



**Office of the Board of Selectmen
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NEWTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

DATE: Wednesday November 29, 2023

TIME: 6:00PM

**LOCATION: NEWTON TOWN HALL, 2 TOWN HALL ROAD and
ZOOM CONFERENCE CALL**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Zoom Conference phone number 929-205-6099

Meeting ID 818 7979 5674

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81879795674>

1. Call to Order

Chairman Marchand called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. Selectmen in attendance were Chairman Robert Marchand Jr., Vice- Chairman Michael Connolly, Matthew Burrill, Daniel Guide, and Joseph Simone. Also in attendance were Interim Town Administrator (ITA) James O'Mara, and Selectmen's Executive Assistant (EA) Robyn Sparks. The public meeting minutes were transcribed and typed by EA Sparks.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Citizen's Input

No discussion.

Selectman Burrill wanted to acknowledge the Department Heads in attendance and town employee watching on zoom, mentioning the timeline for finalizing the budget is nearing the end and there is plenty of opportunity for residents to participate.

4. Administration

4.1 Jack Kozec's Food Pantry Donation

Selectman Simone moved to accept Jack Kozec's \$100.00 food pantry donation.

Seconded by Selectman Guide. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

Motion Amended

Selectman Simone moved to accept and expend Jack Kozec's \$100.00 food pantry donation.

Seconded by Selectman Guide. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

5. Warrant Article Review and Discussion-Refer to attached document.

ITA O'Mara stated he would like to review the draft 2024 Town Warrant Articles, see attached. Discussion ensued around misnumbering of warrant articles and correcting numbering on # 2.

4. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, as proposed by the Police Chief, the sum of \$25,000.00 to be deposited into the "Police Cruisers and Equipment" Capital Reserve Fund created in 2021.

This article would result in an estimated \$0.xxx increase per \$1,000.00 of assessed value to be raised by taxes.

The Selectboard would like to reconsider :Selectman Burrill mentioned these funds can also be used for maintenance of vehicles. Interim Chief Kane stated that it's not likely any vehicle purchases would be made in 2024, but possibly one or two vehicles in 2025. Item will remain on the draft warrant.

5. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, as proposed by the Fire Chief, the sum of \$25,000.00 to be deposited into the "Fire Apparatus and Equipment / Refurbishment Fund" Capital Reserve Fund created in 2005 and amended in 2011.

This article would result in an estimated \$0.xxx increase per \$1,000.00 of assessed value to be raised by taxes.

ITA O'Mara stated there is currently \$90,387.00 as Of October 31, 2023, in the account.

6. To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to convey an easement, license, or leasehold interest on a portion of the property owned by the Town of Newton located at [INSERT STREET ADDRESS], identified as Tax Map __, Lot __, for a period not to exceed __ years for the purposes of constructing, installing, and operating a communications tower, in such dimensions and under such terms and consideration as the Board of Selectmen, in its discretion, deems suitable, and to further authorize the Board of Selectmen to execute such related contracts and agreements related to such communications tower. Such authority shall not lapse and shall remain effective until December 31, 2025.

Town council oversaw the writing of this Article. It was mirrored after a neighboring town.

ITA O'Mara stated he is waiting on wording for the Recreation Coordinator Warrant Article. He also asked if the Selectboard would like to establish a Revolving account for the 275th Celebration. Selectman Simone responded \$40,000.00 which would include fireworks, a parade, celebration for a movie night and BBQ. Item will remain on warrant with zero tax impact.

7. To see if the Town will vote to establish an "Emergency Management Revolving Fund" pursuant to RSA 31:95-h for the purpose of providing and maintaining government services during emergencies, as deemed appropriate by the government body. Further, to see if the Town will vote to authorize the Town to deposit into the Revolving Fund all or any part of the revenues from state or federal grants, any other state or federal funding program, or from any other sources, as approved by the legislative body for deposit into the Revolving Fund. Further, to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$8,417.25 to be deposited in the Revolving Fund, said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance and constituting the anticipated final balance of the Emergency Operations Center Expendable Trust Fund. The money in the Revolving Fund shall be allowed to accumulate from year to year and shall not be considered part of the town's general fund unassigned fund balance. The Board of Selectmen shall be the agents to expend from the Revolving Fund. The town treasurer shall have custody of all moneys in the fund and shall

pay out the same only upon order of the Board of Selectmen, and no further approval of the legislative body shall be necessary to expend. The monies in the Revolving Fund may be expended for maintaining government services, including, but not limited to, payroll, equipment, supplies, maintenance and repairs, utilities, and fuel. This article is contingent upon the Town Meeting's approval of Article 7, and, if the Town Meeting does not approve Article 7, this Article shall be null and void.

This proposed article will result in no increase in the amount to be raised by taxes.

Trisha McCarthy Emergency Management Director stated the funds are used for emergency situations and services. Discussion ensued and #7 will be removed from the Warrant.

#8. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$30,363.00 for the following Community Services:

AREA HOMECARE & FAMILY SERVICES	\$ 3,800.00
CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER	2,000.00
DRUGS ARE DANGEROUS	2,500.00
HAVEN	3,050.00
NHSPCA	750.00
ROCKINGHAM COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION	5,000.00
ROCKINGHAM NUTRITION MEALS ON WHEELS	
2,927.00	
ROCKINGHAM NUTRITION MEALS ON WHEELS TRANSPORTATION	700.00
SOROCK COALITION FOR HEALTHY YOUTH	
4,936.00	
VIC GEARY CENTER	2,700.00
WAYPOINT	2,000.00
	\$30,363.00

ITA O'Mara recommends that this has been received with great success, there should be a Selectboard decision when there is a new/additional agency request or removal. This would also allow a single agency to receive an increased amount. ITA O'Mara suggested it be a line item in the executive budget.

#9. To see if the Town will vote, as proposed by the Board of Selectmen, to raise and appropriate the sum of \$60,000.00 to be paid toward the 2023 Solid Waste Disposal Budget as an offset to the recycling and disposal costs, and to authorize the withdrawal of \$60,000.00 from the Transfer Station/Recycling Special Revenue Fund created in 2003 for this purpose.

This article would result in no increase in the amount to be raised by taxes.

Selectman Guide stated that additional an \$60,000.00 is not needed based on the existing funds. Item to be removed per Selectboard discussion.

#10 To see if the Town will vote, as proposed by the Board of Selectmen, to raise and appropriate the sum of \$30,000.00 for the purpose of holding a Hazardous Waste Day, for Newton Residents only. Said monies to come from the Transfer Station/Recycling Special Revenue Fund created in 2003 with no monies to come from taxation.

This article would result in no increase in the amount to be raised by taxes.

Item to be removed per Selectboard discussion. The Town holds Household Hazardous Waste day every other years. Last hosted in 2023

11. To see if the Town will vote, as proposed by the Board of Selectmen, to establish a Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 to be known as the "Town Cisterns and Fire Ponds Capital Reserve Fund" for the purpose of maintaining, repairing, and improving or replacing the Town's cisterns and fire ponds; to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000.00 to be placed in the fund and to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from such fund. Said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance.

A discussion ensued, item will be left in draft, the department head needs to add input for final decision.

12. By petition of 25 or more eligible voters of the Town of Newton to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$3,000 to support a Lake Host Program at the Newton Town Boat Ramp for the 2023 summer season. The Lake Host Program is a collaborative effort between NH Department of Environmental Services, NH LAKES and local lake associations. It trains and employs individuals to provide courtesy boat inspections to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive plants, such as milfoil, from one lake to another thereby protecting public lake uses such as swimming, fishing, and boating. This article would result in an estimated \$0.005 increase per \$1,000.00 of assessed value to be raised by taxes.

Recreation Secretary, Pat Masterson stated this would provide coverage for the boat ramp and education for 6-8 volunteers.

ITA O'Mara stated that a discussion around the cyclical re-evaluation is needed as it was last done in 2020 and is required every 5 years. It's estimated to cost \$100,000.00. He suggested putting \$20,000.00 every year in order to avoid a spike in costs. This will be included in the draft Town Warrant.

RA Pivero would like to include a warrant article for a road repair bond. He would work with the town engineer to configure an amount. The bond allows payment to be made on what is actually being used. This item will be included in the draft.

Selectman Burrill would like to see a proposed article regarding the EMS and Firehouse in house contract. This would require estimated costs for the firehouse and staffing. This will be included in the draft with the appropriate language required.

Chairman Marchand announced that the Planning Board is proposing increasing the weight for home based businesses with vehicles to 26,000.00 .

Selectman Guide presented the proposed following draft Warrant Articles:

1. \$50,000.00 to be deposited into a revolving account to obtain a Recreation Coordinator to plan senior and child programs. Funds to come from the unassigned fund balance.
2. To approve the deposit of \$100,000.00 into the Highway revolving fund to purchase vehicles and equipment.
3. To approve the deposit of \$250,000.00 to the paving line. RA Pivero stated it should read for road improvements and upgrades. This will be zero tax impact.

4. Town Clerk Tax Collector, Mary Jo McCullough stated that her pay is based on fees, which is difficult to predict. There is no benefits other than health associated with the Town Clerk/Tax Collector position. She stated this would make the position more attractive and last year she earned in the area of 64,072.00, if a figure is needed, she would support \$65,000.00. The fees will then be returned to the town as revenue. The Selectboard discussed the number of warrant articles and the benefits of presenting a smaller number of articles. The Selectboard is aiming to make the majority of articles have a zero tax impact. ITA O'Mara stated that the DRA currently lists the unassigned fund balance as \$2,397,933.00. Funds will be used to minimize the tax impact on residents. ITA O'Mara stated this current year's municipal tax rate is \$3.73 and the DRA has established 2024's year @ 3.63, which is down. The School's current rate is \$18.25 up from \$16.61.

Chairman Marchand stated the Planning Board has received a written request for Tax Map (14-1-27-3) a withdrawal for an application fee of \$750.00 Chairman Marchand stated the Selectboard's role is just to approve the request.

Selectman Simone moved to accept the approval for the return of the application fee in the amount of \$750.00 for Tax Map 14-1-27-3. Seconded by Vice -Chairman Connolly. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

Diane Morin announced that she spoke with the Town Tax Collector and tax bills will be mailed on Monday.

6. Approvals

6.1 2023 Tax Warrant -Signature Required

Selectman Guide moved to approve the 2023 Tax Warrant. Seconded by Selectman Simone. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

6.2 Resignation Bruce Gusler-Fire Department

Selectman Simone moved to accept the resignation of Bruce Gusler a Newton Firefighter effective December 23, 2023, with thanks and gratitude. Seconded by Selectman Guide. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

Chairman Marchand thanked Bruce Gusler for his service and wished him the best of luck.

6.3 Motion to Reconsider-Fence Pro

Selectman Simone moved to reconsider the following motion from the meeting dated November 21 : moved to instruct the Trustees of the Trust Fund to withdraw \$ 3,613.00 to pay an invoice to Fence Pro from the Town Buildings Capital Reserve Funds. Seconded by Selectman Burrill, withdrawn.

6.4 Minutes

Selectman Simone moved to approve and accept the public meeting minutes dated November 15th , 2023, as written. Seconded by Selectman Guide. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

Selectman Simone moved to approve and accept the non- public meeting minutes dated November 15th, 2023, as written. Seconded by Selectman Guide. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

7. 2024 Budget Review

ITA O'Mara stated that he neglected to include \$130,000.00 for the EMS contract in the previously presented 2024 budget. He recommends adding this to the consulting line in the Fire Department's Budget.

ITA O'Mara stated that department heads had been asked to include current employees wage increases and retention rates in their 2024 budgets.

Discussion ensued around the 2024 budget passing and price increases personally and professionally. Selectman Burrill suggested posing the wage/merit increases on the town Warrant. Selectman Connolly supports the format of merit increases but encourages all departments to actively become better in budgeting.

Selectman Guide stated he just did the math, and the wage increases add up to an estimated \$263,000.00 and the proposed budget is roughly 12% higher than the default. He then asked RA Pivero to explain the salary increase of \$74,600.00. RA Pivero stated that includes a part time CDL holding employee, and the increase for the existing Foreman. He would like to see the Voter's Guide submitted to the Carriage town News with a simple explanation and information. Discussion ensued around reaching the Voter's directly and providing voting education.

Interim Police Chief (IPC) Kane stated that he understood the strategy of placing the wage increases on the ballot but is concerned with the consequences if it does not pass. He is worried that this would impact employee retention, ultimately increasing costs to onboard new employees. IPC Kane stated that Newton can't compete with the wages and benefits offered in neighboring towns. He would like to see these increases included in the proposed 2024 budget and does not support putting it on the warrant.

ITA O'Mara stated that Newton's Police Department 2024 proposed salary/wage line with given increases has decreased.

Administrative Assistant for the Planning Board(AAPB) James Doggett, wanted to verify that the Selectboard is asking Department Heads to flat line the salary lines to 2023. AAPB Doggett stated this would greatly impact all departments directly and leave employees without a wage increase for 2 years.

Selectman Burrill stated that he is concerned with the 2024 proposed budget not passing and is left with less than favorable options. Discussion ensued on the effects of the proposed 2024 budget not passing.

Sam Zannini, Building Inspector wanted to advocate on behalf of the town employees and the importance of including the raise in the 2024 proposed budget. He stated although he will not be directly impacted by the proposed increase, he fully supports including the increases in the proposed budget. Further stating as the Union President in another town he has overseen employee raise negotiations. He supports the idea of including the wage increase in budget to retain and attract town employees.

Vice Chairman Connolly stated he appreciates the input of Building Inspector Zannini, however its not just the salary line. It would be fiscally irresponsible not to start moving forward.

Selectboard discussion ensued as to when the decision would be made on the default or proposed budget will be finalized. It was decided that the Selectboard should follow the regular meeting schedule, in order to avoid conflicting with any existing scheduled meetings in the main hall. Diane morin stated that the Public Hearing is on January 15th, which gives the Selectboard a until the first week of January to make any final decisions.

8. Action Items New/ Old Business

8.1 275th Anniversary Celebration-Update

Selectman Simones stated the 275th Anniversary planning is making great strides and efforts in organizing events. There is a community gathering hosted by the Just Church@ the community center, on December 16th. The 275th Committee will be there to answer any questions the community may have.

8.2 Seasonal Tree lighting Ceremony Announcement

Selectman Simone stated there is a town tree lighting this Sunday @ 5PM. Santa and other activities are being sponsored by the Recreation Commission.

AAPB Doggett announced the Age Friendly Community is meeting tomorrow @ 11:30am in the Main Hall. Light refreshments will be provided.

Chairman Marchand declared the meeting adjourned at 8:13pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robyn Sparks

Robyn Sparks
Executive Administrative Assistant