

**Board:** Select Board / Water Commissioner's Meeting  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 11, 2023  
**Location:** Erving Elementary School, 28 Northfield Road, Erving, MA 01344

**Select Board Present:** Jacob Smith, Scott Bastarache, James Loynd  
**Finance Committee Present:** Debra Smith, Thomas Duffy, Benjamin Fellows (Charles Zilinski and Daniel Hammock absent)  
**Capital Planning Committee Present:** Debra Smith, Jacob Smith, Benjamin Fellows, Linda Downs-Bembury (Peter Mallet absent)  
**School Committee Present:** Mackensy Bailey (Erik Semb, Jennifer Eichorn, Katelyn Mailloux-Little, and Mark Blatchley absent)

At 6:57 PM **Chairman Smith** called the meeting to order.

#### **Review of VEH119 Road Salt Contract MOU**

**Chairman Smith** provided an overview of the proposed procurement for road salt from the State contract, noting that the successful bidder for the region is Eastern Salt. **Selectman Loynd** asked for an explanation for the anticipated tons to be ordered, suggesting that the number of tons should be increased based on historical usage. Glenn McCrory, Highway Superintendent, explained the rationale for the anticipated order of 350 tons and explained that the Highway Department creates its own mix of treated salt and sand for use in Town. The Select Board members expressed support for proceeding with the procurement. **Chairman Smith** made a motion to use the State contract VEH119 for road salt and engage in the memorandum of understanding, and further authorize Glenn McCrory, Highway Superintendent, to sign any and all documents related. **Selectman Bastarache** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

#### **Joint meeting with Finance Committee, Capital Planning Committee & School Committee - Proposed FY24 Proposition 2 ½ Override Informational Session**

At 7:01 PM **Chairman Smith** called the joint meeting of the Select Board, Finance Committee, Capital Planning Committee and School Committee to order. Debra Smith, Thomas Duffy and Benjamin Fellows of the Finance Committee, Linda Downs-Bembury of the Capital Planning Committee, and Mackensy Bailey of the School Committee joined the meeting.

#### **Informational Session – Proposed FY24 Proposition 2 ½ Override**

**Chairman Smith** welcomed those in attendance and discussed the reason for the informational meeting in advance of the Special Town Meeting and Special Election regarding a proposed Proposition 2 ½ override. **Chairman Smith** explained that there are handouts available at the entry area of the meeting, including the estimated tax impact. **Chairman Smith** invited questions from members of the public and asked people to use the microphone and to state their name for record.

Kelly Loynd asked if voting “yes” to the proposed Proposition 2 ½ override would be the same as the voters saying that they are okay with the proposed changes. **Chairman Smith** explained that an approved override would provide the financial means to implement the proposed changes. Michael Truckey asked if the Special Town Meeting warrant articles would be voted on as a single package, or if they would be voted on separately. **Chairman Smith** explained that each warrant article will be voted on separately. Michael asked if the Select Board members could provide a presentation on the proposed Proposition 2 ½ override and the rationale behind the proposal.

**Selectman Bastarache** provided an overview explanation for the proposed changes, by functional area. Regarding General Government, **Selectman Bastarache** discussed the requests from the Assessor's Office, including the appropriations for the overlay, legal defense, and proposed staffing. Jacquelyn Boyden, Principal Assessor, explained the use of the overlay and the legal costs. Jacquelyn discussed the current Appellate Tax Board cases being worked on. **Selectman Bastarache** provided the context from the floor amendments that occurred at the Annual Town meeting and the budget setting process that occurred for FY2024, noting the approximate \$1 million in request reductions town-wide to present a balanced budget. For further context, **Selectman Bastarache** explained that the Select Board, Finance Committee and Capital Planning Committee continued to review for the FY2024 budget since June 2023 and that departments were asked to consider needs over the next five (5) years so that they would be considered in this request before asking the voters to consider a Proposition 2 ½ override again. **Selectman Bastarache** discussed the proposal to ask for administrative help in the Select Board office, noting that the planning work was broken out as the Community Planning Office, and the goal of back filling the assistant needs. **Selectman Bastarache** discussed the proposal for providing additional capacity for surveying and consulting that is necessary to move some projects forward. **Selectman Bastarache** discussed the proposal to establish a grant match fund, under the purview of the Finance Committee, that will remain if not used in a fiscal year and that can be replenished if used, adding that matching funds are needed for some initiatives. Kelly asked for information about anticipated grants for the Town. Mariah Kurtz, Town Planning, discussed the recent grant funded work on Wheelock Street to replace two (2) culverts, the funding of a new pump station on Papermill Road to prepare for redevelopment of the site, the feasibility study of a proposed shared use path to provide an alternative connection between Farley and Erving Center, and waiting on the decision regarding the Small Bridge program grant application for the Swamp Road Bridge.

Regarding Public Safety, **Selectman Bastarache** discussed the reductions that were made to the Police Department FY2024 budget request for to police for facility maintenance, electricity, the cadet program that the Select Board would like to restore. **Selectman Bastarache** explained the proposal for the cadet program, considering law enforcement reform, to hire a civilian, focus on training, and work towards enrollment in the full-time academy and to graduate. **Selectman Bastarache** discussed the goals of staffing in the Police Department and the costs associated with the full-time Academy. Jenny asked if there is way to get a commitment out of Police Officers that Erving sends to the Academy. **Selectman Bastarache** discussed contractual requirement for reimbursement to the Department if a Police Officer is sent to the Academy and leaves before three (3) years. **Selectman Bastarache** acknowledged the turnover experience. **Selectman Loynd** explained that the past practice of towns like Erving benefiting from the part-time Academy and that with the recent reforms, Police Officers must be full-time Academy trained. As it relates to the Fire department, **Selectman Bastarache** discussed the proposal for a new full-time Firefighter and explained the 2-in-2-out practice that the Department is striving for. **Selectman Bastarache** noted the reality of time off and not being able to always have four staff members on a shift but working towards the goal.

Regarding Public Works, **Selectman Bastarache** explained the proposal to backfill the vacant Equipment Operator position in the Highway Department after the filling of the vacant Foreman position. **Selectman Bastarache** added that the proposal also includes funding for surveying services that are needed to approach comprehensive road projects like complete streets that the Town has been working on in recent years. **Selectman Bastarache** explained that the Wastewater Department proposed increase is related to cost increases in heating fuel, testing requirements, chemicals, and sludge disposal. **Selectman Bastarache** explained that multiple years of costs were reviewed as well as the new expectations from Federal and State permitting requirements that did not previously exists.

Regarding Health & Human Services, **Selectman Bastarache** explained that the proposal includes programming funds for the Senior & Community Center, to provide resources for patrons and for the work of the Activities Coordinator. Regarding Culture & Recreation, **Selectman Bastarache** explained that the proposal includes an increase in staffing, programming and materials for the Library. Michael asked for information regarding the use of the Library. Abigail Baines, Library Director, explained that participation at the facility has doubled in the last two (2) years.

Regarding Health Insurance, **Chairman Smith** explained that the FY2024 budget reflected level funding during the effort to balance the budget. **Chairman Smith** provided context that the premium costs increased for FY2024 that absorbed the capacity that existed. **Chairman Smith** discussed that after discussions with all departments the proposal includes funding for the benefits for approximately nine (9) positions at the Elementary School and eight (8) proposed on the Town side. Michael asked if the budget includes all benefits or just health insurance benefits. Bryan explained the employment benefits that are covered by the budget.

**Chairman Smith** discussed the capital improvement proposals, including the warrant article for roadwork and bridge improvements. **Chairman Smith** explained the proposal to appropriate \$900,000.00 into the Capital Stabilization Fund, conditioned on the approval of a Proposition 2 ½ override. **Chairman Smith** discussed the multi-year review of capital expenditures, noting an average of \$1.3 million annually. Benjamin discussed wanting to address the long-term funding strategy for larger capital needs will dealing with short-term needs. Benjamin discussed the goal of building capacity annually. **Chairman Smith** added that the annual capital improvement spending is inclusive of debt services, such as the Arch Street forced sewer, that becomes annual operating costs.

Michael asked for an explanation regarding the warrant article to create a Special Education Reserve Fund and if there is a need to appropriate funding into the Reserve fund. Mackensey discussed the proposal for the Fund, noting that the School Committee can appropriate up to two (2) percent of the education budget into the Fund. Mackensey explained that it would be the first place for the School Committee to seek coverage for an unanticipated Special Education cost before coming back to the voters with other requests. Michael discussed the need for the State legislature to take action to address these costs.

Jenny asked if the proposed Proposition 2 ½ override would be used for capital expenses at the former IP Mill site. **Selectman Bastarache** explained that one article does include funding for the Capital Stabilization fund which could be available for future appropriation, by the voters, for projects like the IP mill site. Michael discussed acknowledgment of the prudent act of savings and for the work to anticipate future needs as best you can and noted the need to balance with the concerns about the impact on taxpayers, with no significant changes to the tax base. Michael stated that he wants to ensure that the Town does not keep coming back to ask for a Proposition 2 ½ override. **Selectman Bastarache** expressed understanding of the concern and explained that it was the reason why the departments considered multiple years of anticipated operating costs. **Selectman Bastarache** discussed the estimated tax impacts and expressed appreciation to Jacquelyn for preparing the information. **Selectman Bastarache** urged caution that the estimated impact sheets are based on FY2023 values and that the FY2024 values have not been set yet and that they can change.

Regarding next steps, **Selectman Bastarache** explained that the Special Town Meeting has been scheduled for October 18, 2023, warrant has already been sent to residences. **Selectman Bastarache** explained that the Special Election has been scheduled for October 23, 2023. **Selectman Bastarache** clarified that

approval at both the Special Town Meeting and the Special Election are necessary for the proposed Proposition 2 ½ override to pass.

Mark Burnett asked if the article regarding the amendment of elected official compensation was part of the proposed Proposition 2 ½ override. **Chairman Smith** explained that the funding for the amendment to compensation already exists in a special article and is not part of the proposed override, but the change must be approved by the voters.

Sarah Vega-Liros asked for an explanation of how the levy limit is calculated. Jacquelyn provided an explanation of the formula that is used to determine the annual levy limit, using FY2023 values for an example. Jacquelyn also provided an explanation of the difference between the levy limit and the Town's levy ceiling.

#### **Adjournment**

At 8:20 PM **Chairman Smith** made a motion to adjourn. **Selectman Bastarache** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bryan Smith  
Town Administrator