



TOWN OF WARNER

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Select Board: Michael Smith, Chair
Faith Minton
Harry Seidel
Kathleen Frenette, Town Administrator

Select Board Meeting Minutes December 17, 2024 10:00 PM

Lower Meeting Room Warner Town Hall 5 E Main St

I. Open the Meeting and Roll Call

Harry Seidel called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM

Present: Michael Smith (Chair) via Zoom, Faith Minton, Harry Seidel, Kathy Frenette Town Administrator and Judy Newman-Rogers Selectboard Administrative Assistant.

Faith Minton made a motion seconded by Harry Seidel to allow Mike Smith to participant via Zoom. Motion passed unanimously.

II. Non-Public Session (If needed, RSA 91-A:3 II (i)) Managed Care IT

The Select Board agreed to hold a non-public session at the end of the meeting.

III. Select Board Minutes – 12/3/24 and 12/10/24 12/03/24

Page 2 line 40 insert Ben Frost Town Moderator

Faith Minton made a motion seconded by Mike Smith to approve the Select Board meeting minutes from December 3, 2024 as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

12/10/24

Page 2 line 32 add *is expected to* range

Faith Minton made a motion seconded by Mike Smith to approve the Select Board meeting minutes from December 10, 2024 as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Concord Lake Sunapee Rail Trail, Tim Blagden, Transportation Alternative Program Grant Opportunity

Tim Blagden advised the Select Board on the process of applying for the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) Grant Opportunity. He stated: the Town is the only entity eligible to apply for these types of grants; the Friends of Concord Lake Sunapee Rail Trail (FCLSRT) have taken the first of three steps by sending a letter of interest; the second step is to attend a team meeting during the week of January 6, 2025; the application is due by January 24, 2025. Tim Blagden advised the Select Board that the FCLSRT will be responsible for raising all the matching funds required for the grant; the NH DOT offers 2 grants (CMAC and TAP) once every 4 years; the FCLSRT has submitted 2 applications; one for the bridge over the Warner River at exit 9 and the second project is to build a half a mile trail between Route 103 and Tom Pond. Harry Seidel spoke in support of the TAP grant. Tim Blagden stated that he will be meeting with an engineer to get up to date estimates and he will provide that information to the Select Board. Mike Smith stressed that the sooner the Select Board receives the information the quicker they can inform the public.

V. Rick Evans, Department of Revenue (DRA), Process on Logging on Town Owned Property

1 Rick Evans explained the process; when logging on publicly owned land, the individual or entity who is cutting
2 and selling the wood is responsible for the yield tax; the assessing officials have the authority to waive the yield
3 tax for municipally owned land within the municipality. Rick Evans suggested the Select Board make a
4 decision on the waiver prior to entering into a timber sale agreement with a logger; some municipalities have
5 ordinances in place that some or all yield tax collected go to the Conservation fund; if Warner has a policy like
6 that the Town needs to collect yield taxes to satisfy the ordinance. Mike Smith asked if the Town logs a parcel,
7 then sells the property, is the original owner entitled to any proceeds? Rick Evans encouraged the Select Board
8 to work with the Town Forester and the Town's legal counsel.
9

10 **VI. Burrington Builders, Review of RSA 79-E Compliance**
11 **TABLED to January 7, 2025**

12 **VII. Select Board Business**

13 **a. Sale of Town Owned Properties**

14 None

15 **b. Review for Town Auditor**

16 Harry Seidel stated the current town auditor is Vachon & Clukay. There is another quote from Plodzik &
17 Sanderson. Kathy Frenette stated that she is still waiting for the third quote. The Select Board agreed to
18 **TABLE** this discussion until the third quote is received.
19

20 **c. Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) Grant Award**

21 Harry Seidel stated the Town has been awarded the HOP grant. Ian Rogers spoke in support of the grant. He
22 explained that the Select Board needs to formally accept the grant after which there will be a separate sub
23 agreement with Central Regional Planning.
24

25 **Faith Minton made a motion seconded by Mike Smith to accept the Housing Opportunity Program grant**
26 **in the amount of \$27,930. Motion passed unanimously.**
27

28 **d. Encore Solar, Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Agreement**

29 **Faith Minton made a motion seconded by Mike Smith to accept the payment in lieu of taxes agreement**
30 **between the Town of Warner and ER Poverty Plains Solar LLC on this day December 17, 2024. Motion**
31 **passed unanimously.**
32

33 **e. Town Solar Renewable Energy Credit (REC), Selling RECs**

34 Harry Seidel explained that the Town receives renewable energy credits (REC's) via the Town solar array that
35 are sold back to Eversource. Faith Minton read an explanation of the REC's. The town receives quarterly
36 payments for the sale of the REC's and the contract with the company handling the sale expires at the end of
37 December. The Community Power Coalition of NH (CPCNH) recently received approval from the NH Public
38 Utility Commission (NHPUC) to be an aggregator of renewable energy credits. She read that the proposal to
39 switch to CPCNH for the sale of its REC's. The current contract with Knollwood reflects payments priced at
40 93% of the market rate while CPCNH intends to price payments at 95% of the market rate. Warner is a member
41 of the CPCNH and it benefit the town to help CPCNH.

42 **Mike Smith made a motion seconded by Faith Minton to approve the contract and begin selling the**
43 **Town's renewable energy credits to Community Power Coalition of NH. Motion passed unanimously.**
44

45 **f. Elderly Property Tax Exemption, Review Draft of Suggested Updates**

46 David Carle explained: the State of NH equalizes property values; currently Warner's property values are at
47 61% of market value; next year after the revaluation, property values will be within 5% of market value; Warner
48 has the 20th highest tax rate out of 229 communities in the State; the elderly exemption law was passed to help
49 low income seniors (65+ years old) keep their properties; every community is different and Warner should not
50 be compared to other towns in the county or state. Mr. Carle asked the Select Board to adjust the elderly

1 exemption in a way that best represents Warner. David Carle was asked by an audience member, *William or
 2 Sherry Gould, to briefly summarize his proposal. Harry Seidel stated that the Select Board will be holding
 3 additional information sessions. He stated that David Carle has submitted a draft warrant article but the Select
 4 Board has not taken any action. Sherry Gould asked if it could be dissected to show how much of Warner's tax
 5 rate is the school's portion. The Select Board agreed that the public needs to be informed about the proposed
 6 changes. Harry Seidel stated any changes will be a warrant article.

7
 8 Mike Smith cautioned that the deadline for warrant articles is fast approaching. Judy Newman-Rogers
 9 suggested updating the town website with the proposed elderly exemption information.

10
 11 David Carle is proposing the following increases: (In parenthesis - current amount)

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Assets</u>	<u>Age 65-74</u>	<u>Age 75-79</u>	<u>Age 80+</u>
13	Single \$50,000 (\$30,000)	\$170,000 (\$85,000)	\$128,400 (\$50,000)	\$179,760 (\$75,000)	\$239,680 (\$100,000)
14	Married \$65,000 (\$45,000)	\$170,000 (\$85,000)	\$128,400 (\$50,000)	\$179,760 (\$75,000)	\$239,680 (\$100,000)

15
 16 Mike Smith stated that he supports increasing the exemption but he does not support the amounts proposed; he
 17 does not want to be the 2nd highest in the State. Harry Seidel stated he would be supportive of the proposed
 18 amounts, he wants the amounts to represent what the elderly in Warner faces. Mike Smith stated that he is ok
 19 with the proposed income amounts, he would like to slightly decrease the proposed asset amount and he does not
 20 support the proposed exemption amounts. He stated this is considering all residents not just the elderly. He
 21 further noted that currently there are 25 elderly exemption recipients and by adjusting the exemption amounts
 22 this could drastically increase the eligibility placing the tax burden on other taxpayers. Faith Minton
 23 appreciates both positions. She stated that the proposed change does not eliminate taxes for the elderly it
 24 reduces the amount they pay. Harry Seidel stated that ultimately the residents will have the final say at Town
 25 Meeting, he supports the proposed amounts as submitted.

26
 27 Mike Smith proposed the following: (In parenthesis - current amount)

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Assets</u>	<u>Age 65-74</u>	<u>Age 75-79</u>	<u>Age 80+</u>
29	Single \$50,000 (\$30,000)	\$160,000 (\$85,000)	\$110,000 (\$50,000)	\$150,000 (\$75,000)	\$200,000 (\$100,000)
30	Married \$65,000 (\$45,000)	\$180,000 (\$85,000)	\$110,000 (\$50,000)	\$150,000 (\$75,000)	\$200,000 (\$100,000)

31
 32 Harry Seidel reiterated he supports the proposed amounts from David Carle because they are based on facts
 33 from Warner. Mike Smith stated the amounts he is proposing takes into consideration the other communities in
 34 Merrimack County and what is best for all residents of Warner. Faith Minton stated that that she can appreciate
 35 both positions. Sherry Gould spoke about the valuation of her excess acreage which the value of disqualifies
 36 her from receiving the exemption. She stressed that with the way the law is written many will be disqualified.
 37 Bill Gould explained that when they initially applied for the exemption he was told by the previous assessor to
 38 use the land value from his tax bill. He stated that his land is in current use and valued as such. He stated this
 39 year the exemption was removed and the Town Assessing Admin. Elizabeth Labbe, said the Town's contracted,
 40 licensed assessor said he owned too much land to qualify. Barb Marty was hoping there was a formula used in
 41 determining the exemption amounts. She appreciates Mike Smith's suggestion to start modestly and see where
 42 this goes and make adjustments if needed. She cautioned against setting the limits too high because it is
 43 difficult to reduce it later. Rebecca Courser agreed with Mike Smith to start slow to see what kind of an impact
 44 this will have on the tax rate. She does not understand the \$75,000 per acre land value. The Select Board
 45 agreed to look into that.

46
 47 Elizabeth Labbe was asked to explain the land value for excess land. She explained: when the assessing
 48 department is looking at someone's assets, land is considered an asset; the value of the land is the "ad valorem
 49 value" (market value) *not* the current use value; property owners would not sell their land for current use value;
 50 the current ad valorem land value is approximately \$51,000 per acer. She stressed that ad valorem value will

1 never equal the current use value; the current use program was established in the 70's to encourage land owners
2 to preserve their land in its natural state; that land is an asset and is valued as such.
3

4 Harry Seidel stated that essentially the elderly exemption is going away for those who own a lot of land. He
5 stated the Select Board needs to address this if they feel it is necessary. He suggested creating another category
6 for the elderly exemption for those residents who own a lot of acreage. Elizabeth Labbe explained that elderly
7 exemption is governed by state law. Judy Newman-Rogers explained that property tax exemptions have an
8 impact on those who do not receive an exemption: she supports exemptions based on age, military service but
9 disagrees with the 100% solar array system tax exemptions which is based on the ability to afford solar. She
10 believed the MS1 form valued total Town solar exemptions at \$1 million dollars which falls on "non-solar"
11 owners to pay.
12

13 *At 12:29 PM the Select Board took a 15 minute recess. The meeting reconvened at 12:51 PM*

14 Harry Seidel explained that after hearing from those who spoke earlier it appears there is a consensus that the
15 amounts that Mike Smith proposed are a good start. He stated that there is some concern about shifting the
16 burden to other taxpayers.
17

18 **Harry Seidel made a motion seconded by Mike Smith to forward a proposal for the elderly property tax
19 exemption for the Town of Warner as following:**

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Assets</u>		<u>Age and Exemption Amount</u>				
21 Single	\$50,000	\$160,000	65-74	\$110,000	75-79	\$150,000	80+	\$200,000
22 Married	\$65,000	\$180,000						

23 **Motion passed unanimously.**
24

25 *Discussion on the motion*

26 Faith Minton stated that this is a good starting point. Harry Seidel explained that his personal preference would
27 be to accept the original proposal but he acknowledged that this is a step in the right direction. Mike Smith
28 reiterated that the Select Board can review the exemption program next year to see where it stands. The Select
29 Board agreed to look into why applicants were removed without Select Board review and seek additional
30 clarification regarding the excess land value.
31

32 **g. Volunteer Interest, Alternate Planning Board Member**

33 The Select Board discussed the expressed interest from two residents, Janice Loz and Micah Thompson to serve
34 as an alternate on the Planning Board. The Select Board agreed to invite the candidates to come talk with the
35 Board and schedule the discussions for January 2, 2024.
36

37 **h. Effective Date for 2025 Employee COLA**

38 The Select Board agreed the effective date will be January 1, 2025 retroactive after town meeting. Mike Smith
39 suggested 3% because they have not done merit reviews. Harry Seidel believes that 2.5% is sufficient given the
40 current revenue situation. Faith Minton supports 3%. Mike Smith spoke about the cost increase across the
41 board considering employees did not receive a merit last year. Kathy Frenette expressed her concern about
42 retaining staff, the difficulties faced in finding new hires and that current wages are on the low side compared to
43 other communities.
44

45 Dana Myskowski stated that the Library Trustees are discussing this topic and there are a few who are leaning
46 towards 3%. She stated that speaking as a resident she supports 3%.
47

48 **Harry Seidel made a motion seconded by Mike Smith that the effective date for the 2025 Employee
49 COLA will be January 1, 2025 that would be retroactive from town meeting. Motion passed unanimously.**
50

1 Clyde Carson provided an estimation of the ½ percent COLA increase from 2.5% to 3% is approximately
2 \$8,000.

3 **Harry Seidel made a motion seconded by Mike Smith to increase the COLA to 3% for 2025. Motion**
4 **passed unanimously.**

5
6 **i. December Select Board Meeting Dates: 12/24 and 12/31, Hold or Reschedule**

7 The Select Board agreed to revise their December meeting schedule to cancel December 24th and December
8 31st. They agreed to meet on December 30th at 10:00 AM. The Budget Committee is reviewing the operating
9 budget on December 19, 2024 and the Capital Budget on December 26, 2024.

10
11 **j. Police Department Flooring, 2024 Budget Expenditure**

12 Kathy Frenette informed the Select Board that she has two estimates: \$14,567.50 and \$13,530.24. The Police
13 Chief would prefer the \$13,530.24 estimate from FloorCraft, he will be expending funds from his 2024 budget.
14 **Mike Smith made a motion seconded by Faith Minton to authorize the Police Chief to expend \$13,530.24**
15 **from the 2024 Police Department budget for the work to be done next year. Motion passed unanimously.**

16
17 **k. Vacation Carry Over Requests**

18 Kathy Frenette provided the list of employees who request to carry over their vacation hours. Harry Seidel
19 spoke about the current policy that manages the vacation balances of employees and the banking of hours is an
20 expense for the Town. Mike Smith stated that most town departments have been short staffed preventing
21 employees from taking vacation during the last year. Judy Newman-Rogers agreed stating how the procedure
22 was applied in the past to address year end carry over vacation hours. Kathy Frenette recapped the number of
23 hours the employees are requesting to carry over. Harry Seidel inquired if the Select Board enforced the policy
24 of 2 week carry over that might incentivize them to take their accrued vacation. Kathy Frenette stated that she
25 could inform the department heads that this is approved for this year only.

26 **Mike Smith made a motion seconded by Faith Minton to approve the vacation carry over requests with**
27 **the stipulation that next year they will only authorize two weeks carry over. Motion passed unanimously.**

28
29 **l. Encumbrances for 2024**

30 Kathy Frenette stated that she has not received any requests. Harry Seidel spoke about the Community Center
31 doors and window repairs that still need to be done. The Select Board agreed to encumber the balance of the
32 maintenance/repairs line item. Harry Seidel will get a price for the doors/windows and another for the ramp.

33
34 **m. Meeting Date with Kearsarge School District Superintendent**

35 Thursday December 19, 2024 at 1:00 PM

36
37 **VIII. Town Administrator's Report**

38 -End of year items and budget items are being reviewed with the Finance Director
39 - Updating the budget with the 3% COLA, other payroll-related expenses will be updated. She explained that
40 she made adjustments to the Police Department budget creating a wage line for the secretary position (removed
41 it from total dept wages) because of the automatically calculated NH Retirement System (NHRS) percentage
42 that is lower for non-police officers). She will adjust the Managed IT budget amount once a decision is made.
43 The budget will be distributed to the Select Board and the Budget Committee.
44 - Audit meeting; reviewed the audit report. Changes and improvements (Personnel files, ACH, deposits and a
45 Credit Card policy) have been made and should be reflected in the 2025 audit report.
46 - Department Head meeting; employees are very upset about the increase in the new policy costs and
47 deductibles. In April 2025 a group will be established (Insurance Benefits Group) to research what surrounding
48 communities offer. Members will include department heads and a budget committee representative. She wants
49 employees to know that the Town values them and their work. She stated that the employees recognize the
50 benefit from the Town but they would like to do better. She appreciates their willingness to get involved.

- 1 - 2025 Ambulance billing came in at \$89,190.
- 2 - National League of Cities offers a grant (Local Infrastructure Hub Grant Application Boot Camps). Classes
- 3 are on Wednesdays starting January 27th.
- 4 - Poll Pads have been ordered. LHS will invoice for \$2,975 plus \$300 for the programming of the pads per
- 5 election. The Total cost is \$3,275. She has ordered the replacement computers.
- 6 Mike Smith stated that the Finance Director has requested that the Select Board provide their comments and
- 7 signature to finalize the 2023 audit.

8
9 **IX. Consent Agenda**

10 None

11 **X. Manifest**

12 None

13 **XI. Public Comment**

14 Barb Marty asked if the Lake Sunapee Rail Trail group came to the Select Board prior to submitting a letter of

15 interest for the most recent TAP grant. The Select Board indicated they had within the last few months.

16
17 **XII. Select Board Unanticipated Business**

18 **a. Continued discussion regarding the 2 applicants for Planning Board Alternate.**

19 Harry Seidel stated the Planning Board needs alternates. Barb Marty, Zoning Board Chair, spoke favorably of

20 Micah Thompson. She stated she is not comfortable speaking about the other candidate in open session. The

21 Select Board agreed to review the process of previous appointments.

22
23 **b.** Harry Seidel asked for a status update for the “tree house” building permit. He outlined the

24 insufficient application documentation. Mike Smith explained that the driveway permit has been submitted and

25 approved; the permit for electric temporary power has been pulled; he is not aware a building permit

26 application; he has spoken to the property owner and specifically discussed setbacks, road frontage, square

27 footage of the tree house and the deck; he also spoke to the surveyor to specify requirements. Harry Seidel

28 expressed caution regarding the missing dimensions. Mike Smith explained the surveyor and property owner

29 will address those concerns.

30
31 **XIII. Non-public Session, Managed Care IT**

32 **Seidel X Motion** to go into Non-public Session in accordance with RSA 91-A:5-XI. *Records*

33 *pertaining to information technology systems, including cyber security plans, vulnerability testing and*

34 *assessments materials, detailed network diagrams, or other materials, the release of which would make public*

35 *security details that would aid an attempted security breach or circumvention of law as to the items assessed.*

- 36 a. Seconded by: Minton
- 37 b. Roll Call Vote: Seidel – Yes Minton – Yes Smith (Remote) – Yes
- 38 c. Motion Passed
- 39 d. Enter non-public session: 2:42 PM
- 40 e. Others present: Kathy Frenette Town Administrator and Judy Newman-Rogers Selectboard
- 41 Administrative Assistant
- 42 f. Motion to return to public session: Seidel
- 43 g. Seconded by: Minton
- 44 h. Roll call vote: Seidel – Yes Minton – Yes Smith – Yes
- 45 i. Motion Passed
- 46 j. Return to public session: 3:37 pm
- 47 k. Review non-public session minutes by: Judy Newman-Rogers
- 48 l. Motion on non-public session minutes: Minton - Approve
- 49 m. Second: Seidel
- 50 n. Roll Call Vote: Seidel – Yes Minton – Yes Smith – Yes

- 1 o. Motion: Passed
- 2 p. Motion on the minutes: Minton - Make Available
- 3 q. Seconded by Smith
- 4 r. Roll call vote: Seidel – Yes Minton – Yes Smith – Yes
- 5 s. Motion: Passed

6
7 NP Minutes: Review of 3 Managed Care IT proposals. The members discussed the pros and cons of each
8 proposal. Managing the Town website is separate.

9
10 **Motion by Minton to accept Culver Technologies Services who has answered with a proposal and**
11 **responded to a request for proposal for IT managed care for the Town of Warner. Second: Seidel**
12 **Voice Vote. All in Favor. Motion Passes Unanimously.**

13
14 Motion to adjourn: Minton
15 Second: Seidel
16 Voice vote: All in Favor
17 Motion to adjourn: Passed

18
19 Meeting adjourned: 3:40 pm.

20
21
22 Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty
23 Edits by Judy Newman-Rogers, Selectboard Admin Asst.
24
25