

BOARD OF SELECTMEN PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES FOR

JANUARY 9, 2024

6:30PM

**In Attendance:** Joseph Pace, Robert Solomon, Robert Gustafson

J. Pace opened the meeting at 6:29pm and lead the meeting with the pledge of allegiance.

J. Pace asked if there was any public comment, there were six people in attendance.

J. Pace read through each warrant article and asked for comments or questions.

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**Article 01     ELECT OFFICIALS**

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**Article 02     MODIFY THE ELDERLY EXEMPTION CRITERIA**

Shall the town modify the provisions of RSA 72:39-a for elderly exemption from property tax in the Town of Kensington, based on assessed value, for qualified taxpayers, to be as follows: for a person 65 years of age up to 75 years, \$175,000 for a person 75 years of age up to 80 years,\$200,000; for a person 80 years of age or older \$220,000.

To qualify, the person must have been a New Hampshire resident for at least 3 consecutive years, own the real estate individually or jointly, or if the real estate is owned by such person's spouse, they must have been married to each other for at least 5 consecutive years.

In addition, the taxpayer must have a net income of not more than \$42,000 or, if married, a combined net income of less than \$63,000; and own net assets not in excess of \$300,000 excluding the value of the person's residence. (Majority vote required)

**K Felch showed a spreadsheet with the impact that this warrant article and the next two articles will have on the residents, this is based on the current enrollment of Elderly Exemptions and Veterans Credits. These totals do not include those that would qualify under the modified amounts.**

**See addendum 1.**

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**Article 03     MODIFY VETERAN'S CREDIT**

Shall the town modify the Veteran's Tax and All Veteran's Tax Credit in accordance with RSA 72:28, II, from its current tax credit of \$500 (five hundred dollars) per year to \$750 (seven hundred fifty dollars)? (Majority vote required)

**No questions on this article.**

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**Article 04     MODIFY SERVICE CONNECTED DISABILITY**

Shall the town modify the Service-Connected Total Disability Tax Credit in accordance with RSA 72:35, from its current tax credit of \$700 (seven hundred dollars) per year to \$1400 (fourteen hundred dollars)? (Majority vote required)

**No questions on this article.**

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**Article 05     OPERATING BUDGET**

Shall the Town of Kensington raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$2,603,198 (two million six hundred three thousand one hundred and ninety-eight dollars)? Should this article be defeated, the default

budget shall be \$2,463,083 (two million four hundred sixty-three thousand and eighty-three dollars). The governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X, and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

The proposed operating budget is an increase of \$138,627 from the budget adopted last year of \$2,464,571. The net estimated impact is \$.20 per thousand dollars of valuation. (twenty cents per thousand dollars of valuation.)

**C. Heal asked what happens if the default budget is passed. J. Pace stated that if the voters vote no on this article, then the default budget is the budget for 2024 and the Selectboard would be charged with finding out where the \$138,000 gets cut from the existing budget. They would be making the decisions on how the budget would be disbursed amongst the departments. The contracts that are obligations of the town but not within the default will have to be addressed. There were no further questions on the budget.**

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#### **Article 06 COMMUNITY POWER PLAN ADOPTION**

Should the Town adopt the Kensington Community Power Plan, authorize the Board of Selectmen to implement the Plan, and take all action in furtherance thereof, pursuant to RSA 53-E? The Kensington Community Power Plan is an opt-out program that offers more flexible electricity procurement. The Plan will initially provide lower electricity rates for residents, or it will not launch. Initial participation in the plan can be declined, after which enrollment becomes voluntary.

Tax Impact: None

**No questions on this warrant article. J. Pace recommended that questions be addressed to the Kensington Community Power Committee.**

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#### **Article 07 ROAD RECONSTRUCTION**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$200,000 (two hundred thousand dollars) for road reconstruction and maintenance of town roads. This will be a non-lapsing appropriation as per RSA 32.7, VI and will not lapse until December 31, 2025. This is in addition to the operating budget article.

The tax impact of this article is \$0.294 per \$1,000 valuation. (twenty-nine point four cents per thousand dollars of valuation)

**A. Noll asked what happens to the amount if it was to lapse? J. Pace explained that with this article we have 2 years to spend the funds appropriated. If the funds are not all spent then the funds can be spent into 2025 and will not lapse into the unassigned fund balance at the end of 2024.**

**This question on the ballot is separate from the budget amount for roads. This is more for construction of the roads. This is designed to accomplish the larger road reconstruction work within the town.**

**S. Heal asked does the board or M. Armstrong have a list of roads that they are going to repair and what the \$200k will be spent on each year? J. Pace stated to ask M. Armstrong the question of what roads at the deliberative session and he does know what roads need attention and what roads come next in the cycle. J. Pace stated that the board is aware of what roads are next in the cycle. B. Solomon stated that M. Armstrong is definitely capable of answering that question but might be apprehensive to state what roads he will be doing that coming year. J. Pace continued that there is a concern that if people don't live on or agree with the road being done that year they won't vote for it.**

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**Article 08      APPROPRIATE MONEY TO FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES CRF**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate \$25,000 (twenty five thousand dollars) to be placed in the Fire and Emergency Services Capital Reserve Fund. These funds to be used for the purchase, repair, upgrade, overhaul and/or retrofit of fire vehicles, apparatus, equipment, and related services. This is in addition to the operating budget article.

The tax impact of this article is \$.037 per \$1,000 valuation. (three point seven cents per thousand dollars of valuation)

**A. Noll asked what the balance is in the fund. The trustees of the trust funds hold those funds and they will be asked. S. Heal stated that there was \$175k taken from the fund this year. S. Heal asked if the Chief wrote the article or if the board did. Chief True wrote the article originally and it was updated this year with the new figure. S. Heal stated that there are usually 2 warrant articles that total \$75k. J. Pace agreed and continued that the board asked the department heads to look at the overall tax impact and Chief True agreed that they could reduce this for this year. K. Felch commented that the Trustees of the Trust Fund control that fund but \$237k has been added to this fund since the creation of it in 2020.**

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**Article 09      TUITION REIMBURSEMENT AND TRAINING TO PPSRF**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate \$15,000 (fifteen thousand dollars) to be placed into the Police Public Safety Revolving Fund. These funds to be used for specialty training, training instructor incentives, tuition reimbursement and educational incentives for Kensington Police Department employees.

The tax impact of this article will be an increase of \$.022 per \$1,000 valuation. (two point two cents per thousand dollars of valuation)

**A resident asked if the tuition reimbursement fund is just for the police department or is there something for the other departments?**

**J. Pace explained that this program has been instituted for the police department based on the specialized training that is needed for the officers. This fund could be used as an incentive for officers and a way to recruit new officers and maintain the existing ones. There is a contract that is signed for the officers and if they leave before the contract is fulfilled, they need to pay back what they have used.**

**The resident believes that all employees should have access to that. He would be interested in reimbursement for EMS. S. Heal stated that there is some reimbursement available to the department members as long as they pass the class.**

**J. Pace stated that tuition incentives are not offered for the other departments. He loves training and is in favor of a training and reimbursement program that would include others.**

**S. Heal stated that the police budget has a training budget line item that this is in addition to the line item.**

**J. Pace does know that there is mandated training in the budget and this training is for the officers to work on specialized training. Enrichment training or drug training might be some of the types of tuition reimbursements that are available.**

**A. Noll is this for the whole thing or partial reimbursement? The contract states as towards the tuition which could be the entire amount or a portion. No further comments.**

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**Article 10      APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO THE POLICE SAFETY REVOLVING FUND**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate \$15,000 (fifteen thousand dollars) to be placed into the Police Public Safety Revolving Fund for the purchase of police department items and related services.

The tax impact of this article will be an increase of \$0.022 per \$1000 valuation. (two point

two cents per thousand dollars of valuation.)

There were comments from the public that the article is too vague and should be more specific and they want to know what the funds are used for.

J. Pace explained that this is a minimal amount to be added to the fund and the Chief will be able to answer them and more detailed questions.

B. Solomon stated that we should have the chief write up what these articles are for.

A. Noll asked if anyone oversees what they buy with that fund? J. Pace stated that the funds are approved by the board, and there have not been any odd requests. Dashboard cams and videos might be some of the things this fund is used for.

C. Heal asked what happens if they don't use the funds? What happens when the fund goes over? J. Pace stated that the funds cannot go over, when the funds are gone they are gone. If money is unspent it goes to the next year, it is a revolving fund so the funds are able to accumulate from year to year. Recreation is a great revolving fund where summer camp money goes in and they can use the unspent funds the next year. B. Gustafson stated that it is the department's responsibility to spend the fund appropriately. The board does look over what the departments have spent.

A. Noll should there be a cap on the revolving fund? It shouldn't be that they ask for money each year if it is not needed. She believes that the government agencies forget about that and that there should be caps on these funds. B. Solomon stated that in the case of recreation revolving fund they are totally funded by the events that they have.

J. Pace wanted to note that these requests are lower due to the sensitivity the board wanted the departments to have towards the tax bills that the residents just got and the town is looking to go into the voting cycle with lower requests. No further comments were made.

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#### **Article 11      APPROPRIATE TO REVALUATION CRF**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$9,907 (nine thousand nine hundred and seven dollars) to be added to the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund to come from the unassigned fund balance. This is the first of five annual installments, which will be used to pay the assessor's cost for the State of NH required revaluation due next in 2028, estimated at \$47,628. This is in addition to the operating budget article.

There is no tax impact.

D. Fabrizio commented that there is approximately \$8700 in that fund presently. J. Pace stated that the board is looking to have this amount come from the fund balance due to the cost of the revaluation rather than asking the town to appropriate the amount yearly.

C. Heal the accumulated funds are going to pay for this each year? J. Pace stated that this board cannot dictate what other boards will decide to do in the future but right now the thought of this board is to have the funds come from the unassigned fund balance until 2028. No further comments.

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#### **Article 12      GIFT OF LAND FROM KACZMAREK**

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to accept a gift of land, identified in the Lot Line Adjustment plan of Elaine H Kaczmarek and Town of Kensington dated \_JULY 2023 that is composed of a portion of Map 8 Lot 13 and would convey .267 acres to Map 8 Lot 14 (Grange Hall parcel). Upon acceptance by the Town, the current owner of such land shall donate .267 acres, or 11,645 square feet, more or less, to the Town's Grange Hall parcel. The Town's intended use of the land is for public parking behind the Grange Hall for the use and enjoyment of the general public.

Further, to raise and appropriate up to \$6,000 (six thousand dollars) to offset the cost of the ownership transfer

The tax impact of this article is \$0.009 per \$1,000 valuation. (zero point nine cents per thousand dollars of valuation)

C. Heal asked what the \$6,000 pays for. That is the quote that the town got for the cost of the transfer of the property from our legal firm. No further questions.

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**Article 13      GRANGE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of up to \$4,000 (four thousand dollars) to do annual maintenance on the Grange Hall. The funds will be used for annual maintenance such as pest control, heating system maintenance, cleaning, and water testing, and for any unforeseen repairs needed as the structure is repaired.

The tax impact of this article is \$0.006 per \$1,000 valuation. (zero point six cents per thousand dollars of valuation)

**No questions on this warrant article.**

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**Article 14      APPROPRIATION TO FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES CRF**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$950 (nine hundred fifty dollars) to be placed in the Fire and Emergency Services Capital Reserve Fund. This amount is to come from Unassigned Fund Balance and represents the total of all permit fees and inspections received by Kensington Fire Rescue throughout 2023. These funds will be used for the purchase, repair, upgrade, overhaul and/or retrofit of fire vehicles, apparatus, equipment, and related services.

This article has no tax impact.

**No questions on this warrant article.**

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**Article 15      SOCIAL SERVICES REQUEST FOR WAYPOINT**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$2,100 (two thousand one hundred dollars) for Waypoint's youth and family support. Waypoint (Previously Richie McFarland Children's Center) provides early intervention programs that serves children from birth to three years of age and their families, service for youth experiencing homelessness, support for families with children with a chronic illness, and family and children programming. This investment will increase family stability, promote socialization in families, enhance child development, and provide concrete support in times of crisis to youth and families in Kensington. This is a special warrant article.

The tax impact of this article is \$0.003 per \$1,000 valuation. (zero point three cents per thousand dollars of valuation)

**No comments on this warrant article.**

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**Article 16      SOCIAL SERVICES REQUEST FOR ROCKINGHAM COMMUNITY ACTION**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,500 (one thousand five hundred dollars) to Rockingham Community Action for the purpose of providing financial assistance, budgeting education & support to Kensington residents in crisis to move them toward self-sufficiency. This is a special warrant article.

The tax impact of this article will be an increase of \$0.002 per \$1000 valuation. (zero point two cents per thousand dollars of valuation.)

**No Comments on the warrant article.**

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**Article 17      SOCIAL SERVICES REQUEST MEALS ON WHEELS**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,000 (one thousand dollars) to Meals on Wheels for the purpose of providing meals and safety services to qualified Kensington residents. Our services helped 4 (four) Kensington residents and provided them with 892 meals and wellness checks. The town support makes a difference. This is a special warrant article.

The tax impact of this article will be an increase of \$0.001 per \$1000 valuation. (zero point one cents per thousand dollars of valuation.)

**C. Heal asked if the wording on the sentence “Our services helped 4 (four) Kensington residents and provided them with 892 meals and wellness checks.” Is this for 2023? She believes that this should be adjusted to say what year they are talking about. J. Pace explained that the individuals should be at the deliberative session and can comment on the articles at that time.**

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#### **Article 18      SOCIAL SERVICES REQUEST ONE SKY COMMUNITY SERVICES**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$700 (seven hundred dollars) to One Sky Community Services Inc. to be added to their One Sky Readiness Fund and to address those critical client needs that are currently not funded and will not be funded in the future, for items like medical supplies, clothing, food, dental care, temporary housing, home modifications and emergency assistance. All monies that are raised yearly through our fundraising efforts go directly into this fund.

Our mission is to enable every person we serve to grow and enhance their abilities to live as independent, valued, participating members of their community. This is a special warrant article.

The tax impact of this article will be an increase of \$0.001 per \$1000 valuation. (zero point one cents per thousand dollars of valuation.)

**J. Pace stated that this is the one social service that is new this year.**

**C. Heal asked if the selectmen did the homework to see if they are valid. J. Pace stated that he is familiar with One Sky.**

**There were no further comments on this article.**

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#### **Article 19      ACCEPTANCE OF PERSONAL PROPERTY DONATED**

To see if the town will vote to authorize the selectmen to accept gifts of personal property, other than cash, to the municipality for any public purposes. This authorization, in accordance with RSA 31:95-e, shall remain in effect until rescinded by a vote of the town meeting. (Majority vote required)

**J. Pace explained that this warrant article would include property such as the warrant article that is being proposed earlier in the warrant. No further questions on this warrant article.**

That concludes the warrant article discussion and these warrant articles will go as presented to the Deliberative Session on February 7, 2024.

J. Pace thanked Ann Noll for her participation on the warrant article for the Elderly modification that she worked on with the board.

The board will vote to endorse each warrant article at the meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January.

K. Felch asked what the board wanted about their report for the Annual Report.

J. Pace will work on one that will be done before the meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> for the board members to review.

A resident asked if the budget would be gone through line by line. J. Pace stated that the budget is done and questions can be asked anytime about the budget. At deliberative session the only thing that

can be decreased would be the budget as a whole, line items would not be able to be adjusted at that time.

C. Heal asked the board if a person was able to stand outside the polls for the election or do you need a permit? J. Pace stated yes, you can. There is an area that is laid out by the moderator for that purpose and you must stay within that area.

Could you clarify, the meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, will you either approve or not approve the Kensington Center Historic District? J. Pace commented that the board is looking this over and it would not be an approval of it, just a letter of support from the board if they decide to support the effort of the Heritage Commission.

S. Heal approached the podium and wanted to go back to last night, he continued that he does pick on the police department because he doesn't like how some things are done. He believes that there is a need for a police department in the town. His overall view is that the budget is 2.6 million and the police department is 800k, which he believes is 33% of the entire budget. He does not believe that the crime rate in the Town of Kensington warrants that type of money.

J. Pace stated that we are not at our fleet capacity this year. S. Heal wondered why the fleet got that big, but as a citizen they are using town property to make extra money for themselves. If the board can structure the detail money to pay for the use of the car totally, then that might be more acceptable.

A. Noll wanted to thank S. Heal for saying that. There are many people talking about the size of the department. That there is not a need for that large of a department in the town.

C. Heal agrees that there are many more people that don't agree with the police department budget.

J. Pace wanted to stop the conversation because the chief is not in attendance tonight.

B. Noll he wanted to say the same thing and agrees 100%.

J. Pace explained that there are probably 5 selectboard chairs that allow these types of conversations, and he is hoping to keep this candor. But will not continue conversations that are against a member of a department or a department when they are not in attendance to refute comments.

C. Heal stated that they appreciate the way the meetings are run.

J. Pace closed the public hearing at 7:52pm

B. Solomon reflected on L. Monroe's comments to the board last night and asked if it would be worthwhile to get legal to weigh in on the project and comments made.

J. Pace agreed that it may be worthwhile to confirm that there is no impact.

The board asked K. Felch to reach out and confirm that there is zero regulatory or other property infringements and that it is benign to the homeowners to be part of this project presented by the Heritage Committee.

B. Gustafson motion to adjourn at 7:54pm, B. Solomon seconded all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen T Felch