

TOWN OF GRANTHAM NEW HAMPSHIRE

TOWN MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 12, 2024

SS. STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

SULLIVAN COUNTY

Moderator Lorie McClory noted the time of 5:30 pm and reminded everyone to check in with the Supervisors (if they have not already done so) to obtain their 'Yes/No' colored paper ballots, in the event of a secret ballot. McClory then introduced herself and called the 248th Annual Town Meeting to order. She reminded those present to put cell phones on mute or vibrate so they do not interrupt the meeting. The Moderator then introduced Caleb and Coby Mason of Cub Scout Pack 279 and asked them to present the flag and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance; she asked all present to stand and recite the pledge together.

The Moderator reminded residents that they need to sit within the posts so that they will be allowed to vote on all articles; non-voters should sit to on the east side of the room. The Moderator reviewed the emergency exits and the location of the bathrooms. The Moderator asked if there were any residents who were new to town meeting; noting one raised hand, she welcomed him. She also advised residents to pick up a copy of the Town Report – available at the rear of the room – as the warrant is printed within; she noted she will be referring to the warrant throughout the meeting.

The Moderator asked those present to turn to page 5 of the town report for the dedication. This year's town report is dedicated to C. Peter James. She recognized Selectman Peter Garland for remarks regarding the dedication. Selectman Garland noted Peter's volunteerism and various contributions to the town. He thanked Peter and asked him to stand so that he could be recognized by those present.

The Moderator then stated "...the meeting having been properly warned as certified on page 21 of the Town Report and by the authority vested in me by the laws of the State of New Hampshire I do declare the 248th Annual Meeting of the Town of Grantham now open." She added that the elections listed under Article 1, as well as the zoning articles 2-6, are voted by paper ballot; she reminded everyone that the polls remain open until 7:00 pm. She asked any resident who has not voted to return to the appropriate check-in table and obtain ballots for both the school and town elections. Today's business meeting will discuss Articles 7 through 17.

The Moderator introduced the Selectmen. She noted that while Selectman Garland is present, Selectmen Connie Jones and G. Warren Kimball were not able to join us. As their proxies, Brittany Pye and Jeremy Walla are serving instead. She then introduced Town Administrator Melissa White; Town Clerk/Tax Collector Ken Story; Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector Penny Palmer; and the Supervisors of the Checklist: Donna Stamper, Sandy Noordsy and Suzanne Goldman. She also mentioned Assistant Moderators Jack Chen and Dave Cole. The complete list of town officers, committees and staff begins on page 7 of the Town Report. She notified all present that if you choose to speak to an article at today's meeting you must use the microphone at the front of the room. She also noted that she has appointed ballot clerks to assist with any hand count or secret ballot that may be required. They are Jeff Walla, Dan McClory, and the two assistant moderators.

The Moderator then noted that state law vests the Moderator with the authority to establish rules of procedure for the meeting, and also vests the governing body with the authority to overrule the Moderator regarding the rules. She noted that the rules are found on pages 12 and 13 of the town report. The Moderator announced that she would read the rules unless a motion was made and seconded to suspend the reading of the rules. She asked for such a motion from the floor; John Parsons of 320 Olde Farms Road moved and Jen Hastings of 323 Burpee Hill Road seconded. The Moderator then asked for a vote to approve the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The Moderator then announced that she needed a motion to adopt the rules of the meeting to make them a permanent part of the record. Paul Nicolai of 18 Summit Drive moved and Bob Meyer of 11 Turnbuckle seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The Moderator then asked for a motion from the floor to allow non-resident officers and consultants to speak at the meeting. Jeff Walla of 201 Walker Road moved and Nancy Morrison of 1 Sugar Hill Road seconded. It was unanimously approved by voice vote. The Moderator then directed all present to refer to page 16 of the town report for Article 7 of the warrant.

2024 Town Meeting Rules (these rules were revised Jan. 26, 2024. Other instructions may be announced to address needs and/or issues that were unknown when these rules were written)

- 1. The Moderator will use the following general rules of procedure, the main purpose of which is to keep the meeting moving and not get bogged down in procedural quagmires.*
- 2. Even though the Moderator runs the meeting, this is your meeting. Any ruling by the moderator can be challenged.*
- 3. All voters must check in with the Supervisors of the Checklist and/or ballot clerks to get a packet of Yes/No ballots for secret-ballot votes. Photo IDs are required when checking in.*
- 4. Only registered voters will be seated in the center section of the meeting hall. Non-voters will be seated in the visitor's gallery located in the area bounded by the pillars and the inside wall of the meeting hall.*
- 5. Voters are discouraged from bringing children to the meeting. However, if that is not possible, please keep them with you to avoid disruption of our proceedings.*
- 6. Non-voters who are not officers of or consultants to the town will be allowed to address the meeting only if the town votes to permit it. A simple majority vote is required.*
- 7. The Moderator will consider each Article as follows:*
 - a. The Moderator will announce the Article number, indicate where it can be found in the town report, and read the full text of the Article.*
 - b. The Moderator will recognize a member of the Board of Selectman (or the petitioner if it's a petitioned Article) to move the adoption of the Article.*
 - c. If the Motion is seconded, the Moderator will recognize a member of the Board of Selectmen (or the petitioner) to explain the Article.*
 - d. The Meeting will debate and then vote on the Article.*
- 8. All questions and comments from the floor will be addressed to the Moderator. The Moderator will choose who responds to the questions. Whenever a voter wishes to speak, they will use a microphone and first identify themselves (and provide their street address in the first instance) for the record. The microphone is necessary for accurate recording of the meeting.*
 - a. If a voter is unable to reach one of the stand-up microphones, the voter should raise their hand and a hand-held microphone will be provided.*
 - b. In order for everyone to have the opportunity to speak, speakers will be limited to three minutes (with the exception of initial presentations on warrant articles).*
 - c. No one will be recognized to speak a second time until everyone who wishes to speak a first time has had the opportunity.*
 - d. If you agree with someone, it is OK to say that instead of repeating something that has already been said. People appreciate brevity.*
 - e. The microphone will also be used by people wanting to "Call (or Move) the question." Anyone shouting it out from their seat will not be recognized. This will avoid preempting people who are already in line to speak to an issue.*
 - f. A motion to "Call (or Move) the question" requires a 2/3 vote for approval. If this motion is passed, all voters who have not yet spoken and are standing at a microphone or holding a microphone, and anyone seated at the head table or in the audience **who has previously indicated to the Moderator that he/she wishes to speak on the Motion** will be allowed to speak.*
 - g. The Moderator shall have the right to refuse to recognize a motion to "Call (or Move) the question" if, in the Moderator's opinion, the voters have not yet had an adequate opportunity to discuss an issue. The voters can overrule the moderator.*

9. *Unless superseded by state law, reconsideration of a vote on any article should be brought up immediately after the vote has been declared and may only be made by a voter who voted on the prevailing side of the vote to be reconsidered. Since there is no way to prove how a person voted, this is done on the HONOR SYSTEM.*
 - a. *Mandatory Restriction: A vote on the issuance of bonds or notes over \$100,000 cannot be reconsidered at the same meeting. In accordance with RSA 33:8-a, if a motion to reconsider a ballot vote on a bond issue of over \$100,000 passes, the Article cannot be reconsidered until a reconvened Meeting that is at least seven (7) days after the original vote. With respect to bond votes, the restrictions on reconsideration automatically apply without the need for the Meeting to vote for it.*
 - b. *Optional Restriction: Voters may postpone reconsideration of any Article at this Meeting by voting to restrict reconsideration of the Article in accordance with RSA 40:10. If the Meeting passes such a motion, then the Article cannot be reconsidered until a reconvened meeting held at least seven (7) days after the date of the original vote. This must be done immediately after an article is voted. Restricting reconsideration cannot be done on more than one article at a time.*
10. *Except for when required by state RSA, the moderator will conduct a secret “yes-no” ballot only when:*
 - a. *five voters make a written request prior to show of “cards” vote on any article open for discussion. All five voters must be present and identified.*
 - b. *seven or more voters question the moderator’s ruling on any non-ballot vote **immediately after the vote is declared** and before any other business is conducted.*
11. *All proposed amendments to articles will be submitted in writing to the Moderator and a second must be obtained prior to discussion of the amendment. If they wish, the person making the amendment may be the first person to address the amendment. Amendment forms can be found on the last page of your town report.*
12. *The Moderator will not accept a negative motion, that is a motion which requires a “no” vote to vote in the affirmative, e.g., “I move that we do not adopt the budget.”*
13. *If the Meeting is not concluded by 10:00 p.m., the Moderator may recess the Meeting to a future date, time certain.*

ARTICLE 1 – Election of Officers

To choose by ballot and major vote for the ensuing years as enumerated:

Selectman	3 years
Peter Garland	167
Trustee of Trust Funds	3 years
Karin Nicoll	169
Moderator	2 years
Lorie McClory	178
Trustee of Dunbar Free Library	3 years
Melissa Britton	164
Marc Bernstein	164
Cemetery Trustee	3 years
Quinn Colgan (write-in)	16
Planning Board	3 years
Peter Guillette	165
Robert Benson	161
Supervisor of the Checklist	6 years
Suzanne Goldman	174

ARTICLE 2 – ZONING CHANGE

Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 1 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Town Zoning Ordinance as follows: Amend Article XIX (Definitions) to add definitions for ground-mount solar system and rooftop solar systems; Amend Article IV-A (Business District), Article IV-B (Business Light Industrial District), Article V-A (Rural Residential District One, RR1), Article V-B (Rural Residential District Two, RR2), Article V-C (Rural Residential District Three, RR3), Article V-D – Central Village District, CVRD) to add rooftop and ground-mount solar to permitted uses and delete Solar energy systems primarily generating energy intended for use at the immediate site from special exceptions.

[Rationale: The current Zoning Ordinance requires any solar energy project to obtain a special exception from the Zoning Board of Adjustment to be allowed anywhere in the Town. This adds significant cost and delay to these projects, which also require compliance with building codes and other regulations.]

The design and construction of solar energy systems is now largely standard. Those that are rooftop mounted have no discernible effect on environmental issues, given that they are located on top of already authorized structures. Ground-mount systems do not represent hazards if they comply with all other regulations (including setbacks) applicable to structures and lots in the particular zoning district.

These revisions, taken together, allow rooftop and ground-mount solar systems that otherwise comply with all requirements applicable to the site at which they are proposed to be located without requiring a special exception from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The limitation that these systems be of a size designed only to create electricity primarily for use at the site is maintained, thus still restricting solar farms.]

Recommended by the Planning Board

Voted by ballot: Yes, 146; No, 12

ARTICLE 3 – ZONING CHANGE

Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 2 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Town Zoning Ordinance as follows: Amend Article XI-C (Shoreland and River Overlay District) by allowing for modifications to structures and other uses that do not affect the land to be achieved through the building permit process only.

[Rationale: The current Zoning Ordinance requires any change to any structure and any other work done in the shoreland protection area to receive additional permission from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. This includes making alterations to pre-existing structures that have no effect on the land, like adding windows to upper stories. The changes proposed here allow for modifications to structures and other uses that do not affect land to be achieved by going through any required building permit process without the additional step of coming to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Alterations of land including removing ground cover, any modification to an existing structure that changes its footprint, or any excavation or filling of land exceeding 3 cubic yards would still require Zoning Board of Adjustment approval.]

Recommended by the Planning Board

Voted by ballot: Yes, 172; No, 11

ARTICLE 4 – ZONING CHANGE

Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 3 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Town Zoning Ordinance as follows: Amend Article XIX (Definitions) by adding a definition for Utility Scale Solar System; Amend Article IV-B (Business Light Industrial District, BLD) by adding Utility Scale Solar as a permitted use by special exception.

[Rationale: The current Zoning Ordinance disallows any solar system designed to mainly produce electricity for off-site consumption, sometimes known as “solar farms.”

The proposed revision would allow for solar farms only in the Business Light Industrial District by special exception from the Zoning Board of Adjustment as long as the solar project complied with all of the strictures applied to structures in the Business Light Industrial District. The building code and permit requirements would still apply to the construction of any solar farm in the Business Light Industrial District.]

Recommended by the Planning Board

Voted by ballot: Yes, 161; No, 21

ARTICLE 5 – ZONING CHANGE

Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 4 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Town Zoning Ordinance as follows: Amend Article XV (Nonconforming Lots, Structures, and Uses) to make the language easier to understand and to allow for changes to nonconforming structures which increase the overall conformance of the property.

[Rationale: The current Zoning Ordinance is based upon an interpretation of New Hampshire law, which has been modified by New Hampshire Supreme Court decisions. This new language accomplishes two goals:

First, the revision to Section 1 makes the language easier to understand. It is not intended to change the standard applied. The rest of the changes, including the preface and the ordinance section, revise the Grantham Zoning Ordinance to bring it in line with current New Hampshire law. Included is allowing for changes to nonconforming structures, which increase the overall conformance of the property to the Grantham Zoning Ordinance even if some of the changes remain nonconforming. This gives, in accordance with current New Hampshire law, the Zoning Board of Adjustment more flexibility to allow the continued use of nonconforming structures and lowers burdens on property owners.]

Recommended by the Planning Board

Voted by ballot: Yes, 175; No, 5

ARTICLE 6 - ZONING CHANGE

Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 5 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Town Zoning Ordinance as follows: Amend the Grantham Zoning Ordinance to update Article XVI and XIX to reflect recent legislative changes to RSA 21:53, RSA 676:7, and RSA 672:3.

[Rationale: Current zoning regulation states that mail shall be sent via certified mail, but RSA 21:53 states verified mail. This change will result in a decrease in the cost of postage to the applicant. RSA 676:7 deals with the public notice requirements of the Zoning Board of Adjustment and is constantly evolving. The section should not include specific references to the RSA that are constantly changing. RSA 672:3 deals with the definition of abutter, which currently states that abutters are within 200 feet of the property line. The proposed change would bring the section in line with the RSA by defining an abutter as "in New Hampshire and adjoins or is directly across the street or stream from the land under consideration" thus greatly reducing the cost of postage.]

Recommended by the Planning Board

Voted by ballot: Yes, 170; No, 14

ARTICLE 7 – Community Power

To see if the Town will vote to adopt the Grantham Community Power plan, to authorize the Selectmen to implement the plan, and to take all action in furtherance thereof, pursuant to RSA 53-E. The Grantham Community Power plan is an opt-out program that offers more flexible electricity procurement. The plan will initially provide lower electricity rates for residents, or it will not launch. Initial participation in the plan can be declined, after which enrollment becomes voluntary. Recommended by the Selectmen. (Majority vote required)

Selectman Garland moved the article and Selectman Walla seconded. The Moderator then recognized Selectman Peter Garland to make the presentation regarding this article. Garland noted that the Grantham Energy Committee has been working on this for the past year. This is a program authorized by the state legislature designed to lower the cost of electric power for the residents of our towns and cities. Over 70 communities in the state have already approved this option, with several more scheduled to opt-in later this year. There will be no cost to town taxpayers for the implementation of this program. Hopefully it will lower power rates for all residents, but if not, it will not proceed. Garland noted that the Energy Committee has held two public hearings on the matter and heard no opposition. He then opened up the floor for comments and questions. C. Peter James of 28 Splitrock Road spoke in favor of this proposal due to the savings involved and recounted his personal experience with the savings, which amounted to thousands of dollars.

The Moderator then asked for any further questions or comments. Hearing none, she called for the vote.

Article 7 Passed by Unanimous Voice Vote

ARTICLE 8 – Modify Elderly Exemption

Shall the town modify the provisions of RSA 72:39-a for elderly exemption from property tax in the Town of Grantham, based on assessed value, for qualified taxpayers, to be as follows: for a person 65 years of age up to 75 years, \$60,000; for a person 75 years of age up to 80 years, \$80,000; for a person 80 years of age or older \$100,000. To qualify, the person must have been a New Hampshire resident for at least 3 consecutive years, own the real estate individually or jointly, or if

the real estate is owned by such person’s spouse, they must have been married to each other for at least 5 consecutive years. In addition, the taxpayer must have a net income of not more than \$40,000 or, if married, a combined net income of less than \$80,000 and own net assets not in excess of \$100,000, or \$200,000 if married, excluding the value of the person’s residence. Recommended by the Selectmen (Majority vote required)

Selectman Pye moved the article and Selectman Walla seconded. The Moderator then recognized Town Administrator White to make the presentation regarding this article. White noted that this article is only changing the exemption amount and not changing the income and asset levels. She referred to the slide and reviewed the changes in the exemption amounts. The Moderator then asked if there were any other questions or comments. Hearing none, she called for the vote.

Article 8 Passed by Unanimous Voice Vote

ARTICLE 9 – General Government

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one million, nine hundred seventy-eight thousand, eight hundred fifty-seven dollars (**\$1,978,857**) to defray the cost of General Government operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. Recommended by the Selectmen (Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2023/2024	Proposed 2024/2025	Change Increase or (Decrease)
Selectmen’s Office	\$361,498	\$383,950	\$22,452
Town Clerk/Tax Collector	\$173,271	\$187,450	\$14,179
Supervisors of the Checklist	\$11,200	\$14,000	\$2,800
Financial Administration	\$51,200	\$51,200	\$0.00
Tax Maps/Assessing	\$47,000	\$47,000	\$0.00
Legal	\$50,000	\$52,500	\$2,500
Personnel Administration	\$957,065	\$1,000,461	\$43,396
Planning Board	\$5,600	\$8,800	\$3,200
Zoning Board of Adjustment	\$3,050	\$6,250	\$3,200
General Government Buildings	\$141,662	\$144,346	\$2,684
Cemeteries	\$21,700	\$24,300	\$2,600
Insurance (Property & Liability)	\$48,000	\$52,100	\$4,100
Regional Associations	\$5,229	\$5,500	\$271
Other General Government	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$1,877,475	\$1,978,857	\$101,382

Selectman Walla moved the article and Selectman Pye seconded. The Moderator then recognized Town Administrator Melissa White to make the presentation regarding this article. White reviewed the increases and decreases in this article, including the factors influencing both. The Moderator then asked if there were any other questions or comments. She reminded residents to speak into the microphone and state their full name and address. Paul Nicolai of 18 Summit Drive said he was flabbergasted by the 15% increase in taxation in the proposed overall budget, which is 4.3 times the inflation rate. He proposed an amendment to cut the total amount for this article by \$45,000 to bring it down to an increase matching the current inflation rate of 3.5%. He added that we need to get our thinking here in line with what we can afford. The Moderator then advised Mr. Nicolai that in order for her to consider this as an amendment, she needed it in writing, and referred him to the back pages of the town report where the forms for that purpose are located. He agreed to do that. She then asked others if they would like to speak. George Niles of 13 Pioneer Point asked to clarify that what we’re voting on today is the town budget only and does not include any increases in the school budget. Town Administrator White confirmed that this is town budget only. Bob Meyer of 11 Turnbuckle asked where the 15% increase number is coming from. He noted that referring to the MS-636 included in the town report gives him an increase of only about 4.5%. Town Administrator

White replied that if you refer to page 31 of the town report, the 15% refers to the increase in the amount to be raised by taxation. Meyer then asked about where the shortfall in revenue between the two years is coming from. White replied that there was a significant amount of fund balance used last year that is not being used this year. Amelia Lantz of 13 Butternut Road asked for particulars regarding the \$20,000 being requested for hazardous waste day and is there any breakout of what is included in that amount. White replied that the amount is an estimate based upon tonnage of such waste processed in previous years. Debra Johnson of 775 Route 10 South asked if there is any breakout for what's included in the Personnel Administration line. White replied that we've had an almost \$15,000 increase in health insurance costs which is a large part of that increase. White added there is also a \$6,000 increase in payroll taxes, \$10,000 for retirement costs, \$1,800 for workers compensation and unemployment insurance, and about \$10,000 for wage adjustment allocation. Johnson asked how many employees are covered. White replied we have 19 full-time employees. Johnson then asked for clarification on the almost \$22,500 increase for the Selectman's Office. White replied that most of this is mostly for salaries. Johnson asked to clarify that the increase is mostly for salaries. Melissa confirmed that most of the increase is for salaries. Johnson then asked how many people does that cover. White confirmed that, all together, about 8-10 people are included in various roles. Marc Bernstein of 4 Azure Brae commented that the half-million increase in the overall budget is accounted for by a reduction in revenues and credits of the same amount. He asked for an explanation of that reduction. White replied that the drop in the use of fund balance from last year is largely the reason. Bernstein asked for an explanation of 'fund balance,' which White provided. Elizabeth Sofish of 17 Highwood Way asked how much is in our fund balance and why are we not using more of it this year. White responded that our fund balance is listed on page 58 of the town report, currently at 1.9MM. The decision not to use more was made in keeping with the town's fund balance policy, which is to keep it somewhere between 10-15%. Right now we're at about 12%. Sofish followed up with a few other questions, which White said she'd get back to her on. Thomas Canfield of 49 Fairway Drive asked about the other parts of the municipal tax rate and when all these amounts will be set. White responded that the tax rate is set in the fall and we won't know the final rate until then. Rita Friedman of 2 Pinehurst Drive asked about a clarification on this article vs. the police budget. White clarified that nothing in the police budget is included in this article. Friedman also noted how the tax year works in New Hampshire and that it runs from April 1 – March 31. Richard Karash of 23 Shore Road asked for clarification regarding whether or not we're taking anything out of fund balance for the proposed budget. White clarified that we're taking \$165,500 out for a separate warrant article (funding capital reserves). The Moderator then noted that she does have a motion from Paul Nicolai to amend this article. He proposed amending this article to reduce the bottom line by \$35,671, bringing the amount down to \$1,943,186. Having received the motion, she called for a second; seconded by Elizabeth Sofish of 17 Highwood Way. The Moderator then opened up the floor to discuss the amendment. Paul Nicolai reiterated that this is an attempt to reduce this article by this amount to bring the total down to the rate of inflation. The Moderator then read the article with the proposed amendment. Dan McClory of 38 Brookridge Drive asked the Selectboard how this proposed reduction would be handled. White replied she's not sure how the reduction would be implemented, as certain line items have little or no flexibility. The Moderator added that whatever happens with amendments, the ultimate authority is with the Selectboard to decide how the money is spent within that amended article. Bob Meyer of 11 Turnbuckle pointed out that the inflation figure used by Nicolai is the consumer price index, which is not a broad measure of inflation and does not include a number of other things. He advised caution in proceeding with this amendment. Jane Walsh of 824 Covered Bridge Lane said she does not support the amendment because she believes the fund balance has been handled appropriately and the best practices are being followed. Shawn Bailey spoke to the price of lettuce and how it has not recovered in the way some sectors of the economy have done. Elizabeth Sofish of 17 Highwood Way asked to clarify that should this amendment pass, the money would not have to come from salaries of those whose line items are included in this warrant. The Moderator confirmed that Sofish was correct. Hearing no other questions or comments, the Moderator then called for a vote on the amendment.

Amendment to Article 9 Defeated by Majority Voice Vote

Debra Johnson of 775 Route 10 South asked if we could revote using paper ballots. The Moderator stated she had no problem demanding a revote if she had seven residents present who would stand in favor of such a revote. Seeing only four residents standing, she declared the voice vote valid and final. The Moderator then

reread the original article and asked for further questions or comments. Hearing none, she called for the vote on the original article.

Article 9 Passed by Majority Voice Vote

ARTICLE 10 – Establish Police Department Uniform, Equipment, and Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund

To see if the town will vote to establish a Police Department Uniform, Equipment, and Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a for the purpose of purchasing and maintaining uniforms, safety equipment, and other equipment needs of the Police Department and to raise and appropriate \$10,000 to put in the fund; further to name the Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund. Recommended by the Selectmen. (Majority vote required)

Selectman Pye moved the article and Selectman Walla seconded. The Moderator then recognized Town Administrator Melissa White to make the presentation regarding this article; White deferred to Police Chief John Parsons. Parsons explained the genesis of this article and how it makes sense to set this money aside for non-everyday occurrences. He added that should this article pass, he has prepared an amendment to Article 11 that will reduce it by \$10,000. The Moderator then asked for comments and questions. Paul Nicolai of 18 Summit Drive stated that he opposed this article, mainly because he thought it was unnecessary to have a trust fund for this. He added that he believed all our trust funds were already overfunded. He also noted that as is the case with all trust funds, money placed within those funds remains there if unused, rather than going back into the general fund like regular budget items. Susan Buchanan of 43 Deer Run asked the Chief to explain why the trust fund option is preferable to including these purchases in the regular budget. The Chief reiterated the expense of outfitting a new officer and how much that has increased. He added that other equipment purchases have also increased in price. Buchanan followed up asking if this \$10,000 comes out of the regular budget, could we anticipate that the regular budget would be so reduced in upcoming years. The Chief confirmed that it would. Cindy Covell of 95 Jericho Road asked how many officers we currently have. The Chief noted we have five full-time officers and two part-timers. Covell stated that she said she was opposed to budgeting for these needs in this fashion and that they should be addressed in the regular budget. Amelia Lantz of 13 Butternut Road asked for clarification regarding how normal budgeting works and how the trust fund would address unmet needs. The Moderator then asked if there were other comments or questions. Hearing none, she reread the article and proceeded to the vote.

Article 10 Passed by Majority Voice Vote

ARTICLE 11 – Public Safety

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one million, ninety-one thousand, six dollars (**\$1,091,006**) to defray the cost of **Public Safety** operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. Recommended by the Selectmen (Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2023/2024	Proposed 2024/2025	Change Increase or (Decrease)
Police Department	\$671,084	\$722,746	\$51,662
EMS Department	\$194,349	\$196,250	\$1,901
Fire Department	\$145,540	\$137,910	(\$7,630)
Building Inspection	\$21,000	\$23,100	\$2,100
Emergency Management	\$10,900	\$11,000	\$100
TOTAL	\$1,042,873	\$1,091,006	\$48,133

Selectman Walla moved the article and Selectman Pye seconded. The Moderator then recognized Chief Parsons, who spoke to the article and reviewed the increases, including equipment, computer services, vehicle fuel and training. He spoke at length about the need to upgrade tasers. The Chief also reviewed the decreases in the budget and the grants received over the past year. Town Administrator White then reviewed the increases and decreases in

the rest of the budget. The Moderator noted that the Chief had submitted an amendment to this article, reducing the proposed amount for the 2024/2025 budget year to \$1,081,006. However, she opened up the floor for questions and comments on the article as written prior to considering the amendment. Cindy Covell of 95 Jericho Road asked how many tasers are owned by the police department, how many are we replacing, how many have been discharged in the line of duty and what were the circumstances surrounding those deployments. The Chief replied that they have five tasers – one per officer – and a spare. Within the past year, one taser has been ‘used,’ which is defined by removing it from the holster, pointing it and arming it. None were discharged. Elizabeth Sofish of 17 Highwood Way thanked the Chief and asked him what was the increase in personnel costs; the Chief replied 4%. Richard Karash of 23 Shore Road thanked the police department for all their work, and added that he supports all upgrades in technology. He then asked how many times Grantham officers discharged their firearms in the past two years. The Chief replied that no firearms have been discharged at people, only at injured animals that needed to be dispatched. Rita Friedman of 2 Pinehurst Drive asked a question about the regular budget as opposed to the capital reserve. She wanted to know what’s in the capital reserve and why isn’t it being used for the taser upgrades. White noted that the current capital reserve fund is for radio equipment only. Paul Nicolai of 18 Summit Drive spoke to the speed trap that is always deployed in Grantham at the same time and place and that it’s the only town he knows where this is the case. He added that Grantham is the only town where the local officers patrol the interstate, giving out speeding tickets. He believes that we’re overfunded. He added that two-thirds of the town lives in an HOA where the town police do not patrol. As for tasers, he doesn’t understand why we need guns AND tasers. The entire budget is an overreach. He finished by saying he plans to introduce an amendment that removes the money for the tasers and more besides. Chief Parsons responded to Nicolai’s comment about the Grantham police not patrolling Eastman. Chief said they do respond to calls regarding any criminal activity there; the only thing they do not do is enforce the motor vehicle code there. This is because the roads in Eastman do not meet the statutory definition of a public way. If the roads do not meet that definition, he refuses to send in his officers to enforce laws they don’t have the authority to enforce. Thomas Canfield of 49 Fairway Drive asked about the tasers and the current models and what we’re upgrading to. The Moderator then asked if there were any other questions or comments on the article as presented. Hearing none, she then introduced and read the amendment to the article proposed by Chief Parsons. This amendment proposes to reduce the bottom line for the upcoming year by \$10,000 due to the passing of the previous article; this brings the total down to \$1,081,006. Moved by Chief Parsons; seconded by Paul Nicolai. The Moderator then called for any questions or comments on the amendment. Hearing none, she called for a vote on the amendment.

Amendment to Article 11 Passed by Unanimous Voice Vote

The Moderator then noted that she has a second amendment from Paul Nicolai proposing to reduce the bottom line for this article by \$76,000, reducing that line to \$1,006,006. Cindy Covell seconded. Nicolai stated that he submitted this amendment not because he has anything personal against the police department, but because he believes we are over-policed. He added that in addition to the constant presence of a cruiser on Route 10 in the middle of town, he has a pet peeve regarding patrolling Interstate 89 and giving out tickets there for which the town receives none of the money collected. He stressed that we need to revisit the policing policy in Grantham and reduce the coverage to what we actually need. The Moderator then announced the formal closing of the polls at 7:00 PM. C. Peter James of 28 Splitrock Road spoke to the fact that all speeding fines go to the state, not just those issued on the interstate. Secondly, he spoke from personal experience to his appreciation for having an officer on duty when needed. He added that a lot happens here in town that we don’t know about. He stressed that having an aging population with increased medical needs makes an active police presence much appreciated. He finished by saying we’re a busier town than we think and that he wants an officer on duty when needed. Amelia Lantz of 13 Butternut Road spoke to those who suffer from the threat of domestic violence and the entire issue of child trafficking. She noted that the Irving Station is a hotspot on the interstate. She noted that while our town seems rural and safe, we could be effected by anyone coming off the interstate; she added that she loves the speed traps. Rick Karash of 23 Shore Road said that he doesn’t see a speed trap in the same place every day; he sees a police presence that moves around and he sees a positive effect of the visible police presence. He also recounted an event in his neighborhood where a resident had a medical issue at 6:30 in the morning. The ambulance didn’t arrive for forty minutes, but the police were there right away. He finished by saying he was going to defer to the Chief as to whether or not officers should be carrying tasers. Bob Meyer of 11 Turnbuckle asked the Selectmen if the budget meetings they held earlier were open to the

public. Selectman Garland said they were. Meyer then asked if any members of the public attended. Selectman Garland said there was hardly anyone. Meyer then said that we have a very safe community thanks to Chief Parsons. Debra Bean of 97 Greensward Drive spoke to tasers and the need to keep equipment upgraded. She added that as a nurse who’s worked in the mental health community, she’s thankful for tasers. Debra Johnson of 775 Route 10 South said she takes offense at those who shame residents who struggle financially. Some residents are looking to save money wherever possible, including town budgets that keep increasing. It’s getting increasingly difficult to live. She believes we should have discussions about how to look at budgets and cut where we can without shaming those who want to have those discussions. She also thanked Nicolai for his efforts. The Moderator then asked if there were any more comments or questions on the amendment. Hearing none, she then reread the amendment and called for a vote.

Amendment to Article 11 Defeated by Majority Voice Vote

The Moderator then reread the article as amended and asked for questions or comments on the amended article. The Moderator then noted that she has a third amendment from Rita Friedman of 2 Pinehurst Drive to reduce the bottom line for this article by \$35,000 to \$1,046,006. Seconded by Nicolai. Friedman spoke to the amendment and how the reduction by \$35,000 would help taxpayers. She wanted to remove this amount because this is a tough year for many taxpayers and removing this amount would not prevent the police department from doing their job. The Moderator then asked for questions or comments on the amendment. Chief Parsons then clarified that the warranties on the current tasers expire in August and that after that, they will no longer have tasers. Should the article as amended pass, the police department will still have a short window of time to order the new equipment and properly train the officers to use them before the current tasers are no longer operative. Elizabeth Sofish of 17 Highwood Way thanked the Chief for that clarification and asked the Chief to speak to the importance of having tasers. The Chief spoke to the specifics of how the tasers work and how they help protect both officers and citizens. He explained the advantages of tasers vs. such other non-lethal methods as batons and pepper spray. There is also a deterrence factor to having a taser in terms of de-escalating a potentially violent situation. The Chief added that he has drawn his taser four times while working here, but had not yet had to fire it in the line of duty. Sofish then confirmed that tasers have been used by the police department in such situations, just not fired. The Chief confirmed this. The Moderator then followed up with a question about how many times the entire department has drawn their tasers in the line of duty. The Chief confirmed that it was about a dozen times. He added that in his time with the Grantham police department (since 2006) there has only been one incident when the taser was discharged. The Moderator then asked for any further comments or questions on the amendment. Hearing none, she called for a vote.

Amendment to Article 11 Defeated by Majority Voice Vote

The Moderator then moved on to the article as amended (with the bottom line of \$1,081,006) and reread the amended article. She then called for a vote.

Article 11 as Amended Passed by Majority Voice Vote

ARTICLE 12 – Public Works

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one million, one hundred seventy-three thousand, six hundred fifty-eight dollars (**\$1,173,658**) to defray the cost of **Public Works** operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. Recommended by the Selectmen (Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2023/2024	Proposed 2024/2025	Change Increase or (Decrease)
Highway Administration	\$383,976	\$403,292	\$19,316
Highway Maintenance	\$221,700	\$221,700	\$0.00

Street Lights	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$0.00
Transfer Station	\$247,580	\$297,166	\$49,586
Waste Disposal	\$220,000	\$240,000	\$20,000
Landfill Monitoring	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$1,084,756	\$1,173,658	\$88,902

Selectman Garland moved the article and Selectman Walla seconded. The Moderator then asked Town Administrator White to speak to this article. The Moderator then asked if there were any comments or questions. Elizabeth Sofish of 17 Highwood Way asked for clarification regarding salary increases. She also asked if we needed the new concrete pad for the compactor. White noted that the current pad is deteriorating to the point of it being difficult to move the bins in and out. Transfer station supervisor Chris Scott confirmed this and said the current pad is twenty-three years old. He further explained the other issues with the current pad. Jane Dean Clerk of 19 Trillium Lane spoke to the issue of recycling paper and noted this has been a difficult issue to resolve. She thanked White and Scott for their work on trying to find a solution and following up on the suggestion she made at the budget hearing in February. She said that the recycling center in Lebanon may be able to take Grantham’s mixed paper and she looked forward to hearing more about how this may proceed and about a potential resolution. White added that this issue will be discussed at the Selectmens meeting the next day. The Moderator then asked if there were any other comments or questions. Hearing none, she called for a vote.

Article 12 Passed by Unanimous Voice Vote

ARTICLE 13 – Health and Welfare

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of fifty-three thousand, six hundred two dollars (**\$53,602**) to defray the cost of **Health and Welfare** operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. Recommended by the Selectmen (Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2023/2024	Proposed 2024/2025	Change Increase or (Decrease)
Health	\$1,000	\$2,400	\$1,400
Boarding Animals	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0.00
Community Services	\$22,702	\$23,202	\$500
Town General Assistance	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$51,702	\$53,602	\$1,900

Community Agencies:	Budget 2023/2024	Proposed 2024/2025	Change Increase or (Decrease)
Lake Sunapee VNA	\$9,872	\$9,872	\$0
Newport Food Pantry	\$500	\$500	\$0
Sullivan County Nutrition Services	\$440	\$440	\$0
Kearsarge Area COA	\$4,290	\$4,290	\$0
Southwestern Community Services	\$900	\$900	\$0
West Central Services	\$3,700	\$3,700	\$0
Grantham Food Pantry	\$0.00	\$500	\$500
Public Health Council of the Upper Valley	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0
Visiting Nurse & Hospice of VT/NH	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$0
Total	\$22,702	\$23,202	\$500

Selectman Pye moved the article and Selectman Walla seconded. The Moderator noted that the reports from all the above-referenced non-profit agencies start on page 119 of the town report. The Moderator then recognized Town Administrator White to discuss the article. The Moderator then asked for any other comments or questions. Hearing none, she called for the vote.

Article 13 Passed by Unanimous Voice Vote

ARTICLE 14 – Culture, Recreation, and Conservation

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of three hundred eighty-two thousand, eight hundred forty-four dollars (**\$382,844**) for **Culture, Recreation, and Conservation**. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. Recommended by the Selectmen (Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2023/2024	Proposed 2024/2025	Change Increase or (Decrease)
Recreation	\$88,090	\$93,011	\$4,921
Dunbar Free Library	\$258,440	\$284,483	\$26,043
Archives	\$750	\$750	\$0.00
Conservation	\$2,950	\$4,600	\$1,650
TOTAL	\$350,230	\$382,844	\$32,614

Selectman Walla moved the article and Selectman Garland seconded. The Moderator then recognized Town Administrator Melissa White to make a presentation on this article. White reviewed the increases and increases in this article. Moderator McClory asked for any comments or questions on the article. C. Peter James of 28 Splitrock Road asked why lots of people had plenty of questions and comments on the police budget but no one had questions about this article. Rich Karash of 23 Shore Road noted that the library budget is up roughly 10% and wanted to know why. The Moderator then recognized Librarian Dawn Huston to approach the microphone. Huston addressed the increases in wages and benefits, noting that our library staff are not compensated anywhere near the top of the scale as compared to our neighboring communities, and even with increases in past years’ budgets we’re still not near the top. She added that there have also been increases in operating costs, specifically electricity. There have also been cost increases in professional services. She added that in keeping with best practices, the library will also be instituting background checks for volunteers. Huston also reviewed decreases in the budget. Karash then spoke and confirmed the explanation was sufficient and that he supports the article. The Moderator then asked if there were further comments or questions. Hearing none, she then moved to consideration of the amendment in-hand submitted by Paul Nicolai of 18 Summit Drive. She then read the amendment, which proposes to reduce this bottom line by \$20,356 to bring the total to \$362,488. She then asked for a second to the amendment. Hearing none, she declared that the amendment will not be brought forward. The Moderator then asked if there were any other comments or questions; hearing none, she reread the article and called for a vote.

Article 14 Passed by Majority Voice Vote

ARTICLE 15 – Debt Principal, Debt Interest, and Tax Anticipation Note Interest

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of three hundred ten thousand, nine hundred ninety-five dollars (**\$310,995**) for **Debt Principal, Debt Interest, and Tax Anticipation Note Interest**. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. Recommended by the Selectmen (Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2023/2024	Proposed 2024/2025	Change Increase or (Decrease)
Town Hall Bond/Interest	\$64,500	\$61,500	(\$3,000)
Library Bond/Interest	\$48,307	\$47,081	(\$1,226)
Fire Truck Bond/Interest	\$105,683	\$101,157	(\$4,526)
Miller Pond Road Bond/Interest	\$105,683	\$101,157	(\$4,526)
Tax Anticipation Notes Interest	\$100	\$100	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$324,273	\$310,995	(\$13,278)

Selectman Pye moved the article and Selectman Walla seconded. Town Administrator White reviewed the increases and decreases in this article, including a number of the bonds that are winding down. The Moderator then asked for any questions or discussion; hearing none, she called for a vote.

Article 15 Passed by Majority Voice Vote

ARTICLE 16 – Capital Reserve and Expendable Trust Funds

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred sixty thousand, five hundred dollars (\$160,500) to be placed in previously established Capital Reserve and Expendable Trust Funds, as listed below, with \$160,500 to come from Unassigned Fund Balance taxation. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. Recommended by the Selectmen (Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2023/2024	Proposed 2024/2025	Change Increase or (Decrease)
Library Technology and Office Equipment ETF	\$6,000	\$2,000	(\$4,000)
Mowers CRF	\$10,000	\$0.00	(\$10,000)
Highway Equipment CRF	\$100,000	\$50,000	(\$50,000)
Transfer Station Equipment CRF	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$0.00
Library Building Repair CRF	\$20,000	\$15,000	(\$5,000)
Town Building Maintenance CRF	\$5,000	\$0.00	(\$5,000)
Fire Department Apparatus CRF	\$75,000	\$0.00	(\$75,000)
Fire-EMS Department Equipment/Maintenance CRF	\$10,000	\$5,000	(\$5,000)
Police Vehicles CRF	\$20,000	\$10,000	(\$10,000)
Public Safety ETF	\$0.00	\$3,500	\$3,500
Road Improvement ETF	\$5,000	\$0.00	(\$5,000)
Government Building Expansion & Construction ETF	\$50,000	\$25,000	(\$25,000)
Town Office Equipment CRF	\$2,000	\$0.00	(\$2,000)
Municipality Revaluation CRF	\$10,000	\$0.00	(\$10,000)
Town Clerk/Tax Collector Equipment CRF	\$1,000	\$0.00	(\$1,000)
TOTAL	\$364,000	\$160,500	(\$203,500)

Selectman Garland moved the article and Selectman Walla seconded. The Moderator noted that the MS-9, which includes a listing of all these funds, is found starting on page 44 of the town report. Town Administrator White explained the article, noting the increases and decreases, and discussed the pending withdrawals. Paul Nicolai of 18 Summit Drive asked about the withdrawal of \$7,200 from the police vehicles CRF. Chief Parsons explained that a transmission issue with the Tahoe forced him to ask the Selectboard for this withdrawal to use toward the purchase of a new vehicle. C. Peter James of 28 Splitrock Road spoke to the issue of needing to upgrade the sound system in the downstairs room and implored them to do so. The Moderator then asked for any questions or comments; hearing none, the Moderator called for a vote.

Article 16 Passed by Unanimous Voice Vote

ARTICLE 17 – End of Meeting

To hear the reports of agents, officers, and committees heretofore chosen, to pass any vote relating thereto, and to transact any other business that may legally come before said meeting. Recommended by the Selectmen (Majority vote required)

Selectman Pye moved the article and Selectman Walla seconded. The Moderator then asked if there was any further business to come before the meeting under this article, including reports or comments. Hearing none, she moved on to the nomination of hog reeves and fence viewers. Selectman Garland moved the following:

For Hog Reeves, the Selectmen have nominated Mike and Holly Catalfamo.

For Fence Viewers, the Selectmen have nominated Alexander Bitler and Mariah Gallien.

Chief Parsons seconded. The Moderator then asked for any nominations from the floor. A question from the floor asked if the nominees were present. The Moderator asked if they were present; they were not. The Moderator then gave background on how candidates for these two time-honored positions are selected. The Moderator then asked for nominations from the floor. Hearing none, she called for a vote.

Elected by Unanimous Voice Vote

Town Administrator White noted that she will start working on the upgrade/replacement of the downstairs sound system at the Selectboard meeting the next day. The Moderator asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting formally. Moved by Justin Hastings of 1583 Route 10 North; seconded by Chris Scott of 3 Clubhouse Lane.

Article 17 Passed by Unanimous Voice Vote

The 248th Grantham Town Meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm.

A true copy attest,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kenneth Story".

Kenneth Story, Town Clerk/Tax Collector