The Annual Town Elections were held on Tuesday, March 14, 2023. Polls were open from 10:00 AM. to 6:00 PM. for the purpose of voting for Town & School officials at the Medallion Opera House, Gorham Town Hall at 20 Park Street. The votes were tabulated, and the cast and uncast ballots were sealed. There were 155 people who cast their ballots.

At 7:15 pm, Moderator Paul Bousquet called to order the business meeting to act upon the remaining articles at the GRS Cooperative Middle-High School Gymnasium. He thanked everyone for joining and recognized all of the election workers for their hard work. There were 109 people who were present at the meeting.

Aimee Bousquet, a senior at GMHS, sang the National Anthem.

**ARTICLE #1** To elect one (1) Selectman for a term of three (3) years, one (1) Town Clerk for three (3) years, one (1) Trustee of Trust Funds for a term of three (3) years, two (2) Planning Board Members for a term of three (3) years, one (1) Water and Sewer Commissioner for a term of three (3) years, three (3) Budget Committee Members for a term of three (3) years, two (2) Budget Committee Members for a term of one (1) year, one (1) Library Trustee for a term of one (1) year, one (1) Moderator for a term of one (1) year. (To be voted on by written ballot while the polls are open for receipt of same.)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 Selectman for 3 years | Michael WaddellAngel KingTed MillerAnyone ButMickey Mouse | 1251211 |
| 1 Town Clerk for 3 years | Christina Zornio | 150 |
| 1 Trustee of Trust Funds for 3 years | Karen Willhoite | 140 |
| 2 Planning Board Members for 3 years | Paul RobitailleRobert GarganoJoan MerrillEarl McGuilicuddy | 14010611 |
| 1 Water & Sewer Commissioner for 3 years | Lee Carroll | 149 |
| 3 Budget Committee members for 3 years3 Budget Committee Members for 3 years Cont. | Greg O’NeilKatherine Lutz CorriganDio ThagourasJoan MerrillPatti StoltePaul BousquetEarl McGuillcuddyJay GuilmetteTed MillerJen StewartDennis PednaultPatti BeausejourAllen Beausejour  | 141074321111111 |
| 2 Budget Committee Members for 1 year | Paul BousquetSue DemersStephanie RussellJoan MerrillLee CarrollJay GuilmetteGreg O’NeilPatti StoltePaula Labnon | 1166222211 |
| 1 Library Trustee for 1 year | Nicole Eastman | 143 |
| 1 Moderator for 1 year | Paul BousquetBruce LaryBob Byrnes | 14711 |

**ARTICLE #2** To see if the Town will vote to adopt Amendment No. 1 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Town of Gorham Zoning Ordinance as follows:

Amendment No. 1 would amend Article IV. Districts and District Regulations by removing churches from the list of uses requiring a Special Exception in Residential A and Residential B and add “Land or structures primarily used for religious purposes” to the list of uses permitted by right in order to comply with the new state law (RSA 674:76) that prohibits restricting the use of land or structures for primarily religious purposes.

**Yes-124 Passed**

**No-29**

**ARTICLE #3** To see if the Town will vote to adopt Amendment No. 2 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Town of Gorham Zoning Ordinance as follows:

Amendment No. 2 would amend Article III. Definitions by updating and clarifying the definition of Manufactured Housing by adding reference to HUD certification and removing references to size and pre-site-built housing. Would also clarify that the definition of single-family dwelling does not include manufactured housing.

**Yes-107 Passed**

**No-43**

**ARTICLE #4** To see if the Town will vote to adopt Amendment No. 3 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Town of Gorham Zoning Ordinance as follows:

Amendment No. 3 would update Section 5.02 Temporary Residences Paragraph B to treat tiny homes on wheels the same as recreational vehicles and require compliance with applicable codes for both.

**Yes-112 Passed**

**No-41**

**ARTICLE #5** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$900,000.00** (gross budget) for engineering, reconstructing, and paving Clay Brook Road (2,300 linear feet), and to authorize the issuance of not more than $900,000.00 of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33) and to authorize the municipal officials to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon. (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 6-2.) **(3/5 ballot vote required.)**

**So Moved- Judy Leblanc**

**Seconded- Yves Zornio**

**Discussion:**

Moderator Paul Bousquet explained that this article would be a Yes/No secret ballot vote that would be open for one hour, and needs a 3/5 vote to pass.

Selectman Mike Waddell explained that this article has been coming for a long time. The road was constructed over 20 years ago and the road is no longer up to standards. This Bond includes three roads that would be done. Clay Brook being the most expensive and the most used road. The other two roads are Hemlock and Evergreen. He explained that the Selectmen didn’t want to have to use a bond for this project, but they feel that in these times, this is the only way to go. There are Capital Reserve funds to cover part, but not the whole, project. The roads are deteriorating and need to be maintained before absolute failure happens.

Eric Grenier from HEB Engineering explained that they have been hired to prepare the construction for these three roads. In total, it’s about 3,700 LF of roadway. Clay Brook being about 2,300 LF. HEB has done bids for each of the roads. Clay Brook cannot be covered by the Capital Reserve fund as Clay Brook needs significant repairs. Evergreen and Hemlock can be covered by the Capital Reserve fund. A lot of the subgrade materials on the roads now don’t meet current standards today. Their bid includes having the roads being brought up to building standards with reconstruction of the roads that will last. The drainage will be brought up to standards so that the road will be able to distribute the load more evenly across the substrate. HEB has put bids out for this project. They have received six bids total with five competitive bids. With a thorough review of the bidders, they have made a recommendation to award the project to a local contractor if this article passes.

Town Manager Denise Vallee stated that this Bond for $900,000 is for 5 years with 4.35% interest rate. Total interest would be $120,398.10. If the town does the project all at the same time, there will only be one cost for mobilization for the project which will save the town about $100,000. So, the net cost is only about $20,000. The first payment would be due in 2024 for $205,000. Part of this would be taken care of by the Capital Reserve fund. There would be no increase this year to the taxes for this project.

Dennis Pednault asked what policy is in place to change and make sure that the road will be built to standards. Are there any Wetland issues? Mentioned issues that have come up throughout the town with other roads that could come up with this project?

Selectman Michael Waddell has been talking about how this road was not built to the right standards over 20 years ago. There are other roads in town that have been rebuilt to be up to standards. Michael Waddell stated that this project will be done right this time. He also mentioned other roads that have not been owned by Gorham but the town has moved forward to work on them and get them up to town standards. The town needs the job to be done and it will be done right.

Eric Grenier from HEB talked about how they were involved with making the town’s standards for roads and this project. This includes specifications like the quality of gravel, materials, depth, compact and paving. They took into consideration the specifications that are needed in the North Country. The original roads were lacking these specifications.

Town Moderator Paul Bousquet asked if there was any other discussion. Yes/No ballot took place starting at 7:42 and was ending at 8:42.

**Voted- Passed- Yes- 90 No- 19**

**ARTICLE #6 Optional Veterans’ Tax Credit –** To see if the Town will vote, in accordance with RSA 72-27a, to change the existing Standard Veterans’ tax credit to the optional Veterans’ tax credit pursuant to RSA 72:27-a in the amount of $200.00. The Optional Veterans’ tax credit shall replace the Standard veterans’ tax credit in its entirety and shall not be in addition thereto.

**Also, to adopt the changes to RSA 72:28 IV a: The following persons shall qualify for the standard veterans' tax credit or the optional veterans' tax credit:** (a) Every resident of this state who is a veteran, as defined in RSA 21:50, and served not less than 90 days on active service in the armed forces of the United States in any qualifying war or armed conflict listed in this section, and continues to serve or was honorably discharged or an officer who continues to serve or was honorably separated from service; or the spouse or surviving spouse of such resident, provided that training for active duty by a member of the national guard or reserve shall be included as service under this subparagraph.

**So moved- Michael Waddell**

**Seconded- Yves Zornio**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #7 All Veterans’ Tax Credit –** To see if the Town will vote, in accordance with RSA 72-27a, to adopt the provisions of RSA 72-28b in its entirety**:**

**RSA 72-28b I.** A town or city may adopt or rescind the all-veterans' property tax credit granted under this section by the procedure in RSA 72:27-a.

**II**. The credit granted under this section shall be the same as the amount of the standard or optional veterans' tax credit in effect in the town or city under RSA 72:28. A town or city with an existing standard or optional veterans' tax credit under RSA 72:28 prior to August 18, 2016, adopting the credit under this section, may phase in the amount of the all-veterans' tax credit over a 3-year period to match the standard or optional veterans' tax credit. **III**. The all-veterans' tax credit shall be subtracted each year from the property tax on the veteran's residential property. **IV**. A person shall qualify for the all veterans' tax credit if the person is a resident of this state who is a veteran, as defined in RSA 21:50, and served not less than 90 days on active service in the armed forces of the United States and continues to serve or was honorably discharged or an officer who continues to serve or was honorably separated from service; or the spouse or surviving spouse of such resident, provided that training for active duty or state active duty by a member of the national guard or reserve shall be included as service under this paragraph; provided however that the person is not eligible for and is not receiving a credit under RSA 72:28 or RSA 72:35.

**So moved- Phil Cloutier**

**Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #8** To see if the Town will vote to increase the Veterans’ Tax Credit per NH RSA 72:28 and the All-Veterans’ Tax Credit, NH RSA 72:28-b, from $200.00 to $300.00. (By petition American Legion Auxiliary Unit 82 Gorham.)

**So moved- Peter Gagnon**

**Seconded- Marie Duguay**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #9** To see if the Town will vote to modify the **elderly exemptions** from property tax in the Town of Gorham, based on assessed value, for qualified taxpayers, to be as follows: for persons 65-75 years of age, $25,000; for persons 75-80 years of age, $50,000; for persons 80 years of age or older, $100,000. To qualify, the person must have been a New Hampshire resident for at least three (3) consecutive years, own the real estate individually or jointly, or if the real estate is owned by such a person’s spouse, they must have been married for at least five (5) consecutive years. In addition, the taxpayer must have a net income from all sources of not more than $24,400.00 for single or if married, a combined net income of $32,400.00, and own assets not in excess of $50,000, excluding the value of the person’s actual residence and the land upon which it is located up to 2 acres (RSA 72:39-a).

**So moved- Michelle Lutz**

**Seconded- Patti Stolte**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #10** To see if the Town will vote to modify the **disabled exemption** from property tax in the Town of Gorham, based on assessed value, for qualified taxpayers, to be **$25,000**. The exemption may be applied only to property which is occupied as the principal place of abode by the disabled person. The exemption may be applied to any land or buildings appurtenant to the residence or to manufactured housing if that is the principal place of abode. Nothing in this section shall preclude a qualified applicant from earning an income. The exemption applies to any person who is eligible under Title II or Title XVI of the federal Social Security Act for benefits to the disabled. To qualify, the applicant must have been a New Hampshire resident for at least five (5) years, own the real estate individually or jointly, or if the real estate is owned by such a person’s spouse, they must have been married for at least five (5) consecutive years. In addition, the taxpayer must have a net income from all sources of not more than $24,400.00 for single or if married, a combined net income of $32,400.00, and own assets not in excess of $50,000, excluding the value of the person’s actual residence and the land upon which it is located up to two (2) acres (RSA 72:37-b).

**So moved- Judy LeBlanc**

**Seconded- Yves Zornio**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #11** To see if the voters will accept Imp Trail Road (925 linear feet of gravel road) located in Imp Trail Heights as shown on Plan 2915 on file at the Coos County Registry of Deeds and on Town of Gorham Tax Map R1. (Approved by the Planning Board by a vote of

5-1.)

**So moved- Michael Waddell**

**Seconded- Yves Zornio**

**Discussion:**

Selectman Michael Waddell stated that this is the last new road in Stony Brook and it’s a fairly short road. There is potential for five residences to be on this road. The Planning Board has put forth a change in the ordinance to allow a non-paved road. This is a gravel road that was built to the town’s specifications.

Eric Grenier from HEB has done an oversite of the construction of Imp Trail Road. They have done materials testing to make sure that this road is up to town specifications. There are no concerns with the standards of this road.

Sue Demers asked who owns this road and what is the rating from the state?

Selectman Michael Waddell stated that The Gorham Land Company owns the land.

Eric Grenier from HEB stated that this is a low volume road that meets the specifications of the town.

Sue Demers asked if we will have to put money down later to have this road paved like we are for the other parts of Stony Brook.

Selectman Michael Waddell stated that they could come to the town but it’s built to specifications and the likelihood is low.

Dennis Pednault who stated that he used to be on the Zoning Board, talked about how private roads shouldn’t be the town’s responsibility and that he doesn’t recommend this as it can end up costing the town money down the road if these are wanting to be paved.

Michael Waddell stated that the people who have spent the money on these properties want to be on a public way. The Board of Selectmen supports this article because it can end up giving the town more tax revenue in the long run by allowing more buildable lots that are worth more. He feels that there needs to be a level of trust with the people in this development and the town.

Dennis Pednault suggested that if these people are spending big money for these lots like it was suggested they will, why don’t they spend their money to pave these roads and not the townspeople’s.

Selectman Michael Waddell states that the developers no longer have to have a paved road. The Imp Trail Road is built well and will bring the town revenue.

Dennis Pednault went on to state that if gravel roads are acceptable, why don’t they have the Bond for Stony Brook roads be for gravel.

Sue Demers stated that the Capital Reserve fund is being spent on Stony Brook roads already when a lot of the other roads in town still need work. Why take another road on that could need work down the road?

Jen Stewart asked if the developer owns all of these lots still and if there were any building permits for them yet. Are they not building due to the road?

Selectman Michael Waddell stated that all of these lots have sold. There are no permits yet until things are finished in the late fall. Waddell made it clear that the people who bought these lots were under the impression that this would become a town road because it is up to town specifications. He stated that there was no guarantee for this road, but hoped for trust within the town in making this decision.

Jen Stewart stated that if all of the lots sold the way they were, they shouldn’t expect the towns people to build a road for them.

Marie Duguay was wondering if this was something that was expecting to be done this year.

Selectman Mike Waddell stated that as soon as they were ready, they were looking for the town to take the road over. One of the things that lowered the price for Clay Brook Road was the ability to store the material while they are doing the work until they are finished and change ownership.

Paul Robitaille explained that he has been on the planning board for many years. They are volunteers and do the best they can. Every time they vote on things, there is a divide in votes. There is no guarantee of anything. The planning board had a mixed vote with the vote for gravel roads. Never a guarantee.

Sue Demers said she feels that the town is asking to take on more roads when the town already has a lot on our plates.

Deidre Blair asked if there was anyway to defer this vote until we know if the Bond Article passed.

Selectman Michael Waddell would not withdraw his motion for this to happen.

Kim Gallant asked if this is something that we will have to maintain starting now. It’s across the street from her house. This road is used a lot by hikers and for rescues. Has this been factored in as to who will be able to use this road? Can this be deferred to another year once it is built?

Selectman Michael Waddell stated that people will have to use the trails that exist and not the old trail that used to come through there. If this article passes, then the town will own the road and take possession and it will become part of the maintenance plan. All the boards have voted and agreed on this.

**Motion to End Discussion- Michelle Lutz**

**Seconded by- Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- Question So Moved**

**Voted- Passed (Standing vote) Yes- 45 No- 33**

**ARTICLE #12** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the amount of **$80,000.00** for the purpose of highway and sidewalk asphalt repaving and curbing projects. Tax Rate Impact: $0.21 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**So moved- Judy LeBlanc**

**Seconded- Lee Carroll**

**Discussion:**

Ben Poirier stated that he lives on Highland Ave and that the sidewalks have been destroyed by the snow machines. What will the town be doing to take measures from this happening and protecting the money spent on this project?

Selectman Michael Waddell explained that this money isn’t specifically for this project. Normally this is for resurfacing residential roads. The town has talked with both the Water and Sewer Department and the Highway Department to see where this will be most needed. The concern of sleds on Main street is heard but has been approved by the board to help our businesses and will not change as of now.

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #13** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$250,000.00** to be added to the Road Resurfacing & Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $923,714.79.* Tax Rate Impact: $0.65 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**So moved- Michael Waddell**

**Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Discussion:**

Sue Demers was wondering what roads will be done.

Selectman Michael Waddell explained that there were no specific projects but this fund will be used for the lower end of Stony Brook. This is a Capital Reserve fund that is used for many projects and can be used as a match for State or Federal funds. This is a very important fund when there is a natural disaster as there are adequate funds to be matched.

Town Manager Denise Vallee stated that there is a match of $194,000 is needed and has been put aside for the sidewalks along Lancaster Road that will include an ADA crosswalk. Another request for a Main Street project is also in the works with Senator Shaheen’s office and will need a $183,000 match and will move the project up to 2024 instead of 2026.

Sue Demers questioned if the Selectmen have to come to the town to spend the Capital Reserve funds.

Selectman Michael Waddell stated that they do not, but that these funds are used in the best uses possible. Also, they are saving these funds for certain projects that will need to be done in the future. He feels that they are careful in how these funds are used.

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #14** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee’s recommended amount of **$4,793,830** for the general municipal operations. This article does not include special or individual articles addressed. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 6-2.)

**So moved- Yves Zornio**

**Seconded- Judy LeBlanc**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   |  |  **Budget** | **Tax Rate** |
|  |  | **Committee** | **Impact / $1,000** |
| General Government  | $  |  1,105,390 | 2.87 |
| Public Safety  |  |  2,064,578 | 5.36 |
| Highways, Streets, Bridges  |  |  1,033,733 | 2.69 |
| Municipal Solid Waste/Recycling  |  |  315,910 | .82 |
| Health Purposes  |  |  2,050 | <.01 |
| Welfare  |  |  25,260 | <.01 |
| Recreation & Parks  |  |  238,103 | .62 |
| Patriotic Purposes  |  |  7,056 | .02 |
| Conservation Commission  |  |  250 | <.01 |
| Long-Term Debt  |  |  1,500 | <.01 |
|  **TOTAL:**  | **$**  |  **4,793,830** |   |

 **Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #15** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$165,932.00** for the operation of the Gorham Public Library. Tax Rate Impact: $0.43 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 6-2.)

**So moved- Patti Stolte**

**Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Discussion:**

Sue Demers noted that most of the budget was due to wages at 70.43% excluding the custodian. $116,861 were for wages and benefits. This is a lot of money for a town this size. She feels that there is a lot of overlap with other departments and what the library does. Is the library writing grants to try and cover costs?

Shannon Buteau said they are writing grants and pointed out that there is a page in the Town Report that shows the grants that have been received by the library.

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #16** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$5,000.00** to be added to the Library Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $5,050.69.* Tax Rate Impact: $0.01 (Recommended by the

Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-

0.)

**So moved- Lee Carroll**

**Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #17** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$593,916.00** for the operation of the Sewer Department. (This amount will be offset by user fees and Sewer funds. It will not affect general taxation.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**So moved- Ted Miller**

**Seconded- Roger Goulet**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #18** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$586,712.00** for the operation of the Water Department. (This amount will be offset by user fees and Water funds. It will not affect general taxation.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**So moved- Roger Goulet**

**Seconded- Ted Miller**

**Voted- Passed**

**Motion to Combine Articles 19,20,21 and 22- Yves Zornio**

**Seconded- Lee Carroll**

**Voted- Passed**

Moderator Paul Bousquet read Articles 19-22

**So Moved- Judy LeBlanc**

**Seconded- Patti Stolte**

# ARTICLE #19 To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $10,000.00

for the purpose of supporting the 4th of July Committee with the cost of fireworks for the 4th of July Celebration. Tax Rate Impact: .03 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 7-1.)

**ARTICLE #20** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$50,000.00** to be added to the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $208,341.27.* Tax Rate Impact: $0.13 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 6-0, 2 abstain.)

**ARTICLE #21** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$12,500.00** to be added to the Fire Equipment Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $88,509.99*. Tax Rate Impact: $0.03 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 6-0, 2 abstain.)

**ARTICLE #22** To see if the town will vote to establish a SCBA Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for the purpose of providing SCBA equipment to firefighters. And further to raise and appropriate the sum of **$7,500.00** to be placed in such fund and to designate the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend as may be necessary for this purpose. Tax Rate Impact: $0.02 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 6-0, 2 abstain.)

**Discussion:**

Amanda Bradford asked what SCBA stands for in Article 22.

\*Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus

**Voted- Passed**

**Motion to Combine Articles 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27- Yves Zornio**

**Seconded- Abbi Evankow**

**Voted- Passed**

Moderator Paul Bousquet read Articles 23-27

**So Moved- Bronson Paradis**

**Seconded- Lee Carroll**

**ARTICLE #23** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$40,000.00** to be added to the Ambulance Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $49,643.92*. Tax Rate Impact: $0.10 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 6-0, 2 abstain.)

**ARTICLE #24** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$20,000.00** to be added to the Ambulance Equipment Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $30,476.33.* Tax Rate Impact: $0.05 (Recommended by the

Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 60, 2 abstain.)

**ARTICLE #25** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$25,000.00** to be added to the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $41,949.12*. Tax Rate Impact: $0.06 (Recommended by the Board of

Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**Discussion:**

John Lapierre talked about how the population has gone down and doesn’t see the justification for four cruisers parked at the Police Department. Wants an explanation for all these vehicles.

Chief Adam Marsh explained how he’s done research and surveyed 17 towns. He made it known that we are on point with other towns for what the department has. There is a need for all of the vehicles that are parked outside. The four vehicles are not all lettered vehicles that have all the equipment in them. There is a fourth vehicle that is an older vehicle that is “offline” that is used for trainings and other departments. This keeps the miles down for the other vehicles as well as maintenance. There is no plan to purchase a new cruiser this year, but there needs to be funds when the need arises.

John Lapierre proceeded to ask if these vehicles were all insured.

Chief Adam Marsh said, “Yes, they are”.

John Lapierre stated that there are still four vehicles and that the insurance is an extra cost and he feels that the fourth vehicle isn’t needed. Stated that there are seven men in the department and questioned if Police Chief Marsh actually works? Looking for justification.

Moderator Paul Bousquet stepped in to keep the article moving.

Chief Adam Marsh stated that in the summer, there is a much higher population which is more than enough justification for the number of officers that the town has. He stated that he has an open-door policy and is willing to hear any questions or concerns that people may have.

Christina Zornio talked about how she doesn’t feel this town is the same town as when she grew up. Things have changed and just because you don’t see what the Police Department does, doesn’t mean that they aren’t doing anything. Our neighborhoods aren’t the same safe places that we’ve always had. Things are changing, and we need to change with it.

Isaac Fithian broke costs down and stated that this is only about $10 a person. He feels that this is a pretty reasonable price to pay for public safety.

Mary White brought up that Article 14 has already passed and that this article now is on the capital reserve fund for a cruiser. Continued to explain to John Lapierre that the fourth cruiser has been decommissioned and the equipment is no longer in it. The main reason they keep this vehicle is for departments to use for trainings and other times that they are needing to go out of town. It is considered a “town car”.

**ARTICLE #26** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$10,000.00**

to be added to the Police Equipment Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $20,106.78.* Tax Rate Impact: $0.03 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**ARTICLE #27** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$13,000.00** to be added to the Dispatch Equipment Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $57,398.71*. Tax Rate Impact: $0.03 (Recommended by the

Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-

0.)

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #28** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$100,000.00** to be added to the Town Building Purchase & Repairs Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $190,926.80.* Tax Rate Impact: $.26 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**So Moved- Lee Carroll**

**Seconded- Denise Vallee**

**Voted- Passed**

 **ARTICLE #29** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$20,000.00** to be added to the Renewable Energy Projects Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $10,000.00.* Tax Rate Impact: $.05 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**So Moved- Bronson Paradis**

**Seconded- Denise Vallee**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #30** To see if the Town of Gorham will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Hundred and Nineteen Thousand, Three Hundred and Forty Four Dollars **($219,344)** (Gross Budget) for the purpose of purchasing and installing a 59kw roof-mounted solar array and related equipment at the Public Works Garage and to authorize the issuance of **$59,000** in a CDFA Loan, **$130,344** in federal grants and **$30,000** from the Renewable Energy Capital Reserve Fund; to authorize the Board of Selectmen to apply for, obtain and accept federal, state or other aid, if any, which may be available for said project and to comply with all laws applicable to said project; to authorize the Board of Selectmen to issue, negotiate, sell and deliver said bonds and notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to take any other action, which may include declining an agreement for the project which terms and conditions are not in the best interest of the Town of Gorham, or to pass any other vote relative thereto. This project moving forward is subject to the award of $41,344 from the USDA Community Facilities Grant Program. (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0) **(3/5 vote required.)**

**So Moved- Yves Zornio**

**Seconded- Peter Gagnon**

**Discussion:**

Isaac Fithian stated that he’s looked at studies that solar panels have a 14% capacity in the North Country due to the amount of sun. This is a relatively small amount of energy. He talked about natural gas supply and how it is more reliable.

Selectman Yves Zornio said that he doesn’t disagree that we are not in the sunshine capital, but even still can benefit from solar. We just approved solar for the Edward Fenn. The project in Article 30 has a projected 1-year rate of 60,000 KWH which is about 5,000 KWH per month. The average home owner uses about 1/10th of this. The expected usage, even with the amount of sun here, will fully supply the Public Works Garage and the Fire Station, on top of having some credit. There will still be a need for natural gas even with the panels, but overall, will be less with the solar. Between the grants and money from the loan, once this is paid off, we own all of it.

Town Manager Denise Vallee stated that the total cost of the project would be $219,344. The grant they received already is for $89,000. The town is applying for another grant for $41,344 from the USDA. If the USDA grant isn’t granted, this project will not move forward. There would be $59,000 that would be borrowed at 4%. In addition to that, there are two other grants that they could take advantage of. One is for $10,000 from New Hampshire PUC. Also, an Inflation Reduction Act tax credit which is 30% of $89,000 or $26,700. If we receive both, there’s a balance of $22,300 that the town is responsible for. This is only 10% of the project cost and the town will get a savings on the electricity on top of that.

Melissa Elander advised that the panels according to Revision Energy are good for 79% capacity and not the 14% as stated earlier.

Town Manager Denise Vallee stated that the cumulative solar benefits would be a savings of $375,000.

**Voted- Passed**

**Motion to Combine Articles 31,32,33 and 34- Judy LeBlanc**

**Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- Passed**

Moderator Paul Bousquet read Articles 31-34

# So Moved- Lee Carroll

**Seconded- Judy LeBlanc**

**ARTICLE #31** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$120,000.00** to be added to the Highway Heavy Equipment Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $108,381.87.* Tax Rate Impact: $0.31 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

# ARTICLE #32 To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $30,000.00 to be added to the Sanitation/Recycling Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $141,641.03*. Tax Rate Impact: $0.08 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**ARTICLE #33** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$3,600.00** to be added to the Cates Hill Land Fill Trust Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $21,305.18*. Tax Rate Impact: $.01 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**ARTICLE #34** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$3,500.00** to be added to the East Milan Monitoring Expendable Trust Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $63,978.63*. Tax Rate Impact: $.01 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**Voted- Passed**

**Motion to Combine Articles 35-49- Ted Miller**

**Seconded- Judy LeBlanc**

**Voted-Passed**

Moderator Paul Bousquet read Articles 35-49

**So Moved- Yves Zornio**

**Seconded- Lee Carroll**

**ARTICLE #35** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$900.00** to be added to the Medallion Opera House Capital Reserve Fund as previously established, with said funds to come from December 31, 2022 unassigned fund balance. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $6,247.26.* No amount to be raised from taxation. (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**ARTICLE #36** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$62,000.00** to be added to the Assessment Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $50,014.48*. Tax Rate Impact: $0.24 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**ARTICLE #37** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$30,000.00** to be added to the Information Technology Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $49,095.58*. Tax Rate Impact: $0.08 (Recommended by the

Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-

0.)

**ARTICLE #38** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$15,000.00** to be added to the River Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $188,078.29*. Tax Rate impact: $0.04 (Recommended by the

Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-

0.)

**ARTICLE #39** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$3,000.00** to be added to the Special Insurance Trust Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $11,458.88*. Tax Rate Impact: $.01 (Recommended by the Board of

Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**ARTICLE #40** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum **$5,000.00** to be added to the Longevity/Severance Trust Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2022: $37,355.31*. Tax Rate Impact: $0.01 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**ARTICLE #41** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$14,000.00** for the purpose of supporting Gorham residents needing home care services from Androscoggin Valley Home Care. Tax Rate Impact: $0.04 (By Petition.) (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 6-2.)

**ARTICLE #42** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$2,895.00** for the purpose of supporting The Mental Health Center in providing outpatient and emergency mental health services for the citizens of Gorham. Tax Rate Impact: <$0.01 (By Petition.) (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**ARTICLE #43** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$6,745.00** for the operation of Tri-County Community Action Program, Inc. service programs in Gorham: Transportation, Energy Assistance, Weatherization, Guardianship, Head Start, Homeless Intervention and Prevention, RSVP, ServiceLink, Senior Meals, Tamworth Dental Center. Tax Rate Impact: $0.02 (By Petition.) (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**ARTICLE #44** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$10,000.00** for the purpose of supporting the Gorham Community Learning Center in Gorham. Tax Rate Impact: $0.03 (By Petition.) (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 5-3.)

**Discussion:**

Sue Demers questioned Article 44 about the Gorham Community Learning Center. She feels childcare shouldn’t be the taxpayer’s responsibility. This request has increased by 122% this year from $4,500 to $10,000.

Melinda Fauteux explained that she is the Director of the Learning Center and there is an increase in this article amount because this is the first year since 2020 they have been able to be at full capacity since Covid. Cost of everything has gone up including insurance, supplies and utilities. They are also trying to pay their staff livable wages to keep up with inflation. There is a huge shortage of facilities for childcare due to some closing. It is a community problem. If people can’t send their kids to daycare, they are unable to work.

Marie Duguay feels that she has been personally affected by how the Learning Center has had an impact on her and her family. They have helped provide support even on their own time. They care for these kids and provide education as well. This is the first year that the Learning Center has brought the amount up and feels they deserve this for everything they do.

Judy LeBlanc noted that childcare is an essential service and she asked what the hourly wage was.

Melinda Fauteux stated that the average wage for their employees is $11.50 with no benefits.

Judy LeBlanc asked if there were any employees that were at the meeting.

Moriah Middleton who has been with the Learning Center for seven years, explained that she doesn’t stay for the pay but for the kids. She loves her job and wants these kids to succeed. She could work other places but stays at the Learning Center because she cares for these kids and wants to make a difference.

Abbi Evankow asked what this money would bring the wages up to.

Melinda Fauteux stated that this money will be able to help sustain what the wages are now. Insurance and supplies have gone up and this will help with keeping things the same. They have cut in other ways including not providing breakfast as the grants were not offsetting the cost enough to make this affordable. They do fundraisers with the families and the staff. The grants are mostly for specific items and not an overall funding.

Mary White said that her understanding was that 45% of kids were from Gorham. Have they asked for funding from other towns, including Berlin?

Melinda Fauteux stated that about 49% are from Gorham. They have asked both Randolph and Shelburne for money. They asked Shelburne for about $500 per student that they have. They asked Randolph for about $1,700 per student that they have. In Gorham they ask about $416 for each child. There are three children from Milan, one from Groveton and two from Whitefield. This is new this year and they haven’t asked for money from these towns due to this. They have not asked Berlin.

**Motion to Amend Article 44 to read, “To see if the town will raise and appropriate the sum of $4,500…….” - Sue Demers**

**Seconded- Adam White**

**Failed**

**ARTICLE #45** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$4,000.00** for the purpose of supporting the ongoing public service of the Gorham Historical Society, the museum, and their work to protect and preserve the history of Gorham. Tax Rate Impact: $0.01 (By Petition.) (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

**ARTICLE #46** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$10,000.00** for the purpose of supporting the Family Resource Center at Gorham. Tax Rate Impact: $0.03 (By Petition.) (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 5-2, 1 abstention.)

**ARTICLE #47** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$2,000.00** for the purpose of supporting the Androscoggin River Athletes local Special Olympics team.

Tax Rate Impact: <$.01 (By Petition.) (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-

0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0.)

# ARTICLE #48 To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum $3,000.00 for the purpose of supporting the Androscoggin Valley Chamber’s marketing efforts through our branded marketing program, “Your Adventure Starts Here”. Tax Rate Impact: <$0.01 (By Petition.) (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 4-4.)

**ARTICLE #49** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$5,000.00** for the purpose of supporting Hospice, Home Health, Palliative Care, and Long-Term Care services provided by North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency. Tax Rate Impact: $0.01 (By Petition.) (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 6-2.)

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #50** To hear any reports of any Town Officers, Agents and Committees heretofore chosen and to pass any votes related thereto.

Selectman Michael Waddell recognized Denise Vallee for her many years of service and also gave recognition to our incoming Town Manager Peter Gagnon.

Moderator Paul Bousquet asked Denise Vallee to stand up and the residents applauded her many years of service. This year, there was $1.7 million in grants that came about due to Denise’s hard work.

**ARTICLE #51** To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

**Motion to Adjourn- Ted Miller**

**Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- All in Favor**

**Meeting adjourned at 10:20 PM**

Respectfully submitted by,

Christina Zornio, Minutes Taker