

**TOWN OF WALPOLE
STAFF MEETING
NOVEMBER 18, 2021**

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

Staff Present: Sarah Downing (Manager of Administration); Richard Kreissle (Administrator of Finance); Justin Sanctuary (Chief Police Department); Michael Rau (Road Agent/Highway Department); Ben Hoy (Recycling Director); Kraig Harlow (Recreation Director); Helen Dalbeck (Hooper Institute Executive Director); Jane Malmberg (Library Director); Meghan Hansson (Town Clerk/Tax Collector); Regina Borden (Recording Secretary)

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Mayberry called this Staff Meeting to order at 5:00 PM in the Walpole Town Hall. This meeting was being recorded.

Walpole Town Library: Mrs. Malmberg, Library Director, submitted this November 2021 Report: Outreach:

The blanket squares are coming in fast and furious – they have 58 so far.

Their North Walpole Open House was a success – they had 24 visitors, many of whom had not been in the branch since they reopened. Many thanks to Susan Johnson, Deb Kelsey, Julie Rios and Peggy Pschirrer for their donations of time, banners, balloons and food.

They are once again a location for the Walpole Giving Tree. Unfortunately, they are out of tags at this time, but folks can come in to leave a donation if they wish.

Programming: Their November author talk with Bill Ranauro is this Thursday night at 6 pm.

Coming up in December is their Saturday book club, on December 11 at 9 am. They will be reading books with a Jane Austen theme – Sense and Sensibility, as well as two modern retellings of that title by Joanne Trollope and Sonali Dev. They will meet once a month with a different theme each time and a choice of 3-4 titles to read.

On December 10th, they will be hosting an afternoon concert of Celtic Holiday Music with musician Jeff Snow at 4 pm.

Staff Development: 5 out of 7 of their staff have completed the online harassment training. She anticipates that the other two will finish soon.

Building/Grounds: They have ordered a replacement streetlamp for the front of the main library. Tim Lester (board member) will coordinate with Houghton's to have it installed once it arrives at the library.

They have been having issues with their front door – the spring in the handle appears not to be working making it very difficult to keep the door latched. Brad Nash contacted Countryside who came out and took photos of the lock. They are researching a replacement that is in keeping with the character of the current lock. They might eventually have to replace the door with new safety requirements.

They have been working with Barry Bellows to get an estimate for repair to their chimney which has been leaking into the office.

They were having trouble with water seeping into the book return in North Walpole. They moved the return to the other side of the door where it is sitting on asphalt, not ground. So far, so good.

Board of Trustees: They currently have two open positions on the board: Shirley Capron resigned after more than 50 years of dedicated service, and Jeanne Ramey moved out of state. They have one candidate who is definitely interested in joining and another who is considering from North Walpole.

Friends' Book Sale: The book sale was a big success. They made over \$6,500 before expenses. Many thanks to the Friends and their team of volunteers.

The Monthly Library Statistics – Bridge Memorial Library and the Monthly Library Statistics – North Walpole Library for October 2020 and October 2021 are available in the Selectboard Office.

Hooper Institute: Mrs. Helen Dalbeck, Executive Director, submitted this November 17, 2021, report. **School Programs and School Gardens:** They are really busy teaching in the schools and putting the gardens to bed for the winter. The late fall harvest of carrots has been really fun at the North Walpole School and spinach, kale, arugula are sprouting and growing once again in the high tunnel. She participated in a day-long event with the 6th grade when they hosted “Natures Classroom” at the Middle School.

Outreach and Marketing: November Clarion plus many Facebook posts, school newsletter, wreath making posters.

Facility and Land: The building interior was inspected on 10/28. She is thinking ahead to closing the building mid-December. It takes some planning on her part as the Hooper Institute is her office and workspace.

Administration: They are looking for new board members. The HI Board has approved the budget for 2022 and the next step is to meet with the Hooper Trustees in December.

Special Events, Programs, Friends: Wreath-making Dec 3 and Dec 4. This year she could have as many as 20 wreath makers! Twelve signed up. Sign up soon if you wish to make one.

Development/Fundraising: They have begun to plan for “The Year of the Hooper Institute” in 2022.

Police Department: Police Chief Justin Sanctuary had submitted their Police Stats from October 16, 2021 through November 15, 2021. At this meeting he handed out a new graph. From their regular monthly stats report they took one piece of it and broke out the “Crimes Against A Person”. Total number is 54. This gives people a better understanding of the types of calls they receive. The format is also different. A question was on Welfare Checks. Chief Sanctuary replied it is usually someone calling as they are concerned with the welfare of someone else. They will go out to check on the house, apartment or car. A lot are home checks when a neighbor might see mail piling up, etc. They took back about 40 pounds of narcotics recently; usually they take back about 100 pounds a year. They could end up doing a graph like this for each of the lines. Mr. Dalessio asked if there is anything they could do pro-actively to reduce these numbers. Chief Sanctuary noted this is all reactionary. They cannot reduce this sort of thing. Mr. Hoy mentioned getting reports of dumping in various parts of the town. Mrs. Pschirrer had a complaint through the Conservation Commission about the dumping of trash near French Road. They probably know where it is coming from but now some trash is going over to forest land that is

under Conservation Commission observation. She will send Chief Sanctuary some pictures. Chief Sanctuary said they can try following-up on who is responsible. Ms. Mayberry pointed out that they can put up a few signs about not dumping trash.

Finance Office: Mr. Richard Kreissle, Administrator of Finance, provided the following report dated November 18, 2021.

Tax Rate: He has been working very intensely with their auditors to assist them in completing the audit so they can upload one remaining form to the Department of Revenue's (DRA) portal. In the seven years he has worked for the Town it never was this late. Once accomplished, a preliminary rate is established and submitted to the board. The board decides how much to allow for abatements in the coming year and how much of the unassigned fund balance to use. These decisions are passed along to the DRA who finalizes the rate. When they receive the final rate, the tax warrant can be executed and bills sent out.

Tax Anticipation Note (TAN): Because of the lateness of the tax rate and the effects on their cash reserves resulting from repairs due to this summer's flooding, the taking out of a tax anticipation note (TAN) is a possibility. A TAN is a short-term note. If they need to take out a TAN, they should be able to pay it back no later than January 31, 2022. Ms. Mayberry noted it has taken six-plus months for the Town to get their audit.

Budget: The meeting with department managers is set for Friday, December 10th. In addition to discussing their operating budget, discussion will be had about any individual warrant articles they wish to have.

Walpole Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office: Mrs. Meghan Hansson submitted the following report dated November 16, 2021.

- Since the September meeting, Town Clerk collected about \$77,042, out of which Walpole receives \$57,154. This involved 333 vehicle registrations.
- Over \$10,000 worth of tax payments have arrived against a tax warrant that doesn't exist. Normally, this would have been deposited and applied to the property owner's balance once the warrant came out. Due to questions regarding pre-payment of taxes, the money (checks) is sitting in her office.
- Renovation began last week (attached were pictures) with removal of everything in the back half of the office. The old carpets were ripped up in a day, and the first coat of paint was applied. New flooring was applied, and the heavy safe was moved to a new location. Also, the new window countertop was inserted on Saturday. Due to a delay in the arrival of the cabinets that go under the countertops, the front of the office will not be completed until probably a couple of weeks from now.
- They are prepared to import the warrant as soon as it becomes available, print bills, and then mail them out to the property owners.

Walpole Recycling Center: Mr. Ben Hoy, Recycling Director, submitted their November 2021 report.

Mr. Hoy was voted into the NRRA Northeast Resource Recovery Association Board of Trustees at the annual meeting for members last week.

The NRRA helps communities throughout New England find the best possible recycling solutions for each town, and brings communities together to get the best possible return on their town's investment in recyclables.

The Walpole trash bag order is in progress from Boxes and Bags Unlimited in Lewiston, Maine. They are hoping to receive the shipment in early December. They shipped \$10,000 in Walpole bags to Shaws this week, and have just enough bags remaining to get them through the next bag order.

They are digging out the boxes of bags that have been sitting for a long time in their overseas storage trailer, and finding that the boxes are getting some moisture damage from the temperature changes and poor ventilation within the trailer.

They are considering storing the Town of Walpole yellow bags across the street in their locked storage shed to free up room for more recyclable product on site at Walpole recycling, and prevent damage to their bag boxes going forward.

Tom Donovan has completed training in welding course through Keene Community Education at Filtrine, and is excited to begin needed welding projects at the recycling center.

He has been alerted to several major trash deposits around Walpole, from couches dumped on Old Drewsville Road to tires and trash rolled down the hill on Halls Crossing Road. He is conducting a cleanup of Whitcomb Road on Wednesday, November 24th at 8am starting at the recycling center.

Walpole Highway Department: Mr. Mike Rau, Road Agent/Highway Department, submitted their November 2021 report.

- **Elm Street:** Finally paved, and shouldering is scheduled to be complete this week. The road will not be lined this year.
- **Summer Floods:** Repairs and the new culvert on Cold River Road that washed out is close to completion. Crews have been working on paving in washouts on several roads before the asphalt plant closes for the season. All other flood damage from this past summer will need to be put on hold until spring. They have submitted all paperwork for the next step in receiving funding from FEMA and are still waiting to hear back from them to continue the lengthy process.
- **Leaf Clean Up:** With most of the leaves down now, they will be out doing leaf clean up on town properties.
- **Grading:** Dirt roads in town will be graded one last time for the year.
- **Equipment:** Trucks and equipment have been getting prepped for winter use. This includes winter tire change over, on spots, plow hook-ups, etc. They want to be ready to go when winter does arrive.

Walpole Recreation: Mr. Kraig Harlow, Recreation Director, submitted the following November 18, 2021, report.

Pool:

- Walpole Recreation just purchased a 10 ft. by 20 ft. shed from LaValley's for \$6,094 from the revolving fund to store recreation equipment.

Winter Basketball:

- They have roughly 50 children signed up for basketball from grades PK-6th grade.
- The program generated about \$1,350 through registration and signups.
- They currently have a one PK team, two 1st grade teams, two 2nd grade teams, two girls ¾ teams, two boys ¾ teams, and one girls 5/6 team.
- Games will be held on Saturday mornings at Walpole Elementary School from 10 am – 3 pm and at North Walpole School from 10 am – 3 pm.

- Practices will be held at North Walpole School for one hour between 5–6 pm and 6-7 pm.
- They have Diamond Pizza, McGill Woodworking, Houghton, and Craig Vickers Insurance sponsoring teams this season.

Hockey Rink:

- Walpole Recreation just purchased an EZ Ice Rink for Westminster St. Field for \$4,311 from the revolving fund. The rink is 30 ft x 60 ft and they can purchase additional rink walls to increase its size if it becomes heavily used. Ms. Mayberry suggested he consider having broom hockey.

Mrs. Pschirrer reported that members of St. John’s Church discussed that they would like to participate in some way. The church will be open so the bathrooms can be used. They could have hot chocolate and other snacks providing they are kept informed of the open hours for the Ice Rink.

Community Events:

- Currently, they do not have any community events scheduled until after January 2022.

Selectboard Office: Mrs. Sarah Downing, Manager of Administration, submitted their November 18, 2021, report.

Human Resources:

Many departments are working with their staff to complete the online Harassment Awareness Training module. The deadline for completing the training is December 31, 2021. Primex training certificates are to be sent to the Selectboard Office after the training module is completed. For employees that do not have work or personal email addresses, there is a workaround to allow an employee to register using a faux email address.

Yearly Open Enrollment and coverage notice forms from Health Trust have been distributed. If an employee wishes to change their coverage due to family changes or to move insurance to a spouse’s plan, a new enrollment form needs to be completed and sent to the Selectboard Office by December 17, 2021.

Health Insurance costs to the Town will be decreasing by 8.1% for 2022. Rich Kreissle is working on the cost breakouts which will be announced in year-end benefit info packet to employees. The packet will be distributed in December. The Town is also expecting a Return of Surplus check which will also help lower healthcare costs for the Town and employees.

BCBS Anti-Trust Settlement: A class action suit was brought against Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS). The Town has completed an application to be part of the settlement. Employees received a mailing from BCBS to apply. To receive a payment, one must have filed a claim by November 5, 2021. Per the settlement website, “The Final Approval Hearing has been held. The Settlement is pending Court order.”

Year-end Holidays: The upcoming holidays or paid days off for benefitted employees include Thanksgiving, the Friday after Thanksgiving, December 24 (Christmas) and December 31st (New Year’s Day). When a holiday falls on a weekend, the holiday then moves to either the prior Friday or the following Monday.

Assessing:

Fall Tax Warrant: Once the final tax rate is set, the fall tax warrant will be created and signed by the Selectboard as soon as possible. The Tax Collector sets the final payment date based on when the tax bills can be posted in the mail.

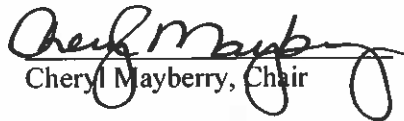
Abatement, Veterans' Tax Credit, Elderly Tax Credit and Solar System Exemption application forms can be accepted after the fall tax bills have posted in the mail.

Selectboard Meeting: Mrs. Pschirrer announced that the Selectboard will be meeting next Wednesday, November 24th at 8:30 AM because Thanksgiving Day falls on Thursday. They will be meeting a day early.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Mayberry reminded the Department Managers that the Selectboard will be meeting with each of them individually on December 10th, 2021. This is to go over their proposed 2022 Budget and go over their "Wish List" for items for the Warrant. She wished everybody has a "Happy Thanksgiving Day". This meeting was adjourned at 5:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary


Cheryl Mayberry, Chair


Steven Dalessio


Peggy L. Pschirrer

(Note: These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be found in the Minutes of the November 24, 2021, Selectboard meeting.)