

**OPEN HEARING ON THE WARRANT
DOVER WARRANT COMMITTEE
Minutes of the March 13, 2023 Meeting**

Members in attendance: Jerry Chen, Melissa Herman, Cam Hudson, Gordon Kinder, Sara Cadena Kinney, Janet McCormick, Steve Migausky, Peter Smith, Woody Weiss

Speakers: Carl Valente, Interim Town Administrator; Sara Gutierrez-Dunn, Dover School Committee; Mark Healy, Regional Schools Committee; Barry Goldman, Capital Budget Committee; Scott Freedman & Jody Shue, Planning Board; John Sullivan, Conservation Commission; Rick Garron, Citizen Petitioner

Location: Great Hall, Dover Town House

Ms. Herman called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

Budget Overview

Mr. Valente began with an overview of the operating budget (Article 4). The largest percentage increase is in health insurance, up 10% after several years of small increases. Highway is requesting three new full-time positions. Ambulance is asking for an increase in the weekday on-call stipend. The capital budget (Article 5) includes replacing a fire engine, a truck at Highway, and repairs to Claybrook Rd. Our cash reserves policy is maintaining a healthy balance. Asked for the Free Cash balance, he said that the State has not yet certified the July 1, 2022 balance. There will be a Special Town Meeting in June to act on the funding shortfall for the Caryl Center project. There will also be a Special Town Meeting in the fall to act on Hale's conservation restriction. Two citizens questioned the need for the staff increases at Highway and another the new fire engine.

School Budgets

Ms. Gutierrez-Dunn and Mr. Healy presented summaries of the school budgets. They noted that 80-85% of the operating budget consists of salaries and benefits. A teaching assistant is being added at Chickering, along with a literacy specialist and athletic trainer at the Region. All contracts are being negotiated at this time, so exact numbers may not be available prior to Town Meeting. The March 7 (Region) and 9 (Dover) committee meetings where the latest budgets were approved are viewable on-line.

Capital Budget

Mr. Goldman explained that there were 19 requests for this year's capital budget, totaling \$4.4 million. The Town's equipment and infrastructure are aging and we are faced with deciding which can be repaired and which must be replaced. For example, the Fire and Highway departments have some key vehicles that are 30-40 years old. Were we to fully replace these fleets the cost would run above \$8 million, equal to about 10% of the operating budget for the next five years. His committee will engage professional help to assess the aging assets and develop a long-term plan. Grants will be sought wherever possible. Asked about the need to replace DPW vehicles, Mr. Goldman reiterated the need for an outside, professional evaluation. It was also noted that the capital requests from the DPW are not just vehicles, but also failing culverts and the failed section of Claybrook Rd. Another citizen asked if we need such large fleets at Fire and Highway. Mr. Goldman said that regionalization of assets and services will be investigated where prudent.

Other Financial Articles

Mr. Valente walked through a list of other articles with financial implications. Most are recurring items which are being funded at the usual rate. Most significant are the Regional Schools OPEB fund at \$721,000 and the General Stabilization Fund at \$170,300. One-time projects this year include \$125,000 for a new communications plan and website redesign.

Article 18: Floodplain District

Mr. Freedman explained that Dover needs to replace the existing bylaw with one that conforms to the latest State model in order for properties within the defined floodplain area to apply to the National Flood Insurance Program. There are about 40 properties that would be affected.

Article 19: Accessory Dwelling Units

Ms. Shue explained that Dover's existing bylaw governing accessory apartments is out of date. It only permits them in conjunction with homes occupied before 1985 and the permitting requirements are unnecessarily complicated. The amendments being proposed would define an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) as either an attached or detached space with living, bathing, and cooking facilities and a separate entrance. Units of 900 square feet or less within the existing home would be permitted by right, so long as they conformed to all building, water, and septic codes. Larger units, or those in outbuildings would go through the Special Permit process. Either the main or auxiliary dwelling would have to be owner-occupied, and short-term ADU rentals would be forbidden. A wording change from the original proposal was requested by the Board of Health and will be incorporated in the language presented at Town Meeting.

Article 20: Amend Wetlands Protection Bylaw

Mr. Sullivan said that the proposed changes are mostly minor. One would simplify the paperwork requirements and allow for electronic distribution instead of the current requirement for multiple paper copies. Another would lift the \$5000 cap on outside consultant fees. He explained that as more marginal properties are being developed, the Town can need more extensive help in evaluating plans.

Article 28: Sidewalk on Cross St

Mr. Garron lives in Dover and operates Precious Beginnings Preschool at 15 Centre St. He is asking the Town to build a sidewalk on Cross St from the Chickering School grounds to the corner of Centre St. He spoke of the danger for people walking on Cross St., and the advantages of connecting to the existing sidewalk on Centre St. He believes such a sidewalk would not affect trees, fences, or utility poles, and if necessary could loop around them, showing pictures of similar deviations on Centre St. One of the property owners whose land would be traversed said that there were nine trees on her property that would be impacted. She added that any such project should go through a thorough review and reference the Town's existing sidewalk guidelines prior to appearing before Town Meeting. Another affected property owner said that he had never been contacted about this, only hearing from a neighbor the day before this meeting. He further stated that he believed this is a self-serving project seeking taxpayer monies for the benefit of a private business. A citizen said that there should be a completed design and costing before this comes to Town Meeting.

There being no further business a motion was made to adjourn, seconded by unanimous proclamation. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Peter Smith, Secretary