



**TOWN OF PITTSFIELD
BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN HALL, 85 MAIN STREET
PITTSFIELD, NH 03263**

MEETING MINUTES OF Wednesday, February 26, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

Call to order at 6:05 PM by Robert Schiferle, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT (11)

Robert Schiferle, Chair
Jeremy Everson, Secretary
Carol Richardson, Select Board Rep.
Heidi Asdot, School Board Rep.
Katie Bachelder
Michael Cabral
John Christakos
Larry Konopka
Ralph O'Dell
Helen Schiff
Randy Severance

MEMBERS ABSENT (3)

Mary Paradise, Vice Chair
Fred Hast
Paul Metcalf III

GUESTS PRESENT

None

DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED:

- *School District Warrant Articles 2020-2021 (Voter's Guide)*
- *2019 Warrant Articles Explanations from the Pittsfield Budget Committee*
- *2020 Annual Town Meeting Warrant*

The purpose of this meeting is to formulate a document to distribute to town voters that will explain the warrant articles that they will be voting on. Some warrant articles are written in such a manner as to complicate and confuse issues that could otherwise be simple for voters to understand and vote on.

Agenda Item 1: School Warrant Articles

Documents Referenced:

- *School District Warrant Articles 2020-2021 (Voting Guide)*

Discussion

- Article 3: Operating Budget – the proposed decrease in the tax impact is because the State of NH has restored school funding for the 2020-2021 school year and our schools received an increase in revenues. The School Board has proposed returning more than half of these funds to the town to lower the tax impact.

Agenda Item 2: Town Warrant Articles

Documents Referenced:

- *2020 Annual Town Meeting Warrant*

Discussion

- Article 4: Municipal Operating Budget - The proposed Municipal Operating Budget reflects an increase in the tax impact due in part to a number of things: 27 pay periods for town employees as opposed to the normal 26 pay periods, extra elections (state and federal), an increase in the BCEP contract obligations, additional funds for sidewalk improvement and the revaluation of properties.
- Article 8: funding to complete Shaw Road Bridge over Kelly Brook project – This project has been ordered by the State of NH. The Town of Pittsfield will need to have funds on hand for this project or will risk encumbering the entire cost through taxation. A 'YES' vote will raise and appropriate \$57,996 through taxation to secure the town portion of the grant. A 'NO' vote will potentially leave the town in the position of losing all the grant monies for this project.
- Article 9: Increase annual deposit into the Ambulance Replacement & Equipment Fund – this warrant article simply increases the amount of funds being set aside for ambulance and equipment replacement from \$30,000 to \$35,000. We have set aside \$30,000 from ambulance billing revenues each year since 2016 but need to modify this amount to meet the proposed schedule for replacement.
- Article 11: Raising matching funds for a Fire Department Grant – you may remember this warrant article from last year. We did not receive the grant and are reapplying for it this year using a professional grant writer. This is one of those cases where the article must be worded in a precise manner dictated by the state, but the real impact is unclear. It is asking you if the Town can spend

\$26,328 in order to receive \$236,952 in grant funds. Yes, that is \$210,624 in grant money that our fire chief worked hard to get approved. Pittsfield Fire received our radios on a State grant from Homeland Security in 2006. The radios are now 13 years old and are at the end of their life cycle. 2019 was the last year they could be repaired. The Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) was also received from a grant directly from the manufacturer in 2007. This apparatus is nearing the end of its useful life and will soon need to be decommissioned. These are a VITAL tools for life safety as they are used when responding to hazardous environments such as fires, Co2 calls, and gas leaks.

- Articles 12 through 22: These warrant articles set aside funds for equipment used by the Fire Department, Police Department and Highway Department. This equipment needs to be maintained and replaced periodically. The Capital Improvement Program Committee established in 2019 has proposed a strategic plan of replacement for each of the vehicles represented by these Capital Reserve Funds. The proposed amounts reflect the committee's desire to stabilize the tax impact over the coming years according to this long-term plan. The plan for 2020 represents an overall increase of \$78,500 more than 2019.
- Article 23: Add to the Floral Park Cemetery Fence Expendable Trust Fund - The Select Board is in favor of continuing the work on the fence around Floral Park Cemetery. One of the selectmen has offered their salary/stipend to the fund totaling \$500. There is no impact to the tax rate and no other monies being raised or asked for toward this project in this article.
- Introduction: In order for the Pittsfield Budget Committee to best assist voters in the practical appropriation of public funds, we present this series of explanations of the warrant articles for the 2020 Annual Town Meeting Warrant. There are many Warrant Articles to be found when you go to the voting booth to vote on the Town and School District budgets this year. Please accept this information on reading and understanding warrant articles. Any article that has money attached to it is presented in the same manner. This is based on rules and regulations overseen by the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA). You will see the phrase "...vote to raise and appropriate the sum of..." at the start of each money related article. This phrase is mandated regardless of where the money is coming from.

For example, Article 11 is seeking to raise \$263,280 for a Fire Department grant to purchase radios and self-contained breathing apparatus. It says we are voting to "raise and appropriate the sum of \$263,280 for...with a grant revenue offset of \$236,952...". The bulk of the money for this purchase is coming from a

grant, not taxes. Even so we still have to “raise and appropriate” the total amount in order to be able to expend the grant money, \$5,000 from the Fire Department Small Equipment Capital Reserve Fund and the amount of \$21,328 which would come from general taxes.

Reading through to the end of the Article you will see a line which reads “Estimated tax impact is \$0.08 per \$1,000 of assessed value.” That is the amount of money you will fund in your taxes if the article passes. Next you will see how the Select Board and Budget Committee voted on the article. This article was passed by all Select Board members with no one opposing or abstaining from the vote (5-0-0) as well all Budget Committee members with no opposing or abstentions (12-0-0).

Please take the time to review the Town Meeting Warrant and the School District Warrant ahead of time. Copies are available on the Town web site, or you can get them at the Town Hall. If something is confusing or difficult to understand, ask for clarification at the Town Hall or School District. You can also reach out to a member of the Budget Committee. Once you are at the voting booth you cannot ask what the Articles mean, so make sure you are an informed voter.

Item 3: Approval to Disseminate Budget Committee Warrant Article Explanations

- Motion to Approve: L. Konopka
- Motion 2nd: K. Bachelder
- 11 (yes) – 0 (no) – 0 (abstentions)

Motion Passed

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Submitted by: Jeremy Everson, Secretary

Approved:



Robert Schiferle, Chair

02/26/2020

Date