

2024 Town Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 14, 2024
Hanover High School
Ballot Voting 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Business Meeting 7:00 p.m.

The annual Town Meeting of Hanover, New Hampshire convened on May 14, 2024, at 7:00 a.m. by the town moderator, Jeremy Eggleton. Moderator Eggleton explained the polls would be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. for the purpose of voting for candidates for Town Meeting and for all other articles requiring vote by official ballot as set forth in Articles One through Article Six of the Town Meeting Warrant.

ARTICLE ONE: To vote (by nonpartisan ballot) for the following Town Officers:

Two Selectboard Members to serve for a term of three (3) years.

Kari Asmus	348
Jarett Berke	476
Joanna Whitcomb	500

One Moderator to serve for a term of two (2) years.

Jeremy Eggleton	631
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One Supervisor of the Checklist to serve for a term of (6) years.

Patricia (Patty) Dewhirst	619
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One Etna Town Library Trustee to serve for a term of three (3) years.

John P. Collier	627
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One Trustee of Trust Funds to serve for a term of three (3) years.

John S. Stebbins	621
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One Trustee of the Cemetery to serve for a term of three (3) years.

Harold Jefferson Frost	598
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One Trustee of the Cemetery to serve for a term of two (2) years.

Write In Candidate – Petra Sergent	215
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One Trustee of the Cemetery to serve for a term of one (1) year.

Write in Candidate – Kevin Knuuti	221
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ARTICLE TWO (to vote by ballot): To see if the Town will vote to amend the Hanover Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Hanover Planning Board in Amendment No. 1:

The following question is on the official ballot:

“Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 1 as proposed by the Hanover Planning Board for the Hanover Zoning Ordinance as follows?”

Amend Section 405.5.A, Objective, Section 405.5.B Permitted Uses in the Office and Laboratory “OL” District.

Amendment No. 1 proposes to:

- a) Amend Section 405.5. A to include mixed use of permitted commercial and residential uses as an objective of this district.
- b) Amend Section 405.5.B OL District, permitted uses to allow for mixed-use, residential, and commercial.
- c) Add a footnote below the listed uses for the district, limiting residential use to 49% of the gross square footage of the building.

RESULTS: YES 630 NO 70 ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE THREE: (to vote by ballot): To see if the Town will vote to amend the Hanover Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Hanover Planning Board Amendment No. 2:

The following question is on the official ballot:

“Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 2 as proposed by the Hanover Planning Board for the Hanover Zoning Ordinance as follows?”

Amend definitions in Section 302, Sections 405.1B, 405.2B, 405.3B, 405.4B 405.5B 405.6B 405.7B 405.8B 405.9B 405.10B, 405.11B 405.12B Special Exceptions “Essential services” to Permitted Uses and add new Section 719 “Essential Services”

Amendment No. 2 proposes to:

- a) Amend the definition of “essential services.”
- b) Delete “essential services” as a use allowed by Special Exception in all districts.
- c) Establish “essential services” as an accessory use in all districts

RESULTS: YES 634 NO 54 ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE FOUR: (to vote by ballot): To see if the Town will vote to amend the Hanover Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Hanover Planning Board Amendment No. 3:

The following question is on the official ballot:

“Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 3 as proposed by the Hanover Planning Board for the Hanover Zoning Ordinance as follows?”

Amend Article IV, Sections 405.2.C and Article V, 505.1 A.2.

Amendment No. 3 proposes:

- a) Increasing the maximum “by right” height of a building in the D-1 Downtown Center district from 45’ to 55’.
- b) Delete the maximum gross floor area ratio (FAR) for the D-1.

RESULTS: YES 577 NO 135 ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE FIVE: (to vote by ballot): To see if the Town will vote to amend the Hanover Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Hanover Planning Board Amendment No. 4:

The following question is on the official ballot:

"Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 4 as proposed by the Hanover Planning Board for the Hanover Zoning Ordinance as follows?"

Amend Article X Off-street Parking, Section 1001-1007.

Amendment No. 4 proposes to:

Allow for changes to the zoning ordinance, remove all parking requirements for specific uses, and to adopt objective standards for non-residential and residential projects greater than three units as part of the Site Plan Review Regulation.

The amendments shall become effective only upon the Planning Board's adoption of objective parking standards within the Site Plan Regulations for non-residential and residential uses equal to or greater than three units.

Delete Sections 1001.1, 1001.2, 1001.4, 1001.5, 1001.6, 1002.1, 1002.2, 1003.1, 1003.2, 1004.1-3, 1005, 1006 Amend Sections 1001.3, 1004.4-7 to address parking requirements for land uses not subject to Site Plan Review and renumber accordingly.

RESULTS: YES 599 NO 97 ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE SIX: (to vote by ballot): To see if the Town will vote to amend the Hanover Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Hanover Planning Board Amendment No. 5.

The following question is on the official ballot:

"Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 5 as proposed by the Hanover Planning Board for the Hanover Zoning Ordinance as follows?"

Amend Article VII, Section 715.

Amendment No. 5 proposes to:

Amend Section 715 to allow the Main Wheelock District the same sign and advertising permitting options as the NP, F, GP, RR, RO, SR, and GR Districts.

RESULTS: YES 604 NO 89 ARTICLE PASSED

BUSINESS MEETING

Moderator Jeremy Eggleton called the meeting to order at 7:27 p.m. at Hanover High School. Selectboard member Nancy Carter led the Pledge of Allegiance. Moderator Eggleton stated that the first question on the agenda is approving the rules for the meeting; he directed everyone to read page 18 of their packet, The Town Moderator's Message. **Moderator Eggleton took a motion from the floor to utilize the set of rules listed in the Town Moderator's Message. The motion was seconded. Moderator Eggleton calls the question. The motion PASSED.**

Moderator states that articles will be read and moved by selectboard members and then we will introduce debate after a second. Following the conclusion of debate he will call for a vote.

ARTICLE SEVEN:

Selectboard member Callaghan read out the current open positions and those nominated for the roles; he then moved the article.

To choose the following Town Officers to be elected by a majority vote.

One Advisory Board of Assessors, one for a term of three (3) years.

John Brighton)

Three Fence Viewers, each for a term of one (1) year.

Robert Grabill

Matt Marshall

Sarah Packham

Two Surveyors of Wood and Timber, each for a term of one (1) year.

Timothy Bent

James Kennedy

Such other Officers as the Town may judge necessary for managing its affairs.

The article was seconded by a resident in the front row and the moderator asked for discussion. A resident asked for explanation on the position roles of Fencer Viewers and Surveyors of Wood and Timber. Selectboard member Callaghan responded that these offices date back to colonial times and the tradition has been maintained in many towns for many years. The Fence viewers would adjudicate fence lines and property disputes; Surveyors of Wood and Timber make sure a cord is a cord of wood.

The moderator called for a voice vote.

ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE EIGHT:

Selectboard member Chamberlain read out and then moved the article.

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$22,592 for deposit into the Land and Capital Improvements Fund, an expendable trust, and to fund this appropriation by authorizing the withdrawal of this amount from the Unassigned Fund Balance. The amount appropriated is the equivalent of 50% of the total Land Use Change Tax collected in the fiscal year 2022-2023.

The article was seconded by resident in the back row, Professor Fowler.

Moderator called for thoughts, comments, observations or concerns. Hearing none, the moderator called for a voice vote.

ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE NINE:

Selectboard member Chamberlain read out and then moved the article. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$22,592 for deposit into the Conservation Fund, and to fund this appropriation by authorizing the withdrawal of this amount from the Unassigned Fund Balance. The amount appropriated is the equivalent of 50% of the total Land Use Change Tax collected in the fiscal year 2022-2023.

The article was seconded by a resident. Moderator called for thoughts, comments, observations or concerns. Resident asks what is the Land Use Change Tax? Selectboard member Chamberlain responded that that land use change tax fee is collected when land changes hands, long history in Hanover to take these fees and split between Capital Improvements and Conservation Funds

One can hear an indistinct comment from a resident. Moderator asks residents to please approach microphones to make comments or ask questions, or if unable, he is happy to restate as best he can. He reiterated the following comment from a resident: The resident wanted to clarify that this is only collected when land in current use is converted back to non-current use resulting in taxes being owed.

Hearing no additional discussion, the moderator called for a voice vote.

ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE TEN:

Selectboard member Chamberlain read out and then moved the article.

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$34,135 for deposit into the Municipal Transportation Improvement Fund, a capital reserve fund, and to fund this appropriation by authorizing the withdrawal of this amount from the Unassigned Fund Balance. This amount is equivalent to the total Transportation Fee surcharge for each motor vehicle registered in the Town of Hanover (\$5.00 per vehicle) during fiscal year 2022-2023.

Article was seconded by resident in the third row.

Moderator called for thoughts, comments, observations or concerns. Hearing none, the moderator called for a voice vote.

ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE ELEVEN:

Selectboard member Carter shared that this is her favorite article and that it does go on, but that we are required to read every word and dollar amount. She read out and then moved the article.

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,912,700** and authorize payment into existing capital reserve funds in the following amounts for the purposes for which such funds were established:

Ambulance Equipment Capital Reserve Fund with funding to come from the Ambulance Fund	\$128,000
Building Maintenance and Improvement Capital Reserve Fund with funding to be raised through taxation	\$216,700
Dispatch Equipment and Dispatch Center Enhancements Capital Reserve Fund with funding to be raised through taxation	\$21,000
Fire Department Vehicle and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund with funding to come from the Fire Fund	\$162,000

Highway Construction and Maintenance Equipment Capital Reserve Fund	\$480,000
<i>with funding to be raised through taxation</i>	
Parking Operations Vehicles and Parking Facility Improvements Capital Reserve	\$84,000
<i>Fund with funding to come from the Parking Fund</i>	
Police Vehicles and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund with funding to be raised through taxation	\$126,000
Road Construction and Improvements Capital Reserve Fund with funding to be raised through taxation	\$67,000
Sewer Equipment and Facilities Improvements Capital Reserve Fund with Funding to come from the Wastewater Treatment Facility Fund	\$307,000
Water Treatment and Distribution Equipment and System Capital Reserve	\$321,000
<i>Fund with funding to come from the Water Utility Fund</i>	

Resident Nico Macri seconds the motion. Moderator asks for thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns; and when you stand, please identify yourself.

Resident Nancy Welch reads an excerpt from Jim Kenyon's recent article

"A public airing also needs to occur outside a courtroom. People deserve an opportunity to question town officials about what went down on May 1 and why police willingly acted as Beilock's goon squad. Hanover's annual Town Meeting would be a place for residents — and I'm including Dartmouth students — to start holding police, the town manager and the Selectboard accountable for the use of tax payer-funded resources in this debacle." (Valley News May 10, 2024)

Nancy Welch continues and states, for this reason, I need to vote no on all of the articles that involve police, we have had no accountability from the police or the Town of Hanover...despite the good municipal items listed.

Moderator asks for further thoughts, comments, observations or concerns about article eleven.

Resident asks if it is possible, to amend to remove only policing; Moderator agreed that this is a permissible amendment but needs to cite specific line item.

Resident moves to remove policing line from article; this requested amendment was seconded by a member of the audience. Moderators asks for any further discussion.

Jacob Markham – Dartmouth student is thankful that the police were on campus and involved on May 1st. and was pleased with the response. He felt that Dartmouth set clear expectations for those on the Green.

Moderators asks to limited discussion to amendment.

Kim Frost, Etna – questions if Hanover police were involved on May 1st protest or the State Police? Moderator asks SB chair Rassias to respond, Rassias responds that he acknowledges that he knows people are here specifically to pose these concerns. He raised that this assembly is our legislative body, our time to discuss and act on the warrant before us; To create processes to move the town into the next fiscal year. He suggests that this meeting is not appropriate for this discussion – but when is? He feels these issues should be relegated to staff members or one may bring questions to selectboard meetings. This is not an agenda item on an upcoming meeting, but welcomes hearing from residents.

Jake Blum disagrees with Rassias; this is the only time we are all together as a town and he does not want discussion quashed.

Jeff Acker would like to know if Selectboard would be willing to hold a meeting to discuss this issue. Without this, he thinks this will be a problem and we will be here all evening.

SB chair Rassias cites two issues: First, this item would need to be added to an agenda. He anticipates a public listening session focuses on policing. Second, there is also turnover on the board and there is a reorganization meeting on 20 May with the new selectboard seated and this can be discussed then. So, a meeting cannot be set now.

Bob Keene – what is effect of Amendment – taking this amount off the Article – and the issue of the impact being raised. This is moving monies that has previously happened.

Rassias - these articles 11 and 12 are related to town reserve funds which we utilize for many purposes, they exist as a mechanism the State of NH allows us to use within our tax policy to mitigate expenses over several years – such as our Fire Tower Truck. We place monies into those funds annually and then use them as needed.

Moderator moves Amendment (Yea would adopt, Nay will reject) and calls for voice vote,

AMENDMENT IS REJECTED

Further thoughts, comments, observations or concerns about original form of Article 11, hearing none moderator called for a voice vote.

ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE TWELVE:

Selectboard member Carter moved Article 12 and explained we have raised the funds, now we have to appropriate them. The numbers are not 1:1 as many of these funds already had funds in them so we are sometimes spending more than was just appropriated. She then read out and moved the article.

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$2,065,591** for the purposes listed below, and to authorize funding these amounts by withdrawal from the listed capital reserve funds in the following amounts:

Fire Department Vehicle and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund: Metal Door Replacement Phase III, Fire Car #2, Heat Pumps, Thermal Imaging Camera	\$314,102
Highway Construction and Maintenance Equipment Capital Reserve Fund: DPW Fleet Roadside Tractor, Truck 15 F550 pickup, Truck 18 F350 pickup, Truck 26 F350 pickup, Truck 4 (Grounds) upgrade to F550 pickup	\$583,889
Parking Operations Vehicles and Parking Facility Improvements	\$64,200
Capital Reserve Fund: Expansion Joints & Capstones, Pay & Display Meter Stations (4)	
Police Vehicles and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund: Firearms & Related Equipment, Wi Fi enabled police radios	\$100,000
Road Construction and Improvements Capital Reserve Fund: Main Street/Wheelock Signal Control Cabinet, Park Street/Wheelock Signal Control Cabinet	\$138,000
Water Treatment and Distribution Equipment and System Capital Reserve Fund: One Ton Utility Truck, Water Meters Phase II	\$292,400

Sewer Equipment and Facilities Improvements Capital Reserve Fund: **\$573,000**
Water Meters phase II, Access Road, Cement Trailer LMC, UG Power & Fiber Replacement

This will be a non-lapsing appropriation per RSA 32:7, VI and will not lapse until these specified purchases are complete or June 30, 2029, whichever occurs sooner.

The motion was seconded by resident in the back. Further thoughts, comments, observations or concerns about Article 12

Samantha Ray, Hanover, motions to amend to remove police line of \$100,000; Amendment seconded from floor. Resident Ray further added she feels the need to do this dance again specifically due to the inclusion of firearms. She feels that the utilization of Armed police against unarmed protestors breaking a college policy was inappropriate and dangerous.

Further thoughts, comments, observations or concerns about the amendment, hearing none calls for a voice vote on the Amendment (Yea would adopt, Nay will reject) AMENDMENT IS REJECTED

We are back to original article as read. Further thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns about Article 12. Seeing and hearing none, he calls the question. ARTICLE PASSED

Selectboard Chair Rassias shared we have an important person to celebrate; he wants to recognize Nancy Carter for her 12 years of service on the Board. He says thank you on behalf of the board and the entire Town of Hanover. Applause and standing ovation.

Nancy shared how quickly twelve years have passed, there were many more memorable moments than not. She will miss her board colleagues and the town department chairs. Thank you very much.

Town Manager Alex Torpey introduces Department Heads and Town Staff who are here. He further asked all residents on boards and committee to stand up and be recognized. The moderator urged all to consider joining a committee.

Moderator announces results from the Ballot voting:

Selectboard – We had three candidates for two open seats.

Kari Asmus 348, Jarett Berke 476, Joanna Whitcomb 500

Moderator – Jeremy Eggleton 631 Supervisor of the Checklist – Patricia Dewhirst 619

Trustee of the Trust Funds – John Stebbins 621 Etna Library Trustee – John Collier – 621

We have now populated a board of cemetery trustees which will become important later tonight.

Existing Articles/Amendments

Article 2 passed 656-76 Article 3 passed 654-54 Article 4 passed 577-155

Article 5 passed 559-37 Article 6 passed 604-89

Article 4 passed 577-155

ARTICLE THIRTEEN:

Selectboard member Whitcomb read out and then moved the article.

To see if the Town will vote to approve the cost items included in the Collective Bargaining Agreement reached between the Selectboard and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 93, Local 1348 (Public Works Department employees) on February 28th 2024, which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2024-2025	\$171,768
2025-2026	\$198,265
2026-2027	\$225,406

And further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$171,768 for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, such sum representing additional costs attributable to the increase in the salaries and benefits required by the proposed agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels in accordance with the most recent collective bargaining agreement.

The motion is seconded by a resident. The moderator states that he will next ask Selectboard member Whitcomb to share the board perspective on these articles and would then recognize Greg Snyder to share the Finance Committee perspective.

Selectboard member Whitcomb makes the following statement:

Tonight, we have been and will continue to vote on the Town's budget which makes up roughly 30% of the total annual taxpayer costs. The school budget that we passed in March is 60% with the County budget 10%. The largest component of the Town's operating budget, about 65%, is the compensation and benefits for our staff. Our dedicated staff is our greatest asset. One of the SB's top 2023/24 priorities is to support and enhance our staff. This includes addressing compensation, implementing retention strategies, and updating our employee policies and benefits.

We have three collective bargaining units, which cover about half of the Town's employees (~70 staff). Employees of the Public Works and some in Parks and Recreation are represented by Local 1348 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Police Department by Local 3657 of AFSCME, and the Fire Department by Local 3288 of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF).

This year, the Town reached agreement with AFSCME Local 1348 and AFSCME Local 3657 on a three-year collective bargaining agreement for the period beginning July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2027. A two-year agreement was reached with IAFF Local 3288 for the period beginning July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2026. The contract negotiations starting point was largely based off the feedback received through the Town's Retention and Recruitment study in 2023, which included participation from union and non-union employees and resulted in the Town's proposed updates that are included for union and non-union staff in the FY25 budget.

The Town took a collaborative approach to working with the union (and non-union) employees this year. Our Town Manager, Alex Torpey, and HR Director, Katie Williams, held over 5 dozen meetings with staff to discuss compensation and benefits and the importance of maintaining fiscal responsibility and operational efficiency. This helped the Town understand the unique needs of each union, which resulted in the cost elements that I'll share for each article.

The costs associated with the warrants this year will appear different from prior years. This is due to two things a) A change in how the calculations of what was included starting in FY24, and b) due to the multi-year contracts this year. There have been one-year contracts since Fiscal Year 2022.

Specific to Article Thirteen:

There are primarily three categories of changes:

1. Wage Adjustments

Adjustments to wages includes market adjustments for positions based on study data, separating out the COLA and Merit systems and eventually creating a new merit system with new town-wide goals and reviews. If there are any costs to those, that will have to come back to Town Meeting next year for approval.

2. Benefits

Adjustments to Benefits:

- 50% NH Paid Family Leave Premium for 12-week coverage (Up from six weeks)*
- Phased contribution to Dental premium**
- Increased HSA contributions for employees electing High Deductible healthcare plans*

3. Other cost items

Resident Greg Snyder, on behalf of the Hanover Finance Committee makes the following statement:

During a public meeting on April 25, 2024, the Hanover Finance Committee voted 6-0 (with one absent) not to endorse the contracts as presented in Warrant Articles 13, 15 and 17, and that should any of the contract articles fail, we take the position that its corresponding Special Town Meeting warrant article should be approved as found in Warrant Articles 14, 16 and 18.

First and foremost, committee members underscore their appreciation for the good work and dedication of union employees. These staff members do extraordinary work, day-in and day-out, to keep us safe and our town running smoothly.

The job of the Finance Committee, however, is to gauge whether any given proposal is in the best interest of the Town's financial wellbeing- both in the short and long term.

The committee had three main concerns.

- 1) all three contracts require that negotiations be reopened within the coming months to finalize merit increases and other benefits. The costs as of today are unknown. This is, in essence, asking voters to approve contracts even though they are not complete.*
- 2) the introduction of automated Cost of Living Adjustments (or COLAs) opens great uncertainty in terms of future increases. The Town's long-established practice of focusing on "total compensation" (COLAs and steps) has resulted in increases greater than inflation while providing budgetary predictability. This is demonstrated in the table of a hypothetical \$75,000 salary comparison of Northeast Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers and Hanover Town compensation over five years which shows the "catch up" success from 2023 and 2024 and an overall positive variance of 2.1%.*
- 3) there was an overriding question of whether the town's compensation was competitive. After analyzing the information made available and the compensation study, we did not see that Hanover's wage scales were particularly uncompetitive, especially as the study looked at FY23 wages which did not reflect the benefits of the 5% wage scale adjustment in FY24.*

In closing, the Finance Committee is raising a caution flag and has taken the position that the following warrant article which would allow for a second vote at a Special Town Meeting should be approved and in doing, hopefully achieve the dual goals of better information for voters and a new contract for employees.

Moderator shares some information about articles thirteen through eighteen. We have three collective bargaining articles (13, 15, 17) with accompanying articles (14, 16, 18) which basically say if we reject any of the three, we may approve a special town meeting for approval of those contracts at a later date. Please bear that in mind as we move through the next steps.

Selectboard member Callaghan makes the following statement:

Selectboard decisions are an often exercise in balancing interests whether its cars, bikes, and pedestrians or in this case our highly valued employees and the also the affordability of living in living in Hanover for our taxpayers. There are no easy answers especially in a time when inflation is pressuring all of us but there is much that is good in these contracts: including addressing pay inequities, fixing on call pay, expanded benefits and even a move to a merit-based system in the context of revamped personnel policies.

How we got here was not easy and arguably flawed. There was very significant effort of the part of the unions and town administrators to engage in a novel process that ended up going right down to the wire. In fact, the selectboard only saw the full contracts on 5 April 5th right up against the statutory deadline for approval. One member abstained for lack of time to review the documents and others regretted not doing so. The selectboard having responsibility for the overall process is ultimately at fault for this process; it was not our finest hour.

It is understandable in many respects that the finance committee has recommended against these contracts, process may have been a contributory factor as well as some aspects of the contracts themselves. In this, again, the selectboard bear some responsibility.

But as to big picture SB responsibility, our ultimate responsibility is to support both our town employees and our citizens. Should these contacts not pass we will none the less do all that we can to ensure that our union and non-union employees feel fully support in this process and that the concerns of our citizens are full vetted and heard.

How we would balance all of that is what makes our selectboard work both challenging and rewarding.

Moderator asks for further thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns about Article 13.

Michael L/N/U asks how many people are affected by Union contracts; am I missing a FTE Count? Town Manager Torpey responded that in the three collecting bargaining units, about 70 employees, about 140 benefits eligible staff (199 total staff) and approximately half are in the three different collective bargaining units.

Ellis Rolett – Looking ahead at the 14, 16, 18 articles, if needed, would we have to have 3 separate special Town Meetings? – Town Manager Torpey indicates only one meeting will be necessary, any of the contract articles that fail would be combined into one special town meeting

David Vincellette comments about being a political prisoner by all three Unions. He supports the contracts but would like investigations for past crimes.

Kim Frost questions if Finance Committee report statement about growth in wage inequality regarding the low end pay scale, she said she knows this has been an issue with the schools but is unaware if this is also true with the Town – She read an excerpt from the Finance Committee report which indicates low end is not addressed:

To the extent that some of the beginning wages are below average, the new contract provisions do not strongly target this end of wage scale and hence do not ease the difficulties currently experienced by the Town in hiring entry-level employees in an extremely low unemployment environment. Instead, the contracts add steps at the top of the wage scales where compensation is already very competitive.

Town Manager Torpey responded that he appreciated the question. This was a high priority in conversations with both union and non-union staff during the recent six-month recruitment and retention process where we worked through issues raised during meeting with staff.

In 2022 survey, the Town conducted a staff survey which was the impetus for the broader R&R process in which 13% of recipients (representing approximately half of the staff) said they felt they were paid fairly compared to other communities, 90% felt that more time off more valuable and 80% sought an improved work environment.

With the help of the UMass Boston Collins Center for Public Management, we then compared our wages to 18 different competitor municipalities within the region and beyond so we could compare apples to apples as we there are no other NH towns hosting a large private college. The market data showed that of our 70 positions within the three collective bargaining units, 21 positions started below the market average and 2 both starting and ending salaries were below the market average. We are competitive at the top of our scale, but not at the bottom.

Drilling down into Article 13, the first-year budget includes funds targeted to market adjustments for the 10 lowest steps in our 22-step scale, but rather than reviewing line by line, he said that these figures are the result of multi-month negotiations with all three bargaining units and the contracts were ultimately ratified by all three groups, which shows agreement with the approach. There was significant agreement among the selectboard, town administrators and department heads and union leadership of the need to bring up some of the pay at the bottom of the scale, also true in articles 15 and seventeen as well. This is a step in the right direction.

Peter Christie indicates realized over time that we have not been keeping up with competitive compensation and need to correct this. That often showed up in the number of town employees lost each year, which could be 30% of staff. He said could not run a business with that reality. I see that the Selectboard is trying to address this issue.

Further thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns about Article 13. Hearing none, Moderator calls the question – As the voice vote is too close to call he requests everyone hold up their pink cards for or against.

ARTICLE PASSED

Moderator states that while it is now moot, we are still required to vote on article fourteen as it is included on the warrant as a matter of law. Town counsel suggested that we can either table or pass over the article. On advice of counsel, Moderator moves to pass over Article 14 as 13 was passed.

ARTICLE FOURTEEN: If the preceding article is defeated, to see if the Town will authorize the Selectboard to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 13 cost items only.

ARTICLE PASSED OVER AS ARTICLE 13 PASSED

ARTICLE FIFTEEN:

Selectboard member Whitcomb read out and then moved the article.

To see if the Town will vote to approve the cost items included in the Collective Bargaining Agreement reached between the Selectboard and the International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 3288 on April 4, 2024, which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2024-2025	\$117,085
2025-2026	\$71,459

And further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$117,085 for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, such sum representing additional costs attributable to the increase in the salaries and benefits required by the proposed agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels in accordance with the most recent collective bargaining agreement.

Article was seconded by resident. Whitcomb read 2 year contract specifics for Firefighters

- Market Adjustments – 2% one-time adjustment for all union members
- COLA: FY25 – 2.5%, FY26 – 2.0%
- Existing Step/Merit Increase: FY25 2% step awarded on employee anniversary.
- No changes to benefits, added a 20 hour vacation sellback option.

Moderator asks Mr. Snyder if the Finance Committee has additional comment on article. None needed. Any further comments:

Jake Blum wondered why other multi-year contract articles had increasing amounts but Fire one was decreasing. Town Manager Torpey shares that the town developed a proposal made to union and non-union staff based on feedback received, Similar proposals were brought to all three collective bargaining units at the outset which would then be tailored based on specific needs. This is a result of back-and-forth negotiations with Fire Union leadership that all parties were most comfortable with.

Mr. Blum further asks to clarify that the Fire Union is happy with a smaller increase in year two? Town Manager reiterates that this is the contract that was supported and ratified.

Further thoughts, comments, observations or concerns about Article 15

Resident Jim Rubens thanks the Finance Committee for their prepared statement and specifically the chart on Tax Bill Changes FY15-25. He asks the Finance Committee what portion of differential over the years is increases in Town salaries and benefits on chart. Finance Committee member Snyder answers that they did not differentiate to show how the compensation increased.

Further thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns about Article 15. Seeing and hearing none, he called the question for a voice vote

ARTICLE PASSED

Moderator moves to pass over Article 16 as 15 was passed.

ARTICLE SIXTEEN: If the preceding article is defeated, to see if the Town will authorize the Selectboard to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 15 cost items only.

ARTICLE MOOT DUE TO ARTICLE 15 BEING PASSED

ARTICLE SEVENTEEN:

Selectboard member Whitcomb read out and then moved the article.

To see if the Town will vote to approve the cost items included in the Collective Bargaining Agreement reached between the Selectboard and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 93, Local 3657 (Police Department employees) on March 29, 2024, which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2024-2025	\$158,103
2025-2026	\$200,375
2026-2027	\$225,210

And further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$158,103 for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, such sum representing additional costs attributable to the increase in the salaries and benefits required by the proposed agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels in accordance with the most recent collective bargaining agreement.

The article was seconded from front row. Whitcomb indicates the provisions of this contract:

- Market Adjustments – No market adjustments
- COLA: FY25 - 2.5%. Future years to be indexed to the CPI New England.
- Step/Merit Increase: For FY25, 2% step awarded on employee anniversary. Eligibility for future year 2% “step” increases to be determined through the Town’s new Merit Steps program, which we aim to have in place before FY26.
- **Benefits**
 - 50% NH Paid Family Leave Premium for 12-week coverage (Up from six weeks)
 - Phased contribution to Dental premium
 - Increased HSA contributions for employees electing High Deductible healthcare plans*
 - Increased opt-out payments for employees who are eligible but elect not to take Town insurance
- Other: 20-hour Vacation Sell-back

Greg Snyder reiterates Hanover Finance Committee looked at all info and come to the unanimous conclusion to not approve the contract based on the three issues highlighted.

Resident Bill Abdu – what are the goals for 1-2-3 year contracts, what metrics do you use to show programs are successful and how will town people know that?

Alex Torpey gives details learned from the rate and retention study – including that more communication is needed with staff, pay changes is a lot like property assessment, small adjustments are necessary so you don’t have a huge increase every 5-10 years. Intend to measure turnover rate, over the last 5 years 137 jobs have turned over in a staff of 140 benefits eligible staff; stunningly high and expensive; that includes retirements. Second metric would be vacancy rate of open positions, that

generally hovers between 5-12%. Today we have 11 open positions, some have been vacant more than a year. We are adding a second person to HR filling a long term vacancy which allow us to have more data to regularly report.

Bill Abdu follows up – He doesn't understand Alex's response....what's a success? Do we have a number for turnover rate/for vacancy? Do we have a number of people who are going to be satisfied with their work, how do we compare with our UMass identified competitor municipalities? Cannot just say lines going up, lines going down, good or bad. You have to be specific and identify what's going to be your measure of success.

Alex Torpey responds that we do not have all the goal points identified at this time but we have the baseline data which we did not have before and thinks we do have the kinds of things that we want to track. We will set those goals over the next months and years.

Further thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns about Article 17. Hearing none, Moderator called the question for a voice vote, determines it is close to say on voice vote, and requests hand vote

ARTICLE PASSED

Moderator moves to pass over Article 18 as 17 was passed.

ARTICLE EIGHTEEN: If the preceding article is defeated, to see if the Town will authorize the Selectboard to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 17 cost items only.

ARTICLE MOOT DUE TO ARTICLE 17 BEING PASSED

ARTICLE NINETEEN:

Selectboard chair Rassias read out and then moved the article.

To see if the Town, per RSA 31:98a, will vote to raise and appropriate \$25,000 into the Town's Annual Contingency Fund for fiscal year 2024-2025, this sum to come from taxation.

A resident seconded from floor. Selectboard Chair Rassias shared the specific RSA governing contingency funds as we are setting this up this year.

RSA 31:98-a Contingency Fund. – Every town annually by an article separate from the budget and all other articles in the warrant may establish a contingency fund to meet the cost of unanticipated expenses that may arise during the year. Such fund shall not exceed one per cent of the amount appropriated by the town for town purposes during the preceding year excluding capital expenditures and the amortization of debt. A detailed report of all expenditures from the contingency fund shall be made annually by the selectmen and published with their report.

Selectboard Chair Rassias indicates that \$25,000 is not close to 1% of our town appropriate but this is an initial deposit into this fund that we anticipate being useful in ensuing years. This should help us spread expenditures over the future and will help spread out our ability to even out costs.

Further thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns about Article 19

Jeff Acker starts by stating that he understands that we have an undesignated fund balance which is comprised of accumulated excess taxes kept by town. The town occasionally puts some of this towards reducing the tax rate but every year they keep more and more. There already is a contingency fund with what he believes are several hundred thousand dollars, but he is unable to verify in report.

It's almost embarrassing in a \$31M budget to have a \$25K contingency fund only because we are allowed to by the state. Why do we need more?

Alex Torpey responds that the contingency fund was created last year and can only be spent in very specific circumstances such as if we overspend the entire budget in the current fiscal year. We do not anticipate needing to use the contingency, but as we have recently rebuilt many budget lines with less cushion than in previous years we thought it prudent to follow this recommended best practice and create the new fund. It is the most transparent way to have a cushion in the municipal budget.

Resident Acker states he doesn't understand the response at all. When can we spend UDF balance? Thought that was that the UDF was for. I thought it was for unexpected expenses in this year's budget. What expenses can we use UDF for that we cannot use contingency fund?

Alex Torpey responds that the UDF is not money that we have permission to spend at all in any given year. The UDF is to ensure we always have funds in out town "bank account" keeping that number at 10-15%. That number is tracked by the State Department of Revenue. The funds collect, we report and this year we anticipate ending at high 14%. Again we cannot spend it in any given year, that is a state decision not a Hanover one per regulation. The contingency fund replaces previous cushion in department budgets to track budget overruns. Town counsel Laura Spector-Morgan asked to clarify. She replies that the UDF cannot be spent without Court approval or special town meeting, or if the DRA allows for an emergency following their process. Not a spending account to spend from at will.

Further thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns about Article 19; Hearing none, he calls the question for a voice vote.

ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE TWENTY:

Selectboard chair Rassias read out and then moved the article.

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$31,077,237 to pay the operating expenses of the Town for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, for the purposes set forth in the Town budget. This sum does not include any of the preceding or succeeding articles.

Seconded by resident. Selectboard chair Rassias shares a statement summarizing the Town Budget:

I. Introduction

I intend to provide a summary of the Hanover town budget, highlighting its main drivers, new additions, purposeful omissions, and the impact on the future. In addition, I will look beyond the numbers at the priorities that drove the creation of the budget.

The Town of Hanover's budget guidelines emphasize the importance of balancing citizens' needs with financial feasibility. Key objectives include maintaining high-quality services cost-effectively, adequately funding long-term liabilities, and investing for the future. The guidelines prioritize competitive compensation for town staff, prudent reserve management, and thoughtful consideration of new initiatives.

The budget creation process followed a time-honored format, with many innovative updates implemented by our town manager. We started in the early fall of 2023 with a series of forecasting presentations by the town manager and the town's finance director. After this, the selectboard set a target range for the budget of 5-7% increase. The department heads then developed their respective budgets, and this was brought together into one proposed budget by the town manager and the

finance director. A series of public budget meetings were held in late February by the Selectboard, where the proposal was developed into a final draft. The budget we're submitting for consideration was approved unanimously by the selectboard at its April 6th meeting.

II. Goals and Aspirations

Understanding the town's budget goes beyond mere numbers; it encapsulates our collective vision for the future. The Selectboard's aspirations for FY24-25 serve as guiding principles, shaping our budgetary decisions and community priorities.

- 1. Enhancing Investment in the Organization:** Initiatives such as the Retention and Recruitment study, professional development funding, and succession planning are paramount.
- 2. Promoting Affordability and Accessibility:** Policies include zoning updates, workforce housing projects, and collaborations with stakeholders to ensure housing aligns with community values.
- 3. Improving Mobility and Transportation:** Initiatives like Main Street reconstruction and Complete Streets policies aim to prioritize pedestrian and cyclist needs.
- 4. Evaluating Community Services:** Collaboration with stakeholders and a keen focus on inclusivity guide our efforts to enhance community programs.
- 5. Enhancing Community Engagement:** This involves leveraging technology for digital engagement, closing the digital divide, and diversifying advisory and implementation roles within the community.

III. Main Drivers of the Budget

The budget as presented a 6.5% anticipated tax rate increase which is an increase of 29¢ per \$1000 of valuation, or the tax on a house valued at \$500,000 would increase by \$145 to fund this budget. This budget is presented within the Selectboard's target set in the fall of 2023 of a 5-7% tax rate increase. It includes many important goals and updates, though with minimal funding needed for new programs, which largely are either tax neutral because of new revenue sources or have a minimal impact from creating greater efficiency internally. The largest driver of the increase over the previous year's budget is an update to staff compensation that helps address some of the Selectboard's highest prioritized personnel goals.

Of note, our forecasted FY25 undesignated fund balance remains estimated at 14.8% well within the recommended 10-15%, reflecting our ongoing commitment to fiscal responsibility and strategic planning.

One must note that there are drivers of this budget that do not have dollars and cents in our spreadsheets. For example, we know that the region's extreme housing and childcare shortage has prevented hiring and forced the resignation of a number of staff and contributes to the need to raise wages. This has also pushed more employees to live farther away, which complicates "on-call" departments. These don't traditionally have a space in any budget document, but they were considered alongside the budget.

IV. Purposeful Omissions

Deliberate exclusions from the budget were made to prioritize critical services and maintain fiscal responsibility. Reductions in non-essential spending, deferred projects, and efforts to streamline operations were emphasized. Long-term sustainability and fiscal health remained central considerations, guiding decisions to establish reserve funds and adhere to budgetary principles.

As an example, there were two new positions discussed that, although they align well with the Selectboard priorities, were not included in this budget due to spending constraints. The Communications and Grant Coordinator and a Transportation and Mobility Coordinator added too much expense and eliminated and replaced by minimal consulting support.

V. Strategies for Future Sustainability

Looking beyond the immediate budget cycle, it's essential to outline strategies for ensuring the long-term sustainability and prosperity of our community. Here are some key considerations, as summarized by our town manager, and available on the town website:

1. **Fiscal Prudence:** We must continue to exercise fiscal prudence and responsible financial management.
2. **Revenue Diversification:** Over reliance on property taxes poses challenges, especially in times of economic uncertainty. Therefore, we should explore opportunities to diversify our revenue sources.
3. **Economic Development:** Stimulating economic growth and attracting new businesses to our community can bolster our tax base and generate additional revenue streams.
4. **Sustainable Infrastructure:** Investing in sustainable infrastructure projects not only enhances our community's resilience but also reduces long-term maintenance costs.
5. **Community Engagement**
6. **Long-Term Planning**

VI. Financial Audit Discussion

As representatives of the Hanover community, the Hanover Selectboard acknowledges the delays and deficiencies in the completion of the FY2021, FY2022, and FY2023 audits. We recognize the critical importance of timely and accurate financial reporting in ensuring transparency and accountability to our residents.

We share the Finance Committee's concern regarding the delay in completing the FY2023 audit. We are committed to taking appropriate action to rectify this situation and ensure that future audits are conducted in a timely manner, including the addition of an accounting analyst position focused on this effort.

Regarding the material weaknesses identified in the FY2021 and FY2022 audits, we agree that these issues are of serious concern and require prompt and effective resolution. We appreciate the efforts of our dedicated staff in implementing new practices to address these deficiencies, and we remain committed to supporting them in their ongoing efforts to strengthen our financial internal controls. Specifically, the risks of management override of controls and improper revenue recognition highlighted by the auditors are areas of priority for us. We are actively engaged in discussions with our auditors to understand the steps required to mitigate these risks and will ensure that appropriate measures are implemented.

It is a top priority for the Selectboard and Town administration to implement a corrective action plan. We are actively working on establishing a comprehensive corrective action plan that addresses the completion of the FY2023 audit, as well as the underlying issues identified in previous audits.

VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Hanover town budget reflects our commitment to responsible stewardship of resources and strategic investment in our community's well-being. By adopting these strategies and

embracing a ensure that our community remains a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable place to live, work, and thrive.

The town of Hanover is indebted to its dedicated employees. This budget is the product of many hours on the part of department heads, and especially our financial director, Ellen Bullion and our town manager, Alex Torpey. On the part of the selectboard I extend my heartfelt thanks for a well-constructed budget.

A resident seconds the article.

Kari Asmus, Chair of the Hanover Finance Committee states:

Every year I preface my remarks by pointing out that our at-large committee members are jointly appointed by you, Mr. Moderator and the Hanover School District Moderator—and that we have been at this business for quite some time, this being the 92nd Annual Report of the Finance Committee.

This year our at-large members have been myself, Greg Snyder as Vice-Chair, Rich Greger as Secretary, Herschel Nachlis, and John Dolan. Antonia Barry has been our School Board member, and Carey Callaghan has served as our Selectboard Member.

I would particularly like to thank Herschel for his service these past three years as he plans to step down at the end of his term on June 30. Should anyone here tonight be interested in serving on the Finance Committee, I encourage you pass along a letter of interest to our Moderator. And of course, I would be happy to answer any questions about the committee.

Now, without further ado, on to the committee's analysis of the FY25 Town budget:

During a public meeting on April 2, 2024, the Hanover Finance Committee voted unanimously to recommend adoption of the Town budget with significant reservations and recommendations. If all warrant articles were to pass—and we now know that they have all passed-- Town administration estimates an increase of 6.7% in the combined Town General Fund and Fire Fund tax rates, resulting in a new “blended” rate of \$6.21 per \$1,000 of taxable assessed property value. Town taxes on a property currently valued at \$500,000—which we know is a modest home in many neighborhoods--would be approximately \$3,105 in the coming tax year.

Among our main concerns are the growth in the tax rate and compensation costs. On page 76 of the annual report, we have a graph that shows how the growth in the total tax rate has started to outpace the rate of inflation. This is a new phenomenon that we have seen only in the past couple of years and want to highlight.

The cost drivers are compensation, as previously discussed, as well as growth in staffing. There have been a number of incremental increases, and if looked at individually, they may look very supportable. Many people might like to see a little additional staffing at the Howe Library and at the Etna Library, and to see a new stewardship position in Parks and Rec, etc., but all of these incremental changes add to the tax rate, and if they are not monitored over time, they could have a significant impact.

We also wanted to call attention to the reliance on inconstant revenues to offset increased spending. If this budget were to pass, we would use \$458,000 from the Undesignated Fund Balance as a revenue. This budget also relies on an additional \$350,000 in Short-Term Interest revenues over the amount in the current budget. These are amounts that greatly mitigate the increase in our tax rate but are ones we may not be able to count on in future years. Short-term interest rates, for example, are unlikely to stay where they are now.

We would also recommend increased transparency in the use of Undesignated Fund Balance and other funds. We understand that trade-offs are an inherent part of any budget process, but there was not discussion at the Selectboard level of how these decisions were made, or how "wants" and "needs" were prioritized. For example, we are aware of significant maintenance items required by the Howe Library. Those items are not included in this budget, but funding for other downtown spaces are included. Voters should have an understanding of how those decisions were made.

Further, we would like to ask the Selectboard to provide detailed guidance to staff in the budget process. For example, we would like to see quarterly financial statements so that can see how the current year budget is unfolding. Timelines and budget expectations, including for negotiations, were not clear this year and led to less-than-ideal circumstances in which to contemplate long-term ramifications of decisions. We would also recommend that future tax rate targets be more exact than this year's flexible range of 5-7%, or that the Selectboard at least ask to see what a budget at the lower end of the range would look like so that the lower end of the range is at least considered.

I would respond to the comments regarding the audits by saying that this is a topic that the Finance Committee has been very concerned about for over two years now. While we are pleased after two years to hear the Selectboard echo our recommendations, we would now say that we would like to see these recommendations happen. For example, last year we heard about having a new audit review process, but we have not had any progress at all in determining what that new process would look like—and that is very important. However, again, we are pleased to hear the comments tonight as that is progress.

In closing, HFC recognizes all the effort required of staff, administrators, and Selectboard members to bring this budget and the proposed contracts to Town Meeting. There have been many challenges in recent years, and we thank all who care about and have contributed to the wellbeing of the Hanover community.

Moderator thanks the Finance committee and asks who would like to respond. Selectboard Chair Rassias responds with thanks to Kari for her comments and that he neglected to specifically thank the committee in his response. Many residents are unaware of the diligent work of the committee in their responsibilities to attend budget meetings, independently look into issues, and opine on what they think is appropriate.

Kevin Knuuti thanks Kari Asmus for her statement. He wants to point one thing out and make a request. When we talk about a tax increase or a budget increase going to result in a certain increase per \$500,000 house; it is misleading for a few reasons. Does not account for reevaluation of properties

- references Page 91 of the Town Report regarding property tax fluctuation since 2014. It might be more useful to show average increases and decreases.

Nico Macri questions why grant writer has not been hired. We have a lack of staff time for writing grants, and the position could potentially pay for themselves. Town Manager Torpey would like more employees but didn't want to add to the current budget – perhaps next year but wants to look into it more.

Bruce Franks poses that he understands that have a \$31 million proposed budget but not measuring success of any spending? Do we have measurable department goals that can be measured – both successes and failures?

Alex responds that the Selectboard started with setting goals and Department Heads built this budget based on those goals. He agrees with comments made, but we are taking one step at a time incorporating changes to the budgeting process. References addition of CIPC which is now adding perspective to the Capital Planning process. Additional goal setting including KPIs (key performance indicators) should be built in over the next few years.

Jim Rubins questions what would increase be if non-recurring revenue was included in the budget? Alex Torpey asks Ellen Bullion, Finance Director, to help clarify but pointed out that every 120K in expenditure is approximately 1 tax point. Ellen added that total is roughly 700K resulting in a 5.8% increase in the tax rate.

Further thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns about Article 19

Resident Kesaya Noda says she may have a naïve question and asks about HFC concern that management overrode controls and there was improper revenue recognition; She would think this simply would not happen and is not complicated.

Finance Director Bullion agreed that management cannot override controls and those were observations made for FY2022. We hired a new audit firm as of that year and they looked at numbers with a new perspective and we are absolutely committed to following policies and procedures not overriding financial controls. This should not be a discussion point going forward.

Further thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns.

Resident Ardis Olson asks what do we mean about financial controls?

Finance Director Bullion response – financial controls are best practices for having any expenditure approved – for really any accounting procedure. It is difficult for her to comment directly as neither she nor Alex Torpey were here at the time. Again, we are committed to enforcing as well as updating our policies and procedures.

Resident Dave Cioffi stated that the finance committee said a 6.7% rate and 6.5% was shared from the podium, which is it? Bullion responds, Rassias refers to municipal rate, HFC uses the blended rate which is the municipal rate and the fire district rate depending on where you live in town.

Resident Cioffi asks if the \$31 million budget includes the increases agreed upon in the contracts?

Bullion responds that operating budget excludes the union contracts and anything else previously voted on in the warrant. The overall budget is \$35million which includes amounts in other warrant articles. What's left is what we are voting on now.

Cioffi was shocked to find in the auditor's report that we have not been able to track capital fund revenues and expenditures separately. He hopes that the new finance director will jump on that. He wants all to remember before voting that it is easy for many not to worry about an increase in our property taxes but think about the rural community and the people living out there. Social security this past year was raised just 3.2% but prices since 2020 have gone up 20%. We are often told how the tax increase will affect homeowners but as someone who rented a high rent property for over 30 years, he knew that if the tax rate was to go up 6.5 or 6.7%, the next time he sat down to sign a lease he was going to get hammered. There are a lot of empty spaces in downtown Hanover, proposed rents for those will go up. He knows Alex has a goal to revitalize downtown and he is not sure that is going to do that as we have seen the decrease in retail in Hanover. The other problem is parking; it is very difficult and expensive. With some of the proposals he has heard, there will be less parking and perhaps traffic will even be worse than it is. But in particular, he thinks we all need to understand how this affects a lot of folks who are in social security.

Further thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns about Article 20. Hearing and seeing none, moderator calls the question – voice vote is too close to call, moderator calls for hand vote.

ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE TWENTY-ONE:

Selectboard member Callaghan read out and then moved the article.

Shall the Town continue the established practice of delegating the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Cemetery Trustees to the Selectboard pursuant to RSA 289:6, II.

The article was seconded from floor. Moderator further explains article.

This article was written before the new board was seated. For many years, the Town of Hanover has taken care of the cemeteries through Parks and Recreation. Unbeknownst to us, when we were looking at the laws, we realized that we were not abiding within a statutory framework. We needed a specific delegation for care of the cemeteries; this proposal delegates care to the Selectboard.

The first option is to populate a board of cemetery trustees with private citizens. When this article was drafted, we did not have such a board, but after publication, citizens came forward to volunteer.

Earlier today. We voted in a board. We are still required to vote on this article. If affirmed, in 90 days, it would strip the authority in the cemetery board and delegate it to the selectboard. Bear that history in mind as you vote.

Rich Howarth says it is outstanding that residents want to serve on this board and really look after these places and asks if he can make a motion to table or go directly to a vote.

Moderator responds and asks for comments on cemetery trust fund as moderator.

Laura Spector-Morgan indicates Cemetery Trustees would have authority to spend cemetery trustee funds on town cemeteries.

Further comment or questions.

Bill Abdu – can the SB have oversight of Cemetery board? Can Trustee Board work collectively with Selectboard? Is there a middle ground?

Laura Spector-Morgan – Ideally the board works in conjunction with the SB but legally SB has no statutory control over the board of cemeteries. Board has a fiduciary responsibility to the town.

Nico Macri said he heard these board candidates speak today outside the polls and he was impressed; he believes the SB could use this time in better ways. He thinks this article should be voted down.

Kesaya Noda would like to hear any of the SB who thinks they should maintain oversight – any who urge us not to utilize the new board.

Nancy Carter wants this article defeated; SB out of cemetery business – has no problem with that arrangement. Athos Rassias disagrees with Carter; thinks the SB has been handling this efficiently and should continue. Carey Callaghan moved it but is voting against the article.

Susan Blum – confused because SB voted for this article and now some are voting against. Moderator reiterated why the diversity of opinion now, when this was voted, there was no cemetery board, not enough trustees, needed the 2 generous write-in candidates. Without them there would be no board, needed three members.

Newly voted trustee, Harold Frost shared that he expects the new board to work closely with Parks & Rec on maintenance of cemeteries. If you heard the candidates forum, you heard that there has been issues with maintenance and we are eager to remedy that. He is eager to volunteer and impressed with the knowledge and experience of the write in candidates with these issues.

Debra Olson – Trying to understand if there will there be more costs on way or another. Laura Spector-Morgan comments – no. Town could raise or appropriate additional funds if they choose.

Stan Colla – In the warrant, the Selectboard voted 4-0 at Pre-town Meeting – how would the Board vote now. Moderator said they are welcome to share their opinions, but we have an open question.

SB member Chamberlain – voting against Article in favor of new board.

Moderator calls voice vote (yay – transfers duties to Selectboard, nay transfers duties to newly created board)

ARTICLE FAILS

Moderator called for a one-minute stretch.

ARTICLE TWENTY-TWO: (By Petition):

Selectboard chair Rassias read out and then moved the article.

To see if the Town will vote to call on the United States government to support an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza and the West Bank in order to ensure the safety and right to life of all people living in the region of Israel and Palestine. Additionally, to stop the ongoing armed hostilities and human devastation, these voters ask the Town of Hanover to urge the United States government to immediately end U.S. arms shipments and military aid to the Israeli government and to use its considerable influence to ensure the safe delivery of food and medical supplies to Gaza. The record of the vote shall be transmitted by written notice from town officials to United States Representative Ann Kuster from New Hampshire; United States Senators Maggie Hassan and Jeanne Shaheen from New Hampshire; and United States President Joseph Biden, urging them to take action toward this end.

SB chair Rassias reads the article, seconded from floor

Moderator states before we get into debate on this article, I want to mention that I know that this is a very difficult issue that everyone has been dealing with; there are a lot of opinions on this and I want to just very respectfully request of everybody in the room that as we address our comments we do so respectfully and accept and believe that our fellow residents in Hanover are speaking in good faith.

Resident Jackson Weinstein makes a motion to amend the article – Moderator shares that in compliance with the law, Mr. Weinstein submitted this in writing earlier today; we were able to prepare and can therefore share it to the screen.

Weinstein read the entirety of the new proposed article:

To see if the Town will vote to call on the United States government to support efforts for permanent and lasting peace throughout the Middle East; to ensure rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness throughout the region; to greatly increase the humanitarian assistance provided to the region, directing these efforts to the victims of ethnic or religious discrimination, terrorism, and sexual violence and to ensure that the freedoms of dissent, conscience, self-determination and religious practice are protected for all residents or all nations The record of this vote shall be transmitted by written notice from town officials to United States Representative Ann Kuster from New Hampshire; United States Senators Maggie Hassan and Jeanne Shaheen from New Hampshire; and United States President Joseph Biden, urging them to take action toward this end.

Further thoughts, comments, observations, or concerns on the proposed amendment.

Weinstein makes comments to explain his rational for this submission of the amendment.

As a Dartmouth student, I can say that since the arrest and the announcement of this article, I have deliberated with a number of students, faculty, associates of Dartmouth, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, and I have understood there to be a widespread consensus that the language of this particular text is overly exclusive, ill nuanced for this conflict and only liable to hurt or offend a large portions of this town's residents who may feel unsafe, unwelcome, unheard within their own town or their own campus. As a Dartmouth student, I can say that since May 1st our dialog on campus has been monolithic at times at times hateful, utterly toxic to say the least and people have been unable to express their own opinions. I and others have been harassed or accosted online or in person and just based on even expressing an iota of support for the administration's response to the May 1st protest or expressing an equivocal stance on this issue. We worry that the text of this article can only make matters worse and with that said I think that we can all agree that we aspire to peace in the Middle East, that we support US humanitarian aid to all people suffering from war, from hunger, drought,

atrocities the likes of which we couldn't possibly imagine in all countries including of course Israel and Gaza. We hope that this text will help to protect his town's unity, civic discourse and in the best case set a stage for future productive meaningful and constructive dialog in the future.

Weinstein further requests, before debate continues, I move that the vote on this motion to amend be held by secret ballot. Moderator indicates that is already in the record and as a matter of law the vote on Amendment will be by secret ballot.

Resident Sharon Racusin invited to read her statement to give perspective on original article, not necessarily a response to the amendment. This resolution is part of a movement of towns and cities across the country to condemn US complicity in Israel's apartheid system of oppression. We want Hanover to join Lebanon, Dover, Durham, Sharon, VT and Thetford, VT, and many others, in calling upon our congressional delegation to use its significant leverage to stop providing military aid that is used to commit genocide and call for a permanent ceasefire. For me, as a Jew, it is especially imperative that Jews not stay silent to something so catastrophic as genocide in Gaza. A common argument is that ceasefire resolutions are anti-Semitic expressing hostility towards Jews because of their religious or cultural identity. But think about the ones weaponizing this charge of antisemitism, Governor Sununu, Former President Trump, Netanyahu, Speaker of the House Johnson.

It is not anti-Semitic to criticize the Israeli government. It is not anti-Semitic to criticize Israel or having developed into an apartheid state that grants rights and recognition to only half the population, the Jewish population, while using violence to suppress, displace, dehumanize, and eliminate the indigenous Palestinian population. These ceasefire resolutions are not anti-Semitic but anti-Zionist expressing opposition to Zionism as an ideology that claims the land of Israel and Palestine exclusively for the Jewish community.

Hundreds of US Rabbis and cantors signed a petition to President Biden calling on him to stop this war and telling him that war will never provide safety to Israelis and Palestinians. These Rabbis and cantors are certainly not anti-Semitic. Likewise, Holocaust survivors, and their descendants, have been present at protests across the country wearing signs that read "This Holocaust survivor says stop the genocide in Gaza." These Holocaust survivors and their children and grandchildren and certainly not anti-Semitic. One Holocaust survivor, Steven Capos (sp?), said if you are indifferent, if you do not take a stand, [and that is not a stand (pointing to amendment on screen). That is a general feel-good proposition and statement] like we do, you acquire a degree of guilt. Hanover needs to take a stand, don't stay silent and please pass this resolution with a show of pink cards not by voice please.

Moderator shared that there has been a motion made to vote by secret ballot on this resolution. Again, now we are at the phase of considering the amendment.

Susan Blum comments that she appreciates the amendment; it is a feel-good statement, but it doesn't go to the language of the original regarding stopping tax dollars being spent and I want that addressed. This is all we have that we can do; we can send a message. I think we should vote down the amendment and go with the original.

Lorna Britton, on behalf of myself and a neighbor, Christine Foley who could not be here. This statement was drafted in response to the original, but it fits just as well as a response to the amendment. We want to express our strong opposition to the warrant. The conflict in Gaza is complicated and the range of opinions in town reflect this complexity. If adopted, the article will

unfairly represent the views of many town residents, like my neighbor who cannot be here. We understand the desire to show empathy, but regardless, this is not a Hanover town matter that we should opine on as a town. There is more we can do as individual citizens to provide support. Again, we strongly oppose this warrant article as it is not a Town matter.

Harper Richardson – comments that this issue matters to Hanover and the State of NH
We keep hearing that this is an issue that does not matter to Hanover, to New Hampshire and I frankly do not think that is true. Resident shares dollar figures related to Hanover and NH funds specifically going to Israel and shared US figures. Israel is the largest cumulative recipient to US aid in history. This is an issue that should matter to each of us.

Nico Macro posed a procedural question, can we suggest a different amendment.

Moderator states that we need to conclude debate and discussion on this amendment first and vote on it. Then we can consider other amendments. Resident Macro thinks City of Lebanon amendment was fair and balanced and more appropriate than this one and should be considered.

Deb Hoffer wants to emphasize that while we say this is not a Hanover Issue, this is important to every person in Hanover. She likes the amendment as it is less one-sided and divisive than the original. People are hurting; this is a horrible situation. She wants to vote to support people being devastated by this war and that can be a uniting force as opposed to the many divisive forces being proposed in the original petition.

Orin P (I/n/u) wanted to thank prior speakers for making case that criticizing Israel is not anti-Semitic and it is not problematic to call for peace in the Middle East. Why focus on Israel when there are human rights issues through Middle East. He encourages us to think how the amendment tries to be inclusive of international issues in our town governance and does not focus on one issue.

Jordan (I/n/u) shared what he called scattered points. 1. We are focusing on Israel specifically as it is the thing we can do something about now and the dollars going to Israel could be better used to solve local problems. 2. They say it is not a Hanover issue, but those dollars are our dollars and empathy is a Human issue. In 2005, the Hanover Selectboard voted to impeach the President. This was not a Hanover issue, but he presumes that they felt morally motivated. 3. On the amendment, no one will disagree with this, peace in the Middle East is good, but the original calls for action items that be concretely be put into policy.

Jake Blum says we should take a stand on not sending our tax dollars and weapons to support genocide.

Shayna Rockmore said she is used to speaking in front of her student council but happy to address this bigger group. She wants to address the concern about sending taxpayer dollars being sent. While she and many others agree and feel heartbreak about Gaza, she wants people to understand the Iron Dome, Israel's defense system, which is supported by US dollars. Some US funds are used to save lives not purchase bombs. Second, in response to an earlier comment that some of the people are Hamas; she shares that Hamas is a violent dangerous terrorist organization that governs Gaza.

Jonah Bard shares - As an Israeli resident of Hanover who spent considerable amounts of time in Israel and Palestine talking to residents in the West Bank, he wants to highlight that the movement behind

the original petition is alienating to Israelis and Jews in this community. Over the past few weeks, he has been bombarded with anti-Semitic rhetoric such as “Free Palestine from the River to the Sea” when he walks across campus. He cannot advertise being Israeli as he would lose relationships with people who do not believe his nationality should exist. That’s how students are interpreting this. We need a nuanced approach to the Israeli Hamas war in Hanover.

Nancy Welch states she is wearing a button that says “Free Palestine;” I don’t view this as hate speech. It further says “One state with equal rights for all;” I’ve worn this for 25 years hoping for the creation of one state and the end of the apartheid and US funding of the apparatus such as the Iron Dome. A first step is to say to the US government, stop funding this war and stop funding the apartheid. Looking back to apartheid in S Africa in the 1980s, she urges all to consider what they will think of this moment 25 years from now.

Marty Hemmelstein wants to say that people are using terms like apartheid and genocide that are highly inaccurate. Many numbers being shared about deaths and population cannot be trusted. There is no genocide happening.

Constance Fontanet, medical student, apologizes if she gets emotional but her preference is taking care of patients not speaking in front of a large crowd. Since October, she is tired of seeing colleagues being murdered and patients dying. There is a reason why NGOs like doctors without borders have passed similar resolutions. She wants to know what would be enough for people to speak out.

Kesaya Noda appreciated the clarity of Sharon Racusin’s discussion of the amendment with clear expectations and she urges that we vote it down. It does not address this issue at hand which the original proposal does. She thinks we need to speak out.

Julia Abbott comes from LA but her mother came to LA from Tehran, Iran. One reason she is at Dartmouth is that her mom really liked Hanover when they visited, she thought it was a safe town. She says that a call for ceasefire will not have a big impact outside Hanover, but will matter here. She’s fought for fighting again protests in Iran, but Hanover has not picked up that issue. There are many important issues, but we cannot take them all up. If the town does choose to adopt this proposal, she may feel that Hanover is not as safe as she thought.

Mia Beauveneau thanks all for taking time to listen to this resolution and for coming out to make their voices heard; indicative of what democracy is. Tonight, she wanted to speak in support of the original ceasefire resolution and shared a story about learning about the Rwandan genocide and that world powers including the US refused to take action. She told herself that she would not be silent or turn a blind eye if the US again supported genocide. Within that context she chose on May 1st to call upon Dartmouth to divest and along with 89 other students, faculty and members of the Upper Valley community calling for justice she was arrested. She felt betrayed by her college, her town and her country. She urges all to consider the original message as it sends a message to the US and stands for justice and peace.

Aman Sinha (SP?) As a Dartmouth student, send his deepest apologies to any Jewish student who has been harassed, who has felt threatened by any Pro Palestinian protest. Any who threaten or harass should be held accountable. He thanks people for coming as believes that the beginning to any solution is communication and that is what we are doing here today. The amendment refers to the Middle East in vague sense – he agrees that atrocities are happening everywhere in the world including the Middle

East – but today we are talking about what's happening in Israel and Palestine. This issue is here it's now a Hanover issue; it's on our campus; State Police were involved. You can be for or against it, but it's a Hanover issue; how we deal with that is what happens here today. It's a Hanover issue because the tax dollars are real and are going to Israel and are funding what's happening in Palestine. As residents, let's do what we can and use our voices. This is the system we live in and we should take advantage of this democratic system. Regarding the proposal, he heard from some that is was divisive, but not to him. He feels it's peace at its core.

A resident (name unknown) shared that he feels original too strong, amendment too weak, but as a moderate he thinks the original was better.

Moderator thanked all for the passionate opinion and extremely well-spoken way it was handled on all sides. He calls the question on the table by reading the proposed amendment and explains secret ballot process – yes if for amendment, no is against amendment. The Secret ballot process begins, and 5 minutes given for all to participate. Staff began counting ballot.

In the interim, moderator recognizes Deborah Bacon Nelson as a representative of the Hanover Democratic party. She asked all to think about and recognize a former Selectboard chair who served 35 years in the State House who passed away in February, Sharon Nordgren. As a long time, Hanover resident, she never missed town meeting, always sat with me, and wrote notes and shared wisdom and counsel asked for or not. She did so much to represent the Town of Hanover and to represent disadvantaged groups in our society and it's important to take a minute to recognize her contribution.

Moderator commends our administrative and counting staff, both volunteers and town employees. He announces results on amendment Yes 74 Opposed 132 **AMENDMENT IS REJECTED**

Moderator indicates that originally drafted Article 22 is now up for discussion.

Nicolas Macri recognizes different opinions and does not want to reinvent the wheel. He would like text replaced with what Lebanon adopted in February and makes this motion.

To see if the Town will adopt and affirm the City Council resolution passed by the City of Lebanon in April. Motion was seconded. Macri reads the Lebanon Resolution.

WHEREAS the City Council of Lebanon (henceforth referred to as "the Council") affirm the intrinsic value of human life and the human rights of all people regardless of race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, cultural group, language, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, age, religious or political opinion or activity, economic status, immigration status, or housing status, in accordance with the Welcoming Lebanon Ordinance; and

WHEREAS the Council recognizes that in a widely multicultural community, matters of international concern have local significance; and

WHEREAS the Council grieves the tragic losses of human lives, both Palestinian and Israeli, in devastating numbers in the last half a year alone, and expresses its deepest sympathies for the friends, families, and communities of those affected by the ongoing violence; and

WHEREAS there have been significant local effects arising from the ongoing violence, including a rise in antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian racism, leading to safety concerns and a reduced quality of life for members of the greater Lebanon community; and

WHEREAS the Council understands that many members of the greater Lebanon community have not felt their concerns to be heard by members of higher levels of government and are seeking recognition at the local level;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council affirms and echoes the City's residents' fervent desire for an immediate and permanent bilateral end to violence in the region, the safe return of all hostages and prisoners, Israeli and Palestinian, and for the development of a lasting peace based on a recognition of the universality of human rights and fundamental equality of all peoples; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council affirms and echoes the City's residents' fervent desire for priority to be given to humanitarian aid, especially medical care and relief from hunger to those most affected by the ongoing violence in the region, as well as an end to military aid; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council condemns antisemitism, Islamophobia, and racism of all forms, at home and abroad, and will work to foster an environment in which all members of the greater Lebanon community can feel safe practicing and expressing their cultural and religious identities freely and in public, without fear of discrimination or harm; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council will forward a copy of this resolution to our United States Congressional delegation, namely Representative Ann Kuster, Senator Jeanne Shaheen, and Senator Maggie Hassan, as an indication of the greater Lebanon community's deeply held desire for peace, abroad and at home.

Jake Blum asks to call question on amendment, seconded from floor. Moderator calls for Voice Vote

AMENDMENT IS REJECTED

Jake Blum asks to call vote on Article 22 as drafted. Moderator announces voting by silent ballot on article 22. Directs how to vote – yes to support article 22, no if reject article 22. Voters were given time to submit vote.

Moderator called order to share results

Yes 101

No 89

ARTICLE PASSED

Asks everyone to take seats as meeting is not over yet. With respect to Article 23.

ARTICLE TWENTY-THREE: To transact any other business that may legally be brought before this Town Meeting. Moderator moves; seconded from floor.

No debate or discussion Moderator calls for voice vote

NO OTHER BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD

Town Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta Hitchcock, Town Clerk

Minutes prepared by Tracy Walsh