

# Colebrook Budget Hearing

February 7, 2024

Selectboard Members: Sue Collins, Greg Placy, and Ray Gorman

Staff: Tim Stevens, Heidi Lawton, and Melanie Fogg

Public: Richard Cole, Robert Murphy, David Brooks, Kathy Woodard, Bill Brooks, Jake Mardin, Julie Colby, Melissa Shaw, and Teri Haynes.

Hearing started at 6:00pm

Greg Placy started the hearing by talking about the budget and the increases due to personnel costs, wages, and benefits. In 2024 the board is proposing a 3% cost of living adjustment for town employees which is right in line with the inflation rate during the past year. Additionally, health insurance rates have increased another 15.6%, the rates increased 11.7% in 2023. Dental Insurance rates increased 4.7% in 2024 and an increase of 1.5% in 2023. The Town Administration will have to spend some time during the summer of 2024 reviewing health and dental plans, taking a hard look at premiums and deductibles as well as the town's contributions to the employees' plans.

Richard Cole: Greg, what is the co-pay?

Sue Collins: On the family plan the employee pays 20%, on a two person plan the employee pays 20%, and on a single plan the town pays 100%.

Greg read the warrant to the public. Town Warrant for Colebrook, New Hampshire the polls will be open from 8am to 6pm. To the inhabitants of the Town of Colebrook in the County of Coos in the State of New Hampshire qualified to vote in Town Affairs:

You are hereby notified to meet at the Colebrook School Gymnasium in said Town of Colebrook on **Tuesday, March 12, 2024, at 7:00pm** in the evening to act upon the following subjects:

**Article 1:** To bring in your ballots for the selection of Town Officers to be elected by ballot for the Town of Colebrook for the ensuing year.

**Article 2:** Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. I as proposed by the Planning Board for the Colebrook Zoning Ordinance as follows: to amend Article 3 Definitions by expanding the meaning of "Accessory Building or Use" to make the rental of one or two guestrooms in a home an allowed accessory use of any owner-occupied dwelling, and to expand the meaning of "Public Accommodation" to include the rental of rooms to those who may be staying in town for longer than a season such as boarding and rooming houses? (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.)

**Article 3:** Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. II as proposed by the Planning Board for the Colebrook Zoning Ordinance as follows: to make several changes to Article 3 Definitions and Article 4 Zoning Regulations to allow detached accessory dwellings such as may

be in a guest cottage, barn, or garage, provided they are no more than 1,200 square feet with water no more than 2 bedrooms and are designed to match the main house? (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.)

**Article 4:** Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 3 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Colebrook Zoning Ordinance as follows: to amend Article III Definitions and Article IV Zoning Regulations to add Short-Term Rental as a permitted use of single family dwellings on individual lots, and of one unit in a two-family dwelling or not unit in a single family dwelling with an accessory dwelling unit; including parking, health and safety requirements? (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.)

Richard Cole: Is that the one that North Conway and Conway had a problem with?

Sue Collins: No, theirs is Air BNB's.

Richard Cole: That is what that is, a short-term rental.

Sue Collins: I don't know what happened in Conway, I read a little in the paper, but I can't say I retained it all.

Julie Colby: If you have a house with three bedrooms and you rent out that house, is that doing this, or you can't do that?

Sue Collins: Yes, you can, these are just some articles that are being amended, there is already stuff in the zoning ordinances.

Julie Colby: It says two bedrooms.

Greg Placy: No, up above it said two bedrooms, that is for building an accessory level.

Julie Colby: After adding extra?

Greg Placy: Yes

**Article 5:** Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 4 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Colebrook Zoning Ordinance as follows: to amend Article V Cluster Housing Regulations and Article III Definitions to update and add language regarding several cluster housing requirements and to revise the density bonus to encourage construction of homes 1,200 square feet or smaller? (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.)

Richard Cole: Is this like a mini apartment complex?

Sue Collins: We have regulations that deal with cluster housing, and we have only used them once.

Mike Ouellet was in the hallway, so we had him come in to answer the question on cluster housing.

Sue Collins: explained to Mike that we had a question on the amendment for cluster housing.

Mike Ouellet: explained that cluster housing are multiple units on a single, smaller piece of property, allows you to put multiple units on, but there are certain conditions of green space, septic issues, frontage.

Richard Cole: Is it like a mini apartment complex?

Mike Ouellet: Not like apartments, but like condos, at the corner of South Hill & Stevens Hill, they put three small homes in there with one single septic system and they had to meet those requirements. Years ago, the Colebrook Country Club wanted to put condos in.

**Article 6:** To see if the Town will vote to recognize April 8, 2024, as Total Solar Eclipse Day within the Town of Colebrook. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.)

Richard Cole: Is that at Town Meeting or a separate ballot vote?

Sue Collins: That is at the Town Meeting and the only reason we put it in is to allow our Town Manager to inform the townspeople that attend the town meeting of all the plans that are developed for the Solar Eclipse.

Richard Cole: But this is at the start of Town Meeting, not a ballot vote?

Sue Collins: Yes

Greg Placy: Seems though last year those articles that are on the ballot said by ballot, didn't they?

Richard Cole: Technically, instead of Articles 1-5 it should say ballot portion 1-5.

**Article 7:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$3,231,927** for the **General Government**. This article does not include special or individual articles addressed. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

Sue Collins: I can go down through these:

Executive: Selectmen down \$100.00, Town Administration is up \$18.50, last year at this time we did not have a Town Manager, that position went unfilled from January to April. This budget reflects a raise for the Town Manager working full-time, 52 weeks a year.

Town Clerk, Voter Registration, Town Meeting, Elections: This budget is down \$6,150.00, last year's budget was up because we were transitioning from one Town Clerk to another. So we had overlapping and training time built in there, we don't need that this year. Voter Registration and Town Meeting are up because last year there was only one election in March, this year we have to staff four elections, Primary Day on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Town Meeting Day on March 12<sup>th</sup>, September Primary and November Election. The budgets are up \$7,300.00.

Financial Administration & Assessing: General office is up \$18,980.00 primarily due to hiring a full-time employee as Administrative Assistant to the Town Manager. We had funds there last year to start that process, but this year it is going to be for the whole year. Tax Collection the budget is down \$2,500.00. The Treasury is up \$550.00 it covers that annual salary increase for our elected Treasurer and the Trustees of the Trust Funds. Data Processing is down \$15,800.00, last year's budget had increased to cover a one-time payroll software upgrade and \$21,000.00 in hardware upgrades. They have been done or are still in-process, but we don't need the money again in 2024. Assessing services, here you see an increase of \$5,750.00, the town's contract with long-time assessors from Pervis & Associates expired on December 31, 2023, and the assessor is retiring. Efforts are underway to contract with another firm, when requests for proposals went out to all the

assessing firms approved by the state, no one submitted a proposal. Most firms are understaffed and unable to take on new business. The Town Manager is working with a new lead right now. The budget is up because we anticipate that the contract rate that we had from 2021 to 2023 will go up, but we don't know that yet, so we have to plan for that.

Legal Expense: No change

Planning & Zoning: Down \$395.00, most of the work being done this year to update our documents is being covered by a grant that we received last year. It is a housing grant. Zoning Board has no change.

General Government Buildings: Last year we installed a new furnace, there is still work to be done on components of the heating system and insulation on the upper level. Additionally, the camera system that is in place is failing component by component and the new system will cost approximately \$14,000.00. The budget is up by \$7050.00.

Advertising & Regional Association: Regional Association is up by \$150.00, that is the North Country Council Membership that we pay.

Police Department & Stonegarden: The police budget shows an increase of \$67,650.00 and this is primarily due to staffing SAU #7 with Resource Officers in Colebrook, Stewartstown, and Pittsburg. The total budget for wages is estimated for the Resource Officers is \$95,000.00 up from \$46,100.00 we budgeted last year. This amount is 100% reimbursed by three school districts and is included in the town's revenue budget as an off set. So even though we went from \$46,100.00 to \$95,000.00 on Resource Officer wages, the revenue side will recapture all of that. Wages and benefits are up in the police department, but there is no other unusual one time increases or projected expenses. Stonegarden is state funded, with \$37,097.00 in expenses and there is an equal offset in the revenue budget.

Ambulance: the 45<sup>th</sup> Parallel Ambulance budget is down \$511.00.

Fire: An increase of \$450.00 dollars due to the amount the town reimburses individuals that issue fire permits, the state requires that that they be reimbursed a certain amount for each permit issued. They sent a bill in December for all the permits issued during the year, and last year we were short so this year the budget had to go up.

Emergency Management: This item is up \$905.00 our Worker's Comp carrier specified that the worker's comp rate for the Emergency Management Director will be \$605.00 in 2024 and previously we were charging that worker's comp insurance for the Emergency Management Director to General Office, but since it was so specific in the invoice from Primex, we made it, its own line item in the Emergency Management Budget.

Highway Department & Used Oil Grant: Road Maintenance is up \$52,650.00 wages, NH Retirement, health insurance, electricity, fuel, propane, gasoline, tires, chloride, salt, and sand have all gone up. Additionally, we are requesting an extra \$10,000.00 in stone to fix some of the roads. The \$10,000.00 has a revenue off set from one-time funds that we received from the State of New Hampshire in December for Highway Maintenance. The amount that we got we placed in the savings account to be used for specific purposes, so the Road Agent requested to use \$10,000 of

those funds to fix some of our gravel roads. There is a revenue offset. Used Oil Grant is by itself, it is \$2,500.00 some years we get a grant, some years we do not. The grant pays for cleaning the oil furnaces down at the Highway Garage, if we send them the bill, they will reimburse us.

David Brooks: The used oil that is stored in barrels for DES violations, it has to be contained, can't be in scratched or dented containers and the containment system under the barrels has to be a certain way, they pay for that also.

Street Lighting: This is the same, but this year we are going to be looking at a proposal to upgrade streetlights to LED fixtures and over the years we will be saving a lot of money.

Transfer Station & Recycling: Transfer Station budget is up \$19,725.00, the rates are up for hauling municipal solid waste, tipping fees for disposal at Mt. Carberry are up, and we are shipping more tonnage than ever before. This also includes an additional \$5,000.00 for hosting a Hazardous Waste Collection Day, which we haven't had in a couple of years. The Town has applied for grant funding to offset some of this cost, but we haven't heard anything yet. It was like .14 cents for each individual that brings waste. Recycling budget is up \$2,800.00 and that is the town's share of the county program that runs the Recycling Center in West Stewartstown.

Health Administration: Down \$10.00.

Animal Boarding: The town gives an annual stipend to the Coos Animal Sanctuary of \$250.00 a year.

Welfare Administration: General Assistance budget is up \$3,500.00. This is the line item known as Welfare, there are more and more folks showing up at the Town Hall needing a place to stay, help with electric bills, and rent. The number people experiencing homelessness in Colebrook has increased significantly in the last year, it is a concerning trend and the town's expenses for providing aid to these folks far exceeded the budget we had in 2023.

Richard Cole: I hate to tell you this, but if the schoolboard keeps spending money the way they are, we are going to need more in that fund.

Parks & Recreation: Recreation is up \$19,605.00 due to a wage adjustment for the Recreation Director and wage increases for part-time counselors, but there is a \$13,000.00 off setting income that the town gets from the program. All activity costs for Parks & Rec are paid by the Recreation Revolving Fund created by Town Meeting over a decade ago.

Patriotic Purposes: This is level funded.

Economic Development: Down \$200.00

Conservation Commission: Down \$50.00

Bond Payment & Tax Anticipation Note Interest: Debt service has only changed by \$3.00 and that is because I rounded a number.

**Total Article 6-\$3,231,927.00**

**That is up from \$3,029,525.00 in 2023, that is a 6.6% increase in general government with some of the costs that will be offset by revenues.**

**Article 8:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$267,500** for the following **Capital Reserve Funds**. The appropriation shall be funded by taxation with the exception of the water and sewer short-lived assets, which will be funded by user fees. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

This whole category of Capital Reserve Funds is down by \$7,500.00 because the town is setting aside less for repairs in the Town Hall. The Town has been putting money aside to buy a new heating system and before that we did new siding on the building and before that we fixed the stairs in the front, there are new windows in the building, so it is coming together.

David Brooks: on the Capital Reserve for the Water Purification System, is that going to be purchased?

Sue Collins: It was purchased.

David Brooks: Where is it?

Sue Collins: She believes it is at the Fire Department; it was purchased two years ago.

Sue Collins: The reason we were able to purchase it is because of Covid money.

**Article 9:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$124,750** for Landfill Closure Expenses and to authorize, the withdrawal of **\$50,000** from the Sanitary **Landfill Closure Capital Reserve Fund** as offsetting revenue against these expenses. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

This budget is up \$775.00. Annually the Town withdraws \$50,000.00 from the Landfill Closure Capital Reserve Funds to offset the cost of keeping the landfill compliant with NH DES rules.

Richard Cole: Are they still hauling water down.

David Brooks: Yes, I am, I hauled 5 million gallons last year.

Richard Cole: Do you have to test it for all those...

David Brooks: It is tested quarterly.

Richard Cole: all those PFAS?

David Brooks: yes

Greg Placy: the reason we haul it, is for PFAS.

**Article 10:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$152,000** for the purpose of purchasing **a new replacement highway plow truck with accessories and warranty** and to authorize the withdrawal of **\$152,000** from the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established for that purpose and to permit the Selectmen to dispose of the existing 2015 Terrastar truck by "trade-in" allowance or by sale as deemed in the best interest of the Town. Said

appropriation will be non-lapsing until December 31, 2029, pursuant to NH RSA 32:7, VI. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required. No tax impact.

Sue Collins: The Highway Department purposes to replace the 2015 Terrastar Truck with a 2024 Ford F600 Dump Truck with a seven year, 125,000 warranty. The cost includes the body, plow, and sander. The funds will be withdrawn from the Capital Reserve Fund for Highway Equipment.

Richard Cole: Does the box last six years with the sander on it?

Greg Placy: Oh yes

David Brooks: It's stainless steel.

**Article 11:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$71,000** for the purchase of a **police cruiser** and to authorize the withdrawal of **\$71,000** from the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund and to permit the Selectmen to dispose of the existing Chevrolet pickup by "trade-in" allowance or by sale as deemed in the best interest of the Town. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority Vote Required. No tax impact.

Sue Collins: This appropriation is for a replacement truck 2024 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 four-wheel drive crew cab with upgrades to make the pickup into a police cruiser. Total cost is \$71,000.00.

David Brooks: Is that a local dealership?

Sue Collins: Yes

**Article 12:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$55,000** for the total re-evaluation of properties in the Town as required every five years by the Department of Revenue Administration and to authorize the withdrawal of **\$55,000** from the **Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund**. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required. No tax impact.

Richard Cole: If we say no, will they not do the property evaluation?

Sue Collins: They still have to do it. State law requires that every city, town, and unincorporated place in New Hampshire undergo a complete revaluation every five years. Colebrook is due in 2024. Although we have not received a proposal for the 2024 revaluation, we are requesting the sum of \$55,000.00, but we will only withdraw from the Capital Reserve for this purpose the amount absolutely needed, not to exceed \$55,000.00.

**Article 13:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$65,000** for repairs to Aldrich Road caused by heavy rains during the summer of 2023 and to authorize the withdrawal of **\$15,000** from the **Disaster Management Capital Reserve Fund** as offsetting revenue against these expenses. Any funds remaining at the completion of this project will be placed in a savings account to be used for future road repairs resulting from future damage to roads caused by forces of nature. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

Richard Cole: We didn't get any FEMA help.

Tim Stevens: That is still in the process, however with FEMA comes tags and strings attached and even if it is a 20/80, if we can have it done locally, we would have it done for a lot less than what our 20% would be with all the requirements that FEMA would put on to do it. We are looking at probably having it done locally at a less cost than what our 20% would be, with everything they are going to require. So yes, we are still in that process, it is like that anytime you deal with the Federal Government, you aren't going to get an answer. We are waiting for things like a wetlands permit, and an engineer going in there to make sure the town is doing things appropriately, and lastly is to make sure the town can go out on its own.

**Article 14:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum **\$654,200** for the **Colebrook Water Department and the Colebrook Sewer Facilities**. Said funds to be offset by user fees. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

Sue Collins: The Water Department budget is up \$14,850.00, salaries and health insurance account for most of the increase. The Water & Sewer Departments are finally at full staffing, 40% of labor costs and benefits for the three employees and water and sewer are funded by the Water Department with 60% funded by the Sewer Department. This year we hope the department can replace some of the most worn-out fire hydrants, so that is one of the reasons the budget is up. We propose to add \$7500.00 from each department to a savings account for future replacement of the water and sewer department truck. It is all paid by user fees.

Terri Haynes: The sewer down on Edwards Street at the bottom of the hill, did they ever fix that do you know? Because at one point it needed a new pump or something.

Greg Placy: That pumping station is overworked and the town looked at coming though the swamp with a special technique, the town is now looking at or is going to be putting a ground line from where that crosses the road to Park Street.

Sue Collins: Down Rt. 145 to Park Street, it is going to relieve half the work that the Edwards Street pumping station is doing right now. All the hospital effluent.

Greg Placy: Everything off Corliss Lane/Hospital Road will be fed into the gravity line, so it will only be the houses on the other side that will be going into it.

Terri Haynes: When do they test for lead and copper in our water?

Sue Collins: I think it is quarterly, but once a year for sure.

Terri Haynes: In 2016, my water got tested and it was positive for lead and copper. I had lead poisoning. I don't think they were connected, but no one ever came back to check my water again, and it has been awhile. I had plumbers come in, my house was built in 1986. I



had three plumbers check it and then we had a pipe outside of my house, my sewer pipe had collapsed, and it was the old cast iron, so we think that is what it was. I didn't know if they would come and check it again to see.

Sue Collins: I don't think we check individuals, but the water gets tested in Concord every month and every year every water user gets the consumer confidence report, and it lists every mineral or metal that is found in our water, so we could get a copy of that and see what we tested for. Generally, our water in Colebrook is excellent.

Terri Haynes: I got blood tested last summer and I am lead free. I just didn't know if they could check mine again.

Sue Collins: Once a year it is tested for lead and 99 other chemicals.

Heidi Lawton: We also have water testing kits in the office if you want to come in and get one.

Terri Haynes: I didn't think they did the lead and copper.

Terri Haynes: I think that is separate, because I sent mine in, actually got it at Hick's and sent it in afterwards and the State will only do it once and only test your blood once, because it is a thousand dollars to test your blood. I did get mine tested again and I am negative for lead.

**Article 15:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$223,385** for support of the **Colebrook Public Library, \$202,660** to be raised through taxation and **\$20,725** is to come from other library balance on hand January 1, 2024, book sales, donations, trust funds, non-resident fees, other communities, overdue fines, book resale, copying fees, etc., such funds to be expended under the direction of the Board of Library Trustees. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

Julie Colby: I have a question. Last year you asked us not to budget the \$5,000.00, did you put the \$5,000.00 into our Capital Reserve this year, 2023?

Sue Collins: No that was the year before.

Julie Colby: No, that was last year.

Sue Collins: Yes, this last year we did not do those Capital Reserve Funds for Library and Cemetery. This year we are doing it again, so the information on the slide for 2023 is wrong.

Richard Cole: So, the second from the bottom the \$5,000.00 should move to the last column.

Sue Collins: That is my error, I am sorry I did these.

Greg Placy: That is okay, we are proofreading.

Sue Collins: So, what is my error? Articles 15 & 16 change the 2023 budget to zero, so we have an increase of \$5,000.00.

**Article 16:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$5,000** to be added to the previously established **Library Building Repairs and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund** for Library Building Repairs and Replacement. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

Richard Cole: So, if we didn't use it last year, why do we need it this year?

Sue Collins: No, last year we were trying to keep the cost down.

Richard Cole: It was a joke.

**Article 17:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$102,790** for the operation and maintenance of the **Colebrook Cemeteries**, the sum of **\$101,590** to be raised through taxation and **\$1,200** from burials, cemetery trust funds and other Colebrook Cemetery revenues. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

Sue Collins: The net cemetery budget is up \$12,075.00 not due to an increase in spending, but due to a decrease in the amount of cemetery funds projected to be transferred to the town. Last summer the Trustees dedicated operating funds to do major repairs to the Reed Cemetery, fixing monuments that were damaged or dislocated from their bases, and it various stages of disrepair. The additional cost of the one-time project ended up being covered by cemetery trust funds that we did not receive until this last Monday. The funds are here, the money from the Town of Colebrook Trustees of Trust Funds to the Cemetery Trustees, then over to the town, we finally have the funds in hand. It was about \$21,000.00.

**Article 18:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$30,000** for the Town's anticipated allocation of the **Northern Borders Alliance Program** created by the State of NH as part of its 2024-2026 state budget. Any and all funds expended will be received from the State of NH. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) No tax impact.

Sue Collins: This is Colebrook's share of Governor Sununu's initiative to further protect New Hampshire's northern border. 1.5 million state funds were directed to this program, Colebrook applied for a little under \$30,000.00 just last week. The Police Department does not have extra manpower to devote a lot of time to border security but will do whatever they can to help.

**Article 19:** To see if the Town will authorize the Board of Selectmen to close the **Northern Borders Dispatch Center Capital Reserve Fund** and any and all interest accrued on said funds, funds will be transferred to a Northern Borders Dispatch Center Equipment Savings Account as requested by the Board of Directors of the Northern Borders Dispatch Center. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.)

Sue Collins: The Dispatch Capital Reserve belongs in equal shares to five core towns, Colebrook, Columbia, Stewartstown, Pittsburg, and Canaan, VT. The core towns should

not have to wait for a Town Meeting in Colebrook to authorize use of these funds. Therefore, they are requesting that the funds be transferred to a savings account with the NH Public Deposit Investment Pool. Colebrook is holding funds for five towns; they shouldn't have to wait for our Town Meeting to use those funds. They wanted us to close the Capital Reserve, we can't do that without town authorization.

**Article 20:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$437,725** for the **Northern Borders Dispatch Center**, with **\$214,212** to come from participating towns, and **\$223,513** to come from taxation. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

**Article 21:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$2,000** for the purpose of funding **Northern Borders Dispatch Center** Trail Maintenance with **\$1,600** to come from participating towns and **\$400** to come from taxation. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

**Article 22:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$23,000** for the **Northern Borders Dispatch Center Equipment Savings Account** to be used for future replacement of dispatch equipment with **\$18,400** to come from participating towns and **\$4,600** to come from taxation. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

Sue Collins: The dispatching operating budget is up \$31,159.00, that is an increase of \$5,200.00 in the health insurance line item with the addition of one employee who has selected a family plan. The remainder of the budget is very much status quo of last year.

Ray Gorman: If you have any questions, we are working on a lot of things right now, basically the increase was the insurance, this was put together by the five core towns and presented to the Colebrook Selectmen. These three articles I stand up at Town Meeting and talk about.

Richard Cole: Have they gotten anywhere with putting up the radio on top of Mt. Monadnock?

Ray Gorman: I believe we are gaining; we have the State of Vermont showing some significant interest now. This is the first time the state has talked to us about possible funding. We have been working on it for several years now.

Richard Cole: So, if it comes to fruition, and they actually have to buy a tower to put up there, does that come out of the town's budget?

Ray Gorman: The money will come out of the Capital Reserve or any grants we get, it is not all one single thing.

Richard Cole: My question is do we have to approve putting the radio up there, or does that come from the money that was transferred over to the borders to do on their own?

Ray Gorman: The approval will come from the person that is represented on that five-town board, so we will be part of it, but it will be the five towns that approve any type of Capital Improvements.

Greg Placy: They can't approve any money that is allocated here, so my guess is that is not going to happen with the funds that are available here, so there will have to be some grants.

Sue Collins: Yes, they are looking for grants.

Greg Placy: I would expect you would see it in a year. It will take a while to get to that point, I think.

Ray Gorman: If they start the applications this year, you hopefully get answers this year, but there is still, Mt. Monadnock is complicated.

Richard Cole: I hope they don't make it look like a damn pine tree so that it is aesthetically appealing to people when they look up.

Ray Gorman: No, the plan is to have repeaters and antennas hooked to the current tower that is there, in good shape. There will be a building with solar arrays and batteries etc to run it.

Richard Cole: So, it is not going to interrupt my view of the mountain?

Ray Gorman: Not unless cell phones get involved, it is not something that you are going to notice from the Town Hall or your place.

David Brooks: Has there been a decrease in calls from Colebrook?

Sue Collins: No, we have a bigger share this year.

David Brooks: I see every week at least once or twice a day a lock out. The police department has to go to someone's car or house, that is what we have locksmiths for.

Greg Placy: The one thing we are looking at, is the number of calls they get for alarm systems. Some of the alarms they are responding to on a regular basis are a half an hour away from here. We are going to start charging for those.

Richard Cole: On that same note though, the non-emergency number for the police department refers them to Colebrook Dispatch's number. It doesn't go anywhere else.

Tim Stevens: We just got a new phone system in and we have new numbers, and if it hasn't been published yet, shortly there is going to be a number published, we have been working on it for a few weeks where the public can call the Police Department, rather than dispatch, because dispatch is a charge. If you need to talk with an officer about something that is a non-emergency or does not require dispatch, the number will go down to the PD, if there is an officer down there, they will answer it, if not, they will get back to you. We are currently doing that.

Richard Cole: I ended up sending an email message to Paul, so I didn't have to call dispatch.

Tim Stevens: The work is being done, we are wrapping it up in the next week or two.

Richard Cole There was one in there about a possible corner of Monadnock & Colby Street lock out periodically, those calls should be routed to DPW or, unless it is an emergency.

Tim Stevens: People are still going to call dispatch and that is still going to be charged to us for things that aren't dispatch issues, but if we can start ingraining that if you have a question for the Prosecutor or something that is a non-emergency that has to go through dispatch, if you could call the PD and talk to an officer, each one is a reduction in calls that we are paying for and it gets split up proportionally between the towns that we share it with.

Richard Cole: How about a 900 number?

**Article 23:** To see if the Town will vote to discontinue completely Paul Gleason Road in its entirety as a town highway per RSA 231:43. (The Selectmen do recommend passage of this article.) Majority vote required.

Richard Cole: Where is that?

Greg Placy: So, it is a road, it is off Titus Hill Road on the left if you are going up Titus Hill Road, and if you know where Boire's Farm is on Route 26, some years ago the purpose of that road was to give them access to their lot on the other side of the Mohawk River. The road was never used for that purpose because they chose to build a bridge across the Mohawk River. Now there is no reason for it and the property owner, that, that road it on and the property owner that owns the Boire property now, both agree to do away with the road.

Richard Cole: So, is it going to be gone permanently?

Greg Placy: Yes

Greg Placy: Yes, that is what this does, it does away with the road permanently. If you discontinue a road, yes.

David Brooks: It is basically diagonally across from Jackson Road on the other side of the road.

Tim Stevens: It is across from Jackson, and it never even went to Boire's property because the requirement was, by town vote, was that Boire was going to have to maintain it, and so rather than maintaining it, they put a bridge on the other side that went over the river. That road was never even used, but it is on the maps.

David Brooks: Drawn up.

Tim Stevens: It is on the maps, it goes like a couple hundred feet into the property, never even makes it to what used to be the Boire property.

Greg Placy: It has been discontinued in the past, but this gets rid of it totally.

Richard Cole: Is there an easement on the property that we need to give up too?

Greg Placy: No, if there is, that would do that. That road would revert to the existing owner.

Richard Cole: Which means that they should get taxed for it.

Tim Stevens: I believe they have always been taxed for it. It was never owned by the town as far as deeded; it was never deeded to the town. It was a road the town had but was never deeded.

**Article 24:** To see if the Town will vote to require all regular and special sessions of the board of Selectmen meetings video recorded and live streamed on a platform that is accessible to the public. Majority vote required.

Sue Collins: Last year's Town Meeting requested the board look into this, the cost is about \$350.00 a month, with the installation cost about \$3,000.00.

Richard Cole: Will the information be stored somewhere, to be used later.

Tim Stevens: Yes

Richard Cole: Radius?

Tim Stevens: I don't know if there is a limit on it, I don't know if they keep it forever, something I can find out.

Richard Cole: I am just wondering how long it had to be kept.

Sue Collins: Municipal records have to be kept for seven years.

Richard Cole: I wasn't sure if it had to be kept seven years.

Tim Stevens: It wouldn't have to be because there is no requirement that we do it now. There is no requirement for us to record video meetings right now. So, if there is no requirement for you to do it, I don't think there is a requirement on how long to keep it.

Richard Cole: I just worry if we do it, we need to meet the requirements, that is all.

David Brooks: There will be regular minutes anyway.

Tim Stevens: Yes, there will still be minutes, everything will still be the same, this is just a platform that will have that.

**Article 25:** To see if the Town will vote to accept, ratify and confirm the reports of the Agents, Selectmen, Auditors and all other Town Officers.

**Article 26:** To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

David Brooks: What is the tax rate?

Sue Collins: The 2024 operating budget, all funds is \$5,445,277.00. We have estimated revenues on that pink handout of \$2,570,784.00. So, the amount to be raised before using any fund balance is \$2,874,493.00. We are projecting that we would have fund balance of \$375,000.00 to help reduce taxes in 2024, leaving a net amount to be raised of \$2,499,493.00, last year the amount that was finally raised by taxes was \$2,339,521.00, that is an increase of \$159,972.00 or 6.8%. In order to determine how much it is per thousand we don't know what the 2024 total valuation of Colebrook will be, the best we can do is use the number that DRA had last year which is \$193,600,126.00. So, the tax rate would go from 12.09 to 12.91 or an .82 cent increase.

Richard Cole: I prefer a negative sign before that but thank you.

Sue Collins: There is stuff that we said no to this year, and it will show up another year maybe. There is no paving in the budget this year.

Richard Cole: What about the Main Street disaster?

Sue Collins: The Main Street is not a disaster.

Greg Placy: So Main Street right now, everybody probably knows we are working on underground utilities from Colby Street to Bridge Street, and that is all at the expense of Eversource. But what needs to happen, because that section disappears, above ground we need to have streetlights in that section of the road, we need to work out how that will be paid for. No matter how it is being paid for, we probably already have funds if we have to pay for it and if the state pays for it, thank you. It is anticipated that the underground work for the utilities will be done this summer. That would be a conduit system for electrical and a conduit system for communications. That takes all the poles above the street underground. Nothing we requested, they asked to do that because if you look at the pole, especially the one at the corner of Bridge and Main Streets, that pole, they don't know what they would do to meet code with the way the pole is now. So, if they go underground, they take care of that pole another way. It is anticipated that the road project itself, which goes from the island south of town to Beaver Brook will be out to bid this spring or early summer, it is the Contractors option to construct as they see fit, but they could start work late this summer/fall and do from Bridge Street to Beaver Brook and then next summer come back and do from Bridge Street to the island south of town. So, we are gaining, we are getting there.

Sue Collins: and that is a six-million-dollar tab for the State of New Hampshire. It has gone from five to six in those years.

Richard Cole: I am concerned with the east side of Main Street with the pyramid type step.

Greg Placy: The two step?

Richard Cole: yes.

Greg Placy: The two step will disappear.

Richard Cole: Even now it is not fully cleared of snow and ice, if you do a step off, you run the risk of ending up in the middle of the road with a broken back.

Sue: Collins: It's coming.

Tim Stevens: One of the visions for this is as we get new pavement and new sidewalks everyone is seeing the businesses that have been worked on in town, right up at the end of this street, across the street, and down by the car store down there, there is people that are putting money into Main Street and we are hoping that when we take down all of the street lights and wires and put them all underground we will get some type of ornamental street lights to go up there with LED lighting that we could also help make Main Street a little more attractive by, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July putting up flags, at Christmas time putting up ornaments, in May or June putting up the flags with the Seniors graduating, on Memorial Day putting up the flags or putting Veteran's type things hanging up there. Also, having some of the clubs at the school or rejuvenating the Garden Club to have some of these nice things on Main Street that just make it look like a town that people want to go to. Main Street looking good is going to attract a whole lot more than Main Street looking like junk.

Richard Cole: When they pave that Tim, are they going to raise the road?

Tim Stevens: That is all going to be done by NH DOT, they are going to make sure it is all ADA compliant. It has to be, to pass all the regulations.

Greg Placy: some will go up and some will go down. They need to match the entrances on the east side of town, on the east side of the street.

David Brooks: once they re-do Main Street are they going to do away with snowmobiles using the sidewalks on the west side of Main Street?

Sue Collins: No David, that is not in the plan.

David Brooks: with the carbides on these snowmobiles, they are chewing up the sidewalks more, especially if they have studs on their tracks.

Sue Collins: Well, we want concrete sidewalks, that is not cast in stone yet, but that is what we want.

David Brooks: Well, I think that is something we need to revisit when we get to that point.

Terri Haynes: Once the poles are gone, would they be able to have trees on the sides of the streets like in the olden days? Will they ever do that again?

Greg Placy: no

Richard Cole: no because the roots would grow right up and around the steel rods?



Terri Haynes: even if there are little shrubs or something?

Richard Cole: same problem, where are they going to put the conduit.

Greg Placy: If there are any shrubs around there, they will go up. It is going to be on private property, because the town's right of way ends behind the sidewalk.

Richard Cole: and they are going to put the conduit right under the sidewalk, right?

Greg Placy: No, the conduit is probably going to be under the parallel parking on the other side of the street.

Greg Placy: It is big stuff; the conduit is huge.

Sue Collins: the CDDA which is the Colebrook Downtown Development Committee, and the Colebrook Garden Club left us all their monies when they went out so that the town could use the money to beautify what the engineers do, so we do have some funds for some nice stuff for the holidays.

Richard Cole: Who owns the parking between South Main Street and Bridge?

Tim Stevens: The State does, so they will be doing all of the parking legally on Main Street.

Richard Cole: They still going to do the parallel parking?

Greg Placy: yes

Richard Cole: the angled parking.

Tim Stevens: They don't do that very often, but understanding if they don't do that, then they are going to seriously limit parking for our businesses on Main Street, so they have taken that into consideration saying that they want to keep as much parking on Main Street as they can for the businesses.

Richard Cole: The problem is, everyone complains when you pull up to the intersection of Route 26 and Route 3, you can't see.

Tim Stevens: Right now, I am not going to say that parking is legal with the amount of space you are supposed to have between parking and crosswalks and fire hydrants. The state is coming in and redoing it, they have to, when they redo it ensure that it is done by state regulations. A lot of that will be changed.

Greg Placy: There will be less parking spots on Main Street.

Tim Stevens: The statute calls for 20ft between a crosswalk and a parking spot.

Greg Placy: and prior to and after a road. And 25ft for a fire hydrant both left and right, both sides.

Richard Cole: I am hoping they actually put up the crosswalk signs that explain to speed racers coming down by the school, that they are to slow down coming up Colby Street, because they come off that too fast and anyone trying to come off Parsons Street runs the risk of getting t-boned when they come out to make a left because the cars are coming down so fast and some of the trucks that are parked there, you can't see.

David Brooks: Greg, are those going to physical bump-outs or just painted bump-outs on the corner?

Greg Placy: yes, some will, and some won't.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:12pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Heidi Lawton*

Heidi Lawton, Administrative Assistant, Town of Colebrook

