

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Benson in the main floor meeting room at the Fremont Town Hall, 295 Main Street in Fremont. The Committee started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Committee Members Jon Benson, Gene Cordes, Gordon Muench, Brenda Beauchain, Nancy Murray, Steve Bonaccorsi and Joshua Yokela; Town Administrator Heidi Carlson and Recording Secretary Shawn Perreault.

Motion was made to approve the meeting minutes of November 29, 2023 by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Benson. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

Town Warrant

Carlson opened the discussion on the 2024 Warrant by informing the Committee that the DRA and Town Attorney have not approved the Warrant Articles yet. In addition, she will be reviewing the numbers and confirming that everything is correct. She asked members to carefully proof read the Warrant as well.

Each Article was read aloud.

Article 6 – Town Operating Budget: Bonaccorsi made a motion to recommend the operating budget of \$4,452,660. Muench seconded. Motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes, 1 No (Yokela).

Article 7 – Bridge Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) \$100,000: Carlson said the Town will combine the current balance in this fund, with money requested in this Warrant Article and money received from NH DOT to continue paying the bills in anticipation of the first approval phase when NH DOT Bridge Aid will begin reimbursing the Town for the 80% of costs incurred to date (beginning in 2014). This will all go toward the Martin Road Bridge project. Murray asked if the 15 ton weight limit would still be in effect for the new bridge. Carlson stated it would not, that the current restriction is due to it's red listed status. She also gave the Committee a little history on the project, stating it has been 11 to 12 years that estimates, statute changes, historical and wildlife requirements have been worked out. This project has gone from \$750,000 to \$1.4 million because of these changes and time delays. If there are funds remaining after the Martin Road project in the Bridge CRF, they will go to the next bridge on the red list, which is located on Scribner Road. Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend this Warrant Article, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

Article 8 – Highway CRF \$25,000: Carlson stated that this year \$15,000 was used for a new sander. She will have a current balance on all accounts by the next meeting. However, this is to build the fund back up. Motion was made to recommend this article by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

Article 9 – Fire Truck CRF (\$50,000): Carlson stated there is about \$5,000 currently in this account because we purchased a new truck last year. The new truck should arrive sometime next Spring. Motion was made to recommend this Article by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

Article 10 – Computer Equipment Expendable Trust Fund (\$4,000): This fund is for the two servers the Town uses. One is at the Town Hall and the other is at the Safety Complex. They are on a revolving timeline to replace one at a time. Those replacements come from this fund, the current cost of which is estimated at \$17,000. This is funded from Unreserved Fund Balance (UFB) and has no further tax impact next year. Motion was made to recommend this Article by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 1 No (Yokela).

Article 11 – Library Maintenance Fund (\$10,000): Carlson stated there were unplanned repairs to the roof stacks this year. She is hoping that the Library’s operating budget will cover the cost, but if not, it will be drawn from this ETF. The Town is asking the voters to replenish this fund. There is a chance it could come from UFB, and if so, the revised Article wording will be brought back to the Committee. Motion was made to recommend this Article by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

Article 12 – Town/Tax Clerk Salary Increase (\$1,194): This will provide for a 3% salary increase for the elected Town Clerk Tax Collector. Motion was made to recommend this Article by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes, 1 No (Yokela).

Article 13 – Mosquito Control (\$34,000): This is the same program that appears every year. Motion was made to recommend this Article by Muench, seconded by Benson. Motion passed with a vote of 4 Yes, 3 No (Benson, Yokela, Bonaccorsi).

Article 14 – Parks & Recreation Structural Amenities ETF (\$5,000): Carlson stated that this fund was created this year at Town Meeting and the request is to add another \$5,000 from UFB (unspent operating budget for Parks & Recreation). Discussion was held about the potential types of structures and equipment that might be bought using this account, but it was stressed it is only a savings account for something in the future. Carlson also reminded the Committee that an agent was NOT assigned and as such any projects would need to go back to the voters before being funded. Motion was made to recommend this Article by Muench, seconded by Bonaccorsi. Motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes, 1 No (Yokela).

Carlson stated that the next four articles are clean up articles for various underutilized CRF and ETF funds held by the Trustees of the Trust Funds.

Article 15 – Old Library, Revaluation and Police Cruiser CRFs: The assessing fund was used when the Town did the traditional every five year revaluation. About 10 years ago we began doing cyclical assessing to spread the cost out over the five year period, and do not have the huge “reval” expense in the fifth year. The gets information updated more frequently and creates a more balance tax impact.

The Library fund was for the old library when it was located at the end of Beede Hill, with a small amount doing the feasibility study in the late 1990’s when the new library was being researched.

Police Cruisers have also become part of the operating budget. If approved, the accounts would be closed and the funds returned to the general fund. The current estimate is \$1,717. Motion was made to recommend this Article by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

Article 16 – Discontinue Rescue Vehicle CRF: Carlson stated that they would like to close this account, and transfer the money into the Fire Truck CRF. We committed to replacement of the 2002 rescue truck last year with ARPA funds (due for delivery in Fremont within the next month or two). Motion was made to recommend this Article by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

Article 17 – Rename the Fire Truck CRF: Carlson stated the Town would like to roll the fire trucks and any rescue vehicles into one account now that it is a combined Fire Rescue Department. The new name of the account would be the Fire Rescue Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund. Motion was made to recommend this article by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes, 1 No (Yokela).

Article 18 – Dare Fund ETF: The Town is seeking to discontinue this fund. We no longer have a trained DARE Officer and the curriculum is outdated. The School and officers do things through out the year together, but his is no longer coming from the Town. The balance is estimated at \$891 will be returned as revenue to the General Fund. Motion was made to recommend this Article by Muench, seconded by Bonaccorsi. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

Article 19 – Waste Management Contract: Carlson stated that after talking to other Towns and doing more research the Town received an offer they felt wouldn't get better in a new negotiation with Waste Management. Waste Management's costs will go up 5% each year. After the first year, fuel adjustments will be added/subtracted, which she doesn't have the numbers for right now. The company will also be supplying all residents with a 64 gallon recycling toter. This should make it easier for bad weather and will hopefully encourage more recycling. Our recyclable items will not be changing right now despite market changes. There was discussion that other towns have recently removed things like glass and cardboard from their eligible recycling, as well as high cost increases in the market. The Town's contract only increased by about \$10,000 in year one. Carlson stated that the DRA now requires Towns to put any long term contract to the voters. There is no money raised in this article, it is shown in the operating budget.

She will have another updated Warrant for the Committee with better numbers and updated language next week. Motion was made to table this Article until the next meeting by Benson, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

Article 20 – Town Forest Designation of Parcel 04-077: Carlson stated that this Article is just seeking the designation. It is 25 acres located off of Copp Drive. Motion was made to recommend this Article by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes, 1 No (Yokela).

Article 21 – Committee to commemorate America's 250th Birthday: Carlson stated this Article is seeking to establish a Committee to look into what the celebration might be in 2026 and directed members to the November 16th Select Board meeting where Historian Matthew Thomas discussed a lot of these ideas (or the minute). There is no money being allocated at this time and Thomas did not think they would ask for more than a couple thousand dollars. Yokela asked if the Committee had an end date. After discussion and review, Carlson is going to go back and update some language as well as add in an expiration date. Motion was made to table this Article for the next meeting by Cordes, seconded by Bonaccorsi. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

The Committee reviewed the revenues and expenses summary reports.

Petition Warrant articles are due January 9, 2024 which is the day before the Budget Committee Public Hearing on January 10, 2024. Open positions were reviewed for Town and School seats.

Candidate declaration takes place from January 24, 2024 through February 2, 2024. You must be registered to vote prior to declaration.

Next meeting dates: December 13, 2023 – Work Session (basement meeting room)
December 20, 2023 – School Budget (first floor meeting room)

Motion to adjourn made by Muench, seconded by Bonaccorsi and voted unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Shawn Perreault, Recording Secretary