

WARREN BOARD OF SELECTMEN PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
Tuesday, February 18, 2026

Present: Laurie Gullage, Tina Greene, Karen Youngman, Maria Sanders, Marlene Wright, Douglas and Crystal Kenneally, Donald and Donna Bagley, Philip Belyea, Norman Roulx, Bryan and Donna Bloom, Justin Monninger, Kellie Malette, Sheila Foote, Tom and Lisa Mantz, Heather Sackett, Jesse and Kathy Bushaw, Paige Koning, John Mackey, Joseph Preckol, Karen Trojano, Sharon Pushee, Jeff and Judy Tompkins, Donna Borges, Charlie Chandler, Cindy Hope, Maggie Carr, Ron Langdon, John Elias, Chris Suprock, Derrick and Annie Pierce, Ronald and Lorri Fulton, Peter Boncek, Daniel Arber

Chairwoman McCartin called the public hearing to order at 6:00 PM. Charles Sackett, Shirley McCartin, and Jeremy Hair were present.

Chairwoman McCartin welcomed the public to the Town's budget hearing.

The Town Administrator provided the audience the following information.

Thank you for attending and participating in your local government!

This public hearing is required under the Municipal Finance Act and applicable New Hampshire law. When a town proposes to issue bonds or notes exceeding \$100,000, the Selectboard must hold a properly noticed public hearing before Town Meeting. The purpose of tonight's hearing is to allow residents to comment on the proposed projects and related financing. While preliminary concepts and cost estimates have been prepared, final design details and facility requirements have not yet been determined and remain subject to further review and public input.

Articles 3 and 4 of the Town Warrant ask voters to consider proposed municipal building projects and associated long-term borrowing. The need for improved facilities is real. However, the Board is also mindful of the financial pressures currently facing taxpayers. Given the projected increase in the local impact of the proposed school budget, the Board of Selectmen does not recommend passage of Articles 3 and 4 this year. Although construction costs are unlikely to decrease, the Board believes timing must be weighed carefully against overall tax impact and current financial conditions.

There is no first-year tax impact if Articles 3 and 4 are approved. If bonded at the current estimated rate of 3.43% for 20 years, first-year payments would be approximately \$82,935 (\$0.77 per \$1,000 of assessed value) for Article 3 and \$101,365 (\$0.94 per \$1,000) for Article 4, with payments declining slightly in subsequent years. Borrowing authority would remain valid for five years. No funds are proposed to be raised in 2026 for first-year bond payments, allowing the Town to use available capital reserve funds to begin planning and project work. According to census data, the average home in Warren is valued at \$237,200. If both projects were approved and bonded at current interest rates and based on the Town's present valuation, the estimated combined impact would be approximately \$405 for the first year and decrease slightly after that.

Article 3 – Highway Department Garage

This article proposes to raise and appropriate \$1,100,000 for construction of a new Highway Department Garage. Of that amount, \$200,000 would come from the existing Capital Reserve Fund, with authorization to issue up to \$900,000 in bonds or notes pursuant to RSA 33. The appropriation would be non-lapsing under RSA 32:7, VI and remain available until project completion or December 31, 2031, whichever occurs first. The Selectmen do not recommend this article.

Article 4 – Public Safety Building Construction

This article proposes to raise and appropriate \$1,265,000 for the purchase of land and construction of a new Public Safety Building. Of that amount, \$165,000 would come from the Capital Reserve Fund, with authorization to issue up to \$1,100,000 in bonds or notes under RSA 33. This would also be a non-lapsing appropriation under RSA 32:7, VI through completion or December 31, 2031. The Selectmen do not recommend this article.

Preliminary cost estimates were developed by Tom Babbit, Chuck Sackett, Arthur Heath, and Austin Albro.

For the Highway Garage, the Town reviewed a recent project in a neighboring community. The completed municipal garage in Bath provided a benchmark for construction costs and general design considerations. In addition, University of New Hampshire students dedicated their 2023–2024 capstone project to gathering data and working with a Portsmouth-based engineering firm to assess space needs and preliminary layouts.

The conceptual estimate for the proposed Public Safety Building reflects similar space planning assumptions as the Highway Garage, with additional functional areas required for fire protection and emergency response operations.

Some residents have asked whether 446 NH Route 25, formerly Warren Wentworth Ambulance Service, was considered as a location for the Public Safety Building. The Town held a public hearing on August 26, 2025 to discuss that property. The hearing was well attended and those present expressed strong opposition to moving forward with its purchase at that time.

The Town will continue refining project scopes and gathering information. This hearing is intended to facilitate discussion about the Town's long-term infrastructure needs and the financial realities facing our community.

The Selectboard welcomes your input and encourages participation in this discussion and at Town Meeting on Tuesday, March 10, 2025 at 9:00 AM.

Selectwoman McCartin encouraged comments and questions from the public.

Charlie Chandler asked whether the property on Red Oak Hill would be suitable for either of the building projects. Selectman Sackett responded that it was possible but not the best. He explained that the salt and sand were stored at the Transfer Station and that there was room available there for the Highway Department building. He also stated that a Fire Department located closer to the center of Town and on a main road would be preferable to Red Oak Hill.

Norman Roulx asked how many acres the Red Oak Hill property was. C. Sackett responded 12. C. Sackett continued to explain that the Town cannot retain profits from tax deeded sales and that if sold the profits would be returned to the prior owner. C. Sackett believed there to be a possible exemption from this law based on municipal use.

Ron Langdon asked how many properties were owned by the Town. The Administrator responded that there were approximately six properties owned by the Town that would be sold via auction.

Peter Boncek asked what would be built for a cost of \$1.1 million? It was explained that the highway building project was modeled after the Town of Bath project constructed in 2025.

Peter Boncek asked why the Board would include the articles on the Warrant if they were not supporting them. C. Sackett explained that the projects had been discussed for years and expressed that improvements to Town infrastructure must be considered alongside the projected tax impact of the school budget.

Peter expressed concerns about Town Meeting participation.

Doug Kenneally asked when the Board might recommend the articles for passage. The Board indicated they were unsure and cited uncertainty around the costs associated with the EMS regionalization efforts and future school budgets.

Ron Landgon asked whether the old Fire Department could be used as space for the Highway Garage. C. Sackett explained that he did not believe the Fire Department was abandoning their current space altogether and would retain meeting rooms. He further explained that the proposal was primarily an auxiliary building to be used to store trucks.

Maggie Carr asked whether Articles 3 and 4 could be placed on a ballot to be made available to voters all day not just during the Town Meeting. It was explained that the State of New Hampshire does not allow this for Traditional Town Meeting towns and that all articles except for the election of officials would be conducted during Town Meeting.

Tom Babitt indicated that he was a part of the volunteer team that gathered cost information. He explained that he could not believe the costs associated with constructing a new building and further explained the additional costs associated with commercial and municipal buildings. There was discussion about the need for a fire suppression system.

Fire Chief Arthur Heath explained that he was very frugal in nature and articulated the concerns he has relative to space within the current Fire Department. He explained that the new trucks must be custom built to accommodate the low clearance of the doors. He estimated that there was about 22" between trucks. Arthur explained that the tax rate would increase \$4 and be nearly \$29.00 if the proposed school budget is approved. If the building projects were approved it would increase another \$1.71 and be over \$30.00.

Tom Babbit asked the Administrator to calculate the tax impact caused by \$50,000 contributions to the Trust Funds. The Administrator explained the impact was \$.046 on the tax rate and further explained to the audience that based on current values every \$107,996 created an impact of \$1.00 per thousand.

Jesse Bushaw asked whether the property at the Transfer Station could accommodate both the Fire Department and Highway Garage. The Administrator explained that due to the capped landfill, it was unlikely the site could accommodate both buildings.

Derrick Pierce sought clarification on what would be included in the new building and whether the proposal was for an auxiliary building or entire Fire Station.

Chief Heath explained that the proposal was for all trucks to be housed in the new building.

Jeff Tompkins asked about plans for current highway garage. C. Sackett stated that the building would be used as cold storage.

There was additional conversation about total square footage and the need for fire suppression system.

C. Sackett expressed concerns about the status of the highway department equipment and the difficulty of maintaining it.

Sheila Foote asked whether the Town would have enough members to staff the Fire Department in the future and whether a new building was warranted given the current age of members. Arthur explained there were limited young people in the area and expressed a willingness to collaborate with Wentworth, highlighting a great working relationship. Arthur stated he is open to new ideas.

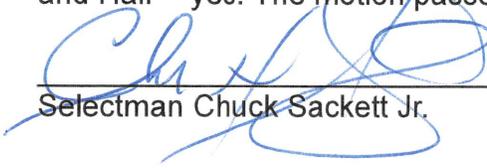
Justin Monninger expressed a desire to build a community that young people want to live and stay.

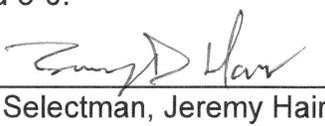
Annie Pierce asked whether the Town had data on the income of local residents. The Administrator explained that the Town relies on the available data but had not conducted an independent survey.

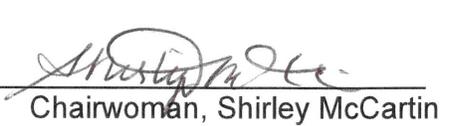
John Alias asked whether the Town Fire Department needed a fire suppression system. Tom Babbitt explained that one state department had indicated that a fire suppression system and a vehicle exhaust removal system were required, along with a separate room for turnout gear. Fire Chief Arthur Heath stated that another state department had indicated the opposite, noting that the lack of a municipal water supply and the proposed square footage of the building might not require those systems.

There was further discussion about the proposed increased property tax burden, state funding, municipal and school district budgets, and projected revenues.

Chairwoman McCartin moved to adjourn the Town budget hearing at 7:03 PM. The motion was seconded by J. Hair. Voting in favor of the motion were Sackett – yes, McCartin – yes, and Hair – yes. The motion passed 3-0.


Selectman Chuck Sackett Jr.


Selectman, Jeremy Hair


Chairwoman, Shirley McCartin