

Wakefield Budget Committee Meeting  
with the school  
held in the Town Hall Opera House  
December 12, 2023  
Approved

Members present: Jerry O'Connor, Tom Daniels, Dave Mankus, Priscilla Colbath, Denny Miller, Howie Knight, Bob Ouellette, Peter Kasprzyk, Mark Duffy, John Parker, Josh Fuller and Mark Taliaferro.

School Administration: Business Administrator Frank Markiewicz. Michele Lambert

Public present: Max Gering with Clearview Community TV

Mr. O'Connor read article 2, Operating Budget. Mrs. Colbath told the Committee that the School Board, at their last meeting, did offer Mrs. Kebler the part time Superintendent position and will negotiate the amount. Mr. Knight asked Mr. Ouellette what the rationale was for the two votes against the operating budget. Mr. Ouellette responded that it might have been the behavioral interventionist position but he doesn't really know. Mr. Miller said he was thrilled that the default budget is lower than the operating budget. Mr. Markiewicz said he has never proposed a default budget that was higher than the operating budget.

**Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller to approve article 2 at \$12,462,470. (Vote 9-3)**

Mr. Markiewicz said that the School Board will be ratifying the para CBA on the 19<sup>th</sup> and the Board is also in negotiations with the teachers to look at the third year schedule and will take that up on the 19<sup>th</sup> as well.

**Article 3 and 4 were tabled.**

Mr. O'Connor read article 5, Special Education.

**Mr. Daniels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve article 5 at \$50,000. (Vote 10-2)**

Mr. O'Connor read article 6, Transportation. There was some discussion about the cost of the buses and what will be purchased.

**Mr. Daniels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve article 6 at \$110,000. (Vote 12-0)**

Mr. O'Connor read article 7, Replacing Boilers.

**Mr. Parker made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to approve article 7 at \$50,000. (Vote 12-0)**

Mr. O'Connor read article 8, Well Replacement. Mr. Kasprzyk suggested looking into a water wheel.

**Mr. Daniels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Parker, to approve article 8 at \$15,000. (Vote 9-3)**

Mr. O'Connor read article 9, HVAC.

**Mr. Daniels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight to approve article 9 at \$75,000. (Vote 12-0)**

Mr. O'Connor read article 10, Classroom Floor Replacement. Mr. Knight questioned having a maintenance of the building trust fund that has \$25,000 in it and he asked why that account isn't being used? Why is a new one being created? Mr. Daniels said that's the fund used for summer projects. Mrs. Colbath said that's the one used for doors etc.. Mr. Daniels said there's probably no reason for having a separate fund. Mrs. Colbath questioned the wording of that fund. Mr. Miller asked Mr. Markiewicz to find the exact language.

**This article was tabled**

Mr. O'Connor read article 11, Technology. It was determined that this is maintenance items. This is not a capital improvement. This is a budget technology line item.

**This article was tabled**

Mr. O'Connor read article 12, Discontinuing trust funds.

**This article was tabled**

**Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 (Vote 12-0)**

Respectfully submitted for approval at the next Budget Committee meeting,

Priscilla Colbath,  
Secretary Pro Temp

**Budget Committee  
December 12, 2023**

**Present:** Jerry O'Connor, Chair; Mark Duffy, Selectmen's Rep; John Parker; Denny Miller; Bob Ouellette, School Board Rep; Howie Knight; Priscilla Colbath; Dave Mankus; Tom Daniels; Josh Fuller; Marc Taliaferro; and Peter Kasprzyk, SWP Rep. Also present were Dino A. Scala, Town Administrator; Fire Chief Todd Nason; Wayne Robinson, Parks & Rec Director; and Toni Bodah, Secretary.

The Committee began review of the proposed 2024 Town budget/warrant articles at 7:28 a.m. (following review of the School's budget/warrant articles).

Mr. O'Connor referred to requests received from the Greater Wakefield Resource Center for \$24,300 and from Cross Roads House for \$2000. **Mr. Knight moved the request for GWRC at \$24,300. Mr. Fuller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0-1 (Mr. Duffy abstaining).**

**Mr. Knight moved the request of Cross Roads House at \$2000. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0-1 (Mr. Duffy abstaining).**

Mr. O'Connor stated that the Board of Selectmen has not yet voted on these articles; however, perhaps the Committee would be comfortable reviewing the articles that are regularly on the warrant each year. Most Committee members were not comfortable with voting on the articles prior to the Selectmen doing so. Mr. Miller stated, however, that he would like to have some discussion. Mr. Knight stated there are too many articles. Mr. Scala expects fewer zoning articles. Mr. Daniels stressed that the voters have indicated there were too many money articles. We should reduce their number. Mr. Scala will be recommending to the Selectmen that at least 2 be eliminated. Mr. Duffy had hopes to combine some of the articles, but concern was expressed that such a move increased the liability of losing funding for a number of projects at the same time.

Mr. O'Connor referred to the Highway Road Projects money being moved from the Operating Budget. Mr. Duffy noted one reason this was done was to reduce the Operating Budget. Mr. Miller cited a year when these funds were in the Operating Budget and were not expended due to the closure of the asphalt plant. The road in question (High Street) had already been prepped, and we lost the funds. It was decided to create a capital reserve fund so funds would not be lost in the future.

Mr. Miller suggested elimination of Article #10 (Highway Heavy Equipment) and addition of \$10,000 to Article #11 (Highway Truck, for a total of \$85,000). The next year we could add to the Highway Heavy Equipment Fund rather than the Highway Truck fund. Mr. Daniels stated there is no plan (per the CIP) to utilize the Highway Heavy Equipment fund in 2024; however, we may need to increase the funding for the Highway Truck fund in order to meet the spending plan.

Mr. Miller suggested funding either Article #13 (Transfer Station Heavy Equipment) or #14 (Transfer Station Facility) at \$20,000, then fund the other CRF next year. Mr. Knight suggested elimination of both articles for 2024. Mr. Daniels confirmed there is no plan to utilize either fund in 2024. The consensus of the Committee was to eliminate both articles. Mr. Kasprzyk referred to the risk involved in combining articles, then having the articles defeated.

Mr. Miller stated that Article #26 (Air Pack Replacement) should refer to firefighters as most people may not know what air packs are used for.

Mr. Daniels referred to Article #24 (GWRC) and questioned the purpose of the \$13,000. Mr. Scala explained that is last year's article, and he plans to suggest that the Board not fund this for 2024. He also anticipates not funding the Town Hall Improvement CRF (Article #22), thereby holding off on replacing the Town Hall roof. Mr. Daniels disagrees with this action, stating that the roof needs to be done.

Mr. Parker noted a typo in Article #23 (Assessing Statistical Update), which should read \$11,000.

Mr. Miller referred to Article #12 (Highway Construction Projects). He believes last year was the first time this article was denied. That article was for \$325,000, but now the Board is seeking \$500,000. He cannot support \$500,000; although, he could support \$350,000 to \$375,000. The risk of losing funding 2 years in a row is too high. Mr. Duffy stated he hopes to partially fund this article from the undesignated fund balance. Mr. Miller totally agrees with use of the UFB for the ambulance, fire truck or something that all citizens can use. He believes use of the UFB for town road projects would actually be taxing the residents on private roads twice. All benefit from the fire truck, ambulance, and Town Hall, but not from Town roads. Mr. Kasprzyk suggested it might be better to seek \$300,000 in this article, then raise the appropriation for the Storm Damage fund. Mr. Miller also approves of use of the UFB to reduce the tax rate. Mr. Kasprzyk added that use of the UFB actually gives a false impression of how much it actually costs to operate the Town. Mr. Duffy stated perhaps we should retain only the minimum recommended by DRA and give the rest back to the taxpayers if we will not be able to utilize the UFB in other ways.

Mr. Daniels does not support establishment of a Storm Damage CRF; rather we should increase the appropriation for the Emergency Management CRF. Mr. Kasprzyk believes the Emergency Management CRF relates more to public safety. He stated it would be cleaner to keep the 2 separate. Mr. Knight stated the Storm Damage CRF is an attempt to address issues we had in 2023. If we follow the established procedure, we will be fine. Mr. Duffy stressed we are always playing catch-up on road projects. We need to address roads that were not addressed last year. Mr. Kasprzyk does not believe the voters would approve an additional \$150,000 for the Emergency Management Fund. If we propose establishment of a Storm Damage fund, the voters can choose whether to support same.

Mr. Miller suggested appropriating \$350,000 in the Highway Construction warrant article and an additional \$150,000 in the Highway Operating Budget. Consensus of the Committee members is to break up the \$500,000 request, with \$300,000 to \$350,000 in the warrant article and the remainder in the Operating Budget. Mr. Scala expressed concern in raising the Operating Budget. The preliminary Default Budget is about \$6,931,000, which could be very tempting compared with the Operating Budget, which is close to last year's request. Mr. Kasprzyk added that establishment of a Storm Damage CRF limits use of those appropriated funds.

Mr. Fuller referred to Article #28 (\$38,500 for Field Maintenance), last year's article to address another field, as well as the School's request for funding to irrigate their fields. Mr. Knight stated that the Thompson Field was built on top of stumps and can no longer be used as the stumps are working their way to the surface. Mr. Scala added that this number will actually need to be increased based on estimates received today.

Mr. Knight would recommend use of the UFB for this article, as it is a safety issue. Mr. Kasprzyk agrees. Mr. Fuller referred to the expansion of sports teams at the Paul School. Mr. Robinson is unaware of such action.

He spoke to the limited use of the gym and the need to limit team numbers. Some participants are given the opportunity to play on a Rec team in Rochester. Mr. Fuller wants to see many sports in Town and referred to the School budgeting for 2 basketball teams. Mr. Robinson spoke to the difficulties this would present and does not believe this would make for stronger teams.

Mr. Knight referred to Article #9 (Bridge CRF) and asked whether there is a plan in place. Mr. Scala stated there is no immediate need; however, we do have a closed bridge on the State list. This project will likely not happen until 2030. Mr. Knight suggested elimination of this article. Discussion of the Maple Street Bridge area followed.

Mr. Knight suggested elimination of Article #15 (Transfer Station Trucks). Mr. Daniels believes this appropriation is actually too low, as it covers the lease buy-out for the truck that hauls the cans. Mr. Miller stated we could eliminate the article for this year, then increase next year's ask.

Mr. Knight suggested Article #25 (Cemetery Maintenance) could be eliminated this year. Mr. Daniels cautioned removal of too much money as it could back-fire next year. He would like us to stay around \$800,000 to \$900,000 total for warrant articles.

Mr. Kasprzyk stated that \$30,775 is too low for Article #19 (Invasive Species). Several lakes dealt with invasive species over the past year and it is not only lakes that need protection. He suggests \$50,000.

The Committee has not yet voted on the bond principal and interest payments in the proposed 2024 budget. Mr. Scala asked whether Chief Nason wishes to speak to any of the articles. Chief is all set. Mr. Kasprzyk suggested those present observe a moment of silence in honor of the passing of David Lee, a staunch defender of taxpayers' rights. [Moment of Silence observed.] **Mr. Knight moved \$314,000 for the 2024 Bond Payment and \$64,179 for the 2024 Bond Interest Payment. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 12-0.**

The following meeting dates were confirmed: January 3, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m. to vote on finalized Town Warrant; January 9, 2024 at 6 p.m. to review any outstanding School/Town issues, with the public hearing to begin at 6:30 p.m.; February 3, 2024 @ 9 a.m. for Deliberative Session [all in the opera house].

There were no objections to the meeting adjourning at 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Toni Bodah, Secretary

