

Tilton – Northfield Fire & EMS District
Warrant Article Public Hearing
Minutes of the Meeting of February 12, 2018

Present: Paul Auger, Dennis Manning, Chief Michael Sitar

Commissioner Chair Dennis Manning opened the public hearing on the Warrant Articles at 6:24pm

Commission Manning read each article and opened the floor for public comments. He skipped over Articles 1-5 since those are election warrant articles and will be determined at the district elections.

Article 06: To see if the District will vote to abolish the Fire District Budget Committee, RSA 32:14, V. Voting shall be by ballot, RSA 32:14, III Voting shall be by ballot, but the question shall not be placed on the official ballot used to elect officers. Polls shall remain open and ballots shall be accepted by the moderator for a period of not less than one hour following the completion of discussion on the question. (Majority vote required.)

Commissioner Manning stated that it has been difficult to find volunteers to be on the Budget Committee. In 2010 is when the Budget Committee came into effect.

Jason Wright mentioned that there are not enough people who have time to volunteer for this committee. Manning added that most committee members are also on other committees leaving them with little time to dedicate to the Budget Committee. Chief Sitar added that there has to be three from Tilton, and three from Northfield and a Commissioner Representative. Wayne Crowley stated that he feels not being able to find volunteers is not a good enough reason to abolish the committee. Manning added that over the years they have instituted bi-laws and regulations to take care of most of the needs that the Budget Committee would be needed for. Robert Petrin asked about lowering the number of committee members, Chief Sitar replied that, that would result in changing the bi-laws. He also added that in the 4 years he's been here the Budget Committee hasn't really changed from what the commissioners recommend and / or what the Chief recommended.

Article 07: To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee recommended sum of Two Million Eighty-Eight Thousand Six Hundred Eight-Four Dollars (\$2,088,684.00) for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. This article is recommended by the Board of Commissioners and Budget Committee. (Majority vote required.)

No questions

Article 08: To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate Five Hundred Thousand Nine Hundred Eighty-One Dollars (\$500,981.00) for the purpose of purchasing Fire, Rescue, EMS Equipment and Ambulance Charges, with said funds to be withdrawn from the Apparatus and Equipment Special Revenue Fund established under RSA 31:95-C (Adopted March 7, 2005). This article is recommended by the Board of Commissioners and Budget Committee. (Majority vote required.)

Wayne Crowley asked what the equipment is. Chief Sitar replied that it is the radios and equipment we discussed at the Budget Public Hearing. Wayne Crowley asked about the impact in taxation. Manning replied that we will explain that during the meeting. Paul Auger agreed that it has been a confusion topic over the years and they will make it clear this year.

Article 09: To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifty-Eight Thousand Three Hundred Twelve Dollars (\$58,312.00) for the purpose of purchasing a 2018 Ford F450 to be used as a Forestry Vehicle with said funds to be withdrawn from the Apparatus and Equipment Special Revenue Fund established under RSA 31:95-C (Adopted March 7, 2005). This article is recommended by the Board of Commissioners and Budget Committee. (Majority vote required.)

Manning added again, no impact to taxation.

Chief explained the request for this vehicle is for safety reasons. He was driving the one they currently have and realized that it does not like to stop. The Chief had it weighed it came in 70lb under the GPW. Put the equipment in it and it came in 700+lbs over. They cannot use the vehicle for what they need it for. They will keep the current vehicle and use it as a plow truck and a truck for Deputy Joubert. They will purchase a new truck for what they need it for.

Article 10: To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Eight Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Dollars (\$8,260.00) for the purpose of adding to the existing Fire Prevention Expendable Trust Fund with said funds to be withdrawn from the Unassigned Fund Balance. This article is recommended by the Board of Commissioners and Budget Committee. (Majority vote required.)

Manning added there is no impact to taxation.

Wayne Crowley, recommended doing a revolving fund so you don't need to do all this. Chief Sitar would like to do that. Manning added that this fund was created by warrant a couple years ago.

Article 11: To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Three Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty-One Dollars (\$3,761.00) for the purpose of purchasing materials, tools and equipment related to public education, code enforcement, training, etc. with said funds to be withdrawn from the Fire Prevention Expendable Trust Fund. This article is recommended by the Board of Commissioners and Budget Committee. (Majority vote required.)

No questions

Article 12: To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$1,500.00) for the purpose of adding to the existing health insurance deductible expendable trust fund with said funds to be withdrawn from the Unassigned Fund Balance. This article is recommended by the Board of Commissioners and Budget Committee. (Majority vote required.)

Manning added there is no impact to taxation.

Article 13: To see if the District will vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 31:95-c to restrict communication tower lease income revenues to expenditures for the purpose of repairs and maintenance of fire stations and radio infrastructure. Such revenues and expenditures shall be accounted for in a special revenue fund to be known as the Communications Tower Special Revenue Fund, separate from the general fund. Any surplus in said fund shall not be deemed part of the general fund accumulated surplus and shall be expended only after a vote by the legislative body to appropriate a specific amount from said fund for a specific purpose related to the purpose of the fund or source of revenue. This article is recommended by the Board of Commissioners and Budget Committee. (Majority ballot vote)

Chief Sitar added that this is something we wanted to create a revolving fund for. Kathy Tobine added that the article first went to NH Dept of Revenue, then to Primex, they said it was out of their expertise

and to check with the Municipal Assoc, who said we couldn't do a revolving fund, and we would need to do it this way. Chief Sitar stated this was for the collection of rent from the cell tower on the station. Instead of the money going into the general fund, it would go into this fund to be used for radios and station repairs.

Article 14: To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$130,000.00) for the purpose of design services and permit fees for a new fire station with said funds to be withdrawn from the Land & Building Capital Reserve Fund. This article is recommended by the Board of Commissioners and Budget Committee. (Majority vote required.)

Manning added there is no impact to taxation.

Chief stated that this is to continue the research of what was started last year for a new station. This money is to find out what a building at the same location will cost. Right now all they have is an architect's estimate of what it will cost. This will get the civil engineering done, wetlands permits, permits from the Town, to get the architectural plans in place to go to a construction manager and find out what it would cost to build not to exceed. And have a final number to go to the next meeting. Manning added that Blaisdell will speak at the annual meeting, does not want to see this plan die, but we need a lot more discussion on this, and we've already invested a lot of time and money into the project to just let it die. Are we going to build a fire station based on the dollar amount or based on the needs for the district?

Article 15: To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Thirteen Thousand Nine Hundred Thirty-One Dollars (\$13,931.00) for the purpose of repairing Center Street Station, with said funds to be raised through taxation. This article is recommended by the Board of Commissioners and Budget Committee. (Majority vote required.)

Article 16: To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Forty-Five Thousand Sixty-Nine Dollars (\$45,069.00) for the purpose of repairing Park Street Station, with said funds to be raised through taxation. This article is recommended by the Board of Commissioners and Budget Committee. (Majority vote required.)

Manning added that the Chief and several other firefighters went through the entire building top to bottom and created a list from minor to major repairs needed, such as painting, cleaning, siding, doors, trim, siding, etc. The biggest expense you'll see is at the Park St station we are looking to repave around the station. This would be done after we switch over to natural gas, the Chief negotiated with the gas company, therefore the gas company agreed not to charge for the installation. They are going from the road to the station for free. Chief added that they have an itemized spreadsheet for each station, some do not have quotes because it's been hard to get a contractor to give an estimate right now because they have been so busy.

Article 17: To see if the District will vote to change the Clerk's duties in the By-Laws to read The Clerk shall perform all duties of the District's meetings and business affairs pursuant to RSA 52:8; RSA 41:16. The Clerk shall perform such other duties as are generally associated with the office. (Majority vote required.)

Manning added that this is to just clean up the bi-laws to go along with the RSAs. There has been confusion over the years as to what the clerk's duties are, and this will help solve that confusion. Wayne confirmed that any change to the bi-laws have to go through a warrant article. Chief added that yes it does because the bi-laws were created by warrant article so any changes have to go before district meeting.

Article 18: To see if the District will vote to change the election of Officers in the By-laws to read: Section 1: Officers Elections the officers of the Fire District shall consist of three Commissioners, one Clerk, one Moderator, and one Treasurer. The Commissioners, Clerk, Moderator, and Treasurer shall severally qualify and possess the same powers and perform the same duties in respect to the District's Meetings and business affairs that the Clerk, Moderator, Treasurer and Selectmen of towns respectively possess and perform in respect to like matters in towns^{6, 9}. The positions of Commissioner shall have 3-year terms. The Clerk and Treasurer shall be a 3-year term beginning with the term to be elected at the 2012 regular District Meeting^{16, 4, 3}. The three Commissioner positions shall be staggered so that only one new Commissioner is elected each year. The Commissioners shall have representation from both towns; one Commissioner who is a resident of Tilton, one Commissioner who is a resident of Northfield and one Commissioner will be at-large. The Moderator shall have a 2-year term and be elected in even numbered years¹. All Fire District officers shall assume office upon his/her election and qualification for office, and shall serve until the election and qualification of his/her successor. All employees of the Fire District are discouraged from running for elected office in the Fire District so as not to create a perceived conflict of interest. Full-time employees of the Fire District are prohibited from serving as a Commissioner in the Fire District¹⁵. By petition. (Majority vote required.)

Manning noted that he filed this petition to change the bi-laws. Once the petition was filed it was sent to NHDRA, they sent us over the NH Municipal Association and they said it was illegal, because you're establishing wards and precincts. Someone would need to spend a couple years and form a municipal charter for the Fire District, this committee would be set up by the Fire Commissioners. The reason it's on the warrant is because it was done by petition. Chief added that it can still be voted on and if it passes through district meeting and no one challenges it for five years then it would be struck down. Robert Petrin recommended getting a second opinion than going with what NHMA stated.

Article 19: To see if the District will vote to establish a contingency fund and vote to appoint the Board of Commissioners as agents to expend from the contingency fund for the current year for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and appropriate Nineteen Thousand Dollars (\$19,000.00) to put in the fund. This sum to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance. Any appropriation left in the fund at the end of the year will lapse to the general fund. This article is recommended by the Board of Commissioners and Budget Committee. (Majority vote required.)

Manning added that there is no impact to taxation.

Fire Commissioners approved and signed the 2018 Warrant.

There being no other business motion to adjourn the meeting by Dennis Manning, seconded by Paul Auger. Public hearing adjourned at 7:07pm.