

Warren Board of Selectmen

Minutes of September 15, 2022 Meeting

6 p.m., Selectmen's Meeting Room (also by Zoom and on Facebook Live)

Selectmen in Attendance: David Dufresne, Derick Veliz, Richard Eichacker (all in person)

Others in attendance: Town Administrator James Ferrera, Fire Chief Adam Lavoie, Police Chief Gerald Millett, Highway Surveyor Jeremy Olson, Joseph Kondrat, James Dusty, Kerry Schmidt (all in person); Brianna Dunn, Mike Hugo, Karen Dusty, James McKeon (by Zoom)

#1,2

D Dufresne opened the meeting at 6:01 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

#3

The Board heard a presentation on Zoom by Michael Hugo, Policy Director and Director of Government Relations for the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards on the Public Health Excellence Grant Program for Shared Services. The Association represents all 351 Boards of Health and serves as their technical assistance and legal assistance provider.

The program was developed three years ago to build more staff and capacity across the state, thereby easing the burden on smaller local Boards of Health. It was the first time the state funded local boards of health and it has received increased and generous funding -- \$15 million has been budgeted for the program this year. There is a chance that it will become a regular line item in the state budget.

Through the program, towns receive funding to work in groups to collaboratively hire Board of Health personnel (i.e. inspectors, public health nurses, social service or health educators, epidemiologist) who can provide services across all of the towns in the group. Each group will employ a Shared Services Coordinator to administer the program and file the required reports. The program started with 14 groups comprised of 49 towns, and now has 50 groups comprised of 310 towns.

Warren, should it accept the Municipality Statement of Commitment, would be part of the Mill Towns Public Health Coalition along with West Brookfield, Ludlow, and as the Host Town, Palmer, which will receive an extra 15% of the funding for an administrative hire. The Mill Towns PHC will receive \$300,000 each year for nine years to support the positions, including training, salary and benefits. It's like hiring a temp agency to help catch up, then the temps stay on at no cost to the town.

There will be a capacity assessment to determine how far behind the community is in meeting statutory standards; every community is at least somewhat behind.

Selectmen must sign the agreement saying that they will cooperate with the lead municipality and will use the funding to supplement, not supplant personnel, meaning you can't use the grant to hire someone and then layoff an existing employee. During the first 90 days, Warren can opt out of the agreement.

Warren Board of Health Secretary Brianna Dunn indicated that the Warren B of H is in support of the program.

Motion to join the Mill Towns Public Health Coalition and sign the Municipality Statement of Commitment: R Eichacker

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

#4

Town Administrator James Ferrera applied for and received a Community Compact Grant in the amount of \$12,840 for Omnibus Budget planning software for FY 2024.

Motion to accept the grant in the amount of \$12,840 to acquire budgetary software for FY '24: R Eichacker.

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

#5

J Ferrera also applied for and received a Community Compact Grant in the amount of \$40,000 for a Feasibility Study for a Public Safety/Municipal Complex. The resulting report will show whether such a complex would be feasible for Warren and what the costs would be. D Veliz indicated that there is money available for projects like that, but you have to have done such a study to apply, so thanks to the Town Administrator for laying the groundwork.

Motion to accept the state grant in the amount of \$40,000 to commission a feasibility study for the construction of a Public Safety/Municipal Complex: R Eichacker

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

#6

Warren has also received a grant for \$200,000 from the Green Communities Division of the Department of Energy Resources to fund energy conservation measures at the Warren Community Elementary School. The entirety of the program at the school will cost more than the amount allotted, so it may have to be completed over the next few years, but this can get it started. The grant was awarded to the town, not the school district, so the town will have to work with the School Committee and the School Department on the project and funding.

Motion to accept the state grant in the amount of \$200,000 to fund energy conservation measures at the Warren Community Elementary School: R Eichacker

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

#7

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation, through its Winter Recovery Assistance Program (WRAP), has awarded \$210,794.79 to the Town of Warren (based on the town's 63.207 miles of road). Jeremy Olson indicated that the grant "follows the lead of Chapter 90" and allows the town to recover costs from winter cleanup.

Motion to accept the state grant in the amount of \$210,794.79 from the Winter Recovery Assistance Program: R Eichacker

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

#8

Cornerstone Bank made an unrestricted donation of \$28,500 to the Town of Warren. When the Cornerstone branch in town closed it was a hardship for Warren residents, and in addition to its donation to the Veterans Council, the bank agreed to donate a percentage of the proceeds from the sale of the building to the town.

D Veliz calculated that the donation comes to just over \$5 per resident.

Motion to accept the receipt of an unrestricted donation in the amount of \$28,500 from Cornerstone Bank to the Town: R Eichacker

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

#9

Selectmen discussed whether to put the donation into the town's General Fund, where it would be absorbed into the general accounting for the town, or to put it in an Unrestricted Gift Account, which would be controlled by Selectmen, and the funding could be used for one project or many over a few years. An example of the possible use of the funds would be for the Senior Center or Veterans Council, do something for sports teams, or repair the fountain on the Town Common.

J Kondrat suggested it be called the "Selectmen's Gift Account" to make sure it's the Selectmen who administer it, but J Ferrera said it wouldn't be necessary as it was the Selectmen who created the account.

Motion to put the \$28,500 from Cornerstone Bank into an Unrestricted Gift Account: R Eichacker
2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

#10

J Olson requested that he be allowed to hire Steven Swiecanski, his selection for Highway Foreman (PW-4), at a Step 1 on the wage scale. Mr Swiecanski, who wants to come on board to help make the town a better place, is an excellent candidate and has 14 years' experience in construction- and equipment-based positions, as well as various licensures, and bringing him in at Step 1 would bring his pay in line with his current family budget.

Olson also asked that Swiecanski be allowed to participate in the town's health insurance on his start date, rather than waiting the typical 30-day period. He would be willing to make double-payments on his premiums to catch up.

Olson said he was fortunate in that he had a lot of good applicants for the position, due in part to the improved wage scale, but also to good benefits and the group that works for the department. D Veliz suggested that it may also be attributable to Olson's enthusiasm and his team ethic.

Motion to start the new Highway Foreman for the Highway Department at a Grade PW-4 Step 1 on the Wage Scale: R Eichacker

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

Motion to enroll Steven in the health insurance program upon his date of hire: R Eichacker

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

#11

J Ferrera presented Selectmen with a draft for a Town Meeting Budget Calendar, listing out steps in the process, the dates when the steps have to be completed and the departments responsible for completing the steps. He has also shared the draft with the Finance Committee, which prefers the more organized approach. The Selectmen set the tone for the budget, as far as level-funding or requests for cuts.

The finance offices in the building are very busy at this time of year, getting all of the required reporting together for the Department of Revenue and have everything ready for the Special Town Meeting in the fall. J Ferrera would like to send the calendar out to all departments and keep the lines of communication open so everyone knows what is needed and when.

R Eichacker said it appeared that there may not be a need to meet with every department about their budgets, just the ones that need some work.

D Veliz would like to see as much detail as possible on specific deadlines and requirements, and parties responsible for the requirements.

#12

J Ferrera discussed possible dates for the Special Town Meeting to be held in November. The first week is too early, as Free Cash won't yet be certified, Nov. 8 is the election, the 15th is a possibility,

the 22nd is very close to the Thanksgiving Holiday and after Thanksgiving is too late to get through all of the steps necessary to mail out the 3rd Qtr Tax bills on time (by the last week of December). J Ferrera will run the Nov. 15 date by the Town Clerk to see if it works with the schedule in that office and if the school auditorium will be available. Hopefully a certain date for the meeting will be set at the next Selectmen's meeting.

#13

Use of the initial payment, in the amount of \$273,289.60, from the new round of American Rescue Plan Act funds for some high priority projects was the next topic of discussion. The projects have a high priority because the costs will increase if not acted upon quickly. There is an additional \$507,000 in ARPA funding expected to come at the end of the month.

Fire Department/Police Department -- There was \$122,000 unencumbered at the end of FY '22 for the Public Safety radio project. The monies were already approved, it's just taking a while to get the infrastructure in place (it's a three-repeater system on three towers around town), and in the interim, the funds went back into Free Cash. The costs for leases for space on the towers and insurance are not included in this amount, but other than that, the project is fully-funded. The lease costs for the remainder of this FY will be addressed at the Special Town Meeting. Additionally, Lavoie is expecting more money through a grant from Rutland for the actual radios, meaning that the entire system and equipment will have been upgraded.

Motion to allocate \$122,000 from ARPA to the Radio Infrastructure Project: R Eichacker
2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

Police Department -- G Millette presented Selectmen with quotes for two 2022 Ford Police Interceptor AWD vehicles, one of which is a hybrid. Millette stated that the current department vehicles are front-wheel drive, which causes problems in a hilly town in the wintertime, and are small. At this point in time, the dealer has 2022 models -- the 2023 models are \$5,000 more -- and the department can get about \$15,000 on trade-ins, so the total for two new all-wheel drive vehicles would be \$82,910.15.

Motion to allocate from ARPA for two police cruisers the sum of \$82,910.15: R Eichacker
2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

Fire Department -- A Lavoie presented Selectmen with quotes for two different types of Automatic Electronic Defibrillators, professional-grade and commercial-grade -- he would like to purchase 13 of them: three for the Shepard Building, four replacements for Fire Department apparatus, three replacements for Police cruisers, one replacement for the Senior Center, a unit for the Highway Department, and one for the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Lavoie apologized for having inadvertently left one of the units off of the quote request, bringing the actual cost of his request higher.

The lower cost estimate would include 10 commercial grade LIKFEPAK CR2 units (though 11 are needed) and two of the professional-grade LIFEPAK 1000 units for a cost of \$25,895. This would work just fine, but the pads for those units are incompatible with the ambulance units, and would have to be changed upon the arrival of First Responders, which could cost valuable time. The professional grade LIFEPAK 1000 units are more expensive, and for 12 units would cost \$32,885, though 13 are needed.

D Dufresne indicated that it's not worth saving a couple of dollars if it could cost someone's life. It's better to use the same equipment and have a seamless transition. A Lavoie pointed out that if all the pads they purchase are the same, they may see some savings in the ability to buy them in bulk.

Dufresne inquired about the CPR Training for town employees. Another class will be offered in the next few weeks, as there were too many cancellations for the class offered last week. Dufresne

emphasized the importance of CPR training, having had to administer both CPR and an AED to someone who, thankfully, made it to the hospital.

Motion to allocate from ARPA \$36,000 to the AED LIFEPAK 1000: R Eichacker

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

Highway/Cemetery/Parks Departments -- J Olson presented Selectmen with a \$13,771.50 quote for a Kubota 4WD Sub-Compact Tractor for maintaining the cemetery, which is a very hilly property. The machine they currently use for the task has 5000 hours of operating time on it, and it is costly and time-consuming for the Highway Department to maintain such an old tractor.

If Selectmen approve the purchase of the new Kubota, it would work better on the hills of the cemetery, and could be used to maintain other town properties, as well. Also, it uses diesel fuel, which they have at the Highway Department.

D Veliz calculated that the old tractor had run for about two straight years of eight-hour days. Olson said that his crew members, particularly Alan and Jimmy McKeon, have done a great job improving the conditions at the cemetery, and that this piece of equipment will really help to continue that progress.

J Ferrera, who met last week with Olson and the Cemetery Commission last week, said this would be a great purchase because the machine can be used by all three departments, whereas the current tractor can be used only at the cemetery because it was purchased with Cemetery Commission funds. Olson said this tractor with 4WD offers the kind of stability required to handle some of the steeper slopes that need mowing.

The old tractor would be kept running for a while and then auctioned off.

Motion to transfer from ARPA \$13,800 to purchase a Kubota 4WD Sub Compact Tractor: R Eichacker

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

Fire Department -- A Lavoie presented Selectmen with a \$17,040 quote for a Lucas 3 Chest Compression Unit, a state-of-the-art battery-operated machine that administers uniform chest compressions on a patient in cardiac arrest. He said this project goes hand-in-hand with the AED project.

Maintaining the pressure and consistency of chest compressions during CPR is crucial for the survival of the patient, but very taxing on the First Responders, who have to swap out every two minutes. New state regulations say that CPR has to continue for 20 minutes, at which point the First Responders are exhausted, the compressions not as deep and so the CPR isn't as effective.

With a Lucas 3 unit, which is becoming a staple on ambulances, the patient would continue to receive regular and deep compressions which increase the patient's chances of survival while freeing up the First Responders to ready the patient for transport. It takes only seconds to put it on a patient.

The company has said there will be a 9% price increase after Oct. 1, so, if approved, Lavoie would order the unit right away. The units are on the State Bid List.

Motion to transfer from ARPA \$17,100 to purchase a Lucas Machine: R Eichacker

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

#14

J Ferrera requested Selectmen's approval to move forward in applying for a Community Compact IT Grant, which provides funding for small communities for costs relating to updates or conversions, new modules, tech support for a project, etc., but not for annual subscriptions for software.

The Tax Collection software POINT will no longer be supported after June 2023, and so there is a need to find a new platform. There is an opportunity to link the Town Departments together under the

umbrella of three software companies working together: POINT Software's PermitLink for permitting and licensing software; QDS for Assessing and Tax Collection; and Zobrio for the Treasurer's and Accountant's offices.

Ferrera and Tax Collector K Schmidt (and Treasurer Dawn Swistak by Zoom) attended a presentation by the three companies in Greenfield a few weeks previously and thought the packages looked promising, though departments would all have to look more closely at the software and make sure it would be a good fit.

Members of the Planning and Conservation boards, along with a few other town employees, had a Zoom presentation the previous week from another permitting software company PermitEyes, which Building Inspector BJ Church uses in other towns and recommends. Like the other software packages, it has modules that can link some departments' information together.

D Dufresne emphasized the importance of user-friendliness as well as interdepartmental connection.

While the selection of software is not a process to rush into, and all departments need to be in agreement, the Community Compact Grants are timely, so Ferrara will put together an estimate of costs using the quote ranges he received from the QDS, POINT and Zobrio package. There may be a need to upgrade some of the desktop computers, as well, or perhaps purchase new laptops for a dedicated work station in the Planning/Building office.

If the estimate is a little short, the town may have to come up with the difference. Also, there are annual subscription costs associated with the software, and so departments would have to budget accordingly going forward.

R Eichacker pointed out that the cost of PermitLink is \$10 per permit with an annual minimum of \$4,000. If a town raised its permit fee by \$10 and did 400 permits a year, it could pay for itself.

D Dufresne indicated that the point of the software is to reduce the workload and stress on the employees and residents/contractors using it, and to track timelines and deadlines. It's very important to make sure that all of the employees who will be using the software are comfortable with it, and so we need to make sure to bring as many departments as possible into any software demonstration.

#15

Motion to pay the following warrants –

Payroll #22 \$53,212.52

Vendor #23 \$12,825.48

Payroll #24 \$61,110.26

Vendor #25 \$212,988.04

Payroll #26 \$5,000.00: R Eichacker.

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

Bills will be paid at the next meeting (Speedy recovery, Mrs. Dusty).

#16

There are no minutes to approve at this meeting – they'll be prepared for the next.

#17

Police Department report for the month of August attached. The department received a Governor's Safety Grant for traffic patrols last month. Early in the month, Millette and officers attended the Purple Heart Breakfast put on by Becky Acerra and the Veterans Council – again this year the event was well attended. On the 9th, the Police and Fire Departments took part in Active Shooter Training at Ware High School with members of the Ware and West Brookfield departments. The following week Millette and Lt. Early attended a presentation by the Central Mass Chiefs Association on mental wellbeing and communicating with the new generation. Finally, with school being back in session, Millette and Lt. Early

conducted ALICE training with district's teachers and discussed school safety. Please watch for flashing lights on the school buses and children – it is illegal to pass a school bus with its lights flashing.

Additionally, Millette and J Ferrera were just notified that the town was awarded another Governor's Safety Grant for traffic patrols in the amount of \$17,280.

Also, Millette has been nominated by the Central Mass Chiefs Association to serve on its Homeland Security group and serve as its representative to Homeland Security Department.

D Dufresne mentioned the electronic speed signs, that have also helped slow traffic going through town and provide the PD with statistical information on the number of people speeding in specific areas.

Five-minute break for WCAT tape change.

#18

No Old Business.

#19

J Ferrera informed Selectmen that in the process of applying for Community Compact Grants, he was informed that the town had never acted upon the Department of Revenue's Division of Local Services Financial Management Review grant that was awarded two years ago. And so, on Oct. 6, representatives from the DOR will be here to interview the Town Administrator, employees in the town's financial offices, members of the Board of Selectmen and a member of the Finance Committee. Based on the interviews and the reports they've requested, they'll come up with a document to serve us as a roadmap for best practices.

In late August, Ferrera was notified that a Warren student will be attending Smith Vocational High School in Northampton, and the cost for the tuition will be \$19,622. An additional cost of \$38,700 will be incurred for the student's transportation by Van Pool to Northampton. There will have to be articles on the Special Town Meeting agenda to fund these costs. The family has also recently requested that the town provide transportation to sporting events, which will cost around \$140 per event. This is a first-year student, and so we can anticipate four years of these costs.

Ferrera will send out notification to all departments next week to submit articles for the Special Town Meeting.

According to the monthly Accountant's report, budget expenditures are at about 16.67%, with only a few departments' lines moderately higher due to full-year expenditures made at the beginning of the FY.

Treasurer Dawn Swistak has been available for the past two Wednesday mornings to help interested employees sign up for the new Vision Plan, in which about 12 employees have enrolled.

Ferrera is concerned that the Sewer Commission has been holding its recent meetings at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Our MIAA representative has recommended that meetings not be held there – it is a working facility with various types of industrial and hazardous materials and therefore not necessarily safe for the public, it's not ADA compliant, and there are no video capabilities. He would like permission to contact the commission to tell them to meet here instead, and Selectmen agreed.

Also, there will be a pre-bidders' conference for the Grit Screw at the plant next Wednesday, Sept. 21, at 10 a.m.

Ferrera requested permission to attend a Massachusetts Municipal Management Association training in Sharon on Sept. 29, and a What's New in Municipal Law presentation by the DOR on Oct. 13 in Holyoke. There is a \$75 charge for the Oct. presentation. Selectmen consented to both and are in support of any type of training.

#20

R Eichacker was pleased with the positive meeting tonight – Selectmen voted to accept nearly \$500,000 in grants and gifts. D Dufresne congratulated the town employees and departments, as well as State Sen. Gobi and State Rep. Smola, who pulled together to win the grants.

D Dufresne contacted the School Committee requesting to meet with them and West Brookfield Selectmen at the Committee's Sept. 19 meeting, but hasn't yet heard back. Selectmen from both towns want to work with the district on matters concerning the budget, especially with a new superintendent coming in, and they are hoping to be put on the meeting agenda.

J Olson had a meeting with the new Wastewater Treatment Plant Chief Operator at the Highway Department about ways that the two departments could help each other. Olson is encouraged by the interdepartmental cooperation. D Dufresne emphasized that we are all here to work together for the good of the town – no one is getting rich working here, and some people even volunteer many, many hours for the betterment of the community.

#21

No correspondence.

#22

The next meeting will be held Sept. 19 at 6:30 p.m. at QRMHS, along with the West Brookfield Selectmen, to hopefully discuss budgetary concerns with the School Committee. The meeting will be broadcast on WCAT.

Travis Baker, chairman of WCAT, suggested that the live stream of meetings can be watched with a Roku Stick through Cablecast Streamweave or by using the link on the WCAT page on the town website.

#23

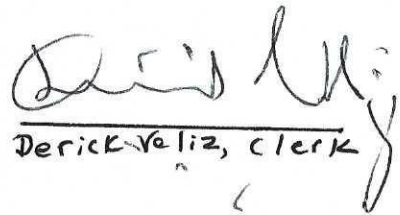
Motion to adjourn: R Eichacker.

2nd: D Veliz

Vote: 3-0 in favor

Meeting adjourned at 9:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kerry Schmidt


Derrick Veliz, clerk

Monthly Report August 1, 2022 to August 31, 2022

In the month of August 2022, the Warren Police Department responded to a total of 1595 calls for service with 23 ending in arrests. The following is a breakdown of statistics.

Calls Logged	1595
Felonies Investigated	7
Incident reports	71
On View Arrests	6
Warrant Arrests	6
Summons Arrests	11
Total Arrests	23
Protective Custodies	2
Juvenile Arrests	1
Motor Vehicle Stops	225
Motor Vehicle Citations	79

In August 2022, the Police Department had 6 total vehicles on the roster. They consist of 3 Ford Police Interceptor SUV's, 1 Ford Taurus, 1 Ford Fusion and 1 Humvee. Mileage on each is as follows.

Taurus	56,520
Fusion	43,323
D785	40,202
5068	189,719
C564	85,654
5116	Turned over to ACO
Humvee	8,288

On the first Sunday of the Month the Veterans Council held their annual Purple Heart Breakfast. The turn out was fantastic to honor these Military Veterans. Becky Acerra and her crew put on yet another amazing event. I thank the Council for inviting me as well as my Officers to participate in this event.

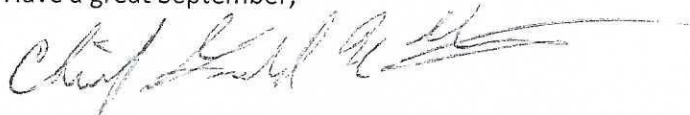
On the 9th, the entire Department took part in active shooter training at Ware High School. This combined training had Officers from Ware Police and Fire, Warren Police and Fire as well as West Brookfield Police. The instructors included Lt. Early as well as two trained instructors from Ware PD.

Also on the training front, Lieutenant Early and I attended a training on the 16 and 17th put on by the Central Mass Chiefs Association. This training focused on mental wellbeing and communicating with the new generation.

On August 30th, Lieutenant Early and I conducted a training with all of the teachers in the Quaboag School district. We spoke about school safety and what we are looking for in the up coming school year. We also conducted our yearly ALICE training with all the teachers and answered any questions that came up in regards to safety.

And finally, school is once again starting up for the year. Please drive safely and watch for the flashing red lights of the school buses.

Have a great September,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Chief Gerald Millette", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chief Gerald Millette



BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

CHARLES E. SHEPARD MUNICIPAL BUILDING

DATE: 9/15/2022

Attendee: Joseph Kauder, Jr.

Attendee: _____

Attendee: A. Lavoie

Attendee: _____

Attendee: C. Milette

Attendee: _____

Attendee: Jay Orr

Attendee: _____

Attendee: J. Dwyer

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