

TOWN OF EPSOM
BUDGET COMMITTEE
JANUARY 11, 2024

Attendees: Marylou Keane, Chairman; Joni Kitson, Vice Chairman; Gary Kitson, Water District Representative; Meadow Wysocki, Selectmen's Representative; Joyce Heck; Floyd Graham; Len Gilman; Linda Hodgdon; Penny Graham; Michael Wiggett, Alternate School Board Representative; Mary Frambach; Nancy Wheeler

Not in Attendance:

Other Attendees: Pat Connors; Jack Finley; Cynthia Learson; Lisa Moulton; Jennifer Smith; Virginia Drew; Amber Wheeler; Rob Topik; Cheryl Gilpatrick; Melina LaValley

Marylou opened the meeting at 6:32 PM.

Marylou noted the Deliberate Session is Saturday February 3, 2024 at 9:00 AM for the School and Town Warrant Articles. Voting will be March 12, 2024 at the Epsom Bible Church from 7:30 AM to 7:00 PM.

Marylou noted the procedures to be followed for the public hearings.

Epsom School District

Marylou opened the public hearing for the Epsom School District Warrant Articles.

Article 2 Shall the Epsom School District vote to approve the cost items set forth in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Epsom School Board and the Epsom Education Association for the 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 fiscal years, which calls for the following estimated increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

2024/25	\$ 99,391.61
2025/26	\$166,376.86
2026/27	\$118,134.79

And further to raise and appropriate the sum of Ninety-Nine Thousand Three Hundred Ninety-One Dollars and Sixty-One Cents (\$99,391.61) for the 2024/25 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?

School Board Recommends [3-0]

If passed, the estimated tax rate impact will be \$0.19 [per thousand]

Marylou read the Warrant Article.

Marylou opened for public comments.

Virginia asked if additional information has been provided. Marylou noted the information was only e-mailed to Committee members.

Mike Muise reviewed the changes in the contract. The health benefits have a different plan. The salary increase is 2% each year of the proposed contract.

Joni noted there are revisions in sick and personal days and longevity that are not included in the salary.

Ms. Wheeler noted the savings with the change in the health plan is \$73,969. Virginia asked if the full amount of the benefits is included in the budget. It was discussed the budget is based on the current plan with the revisions to be added if the contract passes. The health care costs were discussed with Ms. Wheeler noting that not all the towns have the same costs.

Virginia asked about the longevity revisions. She asked if teachers are hired from another district can they expect longevity if they have not worked 10 years in Epsom. Nancy discussed if they are hired at the top of the step, they are given an increase based on their years of experience. Ms. Wheeler noted that there were 4 or 5 teachers that were eligible for an increase. Mr. Finley noted the teachers are given increases based upon their service in Epsom or also can receive a longevity check based on the number of years they have been teaching. Virginia noted that Epsom has had great retention. She did not understand the increases and decreases in the salaries from year 1 to year 3. It was discussed. Ms. Wheeler noted that as staff members are moving up in steps, they do not all obtain increases.

Gary asked if anyone was available that was on the negotiating team. Mike noted that he could not remember all the calculations used to determine the revisions. Ms. Wheeler noted that in the first year it is recognized the health insurance costs are reduced.

Mike noted he would get more information. Linda asked to have the salary increases, longevity increases, etc. broken out. She noted it should be the gross number before the health care reductions are included.

Marylou closed public comment for Article 2.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Nancy noted that the 23/24 article was recommended by the Budget Committee but did not pass by the voters and this contract is \$15,486 less.

Joni noted they heard a lot of questions tonight and she still has a lot of questions that gives her a hard time to vote yes on the article. She noted the teachers deserve a raise, but there are so many other items included that muddied the waters. She noted they are asked to raise and appropriate funds, and the district might give back some surplus.

Floyd noted the Committee had a lot of discussion with all the department heads and the school. He noted they have learned to manipulate the system asking for more than is required so that even if the default budget is voted they will have what they want for funds. He noted without all the answers it is difficult to support the contract.

It was noted the contract includes 15 sick days and 3 personal days. Mike noted there is a cost to filling those spots if the teacher is out.

Joni noted if they have not used their sick days, they get paid X dollars asking why. Mr. Connors noted it is an incentive to not use the sick leave. It was discussed at the end of the year they get an incentive payment and are still allowed to bank the leave. Nancy asked if when a teacher retires does a teacher get paid for the sick days. Mr. Connors discussed only if they take early retirement.

Joyce asked if there is pay out if they retire at age 66, it was discussed there is no pay out then.

The Budget Committee members had no further questions or concerns.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 2 requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 2 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion failed with a vote of 4 yes, 8 no.

Article 3 Shall the Epsom School District, if article #2 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article # 2 cost items only? (Majority vote)

Marylou noted no Budget Committee vote was required for Article 3.

Article 4 Shall the Epsom School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of up to Forty Thousand Dolars (\$40,000) to be added to the Special Education Expendable Trust Fund previously established, with such amount to be funded from the June 30, 2024 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024? NO AMOUNT OT BE RAISED FROM TAXATION.

School Board Recommends (5-0)

(Estimated tax impact per thousand \$.00)

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 4.

Virginia asked the balance in the fund; it was \$348,956 as of November 1, 2023. Marylou noted as of December 31, 2023 is was \$363,629.76.

Cheryl asked the amount spent out of the fund each year. Mike Muise noted that no funds have been spent. Marylou noted no funds have been requested since the fund was

set up in 2015. Mike Wiggett explained the funds were there if someone moves in unexpectedly and the funds are required.

Virginia asked if the funds were included before the surplus was calculated. It was noted that they were not included in the surplus.

It was discussed that the catastrophic aid is not reimbursed until the following year. Ms. Wheeler noted the state does not reimburse the total amount of the funds.

Virginia asked if anyone from the SAU or School Board attended the hearings for the special education funding. Ms. Wheeler noted Ms. Bickford attended and a School Board member from Allentown also attended. Virginia suggested everyone should attend. Ms. Wheeler noted the SAU is working on a letter to the School Boards regarding the issues.

Rob discussed based on averages and reimbursement is it more of a state or local funding issue. Floyd noted it is a mandate. It was further discussed with Meadow and Virginia noting it was funding issues.

Marylou closed public comment for Article 4.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Gary asked where this money came from as it says Estimated tax impact per thousand \$.00. It was discussed that it was originally raised by taxes.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 4 requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 4 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

Len agreed with what Gary was saying as the money was raised by taxes. Meadow noted DRA would not allow that wording.

Article 5 Shall the District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of up to Forty Thousand Dollars (\$40,000) to be added to the Building Maintenance and Repair Expendable Trust Fund previously established, with such amount to be funded from the June 30, 2024 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024? NO AMOUNT TO BE RAISED FROM TAXATION.

School Board Recommends (5-0)

(Estimated tax impact per thousand \$.00)

Marylou noted the balance of the fund as of December 31, 2023 was \$243,032.32.

Virginia asked if any of the funds had been used in the past. Ms. Wheeler noted not since she has been here. It was discussed the fund was established about 2007.

Marylou closed public comment for Article 5.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Gary discussed different amounts have been added each year. Meadow asked what the funds were used for. Mr. Connors noted the roof has been inspected and he is hoping to get 5 years out of it. Meadow asked cost estimate to repair the section Mr. Connors noted. Mr. Connors noted approximately \$100,000. Mr. Connors noted the gym section was the last repaired.

Virginia asked when it was repaired – Mr. Connors noted pre COVID. She asked if they could use the town undesignated fund balance for repairs. It was discussed those were different funds

It was discussed that whatever the amount of surplus needed to put in the fund and what amount would be a comfortable balance in the fund.

Mr. Connors noted that the last section of the roof repaired was in 2014.

Rob asked if the septic tank is pumped regularly would it help the leach field last longer. Floyd noted there are other reasons for failures. Len noted the ground is saturated with water due to the rains causing failures.

Penny asked the name of the fund. Marylou noted the title is shortened and she would have to look it up.

Len discussed the smaller amounts to repair the roof in sections which would be better than completing the entire roof at one time.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 5 requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 5 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

Article 1 Shall the Epsom School District vote to raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling Fourteen Million One Hundred Ninety-Eight Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty-five Dollars (\$14,198,955)? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be, Fourteen Million Two Hundred Eighty-five Thousand Eight Hundred Thirty-two Dollars (\$14,285,832) which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Epsom School District or by

law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

School Board Recommends (5-0)

(Estimated tax impact per thousand \$.00)

If passed, the new estimated tax rate will be \$21.01 [per thousand], which will result in a \$2.25 increase over the previous year tax rate.

If the proposed budget fails and default budget is passed, the new estimated tax rate will be \$21.17 [per thousand], which will result in a \$2.41 increase over the previous year tax rate.

[Note: Warrant Article #1 (operating budget article) does not include separate Warrant Article #2.]

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 1.

Virginia asked about the tuition to Pembroke Academy as it looks like they do not spend all the funds each year. She noted in 2022-2023 \$250,000 less was spent. Ms. Wheeler noted they do not always know in advance the number of students attending Pembroke Academy. The budget is prepared 14 months in advance. Virginia noted that in a decade or more the budgeted amount is more than what is needed. Ms. Wheeler noted the School Board reduced the budget by 2 students and the Budget Committee reduced it by 4 students. The tuition amount was reduced by 6 students.

Linda asked number of students currently attending Pembroke Academy; being told it was 159 students. Floyd asked number going to other districts; 3. Virginia asked if the 3 students were counted in 159; being told no.

The amount in the tuition line was discussed with Virginia noting it was over budgeted \$350,000 last year and it could be lowered. Floyd noted the number of students and the reductions made for this year.

Cheryl noted the increases in math supplies (Line 001.1100.610.103.023); Mr. Connors noted it was for Grades 1-8 new math books.

Virginia noted the over expenditures for Repairs – Electrical and Plumbing (Line 001.2821.431.103.00) last year that was decreased this year. Mr. Connors noted if have to repair anything this year he will find the funds.

Virginia asked why there were no funds budgeted for site improvements. Mr. Connors noted he did not add anything for site improvements.

Virginia asked to have tuition budget reduced further due to the decrease in the number of students.

Mr. Finley noted there are 35 8th graders this year with only 24 seniors graduating.

Nancy noted with the reductions made the budget line would allow for tuition of 170 students.

Marylou closed public comment for Article 1.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Mike noted it is not an easy job putting the school budget together. He understands the need to change with the times and is a large amount of money. He noted the unfunded mandates. He discussed the home sales in Epsom, Special Education transportation is mandatory and has no cap of the costs and he recognizes the more information presented it is helpful. He noted the School Board would make it work one way or another. Mike noted that 22% of the town is children toddler through high school. The real change has to come from the state and federal level. He noted that they could keep students if they could have athletic programs going. It is about trying to provide an education. He noted Deerfield and Pembroke will be over budget due to special education this year.

Linda appreciated the comments and felt the School Board should speak with Carol McGuire (State Legislature) and express the items that are being dealt with. Mike noted he had spoken with Dan McGuire last week. He noted there are real struggles in towns.

There was further discussion that we need to remember that the school is doing what they can. Linda noted the tax increase for a \$300,000 home is proposed to be \$675.

Mike noted that he has faith in Mr. Connors and we are making it more difficult for him. Floyd noted that Mr. Connors does have the support of the Budget Committee.

Joni noted that the default budget does not have the positions funded by grants. She hopes that the budget passes.

Marylou noted except for one year of the past 6 years the school has had a default budget. She noted they did not touch some line items. Gary asked if there was any savings that could be made. Mr. Connors noted it is not equitable between towns. He noted anything you can do regarding increasing state funding is helpful.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 1 requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 1 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

Marylou closed the public hearing for the Epsom School District Warrant Articles.

Epsom Village District

Gary noted he had one change due to an invoice was a net 30 days from 2023.

Marylou opened the public hearing for the Epsom Village District.

Article 5 To see if the district will vote to raise and appropriate \$215,770 for the 2024 operating budget.

Commissioners Recommend

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 5.

Gary noted that the \$215,770 does not include funds in Article 6.

Marylou closed public comment for Article 5.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 5 as there was no comment, requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 5 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

Article 6 To raise and appropriate five thousand dollars (\$5,000) to be added to the Water System Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund with said funds to come from user fees. Commissioners Recommend

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 6.

There being no public comment, Marylou closed public comment for Article 6.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 6 as there was no comment, requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 6 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

Marylou closed the public hearing for the Epsom Village District.

Town Warrant Articles

Marylou opened the public hearing for the Town Warrant Articles. She noted Article 1 would be discussed last.

ARTICLE 2: Shall the Town vote to establish a contingency fund for the 2024 year for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further raise and appropriate the sum of twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) from the Unassigned Fund Balance to go into the fund? Any appropriation left in the fund at the end of the year will lapse to the general fund. Majority vote required. This Article and its appropriation are in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact.

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 2.

Virginia noted the Select Board have put this article in each year, but have never used it. It would allow for an overage of the budget if needed.

Marylou closed public comment for Article 2.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Mike asked if this amount was over spent would the Town have to have a special meeting. Virginia discussed they haven't had this issue.

Mike clarified the funds lapse each year; they do.

Nancy asked the amount in the fund balance after the funds to offset taxes were taken out; \$1,629,786.00 but not all is cash.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 2; requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 2 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 3: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the previously established Expendable Trust Fund for the Maintenance of Historic Town-Owned Buildings with said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 3.

Virginia discussed that some funds were used for old library and town hall roofs noting it is important to have the funds.

Marylou closed public comment for Article 3.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Nancy asked the balance in the fund; it is \$11,732.67.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 3, requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 3 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 4: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the previously established Government Buildings Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund with said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 4.

Virginia noted the funds were used for the existing town hall project. The town owns a number of buildings and this allows a way to do improvements. The Select Board does not spend the funds unless they are needed.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 4.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Nancy asked the balance in the fund; it is \$42,884.00.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 4.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 4 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of seventeen thousand six hundred and seventeen dollars (\$17,617) for the purpose of purchasing five sets of firefighter turn out gear for the Fire Department, and further authorize the withdrawal of the same amount of seventeen thousand six hundred and seventeen dollars (\$17,617) from the Fire and Rescue Apparatus Fund for that purpose? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 5.

Virginia noted she supports this article.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 5.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 5 as there were no comments requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 5 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of eighty nine thousand six hundred and seventy dollars (\$89,670) for the purpose of purchasing a High-Pressure Air Compressor for filling the self-contained breathing apparatus for the Fire Department, and further authorize the withdrawal of the same amount of eighty nine thousand six hundred and seventy dollars (\$89,670) from the Fire and Rescue Apparatus Fund for that purpose? This compressor will replace the existing compressor that was previously purchased in 1980. Majority vote required. This is a special Warrant Article and is in addition to the operating budget.

No Tax Impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 6.

Virginia supports this article.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 6.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 6 as there were no comments requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 6 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 7: Shall the Town vote to establish a Fire Department Details Revolving Fund pursuant to RSA 31:95-h? All revenues received from fees for Fire

Department Details shall be allowed to accumulate from year to year and shall not be considered to be part of the Town's general fund unreserved fund balance. These funds may be expended only for payroll, payroll related costs and fire department equipment. The Town Treasurer shall have custody of the funds and shall pay out the same on the order of the Fire Chief.

No Tax Impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 7.

Virginia supports this article.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 7.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Nancy asked if any of the revenue would be coming back to the town for the use of the equipment. Floyd noted that a portion of the funds should be for equipment. Meadow thought it would be for repair and replacement of the equipment. It was discussed this was not included to be deducted.

Cheryl asked if the detail fund set up for the Police Department was written to include these funds. No one could remember.

Meadow will check on the Police Department article and this article could be revised at the deliberative session.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 7 requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 7 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 8: Shall the Town vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into a five year lease- to- own agreement in the amount of one hundred ninety thousand eight hundred and seventy five (\$190,875) for the purpose of leasing an excavator for the Highway Department, and to raise and appropriate the sum of (\$50,000) for the down payment, and to authorize the withdrawal of that same amount of \$50,000 from the Highway Vehicle Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. The annual payments will be included in the operating budget. This lease agreement contains an escape clause. Majority vote required.

No Tax Impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 8.

Virginia noted that the Select Board had changed the wording to include “the annual payments will be included in the operating budget”.

Virginia supports this article.

Marylou closed the public comments for Article 8.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 8 as there were no comments requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 8 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 9: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the purpose of reconstruction and improvements to town roads? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$.29 per thousand
Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 9.

Virginia supports this article asking the balance in the fund, it is \$316,731.49.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 9.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 9 as there were no comments requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 9 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 10: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the purpose of purchasing motorized vehicles and equipment for the Highway Department? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$.02 per thousand
Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 10.

Virginia supports this article, asking the balance in the fund. It is \$73,317.68.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 10.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 10 as there were no comments requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 10 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 11: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the purpose of bridge replacement and repair? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$.05 per thousand

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 11.

The balance in this fund is \$149,353.86.

Virginia supports this article.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 11.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 11 as there were no comments requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 11 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 12: Shall the Town vote to establish an Emergency Management Equipment Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for the purpose of purchasing emergency management equipment and related project costs, and to raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to be placed in this fund. Further, to name the Emergency Management Director as the agent to expend from said fund.

Estimated tax impact is \$.02 per thousand
Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 12.

Virginia appreciates the Emergency Management Director noting he does a good job.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 12.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 12 as there were no comments requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 12 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 13: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) to be deposited into the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the potential future expansion of the public water system? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$.04 per thousand
Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 13.

Virginia asked the fund balance, it is \$49,632.99.

Cheryl spoke in favor of the article noting the funds would help as matching funds for grants.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 13.

Marylou opened for the Budget Committee member discussion.

Len noted he is aware this is in the planning stage. He asked if anyone considered having two water districts.

Cheryl noted the town has been encouraged to expand the existing district as it would be less expensive.

Gary noted that the state does not like two water districts side by side. Gary noted to expand if something breaks outside the district they may have to go to the town for assistance. Gary noted the district can sell water outside of the district.

Len asked if you had to connect if the lines go by your property. Gary noted that if the lines go by your property, you do not have to connect to the water. Gary noted there is no precinct tax.

Cheryl noted that Regional Planning Commission is helping with this along with the Planning Board and others.

Joni noted that when the water line went to the traffic circle the district did not pay for that work.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 13 requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 13 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 14: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) to be added to the previously established Cemetery Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund, with said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance, which is equivalent to the total amount of cemetery plot sales for 2023? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact.

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

The balance in the fund is \$25,891.67. The funds are from the sale of plots in the town cemetery.

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 14.

Virginia supports this article.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 14.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 14 as there were no comments requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 14 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

ARTICLE 15: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of four thousand dollars (\$4,000) to be used by the Northwood Lake Watershed Association for aquatic invasive species and aquatic bacteria education,

prevention, treatment and control in Northwood Lake? Majority vote required. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$.01 per thousand
Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 15.

Len asked why the town was paying for the Article when not all residents are using the lake. He asked why state was not involved. Meadow thought the state paid something.

Virginia noted there would be an impact on the tax rate if the values of the properties on the lake decreased.

Virginia supports this article.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 15.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 15 as there were no comments requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 15 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 8 yes, 4 no.

Meadow noted the Select Board removed Article 16 from this copy of the Warrant Articles as there is no monetary consideration. It will be on the final Warrant.

Meadow gave the Article to Marylou who read it into the record. No vote was taken as there is no monetary consideration.

ARTICLE 16: Shall the Town vote to establish a Heritage Commission pursuant to RSA 673:1, II, consisting of five citizen members and up to five alternate members to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen? One commission member shall be a member of the Board of Selectmen.

No tax impact.
Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

ARTICLE 1: Shall the Town of Epsom raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$4,033,315. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$4,085,421 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town of Epsom or by law, or the governing

body may hold one special meeting in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

The operating budget is estimated to have a tax rate of \$3.87, which is 23 cents more than the 2023 Tax rate. The default budget is estimated to have a tax rate of \$3.97, which is 33 cents, more than the 2023 Tax rate.

Recommended by the Selectmen 3-0

Marylou opened for public comment on Article 1.

Virginia noted she appreciates the Budget Committee's work and diligence. She noted this year was a tough sell. She had put information on social media requesting people attend the meetings.

Rob asked the percentage amount for legal expenses. Cheryl indicated they did not have that, but could get it. Rob noted the amounts that are spent for planning and zoning issues. He wondered if those responsible would be responsible for the legal invoices. Rob asked if the Select Board representative to the Planning Board could be asked to recuse herself as she is also overseeing the fiscal aspects. Rob is looking for the legal expenses to be reduced by \$20,000 as the funds have been expended in error. Marylou noted anything about the budget is all they can discuss.

Virginia supports this article.

Marylou closed the public comment on Article 1.

Marylou opened the Budget Committee member discussion.

Marylou asked if anyone had any further reductions to the budget. Floyd noted we did decrease the budget. Linda noted the town does not have \$20,000 in legal lines for the town.

Gary agreed the town has to keep an eye on the legal lines as the money does not have to be spent.

Marylou asked if the estimated tax rate could be presented similar as the school does.

Marylou closed the Budget Committee comment for Article 1 requesting a motion.

Mary motioned to recommend Article 1 as written; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

Town Revenue

Marylou noted the revenue did not change from what was previously presented.

Mary motioned to approve the updated revenue as of January 10, 2024; Linda seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a vote of 12 yes, 0 no.

Marylou closed the public hearing for the Town Warrant Articles.

Minutes

The minutes of January 9, 2024 were reviewed and amended.

Gary motioned to approve the minutes of January 9, 2024, as amended; Floyd seconded the motion. The motion passed with Len, Meadow and Mike abstaining.

Marylou will send an e-mail when all the MS 37's are available for signature by committee members at the town office. She suggested they be at the town office next Thursday or Friday.

Linda asked for a trustees report as of December 31, 2023, Marylou will send it when it is complete.

Gary motioned to adjourn; Floyd seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Marylou adjourned the meeting at 9:43 P.M.

Respectfully,

Betsy Bosiak
Recording Secretary