

## HUDSON, NH BOARD OF SELECTMEN

### Minutes of the October 20, 2022 Budget Review Meeting

1. CALL TO ORDER - by Chairman McGrath for the meeting of October 20, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall.
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - led by Police Captain Mike Davis
3. ATTENDANCE:

Board of Selectmen: Marilyn McGrath, Bob Guessferd, David Morin, Kara Roy, Brett Gagnon

Staff/Others: Steve Malizia, Town Administrator; Brian Groth, Town Planner; Tad Dionne, Police Chief; Dave Bianchi, Police Captain; Jason Downey, Police MPO; Chrissy Peterson, Recreation Director; Lisa Labrie, Finance Director; Jill Laffin, Executive Assistant.

Absent: Jim Michaud, Town Assessor

#### New Business

##### A. 2022 Tax Rate

The Town Administrator began by saying The Town Administrator explained, so you should have a memo in front of you, with a couple of pages behind it. Basically, we're looking to solidify, get, get all our numbers in order for DRA to approve a tax rate for the town of Hudson. As you're well aware, we had a very large revival this year. People got notices of their valuation. That basically meant was the property tax rates dropping. So last year the rate was, I believe, \$21.67. That's the total rate broken up between the town, local schools, state, education and county. This year, the rate projects to be \$14.87, with the town piece going from \$6.52 to \$4.70. The second page lists all the components. This assumes that we take \$600,000 of unreserved fund balance against the taxes, which is what we budgeted and typically have been budgeting. The last page of this kind of walks you through some calculations of the surplus of the unassigned fund balance we have, which we calculate it to be about \$8.1 million. So if we take \$600,000, about 7.6 million, which is 8.8% of our total gross appropriations, we like to typically between to be between 5% and 10%.

The Town Administrator went on to say, so that's a very solid number to be at. So it leaves us plenty of cushion it to some negativity, some downtime, some revenues that fall off or if there were to be an emergency. So we're in good shape there. So what we're recommending is using the \$600,000 to support a total tax rate of \$14.87 per \$1,000. Should you vote on that, that's what we'll submit to DRA. They'll go back and forth, look at all the rest of the data. We may or may not get more revenue. Sometimes DRA goes in and adjust things like the rooms and meals tax. So after this first motion we need a consensus. If we were to get some more revenue, do you want to adjust the tax rate or do you want to keep the tax rate the same? When I say adjust the tax rate more likely to go down because more revenue would cause the rate to drop. So we'll take that. Second. The first thing is I'm looking for your approval to use \$600,000 of the town's \$8,195,441 unassigned fund balance to support a tax rate of approximately \$14.87 per thousand.

Selectman Morin made a motion, seconded by Selectman McGrath to authorize the use of \$600,000 of the Town's \$8,195,441, Unassigned Fund Balance in support of a tax rate of approximately \$14.87 per thousand, as recommended by the Finance Director. Carried 5-0.

So looking just for a consensus. If we were to get more revenue on the books, my recommendation would be to take it against the tax rate. You've got a pretty healthy surplus. There's no need banking more surplus. I think it would if we were to get more revenue, it would help the voters; it would help the taxpayer. So I would just consensus, if that's the board's wish, if we were to get more revenue, I don't anticipate it getting less. I'm just saying if we got more, we'll take it towards the rate.

Selectman Gagnon then said and can you just give me a little understanding of \$8 million is a huge surplus and using \$600,000 certainly isn't much drop in the bucket for the most part. What else can we use that \$8 million for. The Town Administrator replied, whatever you want to appropriate in the next budget. Selectman Gagnon replied, okay. The Town Administrator then explained, so typically, it's good to

have as a cushion for, let's say we budget five and a half million dollars' worth of revenues registrations. If for some reason that drops off next year, you could use some of that surplus to ease that if you were to have a major emergency. And that's difficult to define because we're insured for a lot of things. But if something were to happen, you could petition the court to use some of that money. Don't forget, it also is covering the schools too, or a portion of its covering the school. Selectman Gagnon replied, okay, Good to know. The Town Administrator went on to explain, they've retained some of their own surplus, but we still cover some of that exposure. Selectman Gagnon replied, gotcha. Thank you.

Chairperson Roy asked, so we continue to go to do that as their kind of rainy day fund grows? The Town Administrator replied their rainy day fund has a cap on it, so they go to 2.5%. Selectman Guessferd said, I think they're already there. The Town Administrator added, I think they've already maxed out their cap. Chairperson Roy asked and we don't have a cap. The town doesn't have a cap? The Town Administrator replied, No. But typically, good accounting practice and recommendations are somewhere, I've seen it go as high as 17%, but 8% to 10% is where we are. And I think our policy tries to get us at 8%. So we are well within that parameter. It also helps when you go, we just did a police bond. It helps when you go for the interest rate because you show fiscal stability. So that that definitely helps when you look at your credit worthiness.

Selectman Gagnon asked and we can just dip into that. We have to get either put it on the budget or get voter approval or spend something from that account? The Town Administrator replied, correct. And we've done that in the past. We've used money, I think, towards the Taylor fire station. We've done some other projects where we've asked the voters, can we use some of that unassigned fund balance? It's always an option, but it's not a checkbook you just go write money against. It is the voters' money in the long run.

Selectman McGrath said so this this should help to allay the fears of the residents when we want to do a reassessment of properties because people were freaking out thinking that their tax rate was going to double what it was. And so this should help to right that. Chairperson Roy replied saying right, we can't raise more money than they appropriate, Right. We can't raise it beyond what the voters. Selectman McGrath then said people you know people aren't in the know like we are. I mean, and I'm assuming that most people don't watch this meeting, because I'll tell you, if I weren't on the Board, I wouldn't be watching it. So, you know, a lot of people, when they get that letter in the mail, they're, they're really afraid. I mean, I had a couple, I had a couple of people up the street from me, and they were really afraid. They thought that their taxes were going to be doubling and they, they just didn't know what to do next. They didn't know how to go about it. So, you know, that's why it's I think that this is important, that they'll get something that, you know, it will help the next time there has to be a reevaluation, hopefully.

The Town Administrator said and just in terms of absolute numbers, I believe Jim Mitchell and I, we talked about it. I believe this is the lowest tax rate we've had like in the last 30 years. Just to put it in context, you're still going to get a tax bill. It may still be higher than last year's, but from a rate perspective, it's been one of the lowest rates we've ever seen. And just to put it more perspective, last year, the valuation for the all the property in town was \$3.2 billion. I'm rounding a little bit this year. It's almost \$4.8 billion. So there was quite a bit of growth there, but it dropped the rate, you know, 31%, \$6.80. So your taxes aren't doubling. More likely they're going to go up because people did vote for things. We voted for a police facility. There's a cost to pay for that bond. There's, there's other things that we're paying for. Same on the school side. But your taxes should not double.

Selectman Gagnon said Mr. Malizia, just so I'm clear to the I think you gave a number of the residential or can you, the residential side went up the, the assessments average for the residential side went up significantly but commercial assessments didn't rise as much as residential. Correct? The Town Administrator replied, my understanding from the Assessor that is true. So there's been a slight shift between the ratio of commercial versus residential. They might have gone from 70/30 to maybe 72/28. They still pay their share. But as we're all aware, we've been in a very robust market for housing. We all look around and say, Wow, they got half a million dollars for that, you know, market value or try to get close to market value. So it's an acknowledgement. We are you know; we've had significant valuation increase on the residential side of things.

Selectman Guessferd asked, would it be helpful if we told that story at the deliberative session? Chairperson Roy replied, oh, I think it would. Selectman Guessferd went on to say If we if we presented that. So the people that are there and watching because more people, I think, tend to watch that than watch this. As you're saying, not as many watch here. I think it'd be a really good thing for us to be doing

as we introduce the, the budget or whatever. Chairperson Roy replied, yeah, I think that we can probably put some comments together. Selectman Guessferd said yeah, a couple of charts. You know, people can see it and go okay. We truly are. You know, um, our, our taxes are truly a good value, I guess we'll say.

Selectman McGrath then said, so, Steve, can you help us pen something? The Town Administrator replied, oh, of course.

The Town Administrator then said so that's probably a good segue into the Assessing part of the budget. The Chairperson replied, yes, let's talk about Assessing.

## BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

### Assessing (5410)

The Town Administrator then explained, so as you know, that was a pretty major effort this year, this past year, and everybody's to be commended for, you know, all the work they did. So the Assessing budget, I believe, as presented. And I'm just going to cheat a little bit here. I believe, for the operating part of the budget. See here really quick, I'm just going to the end here. It's down about 3.7, 8% and the labor portion is down about 1.28%. So overall, the budget is down about 1.93%. Some of that is because we don't have some of the expenses we incurred with the postage and whatnot. Another, I believe some of the laborers, one of the employees changed their benefits is taking a lesser benefit. So overall, that budget has decreased.

Chairperson Roy asked, okay. Does anybody have any questions about the Assessing budget? Is that is that the entire? Because I have a question about the IT. The Town Administrator replied the IT was when Mr. Beike was here the other day. The Chair then replied, and I didn't notice it, but maybe you can answer it because I think I know the answer. I just want to make sure. 269. Went from \$11,350 to 0. Is that because...The Town Administrator replied, we switched software. The new software vendor is giving us the first two years of maintenance gratis. Chairperson Roy replied, that's what I thought.

Selectman Gagnon then said, Mr. Malizia, one question, it's low numbers, but line item 402 on page one. actuals where? \$237.00. \$108.00. But budgeting is \$2,000. The Town Administrator replied, yeah for the automobile that they use over there. I think it's getting more mileage older on it so it's probably going to be in need of tires and some probably tune up and some other work. We truly don't know. It's like you or I trying to estimate what we think we need for a year. So but given that it's a recycled police vehicle, they do tend to incur more maintenance.

### Planning & Planning Board (5571-5572)

The Town Administrator explained, this would be this would be in the land use tab. It's the first page starts on the first page and the Linnaeus tab. We did the rest of them the other evening. Again, this covers the Planning and then subsequently the Planning Board. So Mr. Groth is here if you have questions.

Chairperson Roy asked does anybody have questions? Selectman Guessferd replied no, actually. The Chair then said I have one question. Can you just tell us what we get for our NRPC membership? And I think that's probably more for the viewing public than it is for sure. Mr. Groth replied, sure there's a number of things that NRPC provides, and it's not just to the Planning Department. as part of our NRPC membership, we're part of an energy aggregation program that I don't know the exact number of how much it saves the town on an annual basis, but I believe it's equal to or greater than the dues that we pay. Other items, for instance, the comprehensive traffic study that is still going. They wrapped up their data collection just as a quick update. They had their transportation planner retire. So that is why that study has taken a little longer. But we should be seeing some of the next few months. anyways. Services like that are part of our dues. We also get representation at their Executive Council and at the Transportation Advisory Committee. So for example, we recently through the, every two years DOT solicits new projects for the ten-year plan. And so, as this board is aware, we submitted three projects and there were 17 total projects submitted in the region for \$40 million worth of projects, and the allocation was only \$7 million. So

we did get one of our projects on there, the sidewalks on 102. We did get the largest piece of the pie for our regional allocation. So I think that was a win for the town. But the story here is it helps to have a seat at the table to make things like that happen. So those are a couple of the benefits. And they also assist with we really have to tap into them. And as their have they as they have capacity, they can help.

The Chair asked, they assisted with the visioning sessions for the master plan, correct? Mr. Groth replied, Yes. And so they do perform services like that. So, for instance, that master plan contract in total over the past few years was \$25,000, whereas a private consultant, that would be over \$100,000. So the town does receive services at a discounted rate than if you were to go out to a private consultant.

Selectman McGrath asked, don't you have an assistant in the office that comes in to help you? Was it once a week or a couple of times a week? Mr. Groth replied, about almost eight hours a week. It's two, two days, well two mornings a week to assist with business that we have going on. And again, that's an example of a service that we receive at a discounted rate that would otherwise cost the town much more.

The Town Administrator added, when we talked about the electricity, too, just to put it in perspective, we're getting our electricity at \$8.4 cents for kilowatt hour. PSNH or Eversource is at \$0.22 NRPC put the aggregation together. We've been participating in it for the last dozen years. And so this was a two-year deal. So it's very beneficial to the town. One other quick thing. When we did the redistricting for the voting districts, they did it. They had all the data. They did it as part of the dues here ago. So it was very, very productive, very efficient for them to do that for us.

Selectman Gagnon was recognized and said yeah. So actually, on the budget, just two questions here. One, I see line 216 actual \$16.00, \$20.00, but you're budgeting \$1200 for other legal docs. Just curious why that jump. Uh, line 216. Repeat. Mr. Groth replied there's a couple of line items we have that vary year to year. Some of the items we don't need it all and other times, they're very important. So it's an honest place in there. It's the basic formation of this budget is been as long as I'm as I've been aware of. So I don't know why it was so low in some years. Selectman Gagnon asked, what is it for, sir? What is that for? What are legal docs and deeds? Mr. Groth replied for instance, we had to hire the Town Attorney to prepare an easement document that. Might have been negotiated as part of a site plan or subdivision approval or something like that. Selectman Gagnon replied, okay. All right. All right.

Selectman Gagnon then asked, and then on the reverse, I see line 252, \$19,000, \$40,000, \$9,000, and then budgeting zero for professional services. Where'd that go? Mr. Groth replied, that was to Selectman McGrath's point the in FF21, this Board, graciously, they allowed to use some of the application fees that came in from the Hillwood Development project to be used towards funding some of the assistant planning help. And so. We have those funds to use in those years. And we've had less since. Selectman Gagnon replied, alright. Thank you very much.

Chairperson Roy asked okay, does anybody have anything else? You have one outside warrant? The Town Administrator replied, yeah, I don't know if you had any questions on the Planning Board itself. The Planning Board just has its own separate cost center. Selectman McGrath interjected saying, can I ask one question before we move on? So you mentioned the visioning session that took place. How many people attended that this past Saturday? I heard that it was a very low number. Were you there? Mr. Groth replied, yeah, it was 25. I'm trying to. Selectman McGrath replied, I heard 21, but. Mr. Groth replied, were 21 people sitting at the tables and so what I was debating was should I count myself and other staff out there? But. There were 21 participants. Selectman McGrath replied, great turnout.

Selectman Guessferd said and some of those were members of boards as well. So in terms of citizens other than those participating in boards, probably, what, 15, 12? Something like that. That's not the fault of the folks putting it together. It just shows.... Selectman McGrath interjected saying, no it's just it's not. It's not, Brian's fault. I'm not I'm not even intimating that. Selectman Guessferd replied, I know that. It goes to the point you made the other night. Selectman McGrath replied, you can't, you can't convince people for whatever reason, they just don't want to participate. So. Sad but true.

Mr. Groth then said, and I'm just off topic. I am curious why this time around it was lower turnout because the first series we did, we had six sessions. The turnout was pretty good. I mean, in terms of if you want to compare to the population of the town, no, you can't really compare it that way. But we were getting 30 to 40 people a session. And so, yeah, I wish more had come out this time. Selectman Gagnon replied, I think some of that had to do with I think there was back then some residential groups different than today's

residential groups that help market that sort of a nod to them for helping get people engaged. Maybe, maybe as leaders we need to pick that up and do a better job with that. But.

Chairperson Roy asked, so does anybody have any questions about the Planning Board?

Seeing none, the Town Administrator said so there was the one out of the budget request. If you wanted to just touch base on that. I think it's between the Planning Board and the Planner. Mr. Groth, we've provided a cost. If you were to bring back an associate planner and associate planner. So perhaps could do more than one function. I don't know. Chairperson Roy asked, is that a position that exists that just hasn't been funded or is it one that would have to be created? The Town Administrator replied, the short answer is yes. We had an associate planner, you remember Cynthia May you remember, there were some other? Selectman McGrath said, that was a century ago. The Town Administrator replied, yeah, we had them into the mid 00's. So when things got reorganized and reshuffled, that position fell by the wayside. It hasn't been populated, but it's in the.... it's on the roster. Chairperson Roy replied, kay. All right. I guess that's my question. The Town Administrator added, I believe it's still been in the contract. For the supervisors group. I think it's in that in that contract. But again, it hasn't been populated for at least a dozen years. Selectman McGrath said Cynthia May was a great asset to have. The Town Administrator replied, she was here when I got here. To which Selectman McGrath replied, Yeah. But that was a long time ago when John Cashel was here. He didn't have the need...The Town Administrator replied, no, I don't believe he did. Selectman McGrath went on to say and John worked extraordinary hours and I don't remember him having. The Town Administrator said I know at least a dozen years ago, it all blends together.

Selectman Gagnon said, Brian, can you speak to the need for this, please? Mr. Groth replied, sure. It's an issue of capacity. Obviously, the more capacity the department has, the more they're able to accomplish. This position, in particular, having listened to some of the feedback in the last budget cycle and not necessarily from this Board, but where the Planning Department was seeking part time help and so is the Zoning Department through NRPC. And some thought maybe it would be better to have a position in-house. And so the thinking here was, a person in this position would be able to assist both departments because planning and zoning are inextricably linked. You know, that's. There's a lot of work that can be done in terms of our land use policies. And just given the, the caseload, if you want to call it that. It's it' that kind of capacity that we could use to address some of those things. So I understand the current budget situation we're in, but, again just respond to what I thought I was hearing.

Selectman McGrath was recognized and asked so is that in addition to the assistant you have from NRPC? Mr. Groth replied, no, this would be in place of that in place. Selectman McGrath replied, in place of. So we're getting someone from NRPC that's at a reduced rate and then looking to have someone on staff? Mr. Groth replied, no, it would be if this position were to be successful, we wouldn't have the need for the part time assistance from NRPC. Selectman McGrath replied, I'll see about that.

Selectman Morin was recognized and said he just answered my question. I'm all set, thank you.

Selectman Gagnon asked, and can you remind you of the cost? I think it was \$30,000. What was the cost for that part time assistant from NRPC? Because if we lose that, we'd be saving that money, right? Mr. Groth replied, yeah. I mean, it depends on the year. At its highest year was \$40,000. But it seems that it hasn't been that high since then. But between \$20,000 and \$30,000 I'd say. Selectman Gagnon replied, okay so if we save \$20- 30,000 then a full time planner under our under our roof is \$113,000. That's not too, too bad. And you were saying, did I hear you correctly, that they would maybe help zoning and end you? Is that correct? Mr. Groth replied, yeah, I think that would be appropriate.

Selectman McGrath then said, that's if you share. Right. You'd have to have to agree ahead of time what the hours were going to be, who was going to get the person...The Chairperson said of course. Selectman McGrath continued saying half of the time, I mean, that would have to be...The Chairperson again said, of course. Selectman McGrath then said I'm saying it out loud because I want to make sure that it's understood.

Selectman Gagnon then asked Mr. Groth do you think you can find someone that has both those qualities? I know zoning and planning are similar. But the Zoning Administrator, he kind of, if understood correctly wanted more of a code enforcement officer. I think maybe that was the \$30,000 figure I'm thinking of. Do you think an individual can come in and be a zoning enforcement officer, part time and a

planning officer, part time? And what I'm getting at is, if you can the zoning officer, I think, was \$30,000. If we got rid of that out of budget expense and we got rid of NRPC's expense and we just went with this \$113,000 expense, it becomes a pretty value add there. Mr. Groth replied, yeah, I do. I mean, I think a lot of zoning administrators and a lot of zoning work is done by planners. So I think it was a professional planner they would absolutely be able to help out with both departments. Selectman Gagnon replied, okay, I'd be in support of this. Thank you.

The Town Administrator then said remember, the \$30,000 is not in the budget. Selectman Gagnon replied, that was another out of budget. True. The Town Administrator reiterated, just to be clear, it's not in the budget right now.

Selectman McGrath was recognized and said so what happens when or if, development stops or calms down. that we're not facing another Hillwood situation or I mean, is it going to be. Is it going to be as busy as it is now? What are we going to do with the extra person? Are we going to? Chairperson Roy replied, so I would think based on what I know from Mr. Groth here, that at least for a time, there would still be plenty for them to do. I mean, it's not just the development part of it. It's zoning ordinances. It's it's updating all those policies and bylaws and doing all those kinds of things that he's been doing on his own, plus the development stuff. So I think that that at least for a time, I don't know if it would last forever then then that that they could be gainfully employed, particularly if they're sharing them with the Zoning administrator. Selectman McGrath then asked so how many zoning changes have you prepared over the last two or three years? Mr. Groth replied, gosh, I think we had five last year. It's an average of 4 to 5 a year. Selectman McGrath asked, and that's done at the end of the year, correct? Mr. Groth replied, that's typically when the public hearings are held. Yeah. Selectman McGrath replied, so.

Chairperson Roy then said but I mean it just doesn't happen at the end of the year. It works up to that. That being said, I know you and I had a conversation and it holds true now that I struggle to support a lot of these a lot of the additions to personnel. I think there's a lot of competing priorities that we have this year as a Board. We have the manpower study that we had that pointed out some maybe some gaps in the town hall staff that we might, we should probably address. So, you know, that's where I am with it. Obviously, it's a Board decision, but that's where I am with it. Mr. Groth then said it's not just Planning Board business. It's not just applications and master plans and things like that. There's the day to day, there's the phones, there's the permits, there's a lot of work to be done on that. Chairperson Roy replied, and don't get me wrong, I'm not saying it's not important or not even not needed. It absolutely is, is just that there's lots of competing things going on this year. So that's where I am.

Selectman McGrath said I'm not convinced that it's needed.

Chairperson Roy asked, does anybody else have anything for Mr. Groth? Selectman Guessferd was recognized and said Brian, I know there's a lot going on with with what you're doing. And I know part of your charter is, is to is to work/update the master. There's a lot of master planning aspects of your job, as well as the day to day. I'm sensing that there's probably things that you could do. You could focus more on because you're trying to do everything right now. What are the things that that would now be if we if we did this, what would those things be that you could get? You could do? What what would be the benefits for you? And just in terms of the breadth of your job and being able to do more. I mean, there's some specifics that we can you can talk to us about.

Mr. Groth replied, a lot of things. So, for example, we we've been undergoing this audit of the land use regulations. And that's kind of a free time project. And this is about bringing our regulations up to date to eliminate, there's some contradictions and there's it's very difficult to navigate. So it's very difficult to sort of improve. Projects like that. And then moving on from that, being able to have the time to produce meaningful and well thought out changes to land use policies because you know, you know, the some of the zoning changes in land use policies that we talk about improving are not just switches we can turn on and off. They take a tremendous amount of analysis and research. So it's not just whip this up and spit it out. There could be a lot more outreach. So when we're talking about maybe improving some of the business district zoning and maybe some design standards, things like that, you can only be sure you're talking to those business owners and to those landowners. So there's a lot of outreach that if you want those articles to be successful, that outreach has to be done. I mean, those are a couple of examples. There's you know, I could come up with plenty. I think we could do a cap fee analysis to determine a number of projects that would be eligible and doable with our impact fee money.

Selectman Guessferd said, as a follow up, and so that's I mean, that's what I'm seeing. I mean, I know we've had one session, one workshop in the Planning Board on the regulations. And if you've had some time to look through some of those regulations, they they are all over the place. You know, you added this here, you add this here, next thing you know, you look at them. I mean, I mean, that's something that has to be done in my mind. And as we move forward over the next I see as, as we, as we kind of look to the future and go, I envision that there's going to be a lot more activity with regard to zoning ordinance and zoning changes as we move forward, as we figure out where we're heading. And from my perspective, I see a need for this. And again, I understand there's other needs as well, but I think this is kind of going to be at the center of of where we're pointing ourselves. And it seems to me that that and this is not a negative on your department, but you're just you're keeping the doors open right now. You're, you're doing the day to day things that need to be done and that there's so much more that that could be done from a strategic perspective, I think. But right now you're processing, you're doing all those things that as they're hitting it, it's almost like firefighting. That's my perception of it and that doing this would allow some more of that strategic work to be accomplished and, and to continue the same level of activity that we're going on right now. That's just my thought. Having kind of experienced a bit of the board in the last several months.

The Chairperson replied, I agree. I think there's some things that are probably not being done that should be done because there's only one person they had to do them right. Selectman Morin said I go along with Selectman Guessferd, but my issue is if you split this position, I'm sure zoning is going to want half of that time. And the problem is if you've got somebody doing part time now and we're not keeping up, is that going to work? Mr. Groth replied, yeah, I think there's a big difference between having somebody that comes in for a couple of hours twice a week and someone who's in the office full time. You know, I don't know exactly what that breakdown would be to your point between planning and zoning, but there's a lot of shared work there, too. I mean, it is the Zoning Department. Selectman Morin replied, right. But there's only one guy and dealing with zoning in the past and listening to the other night and knowing that we don't get any code enforcement to catch up is going to take a lot of time at this point. That's my question. Do we do we have to get a specific person for your department? That's what I'm asking. How is it? He's going to need at least half of that time a week. I would assume at this point. Mr. Groth replied, we could both use a full time person. I mean, there's a capacity issue in more than one department. This was, I would consider a conservative approach to try to address capacity issues in parallel departments.

Selectman Morin then said and this is not directed towards you. This is directed towards everything. But again, instead of dealing with the problem, we split it in half, you know what I mean? Instead of just getting things done as we're supposed to. That's my concern. The Chairperson replied, I don't disagree with you, although I will also say that and somebody can correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe the Zoning Administrator believes with a part time person, I'm not saying we don't I don't know that we need two full time people, like maybe full time and a part time person. Selectman Morin replied, that's what I was. That's what I was trying to get clear. He's going to want half of that time. So that's going to take a lot of time from you and that's 20 hours you're not going to have that person. I would assume.

Selectman Guessferd said when you came forward with this position, I'm assuming you I mean, you believe that we can fill 40 hours a week with an associate planner. Mr. Groth replied, absolutely. I mean, I see this position as a planning position, but I don't know what the breakdown would be. Bruce and I haven't discussed that, but. Selectman Morin asked, is there some way you and the Zoning Administrator can sit down and put together how you would plan to use this and send us some information? Again, like Selectman Guessferd said, if you're doing I know it's more help than you got. Now, don't get me wrong, but I think you need way more than that. Mr. Groth replied, yes, that's something we can do. Absolutely.

Selectman Guessferd said just break it down. I believe you're asking. We're asking this as an additional as additional part of the budget, not as a warrant article. Chairperson Roy said the position exists. Selectman Guessferd then said so, yeah, it's just. I think we can show it here. Just a little bit of a break down because I believe you need this. And I believe it's going to be important where we're heading. And so, I'm in support of it.

Seeing no further questions for Mr. Groth Chairperson Roy said thank you. Selectman Gagnon said thank you for everything you do, Brian.

Police (5610-5673)

The Town Administrator said now the highlight of the evening, the Police Department with 5600. I think this is the Chief's maiden budget. Am I correct? This is the first time you're presenting by yourself. Chairperson Roy said he was here but he wasn't the guy in charge. Chairperson Roy said time flies when you're having fun I guess. The Town Administrator replied, it comes quicker and quicker every year. Trust me. Selectman McGrath said I went over this budget with a fine tooth comb. Jokingly the Town Administrator added, and a magnifying glass. Chairperson Roy said so I will recognize Chief Dionne, even though I got a disappointing text message from you today.

Chief Dionne began by saying good evening. And before I get started, I want to thank the men and women of the Hudson Police Department for their service and their dedication to the community throughout this year. They have made my, they have facilitated my transition as police chief. Regarding the budget, I would also like to thank and single out my appreciation to my administrative coordinator, Sherrie Kimball and Captain Cayot, Captain Bianchi, Captain Davis, Jana MacMillan, all my lieutenants and Master Patrol Officer Jason Downey as well, for their assistance through the process. I think without their help; I would not be able to do my job effectively. Sherrie and the command staff met with me on a number of occasions to work through this budget. Master Patrol Officer Downey has worked with me, developed a wellness program and put together a warrant article.

Chief Dionne went on to say, during the FY24 budget process while trying to keep the same standard of excellent police service with level funding. My staff and I focused on training, equipment, well-being at a time when costs are skyrocketing due to inflation. We are legally bound to increase our training budget from an additional 8 hours of training in 2020 to 24 additional hours of training in 2024 for each officer. And I say additional because each officer must have a mandatory training in several disciplines which are firearms, use of force, de-escalation, defensive tactics. So the additional training equates to a total of 816 total hours at our police department, which is two days of training per officer. That also may require that we have to post overtime to cover those officers or in class supplies required for our training, for instance, ammunition is also challenging with increasing costs. We attempt to tackle these concerns, we continue to utilize creative methods to fulfil these needs, like hosting, training, seeking out federally funded and state funded classes and applicable for using asset forfeiture and grants as well.

We concentrated on continuing the need to replace safety equipment and fund other equipment which will enable us to effectively and efficiently police the town. This includes Tasers, body worn cameras and rifle rated shields. While navigating through this budget without increasing any operational spending. We did determine there may be additional shortfalls in technology. We worked with Mr. Beike on this matter in an effort to cover big increases in our technological contracts that are essential to our police work. I believe the IT Director had covered this on Tuesday as well as I watched the meeting. Additionally, we are addressing the essential well-being of our police officers and employees as a whole. This is both a major recruitment and retention issue. It also increases our resilience. This area of focus gives our employees the ability to take care of the safety and welfare of this town. And these businesses here, while we're taking care of our own safety and our welfare. I will be presenting to our articles for your consideration, the first being the safety equipment and body worn cameras Capital Reserve fund, which will allow us to help pay, continue to pay, for our Tasers and our body worn cameras. Also, the Hudson Police Department will need to purchase additional rifle rated shields, among other safety equipment.

We have further asking for the addition of one police officer to the current staff to backfill the creation of a position of a wellness officer who would be named from our existing staff. The wellness officer would oversee a robust wellness program for all employees at the Hudson Police Department, further enhancing our ability to manage stress of critical incidents, employee peer to peer support and build resilience, and to continue adding tools for our department's health and wellbeing. Moreover, though the wellness officer would be deployed to any town department as needed to assist with crisis or tragedy, in addition to the police duties, our wellness officer would be the link to the Nashua greater mental health to assist officers that calls and help citizens make contact with resources needed to facilitate critical mental health services. Our wellness officer would be responsible for developing CIT, a crisis intervention team to be utilized for the benefit of the community when dealing with tragedies and crisis.

As we manage through our fiscal 2024 budget I do not foresee an immediate fix to the inflation problem, and I am anticipating full potential of continuing rising costs on supplies, maintenance contracts and fuel. And if that's the case, I believe we may need to continue to operate with vacancies to make ends meet. I



know you've all had a chance to look over our budget and our warrant articles, so I'm happy to take any questions you might have.

Chairperson Roy asked, anybody have anything? Selectman McGrath said I looked through the budget and pages two and three, I have no questions at all. And I look at the I look at the actuals for fiscal year '22 and '21, and then to see what the budget was approved at last year and do a comparison. And I, I have no issues at all with this budget.

Chairperson Roy said I have a question. 157, the education incentives.... are, is that based. The Town Administrator said the education incentives are based on contract. To which Chairperson Roy said and I understand that. But is the number in the contract or is that based on? The Town Administrator replied, the number is in the contract, if you take a certain degree or college credit or whatever. It's a specific number. Chairperson Roy replied, I didn't know if it was based on the number of officers enrolled in a program or if it was just a. The Town Administrator replied, I don't know, the page number, but there's a whole list. So it's in the document. Chairperson Roy said that was my only question.

Chairperson Roy asked, does anybody have anything else? The Town Administrator said 5616 facilities, page 8. Chairperson Roy asked, anybody have any questions about facilities?

Selectman McGrath said and again, I looked at this line by line and I have no issues. Chairperson Roy asked, Anybody else? Selectman Gagnon said just quickly it's not a question, but just want to highlight. The \$10,000 almost lowering electrical rate, I believe, because you do LEDs in the facility. Is that correct? Chief Dionne replied we did we did put in LED's. Selectman Gagnon replied, the \$10,000 it's good to see. thank you.

Chairperson Roy said 5620 Dispatch/Communications. Anybody have anything for dispatch?

The Town Administrator said it's predominantly salaries and benefits. So it depends on the benefit levels people elect. Selectman Gagnon said I have a question Madam Chair, if I may. Line 204, gentlemen. I just see the actuals in the mid-twenties. Forgive me I looked at this wrong. I saw last year was \$40,000, but this year \$37,000. it's a \$10,000 or more increase there. Just quick explain some of that. This is large equipment maintenance. Again, 204. The Town Administrator replied, I believe this is the fleet of vehicles for their fleet, for their vehicles including the electronic components.

Chief Dionne added, right so with the large equipment, it's exactly that its fleet. So as we turn over our police cruisers and have we expect less maintenance necessary as we continue to to actually have newer models, I guess what I would say. Selectman Gagnon replied, got it. I should clarify my point, too. I mean, I know from last budget you budgeted \$40,000 this year, \$37,000 so you did decrease it for the actuals are still in mid mid-twenties. Why do you think you need \$37,000 when actuals for the last three years were mid-twenties? Now are you expecting additional hardware for some reason?

Selectman McGrath asked, don't you have cruisers on order? The Town Administrator said so typically we budget the 40 across the board and that's what we just actually spend because it's one of those variable things that you don't know what's going to go till it all goes. So I hazard a guess if we looked at the actual budgets from those years, it was probably \$40,000 across the board. We only spent the 20 to 20 to 20. It's an estimate at best. Cpt. Bianchi said it usually is \$40,000 In the past years, but we've only used that much of it. For oil changes, brakes, tires. There has to be a buffer just in case of a catastrophic problem like we had a couple of years ago, where eight units went down at just about the same time. Selectman Gagnon then said and to Selectman McGrath's point, you have new new vehicles coming. And do they need to be outfitted with new hardware and you're expecting it to come into this line item? Chief Dionne replied, yeah, no, absolutely. We actually take that from the vehicle, from the view that said, we are going to run into a shortfall. We do anticipate a shortfall in the in the vehicle line slightly because of the cost. We're looking at April costs for instance. Right now we were looking at April cost when we went forward with our police cruiser purchases. Those have already changed and they went up dramatically. We have to outfit one. So we just ran into that the other day and I was before this Board a few weeks earlier going with our estimates at the time. And as soon as we actually purchased the vehicles, then the estimates on the outfitting went up. So we do we do have to keep a certain amount of buffer in some of these lines to that point. Cpt. Bianchi added, just to add to that, what we've done, we've been meticulously going through the up-fit and we told the up-fitter, whatever you can get out of the cruiser that works is going into

the new cruiser. So we've already cut many thousands out of the up fit to try to bring that down to meet the actual budget. Selectman Gagnon replied, okay. All right.

Selectman Morin was recognized and said just a question on just so I understand. 307 it was \$14,000 \$13,000, \$7,000. Now it's up to \$14,000 again, just what's why does it fluctuate so much. Chief Dionne replied, the fluctuation on that is where they're not. We are having existing mileage on the cruises that are okay. So we anticipate in '24 that we are going to need to replace more of the snow tires. And that's exactly what it comes down to. We have a certain inventory that still has life. And as we as we go through the tires that are waiting for us in the inventory, we expect we're going to need to replace them in '24.

Selectman Gagnon was recognized and said just a general question, Madam Chair. I think early in the year we at least this Board had a discussion, maybe the School Board as well, about the possibility of transferring the crossing guards to the School's budget. Is that transcribed into anything we see here today, or is it kind of the same? Cpt. Bianchi replied, we're still... they're still under our they are still in our control. Selectman Gagnon asked, is that what you prefer or is there still talk to maybe switch it or are we? Cpt. Bianchi replied, it would be nice to partner with them. A lot of the school districts around us actually are the ones that handle the crossing guards, not the police departments. Yeah, we're probably in the beginning stages of trying to figure that out with the new Superintendent. Chief Dionne said we have had... we've continue to have conversation on that. We have not moved forward anywhere. And I to be honest, I don't know if I can move forward without the Board's approval anyways on that. And so we are in the we have discussed it, but we haven't gotten much further and I've gotten a lot of data on it. Chairperson Roy said yeah, I saw it. yeah because I came up at the joint School Board meeting.

Chief Dionne then said and I guess it would be, obviously it would be a lot easier if it wasn't our issue. But I also understand that it has to be someone's issue and at the end of the day, it's still the taxpayer's problem. Right? So I don't and I guess that's what I'm saying. I would love, if somebody wants it, we would love to let them have that. But if they don't, we understand the fact that this is what we're at. Chairperson Roy replied, but I would also presume you'd have to have some involvement, like with training and those kinds of, you know, those kinds of things. It wouldn't be a just a cut. Chief Dionne replied, right. We actually provide classroom training on it. And so that is something that we could still help facilitate where they go to the class for that. But yeah.

Selectman Morin then said when you say you got to stay under control, I understand that. But couldn't they pay for that and just remain under the Police Department? Chief Dionne replied, well, I suppose that would be great, too. Selectman Morin went on to say you've got to control it, it's just a part of your budget coming from the Schools versus the Town. Chief Dionne said the more I guess, the problem kind of the money wise would be great too. But I mean, the problem we run into sometime is the actual control of it. Because if we can't cover... if the posts are uncovered or we have vacancies that we can't fill, they're covered by police officers. Selectman Morin replied, right. And that's why it would stay under you. But they would they would fund the positions under you. Like we fund the positions under you. That type of thing. Chief Dionne replied, they may be willing to do that, I suppose, but from our standpoint, it would be easier if we didn't have control of them. And that's my only issue because we are, we have usually at that time our we utilize our resource offices as our first coverage, but they they're not always available. And we've literally had more than student resource officers out. So we're manning the post with other officers. Chairperson Roy said but isn't that, I would think that that's something that that you and the School District could figure out like if you're short they call whoever at the PD and say, hey, we need coverage down at Alvirne or whatever and you guys help them out with that. But as for the most part, every day they belong to the School. Chief Dionne said mean, so since they directly report to us when they're out, they call us. And then we we make the coverage either with the student resource officer if they're available or with a patrol officer. And that's how it works now. And if the mechanism is that I'm I guess I would be ignorant to the mechanism of how we go about transferring that over. And so that's on me. I don't know what that mechanism is. And if there was a way and we were in agreement with it, you know, I would be willing to do that and we would be willing to do that.

Selectman McGrath said it'd be nice if they shared the cost. I mean, it would be nice. And, you know, and I know that it's all of the taxpayer's money, but at least, you know, if the School had by in on having to at least fund some of the some of the crossing guards that would that would alleviate some from your budget and add to their budget cuz they're not funding it now. Chief Dionne replied, and to your point, I think the Superintendent might be might very well be, be into that with us and work with us on that.

Selectman Morin then said so you've presented us information. You've had the basic conversation. You think or you would like our permission to move forward with it. It's obviously not going to happen this budget, because we're too far into it. So can we as the Board right now give the Chief permission to move forward with that for next year's budget? Chairperson Roy said yeah, I wouldn't have a problem with it. Although I'd like to see an MOU, something formal and how you guys are going to work together so that they get the right service at the right time and the training and all of that stuff. So everybody knows what they're responsible. Selectman Morin replied, they got, they got a year anyway. Chief Dionne added, I suppose if you were giving us permission to move forward and work towards that end, then when we get to that end present you where we're at. How would that sound? I mean, that works for us. I would love to try that. Selectman Morin made this motion, seconded by Selectman Guessferd. The motion authorizing the Police Chief to work with the School District to work out an MOU regarding the cost center for the School District Crossing Guards, carried 5-0.

#### 5650 Animal Control

Selectman McGrath said I had one question on that. Line item 245 the Animal Control Veterinary Services. The actuals for '22 were just under \$7,000. And what's budgeted, what was budgeted last year and this year is \$10,500. Is that going to be enough to cover? Chief Dionne replied, so that was, that was because we had a situation where we had to seize wild animals, exotic animals. So that's where that came from. And we A) we don't expect that year in and year out. And B), we have actually Jana's been almost a blazer, I would say, in this in this avenue where she's I think she was literally the first one who was actually able to get some reimbursement from the state's new fund in order to reimburse seizing animals that have been hoarded or abused and for evidence. So we don't we don't foresee, I don't foresee that happening very often. And when it does, we do know a mechanism now we were able to get some reimbursement on that. Selectman McGrath said that's the only question I had.

#### 5615 Record Clerks

The Town Administrator said records clerks. Basically I think two full time employees. so pretty minims there. Labor.

#### 5671 Other Office Supplies

Selectman Gagnon said, I have a questions there. Madam Chair. Thank you. So, line 303, gentlemen. Kind of all over the place. I see. 2020, almost \$4,000. 2021 zero, \$180. And you're budgeting \$5,000. Well, I'm sorry. You budgeted \$5,000 last year. \$4,000 this year. Can you just give me an idea of what that lines for and why you expect \$4,000? Cpt. Bianchi said other office supplies, 5671. Yeah, it's items needed for DARE and community policing related programs. Selectman Gagnon then asked, so that's why they were so low last two years? Chief Dionne replied, correct. And we expect to use this year. We also have we also have a donation account there that we can pull from as well. But that is why they're all over the map. We I don't believe we used it through COVID. Cpt. Bianchi added, we did not. DARE is back in session. It is they started this year again. So it's used to purchase things for that as well as things for like Old Home Days and community functions. Selectman Gagnon replied got it. It makes total sense.

And if I may, Madam Chair, one last question. Line for oh three small equipment. Again, just just kind of all over the place, \$3,000, \$10,000, \$73.00 and you're budgeting, close to \$13,000. Just give me an idea of why \$13,000 for the upcoming budget year. Chief Dionne replied, so yeah I mean so and a lot of this so we have we have to have keep a certain amount of for instance, our Tasers, we keep backup Tasers in that we keep certain simunition's for training. Selectman Gagnon asked, ammunition? To which Chief Dionne replied simunition. So they're a simulated ammunition. They actually they fire like ammunition, but they only hurt. Chairperson Roy asked, are they frangible? Are they the frangible? Cpt. Bianchi replied, no, they're paint rounds, Madam Chair. The Chair replied, Oh. Oh, those do hurt. So and again we budgeted in this year and it's funny you should I thank you for asking that we're actually trying to...we expect in FY24 that we'll have a simunition exercise again as well. So we do expect to be utilizing that. It's going to, that's where it's going to come from as well so we expect to be using that to try to also do a large scale exercise with the School as well. Selectman Gagnon then said so I'm assuming that in 2022, you had none. I mean, obviously \$73. We had no exercises. Chief Dionne replied, we did not have one with simunition's at all. That is correct. Selectman Gagnon then said and this year, you're ramping that back up to 2021 kind of thing. Chief Dionne replied, right. And so and I think the other thing, too, is in 2022, I believe, is the year we purchased our brand new Tasers. So what we do have that money is an account to make sure we have spare Tasers on as well. So at that time, I think that's why the account was lower.

Selectman Gagnon replied, alright. Okay. Selectman McGrath said I saw that being done. Cpt. Bianchi said in '21 you'll notice it was \$10,000. That's because we replaced all our pistol rated shields. That's that expenditure. Chairperson Roy asked, and what is the lifecycle of those shields? Chief Dionne replied, five years. Generally speaking, and as you know, we're now looking at rifle rated. And last year we actually purchased with asset forfeiture, we purchased a couple of rifle.

Chairperson Roy asked, anybody have anything else? The Finance Director said page 31. Chairperson Roy said the crossing guards. I think we've had that discussion. So nobody has anything else about the crossing guards? Seeing nothing further they went on to Police Crossing Guard. Chairperson Roy said well you're probably going to save some on paid allowances. Chief Dionne replied, yes, we're struggling, but we're working on it. The Town Administrator said it's predominantly labor in this center.

#### 5674 Bond Repayment

The Town Administrator said this is the first year of the repayment, so you'll see a principal in an interest payment and I put the schedule right behind it, two pages down. So every year the interest should decline somewhat. But again, we put it in I put it in this cost center because that's the repayment for the police facility. Chairperson Roy said nobody has any questions about that stuff? The Town Administrator said I reflected it in their budget.

The Town Administrator said, so I believe the Chief had presented in the warrant article tabs, Tab D a proposed warrant article for a wellness officer. If the Chief wants to speak to that. Selectman Guessferd said isn't that kind of a misnomer? You know, it's not really the wellness officer. It's a new position, wellness officer is going to be. It is a new position. Chairperson Roy said so I guess that's one of my questions. Are you adding one person to your manpower or is this instead of like a take and, say, a patrol officer and making them making that position a wellness officer?

Chief Dionne replied, right. So now we I would like to add a person to my staff. We'd like to add to hire a patrol officer in order to backfill from our current police officers and to take one of the current police officers and to make the position of wellness officer so that we're not running short when we have that position. I will I can tell you that I think the necessity on this is a three prong. It's a three prong necessity for us. I believe the best way to look at it is on three prongs. And first and foremost, the police department itself in the sense that, you know, statistically, police officers are about 2.4 times more likely to take their own lives than to die at the hands of another. And I think those numbers are terrible. I think that I can tell you personally, I've, I've known, we had one, we had an employee who had retired and just shortly after retired, took their own life. I've seen a couple of very promising officers lose their career to substance abuse. Police officers are more likely than most, by a lot, to have substance abuse problems. I think that. It is extraordinarily important in a time where recruitment or even more so in retention, has been so difficult that that we attack this in a way to keep our people healthy so that they can continue to do their job without any great mental health challenges.

Chief Dionne went on to say, I think that one of the reasons why we want to have a robust wellness program is that we learn that we've learned over the years, and it's taken a while. We started with a critical incident stress team. We morphed that into a peer to peer support team as well. But we're realizing now that it's not just important to address those issues as we as we approach them. It's also even more important to address the resiliency and start proactively. And that takes training, that takes constant application. We also look at statistics and I have them available if you want to see any of those statistics. But police officers also, unfortunately die in the line of duty of heart attacks. And part of our program is also health. It's not just mental health, it's physical health as well. And that's one prong right where I can show you some of the numbers if you're interested in that that I feel so strongly about, because I think it's important to take care of our people. The second prong that I feel so strongly about is we can utilize our wellness officer to assist any of the departments here in town, any of our town employees. And it wasn't that long ago when the Fire Department had a huge tragedy and we had an officer and he's here right now, Jason Downey, who was our first officer to receive critical incident stress management training. And he was instrumental in helping town employees throughout here because that particular employee was well known in other departments throughout town, deal with that. And I remember, you know, Chief Buxton talking about how important that was as well. And that was, we're scratching the surface. We're so much further ahead now than we were then at that. And we know that we can deploy that, we could deploy our wellness officer with the wellness tools to assist any town department here. And then the third prong is that our wellness officer is going to be available to assist our community. That's, that's a big part

of this. We would like to say we would like to have a crisis intervention team and I would like to have our wellness officer develop that initial crisis intervention team that will allow us not to just do what we now, but respond out too many disturbances, many mental health issues, and the officers who respond kind of take that lead in that role. And some of this could happen on second shift. This could happen on late nights. The follow up is then difficult after the fact, like the next day we don't have that officer works late nights. They're not making phone calls the next day to see how things went. So we pass it on and it gets over to another officer to try to follow up on that. Our wellness officer would be that officer. Not only to follow up, which is important, but also to make the first contact, perhaps with the with Greater Nashua Mental Health or whatever the resource might be. Our wellness officer will be that link, that liaison, so to speak. And I think that's, that that's a critical thing. We would need to deem certain something to be a crisis, right? Not everything is a crisis. A lot of things can be handled by the patrolmen. Their problem and we have an issue, but often we can handle it at that level. But we do have a handful of legitimate crisis households, families that are in crisis, and they need an intervention. And the officers know because they're there day after day until we're able to actually get a hold of foothold on. And it becomes difficult. That's a difficult situation. We expect that our wellness officer would be able to really help out in a situation like that.

Chief Dionne went on to explain, I think some of the first questions I thought to myself was, can we keep this person use your words, gainfully employed, so to speak. I almost think this person is going to have not they won't have enough time in the day to handle or I shouldn't say handle it. There'll be plenty to do. There'll be plenty to do all the time. Which includes, you know, some of our programs now are without a doubt their wellness programs like, for instance, National Night Out as a wellness program. I can make that leap, that that's a wellness program for the community. It's a community based wellness program. So that the wellness officer would also be will handle something like that. The comfort dog would come under the wellness officer, whether it was handled by that wellness officer or handled by someone else, the comfort dog would come onto that. We've already deployed the comfort dog, since we've had the comfort dog, we've deployed the comfort dog about 80 times already to actually provide comfort in the community for certain instances. Not to mention the amount of times we've sent the comfort dog out around the state, because that's not that's not there's been many instances where the comfort dog has gone to other schools as a mutual aid and assistance with crisis and other issues. I wouldn't come forward if I didn't think this was an absolute need with it. I wouldn't. I think that, you know, you see where we are with our budget. And and I strongly feel this is a need for this town and for this police department.

Selectman Guessferd was recognized and said I absolutely 100% support the concept of the wealth officer and everything that you've described. Absolutely. It's I think it's absolutely needed. I just want to make sure that the way this is worded; it's just I just want to make sure that we represent this in the best way possible. Cuz, cuz, it's it's like we're we're saying that the wellness officer, there's an officer you have already who's going to replace a patrol officer who's well, the patrol officer is going to be the wellness officer and you're going to bring somebody new in. So the person, the new position is really the wellness officer position. But you're going to use a current employee to fill the wellness officer position and then you'll have a new patrol officer in addition on your staff. It just, the way it's just I had to kind of read through it a couple of times to kind of figure that out. But I mean, essentially the new position is really a wellness officer position. Chief Dionne replied, correct. And I guess I look back and how we've done it through the past because we're not actually funding the position of the salary of the wellness officer. They're already paid by us. We're trying to fund the person that's taken over. So we're asking for appropriations for a new officer. That's why it's not. For instance, if the wellness officer is a master patrolman, we're not necessarily hiring...we're not necessarily funding a mass patrol position. We're funding a new officer. So whatever it costs us for the new officer to take over. it's a back filled position, essentially what it is. Selectman Guessferd replied, right, Right. And we're calling it the warrant article title is one wellness officer. And it's again, I want to represent this the best way we can so that the public will support this, get behind it. Chief Dionne replied, I appreciate that. It's I'm not a wordsmith. Selectman Guessferd said I mean, I'm just kind of struggling with this a little bit. I mean, looking for any other ways that we can. The Town Administrator said he's hiring a police patrol officer. That's what he's asking for. So it might be more appropriately labeled to, say, hire police patrol.

Selectman Morin said I agree with you. He's asking for an officer. But the actual position we're creating is the wellness officer. And that being a voter, I'm going to go in why we hiring a patrol officer when we're talking about a wellness officer in town meeting. And here at this meeting. That's my concern to. Because you missed the whole point of the wellness officer. Selectman Guessferd said right, that's the, that's the,

that's the hook. That's the need.

The Town Administrator said just call it Hire Police Wellness Officer. Then it's pretty clear what you're hiring. How you arrange it is up to you, right? You've got another body. So you say hire police wellness officer. Which is exactly what you're doing. Chief Dionne said my question is if I say I'm hiring a police wellness officer and that person that we actually hire, they're not a wellness officer. We're actually, Selectman Guessferd said we're hiring another patrolman. The Chief replied, that's correct. Because we want...as long as I can take the wellness officer from my current employees. The Town Administrator then said to Selectman Morin's point, if you say police patrol officer, it doesn't really give the frame of what you're trying to do. Chief Dionne said I just want to make sure I'm not doing something wrong.

Chairperson Roy said so, so, maybe it's just create wellness officer position. Selectman Gagnon said whoever applies, applies. The Town Administrator said you want to hire it too. The title isn't as important as the verbiage. The title is just a title. It's the verbiage what everybody looks at. So did it pass or not? Yes. Okay. You can go hire somebody and then you figure out who that...Chairperson Roy said so if I could just maybe make a suggestion that you two work together on the verbiage and then. Yeah. And then, you know. Chief Dionne replied, I don't want to mess that up. Trust me.

Selectman Gagnon then said obviously this goes without saying. Obviously I support the need for this, but I'm curious, what does your insurance company offer for mental health services? I know in my work we actually had a lot of similar type of wellness officers that are paid for through the insurance company and offer sessions and that kind of stuff. How far will insurance go to get you maybe three quarters of what you're asking for today. So I can really visualize the value out of a full time position, get you a little farther about what you talk about. Chief Dionne replied so you're talking about how what does our insurance company offer us? Selectman Gagnon replied, in terms of services and counseling and that kind of thing.

Chief Dionne responded, well, we do... to be honest, that's in my mind, that's a totally different subject matter. So that we have we have an employee assistance program. And through that employee assistance program, we can seek counseling. We can if we need to, we can facilitate that counseling. We can even order it if we were at that position with somebody. So we do have that ability through our insurance certain. But the wellness program is it's. Well, as far as far as what we're looking at in the police aspect, it's tailored for first responders. Right? It's tailored as far as on the police prong, a lot of it is peer to peer. A lot of it is building exercises. It's building that are that are tailor made for police officers. We do utilize additional services from there. We use Forge, which is a veteran and first responder program that they're there for us. They're there for us all the time. And our insurance would cover that as well. Right. We do have employees who utilize that. Generally, that's confidential with them as far as that goes. So I do look at it, it's that's probably another tool. And often it's administrative tool. And sometimes the wellness and the administration become blurred, which is good that we're working together. A lot of it like peer to peer, is really confidential to the often confidential until it reaches a certain level. Then we have a duty to communicate with administration in peer to peer. So I think the wellness is a large, large, large umbrella, which will also take into consideration like what our insurance does as well. But a lot of it is about a lot of it is about being proactive. And it's kind of ahead of that that game that the insurance for us is a lot of time would be reactive I think. Selectman Gagnon replied, that that in itself, I think that that's a great response and to kind of curtail on that a little bit.

So you're saying will the wellness officer be almost a wellness director? He'll see programs, policies and he'll oversee a lot of what you already have going on. Is that part of the role as well? Chief Dionne replied, so I've thought about this a lot because we are in the process of kind of formulating and I have Lieutenant McElhinney's working on policy and I've had Jason Downey work on policy regarding this. The more I look at it, I almost want the wellness office to have a direct, direct contact with me so that, you know, obviously we will put we put the wellness officer in our service bureau because it does fit that. But the wellness officer in our, in our chain would, would answer it probably directly to me. And I think I've seen that, to be honest with you. There's only one other right now that I know of. There's one other agency in the state that has a wellness officer. It's Manchester PD. They do a really good job over there. They're trained to handle their stress, their critical incidents, their peer to peer support. They do an exceptional job. And we're looking at a lot of their things, but we're trying to tailor fit it to us. They do it that way. The wellness officer answers directly to Chief Aldenburg, and at first I'm like, Yeah, no. But then I thought about it and some of that I understand completely because some of the stuff may be confidential, you know? And so we're working out those details. We have not finished a wellness policy yet, but it's in the works. We've been working on it for a while.

Master Patrol Officer Jason Downey said, just to answer your question about I think the services or clinicians, as you usually referred to as the clinicians that we have. So technically when an officer needs assistance prior to more than I can assist because I'm not a psychologist, not a psychotherapist or anything like that, we refer on our clinicians that can help and they're especially trained in first responders care. The Forge VFR they're either first responders or prior first responders or veterans themselves. So they're very familiar. But for an officer to be vulnerable, to trust somebody, it's very difficult to try to get them through that door. What happens is, me as the wellness officer, I can tell you that we have vetted everyone that we use. And then when I talk to them and I work very closely with them now with everything, if we ever have a debrief, those clinicians are the ones that step up, rain or shine. 24/7 they would come. And if we really needed a critical incident that I know I could call three or four of them and they'd be on my doorstep right away to help our officers if they need be. So if I ever came in a jam at one point they were actually full capacity and then we kind of needed something. I called them and they have other resources for us, so we've already had that relationship with them and we and we constantly building that relationship. So for me to say, you know, I trust these, that officer might go, okay, I trust you because we I've built that rapport with them and trusting. But if I say to go and we've actually had it before that we've gone to other therapists and the therapists are horrified of what they say or saw because they don't know. You know, sometimes we could have rough language and all of a sudden like, oh my God, I can't believe you made that joke. That's not appropriate for what you just saw. And then all of a sudden now they feel even guiltier than they left out. So we want to avoid that because these guys, day in and day out, give what they the best they can do to protect us and keep everyone safe. And unfortunately, we see some horrible stuff on a daily basis, you know, and most of us can process it. And hopefully, like the Chief said, if we build resilience as soon as I get them out of the academy and, you know, this wellness officer talks to them about what they're about to see and we prep them for what you're about to see and how you're going to feel. And we build the resilience up that makes them stronger and not burning out. The average suicide rate is usually about 16 years, you know, and it's about 40 years old. You know, we have a bunch of guys that are somewhat approaching that or past that. And so if we're not building this resilience and then some guys just call it quits before five years, you know, if you do the notes with the academy.

MPO Downey went on to say so we do that. And, you know, it helps with retention because all of a sudden, like, I'm not made for this. But again, at the same time, the whole wellness process, we reach out to the spouses, we're going to try to incorporate spouses because if you're not happy at home and it's tough at home because it's stress, there's a whole combination. It's like it's just a whole backpack. Like I have four kids. It's tough to manage this job four kids and a spouse and trying to keep everybody manageable, happy and trying to protect myself. But if I'm distracted on the street, I could let my guard down and it becomes an issue. And we're trying to resolve that. And we're trying to work on having a spousal, you know, meeting where we talk about this is what they expect because our training out of the academy, you know, we just go through the door. We're rough and tumble and and don't be vulnerable. Don't let anyone show you're weak. But we have to show that we have to be vulnerable to our loved ones and be that. And if no one tells us that we're just going to keep on trucking like, you know, and again, our divorce rate in the national average is about 50%. Police is 82%.

Selectman Gagnon then said and gentlemen, don't get me wrong, this is all...MPO Downey said yeah, no, no, I'm just telling you. Selectman Gagnon continued saying yeah, as a board who is in a budget meeting, I simply ask the question, can we get these services through other avenues? That's all I was trying to say. MPO Downey replied, so I will tell you that. I will tell you that. Yes. So ultimately, we reference that out and it's covered by insurance. And if they don't if they don't cover that insurance, they will help me find another service provider that is comfortable and vetted, that we vetted too, that meet their insurance. And that's ultimately what we do. Selectman Gagnon replied, thank you for all of that. Appreciate it.

Selectman McGrath was recognized and said Tad, you and I have already talked about this. I'm completely in favor of this wellness officer and the program. You know, as, as I've said many times, I listen to the news. I have it in the background. So I'm not sitting there watching a TV screen, watching the news, but I hear bits and pieces over the course of the day and I can't imagine, I can't imagine some of the things that you have to witness, experiences that you have, I mean, I would never in a million years be able to handle that. And I can't imagine, you know, I mean, it's got to be really difficult. And for everybody. for your family, your yourselves, your coworkers. And so I think that this is this is much needed and I'm in full support of it. I'm also in full support of the comfort dog. And I have a question about the comfort dog that I didn't think of before. You said that Haven has been sent out to multiple places over the last year or two. How long is Haven going to be able to continue as a comfort dog before she gets burned out?

MPO Downey replied, Haven will be four in February, and that's the unknown. Because she's like the second, third comfort dog in New Hampshire. And right now, the first comfort dog in New Hampshire is in Concord, and she's turning five, like next next week or in the next month or so. So we don't know. I mean, usually a canine officer last sometimes eight years before the hips, but there's a whole different thing. So it's kind of the unknown. I think it's as long as she's okay with having people give her belly rubs and head pats and taking treats, I think she'll go as long as she can. But it's really an unknown. I'm not seeing. She goes for a yellow checkup. She's in great health. She's healthy, she's of great weight. So we're always checking on that. And, you know, I know they do absorb it, but some of that energy from it. But at the same time, she loves it. So she's not happy when she gets it. You know what? Dog wouldn't be happy to sit on the couch. She gets upset when she has to sit on the couch for a couple of days and she gets wound up and she wants to see the kids. Selectman McGrath replied, so we're not in danger of losing her anytime soon? MPO Downey replied, no. I have four children and I have one in college and one about to go to college. I'm not going anywhere. Chairperson Roy said I think she meant the dog. No offense, but I think she meant the dog. Chief Dionne said everybody means the dog. Jason goes to this all the time when he realizes it's one of his things he has to manage it. One of the stressful things he has to manage. We care about the dog, the heat dog. But interestingly enough, and I don't know if you know this, but I believe a lot of the original dogs are related in here in New Hampshire. They're actually family, believe it or not. The original the original comfort dogs.

Selectman McGrath then said so the other part of my question is, would you want a second comfort dog to assist with Haven? I mean, is that is that something that you've thought about or is it? MPO Downey replied, I think at some point I think potentially I mean, I think it's a great program, not because I helped build it or anything like that, but I think I mean, obviously that becomes an administrative, I don't I think one at the moment it's good. But I think once we get close to me calling it quits and we start to replace and I think we can mentor, you know, Haven maybe the last year or so and then then the transition is out. Because I think just like a regular canine, I think she'll be upset if I don't retire with her, then I think she might get a little upset that I'm always leaving because I spend more time with her than I do my family. We're with each other, almost 24/7.

Selectman McGrath went on to say so the reason why I asked that is because I know that Chairman Gasdia had questioned about having another comfort dog assisting in the schools and they were, at the time, and I suspect that he still would support that, that they would help with the fees of that. So.

Chief Dionne replied, yeah, and I mean, to be honest, we don't really have a lot of the taxpayers don't pay really much for anything for Haven, which is great. That's what I mean it's all donations. And so that is I mean that is obviously something we could look into more, I think, in that role for sure. And I certainly would no mat. I mean, if I was here and I think I can speak for that as far as if I was in charge, that there would definitely be a phase in phase out if we were if we were losing Jason and Haven, I would definitely want the next comforter. I can't say I was a believer when we first heard of the program. But I can tell you I am now. I have seen it. I have seen it. You, I, Jason, will tell you, I'm the probably the sometimes the skeptic in the room. But I've seen this work. I've seen it really capture some tough moments, some really heavy, heavy, heavy moments that we're involved in, whether it be a really awful death notification or whether it be people grieving, whether it be community members grieving or officers grieving firefighters. I've seen it work. And I and it's it's a mystery of presence, I think, with the dog. When the dog's there, it's like it's there is there is a certain mystery that's going on. I'm a believer now, for sure.

MPO Downey then said but I think just like sometimes the mental you know, the mental health or the system part that we do now is sometimes it's obviously confidential. So it's the quiet. We are the man behind the scenes. I'm not going to post on Instagram and Facebook. I helped out this community during this tragic time because that's not, I don't feel it's appropriate. So but at the same time, some people do, but at the same time we're there and we're not looking for gratitude. We're not looking for, oh my God, that's awesome. If you ask me, I'd be more than happy to tell you we've gone all over like he said, the state, But we're not. I'm not going to say we do all this. I think sometimes we just got to trust that when we tell you that she's being utilized on a daily basis and I'll tell you, meet me in the middle school, she's being utilized every single day. I am in the counseling office. I am somewhere. There is one kid. I'll tell you right now, part of a kids reward system right now is he gets to pet Haven if he has a great day. I'm not kidding. One person wants to try to write it into his, you know, individual IEP plan. They really want it to at one point. But, you know, so I'm not always in the building, so, you know, but I was, that's the impact that she has. I've had kids come up to me and say she's the best thing that ever happened to my middle school.



So, I mean, the daily impact I could have people, unless you really ask them. But again, it's we're there and we're there to support and we're not looking for accolades. And I think some people, you know, I just I'm not going to promote it that way on somebody's tragedy. So and that's what we're usually we're there for tragedy. Selectman McGrath replied, and I will thank you for that, because I know that some like to use Facebook and social media, but I'm not one of them.

I will say the confidentiality program is interesting. Jason will often tell me that he's needed or has been requested in a certain area. And that's kind of where we go with the conversation. Like, okay, you know, I know where you're going to be and when are you going to be there. And so interestingly enough, I'll tell you this, I happened to be in another community on my day off in an entertainment fashion. You know, I was going to I was at a history museum or whatever, and I end up writing the police chief a thank you, because he had an officer there who was just so helpful to the community. I wrote him a thank you and he responds back, telling me how he met Jason Downey and the dog and how that the Jason was helping them get to a comfort dog. I had no idea that that was going on. And so that was the response back from them. So like I said, I mean, it's a really good program. That's one small tool of what we're trying to accomplish in this umbrella of a wellness program. It's actually a great tool. Selectman McGrath said yeah, the middle-schoolers in particular need that.

Selectman Morin was recognized and said if you don't mind, I'd like to ask Officer Downey these questions, if that's okay with you. Because he's the expert. Chief Dionne replied he's definitely the expert. Selectman Morin jokingly said to MPO Downey, well, you came forward, so you brought yourself into the fire. Selectman Morin then said Police and Fire I know you've handled those both and you've got experience that works and get it. The Chief said you could help other departments. Are you going to be able to write a policy and formulate a program for the differences that would happen in this building in public works if the needed arise? Because this is a different, different environment to police and fire which you got down?

MPO Downey replied, I mean, I could do an education. We can do an education piece that they feel and I could say show you sign of symptoms of burnout, compassion, fatigue or whatever it may be just overworked and you just exhausted or maybe someone's having trouble at home or maybe the life work balance is off kilter. We could I could do that training to the supervisors. And then if they ever had a problem or they wanted me to reach out, I'd be more than happy or the wellness officer could reach out to them and give them the assistance. Now, again, that would talk about, again, VFR and Forge deals with first responders. So town employees would have to look and I could do other things. And we do have access to working with the EAP as well if they need to. So but I think that's there's definitely something I could do, the trainings that we could do to staff members here in town hall and wherever and signs and symptoms of what we can look.

Selectman Morin said and my point I'm going to lead into is a wellness officer throughout the town. When an incident takes place, it takes time to get the people in here. We may need somebody like you if something took place here the way the world is, things can happen here. Could you come in and start that process yourself like you would do for police or fire for this building in public works? MPO Downey replied, yes. Typically, what it would be almost like kind of a diffusion type thing. We'd make a quick assessment and we'd probably be able to I could be able to assess people like, no, you need a ride home from you need to have someone pick you up. You're not in a good state to go. kind of talk about what they might be experiencing. We will meet again. This is what happened. This is what occurred. And then this is the emotions that you could feel shortly after. And then we can process it in a group type method individually, and then we can give you all the things of some symptoms, everything that you might need to help out.

Selectman Morin then said my next question. And the Chief brought up community and I'm not talking the schools because you've already worked there. There's a program with that. We had some major incident in town dealing with the community itself. Is this something in that position? Again, it takes time to get a team in here, especially a big incident that you could start right away and start working with the community as a whole. I know you can't do it yourself, but you can put this process into place. MPO Downey replied, so ultimately, right now, this this federal funding for CTI training and it's a 40-hour training that deals with mental health through NAMI, that's what they have right now. So obviously that part of that training incorporate and have maybe some other officers do that. But at the same time, I'd be building my relationship with the mobile crisis team from Greater Nashua Mental Health and if I really needed them, which they are 24/7 for the most part, I could then use them as resource or respond and at least help the other officers that could be trained in it. Or we could work together as a team with my direction to calm or

quell the situation in appropriately, almost like be, I guess, the supervisor in the sense of managing to control the situation and then figure it out and then kind of wrap it around until we were able to again, we're like, I'm a triage. I'm really the triage. Selectman Morin said exactly. And that's what I'm talking about. MPO Downey continued saying, I'm going to stop the bleeding until the surgeon can get there. But yes, ultimately, that's what I mean. I mean, we are we at triage. So, I mean, but I mean, ultimately, yes. I mean, we could definitely do that. And I think that's where me, the Chief we're talking about, that's where the position could help, too. And it's talking to the resources. Like if we then can train Nashua Mental Health is seeing this or and I actually went to the ERs I went to the access teams. I went to Southern. Hey, what could we do better that makes the transition when we have somebody that's suicidal? I've met with the Nashua mobile crisis team, you know, and we're trying to establish a relationship and where if I. Hey. We have this. Can you come down? Well, it really doesn't make my criteria, but I'm trusting your gut on this. I might come. I don't know. But that's hoping with building that relationship with it, that we're able to, one, make it safer for our officers. One, make it so if we can avoid any conflict, we can actually keep the citizens safe and less paperwork. No one gets injured, you know, because if someone goes hands on, officers could get hurt. The person could get hurt. And it's all mental health. But if we're able to quell the quiet it down and everyone can go peacefully because we've been trained or able to articulate and explain it, you know, unfortunately, sometimes we can't. But if we can, majority of the time do that, I think it's a benefit for the whole entire town.

Selectman Gagnon was recognized and said thank you. I'm sorry to drag this on. It's a very interesting conversation. And again, I again reiterate enough the need for it. My question now turns a little differently. If you were to get the resource officer, let me restate this. Do you have any open positions right now? Chief Dionne replied, I have several. I have three police positions open. Selectman Gagnon then said not including if you took this officer off the street and made a wellness officer? Chief Dionne said that would be four. Selectman Gagnon then said all right. That's all I was thinking of. Thank you.

Chairperson Roy asked, anything else? As we talked, I have the same quandary that I did with all the rest of them, so I won't say anything more than that. Thank you.

Selectman Gagnon then said sorry. Sorry. One last thing. I asked this of the fire guys will ask and I ask them to look into pre buys for propane oil, that kind of thing. Chief Dionne replied, we have natural gas. Does that make a difference? Selectman Gagnon asked, you have it plumbed right into the building? The Chief replied, yes correct. Selectman Gagnon then said all right. It doesn't apply.

Chairperson Roy said, Chief I was mistaken, you have another warrant article. Chief Dionne replied, I do the Capital Reserve Fund. The Chairperson said it's an easy one. The Chief jokingly said I assume we didn't have any questions, So we. So we obviously, we wanted to know if the town would vote to raise the appropriate sum of 100,000 from the general fund balance of June 30th at 2023, which would be added to Police Safety Equipment Capital Reserve Fund, which was previously established March 9th, 2021. So just in our existing Taser contract, which is a brand new, brand new tool that we received last year, because our old ones were outdated and they were no longer under warranty with Axon, the company that runs them. Just with that, we have an annual contract of fee of over \$35,000. And with the body worn cameras, our contract fee for fiscal 24 would be \$70,000. That alone is brings us to some of \$105,000, etc. And so that's why we're asking for that capital reserve fund to be replenished up to \$100,000.

The Town Administrator added, I just want to be clear, too, that he's asking for it to come from the unassigned fund balance, which we had a quick conversation about this evening. That would certainly make it more palatable for the taxpayer, because, again, it would be coming from money that we've already raised and it would save a couple of cents on the tax rate. So I just wanted to articulate that when I sort of give the summary, I didn't price it that way, but if the Board forwards that, we could price it that way, knock a couple of cents off of the estimate that we have in the first place. Chairperson Roy said but I think my concern would be that if it didn't pass like this, then you wouldn't have the funds available to. Right? I don't know if that's a risk anybody wants to really take. Chief Dionne replied, right. I think so. When we looked at that, I mean, obviously we're trying to stick with the level of funding the Board was asking. And so when we looked at that, we recalled back in in March last year, March of this year, I should say, Deliberative Session was in February? February, excuse me, that we were at the deliberative session, we had a taxpayer that somebody actually stood up and recommended that it come from the unassigned fund general fund. And so that's the language we stuck to when we went when we went forward with this, assuming the same reason that it would that was obviously palatable to the voters at the time, that we would just stick in the language that was written by the voters at the time. The Town

Administrator said the voters have been reasonable over the last two years in particular with this. I know it's always a risk, but that seems to be I think they recognize what the benefit of this is. I think when you make it easier for them by offering to do it through the unreserved, the unassigned fund balance, you certainly remove a lot of reasons to say no. And so I think it's probably a reasonable risk to take, especially if we keep a relatively short warrant.

Selectman Guessferd asked, how much is the balance now in the CRF? The Town Administrator replied, I'm not sure off the top of my head but right now he's looking to add \$100,000. Selectman Guessferd and Chairperson Roy both replied, right, right. The Town Administrator said but I think we've been spending \$100,000 we've been putting in every year to pay for these things because we've been in the default budget. So if it's anything, it's going to be pretty minimus. It has not built up a big balance because we've been using it. Chairperson Roy asked has it been \$100,000 every year? Chief Dionne replied, last year it was \$50,000 originally. And we asked appropriate \$100,000 because of the addition of the body worn cameras and Tasers. The Town Administrator added, yeah. It just hasn't built up because again...Chairperson Roy said it's only a couple of years and we still have.... the Town Administrator said well we've had to pay for the actual equipment. Chief Dionne said Yeah. We've been we've been utilizing it pretty well. Chairperson Roy said well, all that stuff has like a lifecycle, so you're cycling stuff out. Chief Dionne added, and that was I think I think it was suggestion of the Board that we, that we try to establish that fund as a matter of fact. The Chair said I personally think it's good fiscal policy because we don't have to keep going back to the taxpayers. The Town Administrator said it was easier in the olden days we could budget this, but. Chairperson Roy replied, yeah, I know, I know. We have to ask every time.

The Finance Director said so as of August \$106,778. The Chair replied, okay. All right. All right. Okay. Anybody else have anything else about the CRF? All right. Thank you. I think you're done now. Chief Dionne replied, I'm off the hook. Thank you. Thank you very much, everybody.

The Town Administrator explained, just real quick, there was a warrant article to raise money for the Property Assessment Capital Reserve fund. Mr. Michaud had advanced that. I've neglected to mention it during Assessing. It's I think, in the standard amount that he's been asking for. It's under the G tab. He's asking for \$25,000 to go into that reserve fund. As you recall, we try to fund that in advance so that when we actually do the reevaluation, we have the appropriate funding as opposed to trying to get it all at once. So that's been a long standing warrant article. So I just wanted to mention that in case, you know, I don't want to neglect it.

#### Recreation (5810-5839)

Chrissy Peterson, Recreation Director came forward and asked should I go through each cost center? The Chairperson replied, we go through it and if anybody has any questions.

Ms. Peterson said 5810 Recreation Administration, this covers a portion of our salaries, office supplies and miscellaneous equipment rentals for in the Community Center. And the operating operational side is down 9%.

The Chair asked, does anybody have any questions? Selectman Morin said just 208 - Telephone. That went up it. It was high. Went down. Went up again. 208. Ms. Peterson replied, so we had cut a line when we didn't have a summer program, and then we brought it back, so. Selectman Morin replied, okay. Thank you.

#### Facilities

Ms. Peterson explained, so facilities this covers this covers the Community Center building as well as the Senior Center building in a portion of the custodial salaries or in here as well. And we are up 3.1% on the operational side, mainly in I think it is 5814-224, which is building maintenance. And I feel that's critical to increase the unexpected repairs between the two buildings that might arise.

Chairperson Roy said you had some issues. like I know there was an AC issue at the Senior Center if I was. Ms. Peterson replied, we did. Actually in both buildings. Chairperson Roy said both buildings. Okay. Okay. And that's why you...that's where you sort of started. Anybody else have anything?

Selectman Gagnon said Chrissy, more of a general question, do you have like motion activated lights in the Community Center and the Senior Center? Ms. Peterson replied, in the Senior Center? Yes, in the community center, no. Selectman Gagnon asked is that something you can look into? Ms. Peterson replied, absolutely. Selectman Gagnon then said and that's similar to. I doubt you had a commercial rate environment, but we get those, those automatic thermostats, if it doesn't see motion, readjust. Ms. Peterson said I can look into that. I'm not sure what the rules are with that necessarily, because it is very busy with basketball and different things that go in and out. So I'm not sure on the regulating, but I'll look into that. Selectman Gagnon replied if it works for your facilities, it could be a cost savings there. And at very least the data that comes from them are pretty impressive. As it says, when you can save how much you use. I mean it they're pretty interesting system, so it helps be a little more sustainable if that works.

Chairperson Roy asked, anybody else have anything on supervised play? Selectman Guessferd said yeah, the only thing I want to mention, it's more of a comment is that we show 13, almost \$14,000, but that's just the beginning of your summer, you know, of the summer program. So. The Chairperson replied, right, that's only a portion of the, yeah. Selectman Guessferd went on to say, so I don't want folks to think because it says \$80,000 and we only spend \$13,000. You're going to be picking up that in the next year, you know, during that year. So cuz we just picked it up again, the program again this year. The Town Administrator replied, yeah this fiscal year. Selectman Guessferd went on to say, right, so it's I think the number is fine. I just think it's important when it kind of jumps out at you when you first look at it, it's like, no, you got to understand, that's the entire year, entire summer. Ms. Peterson replied, thank you. Yeah, because it does cross fiscal years. Our summer program. Chairperson Roy said I also think 2020, 2021 and 22 were affected by COVID. Selectman Guessferd agreed saying, oh, absolutely. They weren't as robust programs as they are.

Selectman Morin said let me ask you a question. When Public Works was here, we spent a lot of money on fertilizer. How is that going to affect you if we cut some of that? Ms. Peterson replied, the fertilizer? Selectman Morin replied, of the fields and things to that nature? Ms. Peterson replied, I mean, it would be Jette and Sousa Field that they fertilize for us there. So, I mean, we have our adult softball programs that are there so it could potentially affect them. Definitely. We don't, we utilize the school fields for lacrosse and our other programs, soccer Alvirne High School and those. But Jette and Sousa Field, DPW does a great job maintaining those fields for us. So it would affect those programs if it was an issue fertilizing it. Selectman Morin replied, okay, thank you.

Chairperson Roy asked, so Ballfields, anybody have anything other than? Moving on to Instructional Tennis - 5825. Chairperson Roy said so can I just ask a quick, you contract that out now, right? Like, you don't? Ms. Peterson replied, yeah. It's a collaborative program, the tennis program. So it's with USTA, so it really doesn't cost the town anything. The budgeted expense is just the portion that we're going to pay their instructors. So that's kind of how that is. But it is kind of a split program. We do take in roughly \$20.00 per person and then they get the remainder. So I'm just trying to put it back in there because we've had a default budget.

#### Lacrosse 5826

Chairperson Roy asked, anybody have any questions about that? Seeing none, the Chair then said just because I just thought of it. If we ever get...what is the field called? The Town Administrator replied Liberty Field. Chairperson Roy asked will that increase this program? Ms. Peterson replied, you know, I'm not sure, specifically, lacrosse. Lacrosse, I've talked to Steve about it a few times. It's been on a rapid decline unfortunately, it's very, it's a sport that's expensive, it's equipment specific. So it's not stuff that we can buy the equipment for everybody. It kind of has to be fitted. It's a great sport. I love it. My son, my daughter's played, but it doesn't seem, over the past six years, that as many people are interested in it. So I don't know what the fade is just yet. Fields will help in general across the board for all of our programs though. Chairperson Roy said and I get that. Ms. Peterson went on to say, you know, I had started a flag football for high school over the spring/summer months, but again, we had to utilize HMS for that. For soccer we're down at Alvirne on Saturdays and then we use the schools every night of the week. So the field will help no matter what.

#### Basketball 5831

Ms. Peterson said that's just decreased by 2.6% on the operations. Chairperson Roy asked, anybody have anything on basketball? Seeing none, they moved on.

Soccer 5834

Ms. Peterson said there's no change on that one. Chairperson Roy said I just want to say from what I see just on Facebook, we have a pretty big bang for a buck because there's a lot of kids that participate in soccer. Ms. Peterson replied, we do. It's amazing. And this year, the first time I mean, I've been with the town for ten years. This is the first time we are up over 150 kids. And that's not including our unified team that we started this year, which is kind of an all-inclusive team between kids that have disabilities, intellectual, physical, and that don't. So it's a great program.

Senior Center 5835

Ms. Peterson said this has a portion of, well, it has the Senior Coordinator salary as well. Chairperson Roy asked does anybody have anything for the Senior Center?

Teen Dances 5836

Ms. Peterson said this decreased by 20%, mainly because I can use the...Chairperson Roy said you can reuse stuff you already have. Ms. Peterson replied, yeah, and it's better. It's really money better spent in community activities as opposed to just the teen dances.

Community Activities 5839

This one is increased by, I think it's 38.2%. And the main increase is 5839-270, which is program materials. And that just allows flexibility and room to be able to continue to offer more and do more for the community. So it's important to add that. Chairperson Roy asked, anybody have anything? Selectman McGrath said that was the one thing that I had flagged.

The Finance Director said the last thing is IT. The Chairperson said I think we covered that with Mr. Beike. The Chair asked, do you have any warrant articles? To which Ms. Peterson replied, no. Chairperson Roy asked, any out of budget requests? Ms. Peterson replied, nope. Not this year.

Selectman Gagnon said let me know if this is the wrong form for this, but just to ask the question while you're here. Are you all set with everything that happened, with the power drops and all that kind of stuff? Has that been kind of straightened? I know there was a cost to that. Has that all been kind of straightened out? Ms. Peterson replied, yeah, it's all been straightened out on this end.

Chairperson Roy then said and then you're still working on the HVAC issue? Ms. Peterson replied, yes. The Town Administrator said so actually we let out a request for proposals. The Chair said I think I did see that. The Town Administrator said we'll get some data, we'll get some numbers, and we'll see what we can do. Ms. Peterson said, very specific, specific type of unit we need at the Community Center. Chairperson Roy said, I would presume with the type of building it is, I guess. Okay. All right. Thank you.

Town Officers

The Town Administrator said so go to the front of the book. Under Town Officers. Yes. So these are all the small some elected, some appointed boards and committees. I think without exclusion other than the tax collector, I think most of these are level funded. They're pretty minimal. A lot of these like I said, either elected trustees or the appointed members of other boards and committees. So.

Trustees of the Trust Fund (5020) - no questions

Cemetery Trustees (5025) - no questions

Town Clerk/Tax Collector (5030)

Chairperson Roy asked so are we going to go over separately the tax clerks? The Town Administrator replied, if you'd like to. Selectman McGrath asked, where are we Steve? The Town Administrator said we're on page one, and now we're moving if you'd like to go to the town clerk's office area, you would be going to page. It's 5030, page 6.

Chairperson Roy said so I don't necessarily have questions about this particular budget, although I think it's probably a good time to discuss. One of the recommendations in the manpower report was to split the tax collector and the town clerk's office. And if that is something that we wanted to pursue with an article

this year and in fact Mr. Malizia has taken the liberty of drafting said warrant article. I think it would be a good first step to address, I guess, some of the issues. It would give us a good base for. The Town Administrator said so this language is propagated with in consultation with the town attorney, because you have to do these things a certain way. As everybody is aware, we have a combined town clerk/tax collector. We are probably one of the last communities, particularly of our size, that has that. I think the only other one I believe to be in existence is Merrimack. The positions have gotten very sophisticated on their own. If you look at a town clerk and the election responsibilities and all that they do there. That's somewhat of a different skill set than being a tax collector and all the financial responsibilities that go along with that. So we've had some conversations through the year with the MRI report that we may be better served by having those positions split because, again, they do generally require some different sub-skill sets. Not everybody has this set and not everybody has this set. The clerk is an elected position. The collector could be an appointed position by this body. So you could actually go out and bid and figure out who would be the best person to be a collector. My understanding the collector wouldn't necessarily have to be a resident. The clerk does. If you were to forward this warrant article, this would not take effect until after next year's election. Not next March, March of 24. At which point, if it passed, you would then be able to go out and solicit candidates for the town tax collector. You could actually do, you could get going on it, but you couldn't hire them until after the next election. So for this year, there wouldn't be any impact. If it passed next year, you'd have to budget for the tax collector.

Chairperson Roy said and just so do we have a ballpark of what a tax collector would be? The Town Administrator replied well, I would think on the low end, with all full benefits, you're probably talking \$115,000. If you added up full benefits package. so it could be between \$115,000 and \$140,000 depending, and that's probably about a 60 something, upper 60's, lower 70's salary may or may not be enough, but that's a ballpark. Selectman Morin asked so where we don't fund it this year and we have to put it on the budget next year, is this considered like a labor contract that it's going to be in there? Or if they vote it down, we can't fund it? The Town Administrator said if the voters voted for it, you can put it in the default budget as well as the regular budget. Selectman Morin replied, okay what I was asking. The Town Administrator said because you voted for it. If they don't vote for it, we're not doing it. The Town Administrator said but by default, you've all voted for it. There's a cost. We budget it, but we'll stick it in the default budget. So it's covered. Selectman Morin replied, got it.

Selectman Guessferd said so I'm anticipating some people will maybe ask this question. So we got one person doing this job right now. one salary. And now we're asking...I'm not saying I disagree with this at all. I think this is a good idea. But people are going to say, okay, well, now you have two full time people and you got another \$115,000 that we're going to have to pay for. How do we respond to that? Because right now we got one person doing that job, right? Chairperson Roy replied, right but I think that...Selectman Guessferd said what more is being done could be done? Chairperson Roy said I think there's a lot of things. I think that that office is taking on a lot more responsibility. There's been two voter locations instead of one. They, they, as Mr. Malizia said, there's a specific skill set that goes with being a tax collector that is different than than in the town clerk. I think that we lost a lot when we lost our former town clerk/tax collector, cuz quite frankly, I don't know if this would be an issue if she was still with us. Right? But she's not. And we can't make up for that experience in one year. Right? Like that she knew how to do all that and manage all that stuff. And I think I, I don't I think that that that office has somewhat started to suffer because because of the overburdening. Right? They're not doing things in some in a timely manner and it really affects services to the town. Selectman Guessferd replied, it's not me you have to convince. Chairperson Roy replied, I know. Oh I know. I know. I know. I know. Selectman Guessferd said because at the 50,000-foot level, a lot of people are going to, you know, so we have to sell it. We have we have to say this is what you're getting for this. And this is, you know.

The Town Administrator said \$71 million in taxes comes through that office. That's just the tax burden. They're also responsible to reconcile all the other accounts, as I understand it, that go through there. And typically, somebody who might have the skill set of a clerk nowadays, that's up on all the election and the motor vehicles doesn't necessarily have the financial skills. And we are doing a disservice because we're limping along. We're not, we're not timely and we want to make sure that we're processing things efficiently. And it appears that we've struggled with that recently. And because of the scope and the size of our community, we are not Litchfield, we are not Mayberry RFD, we are Hudson, the ninth largest community in the state. Again, if you do a survey and we've looked, Merrimack is the only other one. Everybody else is separate. The Chair said I think those inefficiencies, equal dollars that we're wasting, we're you know. Selectman Gagnon said we just got to prove it. I guess that's his point. Right? Selectman Guessferd said what are you getting? What are we not get what do you not getting now, citizens that

you're going to get after this. what they see. Chairperson Roy said I think one of the things that that happened last year is probably a perfect example. We would have on time tax bills because there's one person focusing on getting all the stuff to the state that they need so that we can produce all of those things. So you're not getting the holiday tax bill. Right? You're doing it in a more timely manner. You know, because I know that that last year that came up a lot that, you know, here we are at the holidays and they they send this huge bill out to us, you know. You know what I mean? And I understand that I wouldn't want you know, so I think all of those things and I think it is as Mr. Malizia said you know, it is a place where we have to grow with the population. We can't just continue on because there's a breaking point, you know, I'm sure I'm sure those folks up there, do they do a wonderful job. Right. But there's only so much they can do, right. So without help, which is something we've heard. Selectman Guessferd said and this is one of the recommendations. Chairperson Roy said yeah, you know, more than once during this, you know. And I think that we would be it would be wise for us to do one thing and not all of the recommendations at once. So I think maybe this is a good first step so we can get a basis. Selectman Morin replied cuz at this point in theory, we're up to six positions being asked for.

The Town Administrator then said again, this would be the voters. Voters approving or not approving it. You know, the burden for a lot of this falls on the Finance Department who has to actually work with and produce and do a lot of this work. Frankly, they have enough other work to do because we're a pretty sophisticated operation to start with. As you're all well aware, there's millions of dollars to go through here. You know, the town took the step a few years ago of appointing a treasurer as opposed to electing a treasurer. That way you had some control over the skill sets that you're getting involved with. This is not a simple operation. You think about running our side of the street it's just a \$40 million business on its own, and then all of the taxes come through here, all the bills come out of here, all the lean process, all of the collection of that, all of the all of the research and the follow up that goes on to that, never mind reconciling all the rest of the accounting, the finances that come out of that office. That's really what that does. Chairperson Roy said and like we talked about with the planning office, I think I would guess there are things that should be being done that just aren't because there's just not the capacity to do it, you know. Selectman Morin added, and one of the pluses is it's more of a job interview versus an election, which is, which is much better control. The Town Administrator said you can control that. Chairperson Roy added we can look for a certain skill set like you said.

The Town Administrator went on to say, the more efficiently and the more timely we do all of our reconciliation and collection. You know, you get more in the bank and you maybe get more interest. You know, your because you're more efficient. You know what I'm saying? You're not lagging. We're in a low interest rate now, but it looks like they're going up, you know, So the more efficient we are, it just benefits the public that we're doing all that we can do to best manage the voter's money. Again, this is a proposal. It does not take effect the first year. So it would give time if it passed to set up some specific job description, what kind of qualifications we're looking for. And again, it's difficult when you elect positions that are very sophisticated, that are getting more and more complicated. I think the clerk could then pivot to help more of the Moderators burden. I think if we listen to the Moderator, we need to have some more background back up there. Well, you can only stretch positions so far. And I think by separating them, the clerk can then devote more time to the ever more increasingly complicated election side of the house. We all know that's getting more and more scrutiny. We know it's getting more and more attention. We want to make sure we're doing everything right. And, you know, Mr. Inderbitzen spends a lot of time doing it, but the clerk has a role in it. And obviously, if they had more time, that role could be more beneficial to Mr. Inderbitzen and to the voters at large.

Chairperson Roy said so I guess we can put this in with warrant articles and then. The Town Administrator said, again I brought it in, it could go into the tab book. I would probably put it under the under the K Tab. K as in Special K. I could think of another K word. So again, I just wanted to bring it to your attention. I thought it was we've talked about it and ruminated on it.

#### Remaining Town Officers

Chairperson Roy said, So I don't know where we want to go next. The Town Administrator explained, so again, as I said, we talked about the Moderator. He's in that section, all the other departments, and they're all fairly minor from the budget position, I believe are all level funded. You can go through them if you'd like, but nothing has changed. They're basically the Supervisors, Sustainability Committee, Benson Park Committee, Budget Committee. They all have level funded budgets.

Selectman Morin asked, did Benson's Committee ask for that \$10,000? The Town Administrator replied, no, they did not. They did not. Chairperson Roy asked, what were they asking for \$10,000 for? Selectman Morin replied, well, last year we added that fund and then they added the \$10,000 because they spent all the money out of it. And I thought they were going to add it. The Town Administrator then said I will qualify my answer, nobody's asked for it. They still have time to ask for it. So if you want to put the bug in their ear, they can ask for it because you can still add warrant articles. Selectman Morin replied, and that's what I thought they were going to do. The Town Administrator replied, they have not yet. My understanding is the Sustainability Committee will probably ask for money into their energy into the fund that they have not yet. Selectman Morin said Benson's Committee had a meeting tonight, so they may have been talking about it. The Town Administrator said perhaps they've done it so. But you still have a pretty generous window of time where you can still add. I mean, we don't want to wait till the last minute, but if they could get it in the next few weeks and you could deliberate and discuss it at one of your upcoming regular meetings. But, no. they have not done it so far.

Supervisors of the Checklist (5025)

Treasurer (5050)

Sustainability Committee (5055)

Benson Park Committee (5063)

Budget Committee (5070)

Ethics Committee (5080)

BOS/Town Buildings (5110, 5115, 5120)

The Town Administrator asked, is everybody clear on all of that? The Chair replied, yup. The Town Administrator then said so I'll probably go to the Selectmen tab, which is 5100. I think it's the next tab in the book. That's your budget, our budget. That's basically for the office, health care and for your elected official salaries and I think the operating budget I decreased slightly. I'm always trying to sharpen the pencil and keep things keep things at least level funded. We're saving some money on deeded property management. That's probably the biggest item. So when we take tax deeded property, sometimes if it's got improvements on it, sometimes you have to spend money to do some things. But we haven't been in that position for couple of months, so I took a risk and cut a couple of bucks out of there. I left some money in there in case we take something along the way. But I think that's a reasonable compromise at this point. With just raw land, you really don't have to do anything. But it's the improved stuff that you might have to have somebody go in and clean something or fix something. Chairperson Roy added, or winterize it or whatever. Anybody have any questions on that?

Selectman Gagnon replied, actually, yeah, line 345 Community Relations. \$27,000. \$32,000. Then down to \$400 bucks. What's that about? The Town Administrator replied, during the pandemic you were generous enough to approve gift certificates for every employee. We had, if I recall, all employees, that came out of our budget. Chairperson Roy agreed. Selectman Gagnon replied, alright. The Chair added, and I think we actually moved that from contingency, if I remember correctly. The Town Administrator replied you might have transferred, but we didn't have that in there. But that's where we expanded it from.

5120 is basically this facility here, pardon me that's Oakwood which is the small building. That's pretty minimus. Selectman Gagnon said I'm looking at 5115-line item 210 Natural Gas for Oakwood Facility. I know we're probably level funded it at \$800, but the last three years have shown \$2000 to \$3000 expense. Do we want to actually adjust that to be reasonable? The Town Administrator replied, so we'll try to save somewhere else and I'll just make sure I can cover it. I'm just trying to keep a level funded. It's such a minimus budget. That's all I really do. Selectman Gagnon replied, I figured that's what you did. All right. Selectman Morin added, and we keep that down to the lowest setting we possibly can anyway. That's not typically occupied, but you've got to keep it from freezing, right?

Town Hall is basically the only increase; I believe is the salary. It's actual operation of the building is pretty level funded. Selectman Gagnon said same thing I ask Chrissy, I mean, does the town thermostats drop down at nighttime or is it? The Town Administrator replied, they're programmable. We have I believe I



think the majority of them are programmable that they set back. We have all the light things and motion sensors as you walk out after I'm sitting in my office, if I'm concentrating 5 minutes later, I'm in the dark. I'm like, I got to wave my arms. Thinks I'm dead. Selectman Gagnon joked, we'll just buy you a little headlamp instead. The Town Administrator laughed saying, no, no, no, come on. But it's funny. The first couple of times it happens to you, you're like, Oh, God, you know? So, yeah, it's just kind of a pain in the neck. But we put that technology in all of all the areas here.

#### Town Poor (5151)

You can see the trend there the Town Administrator explained, so you can see the trend there. Last year we tried to put it down to \$65,000 but the default restored it to \$80,000. So I'm just proposing the \$65,000 again. One thing, we have an ace in the hole, we have donation account, we folks donate money into the account. So if need be we could draw on that. If for some reason we had some reason to go over this on some catastrophic, catastrophic reason. But our Welfare Officer does an excellent job of working with the area resources so that, you know, we utilize those resources to the best of our ability, where we're not directly spending the money. It comes through some of the community grants. I mean, we fund these other organizations. So she has a very good network to work with, with folks. But we do have a responsibility to be the first line assistance. It's not intended to be, you're going to live off of us, but we're the first step. So if you need a rental assistance payment, a food voucher, a heating, electric. We're that. But then we get you into other programs. Selectman Gagnon said, no plane tickets to Martha's Vineyard. The Town Administrator replied, not that I'm aware of. No. Chairperson Roy added, no. The Town Administrator continued saying, and that's Kathy Wilson. I've said her name, but she does a very good job of managing this. Chairperson Roy said she's always done an excellent job. The Town Administrator said I'm comfortable with the number. And again, if need be, we do have some money in a donation account.

#### Legal (5200)

The Town Administrator said this is where we pay for the attorney, our general counsel, Attorney Lefevre with Tarbell and Brodich. We also pay for the labor attorney. Attorney Both. So this is slightly down. Though I did increase, I think, by a pretty reasonable 2%, I did adjust Attorney Lefevre's fee. I mean, I'm not saying he's going to adjust his fee, but I just put in a cost of living. He's never raised his fee in the seven or eight years he serviced us. Chairperson Roy said you don't even know how amazing that is. The Town Administrator replied, I just think that at some point he's got to do something. So it's a modest 2% there. But I'm able to drop the.... Chairperson Roy I know. Trust me, I know. The Town Administrator said I'm able to drop the collective bargaining slightly because I anticipate one labor contract next year. We're negotiating two this year. Next year will be the one. It'll be the firefighters. So I don't anticipate, you know, using as many dollars to do that negotiation. So that's why the budget is slightly down.

Chairperson Roy said and I think we'd be hard pressed to find anybody else to do it for that, for that amount of money. Selectman Guessferd said I agree. The Town Administrator added, I don't see that anywhere. So that's I think the next tab is the finance director's tab Finance Department.

#### Finance (5310, 5320)

Finance Director, Lisa Labrie said, overall we're down 6.8%. Mostly in the insurance. It's up slightly in the operating because of the audit. Every other year we have to pay \$4,000. This is the other year. Any questions on that one?

The Town Administrator then explained, OPEB is post employee benefits. That's a requirement that we have from Gasby to cost out the potential future cost of retirement benefits. Everything has an acronym, so OPEB is the acronym for that, but it's basically post-employment benefits that we have to account for.

5320 is up slightly across. The cost of paper. We're looking to hopefully replace our small copier that we have downstairs for 1 to 2 copies. It's kind of limping along on its last leg. I increased postage a little bit. Chairperson Roy said so can I ask a question. It's the part time salary. So you have you have an actual '22 and then you didn't do anything in 23...you don't have anything budgeted for '23. The Town Administrator said we did the default, took it out. As you recall, you all authorized hiring, backfilling/filling a position that's part time in the Finance Office. You did it, which is fine. Your purview. We did it. We budgeted it last year, but because it wasn't in the default budget, that's why it shows up zero. The Town Administrator said we're putting it in again, hopefully the budget passes. The Finance Director added, we

were able to cover it with my predecessor, some of my predecessor's salary. The Town Administrator said this is one of those trickle things when you get a default budget, particularly if you get a couple of years of default budgets, you just start losing this, hopefully this year we get a budget.

#### Insurance (5910)

So now if we go take the trip all the way to the back part of the book where it says Other Expenses/Non Departmental 5900. The first step is insurance. This is the property liability insurance and this is the worker's comp insurance. So we are locked into a rate assurance plan with both provided through Primex. They do a worker's comp policy; they do a property liability policy. It's locked in with Primex, it's based on a couple of factors the size of our payroll and experience rate. Wow we do, relatively speaking, the premiums have been fairly stable, but like anything else, things have risen because we've come out of the pandemic. So this is in the default budget because it's actually a legal obligation that we can make a specific decision to put this in the default budget. So whilst there is an increase, it's covered by the default budget and I would never want to go without insurance. And I don't think you cannot legally. You definitely can't legally go without worker's comp. You have to have it.

#### Community Grants (5920)

So the next one is Community Grants, which on this document we see it's level funded. But you go to the that page right there on the page 5, we get a lot of requests. Certainly everybody wants more money but typically we've level funded it. But the one I want to bring your attention to it, just because it just makes me, I'll say concerned, is the Nashua Transit. That's the service that picks up folks that either have disabilities or going to adult type programs. If you can see there, they ask for \$28,480, but level funding would take it to \$16,000. My concern is that when we get to the \$16,000, they're going to stop. And that concerns me because I know there's people that are dependent on this. And usually it's the more vulnerable in our population. That's that's vulnerable. Chairperson Roy said, and that's the one that picks people up and takes them to doctor's appointments or those kinds of things? The Town Administrator replied, yes. We have no control over this because we are the client.

We're the client of Nashua Transit, it appears and I'll just pass up this document. I hate to do things at the last second, but, you know, this is their, this was the submission they sent to us. If you look at that and I'm looking, you see there's three options there. I'm looking at the most conservative option, which is like the 500-hour option. Right now we're about 450 hours somewhere in that ballpark at a cost this year of about \$16- something, it's going to go to \$28-something. And my concern is that if we don't take some sort of action on this, we're going to get to February and they're going to go, whoop, you're done, and we're going to have a bunch of vulnerable people who've become dependent on this transportation for either doctors, rehabilitation, adult day programs. So I, I just bring it to your attention. I'm loathe to recommend that you take it from all the other agencies because we use the Food Pantry, we use the Front Door Agency, we use the Soup Kitchen we use and send folks to these agencies. So it's something that I believe the numbers about \$12,341 delta. I'm just concerned that if you don't fund it.

Selectman McGrath was recognized and said so I was just... I'm not going to comment on this at all because I use Nashua Transit. Chairperson Roy said so, can I ask, do you think it would be prudent, prudent if we say to a little bit of money out of, say, our contingency budget? The Town Administrator replied, that's always an option. So when we get to that point, if assuming we will, you could, we could up with the contingency for money which we budget \$100,000 of contingency. Chairperson Roy said I thought it was \$75,000. Selectman Gagnon said yeah. \$75,000. You have \$60,000 in the bank in \$75,000 you're asking for. Chairperson Roy said because I certainly wouldn't want to see that service go away. You know, I think you're right. The people that would be affected are the people that can't afford to be affected. The Town Administrator said, I wanted to make sure you were aware of. I don't want to gloss over it. I want to just make sure you have a conversation about it. Again, I don't think we want to rob Peter to pay Paul when it comes to the other agencies. But. We could even use the Town Poor money if we had it left. Chairperson Roy then said right. I think actually what I was suggesting is we could do that. We could wait to see what happens, or we could decrease that contingency fund, by some money and put it in here. The Town Administrator asked, decrease that by 12,500 and put the 12,500 and put the \$12,500 here? Again, I don't want to hurt the vulnerable. I don't want to hurt the people in need.

Selectman McGrath then said, I just want to comment, not about whether you should vote for this or not vote for it. I utilize that service, but I pay for it as well. So it's not you know, it's not. The Town

Administrator said there is a charge, I believe, about \$5.00 dollars? Chairperson Roy said I think that's what it says \$5 rate goes...Selectman McGrath said so, I'm going to Nashua for physical therapy and it's \$5.50 one way, so it's \$11.00 every time. The Town Administrator then said so there is a share from the participants. There is a federal grant that helps cut it down. But this is the number that we are responsible for when all is said and done.

Selectman Gagnon said I'm with you. Selectman Guessferd said I think using some of that contingency money probably makes sense. Chairperson Roy said cuz I'd rather have it guaranteed than have it trying to, God forbid, something happen and then we're trying to figure it out in February instead. The Town Administrator then said so, a *motion would be to transfer money from the Board of Selectmen Contingency account 5940-298, in the amount of \$12,400 to Community Grants, 5920-259 for the Nashua Transit account. This motion was made by Selectman Morin, seconded by Selectman Gagnon. Carried 4-0-1. McGrath abstained.*

Chairperson Roy then said while we're here. I actually and I know that they didn't forward a request, but I'll put it out there to the Board that I suggest that we not donate to Operation Troop Care and split that donation between the VFW and the American Legion, just because I think those organizations can do more for service members overall, they get a bigger bang for their buck. Again, that's my personal opinion, you know. Curious about what everybody else has to say about it. Selectman McGrath replied, I don't have anything to say about it. I just like to know what Troop Care is. Because I've never I've never heard of that. The Town Administrator replied, that's the program, if you recall, former Selectman Luzzey and I believe his family started a very active when they packaging care packages for troops overseas and they do it on a fairly regular basis. So service people in Afghanistan or Iraq, wherever they've been posted, get these care packages, I believe up to a couple of times a year. And so that's our donation, our grant to that program to help fund that so that they can continue to do that. Selectman McGrath asked, and they said that they send the care packages to? The Town Administrator replied, soldiers that are stationed overseas. The Chairperson added, deployed overseas.

Selectman Gagnon then said Madam Chair, can you tell me a little bit about what the VFW and they offer? Chairperson Roy replied, so they offer services for when folks come home. They help them get disability payments they.... So without getting too much into a history of it, the VA, the VA had a service dog program that they discontinued. They've started the VFW has started to pick up the slack on that so that some of the soldiers that suffer from our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines suffer from PTSD and stuff have the opportunity to have a service dog and they have well established processes to do that. That's why I say they get more bang for their buck. They have ins to various organizations, including the Veterans Administration, I know a ton of people that used the VA to help them get disability payments and things like that. And the American Legion is similar to that, where they help, they have different programs and they're established and they have processes in place. Selectman Gagnon replied, and to that, my mother used to work for social services in different ways. She always told me to check some of the what you donate to for what percent of the dollar goes to service versus overhead. Chairperson Roy replied, the overhead for both those organizations are fairly low. If you compare that to something like the Wounded Warrior Project, it's almost nonexistent. You know, they don't really pay salaries and things like that. The other thing that the VFW has, I'm not sure about the American Legion, is they have a lobbying arm that goes. Selectman Guessferd said the American Legion does as well. Chairperson Roy continued saying, yeah. So that they, they help get veteran friendly legislation passed.

Selectman McGrath then said so why couldn't we...we've eliminated. Harbor Homes. That's been eliminated. We've zeroed out.... the Town Administrator spoke up saying some of them, Harbor Homes, Keystone Hall, there was a Southern New Hampshire Task Force and Healthy at Home. They all consolidated under something called Harbor Care. So you see, there's zero. They're all under the Harbor Care umbrella. Selectman Guessferd said that's up above. The Town Administrator replied, right, you see the two asterisks and you look at the bottom. Selectman McGrath said well, I do. But I'm also looking at like Lamprey Health, which that's been that's been zeroed out. The Town Administrator replied, correct. Selectman Guessferd said it doesn't look like they've requested anything. The Town Administrator said we haven't. Yeah, they haven't requested we stopped funding them because there hasn't been requests for several, I mean at least this many years.

Selectman McGrath then said Saint Giana's Place, what's that? Selectman Morin said it's right down the street. The Town Administrator added, I think it's women and their young children. Selectman Guessferd said it's a shelter.

Selectman Gagnon said while we're there, the. The Front Door. Any description on that, sir? The Town Administrator replied, that's basically the same equivalent as over here. Only it's a little bit more of a bigger resource. Chairperson Roy said over here, over where? The Town Administrator said over in Nashua. Selectman Gagnon went on to say so it says Nashua Pastoral Care. Chairperson Roy said yeah, what does that mean? The Town Administrator said that's just, I think, that's the name they're registered under but they call themselves, the Front Door Agency. They used to formerly be the Nashua Pastoral Care. What they basically do is also take in folks that have transitional housing needs could be a domestic situation. Kathy Wilson utilizes them for placement. They have beds, they have.... that's one of the resources we place people at. Selectman Gagnon then said so I would be I would be incorrect in thinking pastoral is related to a pastor or anything religious. The Town Administrator replied, they've pivoted and gotten away from that. But that was some people knew them as that. That's why we kind of kept the descriptive. They are the Front Door Agency. Selectman Gagnon replied, okay, Thank you.

Selectman Morin asked, so are you looking for motion to add money or what do you want to do? Chairperson Roy asked, do we want to add money or do we want to reallocate? Selectman Guessferd said instead of going Operation Troop Care, that same money \$1,000 to the Legion, \$1,000 to the VFW. Selectman Morin made this motion, seconded by Selectman Guessferd. Selectman McGrath then said what about the Troop Care? Can we at least give them something? Because it seems to me that they've been depending on that to send items to the troops. Chairperson Roy said well I mean do we want; do we want to increase that budget to accommodate that? And I'm truly just asking? Selectman Guessferd said maybe give them \$1,000? Selectman McGrath replied, yeah. I mean I think that we should, they've been depending on us and, and sending I mean I know that I haven't participated in it, but I know that they've sent care packages to the troops. And I think that I think we should do that. Chairperson Roy replied, okay, I mean, I'm not a I'm not opposed to that. The Town Administrator replied, you're talking relatively modest dollars that will have no discernible input to the tax rate. You're talking \$2,000. Chairperson Roy asked, so in that case, do we want to add the Legion and the VFW and then leave? Selectman Morin rescinded his motion. Selectman Morin made a motion to add \$2,000 to the Community Grants budget 5920-259 with \$1,000 going to the Hudson VFW and \$1,000 going to the Hudson American Legion. This was seconded by Selectman Guessferd. Carried 5-0.

#### Patriotic Purposes (5930)

The Town Administrator explained, Patriotic Purposes. It's level funded. We give a stipend to the Home days towards the fireworks at home days. And when they do a Memorial Day parade. We help offset some of those expenses that I think the Legion incurs. Level funded. You can tell the pandemic has nothing happened. Chairperson Roy said, oh, right. I think we ended up moving that and doing something else with it. If I remember correctly, at some point. There was a lot going on. The Town Administrator replied, we didn't do it.

#### Other Expenses (5940)

Other Expenses - 5940 is basically the catchall. That's where the contingency was, which you've already just reduced. Everything else is level funded. We do include money here for if we get into a situation where we need to have extra money for accrued time pay outs, that's when employees leave, retire. Some of the larger numbers we aren't able to cover that. So again, unchanged level funded actually this line will go down there for the money you transfer to Nashua Transit.

#### Hydrant Rental (5960)

Hydrant Rental - that's the cost that we pay to the Water Utility for the fire hydrant system to keep it charged and in good working order. Selectman Morin said, that kills me. It goes from one pot of money to another pot of money. It kills me. I get it. I get. The Town Administrator said I'd give you the whole history but I doubt you'll want it at 9:38p.m. Selectman Morin replied, right, I get it. Selectman Guessferd said makes the brain hurt.

The Town Administrator then said, so I think that's it for all of that. Chairperson Roy said, yeah we did solid waste the other night. The Town Administrator went on to explain, so looking forward, if you'd like, I would presume it's up to you. You still have whatever you want to do with out of the budget requests. I anticipate having the default budget next Tuesday, so we can take a look at that just so you know where you're at. I will say that it's much closer to the budget. If you recall two years ago, I think it was \$775,000. Last year it was \$500,000. This year it's under \$300,000. So because we haven't had any budgets, it's just getting leaner and leaner and leaner. But hopefully that will, the voters will see that and say, yeah, close enough we'll vote for it, but that'll be a discussion on Tuesday.

We can discuss revenue on Tuesday. Again, that's offsetting revenue or you can look at it tonight if you'd like. It's quite simply put, our estimates of the revenue that we'll use to offset the tax rate, car registrations, the \$600,000 we budget annually to do surplus to reduce the fund balance that's in there. So it's up to you. If you want to do it now, we can do it then. Selectman Morin asked, what's the agenda looking like? The Town Administrator replied, I tried to keep it pretty lean so that you have time to devote to this. Selectman Morin said - SOLD! Chairperson Roy replied, yeah, same. I'm with you. The Town Administrator reiterated, I really tried to keep it. I really tried to, cuz you're having a meeting the following Tuesday so there's a few things that we've got to do. But after that, it's pretty lean. The Chair then said and that, so, but just so I'm clear that Tuesday is going to include the town clerk issue? The Town Administrator replied, that will be in non-public. Yes, it will be. Yes. So I anticipate we'll have a recommendation for the clerk position on Tuesday. We have, again, a public hearing from our fire grant. I think we have a couple water related items. Then it will be budget. Chairperson Roy replied, more budget? No way! The Town Administrator then said just to point out the budget books are due to the Budget Committee by next Friday. So I'm just pointing that out, not to put pressure on everybody. But we do need to be done with the budget part Tuesday. Warrant articles can still come in because that's different. So I just want to point that out. But I believe we should have sufficient time on Tuesday. We're not loading up again, the agenda. Selectman Morin joked saying, quick, before he thinks of something else, I make a motion to adjourn.

#### 4. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Selectman Morin, seconded by Selectman Guessferd, to adjourn at 9:40 p.m.

Recorded by HCTV and transcribed by Jill Laffin, Executive Assistant

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Kara Roy, Chairperson

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Bob Guessferd, Vice-Chairman

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Dave Morin, Selectman

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Marilyn McGrath, Selectman

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Brett Gagnon, Selectman