

MINUTES  
2020 TOWN OF HOOKSETT DELIBERATIVE SESSION  
FEBRUARY 1, 2020

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**CALL TO ORDER:** Moderator Marc Miville called the meeting to order at 9:00am, at the Cawley Middle School. Moderator Miville introduced Boy Scouts Owen Perrotta, Patrick Defelice and Wyatt Defelice of Troop 292 to post the flags and lead pledge of allegiance.

Moderator Miville stated the rules for the deliberative session, located on the back page of the voters guide, and format of meeting. Moderator Miville reminded those present that Hooksett has more elections in 2020 than any other town in NH, beginning with the Special Primary in January. Presidential Primary February 11<sup>th</sup> is expected to have a large turnout. Hooksett has 10,000 voters. Moderator Miville read an informational handout provided to voters about traffic flow for the presidential primary.

Moderator Miville asked veterans to stand and be recognized. Hooksett staff and employees were recognized.

**PRESENT:** Marc Miville, Moderator

Councilors- James Sullivan, At-Large, Chair; Robert Duhaime, District 4, Vice-Chair; James Levesque, District 3; John Durand, District 4; Clark Karolian, District 5, Cliff Jones, At-Large; Alex Walczyk, At-Large; Timothy Tsantoulis, District 1

Andre' Garron, Town Administrator; Matt Serge, Town Attorney; Christine Soucie, Finance Director; Todd Rainier, Town Clerk.

Budget Committee Members: Jason Hyde, Chair; Wayne Goertel, Vice-Chair; Chris Morneau, Secretary; Michael Yakubovich; Brian Soucy.

Supervisors of the Checklist: Mike Horne, Chair; Barbara Brennan and Kim Daggett.

102 voters present.

**Article 1**

To choose all necessary Town officers for the year ensuing.

**Article 2**

Zoning amendments.

***Moderator Miville read Article 3:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$30,000.00** for the purpose of developing an Asset Management Program for the Wastewater Public Facilities that will qualify the Town for federal and state funds (the "Project"); to authorize the issuance of not more than \$30,000.00 of bonds and notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33); to authorize the Town Council to determine the date, maturities, interest rate, and other details of such bonds or notes; and to authorize the Town Council to apply for, obtain, and accept federal, state, or other aid for the Project, including the Clean Water State Revolving Fund program, which may provide principal forgiveness in the amount of up to \$30,000.00 at no cost to rate payers and tax payers. (3/5 ballot vote required) Recommended by the Town Council (7 Yes - 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (10 Yes - 0 No).

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Councilor Duhaime motioned to move the article. Councilor Walczyk seconded motion.

Councilor Duhaime: Mr. Miville, may I suggest we introduce the new Town Administrator, Andre' Garron?

*Moderator Miville recognized Town Administrator Andre' Garron.*

TA Garron: My name is Andre' Garron. I am the new Town Administrator. I serve at the pleasure of the Town Council and I am grateful for the opportunity to be your Town Administrator. Given that this is my first deliberative session, I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself. Over the 8 months and 2 days I have been here (but who's counting?), I did have opportunities to speak before several community groups. This is an opportunity I can speak before some residents.

I want to thank you all for being here on this Saturday. This is very important that you be involved in the direction that the town takes. This is my first deliberative session in Hooksett, but not my first deliberative session. I have been doing this for over 30 years and I am well apprised of what the process is.

Just to give you a little background, the budget process starts in July. The town department heads are given their budgets and I review them in August. Budget Committee begins their deliberations in September.

I commend department heads for delivering to me a budget that is reasonable and meets the needs of the department and also that we address the personnel and operational aspect of Hooksett. When it goes to the Council, I felt that we handed over a budget that was reasonable. I thank Finance Director Christine Soucie for her help along the way.

I attacked the budget after being here for two months. It's tough to know what went into the history of the budget. I read the deliberative session minutes from last year. I do thank the previous Town Administrator, Dr. Dean Shankle, for his support. As well as the interim Town Administrators Don Winterton and Janet Bouchard, as well as Donna Fitzpatrick, for getting me up to speed as much as possible about the budget process and what goes into it.

As it was mentioned, the Town Administrator, as well as Town Council and department heads, also are coupled with not only preparing the budgets, but coming in to union negotiations for fire and police. Emphasis in the contracts was on being competitive in terms of the wage scale. I think we accomplished that. When you compare our wage scale with comparable communities, I did not see us as a poster child for the highest paid staff in the state, but I did want to be competitive in terms of attraction and retention. We have a really good staff, both in fire and police. I want the emphasis to be on getting them trained and up to speed, then keeping them.

In the contract that you will see before you, there are savings derived from transferring to a comparable insurance with a lower cost, as well as contributions from both unions toward their insurance.

I think the management team, comprised of myself, Donna Fitzpatrick, and Christine Soucie. Councilors Durand, Karolian, and Duhaime and the respective chiefs of the respective agencies, Chief James Burkush and Chief Janet Bouchard, were a part of that negotiation team. I think we worked in a collaborative way with the unions. They did a great job coming to the table with objectives in mind. I think the end result with what we have before you are fair and reasonable

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contracts on both accounts. I do commend them for working with us. It's not an easy process at all. I hope you support them, as they were supported by the Town Council and the Budget Committee.

Not to rush time, but looking into the future, the budget you have before you is not terribly ambitious, but it meets the operational needs of the town and capital needs of the community.

As we look to the future, we have projects that we are working on, some that were started last year, like the Route 3A TIF District bond that the town approved. We have taken steps to put a plan together with regard to where infrastructure will be started. That plan will be a multi-phased project in which the first phase will probably be presented to you next year.

We are engaging in the roadway management plan which will study each and every roadway in town so we can better put a plan before you for as to how a roadway system gets upgraded and addressed, with repairs as needed based upon it's condition. We have also restarted our capital improvements program, which in my view, is very important addressing our capital needs on a long-term basis. That is amongst many items that we need to look at as we look to the future of Hooksett.

I thank you again for the opportunity to address the residents of Hooksett and I look forward to our future together.

Moderator Miville introduced the Councilors, staff and Budget Committee.

*Moderator Miville declared Article 3 moved to the official ballot.*

***Moderator Miville read Article 4:***

Shall the town adopt the provisions of RSA 72:61 through RSA 72:64 inclusively, which provide for an optional property tax exemption from the property's assessed value, for property tax purposes, for persons owning real property, which is equipped with solar energy systems intended for use at the immediate site. Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount equal to 100% of the assessed value of qualifying solar energy system equipment under these statutes, not to exceed \$30,000. (Majority vote required)

Councilor Walczyk motioned to move the article. Councilor Duhaime seconded the motion.

Councilor Walczyk: The article is relatively straightforward. The state has provided this to be accepted by towns. There is a limit to the exemption. It's not as much and incentive as it is a removal of a hurdle. Article addresses commercial as well as residential solar. Please ask any questions you may have.

Jason Hyde, 36 Edgewater Drive: It is my feeling that towns should not be offering this type of exemption. Who benefits the most? GE with their huge solar array. It will take money out of the town coffers. Funds that will have to be made up elsewhere. I think this is not good for the taxpayers. I have a problem with giving exemptions like this.

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Councilor Walczyk: This exemption is \$30,000, which is the typical cost of a typical residential solar array. It has a limit. It is capped so that someone with 15 acres does not build a solar farm and then does not pay any taxes. We chose \$30,000 based upon analysis of historical residential solar arrays around NH. Other towns have lost millions by not establishing a limit.

Jason Hyde, 36 Edgewater Drive: How does this work? Is it a one-time thing, or annual?

Councilor Walczyk: It is annual, based upon the valuation of your solar array. It is not intended for regular property taxes on your property. It is just for the solar array, up to \$30,000. It does not exempt residents from regular property taxes. The exemption would be based on the value of the solar array, which will be evaluated annually.

Mary Darby, 244 Whitehall Road: I just have a question about how the exemption is determined. Is it for leased or owned solar? Who determines the qualifications?

Moderator Miville: Would this effect the revenue stream for the town?

Christine Soucie: I believe the town assessor would qualify the exemption. I presume it is revenue neutral. If the solar panels were \$60,000, your assessment would increase with the solar array, but \$30,000 would be exempted.

John Duhamel, Town Assessor: Qualifying structure is defined in the statute that councilor Alex Walczyk has.

Councilor Walczyk read the statute, section 73:61.

Jason Hyde, 36 Edgewater Drive: Finance Director Soucie pointed out it is revenue neutral, which is half correct. If you add a \$30,000 solar array to your home, the town, under this law, would lose that tax revenue. If you compare this to adding a \$30,000 addition to your house, the town, with a tax rate of \$22.00 per thousand, the town would lose \$660.

Wayne Goertel, Budget Committee: How many of these solar arrays are there in Hooksett?

Councilor Walczyk: Unknown. Residents would have to apply annually for the exemption.

Councilor Jones: Permits for this would have to be pulled. The Building Department would have that information from permits.

TA Garron: The town is looking at this as an encouragement for residents to install solar for energy conservation. The town is looking at converting existing sodium vapor lights to LED. Council is also looking at solar on existing town property. This article is an encouragement towards energy conservation.

Moderator Miville declared article 4 moved to the official ballot.

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***Moderator Miville read article 5:***

Shall the town raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant, for the purposes set forth therein, and other appropriations voted separately totaling **\$19,937,694.00**? Should this article be defeated, the operating budget shall be \$19,831,427.00, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town meeting, or by law or the Town Council may hold one special meeting, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. Estimated tax rate impact \$5.51. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes - 1 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (8 Yes - 2 No).

Jason Hyde, Budget Committee Chair, motioned to move the article; Budget Committee Vice-Chair Wayne Goertel seconded the motion.

Chairman Hyde: The budget committee meets several times throughout the year. Hyde described the analysis process budget committee utilizes to determine historical budgets and making recommendations, such as LED lights for streetlights in town.

This is Andre' Garrons first year as TA and bravo to him for following that recommendation. Finance and department heads have done a great job with this budget. Some cuts were made by budget committee. Looking for details that can lead to efficiencies. We adjusted sewer line, legal line, fuel line, some phone lines and electrical.

Wayne Goertel: Budget Committee Vice-Chair: Town budget is approximately \$20m and school is \$35m. Please join us for the school deliberative next Friday. The Town Council and departments did an excellent job with this budget. Budget Committee recommends this budget. We did not have to do much to the town budget. Town Council reviewed these budgets. They are on video. Very transparent.

Councilor Duhaime: I was the Council rep. to the Budget Committee for the second year. The budget is thoroughly explained.

Moderator Miville: There is an amendment to the budget. A \$900 increase has been requested by Claire Lyons and Linda Krewson.

***At this point, Moderator Miville was dismissed due to a medical emergency and Town Clerk Todd Rainier resumed the meeting.***

TC Todd Rainier: We have a motion to amend the budget, introduced by Claire Lyons and Linda Krewson, as follows: Motion to increase the operating budget by \$900 in line 001-300.4150-110.000 FIN Public Officials.

Claire Lyons, Trustee of the Trust Funds, motioned to move the amendment to return the stipend to the Trustees of the Trust Funds. Linda Krewson, Trustee of the Trust Funds, seconded the motion.

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Claire Lyons: A year ago, the stipend for the Trustees was cut in half. The company we had making investments made a couple of inappropriate investments so we switched companies to one that specialized in municipal investments. Somewhere along the Trustees stipend was cut in half.

We do much more than meet one hour once a quarter. We review investments and make sure they adhere to the RSA's of the state. I feel the stipend should be resumed to what it was.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Linda Bonetti, 5 Lafond Ave: I just have a question in the explanation of the budget. It is my understanding we are voting for a \$19,831,427.00 budget plus the \$900 and the estimated tax rate impact is \$5.51 for the \$100,000 increase?

Chair Sullivan: That would be the tax rate for the town, should the budget pass. Not an increase.

Finance Director Soucie: The operating budget that you are currently paying for is \$5.32. If the new budget were to pass that would increase to \$5.51.

*TC Rainier declared Article 5 moved to the official ballot as amended.*

***TC Rainier read Article 6:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$250,000.00** to be added to the Fire Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.12. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes - 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (9 Yes - 1 No).

Councilor Sullivan motioned to move the article. Councilor Walczyk seconded the motion.

Councilor Sullivan: If I could just take a moment to recognize Councilor Jim Levesque who is not running after 10 years of service on the Council.

As you can see in the explanation there is a reserve fund for the equipment firefighters need. Vehicles need replacement over time. In 2021 engine 4 is due to be replaced. These vehicles cost \$700,000. You can see the equipment in the description. The town recently purchased a longer ladder truck through due diligence of the fire department and a donation from SNHU. This fund is set up so the tax rate does not have a big impact in one year.

Wayne Goertel, Budget Committee: I would like to add that the budget committee supports this overwhelmingly. Budget Committee ran its own amortization on this equipment and found the numbers to be solid and a little conservative. Budget Committee is behind this.

Brian Soucy, Budget Committee: I would like to point out that the capital reserve funds in the next several articles are planning for the future. These funds are in place so money is saved for the large purchases, instead of impacting the tax rate significantly in one year. This keeps the tax rate for all of us even and level.

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*TC Rainier declared Article 6 moved to the official ballot.*

***TC Rainier read Article 7:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$200,000.00** to be added to the Public Works' Vehicles Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.10. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes - 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (8 Yes - 2 No).

Councilor Tsantoulis motioned to move the article. Councilor Jones seconded the motion.

Councilor Tsantoulis: The explanation in the pamphlet pretty much sums this up. The highway department is run by capable individuals. Equipment wears out and must be replaced. It costs a lot of money to replace equipment all at once. We build these funds over time to minimize the tax impact that replacing equipment all at once would have. You can see in the description a list of equipment that has been replaced through this program.

*TC Rainier declared Article 7 moved to the official ballot.*

***TC Rainier read Article 8:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$150,000.00** to purchase a Truck Tractor to haul trash for the Recycling and Transfer Division of Public Works with said funds to come from the Solid Waste Disposal Special Revenue Fund. No amount to be raised from general taxation. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes - 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (10 Yes - 0 No).

Councilor Karolian motioned to move the article. Councilor Levesque seconded the motion.

Councilor Karolian: That dollar figure is not going to impact the tax rate. It is coming out of a fund. The vehicle has over 100,000 miles on it. These vehicles are over the road vehicles and gross out at over 80,000 pounds. I believe this particular vehicle is 20 years old and fatigue happens. Upkeep would cost more than replacing. This will be replaced through a state bid process. This is the oldest vehicle in the fleet.

*TC Rainier declared article 8 moved to the official ballot.*

***TC Rainier read article 9:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$115,000.00** to purchase and install a salt storage facility for the Highway Division of Public Works. Estimated tax rate impact \$0.06. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes - 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (9 Yes - 1 No).

Councilor Durand motioned to move the article. Councilor Tsantoulis seconded the motion.

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Councilor Durand: We live in New England. We need salt and it needs to be stored appropriately.

TC Rainier declared article 9 moved to the official ballot.

***TC Rainier read Article 10:***

To see if the town will vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Hooksett Town Council and the Hooksett Permanent Firefighters Association Local 3264, IAFF which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

Estimated increase over prior year

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Salaries</u>	<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2020-21	\$127,297.00	(\$ 16,046.00)	\$111,251.00
2021-22	\$ 74,520.00	\$ 27,594.00	\$102,114.00
2022-23	\$ 77,601.00	\$ 28,736.00	\$106,337.00

and further to raise and appropriate **\$111,251.00** for the current fiscal year; of this amount \$14,985.00 is authorized to be withdrawn from the Ambulance Revenue Fund, and the balance of \$96,266.00 to be raised from general taxation. 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. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.05. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes - 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (6 Yes - 4 No).

Councilor Duhaime motioned to move the article. Councilor Durand seconded the motion.

Councilor Duhaime: The negotiation team, made up of myself, Councilor Durand and Councilor Karolian, worked through three negotiations to an agreement with the fire union that is agreeable to all. The town got concessions in the health insurance line. This is a win-win.

Wayne Goertel, Budget Committee: Budget Committee supported this by a tight margin. As part of our adjustment to the town budget we reduced some overtime. Things negotiated in here offset that.

TC Rainier declared Article 10 moved to the official ballot.

**Article 11:** Shall the town, if ARTICLE #10 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address ARTICLE #10 cost items only? (Majority vote)

***TC Rainier read Article 12:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$106,068.00** for an increase in salaries and benefits for non-union full-time and part-time Town personnel.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Salaries</u>	<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Total</u>
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2020-21                      \$88,047.00                      \$18,021.00                      \$106,068.00

Estimated tax rate impact is \$.05. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes – 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (10 Yes - 0 No).

Councilor Walczyk motioned to move the article. Councilor Sullivan seconded the motion. Councilor Walczyk: This is a 2.5% increase for non-union employees.

TC Rainier declared article 12 moved to the official ballot.

***TC Rainier read Article 13:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$100,000.00** to be added to the Town Building Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.05. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes - 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (9 Yes - 1 No).

Councilor Tsantoulis motioned to move the article. Councilor Sullivan seconded the motion.

Councilor Tsantoulis: This funds repairs to town buildings. The safety center needs a new roof. This article allows \$100,000 to be placed in this fund.

*TC Rainier declared Article 13 moved to the official ballot.*

***TC Rainier read Article 14:***

To see if the town will vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Hooksett Town Council and the Hooksett Police Union Local 46, NEPBA which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

Estimated increase over prior year

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Salaries</u>	<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2020-21	\$ 73,252.00	\$ 20,934.00	\$ 94,186.00
2021-22	\$ 72,999.00	\$ 21,540.00	\$ 94,539.00
2022-23	\$ 80,343.00	\$ 19,454.00	\$ 99,797.00

and further to raise and appropriate **\$94,186.00** for the current 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. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.05. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes – 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (8 Yes - 2 No).

Councilor Durand motioned to move the article. Councilor Duhaime seconded the motion.

Councilor Durand: It’s important to take care of our people in blue. This will allow us to keep people and bring in new people. We should move forward with this.

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Jason Hyde, Budget Committee: Shifting an additional 1% of medical insurance cost to the employee over time so it's 20% in year three, which is what many in the private sector pay. Police officers receive a step increase each year. This contract adds to that step increase, not including any promotions or bonuses.

*TC Rainier declared article 14 moved to the official ballot.*

**Article 15**

Shall the town, if ARTICLE #14 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address ARTICLE #14 cost items only? (Majority vote)

***TC Rainier read Article 16:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$93,390.00** to purchase and install a pavilion for community use; of this amount, not to exceed \$50,000.00 is authorized to be withdrawn from the Public Recreation Facilities Impact Fees Special Revenue and not to exceed \$43,390.00 to be withdrawn from the Parks & Recreation Facilities Development Capital Reserve. No amount to be raised from general taxation. Recommended by Town Council (8 Yes – 1 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (10 Yes - 0 No).

Councilor Walczyk motioned to move the article. Councilor Duhaime seconded the motion.

Councilor Walczyk: Thank you. In addition to what's already in the documentation provided, this item goes back for years as far as I am told. It goes back at least three years in the parks and rec. subcommittee.

Really the opportunity here is to replace the existing gazebo that is there. An Eagle Scout had built it. We have contacted the Eagle Scout and they are supportive of this move going forward. In addition, we have another Eagle Scout stepping forward to potentially provide three picnic tables. That has just come up in the past few weeks.

This is a good opportunity for providing a spot for Hooksett residents to congregate. It's an intimate setting in a quiet park. There is a particularly good area for parking. The location is Lambert's Park.

Bob Willey, 3 Morningside Drive: First of all I want to say that I am not opposed to this in any way. I am definitely for this article, and anything for parks and rec. in the town of Hooksett is long overdue. However, I just want to challenge a little bit the methodology if you will. I appreciate the comments that were just made there about reaching out to the Boy Scouts. I encourage, if we haven't done so, to reach out to businesses and service organizations in town to help support this to try to defray some of the cost. I know, speaking from one of the service organizations that, many times we have been challenged and chastised if we don't come to the Town to look at getting some support there. So let's just reciprocate, and if the town is interested in trying to get somebody for naming rights, et cetera, for this, please reach out to the businesses and service organizations. Thank you.

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TC Rainier declared Article 16 moved to the ballot.

**TC Rainier read Article 17:**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$80,000.00** to be added to the previously established Capital Reserve Funds and to apportion the sum among several funds as listed below:

Air Packs & Bottles	\$ 25,000.00
Fire Rescue Tools & Equipment	35,000.00
Fire Cistern	<u>20,000.00</u>
Total	\$ 80,000.00

Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.04. Recommended by Town Council (6 Yes - 1 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (10 Yes - 0 No).

Councilor Jones motioned to move the article. Councilor Tsantoulis seconded the motion.

Councilor Jones: It's pretty self-explanatory. We as a Town Council depend upon department heads to come to us with needs more than wants. I feel this is a needed article. Everything listed here is to keep the residents of Hooksett safe and to keep our first responders safe and allow them to do their job properly.

TC Rainier declared Article 17 moved to the official ballot.

**TC Rainier read Article 18:**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$50,000.00** to be added to the Emergency Radio Communications Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.02. Recommended by Town Council (6 Yes – 1 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (10 Yes - 0 No).

Councilor Sullivan motioned to move the article. Councilor Duhaime seconded the motion.

Councilor Sullivan: Another traditional warrant article used to ensure the town has proper radio communications. As you can see, that is certainly needed for many situations, including today. Very vital to have emergency communications operating fully.

Jason Hyde, Budget Committee Chair: I probably should have spoken about the last one too. These particular articles, the last one too, items in question are very, very expensive. Just like for the fire trucks and the trash trucks they are very expensive. The last time we had to replace all of the radios and communication gear it was almost a million dollars. To save up the money over time it keeps our tax rate from spiking. That's why we support the last two articles. Thank you.

TC Rainier declared Article 18 moved to the official ballot.

**TC Rainier read Article 19:**

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To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$50,000.00** to be added to the Drainage Upgrades Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.02. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes – 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (10 Yes - 0 No).

Councilor Durand motioned to move the article. Councilor Jones seconded the motion.

Councilor Durand: I think it's self-explanatory. It's something we need in the town.

*TC Rainier declared Article 19 moved to the official ballot.*

***TC Rainier read Article 20:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$39,148.00** for salary and benefits to hire a full-time DPW Recycling & Transfer Administrative Assistant and replace the current part-time secretary position.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Salary</u>	<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Total</u>
2020-21	\$14,196.00	\$24,952.00	\$39,148.00

Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.02. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes – 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (8 Yes - 2 No).

Councilor Sullivan motioned to move the article. Councilor Walczyk seconded the motion.

Councilor Sullivan: As you can see, the explanations provide the information we need. There is currently a part-time administrative assistant there. Because of the change in demand for transfer and recycling there is a need for having a full-time employee to assist on that aspect of the Division of Public Works, which has a multitude of divisions. This is one of their divisions. So it's increasing as it says from a part time to a full time.

The \$39,000 is only the difference between the part-time amount and full-time. Then, if you see later on the estimated cost each year, over time, will become \$56,000, which includes salary as well as associated benefits.

This is a needed position from part-time to full-time to assist in those services in recycling and transfer.

*TC Rainier declared Article 20 moved to the official ballot.*

***TC Rainier read Article 21:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$30,000.00** to be added to the Automated Collection Equipment Capital Reserve previously established. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.01. Recommended by Town Council (6 Yes – 1 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (10 Yes - 0 No).

Councilor Levesque motioned to move the article. Councilor Karolian seconded the motion.

Councilor Levesque: This is essentially like a savings account for future replacement of the trucks. These are the ones that go out every day to pick up your refuse in the barrels. This is

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planning ahead so the money will be available in 2022, when it comes time to start replacing these trucks. That's it. Thank you.

*TC Rainier declared Article 21 moved to the official ballot.*

***TC Rainier read Article 22:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$30,000.00** to be added to the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.01. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes – 0 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (9 Yes - 1 No).

Councilor Walczyk motioned to move the article. Councilor Durand seconded the motion.

Councilor Walczyk: This is a lot similar to the other articles that the budget committee has spoken about. Saving up over time. Same thing.

*TC Rainier declared Article 22 moved to the official ballot.*

***TC Rainier read Article 23:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$25,000.00** to be added to the Parks & Recreation Facilities Development Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.01. Recommended by Town Council (7 Yes – 2 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (9 Yes - 1 No).

Councilor Jones motioned to move the article. Councilor Durand seconded the motion.

Councilor Jones: Pretty much sums it up. I've had my kids and my grand-kids get involved with parks and recreation. It's good that the kids have someplace to go and some things to do instead of being out on the street. Like a lot of towns, they're out on the street instead of something like this happening.

*TC Rainier declared Article 23 moved to the official ballot.*

***TC Rainier read Article 24:***

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$10,000.00** to be added to the Conservation Land Improvements Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.005. Recommended by Town Council (5 Yes – 2 No), Recommended by Budget Committee (6 Yes - 4 No).

Councilor Walczyk motioned to move the article. Councilor Duhaime seconded the motion.

Councilor Walczyk: I will just mention that it is one-half of one cent. A clarification there.

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*TC Rainier declared Article 24 moved to the official ballot.*

***TC Rainier called upon the petitioner, Henry Roy, to read Article 25:***

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$52,000.00** to reimburse for private residential water hydrants to ensure public safety. SUBMITTED BY PETITION. Estimated tax rate impact \$0.03. Not recommended by Town Council (4 Yes – 4 No), Not recommended by Budget Committee (2 Yes - 8 No).

I believe we had 175 signatures on the petition.

Fred Bishop: The warrant articles' purpose is for the town to assume responsibility for private residential hydrants, particularly in condo developments. The town mandates having these hydrants, but the residents pay for rental of these and also for all other hydrants in town through their property taxes and also through their condo association bill. It's double-taxation and it's blatantly unfair. A little history. With assistance from the town staff last year, we developed a proposal to pay for these at last years' deliberative session. It passed by a large majority. Voters approved the budget with the hydrant rentals included. The town attorney and new town administrator did not like the language for what was voted here last year. Although the money sits in the budget, the town hasn't paid for the hydrants.

With assistance from the new town administrator, town attorney, and town staff, this new warrant article was created. The council voted to not support it, then with a second vote, voted to support it. Then with a third vote, voted not to support it, with a 4-4 tie vote. Talk about being jerked around. The council will meet after this meeting and, if possible, we encourage them to reconsider their 4-4 vote.

Condo associations like ours are a cash cow for Hooksett. We pay for our own plowing. Repair and surface our streets. We pay for trash pick-up. We do have police and fire protection, but we are mandated to have sprinkler systems. And the ambulance service is then paid by Medicare and private insurance. Now the towns' obligation to provide fire protection would seem to include the hydrants only used by the Hooksett Fire Department. All we are asking is for the town to treat us fairly and pay for the hydrant rentals. The impact is only \$.03 on the tax rate.

TC Rainier: Thank you, Fred. Just for order of procedure, would you mind introducing yourself?

Fred Bishop, 34 Mammoth Road.

TC Rainier: I presume you second the motion?

Fred Bishop: I second Henry's motion.

TC Rainier: Mr. Roy, would you mind coming back up, please?

Henry Roy: I second the motion.

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TC Rainier: You introduced it. In your introduction, I presume you to mean you move Article 25, as read, to be placed on the official ballot. Is that correct?

Henry Roy: That is correct.

TC Rainier: Thank you. Any input on Article 25? Let's start out with Chair Sullivan.

Councilor Sullivan: Just to clarify what Mr. Bishop said. It was only two roads.

It was a 6-3 vote and a motion was made to reconsider at our last Council meeting. That resulted in the 4-4 tie.

Just from my end, last year, Mr. Bishop is correct, it was an amendment to the operating budget. The wording was not clear. It just said to add funds to the hydrant fees. We just wanted to make sure it was clear that it was representing residential hydrants. As a result of that the Town Council did discuss, at some point, which is probably what Mr. Bishop referred to, on whether we as a Council wanted to place this on the ballot or include it in the actual operating budget. We got the clarification on what the appropriate wording would be, which is pretty much mimicking what the petition article says. Certainly there is a difference of opinion from the different Councilors and what the Budget Committee says. I can't speak for those who spoke against. Clearly, when developments come in. Residential. This is strictly for residential hydrants, not for business or commercial required hydrants. Residential developments come in that require access to hydrants as part of our planning and building requirements.

This is not a precedence. In another situation with a precedent where the town, approved by the voters, moved to reimburse private residential areas for their trash pick-up. So this would not be a precedent. And clearly there is a requirement for the development to have those hydrants.

The residents of those private communities have condo fees associated with hydrants as part of those condo fees. Also they are required as residents and citizens to contribute to the entire welfare for hydrants that service this building, the town hall, and any areas that are not considered private.

It's prudent to do this. It meets the requirement on what is specific to how it is to be applied. From my end, I think this makes sense, to serve those residents. I don't know how many those number. Probably a good portion of those here and a good portion of you vote. So I think those 107 additional hydrants that are required for fire protection. Again, it's needed. Regardless whether it's here or anything.

For my vote, I voted yes on the first time, the second time, and the third time at the Council level.

Councilor Tsantoulis: The reason why I was forced, if you will, to change my vote on the board is: The wording at the end of the petition would lead one to believe, perhaps, that if you were to vote against this, then the condominium associations are not going to have fire service, which is not the case. The wording is, at best, poor, and I received a lot of calls from people who felt it was poor and it was attempting to trick the voters.

I don't think that is something we want to do. I actually supported that the condominium subdivisions be reimbursed for the fire hydrants. I felt that it was the right thing to do. When it was pointed out to me that the wording was somewhat tricky or misleading, I felt that there was

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an opportunity to clean the language up. I don't know if there is an opportunity for this to still get done.

There is no supporting explanation for this article on the ballot. My thought process was then and still is now that people are going to go there and they are not going to necessarily know the true meaning of this warrant. So hopefully, just by my speaking and word getting out to people, the understanding will be made more clear.

The motion is to reimburse and not doing anything with regard to stopping service. Obviously, stopping service would be foolish and that's not going to happen.

That is my explanation and that is why I believe others on the Council changed their vote so it was a split 4-4 vote. It's important you understand that.

TC Rainier: Thank you, Councilor Tsantoulis. Would anyone else from Council like to speak to this article?

Councilor Karolian: First of all I want to clarify a couple of things. I did vote in the negative and I feel like I need to explain why I voted in the negative. I had done some homework. I had contacted. Well, let me back up a little further than that.

As you know I was appointed and I am running again. Excuse me, I am going to run for the District 5 Council seat, to the pleasure of some, dismay of others.

But I feel obligated to explain myself and the information I received. I think it is somewhat disingenuous to call these rental fees.

If I am going to be shooting myself in the foot politically, so be it. Some of you who know me know that I don't play politics. I say it the way I think it should be said. Having said that, these are not rentals. It's not a rental fee.

I went to the water companies and asked about the situation, because I wanted to enlighten myself about the situation before we ended up getting to where we are today. These are not rentals. These are owned wholly by the HOA, the homeowners association, or private entities. They are charged a fee, like all fees. Every hydrant is being charged by the water company. The public ones are going to the fire department line budget. The private ones are being taken care of by the private associations. If something goes wrong with those hydrants, it's not a rental fee where the water company is going to go in and repair that. The fee, as it was explained to me, is to allow the hookup to the main water to the water company. It's a private contract between the water companies and the private homeowners association, or a private landowner to come into an agreement. It's somewhat misleading to think that it's a rental fee.

I've gotten calls and I've heard from people who complain that they don't have fire hydrants in their neighborhood, yet they are going to be paying, are currently paying through their taxes for the public fire hydrants. Now they are being asked to pay not only for the public fire hydrants but private hydrants.

I think it's important to clarify these are private fire hydrants. If something goes wrong with the main, from the water main to the private hydrant, it's on the private association to take care of that.

Before these associations go in, they have to go through planning. The reason why they have what they have is because it was required by planning. So, um, it's a situation that is very delicate.

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I just want people to know, and again, I could be shooting myself in the foot when it comes time on March 10<sup>th</sup> for people to vote yea or nay or to vote for somebody else that is running for the seat, but, being the person that I am, I like to put that out there.

I think it's good to have debate. I commend the people that put this together. This is what democracy is all about. You go about it the right way. You put a petition article on the ballot. You debate it and let the voters decide. But I felt an obligation to explain that. And if there's any more questions directed at me, I would be happy to take them.

TC Rainier: Thank you. Chair Sullivan wanted me to point something out that I think is very valid. The statement was made that no explanation for this article would be on the ballot. In point of fact, what you see in plain print is what you see on the ballot. What you see in italics is in the Voter's Guide. It does not appear on the ballot. Can you imagine what that ballot would look like? I just wanted to make sure we were clear on that explanation.

Jason Hyde, Budget Committee Chair: To speak for the Budget Committee and why the majority decided to vote not to recommend. Basically, we heard sort of the same arguments. It's a private homeowners association. When the homeowners bought into that situation, that concept, those fees were all included in that HOA fee. I don't pay an HOA fee, because I don't live in a place that requires one. I don't pay a condo fee because I don't live in a place that requires one. I don't have a hydrant anywhere within 3000 feet of my house and I suspect most people in town don't. I understand that they were required by the town to be put into these establishments. I get that. But again, when you bought into that, hopefully you understood what you were buying into. And that includes things like trash pickup and plowing the roads and mowing your lawn and taking care of the exteriors of your buildings. Whatever the HOA or your condo association documents say. You bought into that.

I think the majority of the Budget Committee felt that you made that decision and it shouldn't be up to the entire town to cover that part of your cost of living there. It was part of your cost when you agreed to living there. I think that was what the majority of the Budget Committee was thinking when they didn't recommend this. Thank you.

TC Rainier: Thank you. Would anyone else like to speak to this?

Frank Kotowski, 34 Mammoth Road Unit 28: I not only live at 34 Mammoth Road in Hooksett, I am also your State Representative. I have been your State Representative for 12 years.

These kinds of arguments go on all the time. I look at this as fairness, to be honest with you. What would happen, for example, if all of the sudden, we wouldn't do it really, if all of a sudden these associations would say "You know what, we are being taxed double. Why don't we just remove the hydrants?" If it's important enough for the town, they'll put them in and take care of them. I don't think that's what we're here for. It seems to me it's about fairness. There's no doubt in my mind that there's double-dipping going on. Not intentionally, but through the system we have developed.

I would like to encourage all of you to get behind this effort. And I would ask that at the end of this, we take a hand vote. Thank you.

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Don Mafera, 34 Mammoth Road: New to town politics. We moved from Manchester after 40 years, but only two miles down the road. My questions is: Did the town ever pay in the past for any of the cost for the hydrants at 34 Mammoth Road?

TC Rainier: I would ask either Finance Director Christine Soucie or Town Administrator Andre' Garron to address that question. Has the town paid for anything specifically at 34 Mammoth Road?

Christine Soucie, Finance Director: No. The town has not paid for them in the past.

Don Mafera: Well. Like our previous speaker on double-dipping. We get our water supply form the City of Manchester, as well as the rest of the town of Hooksett that's on it. I don't know. Is that considered a private organization that everyone else is getting their supply from?

TC Rainier: I think I can address that question. The condominium association is the private organization.

Don Mafera: Well, we still pay for other hydrants in the town of Hooksett with our taxes, and it was brought up that other people that don't have hydrants in their neighborhoods pay for that in their taxes. What's fair is fair.

We've added 63.5 cents I think to things here so far on the budget. Another 3 cents isn't going to hurt the town itself all that much.

And another question I had is we're an over 55 community and I'm wondering, do we get any taxes off of our school budget?

TC Rainier: That's a separate question from the article that we are addressing right now.

Don Mafera: Well I'm glad I brought it up. It could be quid pro quo.

Ron Ducharme, 4 Currant Lane, Berry Hill Estates Condominium Association: Just to reiterate what Mr. Bishop said earlier at this article introduction: Last year at this deliberative session we discussed this with everybody here. There was an overwhelming majority vote to add to the budget. That made a two cent increase to the general budget. The general budget, before we introduced this at that time, was \$5.89. It was moved. The budget was \$5.91 per thousand for the general budget. It was moved to the ballot by the Moderator. At the time, we had legal counsel here. Someone said something about the language not being proper. For this, adding to Article 3. I'm asking: Where was legal counsel that day? That should have been addressed that day. Moving forward, it went to vote. The townspeople voted for the increase, so that two cents per thousand was put aside. That \$49,000 was through taxation to pay for these private hydrants. I don't know what happened to that money, but no one got reimbursed. There's something wrong with the system here, because it was voted by the people. We had legal counsel here.

There was something wrong with the language. Fix the language. Now, everyone here pays the same rate of taxes. Does anyone here get a break on their taxes per thousand? Condominium associations don't either.

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Now, what I am looking for, what my association is looking for, is \$5000. In a couple of years we are going to have 107 units in that association. We are talking \$800,000 a year in taxes. We're looking for a measly \$5000. My wife was just doing some calculations. There \$540,000 you're adding here to the budget, that we as an association, it doesn't affect us at all. It doesn't benefit us at all.

We pay taxes. I get it. Education. I believe in education.

Let's talk about the division of public works. We get no plowing for our tax dollar. We get no road maintenance for our tax dollar. We get no electricity to pay for our lights. We get no trash pickup and we pay the same rate as the rest of the town. Do you think that is fair?

It's a good opportunity to meet Councilors and Budget Committee. What's really disheartening about this is we already had this pass. And then, we all know your recommendations, people don't know what they're voting for. Recommended by Council. Recommended by Planning Board. Recommended by Budget Committee. They vote according to how you people recommend. I went through every article and you people recommended every one except Article 25. Shame on you people. Shame on you.

Councilor Duhaime: This isn't to talk poorly of any of my fellow Councilors. If you want to talk I will yield to you.

Kathy McLean, Dale Road: Living on Dale Road, it used to be a condo association. And before I purchased my property, I guess the condo association dissolved somehow. All of the rules of the condo association, there is no one there to enforce them. So what we do as a community, as a neighborhood, is we follow them and we get along with each other. It's a sense of fairness. I see how these people fell asking to pay twice. My question is; Is the \$52,000 going to be an annual thing or a one-time?

Councilor Duhaime: The Council had an opportunity to put this in the budget in the fire department budget. Of course, what happened was, the rates doubled, almost tripled in the last few years. Previous Town Administrator took it out of the fire department budget. Hence, we had to make a line item out of it. The Council got into a debate which it normally wouldn't have to, because it was in the fire department budget. And it didn't increase for many years. I reminded Council that in the State of NH, the Hooksett community lead the state in retirement communities. I lived here all of my life. I can retire here. I voted consistently in favor of this on Council. I was the only member of Budget Committee to vote in favor. Here we are today. I hope next year this is not a question. If I am on Town Council.

Kathy McLean, Dale Road: I am hard of hearing. I did not hear your answer. I will not know your answer until I sit down. However, I would just like to say, if it's going to become an annual thing, can the town come to an agreement with the condo associations to buy the hydrants? Can the town meet with the condo associations to outright purchase these and take over the repairs. That won't cost \$52, 000 a year.

Councilor Karolian: The town doesn't own the hydrants. They are not public property. The town doesn't own the hydrants that are on public property. The water companies do. We have three

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water companies: You have Manchester Water Works, you have Central and you have Village. Correct me if I'm wrong, but if something happens to those, they are not taken care of by the taxpayers. The taxpayers have a fee that we have to pay. The hydrants are not owned by the town of Hooksett. They are owned by the water companies. That is my understanding. I don't know that we could turn around and do exactly what you are asking.

TC Rainier: Is that a fact? Can the town attorney confirm that is a fact?

Matt Serge, Town Attorney: Yes. I believe that is correct. It is owned by the water company.

Councilor Tsantoulis: I still have a problem with the overall language with the article as it was presented. Those here are a small number of Hooksett voters. People are going to read it and be misled by those last three words.

We all understand it because we've been talking it up. I think most of the people here should understand it. However, I don't think most people are going to go to the voting booth being informed. I don't like people going to the voting booth uninformed. What I would like to ask if there is a way, a methodology, to change the wording on the article? People need to know that a no vote doesn't mean the hydrants aren't going to be working. People seem to feel the last three words make this article confusing, based upon what they have told me. That's my argument.

Attorney Serge: The reason that language is there is an issue that is kind of sensitive. It's the expenditure of public funds for private service.

There's an old case in NH called Clapp v Jaffrey, that dealt with private rental of equipment to provide for private services. Without getting into too much detail, there are two questions: Is the recipient of these funds already paying into for the services? So here we are talking about hydrants. There is already a tax being paid. The argument, as I understand it, is that we have already paid and we are paying twice. We have paid it through our taxes already and we are also paying for it through a fee. Whatever the fee is called. I am not taking sides here. I am just giving you the legal end of it.

So that's one question. The other question is: This is where the public safety comes in. Is this for the public benefit? For example: If you come and plow my driveway, just me, with taxpayer money. That is completely inappropriate. There is no public benefit. Here, if there is a public safety component, that's in there to protect the language, and frankly, to protect you all, in the event someone says I think this violates the rule and Clapp v Jaffrey. Using public funds for private services. That's why it is there. Respectfully, I don't read it to mean you don't get services.

To get to Councilor Tsantoulis's concerns. This is an article. It can be amended like any other article. So if someone wanted to move to amend to eliminate "To ensure public safety", you can do that. It's up to you. It's your meeting. It can be amended like any other article.

Councilor Sullivan: If an amendment is made and the wording of the article changes, my question for the attorney is, would the change in the wording require a new vote of the board? Traditionally we have a meeting after the deliberative session, where, if there have been any

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changes, the Council as well as the Budget Committee, meet to vote for new recommendations. If that's part of the concern on that, then I suggest someone offer that.

The other question is: As a backup, can someone make a motion to amend the budget Article three? Specifically saying, "I make a motion to amend the operating budget to add \$52,000 to cover the cost associated with the hydrant fees in a private residential area." That was not part of the motion last year. It was just to add \$49,000 to the operating budget for fire hydrants. It wasn't specific to private residential.

That would be my two questions for the Moderator. If someone could answer that?

Attorney Serge: I have a problem with amending the budget. It has already been moved. I have no problem with amending this article.

TC Rainier: If the wording of this article were significantly changed, would the Council and Budget Committee be required to reevaluate their recommendations?

Attorney Serge: I will say they are at liberty to do so and I think they would. It sounds like there may be a change in votes on that if the wording were changed. Perhaps.

I am not aware of it being a requirement. But, we are trying to be on the level on this all the way along, given the context, they would be at liberty to do so and it sounds like, given the discussion here, they would. Again, if amended.

Fred Bishop, 34 Mammoth Road: I would like to offer an amendment to eliminate the words "To ensure public safety" from this article.

Doris Demers, 34 Mammoth Road: I second the motion.

Fred Bishop, 34 Mammoth Road: Is it possible to insert some language into the voter's guide?

Attorney Serge: If they want to revise the voter's guide prior to the election, it isn't an annual report, they could do that. Council could come up with the language at their next Council meeting.

Kurt Ridlon, 7 Crown Hill Road: Was Article 25 put at the end because we anticipated this kind of debate? If I am not mistaken, did the whole town vote for this last year?

TC Rainier: The budget passed last year.

Kurt Ridlon, 7 Crown Hill Road: Someone made a comment that this used to be in the fire departments budget. What, we took it out?

Councilor Duhaime: Previous Town Administrator didn't feel it should be in there.

Kurt Ridlon, 7 Crown Hill Road: One person took it out of a budget that would have been approved if he didn't?

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TC Rainier: That is hypothetical, but we understand your meaning.

Kurt Ridlon: So you take it out to make it a line item and now it isn't approved? Are we talking politics here? This whole table is politics here, except the attorney.

Councilor Sullivan: I have an answer for that. I am not going to address the politics comment. The Town Council is ultimately responsible for this. Whether we were not aware of it. When we approve the operating budget, ultimately it falls on the Council to approve. If it was Mr. Shankles' suggestion, whether we had a conversation about it, I don't recall. It was Mr. Shankles suggestion. Ultimately it is on the Council. We have to approve budgets.

Kurt Ridlon: Thank you.

Councilor Sullivan: I think Councilors do the best we can.

Having been on Council in 1993, with respect to the men and women who have served, I don't think politics has been on our mind. We have done the best we could. We are here to address that. It takes more of the voters that are here to vote. Being an SB2, it takes being informed to know what you're voting on at the ballot. It takes being informed. It takes all of you here getting out and telling your neighbors. It's going to be up to the voters to get the word out. It's not perfect.

I think we are trying to address your concerns. This is the time for discussion and I appreciate your input.

Kurt Ridlon: Thank you. Am I correct in that the past fire department budgets have always been approved? With virtually no dissent.

TC Rainier: I can address that. The fire department budget is part of the budget warrant article. It has not always been approved. I don't know how many years we have been on a default budget.

Councilor Sullivan: Two out of ten years.

Kurt Ridlon: I appreciate your candor. Your statements were non-political. Everybody appreciates that, I am sure. When are the elections?

TC Rainier: The elections for town and school and a special election for state representative are all on March 10<sup>th</sup> here. Please get the word out.

Frank Kotowski, 34 Mammoth Road Unit 10: Thank all of you for having the patience to hear these folks out. Let's get this on the ballot and let the chips fly where they may.

Councilor Tsantoulis was concerned that the public was not aware of the article. I submit to you that, like all of the folks out here, other folks would come to these meetings. Everyone would be much more informed.

Please continue to do the good work that you do as a Council to bring people out to these meetings. Thank you.

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Ernie Biencivenga, 341 Whitehall Road: Does this cover all private hydrants in town?

Christine Soucie, Finance Director: It covers all private residential hydrants. There may be a single family home as well that pays for their hydrant. It covers that as well.

Ernie Biencivenga: Is this billed quarterly, or semi-annually?

TC Rainier The fee is going to be charged by your condo association. Your taxes are paid twice a year. What is your specific question?

Ernie Biencivenga: Is this going to be a one year reimbursement?

Christine Soucie, Finance Director: If this article was to pass, it would be included in the budget next year. Going forward, Council could choose to add it to the budget. If they choose not to, the petitioners could again bring it back to the voters next year. Council could also add it as an article the next year. Basically, Council would have the first bite on what to do.

Ernie Biencivenga: So every year the townspeople would have to vote?

TC Rainier: The takeaway is that this is going onto the ballot in some form, as it was a petition warrant article. This year, should it pass, Town Council will choose when the funds are distributed. Council will also consider how to address the item, whether adding it to the budget or another warrant article, going forward.

Ernie Biencivenga: Thank you.

Ron Ducharme, 4 Currant Lane: When I started looking at these warrant articles I was disheartened. There's an awful lot of money being asked for this year, and everything was recommended by the Council and the Budget Committee. When I got down to Article 25, I lost it. You supported it last year. We are not looking for plowing or trash pickup or paying for our lighting. We take care of that. Our association is looking for \$5000. Totaling \$52,000 for all of the other associations. What's fair is fair. I am starting to wonder: If we need fire or police services if we would be charged for those? We are really getting screwed. We pay a lot of taxes. I am appalled at the amount of taxes in this town. We pay for the hydrants on Farmer Road. We don't need those hydrants.

You say we have to take care of our own. We do take care of our own. I would just hope that the Council and Budget Committee would think about how much we are paying for our taxes and how little we are getting for it.

Jason Hyde, 36 Edgewater Drive: Speaking as myself, not Budget Committee. What we do is give our government, whether the Town Council or the School District, a chunk of money. They can choose to spend that money, within the bounds of the law, pretty much any way they like. That should explain it. I think there was concern that somehow the money was hidden in the fire

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budget, and a previous Town Administrator separated it. That was done to clear up what the money was being spent on. It was called out so we would understand what it was. There was nothing shady going on.

I like the gentleman's suggestion about having those with fire hydrants pay for them. It would reduce my taxes and I don't have a hydrant anywhere near my house. I like it better than adding 3 cents to everyone's tax bill. That's just my personal opinion on the matter. It's a small amount. I encourage everyone to come on Friday night and discuss the \$34M school budget. Thank you.

Bob Willey: Point of clarification: I believe we had a first and a second on the amendment, but people continue to come up and speak about the article itself. Can we vote on the amendment?

TC Rainier called upon Fred Bishop to present the amendment in writing.

Mr. Bishop read the amended article:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$52,000.00** to reimburse for private residential water hydrants.

TC Rainier called for a voice vote. Passed unanimously.

Joanne Ducharme, 4 Currant lane, Berry Hill Estates: I would like something added saying we are already paying for fire hydrants. The article maKes it look like we are not paying for Ohydrants.

If you do vote for this after the meeting, will the recommendations show on the ballot?

Attorney Serge: It does use the word "reimburse", which does indicate you are paying for it. If you want to make a change, you may. It's your meeting. You can amend it however you want, but I don't think it's necessary.

Joanne Ducharme: If you vote on it after this meeting, will the vote show on the ballot?

TC Rainier: The article has been amended and both Budget Committee and Council will meet after this session. They will take another vote and that recommendation will show on the ballot.

Chair Sullivan: It is required for us to show the tax rate and recommendation, based on the vote, on the ballot. It is a requirement. We are meeting after this. We have a publicly posted Council meeting following this meeting. We will take a vote on this and other articles that were amended and our votes to recommend will show, whether they will change or not, on the ballot.

Dan Schaeffer, 5 Lafond Ave: We have two private residences at the entrance to Lafond Ave. If one of them caught fire, would we, as residents of the condominium association, stand out there and say "That's our fire hydrant. We pay taxes on that hydrant. You can't use our hydrant. You'll have to find another hydrant elsewhere". Is that how we do business? We are all residents of Hooksett. It's not us and them.

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If a car caught fire on Lafond Ave., if Town Hall were on fire, would the fire department use our hydrant to put it out? Of course they would.

Back in colonial times, people insured their homes for fire. They would mark their homes. If their home was on fire, the fire departments would check with them to see if it was insured. If it was, they would put the fire out. If it was not, they wouldn't put the fire out. We don't live in colonial times. I'm sorry, I'm having a problem with us and them. It's the public good of Hooksett. Fire hydrants are there for everyone. But it's on the ballot. At the end of the day, it's for the public good. When you gentlemen vote on this, I just hope you keep that in mind.

Wayne Goertel, Budget Committee: This all came about because, at the end of last year, November/December, we all got a bit of a budget jolt when all three water companies passed along a significant increase. This was mid-way through our budget cycle. I think that ultimately prompted the request for the hydrants last year.

If you are part of a water district, much like you are here talking about a specific warrant, Get involved. There is, essentially, a government for your water district. There is a budget and there are meetings for your water district. Please attend those as well and get involved.

Doris Demers, Stonegate: Apparently, after this meeting, you guys are getting together to vote. Nothing is said about Budget Committee voting.

TC Rainier: Budget Committee will be voting.

Doris Demers: That's what I wanted to know. Okay. Hopefully they vote in our favor.

TC Rainier: I don't see anyone else in line.

Marion Kolesar, Webster Woods: I just wanted to clarify something Mr. Hyde said. In our declarations we have certain things that it says we are responsible for. It says plowing, trash, road repair, etc. It says nothing about hydrants.

We questioned it. Twelve years now. It was what it was. We have a new Superintendent at Village Water now. This year our hydrants increased again by \$10.00, so we are now paying \$165.00. We divided that up by 44 units. That's \$44.00 per year. It doesn't sound like much, but for some people, that's a weeks-worth of groceries, or medication. A lot of people in the 55 and over communities are retired and on fixed-income. When the fees go up, we have to increase our condo fees. I am asking the Budget Committee and the Town Council to remember that, because at some point, you are all going to end up there. Like it or not. You can always stay in your house and you will be paying those fees.

When I became president of our condo association, I thought I would only have to deal with my own little house. It's now ten years, and I am dealing with over 40 units, 7 acres, and it keeps on going. We all pay our taxes and they keep going up. We pay our school taxes. No one is complaining about that.

What I am saying is: It would be nice, at some point, if the seniors could get a little break. As irrelevant as they are for some people, they are very important to others.

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Councilor Karolian: Just for clarity and transparency, trash reimbursement: The town reimburses over \$500,000 a year to the associations. I am not sure which associations you are at. In your association you say you pay for trash pickup. Are you aware that you get reimbursed by the town?

For clarity, you are not paying for those things. You are getting reimbursed. I think it's important that you understand that.

The other issues that come along with that are street lighting, plowing, that sort of thing. What people are asking me and are worried about: Is that going to be coming next?

For clarity and in all fairness, the associations are getting reimbursed. In next year's budget, it's \$523,000 for trash reimbursement to private homeowner associations. I just wanted to put that out there, because that's the truth.

Marion Kolesar: That is true. We do get reimbursed for trash, but that is a negotiated price with the town for pickup. We pay over \$600 a month in the 40 units for a private contractor to come for the trash pickup. I don't think we get maybe \$700 per half-year, or \$1500 a year reimbursement from the town when we've spent over \$7000.

The reimbursement is definitely appreciated, but it doesn't fill our pockets when we're had to put that out. And we are still paying a full amount of taxes. Everybody else gets their trash picked up by the Town of Hooksett. That's the only reimbursement we get. I don't know about lighting. We have our own lights. We pay for our own electricity. If there are any sewer issues, like the one we had recently that backed up onto the main road, we paid for that. Any road repairs, any sink holes, we pay for that. Any plumbing that goes on underneath the roads, we pay for that.

I would like the Council to remember that. This comes out of our own pocket. On top of that, we have to put money into our reserves for future capital expenditures. It becomes tight. People want to be able to live in communities, but if they can't afford it, then Hooksett is not going to continue to be the preferred place for developers to build retirement homes. That was the plan, or at least it was. I attend the Planning Board meetings one a month. We all need to be on the same page to make it affordable to live here. Thank you.

TC Rainier: With respect to everyone here, and with respect to the Councilors that are speaking: We need to keep our comments to Article 25, as it has been amended. It's a global thing and I understand that, so I am allowing a little bit of that conversation so we all have a little better handle on the bigger picture. Let's consider Article 25 in our comments.

Chair Sullivan: Since Mr. Roy did make the motion to place it on the ballot. Once everyone has, and Mr. Roy has made his last comment, you can move the article on and ask for an adjournment.

The Council will be voting after that. If you want to stay, please do.

Jason Hyde, Budget Committee: I think I can speak for the entire Budget Committee when I say this: This is 3 cents per thousand. When we look at the budget, we look at every single line in the \$20M budget, and we consider that. I make those types of arguments all of the time with my fellow Budget Committee members. Still, \$66 could be a week's worth of groceries for somebody. It could be a tank of gas for my vehicle to bring my kids wherever they need to go.

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We get all of that. We look at it from the entire town's perspective, as opposed to the condo association. This is a \$19M budget. The article is 3cents per thousand. There's another budget that we are going to be discussing next week. Everyone please come next Friday night. That's a much bigger impact than any of this is. Thank you.

Henry Roy, 6 Shaker Hill Road: I have been the treasure of Berry Hill since its' inception. I have no idea where \$500,000 could be going. We have the largest association and we got like \$900 to \$1100 per year and it keeps decreasing every year. Thank you.

TC Rainier: Perhaps after this meeting you should follow-up with the Finance Director on that.

Wayne Goertel, Budget Committee: I will just mention that in the detailed budgets there is nothing for trash that's \$500,000. We should follow after the meeting.

***TC Rainier read article as amended:*** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$52,000.00** to reimburse for private residential water hydrants. **SUBMITTED BY PETITION.** Estimated tax rate impact \$0.03. Not recommended by Town Council (4 Yes – 4 No), Not recommended by Budget Committee (2 Yes - 8 No).

There will be two meetings happening immediately following this for the recommendations.

*Councilor Sullivan moved to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Karolian.*  
Motioned passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at: 12:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Rainier  
Town Clerk