

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF HAMPTON FALLS**

**JANUARY 03, 2024 – 6:00 PM
TOWN HALL**

FINAL

PRESENT: Ed B. Beattie, Chairman; Lou Gargiulo, Vice Chairman; Mark R. Lane, Selectman;
Karen Anderson, Town Administrator; Rachel D. Webb, Assistant Administrator

Chairman Beattie called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

PUBLIC HEARING: Chairman Beattie opened the Public Hearing, regarding the 2024 proposed budget and warrant articles. He announced that the Selectmen were going to go line by line through the proposed budget, and if anyone has any questions or comments to please come to a microphone to ask their question or state their comment. By way of introduction, Chairman Beattie stated that the Selectmen were especially conscientious to keep the numbers at a reasonable level, and most people will see that many factors affected the budget; however, most were not within the Selectmen's control.

Proposed budget for 2024: \$3,611,388, an increase of \$270,170 or 8.09% over 2023.

Default Budget: \$3,483,572 which is \$127,816 less than the proposed budget.

General Government: Executive, Payroll: Chairman Beattie stated that this section includes the Town Administrator, the Assistant Administrator, and Elected Officials. K. Anderson stated that the only increase to that section was the 3% COLA (Cost Of Living Adjustment). Chairman Beattie stated that the Selectmen decided at a previous meeting to grant a 3% COLA to eligible Hampton Falls employees, so those numbers have been included in this Proposed budget, with an overall increase of 3.5% for payroll.

Bev Mutrie, Brown Road, asked if employees also get "Step" raises in addition to the COLA? Chairman Beattie responded that there are steps that are built in, and for some positions there are not. K. Anderson clarified that some positions have maxed out their Steps, so they only get the COLA. B. Mutrie asked if the COLA is for all employees including Police and Fire, and K. Anderson responded yes.

General Government: Executive: Advertising, Printing, Dues & Subscriptions, Books & Periodicals, Meetings & Conferences, Auto Reimbursement, Food/Meals: K. Anderson stated that there was a decrease in that section of \$1,435 that was a savings in the printing of the Town Report.

B. Mutrie, Brown Road, asked how many Town Reports will be printed, and K. Anderson responded the same number as last year, and the same printer provided better pricing.

General Government: Election, Registration & Vital Statistics & Tax Collection: Chairman Beattie stated that 2024 has multiple elections coming up (compared with only a local election in 2023) namely, two State Primary elections, the Town election, and the State General election (Presidential election).

Election, Registration Increase of \$14,699 due to increase in number of elections.

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JP Pontbriand, Governor Powell Road, asked if there was any provision in the proposed budget for Poll Books, and K. Anderson responded that the State may provide them at no cost (at completion of some testing) so there is no money being proposed in the Hampton Falls Budget for Poll Books.

Chairman Beattie read the components of the section as follows: Election Services, Advertising, Other Professional Services, Printing, Dues & Subscriptions, Supplies, Postage, Machinery & Equipment, Meetings & Conferences, Auto Reimbursement, and Food/Meals. There were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

General Government: Financial Administration: Bookkeeper and Elected Officials:

Financial Administration Increase of \$34,016 due to increase in IT Services.
There were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Chairman Beattie referred to the rest of the components of that section including: Auditing, Assessing, Bank Service Charges, Telephone, Software Support, Internet, Advertising, Other Professional Services, Printing, Dues & Subscriptions, Supplies, Postage, Machinery & Equipment, Meetings & Conferences, Auto Reimbursement, and Food/Bottled Water.

Alan Ganz, Surrey Lane, asked why the Town would have bank service charges, and K. Anderson stated that the Town gets them refunded at the end of the year, so the Town has to budget for them.

General Government: Legal: General, Planning, and ZBA: Chairman Beattie asked if anyone had any questions about the Legal Services.

B. Mutrie, Brown Rd, asked if the three services were provided by the same firm, and K. Anderson responded no there are two (2) different firms.

General Government: Employee Benefits: Chairman Beattie stated that Health Insurance costs are driving the increase in this proposed budget, and he said that it is related to the “give-backs” during COVID for two (2) years when health insurance costs were reduced, so that now municipalities are being impacted with increases across the state.

Employee Benefits Increase of \$112,549 due to increases in staffing and a 15.6% Health Insurance rate increase. (New position in FD; and filling of vacant PD position -11 months).

Chairman Beattie stated that the overall increase for the section is 20%. K. Anderson said that she has a couple of reductions to add after the Public Hearing. There were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Land Use, Government Buildings, Building Inspector: Chairman Beattie stated that there was no change in the proposed budget under this section, and there were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

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Heritage Commission: Chairman Beattie stated that there was no change in the proposed budget under this section, and there were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Government Buildings: Chairman Beattie stated that there is an increase of 3.5% for this section due primarily to increased fuel and electricity costs, repairs and maintenance and supplies. He stated that the Town was fortunate to be able to do some work over the past two (2) years using federal ARPA funds.

B. Mutrie, Brown Rd, asked about the Repairs and Maintenance line item at \$16,500 and what projects will be included. K. Anderson responded that line item covers maintenance costs for the interiors of government buildings. B. Mutrie clarified that the line item did not include any funds for the exterior of the buildings. She continued that there is lots of paint flaking off both the Museum building and also the Town Hall building that will cost a lot of money to scrape and paint, hopefully soon.

Cemeteries: K. Anderson stated that the increase of this section is due to the landscaping contract, that is a two-year increase, as last year they held their price so this is a reasonable increase. There were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Insurance: Property & Liability: Chairman Beattie stated that this section increased by 8.8%, which is reflective of the overall budget increase. There were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Building Inspection: Chairman Beattie identified the part-time position, in addition to all the component line items, and stated that the position is under greater burden as things in town have grown dramatically. There were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Public Safety: Police: Chairman Beattie stated that a fifth police officer has been budgeted, and Police Chief Venio provided an update on the current status of the hiring of a fifth full-time police officer. He called attention to the fact that the Police Department's non-payroll budget has been reduced by -8.4%; and the payroll section is increased by 4.4% to include both the COLA and step increases.

Police Increase of \$14,596 due to 3% COLA wage adjustment.

B. Mutrie, Brown Road, inquired about the Other Professional Services line item, and Police Chief Venio responded that the reduction is because the Town is changing IT companies, and the Town office is going to be paying the IT vendor. K. Anderson stated that for clarification and for greater transparency the Town is consolidating all the currently separate IT costs from Police, Fire, and Town Hall, adding them into one line item, so that it is clear what the Town is paying for IT services. She said that the proposed budget shows an increase under General Government, and then those corresponding decreases under Police and Fire. B. Mutrie asked if that amount was only IT services or if there were other types of services, and Police Chief Venio responded that the line item included other services including printer, faxing, body cameras, Watch Guard cameras, shredding, employee evaluations, mailing system, and other contractual items.

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JP Pontbriand, Governor Powell Rd., made the point that because the COLA is not listed as a previous line or as a variance, it makes the variance column inconsistent. K. Anderson stated that she would correct that.

Public Safety: Ambulance: Chairman Beattie asked if there were any questions.

Ambulance Increase of \$34,211 due to increase in Deputy Position (50% impact in each of Ambulance and Fire budgets).

JP Pontbriand, Governor Powell Rd., made the same comment about the variance column as he made for the Police budget, and K. Anderson said that she can make that correction.

Public Safety: Fire: Chairman Beattie asked if there were any questions.

Fire Increase of \$14,426 due to increase in Deputy Position (50% impact in each of Ambulance and Fire budgets).

There were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Public Safety: Emergency Management: Chairman Beattie stated that overall the budget was reduced by -8.6%, but there are some required drills in 2024. He asked if there were any questions. There were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Highway / Solid Waste: Highway: Chairman Beattie stated that overall this proposed budget has a proposed increase 3.5%.

Highway: Increase of \$16,846 due to contractual increase to Winter Road Maintenance.

B. Mutrie, Brown Rd., asked what WRM Services was, and K. Anderson responded Winter Road Maintenance.

Michael LaBarre, Taylor River Road, asked if there was a formula to determine which roads get repaired or improved and when, and would there be notification to residents? He also asked if the Winter Road Maintenance is just snowplowing, and K. Anderson confirmed. Chairman Beattie responded to M. LaBarre's inquiries about road maintenance, stating that emergencies are prioritized, and then annually, in the spring, the most problematic roads are identified for work. He stated that a list of roads is included in the proposed warrant article recommended by the Selectmen. Chairman Beattie said that the Town has been side-swiped by culverts and not roads in the past five (5) years. He said that he was so glad that the State forced the Town to install the larger size culvert at the bottom of Drinkwater Road because recently, following heavy rainfall, it was almost full. He continued that the Town had to do the culverts and postponed some roadwork as a result. The roads listed for work in the proposed warrant article are recommended by the Road Agent and by the Selectmen.

M. LaBarre, Taylor River Rd., complained about the lack of snow-plowing and road salting on Taylor River Road, and stated his opinion that because the street is not a through street that he thinks the residents are short-changed for snowplowing and road salting services.

Highway / Solid Waste: Street Lights: There was no proposed change to this line item in the budget; and there were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

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Highway / Solid Waste: Solid Waste Collection:

M. LaBarre, Taylor River Rd., asked if there was any reimbursement for the cardboard collection and whether that was a positive or a negative number? K. Anderson responded that it was a positive number currently, and that cardboard prices fluctuate. She stated that the revenues do not show on this part of the proposed budget, but the cardboard recycling is shown on the next page under “Solid Waste Disposal”. Chairman Beattie stated that sixty-percent (60%) of the weight of Solid Waste is cardboard.

Highway / Solid Waste: Solid Waste Disposal: Chairman Beattie stated that the current contract for Solid Waste Disposal is in the third year, and K. Anderson clarified that the contract goes through the Solid Waste vendor (ELM) to Covanta.

Health / Welfare: There were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Health / Welfare: Animal Control: There were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Health / Welfare: Health Agencies: Chairman Beattie asked if there were any questions. B. Mutrie, Brown Rd., asked if this was the list of agencies the Town donates to annually, and if yes, is the list going to be published? K. Anderson responded that the list can be published. She clarified that for this Public Hearing she provided the summary pages and not all the back-up pages or it would have been double the quantity of paper. Chairman Beattie asked how the donated funds were requested and allocated, and K. Anderson responded that if an agency did not request release of funds, then funds were not released. She stated that as of December 31, 2023 the Town had released only \$9,000. Additionally, she stated that some agencies received substantial ARPA funds, and did not need to ask for municipal funds in 2023; and in some instances, some agencies merged during COVID, from two agencies into one. Chairman Beattie stated that, in general, the Town honors most requests that are presented.

Recreation & Culture: Recreation: Chairman Beattie asked if there were any questions.

Recreation and Parks: Increase of \$7,167 due to \$4,670 increase for programs and \$2,500 increase in mowing costs.

There were no questions regarding those sections of the proposed budget.

Recreation & Culture: Library: Chairman Beattie asked if there were any questions.

Library Increase of \$12,869 due to wage adjustments and increase in health insurance rates.

There were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Recreation & Culture: Patriotic Purposes: K. Anderson stated that those are the flags at the Cemeteries, and also stated that Bob Woodes is going to order more veteran markers. Chairman Beattie asked if there were any questions.

B. Mutrie, Brown Rd., asked who is responsible for putting the flags on the two memorial bridges because she said that the Heritage Commission did it for a while, and then somebody else installed some beautiful holders and some flags, and she does not know who did it, and

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asked if anyone else knew who did it, and no one knew. Chairman Beattie stated that he liked the flag holders and the flags on the bridges, and all agreed.

Recreation & Culture: Conservation: Chairman Beattie asked if there were any questions, and there were no questions regarding that section of the proposed budget.

Debt Service / Summary: Bond Principal: Chairman Beattie stated that the bond principal is unchanged.

Debt Service / Summary: Bond Interest: Chairman Beattie stated that the Debt Service – Interest is down and asked if there were any questions.

B. Mutrie, Brown Rd., asked about the bond the Town is paying on the conservation easement/development rights on Applecrest Farm, and confirmed with K. Anderson that it sunsets in two years. Chairman Beattie stated that there are a total of three (3) bonded projects that are maturing in the near future, namely: Kensington Road (former Merrill property that the School purchased), and the Winnacunnet addition that was done in 2007 for which the bond payments are almost done next year, that will result in savings for the Town with those three debts paid off.

JP Pontbriand, Governor Powell Rd., asked about something that is not in the proposed budget, that he thought should be, namely Mosquito Control. Chairman Beattie said that Mosquito Control is a proposed warrant article and can be discussed later in the meeting when proposed warrant articles are reviewed.

K. Anderson stated that changes can be made after the Public Hearing if the matter was discussed.

DRAFT WARRANT ARTICLES (With Financial Impact): Chairman Beattie stated that this was a draft of the warrant articles, and K. Anderson explained that the Planning Board is not yet done reviewing proposed zoning amendments to be included in the warrant, so for that reason the reference numbers of the articles could change.

ARTICLE 20 Highway Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate Three-Hundred-Thirty-Thousand-Dollars (\$330,000) to be placed in the Highway Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of maintenance and improvements to culverts and town roads, using \$70,140 Highway Block Grant to offset this amount. (Majority vote required)

As of 12/31/2023 this fund had a balance of \$122,255.00.

K. Anderson explained that this article can be amended after the Public Hearing to decrease it by \$19,000, utilizing the additional Highway Block Grant money the Town received in 2023.

Chairman Beattie stated that this amount is typical for what the Selectmen propose annually to maintain the roads in town. K. Anderson stated that the Road Agent is present, and the roads proposed for this warrant article are: Crank and Goodwin, and a section of Drinkwater Road.

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 3-0

There were no questions regarding this expenditure.

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ARTICLE 21 Fire Department Radio Equipment:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate One-Hundred-Forty-Thousand-Dollars (\$140,000) for the purchase and service of emergency radios and associated equipment for the Fire Department. (Majority vote required)

Chairman Beattie stated that the Fire Chief is present; this project had been proposed to be funded by a grant but that was unsuccessful so it is now a taxation request. He stated that this request is to replace communication devices that are obsolete.

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 3-0

There were no questions regarding this expenditure.

ARTICLE 22 Public Safety Building HVAC:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate Ninety-Thousand-Dollars (\$90,000) to update the HVAC systems in the Public Safety Building (PSB) as recommended by the town's Energy Committee. System to include two (2) new 48,000 BTU hyper heat pumps and ten (10) ceiling cassettes, thermostatically and independently controllable. Said appropriation to be offset by \$12,333 in remaining ARPA funds. (Majority vote required)

Not Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 3-0

Chairman Beattie stated that this was "Not Recommended" by the Selectmen because of the year and other budgetary expenditures. He said that it was "Not Recommended" not because of the validity of the project. He said that lots of work has been done to ascertain what is needed at the PSB to isolate and correct the heating and cooling issues of the building. K. Anderson stated that the Energy Committee is looking into NH Saves for Unitil to see if there are any grant funds to help offset the costs associated with the proposed project.

Fire Chief Lord asked if the project gets voted down, and the Energy Committee finds other (grant) funds for the project, can it go forward, and K. Anderson responded no, it would have to be proposed again another year.

B. Mutrie, Brown Rd. asked what the dollar impact to the tax rate would be for this proposed project, and K. Anderson stated that she is including that information in the Voter's Guide. Chairman Beattie stated that prior to the revaluation, the tax impact used to be \$0.10 on every \$25,000 and K. Anderson updated that number to \$0.10 on every \$30,000 and said that she needs to update that calculation since the revaluation is complete, and will include it in the Voter Guide prior to Deliberative Session.

Alan Ganz, Surrey Lane, asked what the annual cost savings would be for the proposed new system for the PSB?

Carol Schutte, Chair of Energy Committee, responded that she does not have an exact number for cost savings, but stated there would be cost avoidance on the propane used for the heating bill. She added some additional comments regarding the NH Saves. She said that each of the energy suppliers have different approaches to NH Saves, where some give zero-interest loans and she was not certain if Unitil does that. She said there may be some incentive to go from propane to electricity, and there may also be some rebates. She said that the rebate process requires the Town to purchase and install the units first, before receiving the rebate afterwards. She said that the Energy Committee is going to research and find out as much information as

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possible to understand all alternatives available.

M. Lane stated that the cost of electricity increased this past year, and it is difficult to predict what the rates will do in the future, but there is an opportunity, as a town, in one of the warrant articles to save some costs of electricity, so there are numerous moving parts to try to determine how much would be saved with the proposed heat pump project.

ARTICLE 23 Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate Fifty-Thousand-Dollars (\$50,000) to be placed in the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of purchasing a replacement tank truck in approximately 5 years. (Majority vote required)

As of 12/31/2023 this fund had a balance of \$2,549.25

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 3-0

Chairman Beattie introduced the proposed project to start putting some funds toward the future purchase of a replacement tank truck.

M. LaBarre, Taylor River Rd. asked how much does a new tank truck cost, and Chairman Beattie responded just shy of a million dollars. Fire Chief Lord explained that the timeframe for the purchase is in five-plus years to replace a tank truck that will be thirty-years (30-yrs) old then. He explained that some of the money will come from the ambulance transport fees collected. Fire Chief Lord stated that the Town stopped putting money into the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund approximately five years ago when they started receiving monies from the Ambulance transports, but now want to re-establish that CRF. For context, Fire Chief Lord shared that a Fire Chief in another community bought a tank truck two-years ago that cost \$350,000 that today costs \$800,000, so in five years the cost will be close to \$1,000,000. He stated that the positive side is that the Fire Department keeps their trucks for a very long time, but it is time to start a five-year (savings) plan toward this eventual cost.

ARTICLE 24 Mosquito Control:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate Twenty-One-Thousand-Dollars (\$21,000) for a mosquito control program that will include an early detection system for diseases, larviciding and spot adulticiding for 2024. (Majority vote required)

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 2-1

JP Pontbriand, Governor Powell Drive, asked what the expenditure has been for the Mosquito Control program over the past few years, and K. Anderson responded that the contracted amount has not changed at \$21,000 for each of the past three years. JP asked if the price increased to \$22,000 and the warrant passed to fund \$21,000 only, would the Town need to cut back on the services provided, and K. Anderson responded no, that the \$1,000 difference would be funded from the Budget. JP made the point that this cost is undertaken every year as regular maintenance and, in his opinion, does not fit the characteristics of a warrant article, and he requested that it be added into the budget and not be a recurring annual warrant article.

ARTICLE 25 Police Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate Forty-Seven-Thousand-Four-Hundred-Eighty-Nine-Dollars (\$47,489) to be placed in the Police Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund established in 1994, for the purpose of purchasing police cruisers and other related equipment to include in cruiser video cameras and radar. This appropriation to be offset by a grant of \$47,489 that was

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received in 2022. This is an audit requirement. No Tax Impact. (Majority vote required)

As of 12/31/2023 this fund had a balance of \$28,584.49

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen

Chairman Beattie introduced this project as being similar to the Fire Truck CRF. K. Anderson stated that this proposed project is totally different this year, because in 2022 the Town received a \$50,000 grant to offset the cost of a new police cruiser, and the Town had already paid for the cruiser with funds from the CRF (\$47,489). During the audit last year, the auditors instructed the Town to put the grant money received into the CRF, because it could not lapse to surplus. She said that typically there was an annual warrant article for \$25,000 towards a new police cruiser, but now the Town will not have to make that request for two (2) years, due to the grant received. There were no questions regarding this expenditure.

ARTICLE 26 Library Strategic Plan Study: PENDING TRUSTEES VOTE

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate Thirty-One-Thousand-Seven-Hundred-Fifty-Dollars (\$31,750) for the purpose of engaging a strategic planning consultant to develop a long-term strategic plan for the library and to authorize the Library Trustees to utilize donation funds for this purpose. This article to be non-lapsing for two years. No amount to be raised from taxation. No Tax Impact.

M. LaBarre, Taylor River Road, asked what is the strategic plan that the library is planning for? He stated that he is aware that the library handles and provides books to residents, and offers programs of all ages to the community, but asked why are consultants proposed to be hired, is there need for a new roof, or are they repaving the driveway? And why is this a warrant article? Chairman Beattie explained that the \$31,750 is not from the Town Budget, it is from Library Donations, and the library must go to the Town for authorization to spend its own Donation funds, as per NH RSAs.

Ann Magnarelli, Library Trustee, stated that the library is a community center, and with more materials becoming digital the Trustees felt the need to explore in which direction the library should be going in terms of long-range planning? She stated that the Trustees did not feel qualified to make those decisions but want the Town, School, and Recreation Commission all involved in the planning.

M. LaBarre, Taylor River Rd., confirmed with A. Magnarelli that the funds are already in the library's donation fund.

Article 27 Change of Polling Hours:

To see if the town will vote to change the polling hours so that the polls open at 8:00 AM and close at 7:00 PM for all regular state elections beginning September 10, 2024. No Tax Impact.

Chairman Beattie stated that the polling hours in the Town of Hampton Falls are now 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, and there has been a suggestion that the Town change the polling hours so that the polls open at 8:00 AM and close at 7:00 PM for all regular state elections beginning September 10, 2024. He said that the start time would be the same, but the end time would be one hour earlier.

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JP Pontbriand, Governor Powell Road, asked the origin of the warrant article, and did it come from a citizen petition? K. Anderson responded that it was a Board of Selectmen's suggestion after the last election. Additionally, she stated that the Town Clerk called the Secretary of State's office about the process and determined that the 7:00 to 8:00 PM time is a very slow period for voting, and most polling places have already closed at 7:00 PM and so the State is waiting on the Town of Hampton Falls' results, being one of the last voting locations open. JP asked if there will be a line on the wording of the Warrant Article including whether this is recommended by the Selectmen or not, and K. Anderson responded no, only money articles can contain the Selectmen's recommendations.

Chairman Beattie asked if there were any additional questions to come before the Selectmen regarding the Proposed budget as part of the Public Hearing.

Carol Schutte, Chair of the Energy Committee, expanded on her response to the cost of the HVAC proposal regarding the PSB (Article 22). She said that the Energy Committee looked at the PSB first because it is the "hungriest" building in terms of energy needs, and asked Fire Chief Lord what the largest issue was with the building, and his response was to fix the heat. She said that she does not know how to put a price on employees' comfort, well-being and welfare but the heat is not uniform. She reported that one side of the Public Safety Building can be really hot, while another side is really cold. She said that she wished she had a better analysis on energy efficiency and cost improvements, but they wanted to make it a better working environment for the employees.

Chairman Beattie thanked Carol Schutte and the Energy Committee for all their work on the background to educate the Selectmen on the direction to go for energy savings. He thanked her for all the effort, and Carol Schutte thanked the Selectmen for the opportunity.

Chairman Beattie closed the Public Hearing on the proposed budget and the proposed warrant articles.

Chairman Beattie stated a return to the regular Selectmen's meeting.

Proposed changes to the Proposed budget:

K. Anderson reviewed the proposed changes to the proposed budget.

Employee Benefits: Health Insurance: K. Anderson proposed a reduction in Employee Benefits of \$28,382 to bring that line to \$300,085 to include one employee opting out of the health insurance plan for a buy-out, and reducing the Police Department officer position to eleven (11) months.

Employee Benefits: Benefits Strategies / Buyout: K. Anderson proposed an increase of \$10,741 for the Health Insurance Buy-out, so that both line adjustments together total an overall net decrease of \$17,641.

Article 20: Highway Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund:

K. Anderson explained that this warrant article proposed for \$330,000 can be reduced by \$19,000

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to \$311,000 by utilizing the additional Highway Block Grant money the Town received in 2023 to offset the original cost.

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 3-0

ARTICLE 26 Library Strategic Plan Study: K. Anderson stated that the Selectmen need to vote on whether to “Recommend”, or to “Not Recommend” the proposed Warrant Article.

MOTION: To Recommend the Library Strategic Plan Study.

MOTION: E. BEATTIE

SECOND: M. LANE

2 YES, 1 NO, MOTION PASSED

L. Gargiulo stated that the reason he opposed it was that he thinks the Library Trustees and the Town can figure out the Library’s Strategic Plan on their own, and that they do not need to pay a third party, high-priced consultant. He stated that his preference would be to see the \$31,000 spent on library books and programs.

OLD BUSINESS

Financial Reports: General Fund Balance: \$ 3,514,885.61 K. Anderson reported the General Fund Balance of: \$ 3,514,885.61.

Chairman Beattie asked K. Anderson to explain what happens if the proposed budget does not pass, what the ramifications are, and what is included in the default budget. K. Anderson stated that the proposed budget for 2024, that was just reduced a bit at this meeting, is \$3,611,388 which is an increase over the 2023 budget of \$270,000. The default budget for 2024 is \$3,483,572 which is \$127,000 less than the proposed budget. The default budget is the prior year’s budget, less any one-time expenditures, and plus any contractual increases. It does not include any employee raises; it is a non-union environment so there are no union contracts in place.

The reductions included:

- removing (decrease of) the revaluation cost (because that was a one-time expenditure), and some of that was added back in with the new Assessing contract where the Town converted from an hourly rate to a flat rate, and are still at a net savings.
- increase of \$34,000 for IT services (new contract)

K. Anderson said that if the proposed budget does not pass then the Town has to use the Default Budget, or the Town could decide to hold a Special Town Meeting to try again to pass the Proposed budget. She stated with a variance of \$127,000 (between the proposed and the default budgets) there would have to be some substantial cuts if the default budget were to go forward.

K. Anderson further explained that one of the things that was added to the budget was the addition of five (5) Bulky Waste Days [for a total of six (6)]. If the default budget were enacted, the additional five (5) monthly Bulky Waste Days would probably be an expense that would be reverted to the former one (1) day annually. Another increase to the proposed budget was an increase in WRM (Winter Road Maintenance) of \$16,000 that was an escalation clause in the contract. There is an increase of approximately \$65,000 for the new full-time Fire Department

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position added for 2024. If the default budget were implemented, then cuts would have to be made in other places to keep that staffing going. She stated that it is not a huge amount but would be devastating to services if the default budget was voted in.

B. Mutrie, Brown Rd., asked if the \$65,000 increase included health insurance benefits, and K. Anderson responded yes. K. Anderson explained that the Health Insurance was a contractual amount.

K. Anderson stated that she would be compiling a Voter Guide (similar to last year) to explain all the changes in the budget as compared with last year, and information on the proposed Warrant articles such as the HVAC project and the Library Plan. She said that as much factual information would be included as possible, without politicking.

M. Lane asked where the Voter Guide would be made available, and K. Anderson stated at the same locations as last year: at Town Hall, the Post Office, the Library, and online on the Town's website. K. Anderson stated that the Board of Selectmen did a great job on the Proposed budget for 2024 because it is a very tight budget.

Consent Agenda: Monthly Financial Reports: K. Anderson stated that she provided the Selectmen with the Financial Report through the end of the year, and reported that the Town is ending 2023 with approximately \$160,000 "in the black", that will go into the Undesignated Fund Balance for potential use to offset the tax rate next year. As of yesterday, the Town's revenues collected were at 95% of the projected amount, and there are five more days of motor vehicles to include so the result should be close to 100%.

Executive: Payroll Warrant, Accounts Payable, and Escrow Warrant:

MOTION: To approve Payroll Warrant #618 dated December 20, 2023, in the amount of \$34,093.95 and #619 dated December 28 in the amount of \$32,266.09; Accounts Payable Warrant #856 dated December 20, 2023, in the amount of \$77,431.63 and Accounts Payable Warrant #857 dated December 28 in the amount of \$19,866.60; and Escrow Warrant #45 dated December 20, 2023, in the amount of \$7,697.55 and Escrow Warrant #46 dated December 28, 2023 in the amount of \$10,821.54.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

Location of Presidential Primary: K. Anderson reported that the Board of Selectmen received a request from the School Board to consider moving the upcoming Presidential Primary to the Town Office in order to avoid losing a day of school. Emails from both the Town Clerk and the Town Moderator were received and forwarded to the Selectmen. Chairman Beattie stated that he wrote an email to the Chairman of the School Board letting him know that this would be discussed at the Selectmen's meeting tonight, but that based on what the Secretary of State indicated, that the Town should probably not change the voting location. He said that the Secretary of State's Office cautioned the Selectmen in considering to move the voting location since it has already been posted. L. Gargiulo stated that the restrictions put on a change of voting

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location by the State would require a traffic cop on site for the twelve (12) hours the polls were open.

MOTION: To hold the January 23, 2024, Presidential Primary at Lincoln Akerman School (LAS).

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

Discussion: B. Mutrie, Brown Rd., asked if the LAS School could have a half-day, and not need the cafeteria, so the election could still occur, and K. Anderson responded that it is a security issue having the general public in the building at the same time that school is in session. Chairman Beattie stated that the response from the Secretary of State's office was logical that you don't want to confuse people about where to vote. M. Lane made the point that the polling location has already been posted.

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Chairman Beattie requested that K. Anderson please inform the School Board of the Selectmen's decision. K. Anderson said that the January-February 2024 Newsletter was not released so that this information could be included.

Other Selectmen's Old Business: There was no Other Selectmen's Old Business

OLD BUSINESS PUBLIC COMMENT:

M. LaBarre, Taylor River Rd., asked about the Trust Funds in the budget, how many are there, what they are designated for, and how someone could make an application for them? K. Anderson responded that there are several Trust Funds. The Trust Funds are held by the Trustees of the Trust Funds and are invested, each with specific purposes. They include funds such as: the Cemetery Trust Funds, Perpetual Care Accounts, and the Capital Reserve Funds, that the Selectmen establish. Trust Funds can only be appropriated through a Warrant Article, so that the public can always see when a Trust Fund is established and when money goes into it. The Frying Pan Lane Fund is a Charitable Trust that the Town receives annually in March (an unknown amount), for specific purposes. In 2022 it was primarily used for the Tricentennial, and in 2023 was used for historical restoration of historic windows in the Historical Society Museum and also in Town Hall for the windows in this meeting room. When the Selectmen receive the amount in March, they notify all the Department Heads and Committee Chairs to submit their proposals, and the Selectmen review the requests and make decisions as to where those funds get allocated, based on the subject requirements of the fund to be for purposes such as: historical, literacy, recreation, town beautification, and conservation.

NEW BUSINESS:

Appointment: Sue Veilleux - Farmers' Market: K. Anderson stated that the appointment has been canceled.

M. Lane asked about the Farmers' Market Committee (FMC), and K. Anderson explained that it is an independent group of the Farmers' Market vendors who are working together to determine the best direction for the Farmers' Market. M. Lane asked if it was still under the Recreation Commission because it was his understanding that it used to be, and K. Anderson replied no, it is

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just the vendors, the farmers, and the Farmers' Market Coordinator. M. Lane clarified that the Town has no responsibility in terms of who the members are; K. Anderson stated that the FMC will still need to request approval from the Selectmen for the dates they want to use the Town Common.

K. Anderson said that there was a misunderstanding that the FMC thought that the Selectmen were appointing someone to their group, where they are an independent group separate from Town Hall. M. Lane asked from an insurance standpoint, does that group have insurance for when they use the Town Common? K. Anderson said that she will have to look into that because when it was Town-sponsored then each individual vendor did not have to provide an insurance certificate, but now may have to since they are an independent group.

Chairman Beattie requested to revisit this before the Farmers' Market season in 2024 to make sure that the Town is not liable, and if people need to be appointed to their committee to enable being covered under the Town's liability insurance, then that can be discussed. He restated M. Lane's point that the Selectmen have no control, and yet something could go wrong there, and M. Lane agreed.

L. Gargiulo suggested to re-look at the original formation of the Farmers' Market and how it came to be years ago, because it may designate specific roles and responsibilities. He said that his sense is that there may be some issues currently between some of the volunteers, and Chairman Beattie said that there probably is a difference of opinion of how to operate the Farmers' Market because there are many ways to do it. M. Lane stated that he understood that the Farmers' Market was under the Recreation Commission, and stated that he never knew that they stepped off to become independent. He said that it is important that the Selectmen understand how each Committee uses the Town Common. There was a discussion about the Farmers' Market with the result that L. Gargiulo suggested the Selectmen put together a statement of what the Selectmen's vision is for the Farmers' Market and then get together with the FMC stakeholders to discuss it. Chairman Beattie said it would be good to ask the FMC what their vision is for the Farmers' Market, what went well and what needs improvement, etc. to get their input.

Financial: Abatements: K. Anderson stated that the abatements were not ready, so that will be addressed at a future Selectmen's meeting.

Recreation Commission: Appointment of New Members – Jan Troisi, and Sylvia Archer:

K. Anderson reported that two (2) residents of Avesta, Sylvia Archer and Jan Troisi have volunteered to be on the Recreation Commission, with particular interest in assisting with programming for Seniors. She stated that there are vacancies to accommodate these appointments as there have been three recent resignations from the commission (K. Sabatini, K. Dittami and L. Stan). She said that this came about as a result of the recent programming done at Avesta in the form of Chair Yoga and Cribbage, so the programs are generating interest in Avesta residents to get involved.

M. Lane had a general comment about how people are appointed to committees and boards when the committee or board already exists. (Not the creation of a new Committee or Board.) He asked

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when the Selectmen appoint, shouldn't the recommendation for the appointment come from the Committee or Board first, before it comes to the Selectmen? K. Anderson stated that what she did in this instance was she sent the Chairman of the Recreation Commission the two volunteer applications with their statements of interest and asked if she had any objections, and proposed their term lengths to be staggered appointments.

MOTION: To appoint Sylvia Archer to the Recreation Commission for a three-year term (2027) and to appoint Jan Troisi to the Recreation Commission for a two-year term (2026).

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

Other: Other Selectmen's New Business:

Brush Dump – Christmas Tree Collection:

K. Anderson stated that January 13, 2024 is the scheduled day for the Brush Dump to be open for Christmas Tree collection. The Town has had some requests to allow regular brush to be brought the same day, as a result of the recent storms. R. Hilliard has completed the burn and said that there is plenty of room for brush as well. She asked the Selectmen if they want to open up the Brush Dump on that same day for Brush only, in addition to Christmas Trees?

B. Mutrie, Brown Rd., asked if Sue Veilleux knew about the Christmas Tree collection (as goats love to eat evergreens), and K. Anderson responded that S. Veilleux is only interested in Christmas trees that have not been sprayed with preservatives, for her goats.

Police Department: Hiring of Fifth Police officer: K. Anderson invited Police Chief Veno to discuss hiring the fifth police officer. Police Chief Veno requested permission to rehire the fifth police officer, previously hired part-time, for the full-time position. M. Lane asked about the timeline of the candidates. Police Chief Veno stated that he had hired officer "A" who worked for 4 days and then decided to take another position, but stayed on part-time with Hampton Falls and worked through the holidays on both Christmas and on New Years. In the meantime, officer "B" candidate was identified and a background check was initiated. Then officer "A" decided he was interested in returning. Officer "B" candidate decided to stay in their current position and backed out. Police Chief Veno and Lieutenant Ranauro had a lengthy conversation with officer "A" today to quell any apprehension, and to make sure the commitment was genuine, and he feels comfortable moving forward.

L. Gargiulo inquired about any update on the SRO (School Resource Officer)? Police Chief Veno said that he knows that Lieutenant Ranauro is working on it but he does not have anything to present at this time. Chairman Beattie confirmed that it is going to be a School Board request. M. Lane stated that it is on the warrant as a part-time position, and L. Gargiulo stated that he thought that the part-time aspect may present a problem. Police Chief Veno said that he has been looking at SRO positions and most are full-time in the area and in the State. He has been looking at how to recruit for a part-time SRO to fill the hours at a part-time income.

M. Lane asked if the position is approved by voters and the position is not filled at the end of the year does that salary go back to the Town or to the School, and K. Anderson responded that it

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would lapse to the School, unless the warrant article is worded so that it is non-lapsing until the position is filled. She stated that she has not yet seen the draft warrant article. M. Lane stated that he did not have it with him, but he did not believe that it was worded to be “non-lapsing”, and L. Gargiulo said that it would be a mistake not to.

M. LaBarre, Taylor River Road, asked what is the disposition of the future SRO position in the summer months, would they work in the Police Department, or what would they do? Police Chief Veno explained that if the position was Full-Time, then he would bring the person into the Police Department as a Detective or a Patrol Officer for the summer months. If the SRO position is part-time then the person will barely meet the hours working in the school, and there would be no summer hours. M. LaBarre, asked if a SRO is not found, is the Town doing anything to secure the school, to harden it, to make sure that the LAS school is safe. M. Lane responded that the school has added cameras and all of the doors are locked, and you cannot just go in. Chairman Beattie said that there is an interior lock system, so there is a lobby, but you cannot get into the main part of the school.

MOTION: To authorize Police Chief Veno to rehire the Police officer previously hired.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

Monthly Reports: Selectmen’s Representative Reports:

Library Trustees: E. Beattie reported that the update on the library was heard earlier in the meeting about their plans to put a warrant article forward with “No Tax Impact” for a Library Strategic Plan Study.

Planning Board: E. Beattie inquired with R. Webb about any applications coming up on the agenda for the January Planning Board meeting, and she responded no. He further inquired about the 12 Lafayette application (formerly Faro Gardens) with the ZBA, and whether that was on the agenda for ZBA in January, and R. Webb responded that it is expected at the February ZBA meeting. Chairman Beattie talked about the proposed zoning ordinance amendments the Planning Board is putting forth as warrant articles, specifically the sign ordinance changes in the three (3) business districts. He stated that there has been a lot of work done and a lot of conversation about types of signs, animation, sandwich board signs, and others, and he encouraged people to read the minutes from the prior several Planning Board meetings, and/or to watch and listen to the recorded meetings on www.TownHallStreams.com to educate themselves about the proposed zoning ordinance changes. Chairman Beattie said that it is almost impossible to stay ahead of the technology coming out regarding signage, but these proposed changes address some concerns, and this is the first time that the sign ordinance has been revamped. With potential changes coming to Route 1 he said that he wants to make sure that Route 1 does not turn into Saugus North.

L. Gargiulo reported that he has read some proposed State Legislation that would completely change the complexion of the Town of Hampton Falls. He said that he would like the Selectmen to take a position on where they stand on it, much like they did with the proposed widening of Route 1. He stated that one of the issues is allowing, without any control, the addition of dwelling units on parcels. He continued that it would totally disregard all of the planning

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processes and zoning ordinances, and that he could build an apartment complex in his apple orchard. He said that he is in favor of affordable housing, but people bought in to a particular setting and have an expectation, which is not to allow unfettered development out of character of the location.

Chairman Beattie said that it is why the Planning Board is concerned with how signage looks on Route 1, and why people came to Hampton Falls, and why they want to live here. He continued that there is a move afoot at the State to remove local control, and to remove authority of the local boards. He said that some of the proposed legislation last year did not make it through the legislature and got tabled, and is back, and is a threat. Chairman Beattie stated that the Planning Board is being updated by its Circuit Rider Planner, in addition to others who are paying attention to state-wide issues, and if the Selectmen need to make a statement, he said that he would be happy to participate to send a message that we are not in favor of potentially eliminating local control.

L. Gargiulo asked if there was any update on the proposed sewer from Seabrook for the proposed project at 12 Lafayette Road (formerly Faro Gardens), and Chairman Beattie responded no. L. Gargiulo stated that he thought the Seabrook Selectmen met, and K. Anderson responded that the Seabrook Selectmen did meet at Seabrook, discussed it in public and decided that they needed to go into Non-Public at a later date to discuss the actual negotiation amount. She reached out to the Seabrook Manager who said that he would reach out as soon as they had that number. Chairman Beattie stated that if you watch the Seabrook meeting and/or read those Minutes it appears there are two Selectmen who are in support, and one Selectmen who is opposed.

Heritage Commission and Conservation Commission: L. Gargiulo reported that he had nothing to report.

LAS (Lincoln Akerman School): M. Lane reported that the School Board's Budget Review meeting revised their Operating Budget with a reduction of \$81,000 which brought the total down to just under \$7.5 million dollars. He gave the School Board credit for their work, as he knows how difficult it is, and how many costs are out of their control such as Health Insurance and Special Education. He said that there were some overages in the current budget for which the School Board may need to dip into their Trust Funds to resolve. It was a difficult year cost-wise and the School Board kept the proposed school budget as tight as they could.

M. Lane reported that the School Board is putting forth three (3) Warrant articles in March, namely: (1) Contract for support staff for \$34,219; (2) Part-Time SRO for \$50,000; and (3) Building Maintenance expendable trust contribution for \$50,000.

Chairman Beattie confirmed with M. Lane that the School Board's Proposed Operating Budget is less than their Proposed Default Budget. M. Lane said that he did not know the proposed financial difference between the two.

Recreation Commission: M. Lane reported that he received an email from Mike Montvale regarding the contract to manage the baseball field at Governor Weare Park (GWP). In that contract it gave Mike Montvale a right of first refusal to use the baseball Field during baseball

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season, and it allowed him to install a temporary fence, and the result was that it took one of the soccer fields out of play during baseball season. M. Lane conveyed the summary of the email was that it is not worth returning to utilize the baseball field in 2024 if there are not solutions to two problems, namely: (1) that soccer dominated, and did not allow them to play baseball, (which M. Lane pointed out was their own fault, as they were controlling the schedule of the field use); and (2) the larger issue is the drainage problem of the field. M. Lane paraphrased the email saying that it is not worth it to use the field if the Town is not putting money into the GWP field infrastructure. Additionally, it was identified that the baseball field needs approximately \$3,000 of dirt fill for the infield (estimate from Bateman Landscaping), that M. Montvale would be willing to do as part of the agreement, but he does not want to make the investment if they can not gain access to the field, and if the Town does not fix the drainage problem.

Chairman Beattie agreed that the baseball infield mix is completely gone. He asked K. Anderson if someone was assessing the drainage problem, and she responded yes, that Millenium Engineering has taken a look at it already, and she is waiting for their report. M. Lane asked if Frying Pan Lane funds could be used for this potential project, and K. Anderson responded that it is a recreational purpose. M. Lane said depending on what Millenium comes back with, in terms of what is needed, it may be something to consider. K. Anderson thought that it would be eligible to fit one of the criteria of the benefactor which was recreation.

M. Lane said that it was such a wet season last year, that for soccer sometimes the grass was too high, and K. Anderson said it was so wet that the landscaper could not get his equipment onto the field to mow the grass. M. Lane said that he looks forward to reading the report from Millenium Engineering. M. Lane reminded the Selectmen that there are several people who have indicated willingness to help with the resolution of the drainage problem at the GWP field, in terms of use of equipment, etc. so there may be the opportunity to lower the estimated cost of the project with some in-kind and/or donated services and equipment use, to be determined.

K. Anderson stated that a big decision is going to be whether the Town decides to keep baseball at GWP, or make it Multi-Purpose with Soccer and Lacrosse open field space. Chairman Beattie stated that the demand for baseball fifteen (15) years ago was incredible how far people would travel to play, and K. Anderson responded that now the demand and interest is with soccer and lacrosse. She stated that when the current baseball field is in use, the soccer field next to right field cannot be used due to safety reasons, so the two uses cannot coexist at the same time because it is too dangerous. M. Lane stated that the other problem is that the baseball field is not ninety (90) foot bases, which is typically what 7th and 8th grade students start using.

Chairman Beattie said that he believes that the Town should fix the drainage at GWP no matter what because it is not positive for any one sport in the current condition. He said that there probably needs to be a french drain through the middle of the field installed somehow. K. Anderson said that it drains to the center, and when it rains it is almost as if there is a stream going right through the middle. M. Lane mentioned that pickleball is certainly very popular and a growing sport currently, and he cautioned that the Selectmen should review what the conditions of the donated land were when the field was created. He recalled Larry Smith commented when the Peter Robard Field was named that the use of the property has to be baseball first.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF HAMPTON FALLS**

**JANUARY 03, 2024 – 6:00 PM
TOWN HALL**

FINAL

Other Selectmen's New Business: There was no Other Selectmen's New Business.

NEW BUSINESS PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no New Business Public Comment.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES: December 20, 2023

MOTION: To approve the minutes of December 20, 2023 as written.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: To adjourn the Selectmen's Meeting at 7:55pm.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

Next Selectmen's Meeting is Wednesday, January 17, 2024 at 8:00 AM

These Minutes prepared by Rachel D. Webb, Assistant Administrator