

**Town Meeting
March 11, 2026
Minutes**

Moderator Dauphin called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Selectman Clem Louder thanked the administration for a job well done. He thanked Bill Mitchell for his service. Moderator Dauphin spoke of the Citizen of the Year ballots and location for voting on this year's recipient to be awarded at the Community Dinner in August. He also thanked everyone for making Gilsum the wonderful Town we all enjoy living in. He went on to say that "there are so many people that take an active interest in our Town...thank you to all of them and to all of you for being involved, your support and coming to vote yesterday and for coming here tonight."

Clem Louder then thanked everyone that has been part of the administration. "To be honest with you it has been such a pleasure to work with everyone in the community. The people in the front office are phenomenal. I unfortunately call them when they are not on duty, call them on the weekends and I found that if the phone doesn't ring that means they don't want to talk to me. When all is said and done the front office works like a transmission, everyone of them is a little gear and they all intertwine and come back and forth and it makes me so proud that if I happen to lose one person I know it won't be difficult to put someone else in there and everyone around them can train them because everyone knows." Selectman Louder stated "I asked Bill Mitchell to run for Selectman and Bill is working on some projects and that he hopes he will continue to follow those projects through to the end." He spoke that Bill has been appreciated and asked for everyone to give him a hand (clap).

Moderator David Dauphin "A quorum being present, the meeting will now come to order. My name is David Dauphin, thank you for your votes, I am your Moderator. This NH Town Meeting will be based upon traditional practices and not a strict interpretation of Roberts Rules of Order. Please wait to be recognized before speaking and direct your questions and comments to the front of the room preferably using the microphone. If you speak, please state your name clearly for the minutes. Voting will be conducted by using a show of hands. I will ask for first IN favor, then OPPOSED, followed by ABSTAIN VOTES. Tonight, there are four (4) Articles without financial impact. I will read those Articles, discuss, and then we can waive the second reading. We will vote at the end of the discussion. If anyone wants a second reading on those we will do that. At this time please take a moment of silence for the deceased Veterans, family members and friends

and for all the unrest in the world.” (Pause). The Pledge of Allegiance followed. “Pursuant to RSA 669:5 only Gilsum registered voters are able to vote. I believe that everyone signed in with the Supervisors. I ask that any non-residents stand and state your name at this time.” “Noah Dietrich, Keene Sentinel.” Moderator Dauphin stated “he would read the Town of Gilsum election results and further stated that the period of time to request a recount will end at 5pm on Friday, March 13, 2026. “The results are: Selectman - Bruce Murphy; Treasurer - Angela Lombara; Moderator - David Dauphin; Budget Committee - James Lombara; Library Trustee for 3 years: Tom Hastings, Bruce Murphy, Helen Mercer; Library Trustee for 2 years: Daniel Law; Cemetery Trustee - Michael Ballow; Trustee of Trust Funds - Nicole Langlois; Supervisor of the Checklist - April Frazier. Congratulations to the newly elected officials.” “I would also like to recognize Bill Mitchell for serving on the Selectboard.” “Results of the proposed zoning Solar Amendment...it passed.”

Moderator Dauphin “Please be advised that the return of the Warrant Articles to be considered by the voters of the Town of Gilsum have been properly served and posted. Any suggested amendments to any of the Articles during our discussions must be submitted to me in writing before we continue with our discussion. We must be clear on what we are voting on.”

Motion to waive reading of Minutes of 2025 made by Bart Cushing.

Seconded by Clem Louder
All in favor. Motion passes.

Article 01 Operating Budget

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee's recommended sum of \$863,520 for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately.

The Budget Committee recommend this appropriation; the Selectboard recommend \$863,333. (Majority vote required).

Tom Julius Moved to floor
Bruce Murphy seconded.

Amendment: Dee Denehy proposes an amendment to Article 1 - The Operating Budget to see if the Town will vote to add \$13,000 to amend the budget of \$863,520 for a total

amendment of \$876,520 for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately.

Discussion: Bart Cushing asked "what is the \$13,000 in the amendment is for?" Dee Denehy stated "his goal is to put it towards the general government buildings maintenance. Currently there is \$9,000 in the budget for that, the same as last year. Last year we spent \$8,664. This is a budget line that I have watched closely, lobbying to increase since I became fire chief. This year we have a couple of projects in the works that were discussed during the budget process. The Budget Committee and Selectboard did not have enough information at the time of the Budget hearings to add these projects to the proposed budget. However, they suggested that I get the numbers and bring an amendment to this meeting. The additional projects include replacing the fire department chimney which is around \$6,000, replacing lights in the town office building which is around \$3,000 and finishing the town office emergency exit which is around \$1,500. The total of those 3 is \$10,500. Current expenses, or ongoing expenses, that are usually in this line include servicing and inspecting the fire extinguishers in all the town buildings - \$750, pumping of the septic holding tank at the fire station - \$1,500 and we have purchased three (inaudible) doors for the fire department for \$2,900. Just with those expenses we are at \$5,150. For these reasons, this is why I am proposing this amendment to take care of the buildings we have. The total impact of this amendment of \$13,000 would be 9.5 cents per thousand. It would bring the overall tax rate from \$4.17 and 1/2 cents per thousand to \$4.27 per thousand.

Betsy Cushing asked "what does the \$31,500 that is already on the appropriations go for?" Lenoir Law stated "the \$31,000 is more than just for building maintenance." Jack Carleton asks "if these are one-time expenses and not recurring?" Lenoir made a statement "there are other factors that have come to light since the budget process that we need funding for. We cut back the Sheriff just over \$9,000 and this year with the bills we have paid so far we are at 45% of the average that we paid for all of last year, in the first 3 months of the year."

Moderator Dauphin asked if there were any more questions regarding Article 1. Seeing none he re-read the Article as amended:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee's recommended sum of \$876,520 for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. (Majority vote required).

All in favor. Article Passes.

Article 02 Defibrillator

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000 to be added to the Defibrillator Capital Reserve Fund previously established (2005).

The Selectboard and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required).

Dee Denehy moved to the floor.

Chip Chapman Second

Discussion: Jason Beaubain asks "do we currently have a defibrillator in Gilsum and if we do, what does \$5,000 get us?" Brian stated "we do, and that they cost a pretty penny. The defibrillators cost between \$50,000 - \$60,000 so what we do is every year we put money into the fund so when it comes time for us to replace it, we have the money there. So instead of saying we need \$50,000 for a new defibrillator and sending out an amended tax bill, we built it in and most of these funds are that way. Putting money aside on a scheduled basis knowing how long it takes us to replace it." Dee Denehy stated "there are 3 different automatic defibrillators currently in buildings: one at the town office, one at the school in the back hallway and one at the church. The one that we are raising money for also monitors your blood pressure, your oxygen saturation and several other things that you would use them for that are more advanced and we carry 3 additional AED's on different fire trucks."

All in favor, motion passes..

Article 03 Defibrillator - Add Agents

To see if the Town will vote to appoint the Fire Chief and Selectmen as agents to expend from the Defibrillator Capital Reserve Fund previously established (2005). The Selectboard recommends this appropriation. (Majority vote required).

Bruce Murphy moved to the floor.

Jason Ballou Second

Discussion: Jack Carlton asked "who is the agent currently?" Brian stated "no one. As it is now the funds have to be expensed as town meeting."

All in favor. Motion passes.

Article 04 Fire Department Vehicle Expendable Trust

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$35,000 to be added to the Fire Department Vehicle Expendable Trust, a capital reserve fund, previously established, updated (2011). The Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Dwayne Nettleton moved to the floor

Angela Lombara second

No Discussion

All in favor. Article passes.

Article 05 Breathing Apparatus

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$48,000 to be added to the Breathing Apparatus Replacement Expendable Trust Fund previously established (2016). This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised by taxation.

The Selectboard and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Paula Aaron moved to the floor

Clem Louder Seconded

No Discussion.

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 06 Emergency Management Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,000 to be added to the Emergency Management Expendable Trust Fund previously established (2015).

The Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Barbara Bryce moved to floor

Brian Bazarnicki seconded

Discussion. Bart Cushing stated "Dee, Clem and Tom and a number of other people met and came up with an emergency management plan for the Town. The reason for it was if we have an event where we need FEMA the funds are there and the funds are available for fixing things such as culverts that are identified as a hazard, and generators. This plan is necessary to get matching funding if it becomes available. There were 4 or 5 meetings and volunteers spent 2 hours each time and it was quite constructive and we as citizens owe them a thank you for getting that done. It was a collaborative effort with the Southwest Regional Planning Commission. I just wanted to let people know that we did that because a lot of people don't know and we owe them a big **thank you** for getting it done."

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 07 Replacement Turn Out Gear

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,000 to be added to the Replacement of Turn Out Gear for the Fire Department Expendable Trust Fund previously established (2018). This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation.

The Selectboard and Budget Committee Recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

Clem Louder moved to the floor

Bruce Murphy Seconded

Discussion. Brian Bazarnicki stated "that no amount of this Article comes from taxation and the excess of funds came from the property auction we did last year and timber taxes and things that are accounted for bringing in the money. That is why we had an excess of funds that allowed us to offset some of these warrant articles so that it did not impact the taxes."

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 08 Minitors & Radios

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$500 to be added to the Minitors & Radios Expendable Trust, a capital reserve fund, previously established, renamed (2025). This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised by taxation. The Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Chip Chapman moved to floor

Angela Lombara seconded.

Discussion. Paula Aaron asked "what is a minitor?". Dee stated "it is the little pager we carry that alerts us to an emergency." Nicole Langlois asked "is there a more affordable phone app or system they could use?" Dee stated "the minitors are not cheap and cost close to \$1,500 each. That is a radio transmission and our dispatch center is in Keene. We have one tower over by Bart and Betsy (Cushing) that broadcasts it for us. We do use an app that is currently free, well our dispatch center bought it for us, but to use cell signals we are often not in the right spot so radios are a little bit better. So we are using both just in case one doesn't work. Cell signals are not great, we do use an app too, we use both."

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 09 Fire Department Equipment Replacement Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$4,000 to be added to the Fire Department Equipment Replacement Expendable Trust Fund previously established (2014).

The Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Eric Zablowsky moved to floor

Dee Denehy Second.

No Discussion.

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 10 Forest Fire Suppression Fund

To see if the town will vote to establish a Forest Fire Suppression Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of paying for fire suppression and to raise and appropriate \$1,000 to put in the fund; further to name the Fire Chief and Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. The Selectboard and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Hailey Hrabovsky moved to floor

Jack Carlton Second.

Discussion. Jack Carlton asked "what sort of activity would this fund since it is brand new?" Dee Denehy stated "the State of NH pays 50% of any wildland/brush fire but we are not paid in Gilsum so we have never taken advantage of that and we don't have any plans to. However, if we call on say Alstead to help us they would take advantage of that and we would need to pay 50% wages of their firefighters and 50% of the hourly value of the truck that comes. So I felt like we were kind of dancing on the edge there that if we ever had a big forest fire which Gilsum has historically had, the Town would be caught having to dip into just the operating budget and pull money out so the hope is that we can build this up a little bit so that if we ever get caught in that situation we have some money to draw on. Acworth had a fire last year that lasted two and a half days and involved 14 communities and I believe the total cost was over \$250,000. So Acworth had to come up with \$125,000 to pay for 50% of the firefighters coming in from other communities to fight the fire and I don't want to see us in that situation without having something." Jack Carlton stated "just to be clear I thought this was preventative but it is actually reactive if we have a situation where we have a forest fire here." Betsy Cushing asked "Has Gilsum and that ever been paid to work another Town's forest fire and if so where did that money go and would it not go back into this fund?" Dee stated "we had 3 members at the Acworth fire that I mentioned and so it paid them for their hourly time up there." Betsy Cushing asked "since they are volunteers shouldn't it go

back into this fund?" Dee stated "no, they took time off from their jobs, the State paid 50%, Acworth paid 50% and I think it was money well spent. It was not alot." Betsy Cushing stated "she was just wondering how to start this fund up with just \$1,000 when anything is going to be tons beyond that." Andrew Chapleau asked "was there any Gilsum equipment involved with the Acworth Fire?" Dee Denehy stated "yes, we sent a tanker and we did get reimbursed for that and it went into the general fund. I guess to Betsy's point it could be a possibility in the future." Lenoir stated "the money that came in from the tanker was less than \$1,000 and we could vote to take that money out of the unassigned fund balance and specify that it is money we received from a payment for forest fire suppression and we could build that fund up if we receive money from our own trucks." Clem stated "the reason why it is \$1,000 is so we can get it established and over time when we have extra money we could put more in. We didn't want to put more in because of our school taxes going up \$1.20/thousand and we are trying to keep us at a level place." Dwayne Nettleton stated "any future funds that we get money for for fighting an out of town fire should be put into this fund to build it up faster." Clem asked Dee "don't you have an arrangement with other fire departments if we have a fire they come and bring their equipment and if they have a fire we go and bring our equipment and you swap back and forth?" Dee stated "that with the mutual aid arrangement, yes, other towns are going to come and we are going to go to other towns no questions asked. Because the State is willing to pay half of the price, most of the towns around us bill the State and whoever started it." Brian Bazarnicki stated "I think what you are asking is if we send our truck to another town that is covered by mutual aid and that is not reimbursed. This is going to be if there is a major forest fire, a natural catastrophe, something started by a car wreck or a telephone pole dropping down and starts taking out a lot of brush. So it is two different scenarios. We don't get charged and we don't pay for other towns coming up and putting out a structure fire because that would be considered fire mutual aid. So a large building or if we have to call a second or third alarm from Keene, Acworth or Alstead that is all part of the mutual aid package." Dee stated "if someone is negligent they can be billed for the incident." Jenny Schmidt asks "is a bonfire any outdoor fire?" Dee stated "it depends on the size, the type of permit that you get and it doesn't cover charcoal grills or gas grills but anything else you burn outdoors. Whether you have a permit or not and if it gets out of control you are responsible for it."

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 11 Legal Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$2,000 to be added to the Legal Expendable Trust Fund previously established, updated (2007).

The Selectboard and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Jason Ballou moved to floor
Daniel Law seconded
No Discussion.
All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 12 Office Equipment Replacement

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,000 to be added to the Expendable Office Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established, renamed (2025). This amount to come The Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Karen Hastings moved to the floor
Peter Granucci seconded
No Discussion.
All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 13 Revaluation of Town

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be added to the Expendable Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund previously established (2011). The Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Brian Bazarnicki moved to the floor
Paula Aaron seconded

Discussion. Jack Carleton asked "what the time frame is for the next Town Re-evaluation?" Brian Bazarnicki stated "5 years." Jason Ballou stated "2029 will be the next evaluation."

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 14 Town Culverts

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000 to be added to the Town Culverts Expendable Trust Fund previously established (renamed 2024). This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. The Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Chip Chapman moved to the floor
Barbara Bryce seconded

Discussion: Sang Curtis asked "where the money comes from if not by taxation?" Brian stated "it comes from the General Fund. It's the money that we got last year from sale of land and other income."

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 15 Town Culverts - Add Agents

To see if the town will vote to appoint the Road Agent and Selectmen as agents to expend from the Town Culverts Expendable Trust Fund previously established, renamed (2024). The Selectboard recommends this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Chip Chapman moved to the floor

Lenoir Law seconded

No Discussion

All in favor. Motion passes

Article 16 Highway Truck

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000 to be added to the Highway Truck Capital Reserve Fund previously established, updated (2025).

The Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Clem Louder moved to the floor

Dee Denehy seconded

Discussion. Jack Carleton asked "what is the time frame for replacing the trucks?" Clem stated " they look at a 10 year plan on trucks."

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 17 Highway Heavy Equipment

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,000 to be added to the Highway Department Heavy Equipment Expendable Capital Reserve Fund previously established (2016). The sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount raised from taxation.

The Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Paula Aarons moved to the floor

Valarie Piedmont seconded

No Discussion

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 18 Repaving of Town Roads

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000 to be added to the Repaving of Town Roads Expendable Capital Reserve Fund previously established (2011). This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. The Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Peter Granucci moved to floor

Bruce Murphy seconded

Discussion: Peter Granucci asked "is there enough money stating that Hammond Hollow is in really bad shape?" Clem Louder stated "actually we don't intend on paving it this year. We are talking about ripping the tar off it as we need to do some bed work on it and we are trying to figure out what would be the most economical way to do it. We are working with Harlen (Maguire, Road Agent) . Now that we have our backhoe it is going to be much cheaper for us to peel the tar up with the backhoe and take it back to the town shed and Harlen can get it crushed. What we want to do is part of the road needs to have the underneath of the ditches re-done and we want to pack it down before we tar it. We have done this road before and I asked George Gilman (former road agent) recently because he has done it and he put 18" of gravel and re-tared it but it is obvious to you and everybody else that part of the road is soft.. Long story short, what we hope to do is pack it for a year to get rid of the soft spots and then come back the following year and tar it. You are correct that is about 1/3 of what we need or less." Brian stated that "Article 19 is also part of this." Clem stated "It is hoped to get this road fixed up and on a 20 year plan like the rest of the roads in Gilsum. Unfortunately your road needs the most work so it got put off until last." Eric Zablowky asked "What is the trajectory on the unassigned fund balance?" Clem stated "unfortunately when we get money come in like that we are required to use it. We can't just let it sit in an account and say oh, we are going to use it next year. So what we try to do is to balance this money as evenly as we can to keep your taxes level. Last year due to the Town's land sales that saved us \$133,000 and we were able to put it back into the Warrant Articles." Clem stated that "all of the road work since he has been back in office has come from the unassigned fund balance. He stated that Harlen has negotiated with vendors to keep the costs down."

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 19 Road Improvement

To see if the town will vote to establish a road Improvement Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of improving town roads including but not limited to milling, grading, sealing and

preparation for repaving and to raise and appropriate \$45,000 to be placed in the fund; further to name the Road Agent and Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. The Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Hailey Hrabovsky moved to the floor
Peter Granucci seconded

Discussion: Jenny Schmidt stated "Route 10 was repaved last year and it is already a disaster. Are there best practices on using better products such as rubber to make them last longer?" Clem stated "I am trying to get together with Harlen to pave the roads every 20 years instead of two." Brian Bazarnicki stated "the town has nothing to do with Route 10, which is a State road." Jenny Schmidt asked "is Surry Road a State road?" Clem stated "yes." Bert Hakey stated "if you don't fix your roads you don't have roads and you have to put money back into the roads."

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 20 Bridge Maintenance and/or Replacement Expendable Trust Fund

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate \$25,000 to be added to the Bridge Maintenance and/or Replacement Expendable Trust Fund previously established (2024).

The Selectboard and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Paula Aaron moved to the floor
Angela Lombara seconded
No Discussion
All in favor. Motion Passes.

Article 21 Town Building Renovation & Improvement Fund

To see if the Town will vote to establish a Town Building Renovation and Improvement Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for repair, renovation or improvement projects and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$35,000 to be placed in this fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation.

The Selectboard and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Chip Chapman moved to floor
Lenoir Law seconded

Discussion: Betsy asked "Is this totally something different from the Library and Town office fund and what would the town buildings be?" Clem stated "for one thing he would like to build an addition to the highway garage to get the trucks out of the weather/salt as having them sit out in the weather is not good for the equipment. It also makes it hard for them to work on the equipment on a rainy day. If we have them in a shed we can at least get under cover to work on them." Betsy Cushing asked "So this is not the town office?" Clem stated "No. Most of the stuff in the town office has been done and 90% of it has been done with volunteer labor, more than one person that has come up, gave their time freely and all this Town has paid for is materials." (Clap) Virginia Clark asked "what is the distinction from Article 1 as we talked about repairing the chimney at the Fire Department?" Clem stated "the chimney would be maintenance, we already have one and it needs to be repaired. I go down to look at it as the Building Inspector and I say it is dangerous and needs to be taken care of. It is a danger to the building...Dee I believe there are a couple different things wrong with your chimney and you as the Fire Chief you could explain." Jason Ballou stated "If you notice there are no agents for any use of these funds so expenditures would have to be approved at town meeting." Betsy stated "so in the future this fund could be used for any Town building for renovations or projects."

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 22 Dissolve Health/Savings Trust Fund

To see if the Town will vote to discontinue the Health/Savings Trust Fund originally created in 1994, updated in 2025 with approximately \$270. Said funds, with accumulated interest to date of withdrawal, are to be transferred to the municipality's general fund. The Selectboard and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Karen Hastings moved to the floor

Tom Julius seconded

Discussion

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 23 Town Land Retention

To see if the Town will vote under the authority of RSA 80:80 (V) to retain three parcels of property situated on Surry Road at Tax Map 407, Lot 5, Tax Map 407, Lot 9 and Tax Map 407, Lot 10, and further to place said parcels under the care of the Gilsom Conservation Commission for conservation purposes under the provisions of RSA 36-A. The Selectboard recommend this article. (Majority vote required)

Peter Granucci moved to floor

Hailey Hrabovsky seconded

Discussion: Valarie Piedmont asked "what pieces of property." Clem stated "we have to address it as a community one way or another and we all feel that it should be preserved...the Deep Hole, the whole thing." Brian stated "the reason why we have to take this over is because it was taken by tax deed so we are following regulations by having it placed into conservancy so we can't sell it." Bart Cushing stated "that was one of the many properties that we couldn't get taxes on until we owned them. Since we are talking about land, the amount of money when all those funds didn't cost us, taxation money was headed up by Brian Bazarnicki and the Selectman generated \$130,000 with these property sales. I thought it was proper to recognize that the annual discussion about getting property back on the tax roll was done by this group of Selectmen and I don't know how many years and how many meetings we have been talking about it but these guys got it done and it is a big deal. (Clap) The Conservation Commission was consulted relative to these properties and I support this Article." Jack Carlton said "I am also not familiar with these properties but I am guessing that they were originally part of the 16 that we tried to sell, is that right? Brian stated "we actually didn't try to sell these. There were 23 on the list but we got it narrowed down to 13 that actually did auction off. When we put together the entire list we sent it to the conservancy, to the Planning Board, we reviewed all the properties to make sure they weren't Town owned properties like the fire station, the Town hall, cemeteries. We just narrowed it all down and we made one long list of all the properties that were tax deeded or town owned to see which ones were auctionable and which could be put back on the tax deeds. These are 3 of those properties that we decided not to auction." Jack Carlton asked "so these properties can be easily managed by the Conservation Commission? Is there public access?" Clem stated "we have asked them to keep it in its natural state. If you want to know where it is just sit on the Arch Bridge and look down stream, you are looking at it." Vicki Ayer asked "did the Conservation Commission pay for this land?" Brian stated "no. The Conservation Commission accepted the responsibility of it as well as to help the Town with the expenses to go through and do the title searches and make sure that they were clear to continue on and that there were no other property tax liens on the property itself." Vicki asked "so it's just the searches that they paid for?" Brian stated "it was the searches, lawyers were involved so there were bills that needed to be paid." Clem stated "basically it made it a free and clear piece of property that we knew we could keep without owing somebody money. Sometimes when we sell property and generate municipality money, we get to take what is owed for taxes, what is owed for interest and maybe what is owed for welfare and and we have some obligations on some pieces of property to find the heirs to the property and give them the remaining money." We have to research all this and thank God Mr. Bazarnicki got a group that does this professionally and he went through it and it took all of the liability off of the

Town and they did it properly, they did it right.” Nicole Langlois asked “where does the liability lay if something happens to someone at the Deep Hole?” Clem stated “the public has the right to use the river. As long as we do not improve that piece of property we have no liability. If we put a stairway down to the deep hole to make it easier, we then have liability. We are very careful to keep it in its natural state. They might fight invasive species but that is about it. We don’t want that liability but we can’t tell anybody they can’t swim in that river. They can go right down the river and walk wherever they want.” Chip Chapman stated “New Hampshire has a very robust 2 statutes that protect landowners and as long as we don’t charge a fee, as long as we don’t do anything malicious, as long as we don’t make any improvements, as long as we do nothing, then anyone can go down there and swim. We are not encouraging it and we are not discouraging it, we would not be liable to the best of my knowledge. The last thing we want to do is open up the town for liability but we want to preserve that because it has been a swimming hole for probably before Clem was born (laughter).” Vicki asked “Chip, does that cover if we know there is an issue with the area and we don’t do anything to...” Chip stated “as long as we are not doing anything malicious to the area or creating a hazard.”

All in favor. Motion Passes

Article 24 By Petition - Public Education Funding

New Hampshire communities value strong public schools and responsible use of public funds for education. Therefore, the voters of Gilsum, New Hampshire, are asked: Shall we call on our legislators to protect taxpayers by requiring the Education Freedom Account program to provide fiscal and educational performance reports comparable to those required of public schools, and by limiting eligibility to families with demonstrated financial need? This question is raised because state legislators recently removed all income limits from the Education Freedom Account program (vouchers), expanding it beyond its original purpose. These changes added tens of millions of dollars in costs while the program provides limited public information on how funds are spent or if educational standards are being met. The voucher program is projected to cost \$110 million over the next two years, with no new revenue sources identified. This directs public funds to private education without reducing the expenses public schools are constitutionally required to cover, increasing pressure on local property taxes. Be it further resolved that the Town of Gilsum shall send the results of this vote to the Governor and all members of the General Court representing Gilsum within thirty (30) days of this vote.

Barbara Bryce moved to the floor

Chip Chapman seconded

Discussion: Sang Curtis stated "I have been asked to introduce this warrant and I want to clarify that it was drafted by a state wide petition warrant article committee. This committee developed this language used across the towns in New Hampshire to voice collective concern regarding recent legislative changes to the Educational Freedom Account Program often called The Voucher System. Specifically, this article addresses the legislature's recent move to remove all income limits to the voucher program, making the program universal. This funding from the vouchers comes from the State Education Trust Fund, the same source that provides adequacy aid for our public schools. The concern here is two fold: First, the program is projected to cost another one hundred and ten million dollars over the next two years, creating a significant new draw on the State's education funds with no new revenue to cover it. Secondly, the Article calls for greater fiscal and academic oversight comparable to what we ask of our public schools. By passing this, Gilsum joins with other Towns in formally notifying the Governor and our State Representatives of our concern to the long term stability of our own school funding and the impact on local tax." Bart Cushing stated "I do have people that work with me that have had alternate sources in their education in high school. We don't have a vo-tech school that does all the things that a vo-tech used to do. They used to teach you how to build houses, wire houses, and how to do plumbing. There are still some that teach you how to do automotive. If your kid wants to do that, and I have 2 people working for me, actually 3 of them, from the Monadnock and the Keene District, they are not going to college and they have been written off that they are not going to invest in these kids. One of the kids came to me and asked if he could come to work for me one hour a day. He worked with me during the summer, he was from Winchester. Winchester kids unfortunately are very discriminated against; some are bad actors, a lot of them are not. I said of course Joshua you want to make one hour worth of pay, why is that? He told me he gets out of study hall because he is going to be a junior. He goes to study hall from 11:30 to 3:45 every day. What a waste of time. So he is coming to work with me and he is on an alternate education path. I have another boy that works for me and he goes to school and he is a senior, he is a Keene student. He goes to an alternate school on Thursday nights. That is all he goes for. He came to work for me, he works full time learning a trade and making a good buck. My point is, these vouchers cover alternate education: you can go to the vo-tech school in Concord, you can go outside the district. They are only saying that rich people are sending their kids to St. Paul or wherever, but if you have a child with special needs then go outside of the district. So it is not purely about someone that is really rich which we all want to tax and about taking their kid to a private school. I would hope that maybe take a look as to who is proposing this and I would vote no because it just doesn't sound right to me especially in the way this is being presented." Chip Chapman stated "I have some pretty strong feelings about how New Hampshire funds education. Every parent wants their child to succeed at school. In my mind it is like

national security; how are our children going to compete in the world if they aren't getting the education they need? My daughter loves to read, she loves to write, she took tests very well, she did well in a regular public school. A lot of kids don't. The thing about vouchers is that, first of all, there have been five different rulings in the Supreme Court about how New Hampshire funds state education. The vouchers were introduced in 2021 with an income cap for the parents. That was a great idea. Last year they took the cap off. There is no income cap now at all. The costs went through the roof for funding that. At the same time that money coming out of the general education trust fund isn't going to public schools. Last year at the same time that they were taking the cap off and raising the costs they got rid of the interest and dividends tax which has been around for over one hundred years so they lost revenue, increased the costs and they slammed us with more of what they call 'down shifting' and we got bills related to our education costs that we had to come up with." Clem stated "they set our rate and we come up with the bill. We give extra money to the State, is that right Lenoir?" Lenoir stated "we pay the district every month money that covers the local education portion and a state education portion." Chip asked "did those rates go up significantly?" Clem stated "\$1.20/thousand this year." Chip stated "The only reason I am in favor of voting yes on this is that it feels like bait and switch to me. It feels like they started off as a really good idea for families just like you were describing where most kids might succeed in public school but there are a lot of kids that can't and they need an alternative. Those families should get help but there should be oversight and requirements. One of the things that is coming up more and more is homeschooling. There is really no oversight on homeschooling. This to me is about fairness. I do not believe that we the taxpayers and education funding falls more and more on the property tax owners, and 1/3 of us in this Town are now elderly. They are passing more and more of the cost of public education and the cost of the vouchers on to the property tax owners. Since they have taken the cap off 80% of the people that are getting vouchers now are the people who are already able to afford to send their kids to an alternative or private school." Bart Cushing stated "since they don't know and since there has been no reporting, I don't know how they can say 80%. There has been no reporting about it, where it goes or what the incomes are so saying that statement I believe that it is from someone that is a proponent for that and is feeding you that number." Chip stated "That is the source that was described and what I read was at the New Hampshire Department of Education so I understand what you are saying and yes there is a bias in favor and if you are curating your sources to reinforce your own bias then that's going on way too much in the world. But what we are doing with our funding for public education by shifting it more and more onto the property tax owners is just wrong. Everybody takes the pledge and nobody that is running for office is willing to talk about anything else, but the Interest and Dividends Tax worked for 100 years plus and they just decided to get rid of it at the time when they were increasing costs and

that is not right. I hope that we can vote in favor of it.” Eric Zablosky stated “I like the cap idea but now there is no cap and it’s like the free market. Paula Aarons stated “The thing I like about the Warrant Article is that it is simply asking the State to show accountability in how they are spending our tax dollars, that’s it. Public schools have to have accountability. I was a public school teacher and let me tell you how much time I spent filling out all these forms accounting for what I did for all of these students, a lot of time. Well, if you are getting my tax dollars for your voucher program or for your private schools or your home school programs that is great. But I want to know how you are spending that money.” Bart stated “Our Town voted in support of Monadnock quite heavily in the vote yesterday.” Bill Mitchell stated “Just to do the math our son lives in Swanzey and Swanzey the town saved \$63,000 a year because his 3 children are homeschooled. Now, the State, we don’t pay that much into the State as far as I know paying back up to \$15,000 for those 3 kids. The math for Swanzey works out pretty well for taxpayers down there. If you look at the report on Monadnock School District I did the math, if you want to check it, \$100,000 per year per classroom does not go to the teacher, or to the maintenance of the building. So, if you want to save money on taxes that is where I would start and I would tend to leave the homeschooling thing the way it is. As far as the vouchers go in my mind it is a lot cheaper and it opens up doors. If you want accountability for that money, my grandkids went down to a forge and made me a really nice fire poker and some hooks for my wall, my granddaughter made me a beautiful hummingbird bird feeder out of blown glass, I don’t know how you maintain grade standards for that stuff but that is where you spend your voucher, and to have their math and reading checked which I don’t think my daughter-in-law would flinch at, I can guarantee that they are going to score pretty high. So when it comes to taxes, I recommend home school.” Valarie Piedmont stated “I don’t think this article is suggesting anything about taking away from any child to have what they need. I think this is just asking for accountability.” Dee Denehy stated “I tend to agree with Valarie that if I propose a one hundred and ten million dollar project you want to know where I spent that money and that is all we are asking for. The State is not paying attention to where this money is going.” Jack Carlton stated “I just want to add some interesting information from our Town Report and the school district report to the discussion. It looks like the State Education tax for the Town of Gilsum is \$119,303 and it appears that we are allowed to retain that so it sounds like the net number that we get from the State or pay to the State is zero. But the larger point I wanted to make regarding funds is, I am looking at Monadnock School District Warrant Article #1. In the very first part it says that the average cost per pupil per year is \$21,795. The average proficiency for English Language Arts is 42%, Math proficiency is 33% and Science Proficiency is 26%. I think that is a bit revealing. I am in favor of anything that can improve education for the kids and ultimately for us. I think choice and competition are good things. Lenoir Law stated “I believe that what this is telling you is that we raised those taxes so when we sent out

the tax bills to the Town of Gilsum we are raising the taxes to cover the municipal operating budget and warrants and the State and local education as well as our county taxes so we are collecting money to pay that \$119,303 right back to the school district." Chip Chapman stated "The only thing that matters is what works for each child and I want each child to have exactly the education they need. I just don't feel like we should be expanding a program to help families that don't need help and that may be unfair of me to say I just think that property tax homeowners in this state are over burdened and to cut a significant tax, I don't know why they did that because it worked for over 100 years and then they jacked up expenses which probably could have benefited from those revenues. It always seems like we are getting hammered with our property taxes because that is where all the money comes from because that is only one of the few taxes we have. Nobody wants to talk about any other kind of tax but tax the property owner. I think that there should be an income limit on this and it should be available to all families. There was an income limit on this. The first year it was 185% of the national poverty level." Sang Curtis corrected Chip saying it was "300% in the first year." Chip stated "The Federal poverty level is \$31,000 for a family of 4." Sang stated "It started as a cap of roughly \$9,000 for a family of 4, then they increased the cap to \$350 and then they discussed raising it to \$400 or \$450 but decided to instead get rid of the cap altogether. So when it was initially started it was a program to help families with low income but now it's for anybody." Jenny Schmidt asked "If I want to take my school aged child and put him in any school I want that is covered by this voucher program yearly?" Sang Curtis stated "just to \$5,000." Jenny Schmidt went on to say that "I lived in a Country that did not fund public education so if you wanted your child to go to a public school, the cheap school, you had to buy hand soap, pencils, uniforms, books, paper so I feel like in this Country you don't understand the beautiful thing that we have created called public education and that our money should be going to public education for our children and we should have vocational programs and we should be putting our tax dollars into those programs and if you want your child in a special school, a religious school or homeschool, the more power to you but that should not come out of our tax dollars. Our tax dollars should fund our beautiful public schools and I think this is why our country has excelled over the generations." Paula Aarons added "If you look at public schools across the Country we (New Hampshire) rate in the top 10. We rate 50th in what the State is willing to put into public education so what I think about a lot is what would our public schools look like if the State was putting more in...I think about the tech programs, I think about a lot of the programs in the public schools when I was teaching, they are not there anymore because our property taxes pay for schools and that State just isn't contributing like it used to and programs had to go away so less of our students are being served." Bart Cushing stated that "One of the best vocational teachers we ever had is our Moderator (David Dauphin) and he was part of the trades and a number of young builders around this joint, around this whole area, he is the one

that helped them through.” David Dauphin responded “and you have employed some of them.” (Clap) Hailey Hrabovsky spoke of homeschooling her children because she feels that she can teach them better than a public school can. (inaudible) stated “We are the public and if we want better public schools we should be putting our energy into having better public schools and not taking our taxpayer dollars and losing our public schools because there are all these other private academies popping up all over the place.” Sang Custis stated “That before last year there were 5,000 families that applied for the voucher, the first year in 2021 there were 5,000 so this year when the cap came off there were 10,500 and there is actually a cap of only 10,000 families can apply except that if that amount of families does apply, then the next year is raises 25%. So next year we will be paying for \$12,500 vouchers.” Vicki Ayer stated “I am the Welfare Officer in Town and I believe that limits are an important part of life and if we don’t have responsible limits then the budget being voted on tells the Selectboard they don’t have to be responsible in their spending. That is what we are here for, the responsibility aspect of it. If we remove those limits, then anybody that wants this program can get it, not necessarily someone that needs this program. We don’t want to see me as Welfare Officer, remove limits for our assistance because then everybody would be knocking on the door.” Lenoir Law stated that “In 2025 what we paid for local education was \$1,024,567 and what we paid for State education was \$118,786.” Brian Bazarnicki asked “For how many students does that go?” Lenoir Law stated “there are currently 76 students enrolled in the Monadnock School District. I was unable to get numbers on other enrollments because that information is not well documented.” Jody Terry clarified that a family wanting to send their child to a private school gets \$5,000 and the rest goes to the public school.

Motion passes

Further business: Jody Terry thanks the Selectmen and Lenoir for putting the tax impact to tax payers on the book this year so we could figure out the costs

Motion to adjourn to March 10, 2027. Bruce Murphy moved. Lenoir Second. 9:24pm

Respectfully submitted,


Debra Reilly, Town Clerk

Dated: March 26, 2026