

**TOWN OF WALPOLE
STAFF MEETING
JANUARY 21, 2021**

Selectboard Present: Peggy Pschirrer (Chair); Cheryl Mayberry; Steven Dalessio

Staff Present: Sarah Downing (Manager of Administration); Richard Kreissle (Administrator of Finance); Michael Paquette (Chief Police Department); Michael Rau (Road Agent/Highway Department); Ben Hoy (Recycling Director); Kraig Harlow (Recreation Director); Jane Malmberg (Library Director); Helen Dalbeck (Hooper Institute Executive Director); Rebecca Whippie (Hooper Institute Assistant Director/Educator); Meghan Hansson (Interim Town Clerk/Tax Collector)

Excused: Justin Sanctuary (Lt. Police Department)

CALL TO ORDER: Mrs. Pschirrer called this Staff Meeting via Zoom to order at 5:00 PM. The Selectboard members, Staff Department Managers and Mrs. Regina Borden, Recording Secretary, are all in separate locations. This meeting was recorded by the Town.

Mrs. Pschirrer called for a voice roll call of the Selectboard present: Cheryl Mayberry was present; Steven Dalessio was present and Peggy Pschirrer was present. All Staff members listed above responded they were present during the voice roll call. This meeting will be in accordance with Virtual Meetings, Emergency Order #12, which has been effective since March 2020.

Brownfields Project: Mrs. Pschirrer reported the Brownfields Project is beginning to pick-up speed. Requests for Proposals (RFP) to remove the contaminated soil will be sent out shortly. The existing fence around the property is owned by the Town, paid out of escrow money from the Westberg Estate, and will need to be removed. It is behind Spencer's Restaurant and near the Town parking lot. She asked Mr. Rau and Mr. Hoy if either one of them can remove and use it. It will have very little soil on it; it will be safe but would be best to wear a mask while removing it so they are not exposed to the dust. This would help them financially as the project moves forward.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office: Mrs. Meghan Hansson submitted the following written report dated January 21, 2021:

- Sandy Smith retired at end of 2020;
- Meghan Hansson appointed Interim Town Clerk/Tax Collector until March Election;
- New Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector hired and started working last week; Vicki Gohl is making tremendous progress after just a week of work;
- Looking to bring in part time office assistant to help with answering phone calls, filing, etc. She/he will help during the election with absentee ballots;
- We are undergoing rapid tax training under tutelage of experienced tax collector working with NH Municipal Association;
- Have made 8 deposits this year totaling \$149,312.
- Hope to have Barrington (delinquent account) notices sent out this week;
- Registered 217 vehicles between first of year and end of Tuesday (19th), bringing in over 30K for the Town;
- Filing for Candidacy is underway for March Election (3/09/21); Ads are posted and in the Keene Sentinel and Walpole Clarion.
- Preparations for an election begin;
- Office has undergone major cleanout and reorganization, becoming more streamlined and efficient.

Mrs. Pschirrer pointed out that the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office will be open on Friday, January 29th, 2021, from 3:00-to-5:00 PM per State Law for filing for Town Office Elections.

Selectboard Office: Mrs. Sarah Downing distributed written copies of this report dated January 20, 2021.

Assessing Update:

- Avitar Associates has sent letters to properties owners notifying them of upcoming visits for list and measures as part of the cyclical revaluation process. There is an option to opt-out of a visit. These properties are located in the southern area of Walpole. Avitar is not conducting internal inspections due to COVID-19.
- The field assessor is currently visiting properties that had changes with additions or removals to inventory and measure.
- Property tax abatement forms are currently being accepted. The deadline for submitting abatement forms is March 1, 2021.
- A-29 forms for elderly tax exemption, veterans' tax credit, blind exemption and solar energy system exemption are due on or before April 15, 2021.
- A-10 forms for placing land into current use status are accepted through April 15, 2021.
- If property owners have questions about current use, property tax credits and exemptions, contact the Selectboard Office for assistance.

Water and Sewer:

- Water and sewer readings are completed for the 4th quarter of 2020. Invoices will be posted on 1/29/2021.
- Sixty-day notices for open water/sewer invoices were mailed 1/8/2021.
- A Walpole Sewer Users Notice will be sent out in Q4 of the 2020 billing envelopes.

Town Meeting:

- Reports being gathered for inclusion in 2020 Town Report. Thank you to department managers and other contributors who have promptly submitted their reports or have given a status update.
- Warrant article text is being finalized and formatted in preparation for posting with the MS636.
- 2021 Budget Hearing is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 4th starting at 5:30 PM. The meeting will be held at via Zoom. Department Managers are expected to attend.
- 2021 Town Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, March 13th starting at 1 PM. Department managers should plan on attending and be ready to answer questions regarding warrant article requests. Town Meeting will be held at the Walpole School Gymnasium to allow for social distancing between the attendees.

Walpole Recreation: Mr. Kraig Harlow submitted the following written report Update 1/22/21.

Winter Events:

- Winter basketball season has been cancelled for the season due to rising cases of COVID-19.
- Ice Rink did not happen this year due to late December mild weather.
- Daddy and Me dance has been cancelled/postponed for 2021. They might try to hold a different event that can be held outside.
- Working on trying to have an Online Trivia Night in February as one of our Community Events.

Budget Meeting:

- Office Supplies account decreased to \$150 dollars because most of our marketing has been online and we do not purchase many office supplies unless it is pool season.
- The Ice Rink stayed in the budget with future thoughts of purchasing an outdoor rink kit.
- Soccer budget increased to \$1,500 in hopes of creating another season.

Tennis Court:

- Recreation department asked to encumber 2020 funds to make tennis court repairs and the work will be done in the Spring of 2021.
- Those repairs should keep the court in good shape for 3-5 years.

Future Revolving Fund Purchases:

- Approved to buy a new handicap accessibility chair for the pool. Prices are usually \$4,500-6,000.
- We will be purchasing another shed to be put at Whitcomb Park to hold equipment and help with storage issues with soccer goals and outdoor basketball equipment. They are usually \$3,000 to \$4,500 dollars.

Warrant Article:

- Talked about possible warrant article needed to repair the pool roof. The roof was quoted roughly for \$16,500 by both Long's General Contracting and Eric Franklin. Mrs. Pschirrer reported they included a Warrant Article for \$20,000 for a new pool roof.

Chief Paquette expressed concern with surveillance cameras at the pool. There have been problems in the parking lot. Years ago, there were numerous thefts from the vehicles. Mr. Harlow said they were talking about getting a new set. There is something wrong with the existing system. Chief Paquette advised that when he is ready the police department will help out. Mr. Harlow will reach out. Ms. Mayberry pointed out that now the Town owns the parking lot so they could put a camera in. Mrs. Pschirrer suggested signs that state "Lock Your Cars".

Highway Department: Mr. Mike Rau submitted the following written report.

With the New Year here, we have been working on upcoming projects, budgets, and catching up on vehicle and building maintenance. The past few months at highway, we have been keeping busy with winter storms, one of which had record snow fall with others consisting of ice. Snowstorms are easier to handle than ice. During these storms we have encountered a few vehicle break downs and equipment failures which caused down time during storms resulting in delays in clean up time.

We were recently awarded the ARMS Grant from the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES). Now we are beginning preparations to receive the grant. After this we begin plans for the project by applying for NHDES permits and site plan details. We were very fortunate to receive this \$250,000 for the replacement of the Wentworth Bridge over Houghton Brook which is a red listed bridge. This grant will cover approximately half of the cost.

This morning they had a meeting with the engineers, Fuss & O'Neill, and a few other people from the ARMS Grant. There is a lot of work to get this project rolling. This project might not start until 2022. This ARMS Grant is for the bridge on the south end of Town on Wentworth Road just below Blackjack Crossing over Houghton Brook. This Grant is more geared toward reconstructing the brook to help the aquatic life. Mr. Dalessio said this is not for repairing the bridge but rather complete replacement of the bridge. Chief Paquette asked for an estimate of how long that bridge will be blocked. Mr. Rau thought at least a couple of months. We might be able to use the Graves' Pit Road for emergencies, deliveries, etc. It will cut down on the cost as it will eliminate the need for a temporary bridge. Mr. Dalessio mentioned they hope to keep the cost down by using some local contractors.

Hooper Institute: Mrs. Helen Dalbeck and Mrs. Becky Whippie attended this meeting.

Mrs. Whippie was pleased to get an invitation to attend and said it was good to see everybody. Things are going along very well. She gets to visit with all her groups via a short clip of a lesson. On Fridays she is

visiting remotely with her North Walpole students. They are happy to be participating with the students even though it is by remote learning. One might think teaching would be easier by remote learning, but it is actually more intensive as they are preparing materials, picking up and dropping off bundles. It is so great to be teaching again.

Mrs. Dalbeck distributed copies of her Director's Report dated January 21, 2021.

School Programs and School Gardens: School programs are now fully remote. Becky Whippie has scheduled screen face to face lessons with grades 2, 3, and 4 with her teachers and has made weekly videos of lessons for pre-K, K and 1st grade students to watch at home with their families. She created at home activity kits, inquiry homework, tree reports, fully remote lessons for 5th and 6th grade now through February, 2021. The high tunnel maintenance is twice a week for watering and upkeep. Winter greens are growing nicely.

Outreach and Marketing: Facebook, school-based email, The Clarion and Walpolean, Friends of Hooper Institute. She was present at the Farmers' Market in November. Flyers were up advertising wreath making with a Clarion article, and the FOHI invitation email. January 2021 article for Clarion was submitted, introducing our new logo of a sugar maple leaf and featuring Laura Dunbar. February 2021 Clarion submittal is pending.

Facility and Land: Water and heat shut off December 21, 2020. Roofing repair on main building began 12/29, shed roof replaced, chimney removed; both jobs completed January 4, 2021. Tim Smith and crew have been back to install new copper ridge pieces on the main roof. Lew Shelley has been back walking our trails, making plans to mark the trail and remove some blow downs.

Administration: Sue Nadeau will be our newest board member. The 2021 Budget for the Hooper Institute was accepted and approved by the Hooper Institute Trustees, December 18, 2020. End of month pay reqs, mileage, time sheets all submitted. 2020 is wrapped up and 2021 has begun. Hooper Institute board met on 1/13/21, with a renewed focus on development of resources and the strengthening of Friends of Hooper Institute. There will be a FOHI annual meeting in March 2021.

Public Programs: Wreath making happened December 4, 10, 11, and 12. We had a snowstorm on 12/5 so she accommodated folks who wanted to come by at other times to pick-up kids, make wreaths and put together some crafts. Plans are in place though no date is yet set for a county wide fruit tree pruning workshop at the Hooper, taught by UNH Extension Service staff.

Respectfully submitted and thanks to all for your support. Onward now to a healthier new year.

Mrs. Pschirrer feels they have been extremely busy even with working around COVID-19. She thanked both Becky and Helen for all their support.

Finance Office: Mr. Richard Kreissle presented the following report for the Finance Office. He has been preparing the 2021 proposed Budget. Both he and the Selectboard met with the Department Managers individually in December. The end of the year is a busy time for accounting; this year it went smoothly. He took the week of Christmas off which worked out well. W-2s and 1099s are completed; they should be in the mail shortly. The budget is close to being finalized. The Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) goes over the Warrant Articles and the Budget. He hopes to have the MS636 completed in the next couple of weeks. He is looking forward to Town Meeting. The DRA oversees all the NH municipalities. Mrs. Pschirrer mentioned the Hooper Institute does not go through the DRA but rather is looked over by the Office of Charitable Trusts.

Walpole Recycling Staff Meeting Report January: Mr. Ben Hoy submitted a written report plus two pictures of "Soundproofing balers where possible to keep noise down within building".

- Talked to our MSW trash hauler Naughton and Sons about our current overflow situation. We are currently ordering additional pickup every other week to keep up with extra trash-(\$275

delivery charge). We have an empty MSW trailer that is not currently being used (and can't be used because of the dirt surface it sits on). Naughton could install a used compactor for \$6,000. Or, they would be able to rent us a compactor for \$250.00 per month. It would benefit us to have an extra compactor, so that overflow issues become a thing of the past. It is a bad look when trash overflows onto the driveway, and it is impossible to prevent an overflow without the use of the other trailer. Extra transportation costs are expounding this issue. Alstead and Chesterfield have an extra trash compactor at their facilities.

- Pouring concrete next to our current compactor to allow for the movement (switch) of the full/empty trailer is an option to prevent overflow as well. The bobcat cannot currently move a full MSW trailer on any surface other than concrete. The weight of a full trailer is too much for the bobcat to move on dirt/mud/ice/snow. In short, we need some impervious surface action at the recycling center in the form of concrete and asphalt to improve aesthetics and operability.
- Arlington Paving submitted a quote of \$20,700.00 for grading, removal of unsuitable material, and paving of the "work area" between the south side of the recycling center and the storage trailers.
- Mr. G's discount food warehouse closed down – incoming cardboard has not changed. Walpole bags that were sold at the discount food warehouse can now be purchased at Mr. G's surplus and salvage across the street.

Mr. Hoy reported that their security system has been working very well for them. Countryside did a fantastic job. They have noticed the noise from the baler. So this year he has been working on that. Any help is great because it is next to the Reuse Center. That has been going very well. They have been working on the re-organization of stuff. The products are looking clean and good. At the Budget meeting they talked about paving the work area. One issue is the over-flowing of trash onto the driveway. The need for another trailer is necessary. The Recycling Center full yard is pretty icy. Mr. Rau will have it sanded tomorrow as it is too much to do by hand. The Highway Department loader should be able to move the compactor when needed until they can figure out what to do long-term. Mrs. Pschirrer mentioned there is a huge increase in the number of yellow bags. Things have changed in Vermont; items have to be sorted differently and there are restrictions. Has there been an increase in VT cars coming over? Mr. Hoy believes there have been more. An attraction is the Reuse Center; most Recycling Centers do not have one as well-kept as Walpole. They are selling a lot of bags; it is a good thing as it brings in more revenue. Mrs. Pschirrer said when bank deposits are made, there are more VT checks than in the past. They need to talk about how they should manage the influx. Mr. Hoy has some ideas. There will be a Warrant Article for paving the property.

Library Report for January 2021: Mrs. Jane Malmberg distributed copies of the following report. In November, due to an increase in cases of Covid-19 in Walpole, the library stepped back its service to Express Browsing (1 person/family in the library at a time for 15 minutes of browsing) and Curbside Pickup. As of January 5, we began offering home delivery of materials for those who are unable or do not wish to come to the library.

All library programs are offered virtually via Facebook Live or YouTube. We also offer a kids Take-and-Make craft weekly, and one for Adults once a month that has been pretty popular. They have made coasters, lanterns and stress balls. Next week it will be on growing your own sprouts. All crafts are fun and easy. Julie wanted to try a Story Walk Time in North Walpole along their park fence. They talked to Mr. Harlow and Diane Harty and got it all set up; it might have started today.

We are happy to report that we recently upgraded our library computers, several of which were over 10 years old.

Staff are hard at work cataloguing books for North Walpole. At present, there is no definitive date for reopening due to Covid concerns.

2020 saw a decrease in library visits, circulation and program attendance due to Covid, but an increase in the use of downloadable books and audiobooks, visits to our website, and Facebook followers. The addition of more passive programming and the use of virtual programming did help to lessen the decrease in programming numbers.

They have four Board positions that are open for this election. There are 3 – Three Year Terms and 1 – One Year Term. Mrs. Malmberg also submitted Monthly Library Statics – 2020.

Police Department: Police Chief Michael Paquette reported that applications for officers closed on Monday, January 18th. They are going through the numerous applications but only a few are certified from out-of-state. He hopes to get the positions filled prior to his retirement at the end of March. It will take a couple of months to go through this process. The officers are working diligently on the burglaries and have increased patrols in North Walpole. There were also some on the outskirts of the Village. There were vehicle break-ins. They are looking at evidence and hope to make an arrest. A lot of training had to be done by virtual classes. The State increased the number of hours for part-time officers to 1300 hours. It was a difficult year on how they do police work but they got through it. They have had difficulty with registering for appointments for the vaccines. Chief Paquette asked if the Town will change the quarantine restrictions after employees get their second shot. Mrs. Pschirrer advised they will put something out for that; to date no one had their second shot. The Governor is still telling us to be careful not to be in large groups although he is in favor of opening the schools. He extended his mask order for the State until sometime in March. Chief Paquette reported that everybody has been very busy. They have been working on the new budget. Mr. Dalessio mentioned the Governor's recommendations one of which was to wear body cameras. Chief Paquette replied that Lt. Sanctuary is working on that but it is not mandatory yet. They are extremely expensive. There are costs for storage on the cloud and maintenance. Towns will have to be given time to comply with this. Mr. Dalessio is concerned with significant expenses in the future.

2021 Proposed Budget: Mrs. Pschirrer reminded everyone that the Town's 2021 proposed Budget Public Hearing is on February 4th, 2021, at 5:30 PM. It will be an open virtual meeting and all Department Managers are expected to attend and answer questions about their budget.

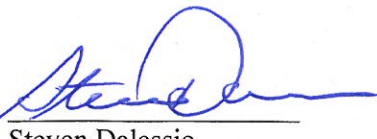
ADJOURNMENT:

Mrs. Pschirrer thanked everyone for attending this meeting. She appreciates all the work they do. Stay Healthy!! She adjourned this Staff meeting at 6:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary


Peggy L. Pschirrer, Chair


Cheryl Mayberry


Steven Dalessio

(Note: These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be found in the Minutes of the January 28, 2021, Selectboard meeting.)