1, Dodge Durango. In closing, Chief Payer added it is less costly than what Dave requested in the two prior Articles.

Discussion: There are no questions asked by the public.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions, and there were none. She then requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 16, followed by a show of red cards against Article 16.

Moderator: Article 16 PASSES with an overwhelming vote.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 17?

Article 17: I move that the town will vote to establish a Snows Mountain Engineering Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for planning, maintenance and repairs to Snows Mountain Road, and the existing water main as well as the planning, engineering and design of a new sewer collection main along the road; and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$100,000 to be placed into the Capital Reserve Account with said funds to come from General Taxation; and to name the Selectboard as agents to expend from said fund.

Motion: R. Rita

Second: W. Rathgeber

Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommends approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Mark Decoteau explains that some engineering funds were raised at the 2023 Town Meeting for conceptual engineering that resulted in conceptual plans in the multi-million dollar range as an overall project inclusive of water and sewer services and the road surface. Discussions then followed by the Selectboard to establish a Capital Reserve (CR) Account to continue moving forward with planning and more detailed engineering. The amount to start the CR Account is small, but it is a starting point to what will be a multi-year project.

Discussion:

Tom Ennis expressed his support for the Article and thanks the Town for the repair work to the road surface and drainage areas. Tom encouraged support of the Article so that the properties (about 35 homes) who are being asked to pay for the new Wastewater Treatment Plant can actually use the sewer system rather than private septic systems.

Judy Ritchie asked if the amount should be larger to start the Capital Reserve Account to be able to get the engineering plans that will be needed.

Mark Decoteau explained that the conceptual work was completed in 2023 and there is a balance remaining of \$48K. The \$100K from this year's appropriation will be combined with last years remaining funds to total \$148K. This amount will be enough funds to get detailed cost estimates from the engineers.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions, and there were none. Hearing no further questions the Moderator requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 17, followed by a show of red cards against Article 17.

Moderator: Article 17 PASSES with a unanimous vote.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 18?

Article 18: I move that the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000 to be added to the Municipal Solid Waste Truck Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Funds for this appropriation will come from general taxation.

Motion: W. Rathgeber

Second: R. Fries

Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommends approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Mark Decoteau explains the balance of the previously established CR Fund is currently \$13K. The trash truck had several repairs in 2023 and is being evaluated for replacement. The trash truck is likely the vehicle used most in town. The \$25K being appropriated will be added to the \$13K CR Fund to put a total of \$38K in the CR Account. The Trash truck may need to be replaced in 2025.

Discussion:

Mike Koppel asked for the approximate cost to replace the Trash Truck.

Mark Decoteau answered that it is approximately \$300K.

Tim Smith asked if there is any thought to having two trucks as it is used most every day.

Mark Decoteau answered that not at this time because there is no garage space for an additional Trash Truck.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions, and there were none. Hearing no further questions the Moderator requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 18, followed by a show of red cards against Article 18.

Moderator: Article 18 PASSES with a unanimous vote.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 19?

Article 19: I move that the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$30,000 to the Curious George Cottage Program providing day camp care and cultural events operated by the Rey Center, a non-profit organization. This Special Warrant Article will be a non-lapsing appropriation per RSA 32:7 VI and will not lapse until the program closes or by March 9, 2026, whichever is sooner. Funding for the purpose will come from General Taxation.

Motion: R. Rita

Second: W. Rathgeber

Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommends approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote will be by written secret ballot and a simple majority is required to pass. There is an amendment to this Article, and Rich Rita is recognized for the reading of the Amendment.

Rich Rita: I move that we amend Article 19 to remove the word “George” and the words “Cultural Events” from the first sentence and change the year from 2026 to 2027.

Motion: R. Rita

Second: W. Rathgeber

Moderator: The Moderator explains the reasons for the Amendments as being that the word “George” is not part of the 501c-3 name of the program (Curious Cottage Program), and “Cultural Events” was removed to make it clear that the funding is solely for the Day Camp Care. The non-lapsing year change is a typo and should be 2027, not 2026. She asks if there are any questions about the Amendment to the Article 19.

Discussion:

Judy Ritchie asked about leaving the phrase Day Camp Care in stating that it is a different product than a Preschool, which has been widely discussed in town.

Mark Decoteau explains that the program being supported is the Curious Cottage Preschool. However, per NH Department of Revenue Administration, Town Meeting cannot use the term “preschool” or “educational use” as part

of an Article on the Town Warrant. The wording presented is what NH-DRA recommends using for Towns supporting a Preschool activity being operated by an independent non-profit organization. Other Towns use similar wording.

Judy Ritchie asked for clarification if Preschool as a word. Is it meant to mean before Kindergarten OR is it the nationally recognized program entitled Preschool, which has specific curriculum intended for specific ages.

Mark Decoteau answered that specific can be discussed after the discussion of the amendment to the article is completed.

Margaret Turner asked the Moderator to re-read the Article, as amended. The article is displayed on the viewing screen for the public to see the amended article.

Moderator: The Moderator asked for any more questions on the amendment and there were none. Hearing no questions the Moderator requested a show of red cards in favor of the Amendment to Article 19, followed by a show of red cards against the Amendment to Article 19.

Moderator: Determines the Amendment to Article 19 PASSES.

Presentation:

Mark Decoteau explains that a non-lapsing appropriation is a specific kind of warrant article in NH state law (RSA 32:7 VI). It means that the Town is appropriating a specific amount (\$30K) for a specific purpose (Curious Cottage Program that is locally known as the "Preschool"). The Selectboard and the Rey Center Board will enter into an agreement if the Article passes on how the \$30K is spent yearly between now and March 9, 2027. There will be no further vote on how to expend these funds. It will be up to both Boards to agree to how these funds are spent. The non-lapsing language will keep any balance remaining at each yearend available for use instead of being returned to Fund Balance.

Leah Elliott, Rey Center Director, thanks the public for support of the Curious Cottage and the Rey Center at the 2023 Town Meeting. Using this current non-lapsing plan will allow the Rey Center to access and fund the "day camp care program" (aka, Preschool) assuming \$10K per year for three years. This is in addition to student tuition costs and other funding as provided.

Mark Decoteau adds that the handout provided at the voter check-in table has additional information on the Rey Center's operating budget and the preschool budget and provides a comparison for the past two years, as well as the proposed budget for this year.

Patti Furgal (Moderator) explained that the School Board has explored creating a Preschool as part of the school, but the cost jumps up dramatically. This plan is the most affordable opportunity to have a Preschool in town. Mark Decoteau concurs and adds the three Boards (Town, School, Rey Center) have looked at what would be the most affordable option for offering a Preschool program to taxpayers and offering it through a non-profit is the best option.

Discussion:

Mark Wagner asked if the slide displaying Fund Balance use be shown.

Mark Decoteau answered that the funding for Article 19 is coming from General Taxation, not Fund Balance.

Tom Myrick asks how many children are involved presently.

Leah Elliot answered that six students are enrolled. All are either Town residents or have parents that work in Waterville Valley.

Amy Saulnier asked what is the number of students needed to break-even, and not come to the Town for funding.

Leah Elliott answered that the break-even number would be 10 students, though increasing students would also increase staffing needs. They are currently licensed for 12 students.

Amy Saulnier asked about the total cost of the Rey Center to the Town.

Mark Decoteau answered that the Town is only responsible for Capital Maintenance items (example; roof repairs). All operating costs for the building are paid for by the Rey Center as part of their annual budget.

Amy Saulnier asks what is the average amount spent for Capital Maintenance.

Mark Decoteau answered there is no average amount. Money is spent on Capital Maintenance on an as-needed basis. There is currently about \$46K in the Capital Reserve Account for the Cottage. Last year, the Town added \$10K to the Capital Reserve Account. This year, because there is a healthy balance, there is no Capital Reserve Funding for the Cottage on this warrant. In the last ten years, the roof and the heating systems have both been replaced.

Amy Saulnier ascertains that the total costs of the Rey Center to the Town are:

- \$10K - For year 1 of the current proposed funding of \$30K – over three years
- \$34K - General funding assistance – out of the Town’s Annual Operating Budget
- \$ 5K - Average cost of Capital Maintenance
- \$49K - Annual Total Cost**

Mark Decoteau explains that in 2006 the Rey Center became a 501c3 Non-profit and separated from the Town. Before that time, the same amount was spent under the Town’s operation.

Amy Saulnier states that the Town could rent the building for profit. She also adds that if the Rey’s had intended for the Rey Center to operate indefinitely, they would have provided a funding source, such as a trust, to support it. Amy explains that she had thought they had, but in her review of their finances she didn’t see that funding.

Mark Decoteau answers that is a complicated question and there have been changes from the original Rey organization to what it is now. He adds that these changes are not Town-related.

Amy Saulnier states that the Town will be spending a lot of money on the new Wastewater Treatment Project and reminds the voters to be careful about what the Town spends money on.

Tim Smith asks Leah Elliot if she feels this program is helping in bringing more young families to town to fill available positions throughout town.

Leah answers that this is year three of the preschool operation. In the past two years, there are three specific families that have been able to move into town earlier than they expected due to the preschool being available.

Tim Smith asks if much of the tax funding in town comes from commercial property owners.

Mark Decoteau answered that yes, a portion comes from commercial property owners, adding the top four taxpayers are commercial property owners.

Tim Smith continues and states that commercial property owners need local employees, and with the upcoming expenses of the Wastewater Treatment Project, having a local preschool program benefits local businesses by offering childcare options to families, and employees of the town’s commercial base.

Mike Koppel shares that education studies claim that pre-school programs are key to placing children on a successful education pathway. The Town needs to decide if it wants a local preschool program for residents and employees.

Mike Conlon explains that the education studies that Mike Koppel referred to were on a different population and follow-up studies show that a preschool advantage fades by second or third grade. He adds that the additional programs (lectures, hikes, star gazing, literary discussions, tours) once offered by the Rey Center have been almost eliminated because of focusing on the preschool. These programs once hosted and held at the Rey Center, as a community building, have been impacted by the preschool operations.

Leah Elliott replies to Mike Conlon’s remarks by explaining that summer programs are being scheduled for 2024. There are more outdoor events recently (skijoring, “skin-the-moon”) in partnership with the resort that have generated excitement and revenues. She offers that the Rey Center will continue to explore different activities that will be attractive to residents and guests.

Joe Jacobs states that preschool is good for kids, though some kids might benefit from it more than others. He asks what dollar amount is generated from preschool tuition.

Leah Elliott answers, that with 6 students enrolled, and a monthly tuition of \$850/student, the gross revenue is

\$51K. The prepared budget shows the breakdown of expenses, including payroll.

Joe Jacobs asks why the preschool isn't at the capacity enrollment of 10-12 students and if there is advertising of the program.

Leah Elliott answers that the current enrollment number is in line with the elementary school numbers, and yes, the program is advertised locally in the greater Plymouth area. The distance to Waterville Valley can be too much for families that don't have employment in Waterville Valley.

Tom Myrick asks to call the question for a vote.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and there were none. She then confirms that there was a motion, which was seconded, to call the question for a vote. She then asked for the voters to vote to call the article for a vote by a show of red voting cards in favor, followed by a show of red cards against and determines the motion passes.

Moderator: Reminds the voters that the vote will be by secret ballot and instructs the voters to mark their ballot and deposit their marked ballot into the ballot box. The ballots will be counted and results announced as soon as everyone has voted. There is no need to wait an hour for this vote.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 20?

Article 20: I move that the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$176,000 for the purpose of leasing a new Public Works Dump Truck with new plow and sanding gear, and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$44,000 from the December 31, 2023 Fund Balance. No amount will come from General Taxation. This lease contains an escape clause.

Motion: R. Rita

Second: W. Rathgeber

Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommends approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Mark Decoteau explains that Fund Balance, at year-end, is the result of excess revenues and/or reduced expenditures from the operating budget. This amount is then labeled as Fund Balance. Fund Balance has been used, and is recommended this year, to pay for one-time capital items. When the Fund Balance is used to pay for purchases it either reduces or eliminates short-term borrowing. Mark displays a chart showing the years 2018-2023 of Fund Balance use, the return to Fund Balance at year-end and the amount of taxes raised. NH-Department of Revenue recommends that towns keep between 5-16% of their annual budget as Fund Balance. The current Fund Balance amount is roughly \$850K which is about 12% of the annual budget. For this article, the appropriation is for the full amount of the 1-Ton Dump Truck with Plow and Sander, \$176K, and the current year appropriation is \$44K for the first year of the lease. This is a replacement for the oldest plow truck in the Public Works vehicle fleet, a 2018 Ford F-550.

Megan Boobar, Public Works Director, describes the truck and the sander accessories and it's improvements including the new design of the sander, plow gear and safety equipment. She explains that the sander's improvements will spread salt/sand better and will reduce the quantity of salt/sand being used.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and there were none. She then asked for the voters to vote by a show of red voting cards in favor, followed by a show of red cards against.

Moderator: Determines the Amendment to Article 20 PASSES.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 21?

Article 21: I move that the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$72,500 for the purpose of leasing a 15-Passenger Van for the Recreation Department; and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$18,125 from the December 31, 2023 Fund Balance. No Amount will come from General Taxation. The lease contains an escape clause.

Motion: W. Rathgeber

Second: R. Fries

Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommends approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Mark Decoteau explains that this is similar to the Plow Truck, being a leased vehicle. The total appropriation is for the amount of \$72,500, including the finance fees. He adds that the first-year lease amount is \$18,125, which is proposed to be funded by Fund Balance. Mark adds that the old Recreation Department Bus was removed from service in 2023 due to maintenance issues, as it did not pass the annual vehicle inspection. The Recreation Department elected to continue to use the older bus until it was no longer operable, which is where we are now. The buses are used by various programs, including elementary school children, for transportation for school field trips, biking trips and summer camps. If the van isn't approved then programming will be adjusted as needed.

Discussion:

Margaret Turner points out a \$100 discrepancy between the amount shown on the displayed slide (\$72,400) and the amount as written in the warrant article (\$72,500).

Mark Decoteau clarifies that the correct amount is as listed on the warrant, \$72,500.

Mark Wagner asked if the 15-passenger van will be adequately-sized for adults, as the buses are sized more towards child-sized seating, not adults.

Mark Decoteau answered it will be a typical 15-passenger van, sized accordingly for the number of passengers seats with limited leg room. The van is easier to drive and doesn't require any specialized training or a CDL driver's license to operate.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and then requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 21, followed by a show of red cards against Article 21.

Moderator: Article 21 PASSES with an overwhelming vote.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 22?

Article 22: I move that the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$36,000 for the payment of the second year of a three-year lease for the Public Works Skid Steer Tractor. Funding for this purchase will come from general taxation.

Motion: R. Fries

Second: R. Rita

Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommends approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Mark Decoteau states that this is the second year payment for the Public Works Department Skid Steer Tractor. The Ski Steer is used for clearing and removing snow from the gated Transfer Station area. In the summer of 2023 NH-DES required the town to secure the Transfer Station area which eliminated the use of the snowplows for snow removal. The solution needed a shorter turning radius and the Skid Steer was identified to meet that need. A lease was chosen by the Selectboard. The Selectboard can enter into one-year lease agreements with a non-appropriation clause but multi-year agreements do need a Town Meeting vote. This warrant article is for year two of an amended multi-year lease agreement.

Discussion: There were no questions from the public.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and then requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 22, followed by a show of red cards against Article 22.

Moderator: **Article 22 PASSES with an overwhelming vote.**

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 23?

Article 23: I move that the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$35,000 for improvements to Town Buildings. Improvements will include replacement of the roof on the Cascade Ridge Road Pump Station, purchase of a New Storage Shed at Packard's Field, and repair and maintenance of the drains in the Fire Department Vehicle Bays. Funding for these repairs to come from the December 31, 2023 Fund Balance. No amount will come from General Taxation.

Motion: R. Rita

Second: W. Rathgeber

Moderator: Noted that the Selectmen unanimously recommend approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Mark Decoteau reviews the three purposes as stated in the article. The repairs needed are minimal although they are all very much needed. He shares, for example, that the floors in the Fire Bay appear to be settling and the drains need to be evaluated to determine if leaks are present.

Discussion: There were no questions from the public.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and then requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 23, followed by a show of red cards against Article 23.

Moderator: **Article 23 PASSES with a unanimous vote.**

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 24?

Article 24: I move that the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$55,000 for maintenance and repairs of the Town Dock and Waterfront Facilities and for continued engineering, design, and permitting for the Corcoran Pond Dredging Project. Funding for these purposes to come the December 31, 2023 Fund Balance. No amount will come from General Taxation

Motion: W. Rathgeber
Second: R. Fries
Moderator: Noted that the Selectboard unanimously recommends approval of this article and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Mark Decoteau shared that the dock on the gazebo-side of the Corcoran's Pond has deteriorating supports and needs repairs, and there are some surface dock boards that need replacement. In 2023 some initial engineering work was done on the dredging project that produced some initial very high-cost estimates (\$2-4M). There is a need for additional engineering needed to determine and evaluate alternatives.

Discussion:

Tom Ennis asked when the last time the dredging of the pond was completed, believing it wasn't that long ago. He also asked if there is anything that can be done to reduce the sedimentation.

Mark Decoteau answered that the Conservation Commission is currently working on a plan to reduce the sedimentation coming in from Snows Brook to Corcoran Pond. The Conservation Committee is working with a hydrologist and the National Forest Service to mediate and reduce the sedimentation. The 2022 Town Meeting appropriated funds for this Sediment Reduction Project. The last time the pond was dredged was in 2009, and unfortunately Tropical Storm Irene hit in 2011 and virtually erased that work. The goal would be to complete the sediment remediation work done first and then any dredging work to follow.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and then requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 24, followed by a show of red cards against Article 24.

Moderator: Article 24 PASSES with a unanimous vote.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 25?

Article 25: I move that the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000 to replace Solid Waste Dumpsters at selected locations in town. Funding for this purpose to come from the December 31, 2023 Fund Balance. No amount will come from General Taxation.

Motion: R. Fries
Second: W. Rathgeber
Moderator: Noted that the Selectmen unanimously recommend approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Mark Decoteau shared we currently have 72 dumpsters located throughout Town. The average life span of a dumpster is 8-10 years. The dumpsters need to be hefty and very secure to deter bears from opening and removing trash, and basically making a mess. This \$25K will cover the cost of 10 dumpsters and would begin a replacement program for future years.

Discussion:

Mark Wagner asked if the current trash truck will accommodate newer dumpsters, and if a new trash truck is needed in the future, which seems likely from earlier discussions, will a new truck accommodate both the new and old dumpsters.

Mark Decoteau answered that our current truck uses a rear-load operation to empty the dumpsters. The trash truck dealer in Ohio that we work with normally has the rear-loaded trucks. For the foreseeable future we won't need

to change to a front-load truck. If in the future that needed to occur, then all of the dumpsters in town would need to be replaced as well. The rear-loaded trucks are still being manufactured and are widely used.

Darrell Frenandes asked at what point do we change strategies. If the closest dealer is in Ohio now, should we not explore options that have dealers closer to Waterville Valley.

Mark Decoteau answered that we are currently in that process of exploring other options. He added that there are other challenges in play as well citing the permitting of the continuation of the Bethlehem landfill, where our trash is deposited. The Pemi-Baker Solid Waste District (WV is a member) is looking at options and alternatives for waste removal for the district.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and then requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 25, followed by a show of red cards against Article 25.

Moderator: Article 25 PASSES with an overwhelming vote.

She then announces the results of the voting on the Bond Articles, 12 and 13, and the Secret Ballot, Article 19.

Article 12 (Fire Truck)	YES 97	NO 13	ARTICLE PASSES
Article 13 (Ambulance)	YES 102	NO 8	ARTICLE PASSES
Article 19 (Curious Cottage)	YES 73	NO 37	ARTICLE PASSES

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 26?

Article 26: I move that the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000 to repair or replace selected Guardrails at various locations in town. Funding for these purposes to come from the December 31, 2023 Fund Balance. No amount will come from General Taxation.

Motion: R. Rita

Second: W. Rathgeber

Moderator: Noted that the Selectmen unanimously recommend approval of this article, and the amount is not included in Article 27. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Mark Decoteau explains that whenever road projects are done in town, the guardrails are replaced, along with the drainage systems. Megan Boobar added that the original plan is to replace W. Branch Road and Valley Road, but other options are being considered. A total of 606 linear feet have been identified thus far for replacement. The other option includes roads that are not part of the current road repair/repaving projects.

Discussion: There were no questions from the public.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and then requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 26, followed by a show of red cards against Article 26.

Moderator: Article 26 PASSES with an overwhelming vote.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 27?

Article 27: I move that the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,381,824 for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations from any of the

preceding articles.

General Government	\$1,416,465
Buildings and Grounds	\$ 175,286
Public Safety	\$1,521,315
Highways and Streets	\$ 537,964
Solid Waste & Recycling	\$ 448,547
Water & Sewer	\$ 856,224
Health & Welfare	\$ 7,500
Culture & Recreation	\$ 574,926
Conservation	\$ 2,000
Debt Service	<u>\$ 841,597</u>
Total	\$6,381,824

Motion: W. Rathgeber

Second: R. Rita

Moderator: Noted that the Selectmen unanimously recommend approval of this article, and this is the general operation budget for Fiscal Year 2024. The vote can take any form and a simple majority is required to pass.

Presentation:

Mark Decoteau presents the information for the proposed budget for the public and references pages in the 2023 Town Report listing Revenues (page 9), Budget Summary (pages 10-11), Town Operating Budget (pages 12-16), Debt by Department Summary (page 73) and Long-Term Debt (page 72). He cites the major budget impacts as: 1) Personnel Costs, 2) Debt Service Costs, and 3) Other Operation Costs (materials/supplies, outside contracts, reduced contingency allowance, legal expenses, assessing services, and solid waste disposal costs).

Discussion:

Stan Piekos shared some of his thoughts with respect to towards the future. There are some big projects that are coming up that will be expensive (Wastewater Treatment Plant, Dredging of Corcoran's Pond) and well as the uncertainty of solid waste disposal at the Bethlehem landfill. In an effort to prepare for the future, Stan suggests using less of the Fund Balance for annual funding and use more of the operating budget, as well as building up the Capital Reserve Accounts for larger items.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and then requested a show of red cards in favor of Article 27, followed by a show of red cards against Article 27.

Moderator: Article 27 PASSES with an overwhelming vote.

Moderator: Recognizes Selectboard Chair Rich Rita for a motion.

Motion: I move to limit reconsideration of all preceding articles.

Motion: R. Rita

Second: W. Rathgeber

Moderator: The Moderator explains that a vote to limit reconsideration means that all votes taken up to this point cannot be changed by further action of this meeting. She asks if there are any questions on the motion before asking for a vote.

Moderator: Asked if there were any further questions and then requested a show of red cards in favor of the Motion to Limit Reconsideration, followed by a show of red cards against the Motion to Limit Reconsideration.

Moderator: The Motion to Limit Reconsideration PASSES with a unanimous vote.

Moderator: Do I hear a motion on Article 28?

Moderator Article 28: To hear the report of agents, auditors and committees of officers chosen and to pass any vote relative thereto.

Moderator: There are no reports to hear at the time so the article will be tabled for discussion.

Moderator Article 29: To transact any other business as may legally come before the meeting.

Discussion:

Mark Decoteau offers a Point of Order and explains that we can dispense with Article 28 as all the reports are contained in the 2023 Town Report. Mark also states that under Article 29 the Moderator can recognize anyone for a motion on a matter that can legally come before the Town Meeting. This article can only be for general discussion and a sense of the meeting vote. No votes taken on matters not previously noticed in the warrant are legally binding.

Moderator: Recognizes Rich Rita for a brief announcement.

Rich Rita announces that the 2023 Waterville Valley Town Report is dedicated to former Selectboard Member and Chair, Margaret Turner. Margaret has, and continues to have, a devotion to our town that is nonpareil, and we thank her for involvement in all aspects of our town.

Moderator: Patty Furgal, the Moderator, offers thanks to all the Election workers, staff, and volunteers for the time and work during the election and Town Meeting, and asks for a final motion to adjourn the 2024 Town Meeting.

Moderator: Recognizes Mark Decoteau for a brief announcement.

Mark Decoteau thanks all of the attendees stating that for a town of 700 the attendance tonight is fantastic. Mark thanks everyone for the discussions and the thoughtful consideration of the articles presented on the 2024 Town Warrant.

Motion: I move that we adjourn the 2024 Town Meeting of Waterville Valley, NH.

Motion: W. Rathgeber

Second: R. Fries

Disposition: Motion passes by unanimous voice vote at 8:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Waite,
Waterville Valley Town Clerk



