To the inhabitants of the Town of Gorham in the County of Coos in said State qualified to vote in Town affairs.

You are hereby notified and warned that the Annual Town Meeting and elections will be held on Tuesday, March 12, 2024.  Polls will be open from 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. to act upon Articles One (1) through five (5) by written ballot in the Medallion Opera House, Gorham Town Hall at 20 Park Street. There were 270 voters who cast their ballots.

The Business Meeting will be held at 7:00 P.M. at the GRS Cooperative Middle-High School Gymnasium to act upon the remaining articles. There were 64 people present at the meeting.

At 7:06pm, 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 the Supervisor’s of the Checklist for the hard work that they do along with all the election workers. He also recognized everyone for coming to the meeting and thanked all of the Town of Gorham workers. He then explained the ground rules of how the meeting would take place and the process of the meeting.

Elizabeth (Ellie) Roberge sand the National Anthem.

Town Clerk Christina Zornio gave recognition to Cecile Clark and thanked her for serving as a Supervisor of the Checklist for 6 years. She also gave recognition to Paul Bousquet for his dedication as Moderator for the past 3 years.

**ARTICLE #1** To elect one (1) Selectman for a term of 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) Planning Board Member for a term of one (1) year, one (1) Water and Sewer Commissioner for a term of three (3) years, two (2) Budget Committee Members for a term of three (3) years, one (1) Library Trustee for a term of two (2) year, one (1) Library Trustee for a term of three (3) years, one (1) Supervisor of the Checklist for a term of six (6) years, and one (1) Moderator for a term of two (2) years. (To be voted on by written ballot while the polls are open for receipt of same.)

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **1 Selectman for 3 yrs** | **Judith LeBlanc** Robert Gargano  None of the Above | **144**  123  1 |
| **1 Trustee of Trust funds**  **3 yrs** | **Marie Duguay**  Paul Bousquet | **227**  1 |
| **2 Planning Board 3 yrs** | **Abigail Evankow**  Wayne Flynn  Jay Guilmette  Reuben Rajala  Allan Pike  Donald Trump  Tim Murphy  Paul Robitaille  Ryan Byrnes | **218**  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1 |
| **1 Planning Board 1 yr** | **Earl McGillicuddy** | **224** |
| **1 Library Trustee 3 yrs** | **Luke Strevig** | **219** |
| **1 Library Trustee 2 yrs** | **Melissa Laplante** | **228** |
| **1 Water and Sewer 3 yrs** | **Roger Goulet** | **239** |
| **1 Supervisor of the Checklist 6 yrs** | **Elizabeth (Betty) Forestall** | **237** |
| **2 Budget Committee 3 yrs** | **Emily Weber**  **Karen Willhoite**  Ryan Byrnes  Paul Bousquet  Diane Boutot  Jen O’Neil | **198**  **181**  3  1  1  1 |
| **1 Moderator 2 yrs** | Paul Bousquet  Bruce Lary  Lee Carroll  Keith Parent  Adam Marsh  Paul Robitaille  Adam White  Mary Oleson  Denise Vallee  Doug Gralinski  Debra Bousquet  Paul Nault  Terry Oliver | 11  4  4  3  3  2  1  1  1  1  1  1  1 |

**ARTICLE #2** Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 1 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Gorham Zoning Ordinance as follows: to revise the definition of “Tourist Accommodation” in Article III in order to clarify that the term includes dwelling units offered for transient use, i.e., “short-term rentals,” for more than 120 days per year; and revise the parking requirements in Section 5.03 C. to require that dwelling units used as Tourist Accommodations provide two parking spaces, the same number required for dwelling units used for Residential use?

**YES 202 Passed**

**NO 53**

**ARTICLE #3** Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 2 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Gorham Zoning Ordinance as follows: to remove the requirement that off-site parking be located within 400 feet and instead give the Planning Board the discretion to determine a reasonable distance based on a parking plan that documents the parking need, the adequacy of the parking proposed to serve that need, the safety of users, and the safety of those using adjacent roadways?

**YES 189 Passed**

**NO 68**

**ARTICLE #4**  Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 3 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Gorham Zoning Ordinance as follows: to add a section regarding temporary construction structures to Section 5.05, and to make associated revisions to the Definitions of “Accessory Building or Use,” “Building” and “Structure” in Article III?

**YES 178 Passed**

**NO 68**

**ARTICLE #5**  Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 4 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Gorham Zoning Ordinance as follows: for accessory structures that are no larger than 150 sq. ft., to make the minimum side and rear setbacks 5 feet in the Residential A, Commercial A and Commercial B districts and 10 ft. in the Residential B district (Article IV); to provide the Board of Adjustment with the ability to grant a Special Exception to any setback for any accessory structure in every zoning district except Industrial; and to make associated revisions to the Definitions of “Accessory Building or Use,” “Building” and “Structure” in Article III?

**YES 182 Passed**

**NO 68**

**ARTICLE #6** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate **$1,540,000** for the purpose of acquiring 1109 acres contained in five parcels, four in Gorham and one in Shelburne, and to authorize the Selectmen to accept funds (Current secured funding equals $1,365,000) from grants and other sources to this project and to accept such easements and other requirements as go with said funding; and to encumber $75,000 from within the Town Forest Fund for land management purposes; and to authorize the Selectmen to withdraw up to $100,000 from the “Undesignated Fund Balance” if needed to meet the budgeted purchase price of the land **$1,262,000** and to further pay such acquisition costs as are necessary to purchase said land **$278,000** for a total cost of **$1,540,000**, Any grant or outside funds received beyond what has currently been secured will reduce the amount of unassigned fund balance used. No amount raised through taxation. (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Town Forest Committee by a vote of 5-0) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 4-0.)

**So Moved- Michael Waddell Seconded- Yves Zornio**

**Voted- Passed**

**Discussion:**

Sue Demers stated that the way this article was written seemed confusing. She went through where the different funds were coming from to make sense of it. It states no tax impact but there has been $175,000 raised in previous years through taxation. The land is across the river and wondered why the town needs this land.

Selectman Michael Waddell explained that the process began trying to solve a parking problem. The parking on Bangor Street for the hiking trail has been a problem for the past few years with 70 plus cars being parked there. The property was offered to the Town for $100,000. Land can produce revenue for the Town and would also solve the parking problem. This land is the last of any privately-owned land and the purchasing of this land will give a guarantee to being able to access the hiking trails, which help in producing tourism and revenue for the Town. Shelburne was on board as well with the buying of this land to help keep business going for the T&C. The Town didn’t want to buy all 5 lots, but it wasn’t an option from the land owner to buy only one. There is currently 1.1 Million dollars in the Undesignated Fund Balance, and there will still be money left over to reduce taxes.

Denise Vallee stated that the Community Forest Program which is a grant program, awarded funds to this project and also felt that it’s worthwhile.

**ARTICLE #7** 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 4-0.)(Majority vote required)

**So Moved- Yves Zornio Seconded-Judy LeBlanc**

**No Discussion**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #8** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$150,000.00** to be added to the Road Resurfacing & Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $926,172.75.* Tax Rate Impact: $0.12 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 4-0.) (Majority vote required)

**So Moved- Judy LeBlanc Seconded-Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- Passed**

**Discussion:**

Amanda Bradford talked about the $900,000 Bond. She asked if this money could go towards paying off that Bond?

Selectperson Judy LeBlanc stated this money is put into the operating budget and used to pay this Bond. This Article was reduced from $250,000 to $150,000.

Paul Bousquet stated that the Budget Committee had suggested the amount be reduced for this article knowing that there was a $900,000 Bond to pay.

**ARTICLE #9** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee’s recommended amount of **$5,372,632** 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 4-0.)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Tax Rate Impact** |
|  | **Budget Committee** | **Per $1,000** |
| General Government | 1,215,184 | 3.12 |
| Public Safety | 2,064,578 | 5.69 |
| Highways, Streets, Bridges | 1,139,892 | 2.92 |
| Municipal Solid Waste/Recycling | 327,590 | .84 |
| Health Purposes | 2,050 | <.01 |
| Welfare | 25,075 | 0.06 |
| Recreation & Parks | 230,781 | .59 |
| Patriotic Purposes | 6,660 | .02 |
| Conservation Commission | 250 | <.01 |
| Long-Term Debt | 206,562 | 0.53 |
| TOTAL: | 5,372,632 |  |

**So Moved- Michael Waddell Seconded- Peter Gagnon**

**Voted- Passed**

**Discussion:**

Sue Demers stated that she had to use the Articles in the back to look at increases from budgets compared to last year. Asked why Assessing has gone up 30.1% totaling $75,971? Why has Planning and Zoning gone up 690.8% totaling $32,259? Building inspection went up 211% totaling $141,968. Why so much and would like an explanation?

Town Manager Peter Gagnon thanked Sue for the questions. He wants to show transparency with the budget and agreed the percentages look high. He explained how there was a part time position upstairs that resigned due to the workload. The job was posted part-time, and there were no qualified applicants. With the extra planning, zoning and assessing needs, it was then looked at to be full-time to accommodate the extra workload. The assessing company KRT that the Town had, has dropped us and we will be in a transitioning phase and will need to be updating property cards manually and updating tax software which will be time consuming. The budgets were then looked at to be more transparent to show which positions the money was more specifically dedicated to instead of just under Assessing.

Sue Demers stated that the budget for all 3 positions is now at $141,968, and asked if this was all one position?

Town Manager Peter Gagnon explained that they are not all 1 position and it includes Planning, Zoning, and Assessing. The majority is for a position, but there is also new software/technology and training that is needed.

Selectperson Judy LeBlanc stated that $72,000 of that is also for a reevaluation.

Town Manager Peter Gagnon explained that the statistical reevaluation is required to fix the disconnect between assessments and sale prices for properties.

Sue Demers stated that the whole Assessing budget is now at $328,565?

Town Manager Peter Gagnon said that this would not be the cost every year, it’s only for the year of transitioning.

Selectman Michael Waddell reiterated what the Town Manager said along with the fact of that when KRT was hired as the assessing company, it seemed like a good deal at the time. This was a company out of Massachusetts called Patriot that was based on Massachusetts law. This company now has no support and has not worked out. We are looking at a small assessing company based out of New Hampshire that is also used by other nearby towns. This company has decided to take on our towns assessing, if we provide the manpower needed in data entry. This is the best we could do to get out of a bad situation.

Sue Demers asked about the public safety budget and if it contains the Police Department? Commended the Fire Department as they went down in their budget from last year. Read an article that this town spends more than 75% more per capita than the entire nation on our Police Department. Asked how many police officers right now?

Captain Jimmy Willhoite explained that although it’s a small town, during the summer, it is closer to Berlin’s population of 7,500. Berlin has 20 police officers.

Sue Demers stated how she doesn’t see or hear much from the Police around town even when there’s a fluctuation of people.

Captain Jimmy Willhoite explained how a lot of the calls that go on are not from the local people, but the out of town tourists. There’re multiple calls from hotels and Walmart has a very high rate of calls. There are even calls at 1:00/2:00 in the morning.

Peter Gagnon explained how you can’t necessarily go by per capita, but the volume of people that come through during certain times. Walmart itself, has a lot of calls. The Police Department is there to help in every situation and local people and businesses appreciate this.

**ARTICLE #10 TENTATIVE** To see if the town will vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Gorham Board of Selectmen and the members of AFSME-Local 3657, which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

**POLICE: DISPATCH:**

Fiscal Year Estimated Increase Fiscal Year Estimated Increase

2024 $16,360 2024 $12,126

2025 $13,250 2025 $5,033

2026 $9,235 2026 $5,221

And further to raise and appropriate **$28,486** for the current fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 4-0.) (Majority vote required.)

**So Moved- Judy LeBlanc Seconded- Yves Zornio**

**Voted- Passed**

**Discussion:**

Amanda Bradford asked what the tax impact would be?

Finance Director Bronson Paradis gave an amount of roughly $0.07.

**ARTICLE #11** Shall the town, if Article 10 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 10 cost items only? (Majority vote)

**Where Article #10 passed, Article #11 was not necessary**

**ARTICLE #12** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$166,442.00** 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 4-0.) (Majority vote required.)

**So Moved- Judy LeBlanc Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**No Discussion**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #13** 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, 2023: $10,107.87.* 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 4-0.) (Majority vote required.)

**So Moved- Marie Duguay Seconded- Peter Gagnon**

**No Discussion**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #14** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$646,705.00** 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 4-0.)

**So Moved- Ted Miller Seconded- Lee Carroll**

**No Discussion**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #15** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$616,145.00** 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 4-0.)

**So Moved- Roger Goulet Seconded- Ted Miller**

**No Discussion**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #16** 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 4-0.) (Majority vote required.)

**So Moved- Marie Duguay Seconded- Judy LeBlanc**

**No Discussion**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #17** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$55,000.00** to be added to the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $260,684.55.* Tax Rate Impact: $0.14 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**So Moved- Bronson Paradis Seconded- Judy LeBlanc**

**Voted- Passed**

**Discussion:**

Paul Bousquet explained how this was addressed as a Budget Committee member and stated that the Budget Committee asked if this could be reduced this year? These funds don’t directly affect people, and they all have money in them now. Overall, the Capital Reserve funds have been lowered by $188,000.

**Motion to Combine**

**Articles 18 and 19- Judy LeBlance Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- Passed**

**Moderator Paul Bousquet read Articles 18 and 19**

**So Moved- Michael Waddell Seconded- Yves Zornio**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #18** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$10,000.00** to be added to the SCBA Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $7,500.00.* 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 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**Discussion:**

Amanda Bradford asked what SCBA stood for?

Fire Chief Phil Cloutier explained it stands for Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus. They have a lifespan of about 15-20 years.

**ARTICLE #19** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$45,000.00** to be added to the Ambulance Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $90,199.16*. Tax Rate Impact: $0.12 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**Motion to Combine**

**Articles 20,21 and 22- Yves Zornio Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- Passed**

**Moderator Paul Bousquet read articles 20,21 and 22**

**So Moved- Yves Zornio Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #20** 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, 2023: $66,501.79*. 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 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**ARTICLE #21** 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, 2023: $28,929.68.* 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 4-0) (Majority vote required.

**ARTICLE #22** 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, 2023: $69,532.27*. 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 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**Discussion:**

Dennis Pednault stated that this would be a good time for an explanation of the Dispatch system to the Townspeople.

Town Manager Peter Gagnon explained that it was a repeater grant for $300,000 plus. It came about after the motorcycle accident where radios/phones wouldn’t work and we needed more reliable service in the area for first responders. It is 90% covered by a grant.

**ARTICLE #23** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$50,000.00** to be added to the Town Building Purchase & Repairs Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $269,941.18.* 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 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**So Moved- Judy LeBlanc Seconded- Peter Gagnon**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #24** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$15,000.00** to be added to the Renewable Energy Projects Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $30,117.62.* Tax Rate Impact: $.04 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**So Moved- Phil Cloutier Seconded- Peter Gagnon**

**Voted- Passed**

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**Motion to Combine**

**Articles 25 and 26- Judy LeBlanc Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- Passed**

**Moderator Paul Bousquet read Articles 25 and 26**

**So Moved- Yves Zornio Seconded- Judy Leblanc**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #25** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$127,000.00** to be added to the Highway Heavy Equipment Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $114,283.58.* Tax Rate Impact: $0.33 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**ARTICLE #26** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$25,000.00** to be added to the Sanitation/Recycling Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: (TYPO ADDRESSED ~~$926,172.75~~*~~.)~~ TRUE NUMBER OF $84,075.83. 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 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**Discussion:**

Dennis Pednault asked about the amount of $926,172.75?

Fire Chief Phil Cloutier stated that he thinks this was a typo.

Bronson Paradis looked at the numbers and corrected the number to $84,075.83.

Moderator Paul Bousquet suggested to amend Article #26 to change the number to $84,075.83.

After a discussion of whether or not there needed to be an amendment to this article, it was decided that where it was a typo, it just needed to be changed on the article and not amended.

Proceeded with typo being addressed and changed to correct number.

**Motion to Combine**

**Articles 27,28,29 and 30- Dennis Pednault Seconded- Judy LeBlanc**

**Voted- Passed**

**Moderator Paul Bousquet read Articles 27,28,29 and 30**

**So Moved- Judy LeBlanc Seconded- Yves Zornio**

**No Discussion**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #27** 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 Expendable Trust Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $18,562.23*. Tax Rate Impact: $.01 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**ARTICLE #28** 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, 2023: $68,201.79*. Tax Rate Impact: $.01 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**ARTICLE #29** 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, 2023 unassigned fund balance. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $6,248.04.* 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 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**ARTICLE #30** 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, 2023: $62,283.81*. Tax Rate Impact: $0.16 (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen by a vote of 3-0.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**ARTICLE #31** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$15,000.00** to be added to the Information Technology Capital Reserve Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $59,928.79*. 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 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**So Moved- Yves Zornio Seconded- Marie Duguay**

**Voted- Passed**

**Motion to Combine**

**Articles 32,33 and 34- Dennis Pednault Seconded- Judy LeBlanc**

**Isaac Fithian made a motion to read the Articles before they were combined?**

**Seconded- Lee Carroll**

**Moderator Paul Bousquet read Articles 32,33 and 34**

**Voted- Passed**

**So Moved- Judy LeBlanc Seconded- Michael Waddell**

**No Discussion**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #32** 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, 2023: $205,202.77*. 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 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**ARTICLE #33** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$3,000.00** to be added to the Special Insurance Expendable Trust Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $14,587.67*. 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 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**ARTICLE #34** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$5,000.00** to be added to the Longevity/Severance Expendable Trust Fund as previously established. *Balance as of December 31, 2023: $11,174.87*. 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 4-0) (Majority vote required.)

**ARTICLE #35** 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 4-0.)

**So Moved- Judy LeBlanc Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #36**  To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$2,895.00** for the purpose of supporting Northern Human Services (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 4-0.)

**So Moved- Judy LeBlanc Seconded- Yves Zornio**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #37** 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 4-0.)

**So Moved- Stephanie Russell Seconded-Marie Duguay**

**Voted- Passed**

**Motion to Combine**

**Articles 38,39,40,41,42 Yves Zornio Seconded- Judy LeBlanc**

**Voted- Passed**

**Moderator Paul Bousquet read Articles 38,39,40,41 and 42**

**So Moved- Yves Zornio Seconded- Judy LeBlanc**

**Voted on 38,40,41 and 42- Passed**

**Article #39 was Amended by Christina Zornio Seconded- Joan Merrill**

**Went back to Article #39 as Amended**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #38** 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 4-0.)

**ARTICLE #39** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **~~$4,000.00~~** **AMENDED to $6,000.00** 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 4-0.)

**Discussion:**

Amanda Bradford thanked Reuben for his work and asked if there were signs and what the hours were?

Reuben Rajala stated that the normal hours are Friday and Saturday. They rely on volunteers and are only part time. They are on Facebook and have a website with a phone number and try to accommodate people when they’re able to, but don’t have as many volunteers as they once did. He also wanted to give credit to a gentleman named Guy Gosselin who recently passed away who was an avid historian and started the Historical Society and was very active in the Town.

**ARTICLE #40** 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 4-0.)

**ARTICLE #41** To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **$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 4-0.)

**Discussion:**

Paul Robitaille had a concern about the Chamber’s participation for the 4th of July and how it’s declined throughout the years. He recommended that this group get together with the Chamber of Commerce to try and collaborate with them and help make the 4th of July bigger.

**ARTICLE #42** 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 4-0.)

**ARTICLE #43**  To see if the town will adopt the provisions of RSA 72:62 for an exemption for property tax purposes from the assessed value of real estate equipped with one or more solar energy systems, for the purpose of heating, cooling, or providing electricity, which exemption shall be 100% if the assessed value if the solar energy systems. (By Petition).

**So Moved- Yves Zornio Seconded- Dennis Pednault**

**Voted- Failed**

**Discussion:**

Amanda Bradford asked for clarification of what would be taxed and how this would affect properties.

Tom Cote who wrote the Petitioned Warrant Article, explained that NH has allowed tax credits for residential solar systems. Currently in Gorham, residential solar energy systems are not calculated to the assessment of properties. This Article would guarantee that in the future, residential solar systems would not be able to be added to the assessment of a property. There are both residential and commercial properties in this category. This would only include residential.

Ted Miller raised his opinion that this provides for any solar energy system and feels that this is a personal gain and it’s almost like a small personal business. You sell energy back to the grid and make money in return. In his opinion, the town should raise those properties taxes. They already get tax credits and shouldn’t ask for a break through the Town as well. He feels that it’s not fair for someone to get a break on something they can afford and get money back from, while the rest of us who depend on oils don’t.

Tom Cote explained that it is an investment and this would give others an incentive to go solar and be more independent for the overall wellbeing and lessens the dependency on fossil fuel. Our leaders recognize that this is one of the best kinds of systems to become less dependent on fossil fuels and this is a way to give incentives to people.

Isaac Fithian stated that he would support this if it had more of a limit on the value. He explained he is opposed, due to how it’s written. Most residents will not have a huge impact but the way it’s written shows that you could have land with multiple solar panels and have a decent money maker. Solar energy ends up raising the base cost of electricity for the grid and transformer costs.

Moderator Paul Bousquet asked if the RSA 72:62 included non-residential and commercial?

Tom Cote explained that this is only for residential properties. There’s another RSA that includes a business that would have to be separate. The buying and selling of electricity are not an equal cost. If he buys at $0.20, he sells at only $0.15. It depends on the storage of your battery and there is technology that is still not quite there yet but is getting better.

Selectman Michael Waddell stated that the problem he has with this is that someone could put in a $50,000 heating system that would be tax exempt in a $400,000 home. People with other heating systems aren’t getting these exemptions. When you pay your electric bill, you’re helping to subsidize the grid. These solar energy systems don’t help in subsidizing the grid. Should be fair all the way around.

Christina Zornio stated how expensive solar is to start and asked if there was any way to amend this article to be able to accommodate how everyone feels about this Article.

Moderator Paul Bousquet stated that you can’t change the intent of the Warrant Article.

Dennis Pednault stated that he is a professional engineer and has dealt the solar in depth. The statement that Michael Waddell made about subsidizing the grid is incorrect. There are actually benefits to the grid with solar. The problem in Gorham is that the assessors are supposed to base the value of the house on the selling factor. Realtors are actually saying that solar panels are a reduction on the property value because they are unsightly. There is no increase or decrease in the assessing to having solar panels. Talked about a wood burning incentive. Shelburne and Randolph have both passed solar energy exemptions. It is a long-term investment, and you shouldn’t have to wonder if your solar panels are going to be taxed down the road. Several studies that show how people with solar are actually getting ripped of on the power they produce. Flood events in town have gotten high and solar is carbon free. Talked about global warming.

Jeff Tennis stated that any improvement should be taxed, just like any work that he has done to his property. He doesn’t feel it should be tax exempt unless other improvements are treated the same. If you want to reap the benefits of solar, then reap the benefits of solar but don’t expect an exemption.

Moderator Paul Bousquet explained that he isn’t going to go back and forth and asked if there were any other opinions that were something different?

Finance Director Bronson Paradis added that he had Assessing office, Michelle Lutz on Zoom who stated that there is not longer a wood burning tax credit.

**Ted Miller made a motion to call the question and stop debate.**

**Seconded- Michael Waddell**

**Voted on stopping debate- Passed**

**ARTICLE #44**  To see if the town will vote to change the name of the Libby Soccer Field to the SSG Tanner Grone Memorial Soccer Field. (By Petition).

**So Moved- Jeff Stewart Seconded- Judy LeBlanc**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #45** To hear any reports of any Town Officers, Agents and Committees heretofore chosen and to pass any votes related thereto.

**So Moved- Yves Zornio Seconded- Judy LeBlanc**

**Voted- Passed**

**ARTICLE #46** To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

**So Moved- Peter Gagnon Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

Moderator Paul Bousquet asked everyone to please consider giving your time to a board or committee for our Town and that we could really use your time.

**Ted Miller made a Motion to Adjourn Seconded- Bronson Paradis**

**Voted- Passed**

Meeting adjourned at 9:32pm

Respectfully submitted by,



Christina Zornio,

Town Clerk