

Town of Boscawen  
Budget Committee Public Meeting  
Boscawen Municipal Complex  
February 11, 2021 at 6 p.m.

Present: Barbara Randall, Chair, Alan Hardy, Mark Varney, Lorrie Carey, Edward Cherian Jr., Katie Phelps, Kevin Wyman, Dean Hollins, Nicole Hoyt, Beverly Drouin, Sherlene (Doddy) Fisher, Bruce Crawford, Brian Fleury, Rhoda Hardy, Kellee Easler, Sarah Gerlack, Sue Croft, Peg Daneau, Penny Sarcione, Gail Egounis, Tama Tillman, Tim Kenney, Rhoda Hardy, Gary Tillman, Beth Heyward, Paul Dickey and Justin Malcolm.

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Barbara Randall, Chair started the meeting at 6:05 pm.

Roll call was taken by Kearsten O'Brien.

Minutes: A motion to approve the 1.23.21 Minutes was made by Bruce Crawford and seconded by Gary Tillman. Roll Call Vote: AYE: Rhoda Hardy, Sue Croft, Bruce Crawford, Peg Daneau, Gary Tillman, and Barbara Randall. NAY: none. Motion passes by a unanimous vote.

Ed Cherian was asked to go through the Budget and Warrant Articles. He summarized.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector accounts have increased to reflect a new hire. There has been growth in town and the clerk's office has new functions and more transactions. The Town Clerk generates revenue for the town. The amount has increased by over \$100,000 over the last 2 years.

Personnel Administration has the largest single increase. There is a large increase of cost in the retirement costs. The State was to cover 35% of that and is not so the burden falls on the town. Health Insurance is another reason for the increase. The Town is trying to better balance and adjust benefits for town employees. Employees who chose individual plans were paying no premiums at all. Employees who chose family or two person plans were paying larger premiums. The Town is trying to balance that better.

Library has had a significant cut due to Covid19 and reduced staffing.

Overall this year there were a lot of unexpected costs. The Town had to adopt new IT. They had to be able to do more things on line and virtually. They encountered PPE cost for employees. They purchased victory sprayers. There was a significant cost associated with the elections. They had huge turnouts and a large amount of mail in ballots.

The overall increase for the 2021 budget is 5.27%.

Capital Reserve proposes \$253,200. Contributions are being made to the Fire Truck fund, Highway Heavy Equipment, Public Works Building, Police Cruiser, Municipal IT, C&D Land Fill Closure & Fire Station. There was grant money and other money that came in and it was put in the Unassigned Fund account. The State of NH recommends that they keep 5% of the annual budget in the Unassigned Fund account – approximately \$475,000. Normally the town keeps 8%. Currently there is 1.4 million in the account. The Board voted to fund the entire amount from the Unassigned Fund balance to Capital Reserve from this account. That is money that does not need to be raised by taxes. Budget & Capital Reserve has a net decrease of over \$100,000 from 2020 to 2021.

Warrant Article for an EPA grant to clean up Commercial Street of \$600,000. \$500,000 comes from EPA and \$100,000 comes from the town.

Donations: Normally they have a number of Warrant Articles presented and proposed by the board. They have put all donations into a single budget line item and will allocate it later. They decided to zero out contributions to nonprofit for this year. Department heads were asked to make cuts. A number of employees declined a 1.3% cost of living increase in order to help reduce the budget. This has never been seen before and it was an unexpected sacrifice by town employees. There is no group on the list that is not doing great work. The Board did vote reluctantly to not recommend Warrant Articles requiring money. There was concern raised by NHMA about the legality of some of those funds. The town attorney has cautioned them about what donations are made using tax dollars. These votes were not easy decisions. They are confident that this is the leanest budget they could present.

Legal expenses: Ed Cherian explained that they carry \$50,000 most years in the budget, but they went down because this past year they were able to spend less. They have general legal expenses and actual legal case expenses. 2020 they did not have many of those. If that money is not spent, it goes back into the fund.

Public Hearing was opened by Chair Randall at 6:21 pm.

Beth Heyward of Belknap Merrimack CAP spoke. They asking for \$7,600. They have requested this for many years. They have always been supported by Boscawen. This past year \$123,204 was spent for services for citizens of Boscawen. They ask every town in Merrimack County and Belknap County to help. Their centers are fully staffed and open year round. They do fuel, electric, food pantry services, etc. They are federally funded for fuel. They are State funded for electric. Food pantry is donations they receive from USDA and donations. They rely on the support from the towns to fill the gap in running area centers.

Bev Drouin spoke regarding the Church Warrant Article. She represents Boscawen Congregational Church. They are requesting \$1,500 for operating costs for the church park. They have 2 ball fields, a gazebo, a picnic area and a playground. They need to make improvements to the park. They have a Boscawen Men's League of over 250 men. Merrimack Valley Youth Basement and Soft Ball League and the Inter-Denominational Church League also play at these fields. Approximately 500 people and 36 teams use that park. They didn't spend all of the \$1,500 granted them last year. They spent \$400 for clean-up. They still have \$1,100 left from last year and are asking for another \$1,500 for this year. The Merrimack Valley Youth League and the Boscawen Men's League want to redo both of the fields. They want to put bark mulch around the playground so it is safer for kids. They want to eradicate the poison ivy. They would like to take down a few trees by the road side. The church just finished a 3 year strategic plan and opening that park is part of that plan. They would like to make the park cleaner, better and safer.

Mark Varney asked what amount of funds the leagues contribute to the church park? Bev Drouin reported that the church doesn't charge anything. Every year the Merrimack Valley Youth and Men's Leagues do a spring cleanup and take care of all the infield work and all the mowing all year long.

Public hearing closed at 6:31 pm.

The Warrant Articles were read by Alan Hardy for the Committee.

Warrant Articles 1, 2 & 3 are valid articles and are not part of this approval process.

Article 04 - To Approve the 2021 Operating Budget. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$4,288,793 for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately (Majority vote required.). Recommended by the Select Board.

A motion to approve Article 04 was made by Gary Tillman and seconded by Susan Croft. Roll Call Vote: AYE: Rhoda Hardy, Susan Croft, Peg Daneau, Gary Tillman, Barbara Randall and Bruce Crawford. NAY: none. Warrant Article approved by a unanimous vote.

Article 06 - To Contribute to Town Capital Reserve Funds. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$253,200 to be contributed to the Town Capital Reserve Funds previously established as follows: (A) Fire Truck \$65,000; (B) Highway Heavy Equipment \$45,000; (C) Public Works Building \$20,000; (D) Police Vehicle \$45,000; (E) Municipal IT \$16,200; (F) C&D Landfill Closure \$32,000; (G) Fire Station \$30,000. Said funds to come from the December 31, 2020 fund balance available on January 1, 2021 and no amount will be raised by general taxation. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the select Board.

A motion to approve Article 06 was made by Rhoda Hardy and seconded by Bruce Crawford. Roll Call Vote: AYE: Rhoda Hardy, Sue Croft, Bruce Crawford, Peg Daneau, Gary Tillman, and Barbara Randall. NAY: none. Warrant Article approved by a unanimous vote.

Warrant Article 07 – To Discontinue Recreation/Senior Center CRF. To see if the Town will vote, per RSA35:3, to discontinue the Recreation – Senior Center Capital Reserve Fund, created by the 2008 Town Meeting. The \$0.15 remaining in the account is to be distributed to the Municipal general fund. (Majority Vote required.) Recommended by the select Board.

A motion to accept Warrant Article 07 was made by Gary Tillman and seconded by Susan Croft. Roll Call Vote: AYE: Rhoda Hardy, Sue Croft, Bruce Crawford, Peg Daneau, Gary Tillman, and Barbara Randall. NAY: none. Warrant Article approved by a unanimous vote.

Warrant Article 08 – To Establish Contingency Fund. To see if the Town will vote to establish a contingency fund for the current year for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and appropriate \$33,000 to put in the fund. This sum to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Any appropriation left in the fund at the end of the year will lapse to the general Fund. (Majority Vote appropriation left in the fund at the end of the year will lapse to the General Fund. (Majority vote required. Recommended by the Select Board.

A motion to approve Warrant Article 08 was made by Gary Tillman and seconded by Rhoda Hardy. Roll Call Vote: AYE: Rhoda Hardy, Sue Croft, Bruce Crawford, Peg Daneau, Gary Tillman, and Barbara Randall. NAY: none. Warrant Article approved by a unanimous vote.

Warrant Article 09 – For Environmental Cleanup Commercial Street. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$600,000 for environmental cleanup and building removal activities on the former Allied Leather property owned by the Town located at 36-38, 40-46, and 48-56 Commercial Street, of which \$100,000 shall be raised from taxation and \$500,000 shall be raised through receipt of a Brownfields Cleanup Grant. The expenditure of the funds appropriated by this article is contingent of the receipt of a grant of at least \$500,000 for the expenses of the cleanup of the property. This special warrant article will be a non-lapsing appropriation per RSA 32:7, VI and will not lapse until the cleanup of the property is completed or by December 31, 2026, whichever is sooner. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the select Board.

A motion to approve Warrant Article 09 was made by Gary Tillman and seconded by Peg Daneau. Roll Call Vote: AYE: Rhoda Hardy, Sue Croft, Bruce Crawford, Peg Daneau, Gary Tillman and Barbara Randall. NAY: none. Warrant Article approved by a unanimous vote.

Warrant Article 10 – To Contribute to Boscawen Historical Society. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,500 to contribute to the operating costs of the Boscawen Historical Society. (Majority vote required.) (By Petition.) Not recommended by the Select Board.

A motion to approve Warrant Article 10 was made by Bruce Crawford and seconded by Peg Daneau. Roll Call Vote: Rhoda Hardy (Aye), Sue Croft (Nay), Bruce Crawford (Aye), Peg Daneau (Aye), Gary Tillman (Aye), and Barbara Randall (Nay). Warrant Article approved by a 4-2 vote. Barbara Randall – this article has been voted to approve 4-2.

Warrant Article 11 – To Contribute to the Boscawen Church Park. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,500 to contribute to the operating costs of the Boscawen Church Park that is used by the community. (Majority vote required.) (By Petition.). Not Recommended by the Select Board.

A motion to approve Warrant Article 11 was made by Crawford and seconded by Gary Tillman. Roll Call Vote: Rhoda Hardy (Nay), Sue Croft (Nay), Bruce Crawford (Aye), Peg Daneau (Nay), Gary Tillman (Aye), and Barbara Randall (Nay). Warrant Article denied by a 4-2 vote. Barbara Randall – this article has been voted no by a vote of 4-2.

Warrant Article 12 – To Contribute to Community Action Program. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$7,600 for the continuation of services to the residents of Boscawen through the Concord area Center of the Community Action Program Belknap-Merrimack Counties, Inc. (Majority vote required.) (By Petition.) Not Recommended by the Select Board.

Comments: Rhoda Hardy hates to see this not get approved because she has supported this for years. She understands this year is unusual year. Rhoda Hardy votes with the Selectmen not to recommend it. ***(There was no motion and there was no second. There was just a vote.)*** Sue Croft (No); Bruce Crawford (Yes); Peg Daneau (Yes); Gary Tillman (No); and Barbara Randall (No). This warrant did not pass by a 4-2 vote.

A motion to adjourn at 6:53 pm was made by Bruce Crawford and seconded by Gary Tillman. Roll Call Vote: AYE: Rhoda Hardy, Bruce Crawford, Sue Croft, Peg Daneau, Gary Tillman and Barbara Randall. NAY: none. Motion passes by a unanimous vote.

*Respectfully submitted by Rose Fife*