



**Town of Milton**  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING**  
**December 21, 2023**

**ATTENDANCE:**

**Members:** Humphrey Williams (Chair), Claudine Burnham, Andy Rawson

**Staff:** Chris Jacobs- Town Administrator, Chief Richard Krauss- MPD, Chief Nick Marique- MFD

**Public:** Renata Gamache -budget committee member, Katherine Ayers – school board member.

*(recognition of public in attendance serving on a committee or board does not nor is intended to imply that the individual speaks for that committee or board)*

Humphrey Williams, Chair, opened the public session at 6:00PM.

**1.) Pledge of Allegiance:** Humphrey Williams led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2.) Public Comment:**

Katherine Ayers: The Women's Club Creche in Veteran's Park is on its last legs; we either need a new one or have it rebuilt. She asked if the town would have any suggestions for this; she thought the shop at the school might be interested in taking this project and getting community service hours. Ms. Burnham asked who takes care of the creche? Ms. Ayers said the DPW sets it up and the Women's Club arranges it.

**3.) Announcements and Community Calendar:**

1. Town Hall will be closed Monday, December 25<sup>th</sup>.
2. The transfer station will be open to 12PM on December 24<sup>th</sup> and closed on Monday, December 25<sup>th</sup>.

3. Town Hall will be closed December 27-29 – Services moving to 55 Industrial Way. Online services will be available December 28 & 29. In-person services will re-open January 2, 2024, in the new Town Hall.
4. Budget Committee will meet on December 28<sup>th</sup>.
5. Town Hall will be closed Monday, January 1<sup>st</sup>.
6. Transfer Station will be closed Monday, January 1<sup>st</sup>.

**4.) NEW Business – Discussion and Possible Actions:**

- a.) Department Head Reports:** Chief Krauss recommended tabling the reports to January meeting.
- Public Works Update: Mr. Rawson did talk to Pat Smith about Northeast Pond Road. Pat and Paul Kane met about the drainage issues and discussed mitigation issues. Pat recommends moving forward Underwood Engineers scope of work to address mitigation. The design cost is \$30,000 and permitting ~\$15,000. Mr. Kane did agree to work with the town.
- Thurston Road drainage issue: This is due to a cleared lot which is causing water to be diverted. Severe damage has been reported to the road and properties downstream. Pat talked to the property owner who has agreed to work with the town to resolve the issues.
- Recreation Update: 2023-2024 Basketball is in full swing with 58 registered players. League play will start in January. Thanks to the coaches who have stepped up. Senior Bingo & Luncheon – Thanksgiving dinner in November and Christmas breakfast early December. Both were well attended. Thanks to donors John & Karen Locke and Walter Cheney for their generosity. Kid's Night Out – December event included building a gingerbread house. "Best in Show" won by Cora Boudreau; Best Children's Houses to Brynsley Trudell & Zoey Brown. Breakfast with Santa – December 9<sup>th</sup> with Santa stopping to meet the families, take pictures, etc. Wildlife Encounters traveling zoo was also there with a white fox, parrot, alligator and huge frog! Thanks to Walter Cheney for sponsoring the morning events. Holiday Toy Drive – thanks to Snowdon Realty & Milton Moose Lodge for their donations. Also, thanks to Caravan of Toys (Portsmouth Naval Shipyard) and Marine Corps Toys for Tots. We also had many town residents donate toys and gifts for older kids. It is due to the generosity of residents and organizations to make this program so successful. We have been able to provide toys to over 80 children.

Mr. Williams motioned to accept the two donations to the Recreation Department from John & Karen Locke (\$200) and Walter Cheney (\$1,000) for the holiday programs. Seconded by Ms. Burnham. All were in favor; the motion was approved.

- b.) Town Administrator & Police Chief shared duties:** Mr. Williams said there have been questions and concerns from residents concerning the Town Administrator and Police Chief. He emphasized Chris Jacobs is still the Town Administrator; due to personal reasons Mr. Jacobs has been working remotely on budgets, Town Report, etc. Because there has been so much happening, Chief Krauss has stepped forward to help out in person at the Town Hall. Chief Krauss also has expertise in electronic/computer issues so he has also been focused on the new Town Hall. If there are any questions, please reach out to Mr. Williams and the BOS.

- c.) **WWTP Lagoon Liner Repair – SAG Acceptance of Work certificate:** Mr. Jacobs said the town has done this before. Now there is another group who requested a signed certificate.
- d.) **CMOM Contract with Wright Pierce:** Mr. Jacobs said to stay compliant with the state and feds, there is a collection system operation and maintenance plan; one plan for plant operations and a plan for operating the collection system (inspection, maintenance, cleaning, etc.). In the past the town has typically not had one; however, with the new permits, this had been requested. Copies were provided for signature.
- e.) **Sewer Rate Study with Wright Pierce:** Mr. Williams said the sewer rate study was quoted at \$42,600. It is required by the state when approving grants. Mr. Jacobs said this past year the town started an Asset Management program which is required both for state and federal. If in the future the town would want to borrow or request money for plant expansion, it is required. It's also used to ensure sewer commissioners do not overcharge consumers; it also helps ensure rates are not so low that a plant is unable to function. Set rates need to be similar to what other communities are charging.

Mr. Williams said currently 300 customers utilize services and all pay the same flat rate fee. A sewer study will help determine if that is the best way. For example, a standard household is charged the same as the local laundromat. We know there are very high costs at the WWTP with repairs, etc. Contracts have also increased. This year the budget will increase over last year - ~30% increase. We know an increase in sewer rates will have to happen. Mr. Jacobs said this study will probably take about a year.

- f.) **MS-4 Storm Water Committee / Outfall Testing:** Mr. Williams said to clear up any confusion, Chris Jacobs is still part of this committee along with Bruce Woodruff and Pat Smith. Mr. Jacobs said they have not yet done dry weather testing. The culvert below the school crossing Dawson Street is the only one that ran all summer long. This is the sixth year of the permit; sampling and testing is now required. Mr. Jacobs will move forward with this.
- g.) **New Ambulance Invoice – consideration for payment:** Chief Krauss – the approved Warrant Article for \$45,000 was to go to first payment.

Mr. Rawson motioned to sign the purchase order submitted by the Fire Department for \$45,000. This is to come from the previously approved Warrant Article. Seconded by Ms. Burnham. All were in favor; the motion was approved.

- h.) **Assessing Re-evaluation contract – consideration for payment:** Mr. Williams – ongoing discussions to decide whether to pay for it now out of this year's budget or to encumber funds for next year? Chief Krauss has been working on end-of-year budget projections. Concerns include two highway trucks needing repair work. They received an estimate for just one of the trucks at ~\$15,000. In addition he is still waiting to hear about the costs to fix the ambulance. He said current projections indicate \$161,000 will be left in the budget. This does not include any retirement payouts or the contract. If they would decide to do both, this would take the entire \$161,000. The projected \$161,000 is with zero dollars coming from the Ambulance Revolving account. If money is taken from that account to help pay down this year's salary, he

suggested not using more than \$50,000 as we need to remain above the \$200,000 which has been earmarked by the Warrant Article for the ambulance purchase. Previous discussions emphasized not taking salaries out of the revolving account as had been done before. Next year if by chance the new ambulance is ready, that \$200,000 needs to be available. Mr. Williams said he calculated the project balance to be ~\$187,000. This does not include any offsets from the ambulance revolving account. Chief Krauss said the motion could happen at the next meeting so additional end-of-year information will be available. The next meeting is scheduled before the next Budget Committee meeting.

i.) **HEB Invoice request to use \$15,000 Highway Block Grant funds to pay invoice for Winding Road Bridge:**

Mr. Williams motioned to pay the \$15,000 from the Highway Block Grant. Seconded by Mr. Rawson. All were in favor; the motion was approved.

j.) **2023 Budget Balances Conversation and Decisions:** Tabled to December 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.

k.) **Encumbrances (all department's possible encumbrances and MCC request to encumber \$500 towards Priority Wetlands Map, Town-wide Assessment):** Tabled to December 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.

l.) **FY2024 Budget Review:** Mr. Williams said the Retirement Deferred Comp has been discussed for the past few years. Upon further review, this is included in the employee handbook. This means the town is responsible to pay leave upon an employee leaving. It is an obligated expense which makes it a default item. Since there are anticipated upcoming retirements, he estimated the amount to be at least \$89,000 in 2024. The \$100,000 added into the Deferred Compensation line-item is based on the potential \$89,000 plus anyone else who may leave. Last year, additional monies needed to be paid out of other budget line-items because this deferred payment was never accounted for. This can include annual leave, sick leave (for employees with more than 10 years). Mr. Rawson said this is just good planning on behalf of the town. Mr. Williams said we are obligated to pay this. In addition, he noted that any monies not used go back into the general fund to help reduce taxes.

**Sewer Department:** The Default budget now lists both contract services & professional services totaling \$76,270 (plus an adjustment on permits & testing). Mr. Williams said the rate study could come from their Capital Reserve Fund. This will help not hit customers with an immediate huge jump. As there has been no increase since 2013, Mr. Williams noted there will be rate increases based on the rate study.

**Town Clerk:** Mr. Williams said the proposed budget is based on \$49,920 (\$24/hour). The average state-wide salary is ~\$45,000 to \$50,000. When looking at hourly rates, \$24-\$25/hour is on the higher end. If this remains at \$24/hour, it would come in under the default budget by \$9,739. When increased to \$25/hour, overall salary increases to \$52,000 an increase of \$2,080. Ms. Burnham said there are not many towns with full-time Town Clerks. Mr. Rawson said it has always been full-time. Mr. Jacobs said with tax collectors, most towns are not open more than two days per week. Mr. Rawson said while this could be a Warrant Article to separate the two

positions, it may be difficult to find someone who only wants to work two days each week. Mr. Williams said the Town Clerk is an elected position and must be a resident of Milton, while the Tax Collector does not have to be a resident.

Mr. Williams – The Public Works Director is currently an elected position with the salary budgeted at \$56,576. For most small towns, the starting salary is \$60,000. Mr. Rawson said most Road Agents do not include buildings and the dump. This position oversees all three. No sensible person would want this position. Mr. Williams suggested bringing this up to \$60,000. This is reasonable; if it goes any higher, we know the voters will vote it down. Mr. Rawson said there is also a lot of overtime involved; the position also requires additional certifications. Mr. Williams said someone who works there needs to have certifications. Mr. Rawson disagreed and said it's the Road Agent who needs certifications. Mr. Williams said it will probably be difficult to have someone elected with all the required certifications. The job description should include language that talks about working toward certification. Mr. Rawson said the job also includes MS-4.

If the salary for the elected position increased to \$60,000, they will still be under the Default. Ms. Burnham said an option would be a separate line-item for payment when the employee achieves certifications after their hire. Chief Krauss said if this is legal to do with an elected official, put this under Professional Services. When all licenses and certifications were achieved, they could receive an additional ~\$4,000. Mr. Rawson noted there are current employees who said they would not be interested in the position because with their overtime they are already making more than the starting salary.

Ms. Burnham expressed her concern with an elected position, any person could run and win the position without any experience. Mr. Williams said the position would get paid, no matter what the experience level of the individual is. However, incentives can be added to entice someone to work towards certification. Both Mr. Rawson and Ms. Burnham said they were OK with increasing the amount to \$60,000.

Mr. Williams motioned to increase the elected Director of Public Works salary to \$60,000. Seconded by Mr. Rawson. All were in favor; the motion was approved.

Mr. Williams motioned to approve the elected Town Clerk salary at \$49,920. Seconded by Ms. Burnham. All were in favor; the motion was approved.

Cemetery: At the end of November Sexton hours amounted to \$1,509. Final numbers for this year have not been submitted. The current Proposed budget is \$15,200. No contract for mowing has been submitted. Normally there would be four mowing's with a fifth mowing if needed. Based on this year's contract, the budget was set at \$10,000 for Milton Mills and \$2,000 to cover the other three. Because there were more Sexton hours this year, the Cemetery Sexton stipend was increased to \$3,000. Mr. Rawson said it's important to note this is

covered through perpetual care. The proposed and default operating budgets were increased to \$17,950.

Mr. Williams said the BOS will finish the 2024 budget review at their next meeting.

m.) **Warrant Article Review:**

**Article #4: Operating Budget**

Proposed Operating Budget - \$5,608,261; Default - \$5,613,551 (\$5,590 below Default). These numbers will change based on final discussions at the next meeting.

**Article #5: Highway and Road Reconstruction Fund, \$360,000 (\$0.72/\$1,000)**

Chief Marique said this increase by \$10,000 over last year was recommended by CIP and will be used for road projects. Chief Krauss said in previous years this was offset by Highway Block grants.

Mr. Rawson spoke with Pat Smith who said in two years, they will need \$300,000 for Winding Road Bridge. He suggested using \$140,000 from the Block grant over the next two years to get to that amount.

Chief Krauss - For Dawson Street project, there is already \$611,000 set aside. The project is set to cost \$891,000 with \$60,000 already in the CRF. Adding the \$130,000 from the Highway Block grant will bring it to \$200,000. According to Mr. Rawson, Pat Smith has recommended not going above the \$611,000 and use \$140,000 towards the bridge. That may mean possibly not completing the entire Dawson Street project at the original timeline. Mr. Williams said there had been confusion around the Sidewalk Block grant as well. The Highway Block grant can be applied to vehicles such as needed plow and dump trucks. Mr. Rawson said there are many infrastructure issues this could be used toward as well; \$300,000 is really not enough money to fix the roads.

**Article #6: Bridge Capital Reserve Fund - \$150,000 (\$0.30/\$1,000)**

Chief Krauss said this is for in-town bridges. There is nothing currently in the fund; \$300,000 will be needed for Winding Road Bridge in two years. Mr. Williams said residents know these bridges need to be addressed and knows there is a better chance this article will pass which will allow the Highway Block grant to be used toward vehicle purchase costs.

**Article #7: Lease/Purchase Two Highway 6 Wheel Dump Trucks - \$540,000 (\$0.136/\$1,000)**

The \$540,000 would be payable over the next ten years. This first year would be \$68,000.

**Article #8: Purchase Police Department Taser 10 Less Lethal Weapons - \$43,834 (\$0.017/\$1,000)**

This is for a term of five years - \$8,766.69 for the first year. Chief Krauss said the manufacturer will stop production on the current models used by the Police Department in May of 2024; the warrant expires in 2025.

**Article #9: Purchase Police Department Axon Body 4 Body Cameras - \$46,908 (\$0.02/\$1,000)**

This is a five-year contract; first year will cost \$9,381.

**Article #10: Public Safety Radio Communications Capital Reserve Fund - \$30,000**

**(\$0.06/\$1,000)**

It was noted this is the top item recommended by CIP; to replace all radio systems will cost ~\$210,000. Mr. Williams asked if this should be increased to \$40,000? Chief Krauss said not this year as the top CIP recommendations included roads, bridges and highway trucks. It will be better to do this over a five-year period.

**Article #11: Fire Department Equipment and Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund - \$15,000 (\$0.03/\$1,000)**

The CIP recommended \$115,000 toward this.

**Article #12: Technology Upgrade Capital Reserve Fund - \$8,000 (\$0.016/\$1,000)**

The CIP had recommended adding Article #12 back into the list for this year.

**Article #13: Municipal Buildings Capital Reserve Fund - \$25,000 (\$0.05/\$1,000)**

Currently there is ~\$60,000 in the fund. This was recommended by CIP due to the town's aging buildings.

**Article #14: Eradicate Invasive Plant Species - \$7,500 (\$0.015/\$1,000)**

Additional support is provided by Lebanon, ME and TPPA. Mr. Rawson said there is a strong possibility there will be no grants provided to help with this which have been previously used to help offset. The CIP had recommended changing the word from 'Eradicate' to 'Control' Invasive Plant Species. Mr. Williams said they have been able to eradicate some areas of the lakes. Mr. Rawson stressed this is not just an issue for those who live on or use the waters; this is a town-wide issue as there is a lot of revenue received due to the lakes.

**Article #15: Appoint Public Works Director**

It was noted of Pat Smith's plans to retire in 2024. Currently this is an elected position; this article would change the position from elected to appointed.

**Article #16: Elected to Appointed Fire Chief**

Chief Marique suggested based on everything currently going on, to not include this article; he said he is not planning on going anywhere. There will be a lot of ongoing hires including Public Works and Town Clerk.

**Article #18: Conservation Commission Legal Defense Capital Reserve Fund - \$1,000 (\$0.01/\$1,000)**

Additional Warrant Articles:

**Elderly Exemptions:** Katherine Ayers explained the last time this was included was in 2009 and said it is time for the minimum tax exemption levels be raised.

The age breakdowns are 65-74, 75-79 and 80+ years. Current breakdowns:

Single - \$30,000; a 40% increase - \$42,000

Married - \$40,000; a 40% increase - \$56,000

Assets – up to \$75,000; a 40% increase – up to \$105,000

Mr. Williams - some residents say they do not qualify because they are just above the maximum income levels. Ms. Ayers said increasing the maximums will allow more people to potentially access the exemption. It was noted that assets do not include the property and up to two acres

of land. Mr. Rawson acknowledged there are a lot of blue-collar workers who struggle within Milton. Mr. Williams said before the BOS votes on this article, they need to first determine the tax impacts. This will be discussed at their next meeting.

**School House Donation:** This would donate the schoolhouse to the Farm Museum and allow them to move it to their property. Mr. Williams said since there would be no cost to the town, there is no tax impact. The Warrant Article, if approved, would allow the town to donate the building.

**Juneteenth Holiday:** Chief Krauss said this is not a state holiday. Mr. Jacobs said the BOS has voted no. Mr. Williams – this Warrant Article would have a big financial impact. Article has been pulled.

**Recreation Capital Reserve Fund:** Chief Krauss said the CIP indicated they did not receive sufficient information to request any funding.

**Library Capital Reserve Fund:** This was far down on the CIP list and will not be included.

There will be two Zoning Articles; one for Wetlands and one for Priority Wetlands.

Tax impact of the current Warrant Articles: \$1.65/\$1,000

n.) **Non-Public Meeting Minutes – discuss/review for un-sealing:** This was tabled to the January 22 meeting.

o.) **Solar Farm Transfer Station – town invoice to collect payments due:** There are twelve accounts within Milton; what has been requested is a breakdown of utilization for each account. They have all the invoices and will be able to determine what is owed to the town. Going forward, this will be on the monthly to-do list instead of waiting till year-end. The new Town Hall is not covered by this agreement. Mr. Jacobs questioned why this is the town's responsibility vs. Eversource.

p.) **Wright-Pierce Asset Management program invoice:** The invoice is for the Facilities study; also a request for \$73,000 for Dawson Street to be released from the federal government to help offset the amount.

## 5.) EVENT PERMITS

a.) There were none.

## 6.) OLD BUSINESS

a.) 2022.02.04.00- **549 White Mountain Highway – status of building:** Building demolition process has started; anticipate finishing on December 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

b.) 2023.05.22 **Townhouse Road Bridge Update:** There was a joint Milton BOS/Lebanon BOS meeting earlier in December. Chief Krauss said it's important to note Lebanon has capped what they will fund. The question is does the BOS want to have a Warrant Article to continue moving forward with the project. Mr. Williams said if the decision is to stop, all the



funds could then be redirected toward the other bridges. Most important information to capture and convey to residents are the water levels and costs.

- c.) Long-Term Goal – website functionality improvements: website functionality improvements: vendor solicitation Revise. Select date for workshop.
- d.) **New Town Hall, 55 Industrial Way- status update:** There are two invoices submitted for payment: Consolidated Communication for cables - \$2,881 and equipment purchase (desk/files) for \$5,607.83. It was suggested to have the Consolidated Communication bill be paid using the Municipal CRF and the second bill come from the TA equipment purchase line.

Mr. Williams motioned to pay the two bills out of the Municipal CRF and TA equipment purchase line. Seconded by Mr. Rawson. All were in favor; the motion was approved.

To clarify recent rumors, Ms. Burnham said we have been very frugal regarding this process. We went with inexpensive blinds, not expensive blinds that have been rumored to be purchased. We have used ARPA funds to help offset much of the associated costs. Mr. Williams said it's important for residents to know they have done everything to keep all the costs associated with the new Town Hall to a minimum. The town paid nothing for the building as it was federally funded; the town owns the land underneath the building. We were originally asked to purchase the building; our answer was no. The only charge was \$2,200 to transfer the title. The rumor going around town that we paid \$12.8M for the building is false.

Mr. Williams motioned to move forward with funding to transfer the equipment to 55 Industrial Way. Seconded by Ms. Burnham. All were in favor; the motion was approved.

Mr. Rawson said that everyone has done a fantastic job; the new Town Hall will be a great facility and the fact that we paid nothing for the building is a definite win/win for everyone. Chief Krauss said with the move scheduled for the following week, the first priority is to have the Town Clerk/Tax Collector up and running by December 28<sup>th</sup>.

- e.) 2023.11.06.01 Winding Road Bridge – status update: Chief Krauss said currently there are no funds to move forward with installing lights on the bridge. There are reflectors on the bridge. Discussion regarding additional lighting is tabled for now.

#### **7.) Communications Received:**

- a.) Conservation Commission letter to Joe and MaryBeth Gustitis: The Conservation Commission is addressing this and will move forward.

#### **8.) Other Business That May Come Before the Board:**

a) There was no other business.

**9.) Approval of Minutes:**

Non-Public Minutes:

**December 4, 2023** - Mr. Rawson motioned to accept **12/4/2023 non-public minutes**. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion was accepted

Public Minutes:

**December 4, 2023** – Mr. Rawson motioned to accept **12/4/2023 public minutes**. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion was accepted.

**10.) Public Comments Relative to Topics Previously Discussed:**

Katherine Ayers – The School Board plans to move forward with the schoolhouse on Nutes Ridge. The building will have to be razed. The school board had discussed the possibility of having the town's Public Works Director involved in the process. Mr. Williams said he did speak with Peg Hurd, School Board Chair. Before anything happens, the school must ensure the building is safe and free from asbestos or other hazardous materials. Mr. Rawson said he did talk to Pat Smith who will remove the building if he receives approval from the BOS. Mr. Rawson will have someone in to look at the building.

**11.) Town Administrator:**

1. The next public meeting of the Board will be January 8, 2024.
2. As the School Moderator and working with the Town Moderator, Mike Beaulieu, he will send the list of moderator officials to the BOS.

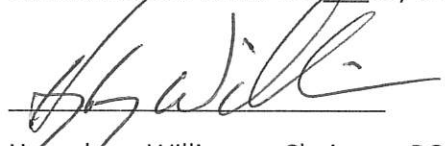
**12.) Selectmen Comments:**

1. Ms. Burnham thanked the Public Works Director and entire crew along with the Police Department for their help during Monday's storms. She wished everyone a Merry Christmas.
2. Mr. Rawson: Silver Street property – they will get a locksmith to change the lock on this tax-deeded property. Mr. Jacobs said he will send 90-day notices to the children of the owner.
3. Mr. Rawson: The home economics teacher is willing to take over providing the food at the upcoming elections. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas.
4. Mr. Williams thanked everyone for their hard work over this past year. He said the lake levels are very high due to the recent storms. He also reminded residents it is the State of New Hampshire – Dam Bureau who controls the dam. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

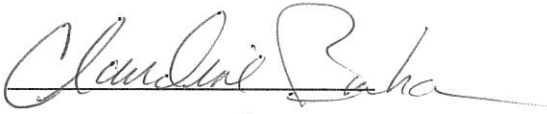
**13.) Adjournment:**

Ms. Burnham motioned to adjourn the public meeting. Mr. Rawson seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion passed. The public meeting adjourned at 9:20PM.

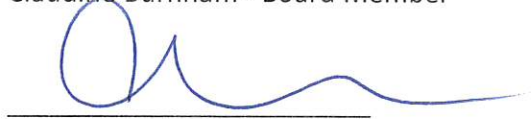
Given under our hands this 8<sup>th</sup> day of January 2024.



Humphrey Williams – Chairman BOS



Claudine Burnham - Board Member



Andrew Rawson - Board Member

**END OF MINUTES – December 21, 2023**