



# Town of Hopkinton

## Budget Committee

330 Main Street, Hopkinton NH 03229-2627 - (603) 746-3170 – [www.hopkinton-nh.gov](http://www.hopkinton-nh.gov)

**BUDGET COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEARING MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, February 8, 2023  
APPROVED 9/13/2023**

### CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Zankel called this Hopkinton Budget Committee Public Hearing to order at 6:02 p.m. on Wednesday, February 8, 2023, in the large meeting room in the Hopkinton Town Hall. Those gathered recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Members Present:** Mark Zankel, Jonathan Cohen, Rich Houston, Steve Reddy, Debbie Norris, Christa Scura, Ken Traum, Norm Goupil, Don Houston, and Victoria Bram

**Member Absent:** None

Mr. Zankel reviewed the process for this hearing. The Budget Committee will present the budget numbers that the Budget Committee is presenting after their several months of review.

### TOWN BUDGET PRESENTATION

Ken Traum, Select Board Representative to the Budget Committee presented the Town's proposed numbers. He provided the following information:

- Select Board Goals
  - Maintain current level of service.
  - Minimize the effects of the current inflation.
  - Retain a well-qualified staff.
  - Plan for the Transfer Station lagoon cleanup.
  - Make progress on the long over-due road maintenance issues.
- The realities of 2023
  - Heating fuel price is up 46.88%
  - Gas/Diesel cost up 86.61%
  - Trash transport and disposal up 27.66%
  - Demolition Hauling up 145.45%
  - Employee Merit Pool cost is \$167,648.
  - Health Insurance up \$37,739 (4.6%)
  - There are substantial sewer infrastructure needs.
  - There are on-going road maintenance needs.
- This proposal, if everything passes has an estimated tax rate increase of \$0.46/100 or 6.46% increase. A \$2.0 million road bond is also being proposed which will not affect the tax rate until 2024.
- Mr. Traum explained the budget process which begins in August and shared details of what is being proposed.
  - The **ESTIMATED REVENUES** are \$3,767,463, an increase of \$69,880 (1.89%). The major drivers to this change are:
    - Room & Rental \$(136,569)

- Motor Vehicle Registration \$ 40,000
- Ambulance Charges \$ 15,000
- Webster Transfer Station Reimbursement \$ 40,000
- Transfer Station Commercial \$ (25,000)
- Recycling Receipts \$ 15,000
- Checking Account Interest \$ 13,000
- TIF Revenue (accounting change) \$ 23,683
- 
- The proposed **OPERATING BUDGET** is \$9,177,987, an increase of \$894,472 (10.8%). The major driver over \$50,000 are:
  - Merit Wage/Benefit Pool (6.5%) \$167,648
  - Transfer Station Lagoon Engineering \$150,000
  - Road Maintenance \$159,000
  - Fuel – Gas/Diesel/Heating Oil \$106,620
  - Transfer Station Hauling/Tipping \$ 94,000
- Mr. Traum provided additional details on the lagoon cleanup at the Transfer Station. In the past year, the Town stopped accepting septage that private haulers were pumping from Hopkinton septage systems. This sludge has been accepted for decades. Working with NH Department of Environmental Services to clean up the lagoons. Because there is PFAS present, the cleanup is more complicated. The budget proposal for this year includes \$150,000 for the engineering required to plan for the cleanup. It is anticipated that next year, a bond request will be brought forward in order to do the actual cleanup in 2024.
- Total **CAPITAL RESERVE/MAINTENANCE FUND** request is \$861,500, an increase of \$129, 500 (17.69%) most of which is for an increase in the appropriation to the Town Facilities Maintenance Trust of \$90,000. This fund did not receive an appropriation in 2022.
- A Warrant Article concerning the **PAY-BY-BAG SPECIAL REVENUE FUND** authorizes \$60,000 already collected to be expended to offset a portion of Hopkinton’s share of the Transfer Station costs.
- It is estimated that \$874,521 is available from the **UNRESERVED FUND BALANCE** which is higher than usual due to unanticipated revenue from the State of New Hampshire, higher than expected ambulance fees collected, and the sale of a piece of Town property. The proposal is to use \$560,000 from the Fund Balance to offset taxes.
- The following summary was presented:

TOTAL TOWN BUDGET SUMMARY					
Operating Budget	\$8,283,515		\$9,177,987	\$894,472	10.80%
Individual Warrant Articles	\$272,000		\$2,000,000	\$1,728,000	100.00%
Capital Reserves & Expendable Trusts	\$732,000		\$861,500	\$129,500	17.69%
Total Town Appropriations	\$9,287,515		\$12,039,487	\$2,751,972	29.63%
Other Tax Rate Impacts	\$320,547		\$270,200	(\$50,347)	-15.71%
Revenue Estimates	\$3,697,583		\$3,767,463	\$69,880	1.89%
Bond Revenue	\$272,000		\$2,000,000	\$1,728,000	100.00%
Use of Fund Balance	45,000		\$560,000	\$515,000	1144.44%
<b>EXPENSE MINUS REVENUE (to be raised by taxes)</b>	<b>\$5,593,479</b>		<b>\$5,982,224</b>	<b>\$388,745</b>	<b>6.95%</b>
ESTIMATED 2023 TAX RATE					
Tax Rate Actual/Estimate	\$ 7.07		\$ 7.53	\$ 0.46	6.46%

Mr. Traum presented the following information on the proposed **ROAD BOND**. He explained that road maintenance has been seriously underfunded for many years. A plan is in place to “catch-up” the maintenance backlog over the next 5 years and the plan is to continue to increase the Paving/Shimming line item each year. The proposal is for a \$2.0 million road bond with a term of 10 years. A 5.0% interest rate is being used for the estimate. Mr. Traum provided the following information:

- Year 1 payment \$300,000 = .3786 on tax rate - \$300,000 property = \$132.52
- Year 10 payment \$210,000 = .2650 on tax rate - \$300,000 property = \$ 92.77

Mr. Zankel thanked Mr. Traum and opened the meeting up for public comment.

- Meredith Hatfield asked about the substantial increase in the solid waste budget and also how the Pay-by-Bag waiver the Select Board granted to a trash hauler affected revenue. Mr. Traum explained that the solid waste budget includes an additional \$150,000 to pay for engineering for the septage lagoon cleanup at the Transfer Station. Town Administrator Neal Cass explained that the waiver had little effect on revenue because trash loads that were previously green bags were not charged a tipping fee and now non-green bag loads pay the cost of the tipping fee plus 10%.
- Bob Matteo asked if the recent interest rate increase as well as anticipated future increases will change the bond numbers that have been presented. Mr. Traum said that a 5.0% interest rate is being used for the estimate. The last Bond Bank sale in January was at an interest rate in the 2’s so it is anticipated that the final rate will be below the 5% used for the estimates.
- Cheryl Morse asked three questions:
  - Are the roads really \$30.0 million behind? Mr. Traum said that the estimate for the road rebuilding projects is \$20.0 million. This amount has increased substantially due to the inflation of the past year.
  - Is the first year of the bond just interest with the rate increasing the second year? Mr. Traum said that the first-year payment is a full payment and the estimated \$0.38/1000 impact on the tax rate will be constant over the life of the obligation.
  - Why is the Personnel Budget up over \$200,000 when the merit pay increase has been presented at \$167,000? Mr. Traum explained that the \$167,000 in the budget for the merit increase included the wage increase and the associated benefits. Mr. Cass clarified that the Personnel Budget included other items such as health insurance and workers’ compensation accounting for the increase larger than just the merit increase.
- Tricia Lambert asked why we are behind in road maintenance and if we have a plan to maintain roads such that work is done before they get to the point of requiring it to be rebuilt.
  - Mr. Traum said that in the past the Select Board’s goal was to maintain a lower tax rate, so for many years the road maintenance budget was cut to accomplish this. For the past approximately 7 years the Paving/Shimming budget has been increased 5% each year and there have been two road bonds. This year the proposal is for a road bond and a substantial increase to the road maintenance budget.
  - Mr. Cass added that there is a plan for maintenance that will keep the roads that currently don’t need to be rebuilt, maintained to keep them from having to be rebuilt. Once a road is rebuilt it will be maintained to assure that it won’t have to be rebuilt again. The cost of maintenance is much less than the cost of rebuilding.

## CONTOOCCOOK VILLAGE PRECINCT PRESENTATION

Don Houston presented the budget for the Contoocook Village Precinct (CVP) and provided the following information:

- The focus for the Precinct is to upgrade the water treatment plant on Bound Tree. The water is tested daily to assure it is always good.
- A \$100,000 grant has been received to identify and document the system and evaluate the needs that will have to be met in the next few years.
- Electricity costs have increased.
- The budget is increasing \$28,400, water fee revenue is increasing \$20,000, so the resulting increase is \$8,400.
- There is a proposed Warrant Article to put \$256,000 into Capital Reserve Accounts
- Summary:

Total Appropriations		\$522,000
Operating Budget	266,000	
Warrant Article	256,000	
Revenue		<u>(234,000)</u>
To be raised by taxes		\$288,000

Estimated tax rate \$1.71/1000 up \$0.04/1000

Mr. Zankel opened the meeting for public comment.

- Cheryl Morse asked how much is in the Capital Reserve Fund. Mr. Houston said there is about \$1.5 million in the fund.
- Loren Clement asked if the \$0.04 cent increase was for the CVP residents or the whole town. Mr. Houston said it is paid by the CVP residents.

### **HOPKINTON VILLAGE PRECINCT PRESENTATION**

Victoria Bram presented the budget for the Hopkinton Village Precinct (HVP) and provided the following information:

- The HVP budget is paid for by the HVP residents.
- There is a 23% increase in the operating budget due to the increase in electricity, which has gone up 25%.
- There is an independent water board.
- A Warrant Article will request \$50,000 for the Water Board so there is enough reserve for emergencies after the major water project bills are paid.
- \$6,900 will come from Unreserved Fund Balance with \$22,324 being raised by taxes which means a tax rate of \$0.46/1000.

Mr. Zankel opened the meeting for public comment:

- Ian Tewksbury asked if the pipe examination that is being done in the CVP is also being done in the HVP. Ms. Bram said that there will be an audit of the fixtures for billing purposes, but not the pipe examination. Mr. Tewksbury suggested that in the future the two precincts talk to each other, and both apply for available grants. Ms. Bram said she would provide this suggestion back to the Water Board and Commissioners.
- Loren Clement asked if either precinct had thought of turning off some streetlights or retrofitting them with more efficient lighting. Ms. Bram and Mr. Houston said that the streetlights are owned by Eversource, and they could be contacted to see what is possible.

**HOPKINTON SCHOOL DISTRICT PRESENTATION**

Mr. Goupil began the Hopkinton School District presentation by providing the following information:

- The School Board started the budgeting process in October with three main goals:
  - Maintain level programming providing consistent learning including a move to a “true” middle school model and revamping the Program of Studies.
  - Maintain level staffing in all buildings which included having four teachers per grade in kindergarten through six grade.
  - Reduce the surplus, meaning that all needs including food service and facility maintenance costs which have historically been paid out of fund balance will not be included in the budget.
- The School Board was faced with unusually high costs:
  - Increased fuel costs due to inflation
  - Additional salary and benefits due to HEA and HESS contracts that were passed by voters the previous year.
- In January the proposed budget of \$24,892,924, a budget adopted by the School Board (5-0) was presented to the Budget Committee. After much discussion and listen to feedback it was the School Boards understanding that a reduced budget would be preferred.
- The School Board then presented a reduced budget with the indication that one interventionist and a fourth-grade teacher would be eliminated. This change was supported by the School Board (4-1) The appropriation to the Maintenance Trust was reduced from \$275,000 to \$200,000.
- The Budget Committee voted 7-2-1 to support the School Board’s original higher budget. The School Board will vote tomorrow on a budget number after the Budget Committee acts.

Budget Committee Vice Chair Jonathan Cohen reviewed the School District budget process with the Budget Committee to date and provided this summary:

Proposal	Budget Amount	% Change	Tax Rate Impact (per \$1000 assessed value)
Original School <u>Operating Budget</u> – presented to Budget Committee 1/11/23	\$24,892,924	7.9%	\$1.83
Revised School <u>Operating Budget</u> – presented to Budget Committee 1/25/23	\$24,715,291	7.13%	\$1.61
<i>DIFFERENCE</i>	<i>-\$177,633</i>		<i>-\$0.22</i>
Original School <u>Maintenance Trust Fund</u> warrant – presented to Budget Committee 1/11/23	\$275,000		\$0.35
Revised School <u>Maintenance Trust Fund</u> warrant – presented to Budget Committee 1/25/23	\$200,000		\$0.26
<i>DIFFERENCE</i>	<i>-\$75,000</i>		<i>-\$0.09</i>

Proposed School Operating Budget revisions shared with Budget Committee on 1/25/23	
• Eliminate elementary interventionist position currently funded through ESSR	<i>-\$44,243.55</i>
• Eliminate elementary teacher position currently funded through ESSR	<i>-\$106,848.70</i>
• Change funding of 0.40 of psychologist position to ESSR	<i>-\$26,540.80</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><i>-\$177,633.05</i></b>

On 1/25/23, Budget Committee voted:	
• 7-2-1 to recommend the <u>originally proposed</u> school operating budget: \$24,892,924	
• 9-1 to recommend the <u>revised</u> school maintenance trust fund: \$200,000	



Mr. Zankel opened the meeting for public comment:

- Jay Burgess shared his concern about the cut to the amount going into the Maintenance Trust Fund. He noted that when the building bond was passed there was a strong sense that maintenance should not be deferred. The School District has put together a Capital Improvement Program plan and it should be fully funded. There is an obligation to the taxpayers to maintain the buildings and to the students and users of the building.
- Ian Tewksbury agreed with fully funding the Maintenance Trust Fund and reminded people that had Select Boards not underfunded road maintenance 10 years ago, we would not have the issues with the roads that we are facing now.
- Loren Clement said that there has been a return from the bond of \$403,000 which has been allocated to future projects. He listed numerous capital expenditures totaling \$117,000 that have taken place over the last year. He then stated that one of the School Board goals was to stabilize the tax rate and that goal has not been met.
- Cheryl Morse noted that the ESSR funded positions were hired as temporary positions. She said that the School Board and administration should be trusted to make the right decision and the cuts that were voted by the School Board should remain.
- Devon Chaffee said that she has learned that students now have higher needs than they did in the past. There is no fat in the school budget, and she is glad that the Budget Committee supported the higher school budget and urges them to continue to do that.

Mr. Zankel noted that the Budget Committee received three emails in support of the original school budget. One of those also requested the full funding of the Facilities Maintenance Trust.

Public comment continued:

- Candice Garvin said that the tax rate is going up and it is just not sustainable. She encouraged the Budget Committee to make choices that are good for all and to listen to those who aren't heard in the process.

Mr. Zankel encouraged all who have opinions to speak up and he wants all to feel safe in speaking their opinion.

Public Comment continued:

- Bob Matteo asked if there will be required renovations needed to Hopkinton Middle/High School and Harold Martin to meet security requirements. Superintendent of Schools Mike Flynn said that there is a safety plan and Homeland Security has done an audit of all the buildings and has made recommendations. The list is being prioritized but there are no requirements. Mr. Matteo continued that he has a philosophical difference and feels that the current tax situation is not sustainable. He believes people are afraid of what is coming and know people have left town because of the tax situation. He stated that this impacts children. He encouraged people to voice their concerns.
- Steve Reddy, Budget Committee member speaking as a resident, said that historical perspective is needed when looking at the cost of schools. Hopkinton made the decision to have a single town high school many years ago, and because of the three villages, supports two elementary schools. There is no slush fund and if cuts need to be made, they have to come from personnel. There is less property per capita here to support schools and the

school prop up property values. He noted that we spend in the middle range and the schools are ranked near the top.

- Meredith Hatfield made a statement and asked questions. She said it is hard to pay \$10,000 per year in taxes on a \$300,000 home. She then asked about decreased in Adequacy Aid and Other State Aid. School District Business Administrator Michelle Clark explained that Adequacy Aid is based on Average Daily Membership (ADM) as well as the number of free or reduced lunches, the number of “identified” students, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> grad ready scores. The Other State Aid dropped because there was a one-time payment from the State in the current year and that will not be there in the next year.
- Elizabeth Sides said she was going to say much of what Mr. Reddy already said. Historic decisions have to be paid for now. She noted that the town creates wonderful kids and cutting teachers is not the way to go. Kids have more needs now.
- Alyssa McKeon stated that we are lucky to live in a town where kids get the care they need. She would like to talk about long-term ways that could help reduce costs.
- Sarah Maston Dustin noted that these decisions affect all of us and this is hard work. She said the drivers this year are the bond which passed by a super majority, the two new contracts which passed overwhelmingly, and the inflationary pressures we are all dealing with. She encouraged not cuts until the School Board can review class sizes and put a policy in place.
- Alyssa McKeon asked about the mechanism for multi-year planning. Mr. Traum and Mr. Goupil explained the CIP plans and noted coordination between the town and the school district. Ms. McKeon asked for the space for innovation and revisiting decisions that have been made in the past. Mr. Goupil will take this back to the School Board.
- Bob Matteo said that he does not feel that there is reckless spending, just that the cost is too high.
- Katherine Matteo said she was a member of the school district strategic plan committee and knows that metrics are being created to show progress. She said that this would be helpful for all to see and hopes that it is included in future meetings to improve accountability. She said that changes to the economy are making people nervous.

Mr. Zankel asked for any additional comments on any of the budgets. There were none and he declared the Public Hearing portion of the meeting closed. There was a short recess, and the Budget Committee resumed its meeting to deliberate on the budgets.

## **BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING**

Mr. Goupil moved to allow Mr. Traum to participate in the meeting remotely. Mr. Reddy seconded the motion.

### **ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes

Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

## **TOWN BUDGET DELIBERATION**

Mr. Traum moved, and Don Houston seconded that the Budget Committee recommend the following Warrant Article:

### **Article 3: Bond Issue for Road, Bridge, and Culvert Rehabilitation**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum \$2,000,000 (gross budget) for the planning, design, rehabilitation, and construction of existing town roads, bridges, and culverts, and to authorize the issuance of not more than \$2,000,000 of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33), as amended; to authorize the Select Board 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 Select Board to issue, negotiate, sell and deliver such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; and to authorize the Select Board to take any other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto.

*(3/5 Ballot vote required).*

There was no further discussion.

### **ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

Mr. Traum moved, and Mr. Goupil seconded that the Budget Committee recommend the following Warrant Article:

### **Article 4: Operating Budget**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee recommended sum of \$9,177,987 for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately.

*(Majority vote required).*

Mr. Zankel called for discussion.

- Mr. Zankel said that the Budget Committee has focused on the school budget, but if the tax burden is unsustainable, the committee needs to look at all the budgets.

### **ROLL CALL VOTE:**



Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

Mr. Traum moved, and Mr. Goupil seconded that the Budget Committee recommend the following Warrant Article:

**Article 5: Appropriation to Capital Reserve Funds**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$756,000 to be added to previously established Capital Reserve Funds as follows:

Police/Fire Radio Replacement	\$ 10,000
New & Replacement Equip. & Vehicles for Public Works & Highway Dept.	220,000
Police Vehicle Replacement	30,000
Replacement & Equipping of Ambulance	80,000
Fire Department Vehicle and Equipment Acquisitions	200,000
Transfer Station Equipment & Facilities	75,000
Revaluation	25,000
Library Building Systems	41,000
Recreation Facilities	50,000
Sewer Equipment/Sludge Removal	<u>25,000</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 756,000</b>

*(Majority vote required).*

Mr. Zankel called for discussion:

- Mr. Cohen said that he wished that the roads weren't being paid for with bonds. It is good to put money into Capital Reserve Funds for both the town and school to plan for future expenses.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

Mr. Traum moved, and Mr. Goupil seconded that the Budget Committee recommend the following Warrant Article:

**Article 6: Appropriation to Expendable Trust Funds**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$95,500 to be added to previously established Expendable Trust Funds as follows:

Town Facilities	\$ 90,000
Recreation Facilities	<u>5,500</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 95,500</b>

*(Majority vote required).*

There was no further discussion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

Mr. Traum moved, and Mr. Goupil seconded that the Budget Committee recommend the following Warrant Article:

**Article 7: Appropriation to Payroll Liability Trust Fund**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be added to the previously established Payroll Liability Expendable Trust Fund, with this amount to come from the December 31, 2022, undesignated fund balance.

*(Majority vote required).*

There was no further discussion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

Mr. Traum moved, and Mr. Goupil seconded that the Budget Committee recommend the following Warrant Article:

**Article 8: Authorization to Expend from Pay-by-Bag Special Revenue Fund**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$60,000 for the purpose of offsetting the cost of collection and disposal of residential solid waste and such other direct costs as budgeted annually, with said funds to come from the Pay-by-Bag Special Revenue Fund. No funds to be raised by taxation.

*(Majority vote required).*

There was no further discussion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

**CONTOOCCOOK VILLAGE PRECINCT DELIBERATION**

Mr. Don Houston moved, and Christa Scura seconded a motion to recommend the Contocook Village Precinct operating budget of \$266,534 and appropriation to Capital Reserve Fund of \$250,000.

Mr. Cohen noted that the same comment can be made here as was made about the town budget, that if the tax burden is unsustainable, the committee needs to look at all the budgets. There was no further discussion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

**HOPKINTON VILLAGE PRECINCT DELIBERATION**

Ms. Bram moved, and Mr. Goupil seconded that the Budget Committee recommend the following Warrant Article:

**Article 3:** To see if the Village Precinct will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee's recommended operating budget in the sum of \$50,000 for improvement to

Precinct water system and to authorize the issuance of not more than \$50,000 of bonds or notes in accordance with the provision of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA33) and to authorize the municipal officials to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon. (3/5 ballot vote required)

There was no further discussion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

Ms. Bram moved, and Mr. Goupil seconded that the Budget Committee recommend the following Warrant Article:

**Article 4:** To see if the Village Precinct will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee recommended sum of \$146,075 for general municipal operations and the general expenses and debt service of the Water Dept. This appropriation will be offset by water usage fees, unassigned fund balance, and \$22,324 from taxation.

There was no further discussion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

**HOPKINTON SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET DELIBERATIONS**

Mr. Goupil moved, and Mr. Reddy seconded that the Budget Committee recommend the following Warrant Article:

**ARTICLE II:** To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee's recommended amount of Twenty-four million, eight hundred ninety-two thousand, nine hundred and twenty-four dollars (\$24,892,924 .00) for the support of schools, for the payment of salaries for the school district officials and agents, and for the payment for

the statutory obligations of the district, or to take any other action in relation thereto. This article does not include appropriations voted in other warrant articles. Majority vote required.

Mr. Zankel asked for discussion.

- Ms. Norris said that the Budget Committee is here to represent all and this year it has been hard work, especially faced with the challenges of inflation. Changes in funding are needed on the state level, but until this it is important not to sacrifice education. She continued that she has hope because of the review of class size that will take place, and the school commitment to a stable budget. Road maintenance, employee retention and fairness, and education cannot be shortchanged now because it will cost more in the future.
- Ms. Scura thanked Ms. Norris for her comments and stated that she totally agrees. She continued that she is grateful to be in a thoughtful, participatory community where this dialogue can happen. She is pleased with the school district’s commitment to look at class size.
- Mr. Cohen said that he is encouraged that citizens of differing opinions share those in a civil manner. He echoes what other members have said and noted that given inflation and the income gap between those that can pay higher taxes and those that cannot, there is no way to cut the school budget to make a meaningful difference. He encourages all to think about these issues when they vote.
- Mr. Zankel said he would be voting no for this budget and wanted to explain why. He continued that the budget is reasonable, but that a budget can be reasonable and still unsustainable. Hopkinton has the fifth highest tax rate in the state. Taxes are high. There are significant town and school expenditures expected in the coming years. The school budget is largely personnel costs. He said he believes in fair compensation and supports the contracts, but the number of positions needs to be reviewed. The School Board revised budget had a small but meaningful reduction, and he would support that budget. The lower budget would have brought on more discussion at the District Meeting when hundreds of people are present. He disagrees with the premise that a cut shouldn’t be discussed because it is small.
- Mr. Traum said that he supports this motion because he feels the proposed cuts are penny-wise and pound foolish. The Town wants a very good educational system, and this budget provides that.
- Mr. Goupil stated he advocates for this number. The lower number from the School Board was in response to the Budget Committee to show the School Board was listening. There will be savings down the road because of the things that are happening now. Encourages the Budget Committee to support this number.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	No
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	No
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 8-2.**



Mr. Goupil moved, and Mr. Don Houston seconded that the Budget Committee recommend the following Warrant Article:

**ARTICLE III:** To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate Two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000.00) to be added to the School District Building Repair and Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund, established in 1993 and renamed at the March 9, 2019, School District meeting for that purpose. Majority vote required.

Mr. Zankel asked for discussion.

- Mr. Goupil said that the community has to get used to fully funding the Capital Improvement Program plan in order to maintain the building we have.
- Mr. Cohen said that he would be voting no on this. He believes that the \$75,000 should be added back in. When he first started on the Budget Committee the school was proposing a bond to pay for correcting the degradation of the buildings. Since that time there has been a call to have a plan to maintain the buildings, and one has been created. The money spent on maintenance protects our property. Money should predictably be put into the Capital Reserve Funds so that we don't end up in the same situation that we now have with the roads.
- Mr. Don Houston said he supports this article and believes strongly in preventative maintenance. But, given the pressures this year, this is the least disruptive cut that can be made. Money has gone into maintenance this past year, and this will continue in future years.
- Mr. Rich Houston will support this article because the Budget Committee owes it to the community to lower the tax burden wherever possible over the next two years.
- Ms. Scura agreed with Don Houston and stated that the \$200,000 is enough this year as a steppingstone toward moving to responsible funding of maintenance. This is a particularly hard budget year.
- Ms. Bram asked what amount should truly be spent if there were no other factors involved. With input from Mr. Flynn and Mr. Burgess that number is expected to be about \$450,000 per year.
- Mr. Zankel said he would have supported the higher number for this if the lower number had been used for the operating budget.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	No
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	No
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 8-2.**

**OTHER ITEMS**

Mr. Rich Houston said that the budget for 23-24 has 196.45 FTEs in it and the Budget Committee has been told that this is fully staffed. Based on this, he said he would like the Budget Committee to recommend a hiring freeze to the School Board.

Mr. Rich Houston moved, and Victoria Bram seconded a motion that the Budget Committee send a letter to the School Board recommending that a hiring freeze be put in place at 196.45 FTEs unless additional staff is needed for an IEP.

Committee members made comments.

- Mr. Reddy asked if the school district is at level staffing or working toward level staffing and asked what the would be for full staffing. Mr. Flynn said they are working toward level staffing. The second question is one for the School Board.
- Mr. Goupil questioned whether this is something that falls into the role of the Budget Committee.
- Mr. Rich Houston said that the Budget Committee provides a bottom-line number, and the School Board determines which positions to fund within that number. He said that he feels the check and balance has deteriorated because if there are funds available during the year, the School Board adds a position and then the next year it has to be fully funded. Feels that the Budget Committee is being left out of the staffing discussion.
- Mr. Goupil said he is happy to bring this back to the School Board, but as elected officials it is the School Boards responsibility to do the hiring.
- Mr. Rich Houston said that this motion doesn't tell the school district what to do, only makes a recommendation.
- Mr. Don Houston said that this is way beyond the purview of the Budget Committee and is micromanaging. The check and balance happen when the Budget Committee recommends a bottom-line number.
- Mr. Cohen said that he is against this motion. While he is open to anything, mindful of not overstepping, there are lots of variables and taking this position now is premature.
- Mr. Don Houston is looking forward to the discussion over the next couple of years as the school looks at new and better ways to provide education.
- Ms. Norris said that she appreciates the attempt to limit future costs but wants to see the recommendations on class size and is hopeful that classroom teachers will be involved in this discussion.
- Ms. Scura said that she is not ready to go to this level of micromanagement. But it is a fair statement that personnel is a driving force in the budget and the Budget Committee does have a role, and even a responsibility, to share its opinion on staffing practices with the school district. She said that the administration has heard this discussion and there is no need to send a letter.
- Mr. Traum disagrees with the motion. He feels that the administration has heard that there is concern over future tax rates, but this motion goes beyond the role of the Budget Committee.

Mr. Rich Houston withdrew the motion.

### **APPROVAL OF THE PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

Mr. Goupil moved to approve the Public Meeting Minutes of January 11, 2023. Mr. Traum seconded the motion.

#### **ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel                      Yes

Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

The minutes of January 25, 2023 were reviewed and a correction made.

Mr. Goupil moved to approve the Public Meeting Minutes of January 25, 2023, as amended. Mr. Reddy seconded the motion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Mark Zankel	Yes
Jonathan Cohen	Yes
Rich Houston	Yes
Steve Reddy	Yes
Debbie Norris	Yes
Christa Scura	Yes
Ken Traum	Yes
Norm Goupil	Yes
Don Houston	Yes
Victoria Bram	Yes

**MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

There was discussion as to whether the Budget Committee would make a statement at the Town and School meetings. This will be determined after the School Board actually votes on a budget.

Mr. Goupil thanked the Committee for its work. The Committee thanked Mr. Goupil and regretted not getting him flowers.

Mr. Zankel thanked all those involved for their work and involvement.

The Budget Committee agreed to sign the MS forms for the town and precincts before they leave the meeting and will sign the school form after the School Board has voted on a budget.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Cass  
Town Administrator

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