

**TOWN OF WILTON NEW HAMPSHIRE
JUNE 10, 2021, TOWN MEETING MINUTES**

Moderator Bill Keefe began the meeting by welcoming everyone to the 259th Wilton Town Meeting and Wilton's first, and hopefully last, at an outdoor venue. He noted that all zoning articles were approved by the voters and Matt Fish was reelected to his Select Board seat in a very close race with contender Michael Pellerin. Following the pledge of allegiance he reviewed the meeting procedures and then began the meeting with Article 7.

7. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee's recommended sum of Five Million Two Hundred Fifty-nine Thousand Three Hundred Ninety-seven Dollars (\$5,259,397.00) for general municipal operation for the year 2021. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)

(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Cary Hughes.

Budget Committee Chairman Cary Hughes spoke about the budget before the voters and how it came to be. He explained that when this budget process was started we were deep in the midst of Covid-19. There was great concern the Town would experience significant drops in revenue. These drops were expected locally as well as from the State and Federal levels. He thanked the Department Heads for generating a bare bones budget that was overall 3% less than the 2020 budget.

He highlighted the following points:

General Government was facing an increase in the Assessing line from \$21,000 (Twenty-One Thousand Dollars) cost to \$68,000 (Sixty eight Thousand Dollars). This increase was due to a mandated 5-year town-wide revaluation.

Legal expenses in 2020 exceeded their budgeted amount so an additional \$10,000 (Ten Thousand Dollars) was added to the 2021 legal line.

Public Safety, including the Police Department and Ambulance Service, were up. Police costs were up slightly while the Ambulance Service saw a significant bump. The Ambulance increases were due to a combination of Temple's withdrawal from the service, staffing expenses, and the cost modification from being based on population to being based on call volume.

While most of the other departments kept their budgets at or below the prior year, the Fire Department had gained a full time Fire Chief in 2020 resulting in significant increased operational expenses.

Police Chief Eric Olesen spoke on behalf on his department. He asked the voters to please approve a \$30,000 (Thirty thousand dollar) increase to help retain existing employees and help acquire new police officers. He explained the department is now, or will soon be, hit with a staffing crisis. He elaborated that a senior officer is about to retire, and another officer will be out on leave and it is not clear if they will be returning. In

addition, one of the two new recruits hired last year failed the Policy Academy. He did say the second of the two new recruits had done quite well and will be a great asset to the department.

He talked of the severe officer shortage plaguing all the small-town departments. Officers are enticed to bigger municipalities because of their more lucrative pay, sign-up bonuses, and advancement opportunities.

Eric's motion to amend the Police Department Operating Budget Labor Line by \$30,000 (Thirty Thousand Dollars) was seconded by Joanna Eckstrom.

Moderator Bill Keefe noted, if approved, the Operating Budget would be increased from Five Million Two Hundred Fifty-Nine Thousand Three Hundred Ninety-seven Dollars (\$5,259,397) to Five Million Two Hundred Eighty-Nine Thousand Three Hundred Ninety-Seven Dollars (\$5,289,397).

Deb Mortvedt spoke to say she supported the motion but asked why this amendment wasn't being presented by the Select Board. She stated she felt it was inappropriate that the Select Board wasn't presenting this amendment to the voters as it was their job.

Kellie-Sue Boissonnault explained the Select Board all supported Eric's request and that they only heard about this situation when he spoke with the Board at their last meeting. They had suggested at that meeting Eric present the issue to the voters so no points were overlooked by accident.

Kermit Williams also addressed Deb Mortvedt's comment to say only the voters at Town Meeting can amend the Budget. He also reiterated that the Chief's request was supported by all three Select Board members.

Laura Manning asked about the current department make-up. Eric stated one of his police officers is going to New Ipswich to be acting police chief, another is about to retire, and another is a retired officer who will be having to limit their hours going forward. He explained that retired officers were allowed to work more than the standard hours decreed by the NH Retirement System during Covid. Due to the Governor lifting the State of Emergency restriction, the Department wouldn't have the advantage of this extra coverage.

He explained his goal was to get the force back up to eight full time police officers. He said if they were not successful recruiting certified officers the Town may have to look at reducing or eliminating overnight coverage. He explained Lyndeborough and Mont Vernon did not have night time coverage. Both towns had to rely on the State Police, which can result in long waits for help to reach these towns.

Serafin Anderson asked how much Wilton is currently paying our police officers? Eric said his pay was \$87,000 (Eight-Seven Thousand Dollars). His lieutenant is currently paid \$79,000 (Seventy-Nine Thousand Dollars) and his Sergeant earned \$68,000 (Sixty-Eight Thousand Dollars).

DJ Garcia, Town Treasurer, stated "Wilton has to stand up if they want continued night Police coverage".

Following these discussions, the Moderator reread the Motion to Amend before the floor to

amend Article 7 by \$30,000 (Thirty Thousand Dollars). The Motion to Amend Article 7 was voice vote approved.

The Moderator then asked, if there was no further discussion, to vote on Article 7, as amended. Hearing no requests for discussion, he re-read Article 7, as amended:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee's recommended sum of Five Million Two Hundred Eighty-Nine Thousand Three Hundred Ninety-seven Dollars (\$5,289,397.00) for general municipal operation for the year 2021. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately.

Article 7, Wilton's operating budget, as amended, was voice vote approved.

8. To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to enter into a ten (10) year lease-purchase agreement in the amount of Six Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$650,000.00) for the purpose of a lease/purchase of a Fire Engine to replace Engine 1, and to raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy-five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000.00) for the first year's payment for this purpose, the monies to come from general taxation. This lease agreement contains a non-appropriation (escape clause). (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)

(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Moderator Bill Keefe noted he had received paper ballot requests for this Article (8) and for Articles 11 & 12. All three articles related to the purchase, or leasing, of new Fire Department vehicles.

Kellie-Sue stated Article 8 was supported by all three Select Board members. She was the lone Select Board member who did not support Articles 11 & 12. The reason she explained was if Articles 11 & 12 were approved it would drain the current Capital Reserve Funds down to a very low amount.

Fire Chief Don Nourse delivered an informative and detailed presentation. He explained there were 5 warrant articles being proposed for the 2021 Budget year. Article 8 addressed the replacement of the 34 year old Engine 1. He detailed "the annual funding has not been sufficient to keep up with the rising costs of replacing our Fire Apparatus, all resulting in an aged vehicle fleet. The average age of our Fire Department equipment is 27 years old. All of these requests are the first step to reducing the overall average age of our apparatus as well as the number of apparatus in the fleet, resulting in an overall reduction in capital outlay over time." Chief Nourse spoke in extensive detail and answered multiple questions from the voters present.

DJ Garcia spoke to say he supported all three Fire Department articles after extensively talking with Fire Chief Donald Nourse about his department's needs.

Once the presentation and opportunity for questions had been finished, the Moderator read Article 8 as written. The Moderator reminded the voters that the vote would be done by paper yes/no ballots,

While Article 8's ballots were tallied, Kermit Williams presented a plaque to Dick Putnam in honor of his and his family's contributions to the Town.

"As most of you probably know, Dick Putnam has sold his building and is closing his store and retiring. Probably few people here remember when there wasn't a Putnam's on Main Street. And of course, the Putnams go back much farther than that. Jacob and Ephraim Putnam moved here in 1739, and Jacob is considered the first settler in Wilton. But Dick would tell you that he was descended from Ephraim, not Jacob, and Ephraim settled in what is now Lyndeborough.

Still, Dick's family moved to Wilton in 1948, when he was just a toddler. His father bought the store from his uncle in 1952. Dick graduated from Wilton High School in 1964, and except for a few years after college, he has been a fixture in Wilton, and Wilton's Main Street, ever since. Generations of kids bought their penny candy from Putnam's. When they got a little older, they got tuxedos for the prom, a few years later, formal dress for their weddings.

Putnam's was the place to go for many things. Magazines, fishing licenses, even sweatshirts like this one. Wiltonites found what they wanted at Putnam's, served with a smile. Dick also looked out for people who didn't have so much. As part of the Lions Club, Dick was the person to see if you needed help getting glasses or a hearing aid. He also was the place to go for penny sale tickets. Hopefully the Lions Penny Sale will be right here in the Florence Rideout gym once again this fall.

Dick also contributed to the community in many other ways, including marching in the Memorial Day parade as an Air Force veteran, helping high school kids get scholarships, and as a member of Wilton's Economic Development team. While he no longer lives in Wilton, and soon will be retired, he still wants to see our town thrive. So Dick, we could honor you as businessman of the year. But with 73 years, more or less, on Main Street, that doesn't seem like enough. So the Town of Wilton names you our "Businessman of the Century"! You may live in Milford now, but we always want you to think of this as home, so we also make you an honorary citizen of Wilton! Congratulations, and enjoy."

Dick gave his thanks to all for the town's support during the 120 years the store has been on Main Street. He said he was very much looking forward to retirement and he couldn't be happier that his shop space was going to be utilized by such a great person and that the new business would be a positive step for Wilton's downtown.

After the conclusion of Dick Putnam being honored as Wilton's "Businessman of the Century" the Moderator announced the results of Article 8.

Article 8 cast votes yes were 93, no votes 9. Article 8, as written, was approved by paper ballot.

9. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty-Nine Thousand Dollars (\$29,000.00) for the purpose of making the fourth-year lease payment (of the seven year lease approved by warrant article #14 at the 2018 Town Meeting) on the Highway Department's 2019 International 10-Wheel Dump Truck. Monies to come from general taxation. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)

(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Kermit addressed the voters with his thoughts on Article 9 and Article 10 as follows:

“The next two warrant articles are for the town to approve annual payments on equipment leases, this one for the Highway Department and the next one for the Police Department. We approved buying both of these items at previous town meetings, but state law requires us to give voters the option to vote down the lease payment. All municipal leases have an escape clause that lets the town cancel the lease if Town Meeting votes against it. The vendor takes the equipment back and no more payments are due.

I hope you don't do that, because the town needs this equipment. The 10-wheel in this article is key to our plowing plan, among many other uses. Our equipment will have a useful life after the lease is paid, so giving it back now would lose money. Article 10, the lease payment on the police cruiser, is the final payment, so after that we own the vehicle. The Select Board recommends you support these lease payments, so our employees have the equipment they need. Thank you.”

The Moderator hearing no further questions read Article 9, as originally written. Article 9 was voice vote approved.

10. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Eight Thousand Nine Hundred Forty-Two Dollars (\$8,942.00) for the purpose of making the fourth-year lease payment (of the four year lease approved by warrant article #13 at the 2018 Town Meeting) on the Police Department's 2017 Cruiser. Monies to come from general taxation. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Hearing no discussion, the Moderator read Article 10 as written. Article 10, as written, was voice vote approved.

11. To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) for the purpose of purchasing a forestry truck to replace the current Forestry 1, and to authorize the retirement of Engine 3. Monies to come from the Fire Department Vehicle and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 2-1-0.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 3-1-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Hearing no discussion, the Moderator read Article 11 as written. By request, paper ballots were used by the voters. The ballot count for Article 11, as written, was yes votes 77, no votes 22. Article 11, as written, was approved.

12. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$55,000.00) for the purpose of purchasing a "Fire Chief Command Vehicle." Monies to come from the Fire Department Vehicle and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 2-1-0.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 3-1-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Hearing no discussion, the Moderator read Article 12 as written. By request, paper ballots were used by the voters. The ballot count for Article 12, as written, was yes votes 64, no votes 35. Article 12, as written, was approved.

13. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Forty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$45,000.00) for the purchase of a police cruiser and associated equipment, and authorize the withdrawal of Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000.00) from the Police Equipment Capital Reserve Fund established for that purpose. The balance of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000.00) to come from general taxation. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Following a brief discussion, the Moderator read Article 13, as originally written. Article 13 was voice vote approved.

14. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000.00) for the purpose of purchasing a pickup truck for the Cemetery Department. The monies to come from general taxation. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 2-0-1.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Following several questions and comments, the Moderator read Article 14, as originally written. Article 14 was voice vote approved.

15. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000.00) for the purpose of continuing the repair of the current out of service water hole (fire pond) list which has been established. Monies to come from general taxation. This will be a non-lapsing appropriation per RSA 32:7, VI and will not lapse until the project is completed or December 31, 2023, whichever occurs first. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Don Nourse detailed the dry hydrant repair progress after the voters granted their approval for the initial repairs at the 2020 Town Meeting. At that meeting 10 dry hydrants were slated to be repaired and brought back into service. He noted by utilizing a competitive bid process and utilizing several contractors' assistance 7 out-of-service hydrants were repaired. Three dry hydrants from that original list still needed work and 5 new failures were identified in the process.

Following his explanations, and after answering questions from voters, the Moderator read Article 15. Article 15, as written, was voice vote approved

16. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000) to be placed in the Fire Department Air Packs Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Monies to come from general taxation. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 2-1-0.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Hearing no questions or comments, the Moderator then read Article 16 as written. Article 16 was voice vote approved.

17. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Thousand Five Hundred Seventy-seven Dollars (\$1,577.00) for the purpose of increasing the Town Clerk/Tax Collector annual stipend from Sixty-eight Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty-seven Dollars (\$68,567.00) to Seventy Thousand One Hundred and Forty-two Dollars (\$70,142.00) per year (an increase of \$1,375.00) and to cover the associated increased payroll taxes and 457b retirement expenses related to same (\$86.00 for social security, \$20.00 for Medicare, and \$96.00 for retirement). Monies to come from general taxation. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Deputy Moderator Deb Degan stepped in to oversee Article 17. Following a question from a voter, she then read Article 17 as written.

Article 17 was voice vote approved. Moderator Bill Keefe thanked Deb for her assistance.

18. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Four Thousand Dollars (\$4,000.00) for the purpose of purchasing a RAD 57 Unit for the Ambulance Department. The monies to come from the Florence M. Wheeler Fund, previously established. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

It was explained by Kermit Williams that this equipment helps detect carbon monoxide in a patient. He further stated the funds for the purchase were from the Florence M. Wheeler Fund and would not be paid for by taxpayer monies

The Moderator then read Article 18 as written. Article 18 was voice vote approved.

19. To see if the Town will vote to establish a Police Special Detail Revolving Fund pursuant to RSA 31:95-h, for the purpose of funding Police Special Details and all expenses related thereto. All revenues charged for Police Special Details will be deposited into the fund, and the money in the fund shall be allowed to accumulate from year-to-year, and shall not be considered part of the Town's general fund balance. If approved, all monies billed and/or received for police special details from 1/1/2021 through the date of this vote shall be placed in this revolving fund. The Town Treasurer shall have custody of all monies in the fund, and shall pay out the same only upon order of the governing body and no further approval is required from the legislative body to expend monies from such revolving fund. Such fund may be expended only for the purpose for which the fund was created. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)

(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Kellie-Sue stated this fund, if approved, would be similar to the already existing Ambulance and Recycling Revolving Funds.

After her explanation, the Moderator read Article 19 as written. Article 19 was voice vote approved.

20. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$225,000.00) for the final design, bidding and construction for the rehabilitation of the Old County Farm Road Bridge over Mill Brook. The monies to come from the following: Seventy Thousand Three Hundred Eighty-Nine Dollars (\$70,389.00) from Fund Balance, this represents the balance of the 2017 additional highway block grant of \$107,000.00 which the Select Board voted to use for this bridge on 10/21/2019 for this purpose. Seventy-seven Thousand Three Hundred Six Dollars (\$77,306.00) to come from the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund previously established, and Seventy-Seven Thousand Three Hundred Five Dollars (\$77,305.00) to come from general taxation. This will be a non-lapsing appropriation per RSA 31:7, VI and will not lapse until the project is complete or December 31, 2022, whichever occurs first. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 2-1-0.)

(Budget Committee recommends this article. 4-0-1)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Kermit spoke to Article 20 as follows:

"The bridge on the northern end of Old County Farm Road, over Whiting or Mill Brook, is a beautiful example of 19th century workmanship. The dry stone arch over the brook is in great condition, almost like when it was first built. But the approach to the bridge has been damaged by flooding."

He stated the Select Board “wanted to save this bridge and keep it in historic condition. It’s on the national register of historic bridges. This warrant article was to raise money for a repair effort. We only got one bid for this repair, and we are not convinced that that proposal is the right solution. So more work needs to be done.” He then made a motion to amend this article in its entirety to read as follows:

“To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$70,389 to be placed in the Bridges Capital Reserve Fund previously established, the monies to come from the unassigned fund balance. This represents the balance of the 2017 additional highway block grant of \$107,000 which the Select Board voted to use for this bridge.”

The motion to amend Article 20 was seconded by Joanna Eckstrom.

Kermit explained that by approving this amendment the funds that were originally planned for this bridge repair will go into the bridge fund, where it can be used for this bridge or some other bridge project, without asking for additional tax dollars at this time. The board will work with the abutting landowner to come up with the best solution. He then asked the Moderator to recognize Fred Roedel, whose property abutted the Old County Farm Road Bridge, to speak on this issue.

Fred stated how he and his wife Kay had found their home 45 years ago. They were drawn to the home for its beauty and history. He said that in its past approximately 300 souls called it home as the County Poor Farm. He and his wife painstakingly restored the property and it is now on the Historic Registry. He went on to say how much he loved the area and wanted to help preserve the space. To that end he explained he was going to give to the Town a conservation easement to ensure the bridge could be restored and the area protected moving forward.

Joe Torre, a neighbor, stated he originally was going to object to Article 20 but would support the proposed amendment 100%.

The Moderator then reread the amendment to Article 20 and asked for a vote. The Article 20 amendment was voice vote approved

The Moderator then read Article 20, as amended, as follows:

“To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$70,389 to be placed in the Bridges Capital Reserve Fund previous established, the monies to come from the unassigned fund balance. This represents the balance of the 2017 additional highway block grant of \$107,000 which the Select Board voted to use for this bridge.”

Article 20, as amended, was voice vote approved.

21. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000.00) to be placed in the Town Hall Heating System Capital Reserve Fund previously established. The monies to come from general taxation. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Hearing no requests for discussion, the Moderator reread Article 21 as written.

Article 21, as written, was voice vote approved.

22. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy Thousand Dollars (\$70,000.00) to be placed in the Highway Vehicle/Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established. The monies to come from general taxation. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Hearing no requests for discussion, the Moderator reread Article 22 as written.
Article 22, as written, was voice vote approved.

23. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy-five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000.00) to be placed in the Public Works Garage Capital Reserve Fund previously established. The monies to come from general taxation. (Majority vote required.)

(Select Board recommends this article 3-0-0.)
(Budget Committee recommends this article 4-0-1.)

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Hearing no requests for discussion, the Moderator reread Article 23 as written.
Article 23, as written, was voice vote approved.

24. To accept the report of Agents, Auditors and Committees or Officers heretofore chosen to pass any vote relating thereto.

Moved by Kermit Williams, seconded by Kellie-Sue Boissonnault.

Deb Mortvedt spoke to thank the Town Report Committee for remembering, and honoring, those lost in the past year.

Serafin Anderson spoke to say we don't know what we have until it is lost. She explained how lucky we all were to be here and able to enjoy the beauty and nature options not available to city residents. She also thanked all public service employees, particularly the police and ambulance personnel for all they do.

Jennifer Gagnon asked about the negative audit finding status. She wondered "were the noted deficiencies resolved?" Kellie-Sue Boissonnault explained that the findings were very important and steps were being taken to resolve the noted deficiencies. Town Administrator Paul Branscombe spoke to say the town's responses will be available via the Town of Wilton's website.

25. To transact any other business that may legally come before said meeting.

Jeff Stone thanked the Select Board for listening to the voters back in the spring and rescheduling the Town Meeting to this later date.

Kermit mentioned the upcoming retirement of our Town Administrator, Paul Branscombe, in December. Because Paul wouldn't be here for the next Town Meeting in March 2022, he wanted to thank him for all his service to Wilton.

A motion to adjourn was made and was seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 PM.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane K. Farrell".

Jane K. Farrell
Wilton Clerk & Collector
June 20, 2021