In attendance were Moderator Rod Stark, Town Clerk Cathy Ball, Assistant Town Moderator Jim Raymond, Select Board Chairman Peter Georgantas, Vice Chairman Mark Lemay, Selectman Collis Adams, Selectman Chet Bowen, Selectwoman Kelly Boyer, Town Administrator Derek Horne, Assistant Town Administrator Danielle Basora and Scribe Gail Labrecque

7:00 PM CALL TO ORDER
Moderator Rodney Stark called the meeting to order. Moderator Stark led the Board and the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Moderator Stark introduced the head table: Town Clerk Cathy Ball, Scribe Gail Labrecque, Assistant Town Moderator Jim Raymond, Select Board Chairman Peter Georgantas, Vice Chairman Mark Lemay, Selectman Collis Adams, Selectman Chet Bowen, Selectwoman Kelly Boyer, Town Administrator Derek Horne, and Assistant Town Administrator Danielle Basora.

**Introductions and Recognition**
Moderator Stark said the dignitaries who may be in attendance, include Department Heads: Police Chief Eric Sereno, Fire Chief Brian Allard, Public Works Director Adam Jacobs, Library Director Dianne Hathaway, and Parks & Recreation Director Rick Wilhelmi. It includes Budget Committee members: Chair Cole Riel, Vice Chair Jeffrey O’Brien, Joseph Alexander Jr., Zuzana Buzzell, Spencer Dias, Peter Grigorakakis, William Kordas, Dennis Lynch, Richard Manzo, Eileen McNinnie, and Karl Soderquist. The Budget Committee also includes Richard Fletcher–Goffstown Village Water Precinct Representative, Jared Talbot–School Board Representative, and Selectwoman Kelly Boyer–Select Board Representative. We may also have our State Representatives Joe Alexander, Jr., Cole Riel, Barbara Griffin, Michael Gunski, Fred Plett and John Burt, and State Senator Lou D’Allesandro present.

**Robinson Cullerot Volunteer Award**
Moderator Stark recognized Parks & Recreation Director Rick Wilhelmi to present the Robinson Cullerot Volunteer Award.

Parks & Recreation Director Wilhelmi said for the past 10 years he has had the opportunity to work with many people of all ages in sports, recreation and leisure activities for the Town. So many fellow colleagues and volunteers share the common goal to create a means of laughter, enjoyment, and social engagement within our Town. I would like to thank our Parks & Recreation Commissioners for their continued dedication to the mission of the Recreation Department. Our current commissioners are Chairman Howard Sobolov, Vice Chairman Jane Steckowych, Brad Parkhurst, Kevin Daigle, Gary Gendron, Alex Hill, Pam Decker and Peter Hooker. I would like to thank the town independent groups who provide our community with recreation, sports and leisure activities as well.

As we all know, for any community to be strong, it relies on the resources of the people within it, and Goffstown has a strong community of dedicated individuals volunteering in so many different ways, all with a similar goal to provide programs and facilities to all residents, which helps foster a strong community spirit.
He is here tonight to present the 31st Annual Clint Robinson/Lionel Cullerot Community Volunteer Award. The Goffstown Parks & Recreation Commission and the Select Board give this award annually to the person or group that best exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism for the community of Goffstown as shown by Clint Robinson and Lionel Cullerot. This year’s award is being presented to a man whose been a volunteer for many years—Brad Parkhurst. Brad moved to Goffstown in 1973 with his wife, Pam, and his children Dan and Diana.

Brad worked for the Goffstown Parks & Recreation Department for many years and continues to volunteer in his community well beyond his children Dan and Diana after they left all programs. Brad’s community involvement began with Goffstown Junior Baseball, Tri-Town Recreational Soccer and Goffstown High School Athletics. While with GJB, he volunteered for 15+ years as Board member, coach, manager, umpire and broadcaster in the minor league, major league, and Babe Ruth Division. He served as President of the minor league in 1985.

While with Tri-Town Recreational Soccer for 23 years, he volunteered as Board member, referee, coach & manager, field maintenance coordinator, and was part of the group who developed the travel soccer program. Brad also volunteered on the State Travel Soccer organization Board. Brad was more than willing to manage the game clock, at all of his daughter Diana’s High School basketball games.

In the past 5 years, he has been very active with Goffstown High School Softball as an announcer. Brad has always been involved during town election time setting up and dismantling the voting stations and staffing the polls for the day.

As a result, of Brad’s volunteer commitment he has served on two town committees, GTV and as Parks & Recreation Commissioner. Brad has been a Parks & Recreation Commissioner since 2012, now serving his third term. He was the Chairman of the GTV Committee as well. We, as his community, owe him a debt of gratitude for all he has done since moving here in 1973 and hope he will continue to grace us with his presence in the future. On behalf of the Parks & Recreation Commissioners and himself, we congratulate and thank Brad Parkhurst for his exceptional volunteerism in this community.

**Moderator’s Opening Statement & Rules of Procedure**

Moderator Stark said, as you probably know, at the 1996 Town Meeting, the Town of Goffstown voted to adopt what is known as “Senate Bill 2" (which has since been codified and is also known now as RSA 40:12 & 13). This act is otherwise referred to, as the "STANDARDIZED OFFICIAL BALLOT REFERENDUM SYSTEM.” It is under this system which the Town of Goffstown in general, and this meeting in particular, will conduct its business.

I would like to take a few minutes to explain to you some of the features of this system as well as the rules of engagement for tonight’s meeting. There will be no smoking on school grounds. To assist in standing votes, registered voters have been given a voting card, which must be displayed during a standing vote. If you have not signed this card, please do so. You will be asked to return these cards to the checklist table if you leave before the meeting ends.
All speakers must use microphones, show their voting card, and state their name. Please spell your last name for the scribe. The most important thing for you to know is that we will not be voting to pass or defeat any Warrant Article tonight.

All Warrant Articles will be on the Town's Official Ballot, which will be voted upon at the second session of this town meeting. Voting will take place on March 10, 2020 here in the High School and at the Bartlett Elementary School in Pinardville. At tonight's meeting, Articles 6 through 13 will be open for discussion, debate and amendment. If, an amendment is properly offered it will be discussed, debated and voted upon. If, an amendment to any particular Warrant Article is adopted by this meeting, the Article, as amended, will appear on the Official Ballot for voting on March 10, 2020.

With respect to amendments, please keep in mind that the purpose of the Warrant is to simply place the "subject matter" before the voters. Senate Bill 2, by allowing amendments, allows the same range of possible amendments, which voters have always had under the traditional town meeting system. Amending appropriation articles up or down is permitted. Details as to how a warrant article subject matter is to be treated, or the addition or deletion of terms and conditions, to the article can be accomplished through amendments as long as they relate to the general subject matter of the article.

Substantive amendments, not relating to the article's subject matter will be ruled out of order and will not be accepted by the moderator. Further, with respect to amendments as in the past all amendments must be presented to the moderator in writing. Forms are available in the hall for this purpose. Proposed amendments must be moved to the floor and seconded before any discussion of the proposed amendment will be allowed. Following the discussion on the proposed amendment a vote will be taken on the amendment. Following the vote on the amendment, discussion will resume on the main article. At the conclusion of the discussion on the main article, there will be no vote on the article. We will simply begin consideration of the next article.

“The previous question" is a procedure which will apply to the conduct of this meeting. After an article or a proposed amendment to an article has been discussed, a voter may move the previous question. This motion is not debatable. A "yes" vote on the previous question means there will be no further discussion on the main article or proposed amendment, as the case may be. A simple majority vote is required to pass the previous question and thus end the debate.

In 2011, the Legislature amended RSA 40:13 to prevent the practice of amending an article to eliminate all words but "to see". Please do not offer amendments, which attempt to do this because they are not allowed and will not be accepted by the moderator. Prior to a voice or standing vote on a proposed amendment, five registered voters may make a request in writing, for a written secret ballot. These five voters must be present at the meeting when the vote is taken. Once a voice vote has been taken or a standing vote is, underway a written request for a secret written ballot may be made. This request must be made by seven registered voters, who are present at the meeting, before any other business is begun. Forms are available for this purpose. If, we have a written ballot, you need to show your voting card. The card will be initialed by the ballot clerk as you are handed your ballot.
All written ballots, which are cast, must be whole. If a cast ballot is torn, ripped or crumpled up, it will not be counted. You may fold your ballot if you wish, but please do no more. In the case of a tie vote, it is recognized by voting authorities, most notably Roberts Rules of Order, that the moderator protects his impartial position by exercising his voting right only when the vote would affect the outcome, in which case he can either vote, and thereby change the result, or he can abstain. Since a majority is necessary to pass a motion, the motion fails if the result of the vote is a tie.

In my 40 years of moderating town meetings, there has been only one dead even tie - that was on the article to raze and sell the building I was born in, the Moore General Hospital.

A motion to reconsider can only be made by a person who voted with the prevailing side. It may be seconded by anyone. It is debatable and requires a simple majority for passage. A motion to restrict reconsideration maybe made with respect to any vote taken at this meeting, or any warrant article previously considered at the meeting. This motion is not debatable and requires a simple majority for passage.

Finally, please note that I will not tolerate derogatory comments to be made about any speaker, or person in this hall – so please be civil.

Chairman Georgantas made a motion to dispense with the reading of the warrant. Vice Chairman Lemay seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.

PRESENTATION OF WARRANT ARTICLES
2020 Proposed Warrant Articles

ARTICLE 6
Moderator Stark recognized Selectwoman Boyer.

Selectwoman Boyer made a motion to move Article 6 to the floor. Chairman Georgantas seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.

Selectwoman Boyer said the Town Operating Budget consists of two funds—the General Fund and the Sewer Enterprise Fund. Prior to 2017, the Operating Budget also included the EMS Special Revenue Fund. At the request of the Department of Revenue Administration, the EMS Special Revenue Fund appropriation has been moved to a separate Article 7. If Article 7 fails, the General Fund will fund EMS operations.

The Proposed Operating Budget is $23,714,941. We will focus this presentation on the General Fund, as that is the only fund, which affects the town’s property tax rate. The General Fund Budget is up $1,285,835 over last year’s budget, and the General Fund Revenue is up $90,818, resulting in an increase in the town’s tax rate. Changes affecting department-operating budgets from the previous year in the 2020 Budget includes a 53rd payroll week, which accounts for a $186,369 increase in the budget. The 53rd payroll week is also in the Default Budget, minus any non-union wage increases.
The budget includes contractual increases previously approved for the Town’s union employees. The Town has four Collective Bargaining Agreements. Eligible non-union employees would receive a 2.5% step increase effective July 1st. The budget also includes a matrix adjustment for Library employees, which follows the matrix adjustment approved for the Town’s non-union employees in 2019. The budget includes the four new firefighters and the offsetting FEMA Grant Revenue approved at 2019 Town Meeting. The breakdown of these four new positions is 100% of the appropriation for the 4 positions is in the Operating Budget of $348,774. Seventy-five percent (75%) is covered by the FEMA SAFER Grant in 2020. Twenty-five percent (25%) is the Town’s share.

Health and Dental insurance premiums under the latest contract with HealthTrust have increased 4.0% due to claims experience. Contract pricing for gasoline, diesel, heating oil, propane, and electricity have moderate increases. If the article fails, the Default Budget shall be $22,804,287. The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) portion of the Operating Budget is an increase of $370,996 over 2019. As you may recall, in 2019 the Select Board proposed many special articles to fund one-time capital projects with the use of Unassigned Fund Balance. This year, the Select Board is only proposing Special Articles to deposit into two Capital Reserve Funds and to add funds to Road Plan, which were reduced during the Select Board and Budget Committee’s review of the Operating Budget.

When comparing the estimated tax rate of this proposed budget to 2019, please remember the State’s biennial budget included additional revenue in 2019 that was not budgeted for. The Select Board used these additional funds in 2019 to reduce the Town’s portion of the tax rate and set it at $8.14 per thousand. If, the Operating Budget passes, the Town’s portion of the tax rate is estimated to increase by 43¢ per thousand. If, the Operating Budget fails, the Default Budget is estimated to increase the Town’s portion of the tax rate by 20¢ per thousand. This article is recommended by the Select Board and Budget Committee.

Moderator Stark opened the floor for discussion on Article 6.

There was no discussion.

Selectwoman Boyer made a motion to restrict consideration of Article 6. Chairman Georgantas seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.

ARTICLE 7
Moderator Stark recognized Selectwoman Boyer.

Selectwoman Boyer made a motion to move Article 7 to the floor. Chairman Georgantas seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.

Selectwoman Boyer said the EMS Special Revenue fund was established in 2001 and 100% of all revenues collected from EMS operations is deposited into the fund. Traditionally, the EMS Special Revenue Fund Budget has been included as part of the overall Operating Budget appropriations article. In 2017, the Department of Revenue Administration issued guidance that all appropriations...
for Special Revenue Funds should be made into separate warrant articles because they require an affirmative annual vote by the Legislative body.

This article asks voters to fund 2020 EMS operations from the EMS Special Revenue Fund, with no funds to be raised by taxation. The EMS Special Revenue Fund has an available balance of $392,245 as of 12/31/19. The proposed 2020 EMS budget is $634,408, which is an increase of $20,449 over 2019. If Article 7 passes, Article 6, the Operating Budget, will be reduced by the amount of the EMS operations. If, Article 7 fails, EMS operations will be funded through taxation, which will increase the tax rate by $.37 per thousand. If, Article 6 and 7 both fail, the Default Budget for EMS operations is $608,456. This article is recommended by the School Board and Budget Committee.

Moderator Stark opened the floor for discussion on Article 7.

There was no discussion on Article 7.

Selectwoman Boyer made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 7. Chairman Georgantas seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.

Moderator Stark corrected an earlier misstatement that the motion to restrict reconsideration is open for debate. It is not. He wants to make it clear.

ARTICLE 8
Vice Chairman Lemay made a motion to move Article 8 to the floor. Selectman Adams seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.

Vice Chairman Lemay said the Fire Department Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund was established in 2008 for the purpose of helping defray the single year impact of the replacement cost of modern fire apparatus, which can run between $650,000 and $1.5 million. This Capital Reserve Fund helps to spread the cost over multiple years and avoid spikes in the tax rate. This fund can also provide the town leverage, in the form of a local match when seeking grants to replace apparatus. This was the case in 2010 when the Fire Department was able to accept an Assistance to Firefighters Grant to replace the Town’s obsolete ladder trucks with one Tower/Ladder. In that instance, the required match dollars came from this fund. The fund currently has approximately $406,000 and the Town is seeking to add $225,000 for future Fire apparatus purchases. Over the years, this fund has been used to replace a Pumper/Tanker, Command SUV, UTV, and rescue boat. This article is to be funded from the Unassigned Fund Balance, with no monies to be raised by taxation. This article is recommended by the Select Board and the Budget Committee.

Moderator Stark opened the floor for discussion of Article 8.

Liz Dolan asked about the Unassigned Fund Balance. Where do we get money that is not from taxation?

Chairman Georganatas said it could be from monies left over from taxation in previous years, or it could be funds from unexpected revenues, such as car registration or money from the School
District returned to the General Fund. These unexpected revenues go into the Unassigned Fund Balance.

Liz Dolan said she should see what we did not spend each year.

Chairman Georgantas said whatever we didn’t spend last year goes into the Unassigned Fund Balance. Town Administrator Horne said it is on the chart in one of the handouts. It is estimated at $5.2 million.

Chairman Georgantas said we are required by the State to carry funds in that fund, in case of emergencies. It is not just a bank account. That money has already been raised by taxation the previous year. It is public information.

Barbara Griffin said for purposes of the Unassigned Fund Balance question, it is clear we are doing a lot by drawing down that Unassigned Fund Balance. It does not affect the tax rate, but it effects the money we have for emergencies. The Unassigned Fund Balance comes from the accumulation of tax-generated revenue and unanticipated revenues that are not expended, during the course of the year, and are not used to offset the tax rate the next year. It is like your budget at home. You can keep it in the budget or use it to offset your expenses in your next budget.

The bottom line is a 5% DRA minimum amount required in case there are issues with cash flow. We have sources of this money sitting in our Town checking account. The Town holds it because the School District is not supposed to carry money forward. That was part of the problem with the $9 million they found. The top line is the maximum amount DRA allows us to hold based on our budget. It looks like the Board has decided to use some of the Unassigned Fund Balance, to pay for items that would otherwise impact the tax rate. In 2020, she noted it appears the Unassigned Fund Balance is going down to the level it was at the time of the last recession. It seems to her we do not want it to get any lower than it will this year.

She asked what the Board considers for future years. Chairman Georgantas said our estimated balance is $5.2 million. That is what we are trying to maintain. When it gets up there, we look at it to see what we can afford to spend. Last year we spent $500,000 on fields at the Transfer Station, as well as other things. We maintain the fund at a healthy level. It is not that we are reducing it. We are retaining the amount the DRA recommends, plus a little more.

**Vice Chairman Lemay made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 8. Selectman Adams seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.**

**ARTICLE 9**
Moderator Stark recognized Vice Chairman Lemay.

**Vice Chairman Lemay made a motion to move Article 9 to the floor. Selectman Adams seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.**

Vice Chairman Lemay said this article would deposit $100,000 into the Grasmere Town Hall Capital Reserve Fund, which was established in 2005. The Select Board and the Historic District
Commission are designated as agents, to expend, and could access this fund any time during the year. The Fund currently has approximately $171,000 and this article would add $100,000 for construction of a two-story addition on the rear of the building.

The second floor of Grasmere Town Hall has been restored through grants, volunteer efforts and previous uses of this Fund. The space is available for residents of Goffstown, but it is only accessed using the front stairwell. This addition will have an elevator to the restored second floor, making the space available to all residents of Goffstown.

It will include storage and an additional bathroom for the second floor. In 2018, the architect of record updated the probable construction cost estimate for the addition at $450,000. This is the second of three planned $100,000 deposits into the Capital Reserve Fund. The Select Board and Historic District Commission will explore grant opportunities and other funding sources. This Capital Reserve Fund can be used for any required match for grants. This article would be funded by the Unassigned Fund Balance, with no monies to be raised by taxation. This article is recommended by the Select Board and Budget Committee.

Moderator Stark opened the floor for discussion of Article 9.

There was no discussion on Article 9.

*Vice Chairman Lemay made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 9. Selectman Adams seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.*

**Article 10**

Moderator Stark recognized Selectman Adams.

*Selectman Adams made a motion to move Article 10 to the floor. Chairman Georgantas seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.*

Selectman Adams said this article seeks to increase the Road Plan funding provided in the operating budget, to meet the goals identified in the Capital Improvement Program. This article would add an additional $500,000 to the Road Plan budget in the operating budget, for a total of $1.6 million.

Last year, in 2019, DPW addressed approximately 6% of the overall road network through reclamation, maintenance overlays, or short-term thin shim treatments. The 2020 Road Plan budget will support work on 7.7% of the Town’s total road network. This plan was built upon a Town-as-General Contractor method of project delivery, which provides the efficient use of taxpayer dollars and greater flexibility of schedule. The reclamation program will continue to target collector roads, which have higher traffic counts, and locations where underground utility expansions or replacements, are planned.

Maintenance overlays and lower traffic roads will augment the plan as time and budget allow. Passage of this article will direct the Select Board to include this amount in future operating and default budgets of the Town. This article is to be funded from the Unassigned Fund Balance, with
no monies to be raised by taxation. This article is recommended by the Select Board and the Budget Committee.

Moderator Stark opened the floor for discussion of Article 10.

There was no discussion on Article 10.

**Selectman Adams made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 10. Chairman Georgantas seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.**

**Article 11**

Moderator Stark read Article 11: “To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $20,000 for the purpose of helping to support the programs of Goffstown nonprofit Crispin’s House Coalition for Youth, Inc., a youth drug, alcohol, and suicide prevention agency.” This appropriation is in addition to Article 6. It is recommended by the Select Board and the Budget Committee.

Moderator Stark recognized Chairman Georgantas.

**Chairman Georgantas made a motion to move Article 11 to the floor. Selectman Bowen seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.**

Chairman Georgantas said this article would continue taxpayer support of Crispin’s House Coalition for Youth. Crispin’s House has provided services to youth and families of Goffstown for over 30 years, providing a wide range of program opportunities to help kids make positive choices. The annual budget of Crispin’s House is about $106,000. The Warrant Article funds $20,000, or 19%, of the budget. The organization works hard to raise the remaining funds through fundraising activities, community involvement, and grants. This article demonstrates strong and continued community support, which helps these efforts.

The newest program is the Challenge Day Program. Challenge Day addresses issues of violence, bullying, conflict management, suicide, peer pressure, alcohol, and drugs. Other programs include an accredited Juvenile Court Diversion Program, VolunTEENS, Youth Forums, Suicide Prevention, and Substance Misuse Prevention. This article is recommended by the Select Board and Budget Committee.

Moderator Stark opened the floor for discussion of Article 11.

Spencer Dias said he just received a message from Richard Manzo saying there is an error on Article 11. It was not a unanimous vote of the Budget Committee. Richard Manzo voted against it.

Chairman Georgantas said the Budget Committee did recommend it.

Barbara Griffin asked if the Budget Committee vote was unanimous or not. It should be represented properly on the warrant so it is an accurate reflection of what the Committees did.
Town Administrator Horne said it is an error on the warrant. The vote should be 11-1. It is reflected in the minutes. They will make that change and it will be on the ballot.

*Chairman Georngantas made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 11. Selectman Bowen seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.*

**ARTICLE 12**
Moderator Stark recognized Chairman Georgantas.

*Chairman Georgantas made a motion to move Article 12 to the floor. Selectman Bowen seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.*

Chairman Georgantas said this article would continue taxpayer support of the Goffstown Main Street Program. Goffstown Main Street Program’s mission is to provide support, advice, and promotion to current and potential business owners and residents of the designated Main Street area using the National Main Street Center’s 4-Point Approach. The 4-Point Approach revolves around principles of effective design, promotion, economic restructuring, and organization as the keys to economic revitalization of historic downtown.

Many of you are familiar with the special events sponsored by Main Street including Old Home Day, Concerts on the Common, the Giant Pumpkin Regatta, Uncommon Art on the Common, Friday Night under the Lights and Art Showoffs. These events bring business to the Village area as well as fostering a sense of community. Passage of this article would provide $15,000 toward their 2020 budget of $82,000. This article is recommended by the Select Board. The Budget Committee did not recommend it.

Moderator Stark opened the floor to discussion of Article 12.

Claire Rouillard asked why this was not recommended by the Budget Committee.

Chairman Georgantas said that was taken up at the Budget Committee public hearing.

Cole Riel, Budget Committee Chairman, said there were issues raised during the Budget Committee deliberations about the financial transparency. They did not have as much information about it as they did about Crispin’s House. The Budget Committee did not feel comfortable with recommending it. He has also heard from business owners that they would like to see Main Street re-vamped. They don’t feel it properly serves the business owners as it currently exists.

Charity Frost, Main Street Director, thanked the Select Board for their support of the warrant article. To clarify the transparency issues, she said there was an interim director during her maternity leave. There was an error on her end and the budget didn’t get submitted to the Budget Committee. That caused some issues. It wasn’t intentional to appear to have a lack of transparency.

*Chairman Georgantas made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 12. Selectman Bowen seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.*
**ARTICLE 13**

Moderator Stark said this article is made by petition. He has received an amendment to it.

He recognized Chairman Georgantas.

*Chairman Georgantas made a motion to move Article 13 to the floor. Selectwoman Boyer seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.*

Moderator Stark said this is a motion to amend Article 13.

*To see if the Town will vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:35, 1-a for an optional veterans tax credit of $2,000 for service connected total ‘and permanent’ disability on residential property and replace the standard tax credit referred to in “this section.”*

He said the portions in quotes are changes made to the language.

Brad Parkhurst asked if you have to first present the article as written before it is amended.

Moderator Stark said he would accept the point of order. He said the original article was submitted by petition. It seeks to increase the maximum on the veterans’ property tax credit for service-connected total disability from $2,000 to $4,000. In 2018, the NH Legislature increased the maximum on the tax credit from $2,000 to $4,000. This tax credit has been modified in the past. In 1990 it was increased from $700 to $1,400. In 2004 it was increased from $1,400 to $2,000.

In 2019, the Town had 50 such credits on the MS-1 Inventory of Valuation. If the Town maintains 50 credits in 2020 it is estimated passage of the article would increase the War Service Credits by $75,000-$100,000. These tax credits need to be made up by the other property taxpayers. It is estimated that passage of this article would increase the tax rate between $.04 and $.06 per thousand, depending on the number of credits in 2020. This article is recommended by the Select Board.

Moderator Stark opened the floor for discussion of Article 13.

Claire Rouillard (who made the motion to amend) said she became aware of this amendment as she was preparing for the meeting tonight. She is very thankful for all the veterans in our town. Our town is very good to our veterans. Currently, totally and permanently disabled veterans are allowed a $2,000 per year credit in their taxes in addition to the $500 All Veteran’s credit.

This bill would bring it to $4,000 for a totally disabled veteran. That is different from a totally disabled and permanently disabled veteran. The statute says for a veteran to obtain this benefit, they must prove to the town they are totally and permanently disabled—100%.

The language in this article does not reflect that. It’s the language required in the statute. There are 50 such veterans that are totally and permanently disabled. To have a $4,000 benefit would be $250,000 put on the taxpayers of the town. The hearts of the Select Board were there. The problem is that veterans that get the benefit they have now do not think they should have an additional $2,000 per year. Her husband could participate in this. He said this was not right. We are taking the money from the seniors and people who cannot afford the housing in this town now. We need
to reduce the amount back to what it is $2,000, and get the wording correct, so the veterans understand they have to be totally and permanently disabled.

Scott Bartlett, a Goffstown resident and the Town’s Assessor, said the term under RSA 72:35 is “Service-connected total disability.” That is defined as “any person who has been honorably discharged or an officer honorably separated from the military services of the United States, and who has total and permanent service-connected disability, or who is a double amputee or paraplegic because of injury, or the surviving spouse of such a person”.

You do not need to put in the word “permanent” in the actual article. The article is only determining the amount needed. It could be anywhere between $700 and $4,000. That is the question that needs to be raised here. We do have 50 service-connected total disability recipients. That is what we gave out in 2019. If we have the same number next year, and if we used the $4,000, there would be an increase in the amount to be raised by taxes of $75,000. It would not add anyone other than those that entirely qualify per the statute. The statute clearly defines what he needs to look at to qualify for it. The issue is not the wording. The issue is if it should be $2,000 or $4,000. The term “service-connected total disability” refers to the wording he said.

Claire Rouillard said as an Assessor, Scott Bartlett was probably correct in everything he said. As an attorney she said, the language is needed. An individual reading this statute that thinks they would qualify must provide a document to the Town Clerk that they are totally and permanently 100% disabled. She understands what the Assessor is saying and respectfully disagrees with him.

Ellen Vermokowitz said she seconded this amendment to Article 13 for the purpose of discussion. She is confused about the language and if it is appropriate or not. She supports all our veterans. She supports a higher tax credit for our veterans, who are totally and completely disabled. She is not sure if the language covers it appropriately. She asked for an explanation.

Barbara Griffin said we have a difference of opinion regarding statutory interpretation. She does not think there is any issue with the wording of the amendment with regards to passage, because of the statute. She speaks as someone married to a veteran and the sister of a deceased brother who was 100% totally and permanently disabled. She is not concerned with the language provided. It provides a clear notice to everyone voting that it is not just a total disability but is a permanent disability.

In the military, there are 10 different honorable discharges and a number of different levels of disability. She is in favor of the amendment, and of veterans. This Town supports enabling legislation that allow taxes to go up because no one wants to say no. She suspects the Selectmen have not had tax deeding issues with permanently disabled veterans. She knows from her experience on the Board of Selectmen that, when there are issues with taxes due on a property, they work with them to make sure that property isn’t taken for taxes when someone is living in the house and wants it. What we have here is a petitioned article to increase the credit.

There was legislation in Concord that allowed towns to increase this credit. Every time we raise a credit, we increase taxes that have to be raised elsewhere. Our Unreserved Fund Balance from the DRA minimum rate will be at approximately the same level in 2020 that it was 10 years ago. She
has concerns about spending in the future based on past approvals we have had in town. She appreciates that someone brought this forward. She is not sure of issues brought forward by the Board of Selectmen regarding this issue. She is not sure as a community why we would be raising it. The veterans get alot of benefits. She would be in favor of the amendment.

Brad Parkhurst said this was submitted by petition so the wording was not changed by the Select Board. Can we reduce the amount on a petitioned article?

Moderator Stark said we can reduce the amount of a petitioned article.

Amendment to Article 13 reads, “to see if the town will vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:35 I-a for an optional veterans tax credit of $2,000 for service-connected total and permanent disability on residential property and replace the standard tax credit referenced in this section.”

Voice Vote on the Amendment to Article 13: Amendment passed.

Marie Morgan asked if people could raise their hands to see the difference in the vote.

Standing Vote: 36 in favor, 11 against. Amendment passed.

Jared Talbot made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 13. Tim Stetson seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.

ARTICLE 14
Moderator Stark recognized Chairman Georgantas.

Chairman Georgantas made a motion to move Article 14 to the floor. Selectwoman Boyer seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.

Moderator Stark said Article 14 was submitted by petition.

It reads, “To see if the Town will urge the NH General Court, following the 2020 census, to redraw the state’s political district maps in a fair manner providing for effective representation of New Hampshire’s voters. And, in order to fulfill this obligation, the NH General Court shall appoint an independent redistricting commission to draw the district maps in a way that does not rely on partisan data favoring political parties of candidates. Within 30 days after the Town Election, the record of the vote approving this article shall be transmitted by written notice from the Goffstown Select Board to all Goffstown state legislators and for the Governor of NH informing them of the results.”

Marie Morgan, the Petitioner said redistricting is encouraged when US Congressional Representatives, Executive Council members, and State Legislators are elected by voters grouped into districts. But populations change. Some districts gain residents, and some lose them That’s why districts are redrawn about every 10 years to make sure each district has about the same number of people and that the districts are representative of and reflect the voters in those
boundaries. The State Legislature sets the district boundaries after receiving the results of the 10-year census.

Redistricting impacts political influence. Sometimes the political party in the majority will draw a district, which favors its own political party members. Sometimes a political party will pack voters of one party into a district, while leaving fewer members of that party in surrounding districts. So it is easier for the majority party members to win in those districts. Why is an independent redistricting commission a good idea? It will be made up of an equal number of members from each party and of nonpartisan members who will have the authority to draft district boundaries through an open and transparent process, enabling full public consideration and comment. It will make elections fair and more representative of all the voters. As of May 2019, 8 states had an independent redistricting commission. Sending the record of the vote of Article 14 to our Governor will emphasize the significance of an independent redistricting commission.

Claire Rouillard said this article violates the NH Constitution Article 11 and 26, which requires that the State Legislature draw the lines for redistricting. Passing an article that we want them to have a commission is out of line when you have a constitution that says the Legislature is responsible for doing this. You would need a constitutional amendment. She is opposed to this article and she would like to have an individual vote on this.

Barbara Griffin said a petitioner can have a warrant article put on. There was a discussion at the Select Board about whether a recommendation is required. This article does not have a recommendation. It has no dollar amount, and will it go on the ballot with or without a recommendation.

Chairman Georgantas said the Select Board can recommend or not have a position. The Select Board decided not to take a position on this article.

David Pierce asked if this article prevails in March, would the Select Board be compelled to sign such a letter.

Chairman Georgantas said they would take it under consideration and check with the Town attorney. If the voters tell him to do something, he probably would do it.

Marie Morgan said a letter would just be a notice of the information, not a statement of approval. There is a bill presently in the Legislature covering this information. The independent redistricting commission, after it has met in each county, and talked to the voters to get input, would present their proposal to the Legislature, for the Legislature to approve what the independent redistricting commission has presented. If the Legislature does not accept the plan, it would have to be redone.

Barbara Griffin said this independent redistricting has been going on since 2016 with a couple of national PACS. The reference to the eight legislators who currently have independent redistricting commissions—the majority of those actually have the independent redistricting commission written into their constitution. In some of those states, they actually restrict the independent redistricting commission to a particular race.
The bills currently before the House follow a pattern that has been seen, that is trying to create something independent that is somewhat of a political process. For people who have lived here more than 12 years probably do not remember what district they were in 12 years ago. It was different, than the district you are in today. Part of that is because our population of about 3 million and the legislators we have make it a little hard to have district boundaries.

The bills have come forward before in the House and are back before the House. The bills are somewhat partisan where each party has turns picking some. It is not as clear as you think. There are all sorts of party impact on it. At the end of it, this bill is supposed to go to the Legislature. They are the ultimate authority for redistricting. The Legislature is supposed to be able to vote on the plan. If it does not pass, it goes back to the redistricting commission. This is what we have under the bill now. But we saw a very similar bill last term and it was ultimately vetoed by the Governor and the veto was sustained.

One of the issues that has come out is that we elect State Representatives every 2 years. If you do not like them, or what they do, you vote for someone else next time. Some people have expressed a concern that this independent commission is not really an independent commission. You don’t have any direct say over who these people are going to be. Whereas, when you have a legislator up there, you have access to it. Some of the problems are perceived by the process 10 years ago.

Now there are companies that can plug in the census information and create the districts. There are requirements regardless of what happens regarding the districts in the same counter and other parameters. There will be a lot of data out there regarding districting. This isn’t needed because all the seats—House and Senate, have switched parties over the last 10 years.

We have the most flip-floppy legislature in the country as to who is sitting in what position. Part is due to our population and our districting. She appreciates the perception that the process will draw fair boundaries. It is going to be political and deprives people the ability to have direct input to the people who will vote on the plan. She urges people to think about what it sounds like, what the reality is, and how we do it in New Hampshire.

Marie Morgan said in the past, when the State Legislature made district boundaries, she didn’t know they were doing it. The legislators drew those districts behind closed doors. This bill would allow the people to participate in the district boundary development and in the selection of the commissioners for this commission. Sometimes the political party in the majority will draw districts, which favor its own political party members. Sometimes the political party will pack voters of the other party into one district, while leaving fewer members of that party in surrounding districts. So, it is easier for the majority party members to win. The map of the Executive Council of District shows that the towns along the Atlantic Ocean are in the same district as Keene, Westmoreland, Charlestown, and those on the Vermont side. What do the towns such as Westmoreland have in common with towns such as Dover?

A motion to move the question was duly made, and seconded. Motion carries.

Chairman Georgantas made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 14. Selectwoman Boyer seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.
8:35 p.m. Chairman Georgantas made a motion to adjourn. Selectwoman Boyer seconded the motion. VOTE: Motion carries.

Respectfully submitted,
Gail Labrecque
Recording Secretary