



**Town of Henniker
Board of Selectmen/Wastwater Commissioners 2024 Budget and
Warrant Articles Public Hearing
Tuesday February 13, 2024 6:30 PM
Henniker Community Center**

Members Present: Chairman Kris Blomback, Vice-Chairman Bill Marko, Selectman Jeff Morse, Selectman Scott Osgood

Member's Excused: Selectman Neal Martin

Town Administrator: Diane Kendall

Finance Director: Sherry Bradstreet

Recording Secretary: Hank Bernstein

Department Heads: Greg Aucoin, Rescue Chief; Debbie Aucoin, Tax Collector/Town Clerk; Leo Aucoin, Highway Superintendent; Marc Boisvert, Solid Waste/Buildings Grounds/Parks and Properties Superintendent; Lynn M. Piotrowicz, Tucker Free Library Director; Richard Slager, Wastewater Superintendent.

Guests: David J. Mercier, P.E. (NH,VT) Vice President Underwood Engineers, Inc.
Marc Mitch, Conservation Commission Co-Chair
Joe Petrick, Tucker Free Library Trustee
See attached Sign-In Sheet

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Kris Blomback opened the meeting with recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Blomback gave background on the municipal budgeting process and summary of the 2024 budget.

- The general fund operating budget request is \$6,926,886 which is an expenditure increase of \$ 400,998 or 6.14% over \$6,525,888 in 2023. Since \$130,000 of the operating budget increase is 100% offset by highway block grant revenue, the net general fund operating increase is \$ 270,998 or 4.15% over 2023.
- General fund operating revenue is estimated to be \$2,897,544, an increase of \$382,617 or 15% over \$2,514,927 estimated 2023. If we exclude the \$130,000 in offsetting revenue from the Highway Block grant, the net increase to revenue is \$252,617 or 10%.
- The estimated net to be raised by taxation for general fund operating expenditures is \$4,029,342 increase of \$18,381 or .5% over \$4,010,961 estimated in 2023.
- The valuation used for the town tax rate in 2023 was \$737,302,447. 2024 values will be reported as of April 1, 2024. We can estimate that \$737,302 of appropriation or the same in non-tax revenue will impact the tax rate by \$1.00; \$73,730 will impact the tax rate by .10 cents; \$7,373 will impact the tax rate by .01 cent.
- The annual tax rate is set in the fall of the current budget year, after towns, schools and counties have submitted annual budgets, prior year audited financial statements, and revised revenue estimates. The 2023 town rate per \$1,000 of assessed value was \$6.93. To estimate the 2024 town portion of the tax rate we use the 2023 valuation of \$737,302,447 divided by the estimated 2024 net amount to be raised \$5,546,342 to arrive at \$7.52.
- The Board of Selectmen adopted a Fund Balance Policy that may appropriate any amount of the UFB more than the designated percentage minimum of 6% and maximum of 10% to offset property taxes as part of the final adopted budget for the fiscal year. In addition, excess funds may be used, upon town meeting approval, for capital improvement projects, equipment replacement and other similar budgetary needs. The current unassigned fund balance is \$1,718,373 or 8.67% of general fund expenses. Retaining a minimum UFB of 6%

would allow a maximum \$529,771 to be used upon town meeting approval. We recommend the use of excess current UFB in the amount of \$400,000 to offset the operating budget. Additional fund balance may be used to offset tax rate in the fall in the tax rate setting period, after 2023 audited financial statements are available.

- Based on the town's Personnel Policy, regular employees are entitled to 0% to 4% merit adjustments effective the first pay period in April. For budgeting purposes based on incoming performance rating scores, an average merit adjustment of 3.5% has been applied to 2023 wage data. The Board of Selectmen agreed to a draft budget to include a 2% COLA adjustment to 2023 wage data. Wages, stipends, payroll taxes, insurances, and retirement benefits combine to the amount of \$3,979,033 and account for about 57% of the general fund operating budget. The total is increase \$120,998 \$3,858,035 in 2023.
- The town provides health/dental/life and disability insurance benefits to eligible full-time employees. The guaranteed maximum rates (GMR) for the July 1, 2024, renewal is a 14% increase. The configuration of employees with family plans to individuals and opt-opts has changed offsetting the impact of the premium rate increase. Dental rates are also cost shared at approximately 50% and have a GMR of 4.7%.
- Other items included in the budget increases include property liability insurance, energy costs, technology services, legal services, welfare applications, and costs of materials and equipment for road maintenance, level of service increases.

2024 HEARING WARRANT ARTICLE #3 FOR WASTEWATER BOND/NOTE

- Board of Selectmen/Wastewater Commissioner Chairman Blomback opened the public hearing.
- TA Kendall explained the warrant article is to borrow \$1,500,000 for the purpose of supplemental upgrades to the wastewater treatment facility. It is anticipated that the Town will receive up to \$425,000 in principal forgiveness from the State Revolving Fund loan program.
- David Mercier, VP Underwood Engineers provide the board history, summary of the current upgrade and scope of work for the supplemental funds covered under the bond/note funding request.
- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public.
 - **Matt Center, of Dodge Hill Rd, asked clarifying questions.**
 - **AJ Heinrich, of Snowshoe Rd, asked clarifying questions.**
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment.

Selectman Marko moved to support Warrant Article #3 Wastewater Bond/Note, seconded by Selectman Morse. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Selectmen Martin Absent)

2024 HEARING WARRANT ARTICLE #4 FOR CONSERVATION COMMISSION BOND/NOTE

- Chairman Blomback opened the public hearing to borrow \$100,000 for Lake Management Consulting
- Mark Mitch, co-chairman of the Conservation Commission provided a summary of the project scope to hire a Lake Management Consulting Firm to study conditions and provide design solutions to reduce external and internal phosphate loading in French and Keyser Ponds -- to mitigate recurring Cyanobacteria algae blooms in these pond. The project will be funded 100% by \$100,000 in principal loan forgiveness under the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Clean Water State Revolving Fund.
- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public.
 - **Matt Center, of Dodge Hill Rd, asked clarifying questions.**
 - **Mike French, of French Rd, spoke in support of this warrant article.**
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment.

Selectman Marko moved to support Warrant Article #4 Conservation Commission Bond/Note, seconded by Selectman Morse. Motion carried 4-0-1. (Selectmen Martin Absent)

2024 HEARING ON WARRANTS GENERAL MUNICIPAL AND WASTEWATER OPERATIONAL BUDGETS, AND OTHER WARRANT ARTICLES

- Chairman Blomback opened the public hearing.

WARRANT ARTICLE #5 GENERAL MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS

FINAL

- Warrant Article #5 includes the operating budgets for all general fund operations except the Tucker Free Library which is included in another warrant article for a total of \$6,660,642. Department Heads, TA Kendall, FD Bradstreet presented the summary of budget requests provided line by line summary of department requests.

	2024 Requested	2023 Approved	Difference
EXECUTIVE	355,201	31,686	323,515
TOWN CLERK	107,782	94,275	13,507
ELECTIONS	29,986	6,620	23,366
TAX MAP	4,950	4,950	-
FINANCE	245,518	790,173	(544,655)
TAX COLLECTOR	114,689	94,525	20,164
ASSESSING	55,400	-	55,400
LEGAL	40,000	20,000	20,000
PLANNING	31,726	30,679	1,047
ZONING	5,271	5,271	-
GENERAL GOV'T BLDG	107,758	-	107,758
CEMETERIES	35,030	21,330	13,700
INSURANCE	169,674	156,615	13,059
MUNICIPAL DUES	4,043	4,157	(114)
POLICE	1,487,263	1,435,378	51,885
FIRE & RESCUE	793,503	732,465	61,038
RESCUE	128,997	124,159	4,838
FIRE	175,455	166,347	9,108
CODE	32,388	29,993	2,395
EMERGENCY MGT	5,493	1,292	4,201
HIGHWAY	902,646	861,750	40,896
HIGHWAY & STREETS	874,000	697,500	176,500
STREET LIGHTS	13,500	13,500	-
SOLID WASTE	478,739	584,000	(105,261)
HEALTH	5,883	-	5,883
ANIMAL CONTROL	5,340	9,408	(4,068)
WELFARE	91,702	80,000	11,702
ATHLETIC	32,645	32,645	-
PARKS & PROPERTY	59,249	-	59,249
PATRIOTIC PURPOSES	3,210	3,173	37
CONCERTS	21,726	7,195	14,531
CONSERVATION	2,946	2,890	56
COMMUNITY - CAP PROGRAM	14,000	14,000	-
COMMUNITY - WHITE BIRCH	65,000	65,000	-
DEBT SERVICE - PRINCIPAL	92,596	130,163	(37,567)
DEBT SERVICE - INTEREST	16,265	19,039	(2,774)
DEBT SERVICE - LEASE	37,568	-	37,568
DEBT SERVICE - TAN INTEREST	13,500	13,500	-
Totals	6,660,642	6,283,678	376,964

- The Board discussed the budget and asked TA Kendall to explain the request to include the conversion of the part-time assistant position to full-time status. **TA Kendall said the impact to the 2024 budget to converting the part-time admin position to full-time status is approximately \$17,000.**
- Selectman Marko noted his objection to the Executive Budget as presented because he is opposed to the additional cost of converting the part-time admin position to full-time.

- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public.
 - Heidi Aucoin, of Weare Rd, expressed concern about converting a position to full time and provided opinion on health insurance options.
 - Peter Flynn, of Main St, spoke in support converting the position to full time, and explained the positions, while reorganized in some duties were originally full time.
 - Rescue Chief Greg Aucoin spoke in support of converting the position to full time.
 - Matt Center, of Dodge Hill Rd, asked clarifying questions.
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment. Board discussion ensued. Chairman Blomback asked the TA and FD if they could reduce another budget line item to offset the \$17,000 increase. Discussion ensued. Kendall and Bradstreet agreed they would reduce the department 4150 Finance by \$17,000 to offset the increase to 4130 Executive.

Chairman Blomback moved authorize the part-time to full-time reduce the finance budget by \$17,000; Selectman Marko seconded for discussion. Discussion ensued. Motion failed 2-2-1. (Selectman Marko and Selectman Osgood opposed, Selectmen Martin Absent)

Selectman Marko moved to not change the position from part to full time and to decrease the executive budget by \$17,000. Without a second the motion died.

Chairman Blomback moved to approve the Article #5 General Municipal Operations as presented, seconded by Selectman Morse. Motion carried 3-1-1 (Selectman Marko opposed, Selectmen Martin Absent)

WARRANT ARTICLE #6 APPROPRIATION TO CAPITAL RESERVE FUNDS

- TA Kendall and FD Bradstreet presented the summary of request to appropriate funds to the Capital Reserve Funds for a total of \$470,000. Kendall explained the Capital Reserve are planned by recommendation of the Capital Improvement Plan and expenditure from the funds requires approval of the legislative body at Town Meeting.

Highway Equipment	200,000
Wastewater	100,000
Fire Equipment	100,000
Bridge Repair	25,000
Transfer Station	30,000
Property Revaluation	15,000
TOTAL	470,000

- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public. No public input.
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment.

Selectman Marko moved to support Warrant Article #6 Appropriation to Capital Reserve Funds, seconded by Selectman Morse. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Selectmen Martin Absent)

WARRANT ARTICLE #7 APPROPRIATION TO AMBULANCE CAPITAL RESERVE

- Rescue Chief Aucoin explained the warrant article to add \$80,000 to the Ambulance Capital Reserve of which the amount of \$10,000 is to come from the Town of Bradford. If these funds are not received, the appropriation will be reduced to \$70,000.
- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public. No public input.
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment.

Selectman Marko moved to support Warrant Article #7 Ambulance Capital Reserve, seconded by Selectman Osgood. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Selectmen Martin Absent)

WARRANT ARTICLE #8 APPROPRIATION TO EXPENDABLE TRUST FUNDS

- TA Kendall and FD Bradstreet presented the summary of the request to appropriate funds to the Expendable Trust Funds for a total of \$855,000. Expendable Trusts Funds may be expended upon approval of the agents to expend.

Road Maintenance	700,000
Police Department Site Purchase, Building Engineering, Design and Construction	100,000
Fire & Rescue Building Maintenance	25,000
Police Department Equipment	10,000
Town Owned Building	10,000
Highway Building Maintenance	5,000
Parks	2,500
Town Technology	2,500
TOTAL	855,000

- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public. No public input.
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment.

Selectman Marko moved to support Warrant Article #8 Appropriation to Expendable Trust Funds, seconded by Selectman Morse. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Selectmen Martin Absent)

WARRANT ARTICLE #9 APPROPRIATION FROM HIGHWAY EQUIPMENT CAPITAL RESERVE FUND

- Highway Superintendent Leo Aucoin to explain the request to withdraw \$305,000 from the Highway Capital Reserve Funds to purchase a New Highway Dump/Plow Truck. Board discussion ensued.
- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public. No public input.
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment.

Selectman Marko moved to support Warrant Article #9 Highway Equipment Capital Reserve, seconded by Selectman Osgood. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Selectmen Martin Absent)

Chairman Blomback asked Library Trustees if they objected to allowing Wastewater Superintendent Slager ahead in the agenda. With no objection the board proceeded to Agenda item #20 Warrant Article 13 Wastewater Operation Budget.

WARRANT ARTICLE #13 WASTEWATER OPERATION BUDGET

- Richard Slager, Wastewater Superintendent provided a summary of the wastewater budget totaling \$780,792 to the Board of Selectmen/Wastewater Commissioners. Board discussion ensued.
- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public. No public input.
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment.

Selectman Marko moved to support Warrant Article #13 Wastewater Operation Budget, seconded by Selectman Osgood. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Selectmen Martin Absent)

WARRANT ARTICLE #10 APPROPRIATE GRANT FUNDS FOR TUCKER FREE LIBRARY

- Library Trustee Joe Petrick provided a summary of the request to raise and appropriate \$20,000 for purpose of continued restoration of granite and mortar on the exterior of the Tucker Free Library to be offset 100% by a Conservation License Plate Grant Program offered through the State of New Hampshire.
- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public. No public input.
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment.

Selectman Marko moved to support Warrant Article #10 Grant Funds for Tucker Free Library, seconded by Selectman Osgood. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Selectmen Martin Absent)

WARRANT ARTICLE #11 APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THE TUCKER FREE LIBRARY OPERATION

- Library Trustee Joe Petrick provided a summary of the request to raise and appropriate \$266,244 to support Tucker Free Library operating expenses.
- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public. AJ Heinrich, of Snowshoe Rd, spoke in opposition to the library operating budget.
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment.

Selectman Marko moved to support Warrant Article #11 Appropriate Funds for the Tucker Free Library Operation, seconded by Selectman Osgood. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Selectmen Martin Absent)

WARRANT ARTICLE #12 APPROPRIATION TO LIBRARY ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY PROJECT EXPENDABLE TRUST

- Library Trustee Joe Petrick provided a summary of the request to raise and appropriate \$10,000 to fund the Library Accessibility and Safety Expendable Trust Fund.
- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public. AJ Heinrich, of Snowshoe Rd, provided objection to the warrant article.
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment. Board discussion and questions ensued. Selectman Marko explained the CIP Committee endorsed the funding request.

Selectman Marko moved to support Warrant Article #12 Appropriation to the Library Accessibility and Safety Project Expendable Trust, seconded by Selectman Osgood. Motion carried 4-0-1. (Selectmen Martin Absent)

WARRANT ARTICLE #14 COGSWELL SPRING WATER OPERATION BUDGET

- TA Kendall explained the Cogswell Spring Water Operation Budget of \$514,616 was adopted by the Water Commissioners after a duly noticed public hearing.
- Selectman Marko noted that the Cogswell Spring Water Operation Budget does not fall under the purview of the Board of Selectmen.
- Chairman Blomback opened discussion to comments from the public. Matt Center, of Dodge Hill Rd, asked clarifying questions.
- Chairman Blomback closed the hearing to public comment.

Chairman Blomback moved to support Warrant Article #14 Cogswell Spring Water Operation Budget, seconded by Selectman Morse. Motion carried 3-0-2. (Selectman Marko abstained, Selectmen Martin Absent)

Rescue Chief Greg Aucoin requested to the Boards consideration of a warrant article to authorize expenditure of funds from the Ambulance Capital Reserve Fund to appropriate the sum of One Hundred \$141,202 for the purchase of a New Rescue Ambulance Chassis and Re-boxing of the 2016 ambulance body. Chief Aucoin and TA Kendall explained the omission of the article from the Draft warrant was an error. Chief Aucoin explained, in 2023 the legislative body authorized \$64,000 withdrawal from the fund for the purchase of an ambulance cab and chassis.

- Board discussion ensued.
- Chairman Blomback directed TA Kendall and FD Bradstreet to craft the warrant article language.
- Chairman Blomback opened the discussion to comments from the public. No public input.
- Chairman Blomback closed public comment.

Selectman Marko moved support a warrant article to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred Forty-One Thousand Two Hundred-Two Dollars (\$141,202) for the purchase of a New Rescue Ambulance Chassis and Re-boxing of the 2016 ambulance body and authorize the withdrawal of One Hundred Forty-One Thousand Two Hundred-Two Dollars (\$141,202) from the Ambulance Capital Reserve Fund. Seconded by Selectman Morse. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Selectmen Martin Absent)

Chairman Blomback asked if there was any more public input before closing the public hearing on the 2024 general operating budget and other Warrant Articles.

- Ms. Marko also inquired about the balance of total unpaid taxes. FD Bradstreet shared the balance is approximately \$1.1 million at the end of 2023. FD Bradstreet also share there was approximately \$800,000 in ambulance receivables. Ms. Marko expressed concern that budget increases would affect those already struggling to pay their taxes.
- Allison Mrohs, of Ramsdell Rd, addressed a typographical error in the petition warrant article request to eliminate monthly meeting space rental fees paid by an organization whose efforts benefit residents of Henniker. TA Kendall will make the correction.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Blomback closed the public hearing on the 2024 Hearing on Warrants General Municipal and Wastewater Operational Budgets, and Other Warrant Articles.

Selectman Marko motioned to adjourn at 9:48 PM, seconded by Selectman Morse. The motion passed, unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Minutes Approved: 02/20/2024

Minute Taker



Meeting: BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Date: February 13, 2024

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Name

Address

Sherry Bradstreet	France
Marc Boirvert	Transfer Station
Larry Marko	Henniker
Richard Sloger	clarendon
Joe Petrick	Henniker
<u>SUSAN ADAMS</u>	<u>Ramsdell Rd.</u>
Alumkins	10 Ramsdell Rd
J Scott Osgerd	188 Foster
A.J. Heinrich	133 Snowshoe Rd
L. Parker	521 Liberty Hill
<u>Lynn Piotrowski</u>	<u>Taken Free Library</u>
Kirk Spafford	Western Ave
Maric Mitch	Henniker
Greg Accin	Henniker, Fairview Ave
Matthew French	HPD
Matt Center	Unc Dodge Hill Rd.
Richard Dreher	180 Maple St
Correll Johnston	480 Shaker Hill Rd
Stephanie Teas	179 Shore Rd.
Lee Krueger	68 Juniper Ridge
Rueh Jay	247 Hall Ave
Danny & Heidi Arcom	2460 Weare Rd



Meeting: BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Date: February 13, 2024

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Name

Address

Michael French
Peter Lyon

15 French Road
65 MAIN ST