

EPSOM DELIBERATIVE SESSION
OFFICIAL MINUTES
FEBRUARY 12, 2011

The annual deliberative session was called to order at 9:00 AM on Saturday, February 12, 2011 by Moderator, Jeff Keeler.

The Moderator stated with the voters' permission he will move Article 1 to be heard after Article 11.

ARTICLE 2: Shall the Town of Epsom raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000.00) 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.**

Recommended by the Selectmen 3-0 Recommended by the Budget Committee 11-1
Estimated tax impact - \$.38 per thousand

The Moderator read Article 2.

Selectman Bob Blodgett stated this is a standard warrant article put in every year and has passed for many years.

There being no further discussion, Article 2 shall appear on the ballot as presented.

ARTICLE 3: Shall the Town of Epsom raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) 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.**

Recommended by the Selectmen 3-0 Recommended by the Budget Committee 12-0
Estimated tax impact - \$.03 per thousand

The Moderator read Article 3.

Gordon Ellis, Road Agent, stated that the F550 is on its last two years. Next year they will need to purchase another F550 or equivalent vehicle. Around 2015 or 2016 they will need to replace the backhoe. This \$10,000 will go a long ways to helping out instead of doing it all in one year.

There being no further discussion, Article 3 shall appear on the ballot as presented.

ARTICLE 4: Shall the Town of Epsom raise and appropriate the sum of thirty thousand nine hundred dollars (\$30,900.00) to pay for six (6) months' salary, benefits, and equipment for one (1) additional police officer? **Majority vote required. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.**

Not recommended by the Selectmen 1-2 Recommended by the Budget Committee 7-5
Estimated tax impact - \$.08 per thousand

The Moderator read Article 4.

Selectman Don Harty, liaison to the police department, reported this article is to increase the police force from six to seven officers. He voted against recommending this article for two reasons. One, the town is now budgeted for six officers but has been running with five. He stated that according to Chief Preve it is very difficult to run the town with five officers, results in lots of overtime and relying on other towns for coverage. With six officers he could cover the town without the gaps. The seventh officer would be for more detective work and more flexibility with scheduling. It would be advantageous to the town but Don feels it is not a dire need to go from the five we are running with now to seven. He feels it is more important when we get to the general budget to pay the officers we have now more so that we don't lose them to other towns for better pay and better benefits. Kind of a revolving door, we train the officers and they go to another town. The second reason he voted against it was the cost. This year the cost is for half a year, but it will commit the town to have seven officers from now on with future expenses that go on forever. He estimated the extra expenses for a full year's salary times six or seven years, plus added gasoline, court hearings, uniforms and extra costs for another officer over the next five years would be between \$350,000 and \$360,000.

Police Chief Wayne Preve reported that all the surrounding towns except for Chichester which has four full-time and six part-time officers, have more full-time officers than Epsom. We have six full-time officers and no part-time. He has found that part-time officers are not available to work when needed, they have worked all day at another job. Pittsfield has sixteen officers and their population is less than ours. With the seventh officer he would put another person on the street on certain nights and have two guys on. One of the officers could be put on investigative work and not patrolling. It is difficult to do investigative work while patrolling. We have been down to five officers for the past couple of years, but he is in the process of hiring someone for the sixth spot. This person is not certified and would not be ready for the road until the end of August or first of September. He wishes he could hire a full-time certified officer for the seventh position, but would probably not be able to and would have to train him. The reason the warrant article is for only half a year is that he would hope to hire an officer in June, but with the background check, polygraph, psychological check and certification he would probably not start until August. Next year the impact would be for a full year. The amount includes six months salary and all the background checks, polygraph, psychological, academy, uniforms, gear and bullet proof vest. Chief Preve reported that overtime expenses this year were \$19,500 and court overtime was \$7,500.

Bob Blodgett stated that we have a great police department. He did not recommend the article because he feels the Chief can get by with the officers he has and maintain the standards he has. A lot of people here are living on a fixed income, as he is, and cannot stand to have taxes go up. Hopefully, the economy will turn around so we can do better in the future.

Darlene Reinhard asked if there is a federal grant that we can get to cover the costs of officers. Selectman Keith Cota stated he would expect there are grants from the federal government but we did not look to see if there are any. He expects federal money will be drying up very quickly. Chief Preve stated in the past there has been federal money to hire additional staff for three years. There is a certain amount of money the federal government pays and certain amount the town pays. After the three years we either have to get rid of the officer or the town has to pay it all. There are no grants out there at this time. Bruce Graham stated with the federal deficient as it is, we should not even ask for federal money as it will make things worse for ourselves in the long run.

There being no further discussion, Article 4 shall appear on the ballot as presented.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the Town of Epsom raise and appropriate the sum of five hundred thirty-eight thousand one hundred thirteen dollars (\$538,113.00) to purchase a new Fire Engine with major equipment, hoses and Jaws of Life, and authorize the withdrawal of the same amount of five hundred thirty-eight thousand one hundred thirteen dollars (\$538,113.00) from the Fire & Rescue Apparatus Fund for that purpose; no funds to be raised from taxes? **Majority vote required.**

Recommended by the Selectmen 3-0 Recommended by the Budget Committee 12-0
Estimated tax impact - \$.00 per thousand

The Moderator read Article 5.

Keith Cota stated that it is very important to recognize that no funds are to be raised from taxes. Several years ago a Fire and Rescue Apparatus Fund was set up that took the revenue that was coming in from the ambulance service and put it into this account with the intent to replace the large equipment. When this fund was set up the purpose was that any major expenditure had to come before the voters.

Chief Yeaton stated this truck is out of the master plan replacement and will replace a truck that is nineteen years old. The truck will have a 1500 gallon pump and carry 1000 gallons of water. They are also replacing the Jaws of Life that was purchased out of the Lillian Morrison Fund in 1977. There is currently \$610,000 in the account, which leaves some money for next year to replace the ambulance. This amount includes the trade in value of \$28,000 for the old truck.

There being no further discussion, Article 5 shall appear on the ballot as presented.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the Town of Epsom raise and appropriate the sum of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000.00) to hire engineering and architectural services to evaluate the short and long term use options of the Meetinghouse and the surrounding land at Tax Map U4 – 52, and to prepare and present drawings and cost estimates for the occupancy and use of the Meetinghouse? **Majority vote required; this is a non-lapsing warrant article and will not lapse until March 31, 2012. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.**

Recommended by the Selectmen 3-0 Not recommended by the Budget Committee 4-8
Estimated tax impact - \$.10 per thousand

The Moderator read Article 6.

Don Harty stated when he was appointed to the Select Board in November he volunteered to serve as the liaison for the Meeting House Committee which includes the town office complex plans. In 1993 it was first proposed to start looking for a town office complex. There was a proposal in 1999 for a joint library and office complex. There was also a lot of stuff in between those years. There was not a lot of success. Around \$408,000 was raised by volunteers. This warrant article is for \$40,000 for an architectural and engineering study for several different possibilities on our town property around the meetinghouse. We are renting office space now at the circle at the strip mall. We have a five year lease and are committed for the next five years by the lease to stay there. The rent is \$173,000. We have an option to go for the next five years with a 3% per year increase. This would be \$205,000 for the years 2016 to 2020. Another five years, 2021 to 2025, it would be \$238,000. The total over the next fifteen years if we stay at the current town office would be \$617,000 just for rent for the town offices. If we need more space, who knows what the cost would be. He feels it is important that we move forward to move the town offices up to the meetinghouse site. The study in this article has three different approaches, two short and one long term. The first short term approach is to see what is needed to get an

occupancy permit for the main floor of the meeting house, including fire and safety codes and handicap access. The second short term is to see what is needed for an occupancy permit for the main floor of the meeting house and town offices in the lower level with the possibility of using the old town hall for some of the town office functions. The long term approach is for an occupancy permit for fifteen year town office needs, which would include the main floor meeting house and possibly an addition onto the meetinghouse. After talking to Matt Moulton of the fire department it was determined that in order to get an occupancy permit for the meetinghouse for any use whatsoever, a study needs to be done to show what the building will be used for both upstairs and downstairs, what future use, what type of addition may be put on and what needs to be done for fire safety. Hopefully, when our lease is up we will have some possibility to move into that structure to save the town some money. If this article fails, nothing will be done for another year.

Keith Cota stated this is a non-lapsing article which means the funds can be expended over the next fiscal year. It would allow us to spend it up until March of next year. This way the Engineer/Architecture firm can come to our next deliberative session to assist in explaining the proposals and evaluations.

Bruce Graham stated that nobody is going to vote until we know what we are going to use this building for. We need a decision from the Selectmen of what we are going to use it for, not another study.

Penny Graham stated she is the one who got the LCHIP grant. Her understanding is that we cannot change the exterior look of the building. The pews have to stay in the building but can be stored upstairs. You can put in movable partitions but cannot build permanent walls. Can do what you want with the lower level. The building is not on the historic register.

Keith Cota stated the Selectmen entered into a fifteen year stewardship agreement with the LCHIP organization that spells out what we can and can't do with the meetinghouse. The primary purpose of LCHIP is to protect the exterior of the building to maintain any historic features that it has. The stained glass windows can't be changed. The back section of the building can be expanded. They want the large meeting room maintained as a meeting room. Whatever is done to the building has to be reviewed by the LCHIP Committee. He stated the Selectmen, Engineering Consultant and Meetinghouse Committee will be very closely involved. The engineering consultant will have the knowledge, background and contacts.

Dick Frambach, member of the Meetinghouse Committee, stated that for the past three years there has been discussion on the best way to use the building. The only way to realistically evaluate the practical use of this building is to begin with an engineering and architectural study. He supports this article so that the building does not sit there for another year. We have to start somewhere, this is the best conclusion we have had in the past three years. We have over \$400,000 into that building and it is going to just sit there if we don't use it. It is irresponsible to rent when we have buildings and can put money into a building that we can use.

George Foster stated that we all seem to focus around trying to put town offices into the building. Maybe that is not the issue and it should be used for something else. Maybe put a town office next to it, make the basement into a senior center or some other great use in town. Leave the top floor as a meeting room, keep it historically correct. We need to look at it a little differently than we have in the past three years.

Keith Cota stated that other engineering studies have not been done for building needs. There were a series of building committees that looked at different sites around town. They recommended expansion on the town property. In 2007 a building committee feasibility report was developed when we were looking at whether we were going to accept the meetinghouse. A concept level evaluation was done for parking semantics as well as building layout semantics. At that time the meetinghouse did not include a full basement, it was envisioned as a frost slab. The

addition of the basement changed the outlook. The feasibility report stated that we could either expand on the meetinghouse or build a brand new building. It was determined that an engineering architectural study was needed, but none was done.

An amendment was made by Robert Topik, seconded by Andrew Walton which read, "Shall the Town of Epsom raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000) for preparation and presentation of drawings and cost estimates for the occupancy and use of the Meetinghouse?"

Andrew Walton asked for a ruling by town counsel to see if this is changing that amendment too much. Town counsel was not present. Jeff Keeler, as Moderator, ruled that the amendment as proposed does not change the intent of the article sufficiently to say it is invalid. The proposed amendment is still germane to the article.

Don Harty stated this amendment gets rid of the study. They have been told we can do nothing without an engineering study.

Rob Topik stated the amendment does not exclude engineering even though it does not specifically mention it.

Matt Moulton stated he is the one who brought this forward to the Selectmen. He was reading some of the Selectmen minutes which said the Meetinghouse Committee was going to put in smoke detectors. The biggest thing is life safety in the building. An engineer has to know what the building is going to be used for and what in fifteen years it will be used for. Then they can tell whether it needs a fire sprinkler or fire alarm system. \$20,000 will not get that done.

The Moderator asked for a hand vote on the amendment. The amendment failed.

There being no further discussion, Article 6 shall appear on the ballot as presented.

ARTICLE 7: Shall the Town of Epsom raise and appropriate the sum of twelve thousand nine hundred dollars (\$12,900.00) to repair and paint the exterior of the Old Library Building, and withdraw six thousand four hundred fifty dollars (\$6,450.00) of interest from the Town Morrison Fund to pay half of the cost, and six thousand four hundred fifty dollars (\$6,450.00) to be raised from taxes? **Majority vote required. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.**

Recommended by the Selectmen 3-0 Recommended by the Budget Committee 12-0
Estimated tax impact - \$.02 per thousand

The Moderator read Article 7.

There being no discussion, Article 7 shall appear on the ballot as presented.

ARTICLE 8: Shall the Town of Epsom raise and appropriate the sum of eighteen thousand dollars (\$18,000.00) to be added to the previously established Capital Reserve Fund for Revaluation in anticipation of the next required revaluation in 2015? **Majority vote required; this is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.**

Recommended by the Selectmen 3-0 Recommended by the Budget Committee 12-0
Estimated tax impact - \$.05 per thousand

The Moderator read Article 8.

There being no discussion, Article 8 shall appear on the ballot as presented.

ARTICLE 9: Shall the Town of Epsom establish an Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of cemetery maintenance and repair called the "Cemetery Maintenance Expendable Public Trust Fund" and raise and appropriate the sum of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500.00) for this fund and name the Cemetery Trustees as agents to expend the Fund? **Majority vote required; this is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.**

Not recommended by the Selectmen 0-3 Recommended by the Budget Committee 10-1-1
Estimated tax impact - \$.004 per thousand

The Moderator read Article 9.

Keith Cota stated this article sets up a new trust fund using appropriations from tax dollars. The Board of Selectmen did not recommend because they felt that this is basically cemetery maintenance which should be included in the budget itself. One advantage that this article will do is that whatever funds are raised will be carried over into each year. You will probably see this article come forth each year asking for money for this fund. The Selectmen feel that Article 11 is the appropriate mechanism to set up a trust fund as it spends both interest and principal.

Ken Brown, Cemetery Trustee, stated that Article 9 was written before Articles 10 and 11. It is to fix and repair gravestones and the historical part of the McCleary Cemetery where nothing has been done for thirty years.

There being no further discussion, Article 9 shall appear on the ballot as presented.

ARTICLE 10: Shall the Town of Epsom create a trust fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of cemetery maintenance and repair called the "Cemetery Trust Fund", the interest only to be expended, name the Cemetery Trustees as agents to expend, and to raise and appropriate the sum of three thousand nine hundred dollars (\$3,900.00) from the General Fund, which is the equivalent of one half of the plot sale proceeds for 2006-2010, no funds to be raised from taxes? **Majority vote required.**

Not recommended by the Selectmen 0-3 Not recommended by the Budget Committee 0-8-3
Estimated tax impact - \$.00 per thousand

The Moderator read Article 10.

Keith Cota stated that articles 10 and 11 pertain to having a pot of money available to undertake special maintenance needs such as replacing gravestones that have fallen over. The purpose of this is when we sell a cemetery plot half of that money would go into that account. In 2006 through 2010 they sold several lots and we have \$7,800 sitting in the general fund right now waiting for some place to be placed. This takes half of that money and puts it into the fund where only the interest could be expended by the Trustees. The Selectmen did not recommend this article because it can spend only the interest which is going to be very low.

Brad Keyes stated the interest on this money is only about \$100.00 per year. He does not think it is worth it, it won't get us anything.

An amendment was made by Brad Keyes, seconded, by Chris Porter, to zero this out and put the money into Article 11. The amendment reads: "Shall the Town of Epsom create a trust fund per RSA 31:19-a for the purpose of cemetery maintenance and repair called the "Cemetery Trust Fund", the interest only to be expended, name the Cemetery Trustees as agents to expend, and to raise and appropriate the sum of zero (\$0.00) from the General Fund. Majority vote required."

Bill Stevens asked the audience to just think of the fund as a savings account. The town just acquired the Gossville Cemetery and someday the fence will need repair. This money can be used. The money would have to be expended through a warrant article.

Keith Cota stated the Board of Selectmen felt the best interest was to put all the money into one account.

Carole McGuire, Cemetery Trustee, supports this amendment to put all the funds into the expendable trust fund in Article 11.

The Moderator asked for a hand count on the amendment. The amendment passed.

There being no further discussion, Article 10 shall appear on the ballot as amended to read:

ARTICLE 10: "Shall the Town of Epsom create a trust fund per RSA 31:19-a for the purpose of cemetery maintenance and repair called the "Cemetery Trust Fund", the interest only to be expended, name the Cemetery Trustees as agents to expend, and to raise and appropriate the sum of zero (\$0.00) from the General Fund. Majority vote required."

ARTICLE 11: Shall the Town of Epsom create a trust fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of cemetery maintenance and repair called the "Cemetery Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund", principal and interest to be expended, name the Cemetery Trustees as agents to expend, and raise and appropriate the sum of three thousand nine hundred dollars (\$3,900.00) from the General Fund, which is the equivalent of one half of the plot sale proceeds for 2006-2010, no funds to be raised from taxes? **Majority vote required.**

Recommended by the Selectmen 3-0 Recommended by the Budget Committee 8-1-2
Estimated tax impact - \$.00 per thousand

The Moderator read Article 11.

Keith Cota stated article 11 sets up another cemetery trust fund where both the principal and interest can be spent. The \$3,900.00 is half of the \$7,800.00 from plot sales from 2006 to 2010. A certain amount of revenue from previous years was put in as revenue that was intended to be used as cemetery maintenance. The other \$3,900.00 was in Article 10 before it was amended. This is the cemetery trust fund that the Select Board recommends.

An amendment was made by Brad Keys, seconded by Ralph Weeks, to add the \$3,900.00 previously removed from Article 10. The amendment reads: "Shall the Town of Epsom create a trust fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of cemetery maintenance and repair called the "Cemetery Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund", principal and interest to be expended, name the Cemetery Trustees as agents to expend, and raise and appropriate the sum of seven thousand eight hundred dollars (\$7,800.00) from the General Fund, which is the equivalent to the total of the plot sale proceeds for 2006-2010, no funds to be raised from taxes? **Majority vote required.**"

The Moderator stated this would put all of the money that was in Article 10 into Article 11.

The moderator asked for a hand count on Article 11. The amendment passed.

There being no further discussion, Article 11 shall appear on the ballot as amended to read:

ARTICLE 11: Shall the Town of Epsom create a trust fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of cemetery maintenance and repair called the "Cemetery Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund", principal and interest to be expended, name the Cemetery Trustees as agents to expend, and raise and appropriate the sum of seven thousand eight hundred dollars (\$7,800.00) from the General Fund, which is the equivalent to the total of the plot sale proceeds for 2006-2010, no funds to be raised from taxes? **Majority vote required.**

ARTICLE 12: Shall the Town of Epsom authorize the Board of Selectmen to accept in trust any gifts, legacies and devises made to the Town for any public purpose, until rescinded, per RSA 31:19? **Majority vote required.**

The Moderator asked to do Article 12 next, before going back to Article 1. This article is related to Articles 9 through 11. It gives the authorization to the Board of Selectmen to transfer those funds into the trust funds.

Keith Cota said the wording is very particular per the statutes, the selling of cemetery lots are included, also gifts and donations. The elected body would give the authority to the Board of Selectmen to accept. If this article is not passed, whenever there is a plot sale or donation, the voters have to vote accept them every year. This way they can be accepted without having to burden the town.

Ken Brown feels that the town should be the ones to accept, not the selectmen. He is concerned if the gift has conditions.

Keith Cota stated the Board of the Selectmen would review if there were any conditions at the time of accepting the gift. If the gift has too many conditions, they don't have to accept it. Someone could always come forward later with a petitioned warrant article to ask the town to accept a gift that the Selectmen felt was not appropriate. All funds are accepted at a public meeting and would be on their agenda for public input.

Keith Cota read RSA 31:19: "Towns may take and hold in trust gifts, legacies, and devises made to them for the establishment, maintenance, and care of libraries, reading-rooms, schools and other educational facilities, parks, cemeteries, and burial lots, the planting and care of shade and ornamental trees upon their highways and other public places, and for any other public purpose that is not foreign to their institution or incompatible with the objects of their organization."

Nancy Wheeler reported there are two situations. One, the Selectmen already have the authority to accept gifts, grants and donations that are to be expended within the year. This was granted years ago. This is done in a public meeting. If over \$5,000 it is done in a posted public hearing. This article pertains only to money that would be held in trusts. In the past this money had to be accepted by the town in a warrant article every year. This was done prior to 2006 and not come up since.

There being no further discussion, Article 12 shall appear on the ballot as presented.

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 \$ 2,723,543.00? Should this article be defeated, the operating budget shall be \$ 2,678,881.00, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town 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.

Recommended by the Selectmen 3-0

Recommended by the Budget Committee 8-4

Estimated tax impact: Proposed budget - \$.18 per thousand

Default budget - \$.07 per thousand

The Moderator read Article 1.

Nancy Wheeler answered the question as to why the two sources of revenue on the back of the pie chart do not add to page 8 of the budget. She stated the chart is an abbreviated version of how the tax rate was set in October. It is to give the taxpayers an idea that there is revenue to offset and not all of our spending is paid by property taxes. Missing from the chart are what the Selectmen can opt to use from the undesignated fund balance to reduce the tax rate. Every property exemption the town offers, such as veterans or elderly somebody else has to pay that money. Appropriations plus all exemptions the town offers is added to the amount voted on in March. There is also the overlay that is to cover any abatement that may be given during the year. This overlay is usually higher during a reval year because people pay more attention and come in for more abatements. This is an abbreviated incomplete chart of all the information that is needed to set the tax rate.

Dan McGuire stated the Selectmen did a good job spending \$90,000 less than what was raised. You are asking for even more money this year. He asked the Board to talk about the increases in the police, fire, executive and planning board budgets.

Keith Cota stated there are category funds in last year's budget that are there in case we need it. For instance, welfare we have to budget for certain things and if our Welfare Director does a really effective job, as she has been, we may end up with a surplus. Also with planning and zoning we have to budget for appropriate purposes and estimated number of meetings that we would expect to occur. We have to budget for it even though there is a revenue side that offsets these costs. Also the Police Department has an unfunded position. This goes to the surplus that was not spent. The Selectmen look at budgets on a monthly basis with department heads and hold them close to the spending of their budgets. The Executive budget has a \$7,900 increased cost of lease space. There is also a \$2,800 increase due to salary adjustments. The Select board has recommended to the budget committee and is presenting today a COLA increase based on the New England rate of 1.5% and a merit raise of 1%. Under our employee handbook we indicate that we will accommodate the COLA with the New England rate. Another element is the retirement increase of employer contribution from 9.6% to 11.09%, about a \$1,000 mandated increase. The selectmen are recommending a 3% increase for the police chief. Employer retirement contributions on that position increased from 13.6% to 14.63%, which is an additional \$1,200. We are under contract with Merrimack County Attorney's Office for the police department for \$9,000, which is an increase of \$2,000. For the full-time police officer positions they built in a 6% adjustment, which brings the base line up to be more in the average range of other communities around us, this is a \$12,000 increase. This is the third year trying to raise up these salaries. Next year should be a lot lower percentage. We had one officer who went from a single to family plan with our health insurance, this is an increase. The vacant position we have to budget for a family plan. This is a \$3,000 increase in health insurance for the police department. Retirement contributions for police officers went from 14.6% to 16.6% for employer contribution, which is an increase of \$5,600. The administrative assistant for the police department has a 2.5% adjustment, 1.5% COLA and 1% merit raise, which is a \$1,000. Retirement contributions for that position increased \$500. The fire department raised the salary to bring us up to the towns around us and we are recommending a 5% raise. There is also an increase of 50 cents per hour for one of our members who just obtained higher certification. There is an overall \$9,000

adjustment for full time positions. We are increasing the chief's salary 2.5%. The training pay is adjusting from \$10.00 to \$12.00 per hour which is about \$4,400. With the health insurance there has been two \$2,000 buy backs. One officer is going from single to married which is a \$9,000. increase. The employer retirement contribution was 18.52%, now 20.08% that is a \$4,600 increase. There is a slight increase in training and conferences of \$1,000. Collection agency to help with collection costs about \$1,500. There is a slight increase to paramedic intercepts of about \$600. This is approximately a \$30,000 to \$31,000 increase in the fire department.

Nancy Wheeler answered the question if the undesignated fund balance has been averaging the same every year. She stated that what money is not expended at the end of year becomes part of this balance; in 2010 it was \$86,000. By law the Department of Revenue Administration requires each town to maintain a certain balance in that account. It is made of up cash, receivables, unpaid taxes and a lot of things that are not cash. That fund can be used in the event of an emergency with permission from the DRA. It is recommended that between 7 to 12% be kept in that account. Around 1 million is usually our lower range. It is not all money. When the tax rate is set the Selectmen have the ability to access some of that money and apply it to offset the tax rate if there is enough cushion in there that they believe won't be needed for emergencies. We cannot access this right here and now.

There being no further discussion, Article 1 shall appear on the ballot as presented.

ARTICLE 13: To see if the town of Epsom will vote to revert Sanborn Hill Road back to its status before becoming a scenic Road under the provision of RSA 253:17 and 253:18. **BY PETITION. Majority vote required.**

The Moderator read Article 13.

Eric Yeaton asked what is a scenic road and what would it revert back to if this article passed?

Gordon Ellis replied that a scenic road is a regular road that you have difficulty cutting trees on and maintaining stone walls. Our scenic road is a dirt road that is very pretty. He feels that if it reverts back to a regular road it would not substantially change the look or feel of the road, but it would enable the highway department to better maintain it.

Jay Hickey stated he was involved back in 1988 when it became a scenic road. Deerfield has eleven scenic roads, we have one. It has been a scenic road for almost twenty-five years and up until this year it has not been a big issue with road agents. It protects stone walls and trees over a certain size. You need to get permission to cut trees that are over 15' circumference and 4' tall. He believes the reason this is coming up this year is there is a road project that Gordon wants to do to alleviate problems at the bottom of the hill which we agree needs to be addressed. But we don't believe you need to take \$92,000 federal money and add \$30,000 from the town budget for a road that has six houses. The Planning Board gave Gordon permission to cut some trees but not other trees. The Selectmen would like to have it engineered so that they know what is needed and this money will not be wasted.

Ed Nutter stated that people on the road made it a scenic road to make it difficult to put in a housing development. He feels that previous road agents were micro-managed. He lives at the bottom of the hill and a tremendous amount of stuff in the spring comes into his yard and water gets into his basement. He feels a scenic road is just a pain and he would like to get rid of it.

Betsy Bosiak, stated she previously was Chair of the Planning Board and they wanted Gordon to come before them to give them information before cutting down any trees to try and protect the road. He never did.

Dave Florentino stated he did not get a chance to sign the petition. He stated that if you can't maintain the road properly, then you have to do it every time you get a good size rain. He feels if Gordon is allowed to maintain the road as he sees fit, it will save us a lot of money.

Barbara Clark stated there is a lot of discussion as to what a scenic road is and how it is maintained, many people are not aware of the RSA as to what a scenic road is. An amendment was made by Barbara Clark, seconded by Rob Berry, to amend the article to read as follows: "Shall the Epsom Board of Selectmen form a committee to study the feasibility of discontinuing the scenic road status of Sanborn Hill Road?"

Ed Nutter stated this is a delay tactic. He owns half or more of this scenic road and is very much against this amendment.

Keith Cota stated RSA 231:157 defines the process to change a road to a scenic road. RSA 231:158 determines what the road agent can and cannot do. The RSA states as long as it does not involve cutting, damage or removal of trees, or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof, except with the prior written permission of the Planning Board except in an emergency situation.

Gordon Ellis stated he hates committees, and would just like the townspeople to vote the article up or done.

Jay Hickey stated the scenic road law basically protects the stone walls. It does not mean Gordon can't cut the trees, he just has to show up at the planning board to ask. The trees on the side of the road and the stone walls aren't stopping the vehicles from traveling the road. When it snows, the road gets plowed. He stated the main thing it does is to honor an historic road. There are not too many roads in Epsom that are over 200 years old. It does not preclude Gordon from doing what he has to do. He is surprised that Ed Nutter does not want to keep the scenic road to protect the stone walls as Ed has an issue with the town about stone walls. A committee will discuss the scenic road and next year report what is positive and what is negative and what needs to be done.

Rob Berry is a resident on the road and is not aware anywhere in the RSA that talks about tourism being part of scenic roads. The statute is designed to preserve what once was. The road has been essentially unchanged since the mid 1800s with only one house being built in the 1970s. Other than that the road has not changed in 200 plus years. That in itself has value. A great successful effort was made to preserve the church because it is part of Epsom's history, part of their legacy and heritage. This is the same idea, this was done to protect our heritage. If there are other roads like this, we should see about making them scenic roads as well. He doesn't believe there is anything Gordon or any road agent can't do on the hill with a scenic designation that he couldn't do without a scenic designation. It is just that he has to go to the Planning Board for trees over a certain diameter. There is a separate stone walls statute. He stated it comes down to do you want to preserve what you have or get rid of it for the expediency of the moment.

The moderator asked for a hand vote for the amendment. The amendment failed.

There being no further discussion, Article 13 shall appear on the ballot as presented.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 12:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Blackwell
Town Clerk