

**Board of Selectmen's Office
Weare School District
John Stark Regional School District
15 Flanders Memorial Road
Weare, NH 03281**

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2024 Sample Ballot & Voting Information Enclosed

Selectmen's Introduction

The Board of Selectmen is pleased to provide this sample ballot and informational pamphlet to assist voters in making up their minds on the important questions appearing on the Official Ballot for the Second Session of the 2024 Town Meeting. Voting on the Official Ballot will take place on **Tuesday, March 12, 2024** between the hours of **7:00 AM and 7:00 PM** at the **Weare Middle School**.

In the pamphlet, you will find each article reprinted as it will appear on the ballot. Article 1 is to elect officials. Articles 2-5 are the zoning amendments of which the details can be obtained through the Land Use Department or Town Clerk's Office during regular business hours. Articles 6 through 24 are followed by the Board of Selectmen's recommendation, the estimated tax impact, and an explanation of the purpose of the article. Articles 25-27 are petition articles so there are no Board of Selectmen recommendations.

The Board of Selectmen and Town employees appreciate your continued support and participation. Additional information may be requested at the Selectmen's office at 529-7535. Specific questions regarding either the Weare or John Stark school ballot should be addressed to the SAU 24 office at 428-3269.

Weare Finance Committee **Report**

This report contains the recommendations of the Weare Finance Committee on 2024 town and school district warrant articles that have a financial impact on taxpayers. The Committee has worked closely with town and school district officials to understand and assess the operational and financial impact of proposed warrant articles. It is worth noting that the 8.3% tax rate increase in 2023 (\$17.40 to \$18.84) was higher than expected. Taxes on a \$350,000 property increased by \$504. The primary drivers for this increase were the approval of a town proposed budget, no return of town funds to offset taxes, and the unexpected high increase in state education and county taxes. The county and state education taxes, over which we have no control, alone accounted for \$126 of the \$504 increase. In making recommendations for 2024, the Committee was especially sensitive to this year's overall tax impact and the need to avoid a tax increase similar to 2023.

If voters follow the Finance Committee recommendations, the anticipated 2024 tax rate for the town and school portions (excluding state education and county) would be \$17.42, an increase of 6.5% over last year. This means a property assessed at \$350,000 could see an increase of \$371 on their annual tax bill. The tables below show the potential tax impact if all articles are approved, if all articles are rejected, and if the Finance Committee recommendations are followed. In all cases state education and county taxes, which in 2023 added \$1.46 and \$1.02 respectively to the tax rate, have not been included; they would add \$2.48 to all projected tax rates if they stay the same.

Comparison Table
2024 Estimated Tax Rates

	Town	Weare School	John Stark	Total	Increase for \$350k home
All warrant articles fail	\$3.21	\$8.30	\$5.13	\$16.64	\$98 (1.7%)
All warrant articles pass	\$4.34	\$8.98	\$5.23	\$18.55	\$767 (13.4%)
Finance Comm. Recommendations	\$3.93	\$8.28	\$5.21	\$17.42	\$371 (6.5%)
2023 Tax Rate	\$3.76	\$12.60 (Schools Total)		\$16.36	

While this would represent a considerable increase in taxes, it should be noted town and schools have conservative revenue projections. If revenues exceed projections, the tax impact will be reduced. In addition, the Board of Selectmen has the ability to use money from the town fund balance to reduce the tax rate. Also, any surplus in both school budgets is automatically returned to reduce taxes. For every \$100,000 returned to offset taxes, the tax rate is reduced by eight (\$0.08) cents. Although there can be no guarantee on the amount to be returned, using historical returns and a review of current balances in town and school budgets, the Finance Committee conservatively projects a return of \$600,000. This would further reduce the projected tax increases in the table by \$168 on a \$350,000 property.

TOWN BALLOT

ARTICLE 1

To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing year. (By official ballot)

FOR SELECTMAN Three-Year Term

Vote for Two

Janice Mathews
James Drury
(Write-in)

FOR SELECTMAN One-Year Term

Vote for One

David Pratte
(Write-in)

FOR MODERATOR Two-Year Term

Vote for One

Jonathan Morton
(Write-in)

FOR SUPERVISOR OF CHECKLIST Six-Year Term

Vote for One

Kristen Lundeen
Maria Fossiano
(Write-in)

FOR TRUSTEE OF TRUST FUNDS Two-Year Term

Vote for One

Beverly C. Cotton
(Write-in)

FOR LIBRARY TRUSTEE Three-Year Term

Vote for One

Joshua Hilliard
(Write-in)

FOR ETHICS COMMITTEE Three-Year Term

Vote for One

Carl Warren Hallstrom
(Write-in)

ARTICLE 2

Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 1 to the Weare Zoning Ordinance as proposed by

the Weare Planning Board as follows: Amend Article 4.1, Definitions, to add a definition of "Private Road" as an access to three or more lots shown on a survey plan dated prior to March 1988 or a plan approved by the planning board, and to allow the planning board to approve private roads by conditional use permit? (**Recommended** by the Planning Board)

PURPOSE: Currently there is no definition of Private Road in the Zoning Ordinance. This would add that definition.

ARTICLE 3

Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 2 to the Weare Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Weare Planning Board as follows: Amend Article 17.1.1 to allow building permits to be issued on Private Roads? (**Recommended** by the Planning Board)

PURPOSE: The purpose of Article is to allow residential or commercial development on Private Roads, that are built to town standards. This will allow a diversity of commercial and residential development without creating a town-maintained road.

ARTICLE 4

Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 3 to the Weare Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Weare Planning Board as follows: Amend Article 19 regarding Special Exceptions to correct an incorrect internal reference and add sections 19.1.11, 19.1.11.1, 19.1.11.2 and 19.1.11.3 to allow campers/travel trailers/RVs not located in an approved campground to be used for more than 15 days in any 30 day period by special exception, except in the Commercial and Village Districts; allow construction/office trailers to be used for more than 121 days and/or to have running water and/or sleeping provisions by special exception, except in the Village District; to provide that time periods run beginning on the first day of the use; and to exempt manufactured homes used for temporary occupation during the repair or replacement of a damaged dwelling for a period of not more than 12 months from the special exception requirements? (**Recommended** by the Planning Board)

PURPOSE: To provide for owner/guest occupied RV's as an allowed use, restricted to 14 days per 30 day period within the RA and R districts, without the need for

additional permitting. Any other duration will require a special exception. This article also allows the use of a temporary construction/office trailer in any district except Village Districts for a period of 120 days without the need for additional permitting. Any other duration will require a special exception. This article would also allow Emergency Manufactured Housing for 12 months in any district (as may be required due to existing residence becoming uninhabitable), currently only allowed in the Clinton Grove Historic District. Any code required permits shall be required, for example electrical for temporary meter etc.

ARTICLE 5

Are you in favor of the adoption of **Amendment No. 4**: We the undersigned residents petition to amend the Town of Weare Zoning Map by modifying the zoning of Tax Map 107 Lot 025, said parcel being located at 117 Abijah Bridge Road, to change from Residential (R) to Rural/Agricultural (RA)? **(By Petition) (Recommended by the Planning Board)**

PURPOSE: This is a petition to change the zoning of a parcel from residential to rural/agricultural.

ARTICLE 6

Shall the Town raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling Eight Million Five Hundred Seventy-Four Thousand One Hundred Forty-Four Dollars (\$8,574,144)? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be Eight Million Two Hundred Forty Thousand Seven Hundred Seventy-Four Dollars (\$8,240,774), which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$3.47

PURPOSE: The operating budget this year is a 4.05% increase over the default budget. 21.54% of the increase is related to insurance premiums rising. The town is not immune to the increased costs for goods, services, and contracts that allow the town to continue the level of service the town comes to expect. The operating budget

also includes warrant articles that were approved as reoccurring costs in 2023.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

(NOT RECOMMENDED 6-5) Noting the 8.1% tax hike last year, the Committee took a hard look at areas where it could limit this year's tax increase without severely impacting operations. The difference between the proposed and default budgets of \$333,370 results in a \$91 tax difference on a \$350,000 property. A majority of the Committee supports the default budget. Budgeted, but unspent, money as a result of highway department and other position vacancies will help cover increased health insurance and other costs. If actual revenues exceed conservative estimates, the gap will be further reduced. The minority supports the proposed budget noting the default does not fund certain increased costs, such as insurance, for which funds will have to be found elsewhere. Last year, the voters approved the proposed budget to get us back on track after multiple years of default budgets. The minority does not want to head down that road again noting the impact of multi-year default budgets.

ARTICLE 7

Shall the Town approve the cost items contained in the three (3) year collective bargaining agreement reached between the Board of Selectmen and the New England Police Benevolent Association (NEPBA) Union for the Police Department Employees, which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2024	\$ 65,439 – 5%
2025	\$ 66,056 – 5%
2026	\$ 69,359 – 5%

and further to raise and appropriate the sum of Sixty-Five Thousand Four Hundred Thirty-Nine Dollars (\$65,439) for the current fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels?

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.05

PURPOSE: The proposed agreement is a three-year contract for full and part time union member police officers. It does not include the police chief or administrative assistant. It is a three-year contract with a 5% increase in wages each year. The annual increase in

year one is \$65,439, year two would be \$66,056, and year three would be \$69,359. The increases are all-inclusive of payroll taxes, NHRS contributions and wages. The proposed contract will support retention and keep the Town of Weare police department competitive with our neighboring towns.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

(RECOMMENDED 10-1) The Committee believes this contract offers a balanced solution for taxpayers and the Town. The 5% increase each year, although it exceeds the current rate of inflation, is reasonable given the inherent risks of the profession and the difficulty in filling positions statewide and nationally. Weare currently has all positions filled and this contract will give us the best opportunity to keep it so. Retaining officers avoids the lengthy certification process through the Police Academy and local on-the-job training. The estimated first-year cost of the contract is \$18 on a \$350,000 property with similar projected increases in 2025 and 2026. The estimated total cost of the contract after three years will be \$397,788 with a \$53 tax impact on a \$350,000 property. The minority believes the 5% annual increases exceeded inflation and might have the effect of ensuring non-union raise requests in the next three years would also potentially exceed inflation.

ARTICLE 8

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Ninety-Eight Thousand One Hundred Ninety Dollars (\$98,190), representing a 5% COLA pay increases for all non-union Town and Library personnel, except the Town Administrator? If this article is approved, this would become part of the annual operating budget and the difference in wages and benefits annually would be One Hundred Thirty Thousand Nine Hundred Twenty Dollars (\$130,920).

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.08

PURPOSE: This represents increases for 58 full-time and permanent part-time employees, numerous Parks & Recreation employees, as well as numerous on-call firefighters and per diem employees. 32.8% is for Highway Department personnel, 33.4% is for first responders, and the remaining 33.8% is for the Town Clerk's office, Assessing, Library, Transfer Station, Selectmen's Office, Tax Collector, Finance, Land Use, Parks & Recreation, Code Enforcement, Welfare, and Health Departments. This article excludes employees covered by the proposed CBA (Article 7) and those with pay set by contract such as the Town Administrator.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 6-5) This article gives a 5% COLA pay raise to almost all non-union town employees. While this percentage exceeds the actual 3.2% COLA over the past year, a majority of members believes it acceptable this year given the high inflation in previous years. The 5% will also keep non-union raises consistent with the Police Union 5% raise. The estimated annual tax impact is \$28 on a \$350,000 property. The minority believes the 5% was excessive and should have been 3-4% to be consistent with the real COLA. It also believes pay raises should be performance-based rather than across-the-board.

ARTICLE 9

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy Thousand Thirteen Dollars (\$70,013) to cover the cost of a wage adjustment by increasing the hourly wages for the Full Time Highway Department Personnel, by adding Three Dollars (\$3) to step one (1) for each position? This cost represents wages, payroll taxes and New Hampshire Retirement System contributions for nine (9) months. If this article is approved, this would become part of the annual operating budget with an estimated annual cost of Ninety-Two Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty-Eight Dollars (\$92,768).

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.05

PURPOSE: This article increases the starting pay by \$3.00 per hour in hopes of gaining better recruitment and increases current staff hourly wages in hopes of retaining the experienced, skilled staff that we already have.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 8-3) A majority of the Committee believes this is a real problem area for not only Weare, but a large number of towns and cities in NH. We have all seen the signs around NH trying to hire plow truck drivers and plow contractors. Weare is no different, as we have been unable to fill multiple vacancies in our highway department. The current regimen requires a complex smorgasbord of band-aid remedies to get by. These include overtime, bonuses, and subcontractors to keep our roads clear and in good repair. This is not a sustainable solution. This article is designed to provide an additional wage grade adjustment so that we can be competitive in filling the vacancies. These personnel would also receive the 5% non-union raises if the previous warrant article passes. The minority believes the 5% non-union raises proposed in the previous article were adequate as they already exceed the rate of

inflation. The estimated annual tax impact is \$19 on a \$350,000 property.

ARTICLE 10

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty-Two Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety-Three Dollars (\$22,993) to cover a wage adjustment by increasing the hourly wages for each Full Time Fire and Rescue Personnel employee an average of \$1.50 per hour? This represents wages, payroll taxes and New Hampshire Retirement System contributions for nine (9) months. If this article is approved, this would become part of the annual operating budget with an estimated annual cost of Twenty-Nine Thousand Eight Hundred Thirteen Dollars (\$29,813). Should Article 8 pass, then Article 10 increase shall raise and appropriate Zero Dollars (\$0).

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (2-1-2)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.02

PURPOSE: This article is intended to adjust the wage scale of the full-time members of the fire department. Retention of employees is becoming more difficult nationwide, both public and private sector, and this will assist in keeping our roster complete in a very competitive fire service profession.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (NOT RECOMMENDED 8-1) If the non-union raises in Article 8 pass, the EMT/FF personnel will receive a 5% COLA raise, thus Article 10 will have zero impact. If Article 8 does not pass and Article 10 does pass, these personnel would receive a \$1.50/hour (6%) wage adjustment. The majority does not believe this wage adjustment is warranted. As of January, the eight EMT/FF full-time positions are filled with one projected vacancy. Until retention and inability to hire demonstrate the need to do a wage adjustment, the Committee believes the current staff of eight permanent positions and three per diem members can handle the workload. The minority believes the additional training to be an EMT/FF warrants this increase. The estimated annual tax impact is \$8 on a \$350,000 property.

ARTICLE 11

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Ten Thousand Two Hundred Twenty-One Dollars (\$10,221) representing the cost of turning one part-time Library staff position into a full-time Library staff position? This represents wages, payroll taxes and New Hampshire Retirement System contributions for nine (9)

months. If this article is approved, this would become part of the annual operating budget with an estimated annual cost of Twelve Thousand Seven Hundred Forty Dollars (\$12,740).

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact= \$0.01

PURPOSE: This article is recommended by the Library Trustees. The additional hours this article funds will allow the Library to continue to provide expected service levels and respond to the increase in patronage seen in the recent years. Just in 2023, the Library has had a surge in usage: 47% increase in new library card holders, 14% increase in patrons, 7% increase in materials checked out, 34% increase in the number of programs and a 40% increase in the number of patrons participating in programs. In addition to dealing with the increased users and usage, the additional hours will be used to identify material selection, develop new programs and marketing.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (NOT RECOMMENDED 11-0) The Committee takes note that the library is receiving increased use through numerous community programs for both adults and youth. However, staffing of one full-time Director, one full-time children's librarian and several part-time employees has been adequate to handle these demands. Prior to the hiring of the current Director, a full-time interim director and part-time staff were able to adequately handle the workload for an extended period. Thus, the Committee saw no urgent operational need to establish another full-time position with benefits.

ARTICLE 12

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Eighty-One Thousand Six Hundred Ninety Dollars (\$81,690) for the purchase of one (1) new fully outfitted and marked Chevrolet Tahoe 4 x 4 Police Pursuit Vehicle, with Nineteen Thousand Dollars (\$19,000) to be withdrawn from the Police Special Detail Revolving Fund; and Sixteen Thousand Dollars (\$16,000) to be withdrawn from the Unassigned Fund Balance representing monies received for Everett Dam Patrols; and the balance of Forty-Six Thousand Six Hundred Ninety Dollars (\$46,690) to be withdrawn from the Unassigned Fund Balance?

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact= \$0.00

PURPOSE: This patrol vehicle request is a planned replacement per the Police Department's fleet management rotation schedule. It will replace patrol car

#4, a 2017 Dodge Charger that is currently disabled due to a transmission issue. The estimated cost of that single repair is \$4,600, which represents 46% of the entire department's vehicle repair budget for calendar year 2024. In addition to crime prevention and solving, having this car in the fleet will extend the life of all patrol vehicles and control overall vehicle repair expenses.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 9-0) The Committee believes it is important to continue the planned replacement of our 2017-18 Chargers with Chevy Tahoes. One of the Chargers is currently out of service and would require over \$4000 to replace its transmission. Purchase of a Tahoe this year will replace that Charger and save the \$4000 in vehicle maintenance. Using funds from the Police Detail Revolving Fund and the Town Unassigned Fund Balance will also eliminate the need to raise funds through additional taxation.

ARTICLE 13

Shall the Town vote to establish a Public Safety Services Revolving Fund pursuant to RSA 31:95-h, I (c), for the purpose of outfitting, and maintaining police vehicles and other safety equipment as needed? Funding for this revolving fund will come from donations and 75% of cruiser detail fees collected from private details with 25% of cruiser detail fees to go to the General Fund. The money in the fund shall be allowed to accumulate from year to year and shall not be considered part of the Town's General Fund Unreserved Fund Balance. The Town Treasurer shall have custody of all the monies in the fund. Further name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund.

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact= \$0.00

PURPOSE: The primary purpose for the fund is to provide a continuous and self-sustaining source of financing for specific Police Department initiatives or equipment as needed. The fund operates on a revolving basis, meaning that the money generated from its activities is continuously recycled into the fund to finance ongoing and future projects. This creates a sustainable source of funding that can be used over the long term. By establishing a revolving fund, the strain on taxpayers can be reduced. This financial tool allows for greater flexibility and responsiveness to emerging needs without having to wait for annual budget cycles. The revolving fund can help mitigate financial risks associated with unpredictable or fluctuating funding levels. In times of budget constraints, the fund can still

generate revenue through its operations, ensuring that essential public safety services are not compromised.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (NOT RECOMMENDED 8-1) The majority believes the Article 13 language is very vague on how funds can be used. “Outfitting and other safety equipment” can fall under most of the police budget line items. The Committee does not support the establishment of a “Revolving Fund” which would remove the voters from the decision-making process. A “Special Revenue Fund” would have been more appropriate with control of these funds left to the voters as part of the town budget or as special warrant articles. The minority believes it is prudent to have this fund available for the police department to access when funds are not available elsewhere for safety equipment necessary to successfully perform the duties of the department.

ARTICLE 14

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$30,000) to be placed into the Community Cable Access TV Fund Capital Reserve Fund with said amount to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance? This represents previously collected cable franchise fees.

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact= \$0.00

PURPOSE: Upon renewal of the cable franchise agreement with Comcast in 2023, the Town of Weare received \$30,000 for upgrades to the cable channel (Weare Channel 6) as well as other audio-visual equipment. If the voters approve moving the requested amount into the stated capital reserve fund, possible uses could be upgrades and spare parts for the existing equipment to mitigate broadcast issues and delays, as well as possible addition of a second room outfitted to broadcast meetings.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 7-4) Last year the Town received \$30,000 as part of a franchise agreement with Comcast. The Committee supports transferring these funds into the Cable TV Capital Reserve. The first-floor conference room is the only space from which meetings can be telecast. Its space is limited and ill-suited for high public attendance. These funds could be used to make cable improvements to other rooms, such as the larger second floor conference room. That would give the Town flexibility in telecasting larger meetings. The minority felt the funds should remain undesignated and may have better use elsewhere.

ARTICLE 15

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty-Nine Thousand Five Hundred Sixty-Six Dollars (\$29,566) representing the additional cost of turning the Part Time Building Inspector into a Full Time Building Inspector? This represents wages, payroll taxes and New Hampshire Retirement System contributions for nine (9) months. If this article is approved, this would become part of the annual operating budget with an estimated annual cost of Fifty-Two Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty-Three Dollars (\$52,853).

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.02

PURPOSE: This article increases the hours of the building inspector from 25 hours a week to 40 hours a week. With the amount of construction going on in Weare, a full-time building inspector is warranted, and it also has been difficult to hire a part-time building inspector as most qualified individuals are going to employers that offer full-time work.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 10-1) The Town currently has an unfilled part-time building inspector position. Hiring and retaining an employee has been difficult. Adjacent towns are assisting on an as-available basis. This is causing delays for contractors, builders, and homeowners who are required to have projects approved. Our town needs to be more responsive to these demands. Using multiple inspectors also increases the liability risks to the Town. The minority felt new construction is down and the town could wait on the need for a full-time position. The difference in going from part to full time creates an estimated annual tax impact of \$14.

ARTICLE 16

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Eighty Thousand Dollars (\$280,000) to be added to the previously established Highway Truck and Equipment Replacement Capital Reserve Fund. (The intent is to purchase one (1) new fully equipped 10-wheel plow truck for the Highway Department.) The amount of Seventy-Nine Thousand, Seven Hundred Ninety-Seven Dollars (\$79,797) will come from the Unassigned Fund Balance from monies received from the State of NH pursuant to House Bill 2; and the balance of Two Hundred Thousand, Two Hundred Three Dollars (\$200,203) to be raised by taxation?

Recommended by Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.16

PURPOSE: The purpose of this article is to purchase a new 10-wheel plow truck in an effort to continue the upgrading of our highway department vehicles. This will replace a 2007 Volvo 6-wheel truck that is in poor condition. The 10-wheel truck will also provide the ability to haul 50% more road treatment, reducing the trips needed to go back to obtain more sand/salt.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 6-3) The Committee supports the continued replacement of some of its older plow trucks. Maintaining and keeping our roads clear is one of the town's most critical functions. The replacements in the past few years have improved the situation. The DPW fleet now has six (6) ten-wheelers, all less than ten (10) years old with another on order from last year's warrant. DPW continues to operate and maintain four (4) trucks that have been in service over sixteen (16) years. This warrant article will replace one (1) of those. Some monies from the State will be used to offset the purchase. The estimated tax impact will be \$54 on a \$350,000 property. Trucks are an expensive item. The minority, while supporting the continued replacement of older trucks, believes that this year we need to defer this purchase because of the high tax impact of other non-discretionary demands, most specifically the landfill cap in Article 21. As we move forward, the Committee encourages DPW to look at the possibility of reducing the total number of trucks required, noting the improved efficiencies and higher load capacity of the ten-wheelers.

ARTICLE 17

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Ninety Thousand, Seven Hundred Seventy-Six Dollars (\$90,776) to be placed into the Bridge Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund with said amount is to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance? This amount represents State Bridge Aid previously received pursuant to House Bill 2.

Recommended by Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.00

PURPOSE: The town received an additional \$90,776 per the State Bridge Aid per House Bill 2. This article will allow those funds to be added to the Town's existing Bridge Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund. This will help ensure we have the matching funds available when the State gives us the go ahead for bridge projects.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 11-0) Last year, the State provided the Town funds designated for bridges. This article will allow those funds to be added to the Town's existing Bridge Construction Capital Reserve Fund. This will

help ensure we have the matching funds available when the State gives the go-ahead for projects, the River Road bridge being the most critical. There is no tax impact.

ARTICLE 18

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Six Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$600,000) to be added to the previously established Road Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund for road reconstruction and resurfacing of roads with up to Two Hundred Eighty-Four Thousand Dollars (\$284,000) anticipated from the State of New Hampshire Highway Block Grant (pursuant to RSA 235) and the remaining balance to be raised by taxation? (If the Town receives the anticipated amount of the Highway Block Grant, the amount to be raised by taxation will be \$316,000. If the Town receives less than anticipated, the difference will need to be raised by taxation, and if the Town receives more than anticipated, less will be raised by taxation.)

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.24

PURPOSE: This warrant article is on the ballot every year. It provides funding for the Highway Department which is to repair, rebuild, and maintain ALL Class V roads to ensure safe travel for the residents. Roads are the largest infrastructure assets that the town owns. Without proper maintenance, repair costs are extremely expensive and eventually would result in unsafe roads.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 10-1) The 2019 road reconstruction bond “righted the ship” and set us on a path to keep up with road maintenance provided we continue annual funding. If this article fails, we would still receive the anticipated \$284,000 portion funded by the State. That amount, however, would be totally inadequate to keep us on track. Falling behind will only lead to higher road reconstruction costs later. The minority felt the taxpayers living on unpaved roads in the community would not receive a fair benefit from this article. The estimated tax impact on a \$350,000 property is \$86.

ARTICLE 19

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$175,000) for the purpose of purchasing a new roadside mower? This would replace the 1995 New Holland Mower that the Town purchased used in 2019.

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.14

PURPOSE: This Article would allow roadside mowing of all roads in Weare. This would replace the 1995 mower. Due to mechanical issues, it was not advisable to repair the mower. We are currently having to contract a mower for \$14,000 for 3 weeks. This limits how much mowing we can do.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (NOT RECOMMENDED 10-1) This article will replace a 1995 mower, which was acquired as used in 2019 until it was no longer operable last year. Without a new mower, the Town can contract out for limited mowing in the worst areas. The annual cost to do roadside mowing on all roads would far exceed the cost of a new mower. While the Committee agrees with the need for roadside mowing, it believes the \$175,000 can be put to better use this year on higher priority needs. The minority believes the most cost-effective means of roadside mowing is with town-owned equipment and operators. The estimated tax impact is \$47 on a \$350,000 property.

ARTICLE 20

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Fifty-Three Thousand Dollars (\$53,000) for the purpose of purchasing a new battery powered trailer caddy to move empty and loaded trash trailers at the Transfer Station and to authorize the withdrawal of the sum of Fifty-Three Thousand Dollars (\$53,000) from the previously established Transfer Station Recyclable Special Revenue Fund which was created for this purpose? This will replace the 1988 Ford 8000

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (4-1-0)

Estimated Tax Impact= \$0.00

PURPOSE: The requested trailer caddy is a battery-powered means of moving empty and loaded trash trailers at the Transfer Station. It would not require a CDL to operate which would help alleviate personnel licensing requirements at the Transfer Station. This caddy would be capable of moving equipment trailers weighing upwards of 100,000 pounds and would be an affordable and effective option for reducing the possibility of workplace injuries. The trash trailers are currently moved by a 1988 Ford, which requires a CDL to operate.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 11-0) The movement of trash trailers at the transfer station is currently done using a 1988 truck tractor which requires a CDL licensed operator. On high-demand days this requires difficult coordination to make sure full trailers can be switched out. The trailer caddy can be operated without the CDL

license and will be more efficient and cost-effective than the near-term option of replacing the old truck tractor. The article will be funded from the recently authorized Transfer Station Recyclable Special Revenue Fund. There is no tax impact.

ARTICLE 21

Shall the Town establish a Landfill Repair and Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for the purpose of funding repairs and maintenance needs for the landfill cap and raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$150,000) to be placed in this fund? Further name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund.

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.12

PURPOSE: This article is to repair the cap on the landfill located on Merrill Road at the public works. During an annual inspection conducted in 2023 it was discovered that part of the cap had slipped due to the excessive rain. Per State of New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services regulations, and to avoid fines it must be repaired. Currently, there is no money budgeted for this, thus the vital need for this article.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 11-0) The Town has an obligation to keep its former landfill area properly sealed or “capped.” Recent storms have damaged the cap requiring repairs. This article will establish a Capital Reserve Fund from which to draw down and effect the repairs we are obligated to do. The estimated tax impact is \$42 on a \$350,000 property.

ARTICLE 22

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$30,000) for cemetery improvements and fund this appropriation by authorizing the withdrawal of said sum from Cemetery Trust Funds Cy Pres Account?

Recommended by Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.00

PURPOSE: These funds are used to make improvements and repairs to the town’s cemeteries. Some of the maintenance required is cutting down dead trees within the cemeteries and repairs to stone walls, fences and headstones. This warrant article is required to allow a withdrawal from the Cy Pres account for Cemetery trustees to utilize. If money is not used in 2024 the money will be returned to the account.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 11-0) This is a recurring article. Funds are used to maintain the interior of town cemeteries. The only change from previous years is the amount which has been raised from \$10,000 to \$30,000 for necessary repairs. This is funded through withdrawal from the Cemetery Trust, which has a balance of \$154,000. Therefore, there is no tax impact.

ARTICLE 23

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000) to allow the Conservation Commission to secure contracted services with a Licensed Forester for forestry services including plan updates, harvest layout, harvest management, forest inventory, trail maintenance and development, invasive species control and other related services; and to allow the Conservation Commission to contract or purchase materials or services for maintenance and upkeep of town forests, and fund this appropriation by authorizing the withdrawal of that sum from the Town Forest Account?

Recommended by Board of Selectmen (5-0-0)

Estimated Tax Impact = \$0.00

PURPOSE: This is a reoccurring article to allow the Conservation Commission to manage town forests by contracting a licensed forester to render professional services such as those listed in the article.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (RECOMMENDED 11-0) The Committee supports the contracting of professional services to manage and ensure the best use of town forests. The Town Forest Account is being used to fund the article; it has a sufficient balance of \$30,000 to cover expenses this year. Therefore, there is no tax impact.

ARTICLE 24

Shall the Town complete the easement and survey plat voted on at the March 12, 2013 Town Meeting vote on Warrant Article 29, shall the Town authorize the Conservation Commission to convey the associated conservation easement over a portion of the Banks-Shmid property (map 408/lot 123) on East Road including the existing hay field and exclusive of 20 acres set aside for ongoing gravel pit operations and future recreational facilities to a qualified land trust such as the Piscataquog Land Conservancy or Society for the Protection of New Hampshire

Forests subject to the final approval of the Board of Selectmen?

Recommended by Board of Selectmen (3-2-0)

Estimated Tax Impact= \$0.00

PURPOSE: This article will help the Town make an informed decision on how to proceed with the town-owned Banks/Shmid property on East Road. The 2013 warrant authorized the Board of Selectmen to “convey certain conservation easements over a portion of the property” and this article would instead authorize the Conservation Commission to complete that work. Further, this article specifies that the hay fields on the north end of that lot would be placed into conservation as part of the already-designated 117 acres, as understood by the Conservation Commission to be the original 2013 intent.

ARTICLE 25

To see if the Town will vote to study restricting eligibility for appointed positions to Town Boards and Committees to two (2) consecutive terms, which shall include any part of a term served, and shall remain ineligible for the next succeeding three (3) years? (By Petition)

PURPOSE: This is a petition article. As there are no funds asked for the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee do not make recommendations.

ARTICLE 26

To see if the Town will vote to direct the Conservation Commission under the direction of Board of Selectmen to take immediate action on the division of the One Hundred and Thirty-Seven (137) acres of already purchased land on East Road previously known as the Alma Shmid property, tax map 408-123, by dispersing it as follows: twelve acres (12) to include but not limited to the fields and front acreage of the property to be allocated to recreational facilities and ballfields, eight (8) acres to be allocated as gravel pit(s), and to convey the remaining one hundred and seventeen acres (117) as the Conservation Commission deems appropriate? [This article has no tax impact as land is already owned by the Town of Weare] (By Petition)

PURPOSE: This is a petition article. As there are no funds asked for the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee do not make recommendations.

ARTICLE 27

To see if the Town will vote to study to rescind the provisions of RSA 79-A:25 II, which authorized the deposit of 75% of the land use change tax collected by the Town to be deposited into the conservation fund? (By Petition)

PURPOSE: This is a petition article. As there are no funds asked for the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee do not make recommendations.

**WEARE SCHOOL DISTRICT
2024 SCHOOL WARRANT**

To choose by nonpartisan ballot, the following School District Officers.

**FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER
Three Year Term**

Vote for not more than two

Daniel J. Recupero

Sarah Button

(Write-In)

ARTICLE 1

Shall the Weare School District receive the reports of agents, auditors, committees and officers chosen, as printed in the Annual Report? (Majority vote required.)

ARTICLE 2

Shall the Weare School District set the salaries of the School Board and the compensation for any other officers of the District as printed in the 2024-2025 Budget, or take any other action in relation thereto? (THIS WARRANT ARTICLE IS SUPPORTED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD.) (The 2024-2025 amount is included in Warrant Article 3, the operating budget.) (Majority vote required.)

ARTICLE 3

Shall the Weare School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote

of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$18,709,160 (Eighteen Million Seven Hundred Nine Thousand One Hundred Sixty Dollars)? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$18,733,760 (Eighteen Million Seven Hundred Thirty-Three Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty Dollars), which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the District or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. (THIS WARRANT ARTICLE IS SUPPORTED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD.) (Majority vote required.)

PURPOSE: The School Board supports this article, which is an increase of \$230,721 or 1.25% on the current budget. The largest increase to the budget is for mandated special education services, specifically, out-of-district placements. The overall increase in the student services lines is \$322,743. The bus transportation contract increase is \$64,068. Several cuts were made to mitigate increases, including a total reduction of four teaching positions (-\$348,000) and over \$60,000 in cuts from supplies and equipment lines.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:
(RECOMMENDED 11-0) The Committee unanimously supports the proposed operating budget. The 1.25% increase from the current budget is less than the rate of inflation and is less than the default budget. Student population in the Weare District declined from 1006 in 2017 to 899 last year. The current year saw a continued decline to 832 students. This follows a national and statewide trend. Recognizing this, the District has proposed cutting four (4) teacher positions to achieve salary and benefits savings in the proposed budget. It is expected class sizes will remain under 20 even with the reductions. In future budget cycles the Committee encourages the District to look for additional teachers, administrative positions, and support staff positions in both the schools and the SAU where savings can be achieved consistent with student population changes.

ARTICLE 4

Shall the Weare School District vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Weare School Board and the Weare Education Association which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current

staffing levels over those paid in the prior fiscal year:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2024-2025	\$901,796 (Nine Hundred One Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety-Six Dollars)
2025-2026	\$368,687 (Three Hundred Sixty-Eight Thousand, Six Hundred Eighty-Seven Dollars)

and further raise and appropriate the sum of \$901,796 (Nine Hundred One Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety-Six Dollars) for the school year 2024-2025, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits over those of the appropriation at current staffing levels? (THIS WARRANT ARTICLE IS SUPPORTED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD.) (This appropriation is in addition to Warrant Article 3, the operating budget.) (Majority vote required.)

PURPOSE: The School Board supports the 2-year contract with the Weare Education Association. This agreement brings the wages in Weare closer to those of neighboring districts in an effort to retain and recruit qualified teachers. In year one, the base salary is increased 6%, raising the average salary 17% from \$53,235 to \$61,492. Increases are higher for teachers with 10-25 years of experience, who we are currently losing at a higher rate to other districts. The cost for year one of the contract is \$901,796 and year two is \$368,687. The agreement also gives the district the ability to increase the length of the student day.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: (NOT RECOMMENDED 9-2) The previous teachers' contract made the District more competitive with entry level hires. This year's proposed contract focuses on the ability to both retain and hire experienced teachers. The District currently has a turnover problem, as teachers leave for higher paying positions in other districts. While the Committee wholeheartedly supports increasing pay to make us more competitive, the proposed contract is "a bridge too far." An entry level first year teacher would receive a 6% pay increase, which is relatively consistent with other pay raise requests in the town warrant. However, many experienced teachers with over five years' service, who comprise 76% of our staff, will routinely receive pay hikes over 20% with no reduction in benefits. Citing two specific examples: First a

teacher with a BA and 11 years' service in year one of the contract will receive a 26% pay raise from \$46,196 to \$58,191. In year two they will receive another 5% hike to \$61,102, a 32.3% pay increase over today. Second, a teacher with an MA degree and 14 years' service will receive a 22.3% pay raise from \$55,967 to \$68,466. In year two they will receive another 5% hike to \$71,899, a 28.5% increase over today. The first-year contract increase of \$901,786 in salaries and benefits would have a permanent tax impact of \$244 on a \$350,000 property; the year two contract increase of \$368,687 would add another permanent impact of \$100 on the same property. After the contract's second year taxpayers will have paid over \$2.1 million more than they are paying today for essentially the same services. The Committee believes this is too much to ask of Weare taxpayers, especially in consideration of an uncertain economy. Committee members voting in the minority felt these pay hikes are long overdue and will make our district competitive in hiring and retention of experienced teachers, which could potentially lead to better student outcomes.

**JOHN STARK REGIONAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT
2024 SCHOOL WARRANT**

**To choose by nonpartisan ballot, the following
School District Officers.**

**FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER
(At Large)
Three Year Term**

Vote for not more than one
Deborah Urbaitis
(Write-In)

**FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT MODERATOR
One Year Term**

Vote for not more than one
Luther Drake
(Write-In)

ARTICLE 1

**Shall the John Stark School District receive the
reports of agents, auditors, committees and other**

**officers chosen, as printed in the Annual Report?
(Majority vote required.)**

ARTICLE 2

Shall the John Stark School District set the salaries of the School Board and the compensation for any other officers of the District as printed in the 2024-2025 Budget, or take any other action in relation thereto? (THIS WARRANT ARTICLE IS SUPPORTED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD.) (The 2024-2025 amount is included in Warrant Article 3, the operating budget.) (Majority vote required.)

ARTICLE 3

Shall the John Stark School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$15,009,572 (Fifteen Million Nine Thousand Five Hundred Seventy-Two Dollars)? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$14,960,240 (Fourteen Million Nine Hundred Sixty Thousand Two Hundred Forty Dollars), which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the District or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. (THIS WARRANT ARTICLE IS SUPPORTED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD.) (Majority vote required.)

PURPOSE: The Board supports this article, which is an increase of \$345,647 (2.36%) on the current budget. Specific student needs and an increase in health insurance premiums are the main drivers of the overall increase. Almost half (\$159,887) of the increase is for mandated special education supports and services. Over 35% of the increase reflects a 12.1% increase in health insurance premiums and a 4.7% increase in dental insurance costs.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:
(NOT RECOMMENDED 8-3)** The proposed and default budgets are within \$49,000 of each other.

The proposed budget is 2.36% above the current budget, the default is 2.02% above. Both are under the rate of inflation when compared to the current operating budget. Costs are shared with Henniker. The Weare tax increase on a \$350,000 property is projected to be \$46 for the proposed and \$38 for the default. While the Committee would normally support the proposed budget, we believe there will be sufficient funds in the default to support current operations. This opinion is supported by a historical end of year return of over \$300,000 to offset taxes in each of the last five fiscal years. The District also has a Contingency Fund approved by voters two years ago to help offset as needed. Thus, the Committee believes the \$49,000 saved here can be better used to target more pressing needs elsewhere. Committee members voting in the minority felt the 2.36% increase over the current budget was reasonable in ensuring the District has the proper resources to support operations.

ARTICLE 4

Shall the John Stark School District vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the John Stark School Board and the John Stark Support Personnel Association which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels over those paid in the prior fiscal year:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2024-2025	\$152,548 (One Hundred Fifty-Two Thousand Five Hundred Forty-Eight Dollars)
2025-2026	\$39,653 (Thirty-Nine Thousand Six Hundred Fifty-Three Dollars)

and further raise and appropriate the sum of \$152,548 (One Hundred Fifty-Two Thousand Five Hundred Forty-Eight Dollars) for the school year 2024-2025, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits over those of the appropriation at current staffing levels? (THIS WARRANT ARTICLE IS SUPPORTED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD.) (This appropriation is in addition to Warrant Article 3, the operating budget.) (Majority vote required.)

PURPOSE: The Board supports this 2-year contract with the John Stark Support Personnel Association that increases wages to retain and attract support

staff. The increase raises the average hourly rate from \$18.43/hour to \$20.30/hour in year one. In 2025, the projected average rate would rise to \$20.85/hour. The agreement also increases the portion of healthcare premiums the district pays to 60% from 50% and increases paid holidays to six from the current four paid holidays.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

(RECOMMENDED 11-0) The Committee unanimously supports this contract. The District is currently having difficulty hiring and retaining employees covered under the contract. These include FT/PT aides, teacher assistants, food service workers, custodians, secretaries, and other support staff. The contract is front-end loaded to increase average hourly rates from approximately \$18 to \$20. Costs are shared with Henniker. The year one tax impact for Weare on a \$350,000 property is \$28; year two is an additional \$7. After the contract's second year taxpayers will have paid \$345,000 more than they are paying today for these services with Weare's share being \$183,000. Included in the cost is an increase from 50% to 60% for district paid share of health care premiums. The Committee believes this is a reasonable cost to ensure the District can provide a competitive wage, noting the difficulties competing with the private sector in filling in these lower paid, yet essential positions.

VOTING GUIDE

Town Warrant

Article 2	Y	N	Article 15	Y	N
Article 3	Y	N	Article 16	Y	N
Article 4	Y	N	Article 17	Y	N
Article 5	Y	N	Article 18	Y	N
Article 6	Y	N	Article 19	Y	N
Article 7	Y	N	Article 20	Y	N
Article 8	Y	N	Article 21	Y	N
Article 9	Y	N	Article 22	Y	N
Article 10	Y	N	Article 23	Y	N
Article 11	Y	N	Article 24	Y	N
Article 12	Y	N	Article 25	Y	N
Article 13	Y	N	Article 26	Y	N
Article 14	Y	N	Article 27	Y	N

Weare School District

Article 1	Y	N	Article 3	Y	N
Article 2	Y	N	Article 4	Y	N

John Stark Regional School District

Article 1	Y	N	Article 3	Y	N
Article 2	Y	N	Article 4	Y	N