

**MINUTES OF THE FRANCONIA TOWN MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 2023**

The Moderator opened the meeting at 7:15PM

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance led by the Littleton Boy Scout Troop 209 Color Guard. The Moderator stated that the town report is dedicated to Stanley Sherburn who served for 51 years on the Franconia Fire Department.

There was a motion by Cindy Burnell to accept the 2022 town meeting minutes as written, second by Tim Burnell. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

There was a motion by Cindy Burnell to waive the reading of the warrant, second by Tim Burnell. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 1. To choose all necessary Town offices for the ensuing year. (By Ballot)

Selectman (3-year term):	Jill Brewer	138
Write-Ins:	Kim Cowles	42
	Karen Foss	1
	Trevor Presby	1
Treasurer (1-year term):	Steve Plant	174
Write-Ins:	Karen Foss	1
Trustee of the Trust Fund (3-year term)	Janice Cole	170
Write-Ins:	Karen Foss	1
	Jess Presby	1
Cemetery Trustee (3-year term):	Jayne O'Connor	161
Write-In:	Dawn Steele	6
	Bill Mellekas	3
	Mike Betley	1
	Donald Trump	1
Water Commissioner (1-year term):	Trevor Presby	11
Write-Ins:	Jayne O'Connor	4
	Richard McLachlin	3
	Tom Allen	2
	Kim Cowles	2
	Richard Andross	1
	Vince Bell	1
	Jill Brewer	1
	William Cole	1
	Peter Gignac	1
	Mark Hesler	1
	John Peabody	1
	Robert Peraino	1
	Jim Walker	1
Water Commissioner (3-year) term):	Richard Andross	5
Write-Ins:	Kim Cowles	2
	Richard McLachlin	2

Thad Presby	2
Keith Batchelder	1
Lynn Beal	1
Russ Cumbee	1
Peter Gignac	1
Kevin Johnson	1
Bill Mellekas	1
Jayne O'Connor	1
Robert Peraino	1
Trevor Presby	1
Cory Rush	1
Bob Tortorice	1
Jim Walker	1

Library Trustee (3-year term):	Melinda Richmond	160
Two Vacancies	Sharon Penney	169
Write-Ins:	Colleen Foley	1

ARTICLE 2. Town Line-Item Budget. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate two million, seventy-two thousand two hundred ten dollars (\$2,072,210.00) to defray town charges for the ensuing year. (Majority vote required) Tax Impact \$3.40 per thousand

4130	Executive	\$ 236,321.00
4140	Town Clerk	\$ 52,261.00
4150	Tax Collector	\$ 18,684.00
4152	Revaluation of Property	\$ 24,372.00
4153	Legal	\$ 6,000.00
4155	Personnel Administration	\$ 210,891.00
4191	Planning & Zoning	\$ 19,895.00
4194	Buildings & Grounds	\$ 172,967.00
4195	Cemetery	\$ 22,744.00
4196	Insurance	\$ 56,673.00
4210	Police	\$ 425,380.00
4220	Fire	\$ 81,350.00
4240	Building Inspection	\$ 12,000.00
4290	Emergency Management	\$ 4,000.00
4299	Other Communications	\$ 41,000.00
4312	Highway	\$ 397,709.00
4316	Street Lights	\$ 10,000.00
4411	Health Administration	\$ 1,045.00
4442	Welfare	\$ 6,140.00
4520	Recreation	\$ 116,278.00
4583	Patriotic Purposes	\$ 3,000.00
4619	Conservation	\$ 500.00
	Long Term Debt	<u>\$ 153,000.00</u>
	TOTAL	\$2,072,210.00

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. Jill spoke to the article stating that even though the town-wide revaluation increased property assessments, the tax rate this year was lower than the previous year. She also stated the unassigned fund balance policy that was created in 2021 has helped the town reduce the amount in that fund; however, it is not yet in the target range of 12% of the general fund.

Jill stated the 2022 budget was underspent by \$66,480.00 or 3.5% which was due largely to the Highway budget,

the Welfare budget, and the Life Squad budget. In terms of overspent appropriations, Buildings and Grounds was overspent mainly due to fuel and building maintenance, Personnel had an error in the payroll tax calculation, and the Legal line was overspent due to some unforeseen issues the town had to deal with.

Jill reviewed several changes that were made to the budget since the budget hearing. In the Executive line, \$43,350.00 was added to cover an unpaid bill to the Town of Littleton for EMS and \$3,350.00 was added to cover the GASB (General Accounting Standards Board) audit; Planning and Zoning was increased by \$14,000.00 to cover services from North Country Council for the Master Plan; and the Cemetery line there was an error in the original input sheet that had to be corrected.

Jill reviewed the proposed 2023 budget. There is an increase in the budget of \$189,368.00. That increase is explained as follows: 1) the Executive line is due to the 3% COLA raises and the \$43,350.00 that was just discussed, and adding \$31,000.00 towards a full-time Town Administrator; 2) Highway has increased costs for sand, salt, gravel, and fuel; 3) the Police Department wage increases, which shows a very large discrepancy, is due to the fact that the special duty income of \$50,000.00 wasn't accounted for in the budget; 4) Buildings and Grounds is due to wages and increases in fuel; 5) EMS Ambulance, the agreement with Littleton ends on March 31st, and then we have a 90-day contract through June 30th, which is represented in Article 9, and then funding for a longer term contract that is represented in Article 10.

There being no further discussion, Article 2 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 3. Appropriate to Capital Reserve Funds

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of two hundred fifty-six thousand eight hundred ninety-two dollars (\$256,892.00) to be added to the following Capital Reserve Funds previously established. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required) Tax Impact \$0.61 per thousand

Town Buildings and Grounds Equipment, \$10,634.00; Highway Truck, \$85,137.00; Highway Heavy Equipment, \$42,642.00; Police Cruiser, \$14,154.000; Fire Heavy Equipment, \$52,006.00; Frost Place Maintenance, \$867.00; Bridge Construction, \$40,000.00; and Town Building Vehicle, \$11,452.00

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. Dan Walker spoke to the article stating the numbers are larger than what we have seen in the past; however, they are representative of the actual replacement costs of the equipment. The entire CIP plan was revamped to reflect the actual replacement monies needed in today's environment.

There being no further discussion, Article 3 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 4. Appropriate to Expendable Trust Funds

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred sixty-five thousand seven hundred thirty-one dollars (\$165,731.00) to be added to the following Expendable Trust Funds previously established. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required) Tax Impact \$0.39 per thousand

Highway Improvement Fund, \$75,000.00; Town Buildings, \$30,000.00; Sidewalk Improvement, \$21,000.00; Franconia Heritage Museum Fund, \$1,061.00; Library Building Maintenance Fund, \$5,520.00; and Fire Department Safety Equipment, \$33,150.00.

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. Jill spoke to the article stating everything is the same as the article from last year except there is a small decrease in the Heritage Museum Fund and a small increase in the Library Building Maintenance Fund. The main difference is last year we discontinued the Fire Department Safety Equipment Capital Reserve Fund and established an expendable trust fund. This was done because previously the unspent monies from the CRF would roll over into the unassigned fund balance, which is what we are trying to avoid.

There being no further discussion, Article 4 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 5. Tri-Town Transfer Station

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of four hundred twenty-three thousand five hundred ninety-four dollars (\$423,594.00) for the purpose of solid waste disposal, with (\$73,542.00) from the Town of Sugar Hill, (\$35,503.00) from the Town of Easton, (\$110,000.00) PAYT Fees, (\$38,000.00) Special Handling Fees, (\$22,000.00) in Recycled Material, and to raise (\$144,549.00) from taxation. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required) Tax Impact \$0.34 per thousand

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. Dan spoke to the article stating the biggest increase is coming from the tipping and hauling fees imposed on us by where our trash goes. The tri-town committee is actually looking into other places to transport our trash and will be discussing the rate of the pay as you throw bags to help offset these increases.

There being no further discussion, Article 5 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 6. Abbie Greenleaf Library

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of ninety-five thousand dollars (\$95,000.00) for the purpose of operating the Abbie Greenleaf Library and to transfer this amount to the Library Trustees for their use as they see fit. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required) Tax Impact \$0.23 per thousand

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, Article 6 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 7. Water Department Operating Budget

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of three hundred sixty-five thousand eight hundred forty-eight dollars (\$365,848.00) for the operation of the Water Department. The amount to be funded by water rents and revenues with no amount from taxation. Recommended by the Water Department Commissioners. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, Article 7 passed unanimously by voice vote.

There was a motion by Dawn Steele to restrict reconsideration of Articles 2 through 7, second by Tim Burnell. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 8. Revaluation

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) to be added to the Reassessment Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) previously established. This CRF is for the required five-year town-wide revaluation. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required) Tax Impact \$0.02 per thousand.

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. Jill stated the amount of this article is double this year because it was not put in the budget last year. The amount will be reduced for the next three years.

There being no further discussion, Article 8 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 9. Contract for Ambulance Service

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred sixty thousand two hundred seventy-five dollars (\$160,275.00) to sign a contract with the Town of Littleton to provide ambulance service to the Town of Franconia for the period April 1, 2023, through June 30, 2023. The present ambulance contract with

the Town of Littleton will expire on March 31, 2023. Continuation of this contract after June 30, 2023, is referenced below in Warrant Article 10. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required) Tax Impact \$0.38 per thousand

The article was read, moved by William Mead, second by Tim Burnell. Dan Walker made a motion to amend Article 9 to \$60,000.00 which is the actual cost of the contract. Second by Tim Burnell. Dan stated at last night's meeting with the Littleton Select Board and others, Chief Miller of the Littleton Fire Department presented a new budget which more accurately reflected what he feels it will cost to get through the next 90 days. We are going to revisit this in 60 days so we have some time if we can't come to an agreement with Littleton. Janice Cole stated the tax impact on the amendment amount is \$0.14 per thousand.

There being no further discussion, the amendment to Article 9 passed unanimously by voice vote.

The Moderator read Article 9 as amended. William Mead gave a brief history of the Franconia Life Squad and thanked all those who participated in this group over the last 50 years. He discussed the issues that have impacted EMS over the last several years including changes in demographics, the demands on our EMS system due to the fact that we are located in an area that includes a recreation area and a nursing home, and the only way to generate income is to actually transport someone in the back of an ambulance which hasn't occurred over the last several years.

There being no further discussion, Article 9, as amended, passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 10. Contract for Ambulance Service – Continuation

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of three hundred twenty-five thousand eight hundred ninety dollars (\$325,890.00) for the purpose of securing ambulance service for the Town of Franconia for the period of July 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023. This amount is reflective of the prospect for entering into a continuing contract with the Town of Littleton. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required) Tax Impact \$0.78 per thousand.

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. Dan spoke to the article stating this number is based on the yearly cost of \$650,000.00, and the final cost will be determined by the committee that is put together with Littleton in the next 60 days. Dan stated he wanted to make sure enough funds were voted on to cover the cost. If the full amount is not used, it will be returned to the General Fund.

Tina Peabody made a motion to amend Article 10 to state "spend up to" \$325,890.00, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, the amendment to Article 10 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Jill stated that the Board originally had that wording "spend up to" in the warrant article, but the Department of Revenue Administration would not allow that to be included. After a brief discussion, Ginny Jeffryes made a motion to remove the wording "spend up to" and revert back to the original language of Warrant Article 10, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, the second amendment to Article 10 passed unanimously by voice vote.

There being no further discussion, Article 10, as originally written, passed unanimously by voice vote.

Dawn Steele made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Articles 8 through 10, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Article 11. Proceeds from Sale of Town Equipment

To see if the Town will vote to transfer and appropriate the sum of ninety-nine thousand three hundred ninety dollars (\$99,390.00) to the following three Capital Reserve Funds (CRFs) and one Expendable Trust Fund (ETF): Fire Department Safety Equipment EFT - \$40,000.00; Fire Heavy Equipment CRF - \$17,890.00; Highway Heavy Equipment CRF - \$38,000.00; Buildings & Grounds Equipment CRF - \$3,500.00. This amount

represents the sale of the following three items of Town equipment in 2022: Sutphen Pumper, \$57,890.00; Highway Truck, \$38,000.00; and Wright Mower, \$3,500.00. These funds shall come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount required to be raised by taxation. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, the article passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 12. Western Star 10-Wheeler Purchase – Highway Department

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of two hundred sixty thousand dollars (\$260,000.00) for the purpose of purchasing a Western Star 10-Wheeler truck for the Highway Department, and to authorize the withdrawal of an amount up to \$252,000.00 from the Highway Department Truck Capital Reserve Fund previously established for this purpose and \$8,000.00 from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised by taxation. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, Article 12 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 13. One-Ton Dump Truck – Buildings & Grounds Purchase

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of eighty thousand dollars (\$80,000.00) for the purpose of purchasing a one-ton dump truck for the Buildings & Grounds Department and to authorize the withdrawal of an amount up to \$45,000.00 from the Town Buildings Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund previously established for this purpose and \$35,000.00 from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised by taxation. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, Article 13 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 14. Ventrac Tractor/Mower – Buildings & Grounds Purchase

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of seventy-seven thousand dollars (\$77,000.00) for the purpose of purchasing a Ventrac tractor/mower to replace the New Holland tractor for the Buildings & Grounds Department and to authorize the withdrawal of an amount up to \$12,000.00 from the Town Buildings & Grounds Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established for this purpose and \$65,000.00 from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised by taxation. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, Article 14 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 15. Gravely Mower – Buildings & Grounds Department Purchase

In the event Article 14 does not pass, this article is to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of seventeen thousand dollars (\$17,000.00) for the purpose of purchasing a Gravely mower to replace the existing mower and to authorize the withdrawal of an amount up to \$12,000.00 from the Town Buildings & Grounds Equipment Capital Reserve Fund and \$5,000.00 to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised by taxation. Recommended by the Selectmen. (Majority vote required)

Dan Walker made a motion to pass over Article 15, second by Cindy Burnell. Dan stated this article was included in the warrant in case Article 14 did not pass. There being no discussion, the motion to pass over Article 15 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 16. Transfer Funds to Town Building Maintenance ETF

To see if the Town will vote to transfer and appropriate the sum of \$2,000.00 to be added to the Town Building Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund previously established. This sum to come from the unassigned fund

balance. These funds represent rent received from the Chamber of Commerce in 2022. No amount to be raised from taxation. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, Article 16 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 17. Add to Dow Field Fund

To see if the Town will vote to transfer and appropriate the sum of one thousand five hundred thirty dollars (\$1,530.00) from the Recreation Committee line-item budget to the Dow Field Capital Reserve Fund previously established. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, Article 17 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 18. Add to Rink Surface Maintenance Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of two thousand forty dollars (\$2,040.00) to be added to the Rink Surface Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund previously established with said funds to come from the Recreation Committee line-item budget. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, Article 18 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 19. Add to the Recreation Van Fund

To see if the Town will vote to transfer and appropriate the sum of five thousand one hundred dollars (\$5,100.00) to be added to the Recreation Van Capital Reserve Fund previously established for this purpose with said funds to come from the Recreation Committee line-item budget. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. Dan stated the van was down for quite a while, was repaired, but would not pass inspection because the frame was rotted. The Recreation Department is currently looking for a replacement. This fund has been well-funded for three years, but prices are up. Pete Gaudette stated they have a used 14-passenger van that they will bring forth to all three towns for approval.

There being no further discussion, Article 19 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 20. Donations Transferred to Expendable Trust Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of sixteen thousand three hundred thirty-four dollars (\$16,334.00) to be added to the Lafayette Recreation Expendable Trust Fund previously established, with said funds to come from the unassigned fund balance. This equals the amount collected from donations. The Selectmen recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, Article 20 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 21. Non-Profits

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the amount of thirty-two thousand five hundred fifty-eight dollars (\$32,558.00) for the support of the following agencies. (Majority vote required) Tax Impact \$0.08 per thousand

American Red Cross	\$ 600.00
Ammonoosuc Community Services, Inc.	\$ 5,800.00
Boys & Girls Club of the North Country	\$ 2,500.00

Bridge House	\$ 2,000.00
Center for New Beginnings	\$ 1,000.00
CASA of NH	\$ 500.00
Franconia Chamber of Commerce	\$ 9,000.00
Franconia Children's Center	\$ 2,000.00
Grafton County Senior Citizens Council, Inc.	\$ 2,500.00
Northern Human Services	\$ 1,292.00
North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency	\$ 3,200.00
Tri-County Community Action Program (CAP)	<u>\$ 2,166.00</u>
Total	\$32,558.00

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, Article 21 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 22. Conservation Easement

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to convey a conservation easement on (A) property owned by the Town located at Route 18 a/k/a Profile Road, Franconia, NH (Tax Map 17, Lot 3) and (B) property owned by the Town located at Route 18 a/k/a Profile Road, Franconia, NH (Tax Map 17, Lot 2) with the grantee and the details of the easement to be negotiated by the Selectmen with the input of the Conservation Commission. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. Chris Nicodemus, Chair of the Conservation Commission, stated these two properties are the town forest, which we have been in possession of since 1980, and the lot directly across the river from the town forest, near the little beaver ponds as you're heading on Profile Road. This is simply to formalize the stewardship and preservation of these two properties to establish easements and search for funds for long term preservation as a water resource for the municipal water department as well as protect the town from flooding hazards associated with the Meadow Brook and the Lafayette Brook that converge on this land. There will be no cost to the town or the taxpayers.

There being no further discussion, Article 22 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 23. Re-Adopt Optional Veterans' Credit

Shall the Town re-adopt the Optional Veterans' Tax Credit in accordance with RSA 72:28 II for an annual tax credit on residential property in the amount of \$500.00. This tax credit had been previously adopted by the Town. On July 26, 2022, the NH Legislature passed and Governor Sununu signed into law House Bill 1667 (Chapter 121 Laws of 2022) which amends eligibility criteria for certain veterans' property tax credits. In order for the Town's credit to remain in place, this RSA must be re-adopted. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. Sharon Penney stated this is recent legislation from Concord and what these two articles are trying to do is protect the veterans' credits that we already have in place. There are a variety of veterans' credits but these are two that we have previously approved.

Janice Cole stated that the State of New Hampshire has multiple layers for veterans' credits, but they are the ones who have defined these two as "optional" and "all" and they have put different veterans and their families into different categories.

There being no further discussion, Article 23 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 24. Re-Adopt All Veterans' Credit

Shall the Town re-adopt the All Veterans' Tax Credit in accordance with RSA 72:28-b for an annual tax credit on residential property in the amount of \$500.00. This tax credit had been previously adopted by the Town. On July 26, 2022, the NH Legislature passed and Governor Sununu signed into law House Bill 1667 (Chapter 121 Laws of 2022) which amends eligibility criteria for certain veterans' property tax credits. In order for the Town's

credit to remain in place, this RSA must be re-adopted. (Majority vote required)

The article was read, moved by Cindy Burnell, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, Article 24 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Dawn Steele made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Articles 11 through 24, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 25. Ambulance – Taxpayer Petitioned Warrant

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of three hundred seventy-five thousand (\$375,000.00) to hire full-time professional EMS and Fire coverage in a combined department. (Majority vote required). This is a petitioned article. The Selectmen do not recommend this appropriation.

The article was read. William Mead made a motion to table Article 25, second by Tim Burnell. There being no discussion, the motion to table Article 25 passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 26. To Hear Reports

To hear the reports of agents, auditors, and committees, or other officers heretofore chosen and pass any vote relative thereto.

The Moderator stated those reports can be found in the Town Report

Article 27. Transact Any Other Business

To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

There being no further business, after a motion by Sally Small, second by Dinny Richmond, the meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol F. Wills

Carol F. Wills

Franconia Town Clerk