

**RTM Meeting
December 7, 2021**

The call

1. To take such action as the meeting may determine, to elect a Moderator of the Representative Town Meeting.
2. To take such action as the meeting may determine, to elect a Deputy Moderator of the Representative Town Meeting.
3. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the First Selectman and a request by the Board of Education, and in accordance with the Town of Westport Charter, Chapter 21 - Public Site and Building Commission, to designate the Westport Public Site and Building Commission as the building committee for the Staples High School roof replacement project.
4. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Education, to not reject the Professional Agreement between the Westport Board of Education and the Westport Education Association for the period covering July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2025.
5. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by the Director of Public Works, to approve an appropriation of \$81,000.00 along with bond and note authorization to the Sewer Reserve Fund Account for engineering design services to upgrade Pump Station #3 Force Main.
6. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by the Director of Public Works, to approve an appropriation of \$2,395,000.00 along with bond and note authorization to the Municipal Improvement Fund Account for construction and engineering expenses for the replacement for the Bayberry Lane Bridge over the Aspetuck River.
7. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by the Director of Public Works, to approve an appropriation of \$150,000.00 to the Bus Shelters CLFRF Expense account from the ARPA CLFRF Grant Income account.
8. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by Director of Public Works, to approve an appropriation of \$100,000.00 to the Tree Trimming CLFRF Expense account from the ARPA CLFRF Grant Income account.
9. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by the Finance Director, to approve an appropriation of \$250,000.00 for COVID Reimbursement to the General Fund Covid-19 Expense account from the ARPA CLFRF Grant Income account.

The Meeting

Moderator Jeff Wieser:

Good evening. This meeting of Westport's Representative Town Meeting is now called to order and we welcome those who are joining us the evening. My name is Jeff Wieser and I am the RTM Acting Moderator. It is an interesting historical fact that tonight is the

first time in 14 years that the Moderator has changed during an election cycle. As a result we have had to review a few procedures for the functioning of tonight's meeting, but thanks to Eileen Flug and Jeff Dunkerton, I think all is in order. We shall see. As in the past, for the election of the Moderator tonight, I will be handing over the Moderator's gavel to our longest serving Member, Jack Klinge. Jack will in turn hand over the gavel to the newly-elected Moderator. But to proceed, a special notice about procedures for this electronic meeting: Pursuant to Sections 163-167 of Senate Bill 1202, there is not a physical location for this meeting. This meeting is being held electronically and live streamed on westportct.gov and shown on Optimum Government Access Channel 79 and Frontier Channel 6020. Meeting materials will be available at westportct.gov along with the meeting notice posted on the Meeting List & Calendar page. Members of the Westport electorate attending the meeting by telephone or video may comment on any agenda item. Comments will be limited to three minutes. Emails may be sent to RTMmailinglist@westportct.gov, which goes to all RTM members. These emails will not be read aloud during the meeting.

Tonight's invocation will be delivered by Gail Kelly. Until 2017, Gail served for 15 years as Westport's Assistant Town Attorney. She has been active in town activities before and after that service and she currently is the President of the Board of Positive Directions, Westport Center for Metro-health and Substance Abuse Issues. Gail is well-known to the Representative Town Meeting and it is a pleasure to welcome her back to this meeting.

Invocation, Gail Kelly:

Good evening. It's nice to be here and to see everyone. I want to thank Jeff Wieser for inviting me on your behalf to give the invocation tonight. It really is an honor. I also want to congratulate and thank the seven new members of the RTM, as well as those veteran RTM members who have stepped up again to give their time for the people of Westport. I certainly know how much time it takes to serve on the RTM and as a resident of Westport, I am grateful to you for doing so.

During my fifteen years as your Assistant Town Attorney, I attended quite a few of your RTM meetings. I always enjoyed the invocation because it set the tone for the meeting. It started the legislative process for the evening. It is intended to be inspirational. To get inspiration for my invocation, I listened to invocations from prior RTM meetings, particularly those that took place at the beginning of a session - a time for new ideas on how to improve Westport and a time for a fresh start for some old ones. Those invocations often addressed the importance of the democratic process and how that process brought you together, without regard to your political affiliation, to work towards a common goal. I enjoyed observing and being part of the process of government, particularly as it related to this legislative body. Very often the questions to me from the RTM were, do we have the authority to do what we are proposing and if so, what is the process? Process is important. It has rules. Process is reliable. It is clear. Process dictates not only how an issue or law comes before the RTM, but it also dictates how that issue or law is debated. In that regard, as I was working on this invocation my son said to me, "process is the guardrail for civility". I had listened to a former speaker who pointed out that in carrying on your work you will not always agree, but as one of your

colleagues stated in her invocation at this time last year “the RTM work requires promoting civil discourse”. Process helps to insure that. So, respect the process, because respect for the process insures that you have respect for each other. In closing, I want to join my fellow speakers who shared their wishes for this body to represent the people of Westport fairly and well and to have the ability to work together in harmony. I too wish that for you. I know you have done that in the past and I am confident you will continue to do so in the future. I wish you all a lot of luck. Thank you for this honor tonight and I wish all a happy holiday.

Mr. Wieser:

Thank you, Ms. Kelly. You are of course welcome to stay and listen to tonight’s proceedings, but as a veteran of many RTM meetings. You will no doubt understand the beauty of a quiet night at home.

Ms. Kelly: I might watch! But thank you.

Mr. Wieser:

We now have our zoom-era Mandell Montage Pledge of Allegiance if it is working. If not, I’m ready with the flag.

Jeffrey Dunkerton, Town Clerk:

It’s plan B, Jeff. I’m sorry. Zoom is not recognizing the audio.

Mr. Wieser:

The minutes of the November meeting have been posted on the Town website. Are there any corrections to minutes at this time? Seeing none, the minutes are accepted as submitted. If you later find any corrections, please inform Jackie Fuchs, Jeff Dunkerton, or me. Let me take a minute at the start of our session to tell our colleagues that the minutes are a labor of love by Jackie Fuchs. Every month, she produces literally 100 pages of minutes, sometimes, as she has in the past couple of months. So, do take note of them, they are a thing of beauty. They are a wonderful verbatim record, the only town body that has verbatim records of their minutes and they’re really useful and they come in very handy. So, thank you Jackie and thank you everyone for paying attention to the minutes.

Announcements:

Birthdays Greetings to: Seth Braunstein, Cathy Talmadge, Harris Falk and Liz Milwe. Happy birthday to all and I hope I didn’t miss any new members. We missed Seth’s birthday yesterday. Happy birthday Seth. I hope it was a good day.

Jen Tooker is with us in her first RTM meeting as our new First Selectwoman. I’d like to welcome her to our meeting for as long as you wish to say and wonder if you might like to say a few words in your role as our Chief Executive.

Jen Tooker, First Selectwoman:

Thank you, Jeff and good evening everyone. So, this is the beginning of the first four years of my life, spending the first Tuesday evening of the month with all of you guys. I'm very much looking forward to that. I made a few comments at the training that was offered so I will reiterate those comments for those of you who may not have been there. I want to say congratulations for all of you for winning your seat as an RTM member. I want to say thank you, in advance, for all the work you will do in the next couple of years on behalf of our community and our town. Most importantly, I want to tell you I very much look forward to working with all of you. I've heard from a few of you in the last 48 hours ahead of this meeting and I thank you for that. My phone is always on and my door is always open so I think we all share the common goal of trying to make Westport a little bit better tomorrow than it was yesterday. So, I look forward to working with all of you to make that happen. So, with that, I will be here tonight and I will be here every first Tuesday of the month for the next four years. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to Westport.

Mr. Wieser:

Thank you First Selectwoman Tooker. Thanks for being here and thanks for those words. We now move on to announcements from RTM members.

RTM Announcements

Jimmy Izzo, district 3:

I think we should take a moment of silence to remember the 80th anniversary of Pearl Harbor of day and a moment of silence for the 2,403 lives, probably more, lost on that day.

Dick Lowenstein, district 5:

Last month, my friend Julie Belaga passed away. A devoted public servant, Julie served Westport, the state, and the nation with distinction. Beginning with the Westport League of Women Voters, she then was elected to the Planning and Zoning Commission, including four years as chair, And from there, to the RTM, followed by ten years as an elected member of Connecticut House of representatives. She later served as a regional Director of the EPA and a Director of the Export-Import Bank. Eventually returning to Westport, Julie was appointed by the RTM as a library trustee. And this is just a short list of her services. Clearly a very remarkable person. A memorial service for her will be held at the Westport library on Sunday, December 19, at 10 AM. All who are listening are invited. As Julie had been a member of the RTM, as is our tradition, I ask now for a moment of silence in her memory.

Peter Gold, district 5:

My announcements are more prosaic. I have two. First of all, Wheels2U Westport, the commuter shuttle, will be offering free rides during its service from December 20 through the end of the year. We are going to waive the fare if anybody wants to take the shuttle to the train station or back from the train station just to try it out or to actually take the train. We are going to have a press release coming out shortly and, hopefully, coverage in the usual blogs and wherever. Second of all, at seven o'clock tonight, the State Department of Transportation held a hearing on the replacement of the Greens

Farms Road/Sasco Creek Bridge. It's State Project 0158-0129. There was not a lot of notice given by the DOT and I am told they are probably not going to have another hearing but you can make comments or ask questions. There is a link to this site on Dan Woog's blog today. I imagine if you go to the Connecticut Department of Transportation and google Sasco Creek Bridge, you'll get it there as well. As far as I can tell, the meeting was not taped or videoed but I may be wrong about that. But, if you or your constituents are concerned at all about the traffic or the disruption or the design or anything at all relating to that bridge, now's your chance. Comments are open until Dec. 21.

Pete Ratkiewich, Director of Public Works:

Pete, if I might clarify, there is a recording of that public information meeting. It was not a public hearing. It was an information meeting that describes what is proposed at Greens Farms Road over Sasco Creek. It shows the detour and all the other details of the bridge. There are two weeks to take a quick look at that video and make any comments that you wish. It is a bridge replacement. It has been designed at no cost to the town by the State under a pilot program that we signed up for.

Mr. Gold:

I couldn't find the link on the State Department website when I looked quickly just prior to this meeting so it may be there but Pete, if you could send me the link, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Ratkiewich:

As a matter of fact, it would probably be best if I sent it to all the RTM members.

Mr. Gold:

That would be great and even though the State designed it at no cost to us, I know when they did the bridge over I-95 that they just recently finished on Beachside Avenue, we did have some input into the design and got some changes made the bridge better, saved some landscaping, did some other things. So, just because it's designed at no cost to us doesn't mean it's perfect. You might want to look at it.

Karen Kramer, district 5:

I know the Board of Selectmen are putting something into the Board of Finance. We have a jetty at Burying Hill Beach coming up before the Board of Finance. We need to save that jetty. It's shovel ready and we have a permit that's only good until 2024. We don't want to lose the beach so anyone who can write to the Board of Finance. We need at least four votes. I know we have two but I want to make sure we have four. We don't want to lose our beach. We are a beach town. People move here for the schools and the beaches.

Mr. Dunkerton:

Welcome to the new RTM members. I just have a couple of reminders. First, from our Secretary, Jackie, please make sure when you make a comment, that you state your name and your district for the record. From the Town Clerk's office, please, please,

please activate your new town email. For those of you who were unable to attend the training class last Thursday, I will be sending out the recording of it so you can hear in detail the concerns that we have and why we are implementing these new town emails. We're here to help you. The guidance that was sent out by Jamie is very helpful. It may look lengthy, the PDF file, but it moves very quickly and it should be no more than a 10 to 15 minute process for you to activate your email. If you have any issues, we are here. You can reach out to me. If I cannot help you, I will have you get in touch with Jamie or Daryl to get you up and going. Our go live date for all of these emails will be Jan. 1 so on Jan. 1, the emails will no longer be forwarded over to your personal email. It's very important that you get up and going before then. Preferably, if you can do it before the holidays, that would be great. In the meantime, when you are addressing or sending emails to the whole RTM as a body, or the RTM committees, please make sure that you use the old RTM mailing list at westportct.gov as well as the rtm-dl@westportct.gov. The new RTM members are on the new list and our returning RTM members are the only ones that are on the previous mailing list. We want to make sure that we are capturing everybody and then after Jan. 1, the RTM mailing list will go away and we will just be using the "rtm-dl." So, if you have any questions, please reach out. I will be monitoring the emails so that if somebody forgets to use both mailing lists, I will make sure that it gets forwarded out and I did today with Jackie and Jeff's messages. That's all. Thank you, Jeff.

Mr. Wieser:

I saw a couple of hands go up during the email discussion. I would like any questions to go right to Jeff Dunkerton rather than get into a conversation here because it took quite a bit of time. An announcement? Lisa, go ahead.

Lisa Newman, district 8:

It's an email announcement. Based on what Jeff said, I did notice, as we all did today, there is a new whole-RTM email address and the public still has the old one. I'm putting in a request publically, on the record, that I hope we are going to do some public outreach to inform constituents and community members that there will be a new email address to email the entire RTM because until today, we didn't even know. I'm putting out a plea, on record. The public needs to be informed that there is a new way to reach all of us.

Mr. Wieser:

Thank you. I do think that is an important comment. We all had a little problem with it today.

Jay Keenan, district 2:

There is a Public Works, Environment and Parks and Rec. meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 14 for leaf blowers.

Lou Mall, district 2:

I believe that Employee Compensation and Public Protection along with Finance might have to meet in the coming weeks. Nothing has been set as soon as everything shakes out in terms of committees, etc.

Wendy Batteau, district 8:

Just to add to what Jay was saying... Our joint meeting is going to be a work session not an overall discussion. We are going to be hearing from a very large number of landscapers and other experts in technology so, while anybody is welcome to come, it's not going to be an overall discussion meeting.

Mr. Wieser:

Assuming that the business of our meeting is completed tonight, the next regularly scheduled meeting of the RTM will be on January 4th at 7:30 PM.

There were 36 members present.

Mr. Wieser:

The gang's all here. Very exciting. Before we turn to the call, traditionally, the senior member of the RTM conducts the portion of the meeting pertaining to the election of a Moderator. Mr. Klinge is our senior member, having served for 25 years, and so I am happy to turn the gavel, or in this case the mike, over to Mr. Klinge.

Jack Klinge, district 7:

Tonight is our organizational meeting for election of the Moderator and Deputy Moderator. The way our procedures work is that I will run the election for the Moderator and then the newly-elected Moderator will return to take charge, and I will be back to my normal seat in the gallery and start my 25th year. May I remind everyone that this is not a resolution so, as a nomination, it may be seconded but does not need to be. We're acting under section A162-11 of the RTM Rules of Procedure: Voting for the election of the Moderator or Deputy Moderator shall be by signed ballot; however, if only one candidate is nominated then we'll choose to have the election by raising of hands. If you are going to raise your hand, please raise it on the right side and well in view. We now have 36 members. Is that right, Ms. Fuchs?

Ms. Fuchs: Yes, it is.

The call, Item #1: To take such action as the meeting may determine, to elect a Moderator of the Representative Town Meeting.

Mr. Klinge:

At this time, the floor is open for nominations for the position of Moderator of the RTM. I recognize Mr. Matt Mandell.

Matthew Mandell, district 1:

I rise to place in nomination the name of Jeff Wieser as the Moderator of Westport's Representative Town Meeting. I met Jeff 14 years ago right here in the RTM. In every year since then, he has never failed to amaze me in his ability and his commitment to the town of Westport, his integrity and his strength of character. What is a Moderator? I read from a definition: "A Moderator facilitates, reviews and guides discussion or debate and related interactions to insure all shared content is appropriate and follows community rules." In the 14 years that I have known Jeff, he has exemplified each and every word of that definition. In Jeff's request, this will be a very short nomination but I still will embellish, nonetheless. Jeff had a wonderful career in the finance world but there are some things that you may not know about him. He was a proofreader in summers. He was a mill worker. He built houses. But, the one I like most is that he was a New York City cab driver while he was in college. Can you imagine the conversations from the front seat to those folks who were being driven around by Jeff Wieser back then? I wish I had taken a cab. Jeff's time after his financial wizardry was the most interesting to me and probably to the RTM because they came at the same time. He became the Executive Director of Homes with Hope and masterfully took care of the Gillespie Center and other aspects of the place, to the point where he and I became friends and worked together on many, many aspects, he and I have always joked about this one particular concept: That the Democrat ran the Chamber of Commerce while the Republican ran the homeless shelter. That exemplifies not just Jeff, but Westport, itself. It also represents the RTM that we are completely a diverse group and it doesn't matter what side we're on as long as we're always looking for Westport's best interest. So, Jeff went forward and after he was done with that, he became the northeast area Director of Goodwill. Jeff's commitment to this town and to all people of need is exemplary and, therefore, I wholeheartedly endorse his nomination and place into nomination Jeff Wieser for the Representative Town Meeting's Moderator.

Mr. Klinge:

Thank you, Mr. Mandell. Is there a second? I recognize Ms. Briggs.

Brandi Briggs, District 7

Good evening, it is my pleasure and honor to second the nomination of Jeff Wieser to serve as our RTM Moderator. It is not easy to fill the shoes of Dr. Velma Heller, it is a task that most people would not be up for, but anyone who knows Jeff knows he is the perfect person to take on this mission. I don't think I have ever told Jeff this but he is the reason I wanted to join the RTM in the first place. I heard him speak one evening about Homes With Hope- he was so caring, eloquent and spoke with such passion that I thought if this is the type of person who serves on the RTM then this is a group I'd like to be a part of. Jeff has spent tireless hours in leadership roles in both the business and non-profit worlds and you heard Matt speak to all of his impressive qualifications and credentials but that is only one part of why I ask you to join me in supporting Jeff. It is the person that Jeff is that sets him apart. Jeff's heart, temperament, thoughtfulness and character make him a strong leader and the only choice for our new Moderator. His contributions to Westport are endless and he is committed to improving the lives of all Westporters through his non-profit and RTM service. He is a dedicated advocate for Westport, exemplifies the values that we hold and he and his wife, Pat are two of the

most admired citizens in our town. I, and many others have an immense amount of respect for Jeff for his thoughtful decisions and demeanor. Whenever I am torn or undecided on an issue before us I always hope that Jeff will speak. He is the voice I look to because I know his opinion will be reasoned, analytical and made with heart, not ego. He has a deep understanding of the issues and chooses his words carefully as he is aware that words matter. Jeff works to be inclusive of all viewpoints and ensures all voices are heard. As partisanship and divisiveness have become the norm, Jeff will fight to keep the non-partisan nature of the RTM intact and keep us on track with patience and a voice of reason. He never gets flustered or impatient even in the most heated debates. Jeff is a bridge builder, he can work with all types of people and he has gained the trust of all those in our local government. Jeff has been a mentor to many and will no doubt help to guide new and old members through the intricacies of the RTM. All of us that know or have worked with Jeff respect his integrity and values and I feel fortunate to consider him a friend. I am proud to second the nomination of Jeff Wieser for RTM Moderator. He is the intelligent, personable and trusted leader we need at this time.

Mr. Klinge:

Thank you, Ms. Briggs. Are there any other nominations for Moderator of the RTM? I see no hands. Are there any other hands, Ms. Fuchs?

Ms. Fuchs: I don't see any.

Mr. Klinge:

Seeing none, we go to public comment. Traditionally, there has been little or no public comment during these elections; however, our Town Charter does allow for anyone from Westport to speak. Are there any members of the electorate who would like to speak? Seeing none, we will go to the vote. Since there is only one nominee we can proceed with a show of hands. Please raise your right hand. All those in favor of Jeff Wieser as Moderator please raise your hand.

Point of order, Eileen Lavigne Flug, Assistant Town Attorney:

Under the new FOIA rules, all votes need to be roll call unless it's unanimous. So you might ask if there are any objections and if it's unanimous, you don't need to do a roll call.

Mr. Klinge:

Since there are no objections, the vote is unanimous, 36-0. Jeff Wieser is our new Moderator. Congratulations, well done. We look forward to a wonderful period of your term. Come up and take the mic. It's all yours.

Mr. Wieser:

Thank you, Mr. Klinge and thank you Matt and Brandi. I think we should all go home right now. Thank you to all of the RTM for your support tonight as well. Just a couple of words... I have been a student of Moderators over the last 14 years in this body and I feel particularly prepared for the role you have entrusted with me especially as my

teachers have been Hadley Rose, Eileen Flug and Velma Heller. I also feel somewhat suited for the role as I have always considered myself a radical moderate in all things and that seems like a good thing for the Moderator. Nonetheless, we all have a lot to learn and I look forward to working with all of you and making this a productive, useful and efficient term. In light of our activities at the November RTM meeting, I also hope that, above all, this will be a respectful term of the RTM. We passed, last month, a set of guidelines and expectations regarding the conduct of this body. The document was the work of a number of thoughtful, dedicated RTM members and I think it turned out to be a great template of the way we should operate. I embrace the role of Moderator and recognize that there is a limit to what I can do to enforce those guidelines but I really am going to try to remind all of us that we operate best and are most convincing in our positions when we are concise, respectful and appreciative of the dedication of our members, our town employees and our constituents. Sometimes I wonder why I like the RTM so much but I really do have great respect for the institution and I think it's a wonderful beacon of democracy in its ability to be non-partisan and, as Matt and Brandi said, in its ability to forge alliances among people with good hearts and a good view of what Westport should be. I look forward to working with all of you and making this the best RTM ever. So, thank you. Our next order of business is the election of the Deputy Moderator.

The secretary read item #2 of the call - To elect a Deputy Moderator of the Representative Town Meeting.

In the interest of efficiency, we will use the same procedures for election of Deputy Moderator as for Moderator. This is not a resolution. A nomination may be seconded but does not need to be. Under section A162-11 of the RTM Rules of Procedure, voting for the election of Deputy Moderator shall be by signed ballot; however, if only one candidate is nominated then the vote for these offices may be by a show of hands at the discretion of the Moderator. At this time, nominations are open for the Deputy Moderator of the Representative Town Meeting. The Chair recognizes Candace Banks.

Candace Banks, district 6:

Thank you, Mr. Moderator. It is my sincere pleasure to nominate our colleague from District 7, Lauren Karpf, for the position of Deputy Moderator of our RTM. Lauren is one of those people, I'm sure you all know people that you have met over email first before you meet them in person. I met Lauren in person, I remember very clearly, it was Election Day 2015 when she was running in her first election. She had taken over the seat from someone on the RTM in the previous year but she was running in a contested race. I remember thanking her at the time for putting herself out there. Honestly, she was a little nervous but I knew she would win and I knew she would do a great job. There has been time and time again, since we met, when Lauren has impressed me and I'm going to spend a couple of minutes telling all of you how. Lauren's background is kind of interesting. She has a very interesting mix of private sector and public sector. She worked for firms that are household names, American Express and Lehman Brothers, after getting her law degree from Fordham. She's a Wash. U. Alum, of the

Business School and then worked for American Express and a startup tech company. After law school, she worked for what I like to call one of the big law firms, Orrick Herrington and then worked for the New York City Department of Education. All of us know Lauren as our fearless Education Committee Chair and it was interesting to me to learn her passion for education pre-dated her time in Westport. When she moved to Westport, she became Chair of a Child's Place Preschool at the same time as her serving on the RTM. I think Lauren will make a good teammate in our RTM leadership. You have to admit that the 36 of us, the seven newbies will learn this eventually, that sometimes we're a hard group to corral. To borrow what Gail said earlier, 'Process really is the guardrail to civility.' I think having Lauren, who respects process, she doesn't hide behind it, Lauren is always super-prepared on the substance as well. It is always good to have a lawyer, up there in the leadership, who can keep us in line and is familiar with our own Rules of Procedure and *Robert's Rules*. Sometimes, we have to cite those to keep our meetings orderly and efficient. In terms of her committee work, she has been Chair of the Education Committee, Member and Past Chair of Ordinance, and also served as a member of Parks and Recreation. Those are probably the three committees that generate the most emails from our constituents and result in those long meetings that go past midnight. Lauren has definitely put in the time and the work in this body in terms of serving Westport and working on substantial meaty issues that have come before us. Finally, I reached out to a couple of district 7 constituents: 'Hey, if you had to say a couple of nice things about Lauren, what would you say?' Here are some of what her constituents have said:

- Lauren puts herself out there all the time for both the district and the Town.
- She is always available by phone, email or text. She gets right back to me.
- She fought like a warrior for the sidewalk on Maple Avenue.
- She is very well versed on Long Lots building issues.
- She makes Westport better, I know I can count on her.

By the way, there is a division of labor when it comes to this because I could gush about Lauren for a long time but a colleague of mine is going to pick this up from me in a second. What you look for in your RTM leadership is someone who prepares, someone who is dedicated, someone who is humble and I think humility goes hand in hand with open-mindedness, the ability to compromise. While Lauren is very well prepared and usually she's right but she listens to you and keeps an open mind when you disagree with her. I think that comes from somebody who is humble and that is a terrific quality to have in our body. We need leaders who facilitate the spirit and I think we have that in our Moderator and I think Lauren embodies all of these qualities. I hope you will join me in voting for Lauren as Deputy Moderator. Thank you for listening.

Lou Mall, district 2:

Mr. Moderator and my fellow RTM colleagues:

It is an honor for me to second the nomination of Lauren Karpf for Deputy Moderator for the term December 2021 to November 2023. As Ms. Candace Banks pointed out, Lauren is highly qualified. When Velma Heller announced she was stepping down as Moderator, I thought the logical choice would be Jeff Wieser. But who would replace Jeff as deputy? I quickly did a mental roll call and stopped at District 7, Lauren Karpf. Perfect! In my 10 years on the RTM, there have been three Deputy Moderators - Eileen

Flug, who then became Moderator and Velma became the Deputy; when Eileen became Assistant Town Attorney, Velma Heller became Moderator and Jeff became Deputy. You see where I am going. We are voting on our leadership for this term. But we are also planning for our future. This is an important position for this body and Lauren is the right person. Lauren has been on the RTM since 2014. During her time on the RTM, Lauren chose a wonderful mentor and role model – Velma Heller. It is fitting that she has followed in her footsteps. She has served as chair of the Ordinance Committee and for the last four years, Chair of the Education Committee. That’s where I have seen her in action. I have found her to be unbiased, objective, moderate and, most importantly, pleasant to deal with. Her smile lets you know she values your participation and is open for differing opinions. She strives to keep this body what it is meant to be – non-partisan! Finally, Lauren is willing to do the hard work to get things done. Education is her passion. She works for her children Dylan, 11, Mila, 8, and Lyla, 5, who by the way, has served on the RTM with her Mom before she was born. Lauren advocates for all our children, no matter what school they attend. She and her husband Adam make sure their kids take full advantage of the great outdoors and all the amenities Westport has to offer. A few words to the newest members of the RTM. First, welcome! Second, you may not know Lauren like the rest of us do, but trust me. If you join me in voting for Lauren Karpf for Deputy Moderator, you will have a perfect voting record on the first two agenda items as a member of this body. Please elect Lauren Karpf Deputy Moderator. Thank you!

Mr. Wieser:

Thank you Mr. Mall. Are there any further nominations for Deputy Moderator of the RTM? Seeing none, since there is only one nominee, we will have a show of hands. If you are unable to raise your hand, Jackie Fuchs will call on you.

Point of order, Seth Braunstein, district 6:

I wonder if we should be doing it again in the inverse manner?

Mr. Wieser:

Of course. Are there any objections? I don’t see any objections.

It is unanimous, 36-0. I am happy to say the next Deputy Moderator will be Lauren Karpf. Congratulations, Lauren. We all look forward to working with you. Would you like to say a few words?

Lauren Karpf, district 7:

Thank you. I want to thank Candace and Lou for such kind remarks. I hope to live up to even half of their positive words! And thank you to everyone for having confidence in me to fulfill the very big shoes before me as Deputy Moderator. I have learned so much both from Velma and Jeff as two role models over the past few terms. I am very excited to work with Jeff and know he will excel as a thoughtful, logical and dedicated Moderator. We are very lucky to have him. Like Jeff, there are so many things that I love about the RTM – the nonpartisan nature, the ability to get involved in so many different aspects of town life, and meeting so many wonderful people that I would not otherwise have the chance to meet. The passion, time commitment and devotion

exhibited by a board of volunteers who want the best for our town is truly remarkable. While we do have difficult votes and contentious discussions at times, these bring important topics to the forefront, and allow for a wide variety of all of our opinions, backgrounds, and viewpoints to be shared. The RTM is truly a collaborative body. I am proud and honored to be a part of it. Thank you all so much.

Mr. Wieser:

Thank you Ms. Karpf and Candace and Lou. We all look forward to working with you.

The secretary read item #3 of the call - To designate the Westport Public Site and Building Commission as the building committee for the Staples High School roof replacement project.

Presentation

Superintendent Tom Scarice:

I am actually going to defer to Mr. Longo to explain the process here and our request for the Building Commission to serve for our Staples roof project.

Elio Longo, School's Chief Financial Officer:

Welcome and congratulations to the new members of the RTM. The request before you this evening is to request to designate the Public Site and Building Commission as the building committee for the upcoming Staples High School roof replacement project. The State of Connecticut school construction grants review has three basic requirements. Two of the three requirements were addressed by the meeting last month. The third and final requirement is for the establishment and designation of a building committee. I have reached out to Mr. Joseph Strickland who serves as the Chair of the Commission and also to First Selectwoman Tooker to discuss having the Commission serve as the building committee for this project. With the request of the Superintendent and the Board of Education, we are asking for your support for this assignment.

Mr. Wieser:

Thanks Mr. Longo. Your packet contains an email in which the Education Chair, Ms. Karpf, and I discussed the fact that this did not require a committee report because it is so administrative in nature. If there are any questions for this, they can be directed to Mr. Longo or, perhaps, to the Public Works Committee. Otherwise, I think it is fair to say that this is pretty administrative in nature and this is the third item of something we passed the first two a month ago.

Members of the Westport electorate – no comments

Ms. Karpf read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That upon the recommendation of the First Selectman and a request by the Board of Education, and in accordance with the Town of Westport Charter, Chapter 21 - Public Site and Building Commission, the Westport Public Site and Building

Commission is hereby designated as the building committee for the Staples High School roof replacement project.

Members of the RTM

Mr. Gold:

Just out of curiosity, what are the responsibilities of the building committee? Is it just a pro forma thing?

Mr. Keenan:

This is kind of the norm if a special building committee isn't appointed like there was for Coley Middle School or Staples. The fallback is the Public Site and Building Commission which is what they are there for. They don't supervise the construction to the point where they are out there all the time but they are reported to and they follow the construction and the budget and basically make sure that everything is done correctly.

Mr. Gold:

Do they have the authority to do something if everything isn't done correctly?

Mr. Keenan:

Wouldn't say "authority" is the right term but they would point out things to Elio and to Ted as the process is going on. It is probably a little less than an appointed building committee which is meeting every single week. This is more of a monthly meeting where they are reported to and are told what's going on.

Arline Gertzoff, district 3:

Are we talking the whole building? And how old is the present roof? I am all for it but I want some perspective on its life.

Mr. Longo:

We are proposing to replace approximately 2/3 of the existing roofscape. It is just over 200,000 square feet of 300,000 square feet with 90 to 95 percent having exceeded its useful life.

Ms. Batteau:

In the past, when the Public Site and Building Commission has overseen projects, it's been fine but we haven't really had interim reports. Given the great success of the Coley Middle Committee and the usefulness of the reports we received from them, I wonder if we could ask the Public Site and Building Commission to give us occasional interim reports since it's a roof and we know what types of trouble we can get into if we don't pay close attention to the roofs in terms of inter-air quality.

Mr. Longo:

The request can be made to the Public Site and Building Commission. I can't speak for them while I don't see it as being problematic. It is a roof replacement project which will span approximately a two to three months period.

By roll call vote, the motion passes unanimously, 36-0.

The secretary read item #4 of the call - To not reject the Professional Agreement between the Westport Board of Education and the Westport Education Association for the period covering July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2025.

Presentation

Superintendent Scarice:

Thank you everyone for the opportunity to speak this evening. I want to congratulate everyone on your recent election and also your appointments this evening. I also want to thank Candace Banks for her time and some late nights, Candace, with our negotiating teams along with our colleagues on the Board of Finance, Jim Foster and Brian Stern. The negotiation process for our bargaining agreements is guided by statutes, particularly our teachers and that process, that timeline, is pretty clear. We begin late summer and we wrap up by December. Contracts are three years in length. This one, in particular, I believe was very fair, that the Board of Education has agreed to. Before we get into detail about the contract, if I could just say a few words about our teachers. This has been one very long year and a half for anyone in the field of education. It's been for all of us but particularly in education, in serving kids, in serving families. It's been a really trying time. I believe that our professional faculty and our support staff and our administrators have truly stepped up to maintain the quality of programming that we expect in Westport and certainly to maintain as much normalcy as possible. I'm proud of the way the entire team has navigated the pandemic which, obviously, is not over and we're still navigating that. But this agreement is not only fair to the town but also competitive and will help us in one of the greatest priorities. I've been a Superintendent for 10 years and one of the most important things that we can do is attract and retain the very best teachers. There really isn't anything that is more important than that adult who is in front of the students in the classroom. I think we've threaded the needle with this one with a very good contract that has achieved some goals that the Board of Education set out but also is very fair and supportive of our teachers. I would like to have our CFO, Elio Longo, and our Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, John Bayers, go into a little more detail for the RTM.

John Bayers, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and General Administration:

I, too, want to welcome and congratulate all of you that are joining the RTM. I look forward to working with you. I have had the pleasure of working with many of the RTM in various roles throughout the town in the last 15 plus years in the district for me. So, thank you. I'm going to provide a high level overview for you as a group and then Elio will assist me in breaking down the financials. I know you all received a committee report so we'll try not to be too lengthy and, obviously, we'll be available to answer questions, as well. Hopefully, you've received copies of some of the documents we've shared with committees. This memorandum that I shared with Mr. Scarice and the Board of Ed. provides the high level overview. The contract that we're talking about with

the Westport Education Association is a three-year contract that goes into effect July, 1 2022 and will conclude 2025. It's pretty standard to have a three year contract with all of our bargaining groups. The salary schedule is for those three years, providing a full step movement for any teacher who is currently moving up through the steps, there are 20 steps at the upper levels in the teachers' contract. For those teachers already at the top step, where they are not eligible to receive the step movement, they would receive a general increase of 1.75 percent in year one and in year two, in year three, 1.60 percent GWI (general wage increase). It is important to note that any of those teachers moving through the steps movement did not receive any GWI; they saw whatever the increase was in the step movement. In the three year contract, it will be a 9.86 percentage, simple, for the three years compounded to 10.91 percent. We'll provide more detail as we move through the presentation. One of the big pieces in this negotiation was the health and medical insurance. A goal of the Board of Education which began last year when we had some initial conversations with all of our bargaining groups was to move our employees back from the State Partnership Plan back to a high deductible health plan with a health savings account. The reason being that the Board of Education is very concerned about the State's ability to sustain the rates that it has had for the State Partnership Plan over the years and the impact that could have long-term for not only the Board of Education but the town of Westport. The goal was to move them over and we were able to have that occur in the negotiations process. There was a cost involved to get the movement over so, for example, in year one, the teachers will contribute 19 percent towards their part of the insurance premium. They currently contribute 21.5 percent. That is a 2.5 percent decrease. Year two, it goes to 19.5; year three, 19.5. We are the only district in the State so far who is moving out of the State Partnership Plan. Secondly, when we moved into the State Partnership Plan, the Memorandum of Understanding for that movement made the high deductible as the baseline so it allowed us to have a very productive conversation in the negotiations. Some other changes, we had technical changes to the grievance procedure. It's typical when we're going through contracts to clean up some language issues. A big piece that was important for the teachers was the creation of a sick leave bank where members of the bargaining unit can contribute on a yearly basis and we will form a committee. Should any of the members of the WEA find themselves in a very dire situation where they have exhausted their sick leave bank, they can apply for days that are in the sick leave bank. There will be a very robust procedure involved. It's not just a rubber stamp. It is very important to the teachers and to the administration to be as equitable as we can with the sick leave bank. We also were able to negotiate the ability to assign our itinerant teachers to duties when they are at different schools throughout the day. That may not sound like a big deal but it is actually a big win for the Board of Education when it comes to student supervision and the number of people needed for that work. We were also able to eliminate language about block scheduling. That is an instance where you wouldn't see immediate financial impact on the contract but as you use these two situations in terms of our staffing, it could make a difference down the road. As Mr. Scarise spoke to the ability to recruit and retain the best staff, a big plus is to make it more permanent that staff can use online programs for professional growth and salary advancement. That became very big during COVID when pretty much every university in the country had to revert to online courses. Although that was popular before COVID,

it is now the norm with most universities. The advantage of that is that it allows our staff to get involved with phenomenal programs throughout the country while staying here in Connecticut. So, that's a big, big plus for us. A big bonus in the contract is that we have agreed to put together elementary and high school leadership teams that near what already exists in the middle schools. There is a stipend related to that but that is critical to the work that Mr. Scarice and the Board are doing with the strategic plan and when we think about teacher leadership and what that produces in long-term benefits for the teachers and the community, that was another huge positive for us. I'll now just skip down to the financials. Included in the document here is the tentative agreement. We don't need to go through all the details of what I just highlighted. I will ask Mr. Longo to walk us through the sections of the financials.

Mr. Longo:

For the Westport teachers in the current fiscal year in the collective bargaining group, base year zero, we have a total salary of approximately \$53.6 million. In year one of the three year contract, the growth is approximately \$1.8 million; \$1.8 million in year two and \$1.833 in year three. The assumption is that all the teachers currently employed by the district will remain with the district for the next three years. As John mentioned earlier, a simple growth of 9.86, compounded 1.9 percent. In section 2, we account for all our changes in our stipend payment. In the current base year zero, approximately \$1.5 million in full stipends paid. Factored into the three year contract, in all three years of the contract, the two parties agreed to a one percent increase for a cumulative cost of \$46,000, a simple three percent compounded. Next we have the new elementary and high school team leadership positions. These are new to the contract. In year one, the estimated cost is \$135,000. To the far right, I had the percentage growth year to year at zero percent. At a subcommittee meeting, Mr. Braunstein did raise a question regarding the growth as reported. If we report it as a percentage over the existing stipends, it's approximately nine percent of the \$1.5 million. The reason I reported it as zero percent is that these are additional services that will be rendered in the contract year. In year two, a one percent increase, approximately \$1,400; year three, approximately \$1,400; over three years, \$138,000. Section two covers insurance all medical, prescription drugs and rental. During the current fiscal year, base year zero, total cost for WEA employees is \$9.7 million. The next section is a side by side comparison between the State Partnership Plan with a contribution of 21.5 percent projected for the three years of the contract and to the right we have under the new contract, a move to the high deductible plan with an HAS component with a 2.5 percent decrement in year one and 19.5 percent in years two and three respectively. Total cost estimate in year one of the contract is \$9.5 million, an approximate cost avoidance of \$255,000; in year two, a cost avoidance of approximately \$533,000 and in year three, a cost avoidance of just short of \$700,000. If everything comes to our protection, over three years, there is an opportunity to have savings of approximately \$1.5 million for the medical plan offering. Dental coverage is a self-insured policy. Under the current employee contribution of 21.5 percent, total contribution over the three year contract is approximately \$1.4 million. Under the new contract, it's slightly higher by approximately \$38,000. This is an offset to the savings on the medical given that the dental is already under a self-directed plan and the employee benefits with the decrement per year. The \$38,000 is an offset to

the potential savings on the medical of \$1.5 million. Combined, we have approximate savings of \$1.449 million over the course of the three year contract. At the very bottom, we reported the total incremental cost to salary and all of the health care adjustments over the cost of the three years. The total cost of the contract, net, \$4.2 million. Our modeling was based on the following assumptions: that the medical, State Partnership Plan and the high deductible plan have cost increase of six percent annually; that the dental costs rise by four percent annually; that the high deductible overhead costs, the admin costs, if you will and the total employee savings, 62 percent are assigned to the WEA bargaining group; and no change in the covered employees.

Mr. Bayers:

Thank you Elio. Before I turn it back to you, Jeff, I did want to mention to some of the new members of the RTM, the technicality, why we're here this evening and the unusual nature of the teacher's contract. Both the teachers and the administrators, by State Statute, fall under the Teacher Tenure Act in terms of collective bargaining. And their contracts have to be brought forward to the funding bodies, particularly to you, the RTM, who appropriates all the monies for the Board of Education. It's not that you are voting to approve this contract. If you don't take any action, if you don't vote to reject it, it will automatically move forward as an accepted agreement for the town. If, for any reason, the RTM were ever to reject a contract, it automatically puts the contract into the arbitration process. We can talk about that further but I just wanted to share that, particularly with the new members and, if my explanation was not clear enough, I'm sure that Eileen Flug can clarify it as well. It does get confusing for all of us approximately every three years as we try to think about the wording on this. So, I just wanted to share that point. Thank you very much and, Jeff, I'll turn it back over to you.

Committees report

Education, Employee Compensation and Finance Committees, Ms. Banks:

I'll do my best not to be completely redundant and repeat everything that John and Tom and Elio just said. The Education, Employee Compensation and Finance Committees met on Nov. 30. Mr. Scarice started off by characterizing the negotiations as cordial, collegial. I was also in the room during some of these negotiations and there were definitely some hard moments. Consensus developed from our first meeting in August until our last marathon meeting in October where we got closer and closer. A fair agreement is a good way to put it because I don't think either side walked away thrilled. So, there was a lot of compromise. To emphasize one thing that Tom Scarice said is that the hiring market for teachers right now is incredibly competitive. He mentioned that COVID has driven a lot of qualified folks out of the profession because of the challenging circumstances. Therefore, we needed to remain competitive with the salaries and the benefits that we offer. It was a big priority of the Board of Education to move our teachers off the State Plan to the high deductible health plan. The Board of Education felt strongly that there was more visibility in terms of maintaining control as they looked out into the future. The prediction is that the State Plan isn't necessarily going to be sustainable in the long term. By taking control, we'd have more autonomy in plan design for our staff. That was very important to the Board of Education and we achieved that with the contract. That was a real positive. In terms of assumptions, the

data assumes that the mix of teachers and the step that they are at is sort of stagnant three years out. As we know, people leave; new teachers get hired. So, when we are predicting what this contract will cost us, it's a bit of a guess. The net cost is a net add of \$4.2 million while salaries come in at \$5.47 million. The savings that they estimate on the health care plan brings down the total cost to \$4.2 million. Just a caution, a lot of committee members were asking why you can't estimate who is going to leave, who is going to retire, who is going to stay. That is not how we generally summarize these contracts but interestingly, one of our attorneys, Ms. Richman Smith, said that for the current contract, we projected \$100 million over the three year life of the contract and we came in \$5 million less so, while we are talking about this all-in amount, it could very well come in less over three years. Several committee members asked our attorney about settlements around the county and the State. These are relevant because, if we ended up taking it to arbitration, that is what the arbitrator would look at, other district settlements. Our increase is 9.86 percent over three years and two other DIRG A, our DIRG, districts came in. One settled at 10.10 percent. The other settled at 9.79 percent so we're right in the middle there. Our attorney also reminded us that in arbitration, the arbitrator also considers the district's ability to pay. That's relevant. Since we are considered one of the more affluent districts in Connecticut, that wouldn't bode too well for us. At the end, I made the motion not to reject this collective bargaining agreement. The Education Committee passed it unanimously. The Employee Compensation Committee made a similar motion with four yes votes and one abstention. The Finance Committee passed it unanimously with five votes.

Members of the Westport electorate – no comments

Ms. Karpf read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That upon the recommendation of the Board of Education, the Professional Agreement between the Westport Board of Education and the Westport Education Association for the period covering July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2025 is hereby not rejected.

Members of the RTM

Mr. Mall:

First of all, I'd like to thank Candace Banks for being the RTM representative at the negotiations and her excellent committee report. I mentioned to her that this is the first time I've seen a committee report with footnotes. It was that detailed so I want to thank Candace for that. I want to thank the negotiators and the Westport Education Association for bargaining in good faith and reaching an agreement. This is a well-deserved increase during difficult times of COVID so I intend to not reject this contract and to move forward with the next time.

By roll call vote, the motion passes unanimously 36-0.

The secretary read item #5 of the call - To approve an appropriation of \$81,000.00 along with bond and note authorization to the Sewer Reserve Fund Account for engineering design services to upgrade Pump Station #3 Force Main.

Presentation

Mr. Ratkiewich:

We've got an appropriation request for \$81,000 to extend a force main from Pump Station #3 down to Raymond Place along Riverside Avenue. The pump station is part of a \$1 million upgrade. If you recall, a couple of months ago, I came to you with a request for a gravity main on the upper side of this pump station. Pump Station #3 is located right across the street from the Sunoco Station. Pump Station #3 is in Pasacreta Park. The route along here is down Riverside Avenue to about where Raymond Place is. It is about a 2,200 foot run. This is currently an eight inch asbestos cement force main that was installed in the '50s and we want to replace it with a 10 inch HDPE force main for this run. This is part of our effort to replace all of the force mains in town which were installed in the '50s and the '60s.

Committees report

Public Works and Finance Committees, Mr. Braunstein:

As Jeff mentioned, we had a joint committee meeting on Nov. 30 of both Finance and Public Works. I am not going to be redundant and repeat what Director Ratkiewich said. I would just say that for additional context, this is a multi-faceted plan. A few months ago, we took the first step in the rejuvenation of this area. We funded a gravity pump. This is for the engineering and design of step #2 and we'll finance a new 10 inch force main down Riverside Avenue. I will just give you a breakdown in what the costs relate to. There is \$43,700 for the design and engineering. There is \$10,000 for geo tech assessment. There is \$20,000 for a temporary bypass and on top of all that, there is a \$7,370 contingency which represents 10 percent of those enumerated expenses for a total, with some minor rounding of \$81,000. As to the votes, there was a motion by Peter Gold and second by Andrew Colabella. The Public Works Committee voted unanimously 8-0 in favor of the request. . On a motion by Jessica Bram and second by Cathy Talmadge, Finance voted unanimously 5-0 in favor of the request.

Members of the Westport electorate – no comments

Ms. Karpf read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by the Director of Public Works, the sum of \$81,000.00 along with bond and note authorization to the Sewer Reserve Fund Account for engineering design services to upgrade Pump Station #3 Force Main is hereby appropriated.

Members of the RTM – no comments

By roll call vote, the motion passes 35-0. Ms. Purcell left before the vote.

The secretary read item #6 of the call - To approve an appropriation of \$2,395,000.00 along with bond and note authorization to the Municipal Improvement Fund Account for construction and engineering expenses for the replacement for the Bayberry Lane Bridge over the Aspetuck River.

Presentation

Mr. Ratkiewich:

This is a request for an appropriation for construction of the Bayberry Lane bridge. Back in 2014, we did an emergency repair on this bridge to try to extend its life for a short time after the State informed us that it had extreme scour conditions under the bridge. In 2015, we repaired those conditions temporarily but we were informed in 2017 that the structural members on the superstructure, meaning the back of the bridge were now starting to deteriorate to the point that we had to enlist only the beams on the center of the bridge and make it a one lane bridge until we could effect a project to replace the bridge in its entirety. We came back to you in 2018/2019 requesting funds for design. That design is complete. We've gone out to bid. We're still waiting for bids to come in. But we have a probable cost for this bridge that we are convinced is accurate of \$2.4 million. This bridge program is part of a Federal Local Bridge Program that we receive 80 percent back on our expenditures on the bridge. So, the town really has to pay about 20 percent of the \$2.4 million. We do have to front it ahead of time but we receive it back so our total cost to the town on this bridge will be approximately \$500,000 rather than \$2.395, once we get all of our reimbursements. In your package, there's a breakdown of the macro-costs where the construction costs are about \$1.9 million, the construction engineering is \$273,000 and we add a 10 percent contingency for unknowns during construction. There is also detailed estimate of the hours of construction inspection from our construction inspection firm as well as a detailed estimate of the bridge construction itself in your package. Bottom line is the request is for \$2.395 million funding of the construction of this bridge which, if we successfully go out to bid this winter, we should see a start in the spring. The latest would be April 1. If we get some sort of warm weather before then, we'll try to start before then.

Committees report

Public Works and Finance Committees, Mr. Keenan:

Public Works and Finance met last Tuesday in a joint meeting. Mr. Ratkiewich requested an appropriation of \$2,395,000.00 for the replacement of the Bayberry Lane Bridge. This bridge was downgraded by the State in 2017. The bridge was reduced to a single lane and one-way traffic and the Town started the process to replace the bridge. The RTM previously approved the funding for the bridge design. As Mr. Ratkiewich said, this project is eligible for the State DOT Federal Local Bridge Program and the cost will be split 80 percent by the State and 20 percent by the Town. The total cost to the Town will be \$479,000.00. The span of the bridge will increase from approximately 25 feet to 70 feet and the design allows for the utilities to be run under the bridge. These items are in the five year capital forecast and will be funded to the Municipal Improvement Account with Bond and Note Authorization. Both committees voted unanimously to recommend to the full RTM.

Members of the Westport electorate – no comments

Ms. Karpf read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by the Director of Public Works, the sum of \$2,395,000.00 along with bond and note authorization to the Municipal Improvement Fund Account for construction and engineering expenses for the replacement for the Bayberry Lane Bridge over the Aspetuck River is hereby appropriated.

Members of the RTM

Mr. Izzo:

The last bridge we had at Kings Highway, it seemed like it took an eternity to get fixed. I know we have problems that are out of our hands, Pete, with materials sitting out in Long Beach and other ports. When we do this contract, when we appropriate the money, is there a time schedule in the contract as to when it will be done or is it all up in the air as to what's going on in the country?

Mr. Ratkiewich:

There's always a contract when we hire a contractor so there is a time limit on the project but one has to consider outside forces such as supply chain issues. I'm not a lawyer but I believe they can claim *force majeure* if there are outside forces changing what the contract is. I'm not going to go there. I would refer that all to the Town Attorney!

Mr. Izzo:

There just seems to be sometimes, there only so many contractors who are bonded to do these jobs in this State and there's so much work that needs to get done that some of this stuff seems to be taking a heck of a long time.

Mr. Ratkiewich:

All of our contractors are State certified to bid on State contracts. We insist upon that as part of our contracting procedure.

Mr. Izzo: Got it. Thank you.

Ms. Batteau:

Two questions: One is a corollary to Jimmy's. What about prices? Are they committed to keeping the prices even though it seems that cost of materials are increasing, I don't know, 1,000 percent a week?

Mr. Ratkiewich:

This project itself has not come into bids just yet. But we are confident that the factors that were added to the opinion of probably cost are accurate. We will see with the bids. Anything can happen at this point. The markets are very volatile and prices do fluctuate extensively so any time there are possibility of timber or certain materials depending on

the commodities market, you could have a spike. We can't tell that until we get a bid price in.

Ms. Batteau:

If this amount we appropriate isn't in the ballpark, you'll come back to us?

Mr. Ratkiewich: I'll have to.

Ms. Batteau:

Question number two: You have said April 1. The kids are still in school. This is in my district in a high traffic, high profile area. Do you have plans for detour?

Mr. Ratkiewich:

We intend to close the bridge to do this work. That is the most efficient, quickest way of getting the work done rather than doing a bypass and doing it over two seasons. So, we would anticipate that we would start somewhere around April 1 and be done by the end of November.

Ms. Batteau:

I understand that. Do you have an idea of where you are going to be shunting people?

Mr. Ratkiewich:

Both parts of the road have access to an arterial road bringing them down towards Westport. Those that go north from the bridge would come down Lyons Plains Road, partially in Weston and those that live south of the bridge would go down Easton Road. This is the same detour that we did when we did a temporary emergency repair back in 2014. We had to close the bridge to do that.

Mr. Batteau: Thank you. There's nothing to do about it, I guess.

By roll call vote, the motion passes 35-0.

The secretary read item #7 of the call - To approve an appropriation of \$150,000.00 to the Bus Shelters CLFRF Expense account from the ARPA CLFRF Grant Income account.

Presentation

Mr. Ratkiewich:

I will give a very brief presentation of bus facilities in Westport. If anyone is not familiar with it, there is an ad hoc group called Bus Facilities Working Group working on obtaining bus shelters through the corridor of Westport. We have successfully worked with the State of Connecticut to incorporate four bus shelters into their intersection improvement plan that is designated at 158-215 and involves the intersections of where the Fresh Market is up to Roseville Road, as well as the corridor from Stop and Shop down through Bulkley Avenue. A brief presentation: This is the

coastal link bus service. Bus service goes from around New Haven down to Greenwich, around 50 miles of Connecticut's coast. The section circled [on the displayed map] is the section serviced by Norwalk Transit and Milford Transit and is the subject of our proposed improvements. There is broad based support for improving the transit service throughout this corridor. It is mentioned in all of these studies. There are improvements within the districts themselves. This is a picture of a totally electric bus running through the center of Westport. There is a recognized need for improvements of our transit system and the inclusion of bus shelters for those who are waiting for the bus. Here are some photos, this last year, of what's really happening here in Westport. Catching a bus here in Westport, you are pretty much standing in the elements. Basically, where should bus shelters be? According to Norwalk Transit, at least ¼ mile apart; near traffic lights, either past the traffic light or well before the traffic light. This is the area of Westport we're talking about. We've separated it out into seven little districts. The two that are marked in red have already been handled by the Connecticut DOT through the efforts of the working group to insist that they include some bus shelters in their intersection improvement projects. What we are working on right now is this west district, to put bus shelters in there as well as the Roseville to Morningside Drive area. The request of the ARPA funding which has been recommended by the Board of Finance is for \$150,000. That will cover four bus shelters and associated sidewalk facilities. That's estimated based on four sites. The first two sites are on the State right of way between Dragone Auto and Tempurpedic Mattress Company along Post Road West. The second site is Nash's Plaza. Site one has a spot that would be perfect for a small shelter. At the same time, we'd like to put a crosswalk in and put another shelter at 175 Post Road West. We have been in discussion with a developer and we might shift this shelter but the fallback position is 175 Post Road West. Site two would be on the opposite side of the street. There is already a pedestrian patrol in this intersection and we would put a shelter in this location just a little bit east from the crosswalk. The other two shelters that we have in mind, the third site is at Amazon, the former site of Barnes & Noble at 1076 Post Road East and across the street at 1141 Post Road East at the Assisted Living Center. This is an aerial photo of the assisted living center under construction. This used to be a Mobil Station and this is a grocery store. This is a photo of the former Mobil Station which has been removed and this is the 10 X 14 area where we would get an easement to put a bus shelter in. On the other side of the street, this is where we would put the shelter. There is a sidewalk going behind the tree, a small piece of grass, a small footprint to put our bus shelter in. This is a photo of the bus shelter. It is not a low end shelter. It is actually a fairly nice structure which the DOT has adopted throughout its corridors and wants to make as a standard. It is customizable and we have already looked into putting on solar panels for any power needs like night lighting. We discussed at committee, maybe a readout may not be appropriate but a panel that has QR codes to apps that tell you when the bus is coming to the shelter would be appropriate. So, there is a lot of opportunity to enhance these shelters from the basic shelter. We've even had inquiries from the Westport Arts Committee to see what they could do with these shelters.

Committees report

Public Works and Finance Committees, Dick Lowenstein, district 5:

The committees met via zoom on Nov.30, 2021 to hear the same presentation you just heard by Pete Ratkiewich. These shelters are designed to serve the Coastal Link from Stratford to Norwalk. A couple of points of interest were raised:

- The funds would be spent under the “equity” umbrella of ARPA appropriation.
- The Town will maintain the new shelters. Security, as needed, would also be provided by the town, which would cover, if required, the shelters under its liability policies
- Of the two existing shelters, many of you may not know they exist, one is on Bulkley Ave South that served an old route that is no longer in service. That shelter will likely be demolished. Am I getting this right Pete? There is a second one on Kings Highway west of the river near a planned assisted living facility used so people can sit down and rest.

Mr. Ratkiewich:

Dick, there is one on Kings Highway near the new bridge and the third one is the existing one at Stop & Shop.

Mr. Lowenstein:

Thank you very much. On the votes to approve this appropriation of \$150,000, the Transit Committee, on a motion by Sal Liccione, seconded by Candace Banks voted Yes: 2, Liccione, Banks; No: 1, Lowenstein; Abstain: 1, Gold. The Finance Committee, on a motion by Stephen Shackelford, seconded by Cathy Talmadge: Yes: 5, Wieser, Braunstein, Bram, Talmadge, Shackelford; 0 against. For the Public Works Committee, on a motion by Jack Klinge, seconded by Cathy Talmadge: Yes: 6, Keenan, Tait, Mall, Klinge, Colabella, Talmadge; No: 1, Abstain: 1
For: Keenan, Tait, Mall, Klinge, Colabella, Talmadge; No: 1, Lowenstein; Abstain: 1, Gold.

Members of the Westport electorate – no comments

Ms. Karpf read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by the Director of Public Works, the sum of \$150,000.00 to the Bus Shelters CLFRF Expense account from the ARPA CLFRF Grant Income account is hereby appropriated.

Members of the RTM

Christine Meiers Schatz, district 2:

I just wanted to double check and I don't see why it would but it is in the general vicinity. I wanted to make sure that the proposed bus shelter on Post Road West isn't going to affect the school zone, the updated and better school zone signage that we're waiting on from the State.

Mr. Ratkiewich:

No. That will not affect it at all. I am happy to report as a side line that it is going in shortly but that will not affect the school zone at all. In fact, it may enhance it if we can get the crosswalk in from Tempurpedic over to the west side of the Post Road.

Ms. Meiers Schatz: That's what I was thinking. Thank you.

Mr. Gold:

I'm agnostic on bus shelters. For some reasons, I think they're good. I think they're bad for other reasons. But I intend to vote no on this appropriation for an entirely different reason. This is asking us to take a little nibble out of \$8.4 million of ARPA funding which is coming to the town. My concern is that we are going to take a little nibble here and then sometime tonight, a little nibble for the trees and then another little nibble for the COVID reimbursements and who knows what's coming up next month when some other projects are presented to us. Doing it this way doesn't give us a chance to see all the things that we might be asked to vote on and to decide, as a whole, which ones we think are worth doing and which ones we think are not worth doing. This approach is kind of like asking us to go to a restaurant and order dinner before seeing the menu. I'd like to see the menu of all the things we are going to be asked to fund to see if I think this is the proper allocation of the money before I spend chunks of the money now because then, at the end, when there is another project like, for example, the Burying Hill jetty, or other projects that have come up in the Long Range Planning Committee, we've already spent the money and there's nothing left. So, I've got nothing against this particular appropriation. I just don't like the process that we are being asked to go through to spend the ARPA money so I am going to vote no.

Ellen Lautenberg, district 7:

Mr. Lowenstein, can you explain why you voted against this appropriation.

Mr. Lowenstein:

Very gladly. First of all, I want to thank Peter for echoing what I am going say or re-echoing what he was going to say. It's more about the process than the appropriation. Last month, we approved two appropriations: \$185,000 for Human Services and \$100,000 for IT. This month, we are being asked to approve another half-million dollars which would bring the total of the two months to \$785,000 of the \$8 million. It's piecemeal. There was a presentation in September, a hearing, if you want to call it that, in which the public was asked to comment and I don't know how many of those items that were on that list are still viable; how many have been added to the list. The old plan, as I'll call it now, was presented to the Board of Finance for discussion and review. What I'm looking for is for the new administration to present to the RTM a total plan for the \$8 million so we can see where things are going and get a discussion going on that with public input. I don't want to find out that we have been nickled and dimed on the appropriations. So, I'll be voting no for the reasons that Peter outlined and I'll be voting no on the next two items as well. I regret the RTM will have to go through a roll call vote on those items by voting no. Sorry.

Ms. Lautenberg:

My other question was to Pete about the crosswalks. Are the crosswalks associated with traffic lights or is it just open traffic?

Mr. Ratkiewicz:

The only crosswalk that I discussed tonight is the crosswalk from the, if you call it, peninsula at Tempurpedic across Post Road West over to the 175/181 Post Road West property which I believe is called Nash's Plaza, informally. As part of this project, that would require a permit from the State DOT. They have been very receptive having recently approved a school zone at Kings Highway. They understand that it is a high speed area and they get it that we're trying to improve the safety in that zone. One of the things that has been discussed is a crosswalk as a minimum because there are a lot of people from the Woodside Avenue/Stonybrook area that walk their children to school through that vicinity. We have been trying to improve that anyway but this is consistent with that general plan both to improve the location where people can wait for a bus. Potentially, Dragone Auto could turn into assisted living or some sort of memory care unit. That was what was proposed and could be proposed for the future. On the opposite side in Nash's Plaza, there are certainly a couple of strip malls there that have workers that would potentially ride the bus. These shelters that we are proposing are only the beginning. We are trying to get a good portion of the town covered. I'm sure this working group will continue to try to expand the bus shelter network.

Ms. Lautenberg:

I don't disagree with what Peter and Dick Lowenstein said. I'd be curious to know what the long-term plan is for this money. In order to better understand what the priorities are, I am fully in support of bus shelters and safe crosswalks but I think it is important to take that into account.

Mr. Lowenstein:

I said what I wanted to say in response to Ellen's question but there is one more thing I wanted to address and I address certain members of the Town Hall staff. I'd like to get some kind of statement, if possible, maybe not tonight but very soon, from the new administration on what they're going to do about presenting a complete plan for the \$8 million. That's a lot of money and I'd like to see how it's going to be spent before I do any voting on it. I leave that question on the table and see if anybody wants to answer it.

Ms. Batteau:

Pete Ratkiewicz, could you correct me if I'm wrong and I don't know if Jen Tooker is still on but it's my understanding that earlier in the year the departments heads were invited to and did bring proposals from their departments on how the ARPA money should be spent, what would be primary projects from their departments. Those were brought to the Board of Selectmen and there were several discussions held by the Board of Selectmen. Those were prioritized and they were brought to the Board of Finance and the Board of Finance held several discussions about these items and then they were prioritized and now, as I understand it, the items that were approved are being presented to us. Is that not where this appropriation essentially started, Pete? This isn't something you thought up on your own. This came out of a lot of thinking and vetting.

Mr. Ratkiewicz:

That is correct, Wendy. Thank you for asking. The process that we've gone through has been going on for quite some time. We have been meeting on this with the past administration and the current administration and trying to refine this as we receive information from the various stakeholders. We started with an informal hearing with the Board of Selectmen with no public input. We went to a public hearing where we found a lot of input from the public and went on to the Board of Finance to get their input as well. We solicited input from the Long Range Planning Committee and I know they are working on their response and they have made some interim responses to our inquiries. To expect that this is going to be a single working document that can be approved by all parties all at once is, unfortunately, not very realistic. It's a working document. We're taking input as we go. The document exists. It's public information so, at any point in time, if anyone wants to look at it, it hasn't changed that much from when we started. We started with immediate use where these funds could have immediate impact. We then categorized other projects into the first tranche of projects that could be done that may be shovel ready. We categorized into a second tranche that may not be shovel ready but need to have further inquiry. This is some of the feedback we got from the Board of Finance as well. They categorized in their own way but we stuck with the categorization that we started with which is immediate impact, shovel ready and then things that need to get a little bit more developed but we think are good projects. We actually had another category of projects that need to be vetted, that need to be looked at before they are on the list. That's a public document. Anyone of the members can access that document. If you wish, we will distribute that.

Ms. Batteau:

I think that might be a good idea. I've seen those meetings but in case people haven't, it might be useful so people wouldn't get the sense that we were just presented something. It is my understanding that this is all part of a coherent group of projects.

Mr. Wieser:

Selectwoman Tooker has reappeared if she'd like to comment. If not, that's okay.

Ms. Tooker:

Thank you, Jeff. I am happy to answer to my best capabilities. I'm on week three. But I will tell you how we have handled the ARPA funding requests. From a town standpoint, I will not speak for anybody else, how we have handled the ARPA funding is that we looked at what was in our capital forecast and what were we planning to do already and of the things we were planning to do already, what fit the parameters of the ARPA funding initiative. With that, starting in August, we have had three different Board of Selectmen public meetings where we have heard from our department heads and the public about what was important in that bucket and I think that Jack has hosted two meetings of his committee. The Board of Finance has opined on the list a couple of different times. We continue to get public feedback on the list via email. I know the Board of Finance said to the Board of Education at their October meeting, even though the Board of Education had COVID funding spent, the Board of Finance said to the Board of Education 'Would you like some of these monies?' They have spent the last six weeks talking about where they would like to spend this money and they are

formulating a plan, as well. Four million dollars is what we have. It is meant to be spent on municipality issues. That is very clear from the ARPA wording. The process is there is not simply one big document that is going to equal \$8.4 million that everybody is going to vote on in one meeting. It's simply not the way the process works. Our process in Westport is that we take ARPA expenditures to the Board of Finance. They say yes or no and then they pass them on to you guys. We have a wish list, for lack of a better word, which is similar to the five year capital forecast and that's how this process is working. We are moving through the wish list on a project by project basis as quickly as we can. There are two tranches as I hope you know in terms of spending. We will work through it with you guys on a project by project basis. That's how we're handling it. That's how municipalities across the State are handling it.

Jack Klinge, district 7:

This is definitely not the time for the RTM to have a comprehensive discussion of ARPA but I'll tell you what the Long Range Planning Committee has done. We have met twice. The October 1 Total Presentation on the ARPA projects is the document that people have talked about. It is about the \$8.4 million that was discussed with the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance on a part by part basis. The Long Range Planning Committee did meet twice to go over these items. We began to make a list and prioritize and react to what we heard from Department Heads, especially Jen Fava and Pete Ratkiewich. We had Brian Stern come to our last meeting. We were aware of what was being presented by them to us for approval tonight. It is my desire, once we get the new committees set up and the chairs, to get the Long Range Planning Committee and the RTM involved with both department heads, the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance, when appropriate, to go over and get our input before it goes to the Board of Finance. At our last meeting, we added six additional ideas for project we'd liked looked at. So, if you could be a little bit patient until we get through the holiday season, in early January we'll be meeting. All the Chairs will meet with the Long Range Planning Committee. We'll have a brainstorming session to review what's currently underway and what's been projected, get our input, pull together on an organized basis and work together with the rest of the town. So, if that sounds reasonable, you'll hear a little more from me and I talk with Jeff so we can get the RTM's input before it comes back around to us like tonight. We can do that.

Ms. Kramer:

I very much want these all projects but I'm hearing very clearly what my fellow members from district 5 are saying. I'd like to see the whole picture. I want these things but there are other things I want on there too. I want to make sure the money is distributed and we don't get to, how is it put, 'The cheese is gone. The mouse ate it.' I want to see the whole picture. I hope that everybody else wants to see it too.

Mr. Mall:

One of the things that I want to comment on is that first and foremost, two of these shelters will be in my district. I think that they are absolutely necessary and this is an appropriate use of ARPA money. It's been embarrassing for a town like Westport to not take care of people who come into our town and provide them with adequate bus

shelter. I see these people getting on and off the bus at the Mediplex. It is a nursing home. These are essential workers. Something that we didn't even know before COVID, the term "essential workers". They have to sit out in the elements and have no place to stay protected. So, I'm all in favor of this. Another point that is really critical that is being proposed is we need those crosswalks at that intersection because we have children crossing the Post Road to go to Kings Highway School. The fact that we don't have that, for all these years, is mind-boggling. So, this is a public safety issue. This is about taking care of people who are our essential workers. We have a responsibility to provide them a means of staying safe. So, I am in favor of this item, the \$150,000 for four bus shelters and I will have comments on the next item when that comes up. I will vote yes for this.

Sal Liccione, district 9:

Pete, I know we've been looking at bus shelters in the downtown area. Do you know how far we've gotten on that? My comment is thank you to the committee and to you. Thank you very much to former First Selectman, Jim Marpe; thank you Jen Tooker and State Senator Will Haskell to work with the State and local government to get bus shelters for all the employees who work in my district and come in and out of our town who take these buses and really, really need these shelters. My request to RTM members, like Lou said, go up and down the Post Road, come downtown and see the employees and people who come to work in our great town of Westport from New York, Stamford and everywhere else and people who live here who take the buses. My request to Pete is to keep looking at the downtown area.

Mr. Ratkiewich:

Thank you, Sal, that's a great question. The downtown area, we have a couple of people focusing on it because it is challenging to find a space within the downtown corridor between the bridge and, say, Myrtle Avenue to actually put a shelter. We have a couple of people from this working group who are working avidly to find either a shelter or a location that could emulate a shelter. By that, I mean something that is existing with an overhang. I would say that it is a priority because, obviously, there are people coming into our downtown via bus to work in our stores and our establishments. It's very important to have something down there so they can stay out of the weather while waiting for the bus, as well. We are working on it. We do not have a solution yet but it is not going to look like a bus shelter. It will probably look like something that integrates into the downtown area but still provides shelter.

Stephen Shackelford, district 8:

I just want to briefly say that I appreciate the concerns of Peter and Dick and others wanting to have a better understanding. We absolutely can't know how we're going to spend the \$4 or \$8 million dollars right now but to have a better understanding of the tradeoffs we're making, what projects are not to be pursued versus the ones that are being put up in front of us. I think folks have heard the message and I think we'll be hearing at the RTM about the broader plans. I don't think anyone should expect that we will hear how we are spending the full \$8 million over the next however many years. Some more discussion of we should do this or not do that would be helpful. With that

being said, I am voting for this because this is clearly a big need of the town. Seeing those pictures and driving down the Post Road, we need to do something about it. The fact that we have this money and this is something we can put it to, I think it makes a lot of sense to do it. I appreciate the folks who decided to put in for this particular project and I am a strong supporter of it while I would like to see and I will go to the next Long Range Planning Committee meeting and so forth for more explanation of at least what the powers that be are proposing for the next few million dollars and, again, what sort of projects we're choosing not to do that have been proposed.

Ms. Tooker:

Jeff, can I respond to that? [Yes.] There is a Power Point presentation on the town website that details all of the spending requisitions under ARPA that we currently have. It's a very public document. It's on the website. So, Lynn, I'm sure can share that with the entire RTM. Thank you, Jack. You have probably shown that document four times during this conversation. Thank you. Lynn will share the document with the entire RTM so that you can see what the propositions are for ARPA spending. We have actually talked about it since our multiple public meetings since August.

Mr. Shackelford:

I appreciate that from the First Selectwoman. I have not read through that document. I understood that it existed. Does that document include proposals that the town is not moving forward to do? Because I was made aware, in the last week, of a different proposal for some of the funds that, it was my understanding was not in that initial set of proposals. It may now be taking the place of something else. But that is the sort of thing I was wondering. I have not been part of those conversations and maybe I should have been in those meetings to listen to that but I'm just curious if that level of detail, we're doing this but we're not doing that, is a part of it.

Ms. Tooker:

I can tell you every day my email is filled with people who have ideas of how to spend the ARPA money.

Mr. Wieser:

I'd like to move on and just say that Lynn Scully will get us the document and maybe we can discuss it, the whole concept of the ARPA. We can vote tonight on whether we want bus shelters but the whole ARPA should be discussed at the Long Range Planning Committee at its next meeting before we get all this. I understand that some people might vote against this tonight because it's not part of a grand scheme. So be it but we are voting on bus shelters tonight so I'd just as soon limit that and let everyone see this document when it is passed around. With that, Ms. Milwe hasn't spoken yet. We'll take her comment and then go the second round.

Liz Milwe, district 1:

I just think this is such a great project. It is way overdue. Driving down the Post Road and seeing people getting so wet on a rainy and cold day, having the shelters is showing respect for the people who come into our town. They work in our town and we

know many of them. I think we're getting off track here. This is a thoughtful process. It's not a new idea having bus shelters. I understand that the arts community is going to get involved working on decorating some of the bus shelters. I hope we don't get off track with a lot of people voting no on this when this is so overdue. I'm happy it's on the agenda tonight and I'm voting for it enthusiastically.

Mr. Braunstein:

I want to just build briefly on what Liz just said and what Lou had said earlier. In a world where we sometimes struggle to live up to our aspirational goals and really take care of people who really aren't fully represented in our community, this is a very tangible way to show that we are taking action and not just talking about taking action so I will be very enthusiastic in my support and will vote yes on this appropriation.

Mr. Lowenstein:

Consider this for a moment. What would have happened tonight if, instead of putting the bus shelters first of the three items for ARPA reimbursement, we put the bus shelters at the very end. The conversation that we've been having for the last 45 minutes applies very much to the other items as this one. Bus shelters is an emotional one. The other two are less emotional. If you had the trees in front of you instead of the bus shelters, the argument would have been much stronger because there are no people involved. It has been said that they are very much overdue. Well, a little bit longer wait is not going to make that much of a difference. The opportunity is not going to be lost. It is just a question of not *if* but *when*. I will continue to vote no on this and on the next two items, as well.

Ms. Meiers Schatz:

I will also be voting enthusiastically on this matter. I disagree with Dick. This isn't an emotional item to me. It doesn't matter to me what is on that priority list because I know because of the equity issues that Seth highlighted, that this is something that should be on this list. I don't need to see the full list. This is something we should be doing and supporting. I will be voting in favor.

Cathy Talmadge, district 6:

I was going to say I am definitely supporting this enthusiastically. I know I was on the Transit Committee eight years ago and bus shelters were proposed at that time and we were told basically that it would be impossible to get the easements and there were all types of issues. Pete and his team have spent a number of years clearing things and getting those rights of ways approved. I think this is important for all kinds of reasons. I will be supporting it.

Mr. Gold:

Bus shelters are fine. People deserve to be out of the rain. That's fine. But our job is to look at the funds that come to town and set priorities. Do we want to spend it on this, that, or something else? The choice is you can't do your job and set those priorities. Jack is shown a document that is circulated and will be circulated again. That's a list of possibilities. It's not a list of things the administration is proposing. As Jen Tooker said,

she is still getting emails and calls moving the list around. They may come up with something tomorrow for \$8.2 million and we've already spent half a million dollars. That project may be the most important thing in town. I don't know. The more we spend now, the less there is going to be for Jack's committee to meet on when it eventually meets. Nobody says you can't vote for this but vote for this knowing what you're passing up in favor of this. I agree it's an equity issue and people deserve bus shelters but lots of people deserve lots of things and we don't know what those lots of things are yet. I can't do my job. I can't say these are the right priorities. I can't say I can't spend this money here because then I can't spend this money over there until I know what all the choices are. Again, it's not that you can't have the bus shelters. Wait a month. Let's see what the choices are. Nothing has been decided. The Board of Finance hasn't approved anything except for the three projects that are before us tonight. They've seen the list. They've given their input and so has the Long Range Planning Committee of the RTM. We've given our input. So have all the people who have sent emails to Jen Tooker. They've given their input but nothing's been approved by the Board of Finance or by the administration, at least not formally, because they have not come to the Board of Finance to say 'This is what we want.' I can't do my job unless I know what there is to choose from. I will vote no on this and on the other two items as well.

Ms. Kramer:

I am going to have to disagree with some of my district people. I am voting for the bus shelters but I would still like to see the whole list on the table. But, if we have two dollars, we still should support the bus shelters.

Ms. Batteau:

We are having two different conversations here. We are having one conversation on whether or not we should vote for the bus shelters and appropriate money. The other conversation is really a mini-budget conversation.

Mr. Wieser: And we decided we're not going to continue that one.

Ms. Batteau:

What I wanted to say is we never know what is coming down the line. And given the fact that some people have heard the conversations about the virtues of appropriating money for this versus that, for the tree trimming versus something else, the only thing we're missing really is a committee report but I think that, given the detailed report that Pete Ratkiewich gave us, I think we have enough to go on and I am also going to enthusiastically vote for the bus shelters. We need them. We owe it to the community and I don't see a reason not to. And I see many reasons to. Let's confine our discussions to the bus shelters and I recommend voting for them.

By roll call vote, the motion passes 33-2. Gold and Lowenstein opposed.

The Secretary read item #8 of the call - To approve an appropriation of \$100,000.00 to the Tree Trimming CLFRF Expense account from the ARPA CLFRF Grant Income account.

Presentation

Mr. Ratkiewich:

This is a request for additional funding for tree trimming and tree maintenance in the category of Resilience in the ARPA funding. This is an eligible category. I provided this spread sheet to the Board of Finance to show them what a tree trimming program would look like in the amounts of \$100,000, \$200,000 and \$300,000. Essentially, six and a half miles gets removed or trimmed at \$15,000/mile. This appropriation request is the \$100,000 scenario. We discussed with the Board of Finance implementation of a \$200,000 and \$300,000 budget and they decided on a \$100,000 budget to see how this goes, to see how far we can get. Under the category of resiliency because the definition of resiliency is to be able to take care of things that will make you recover faster. During our tropical storm Isaiah, it took us about a week just to clear the roads and probably a month to get everything back up. If we are out there and taking care of tree maintenance on a regular basis and even a more aggressive basis at this point, to prepare for future storms, this \$100,000 will go a long way to doing that. Our operating budget has about \$285,000 in tree removal, tree care and various other tree operations. This will simply enhance certain areas and as you see from this, we have sent our Deputy Tree Warden out and has picked out several roads that need to be addressed in both trimming and removal. So, we have a plan for \$300,000 but we are only asking for \$100,000 at this point. That's only to start the process.

Committees report

Public Works and Finance Committees, Mr. Braunstein:

By now, you'll see we had a very active committee meeting on Nov. 30. I'm just going to try to add a couple of subtleties to what Peter just provided to us. What we talked about was how the town's Tree Warden identified the specific areas to be addressed. He wanted to make clear that this was not just the downing of individual trees; although, that will occur where necessary. A lot of this will consist of the removal of large leaders overhanging power lines. That's really the key here. All of this is being done to help reduce electrical outages in the future or recover more quickly following any sort of event. Some of the things that were discussed in addition to the body of this appropriation included the fact that the tree maintenance budget, as Peter just mentioned, is \$285,000. That is actually a \$60,000 increase that the Board of Finance unilaterally suggested. So, all this kind of fits together that the town recognizes that it has a problem and between the increase to the budgeted funds and the utilization of the ARPA funds under the resiliency heading, we'll hopefully help alleviate some of those issues. We also discussed the fact that this appropriation will only cover tree work that is in the town right of way, on town roads, so won't cover any tree work for parks, for schools, for State roads and then the discussion turned to the status of the current Tree Warden, which I thought was particularly interesting and his decision to transition out of the role and the steps that are being taken to appoint a successor. The existing Tree Warden, Bruce Lindsay, is set to formally resign as on January 1, 2022 at which point

the Deputy will assume the role for an initial contract. In terms of the vote, for the Finance Committee, Jessica Bram motioned and I seconded, and the vote was 4 - 0 - 1 (Stephen Shackelford abstained). For Public Works, Peter Gold motioned and was seconded by Andrew Colabella and the vote was 6 - 2 (Richard Lowenstein and Lou Mall opposed).

Members of the Westport electorate – no comments

Ms. Karpf read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by Director of Public Works, the sum of \$100,000.00 to the Tree Trimming CLFRF Expense account from the ARPA CLFRF Grant Income account is hereby appropriated.

Members of the RTM

Mr. Izzo:

Looking at all the trees that need to be trimmed, why don't we put more money in your budget for tree trimming? I think we need to do it anyway. It's a necessity like a bridge. The residents would not be upset. I don't know why we would use ARPA money for this when we really do need to extend that budget overall. That's just my opinion. So, I don't know how I'm going to vote on this but I do think you need to put more in your budget for tree trimming.

Mr. Ratkiewich:

We did receive the increase the Board of Finance last year and appreciated that. The one thing that is unique for the ARPA funds is that it is slated for resiliency measures. If anything is a resiliency measure, if anybody remembers, Storm Isaias two years ago, the fact that we had a lot of areas the trees came down that took us a long time to resolve indicates that we still have issues. Long before the ARPA funds came into account, I had suggested to the Tree Warden that we start a program of doing additional tree trimming focused on various areas, almost the exact program we are talking about but coming out of town funds; that money is my reserve and a modest money coming out for tree trimming is something that we thought we would be able to do but it was nowhere near \$100,000. If we were able to get these funds, we would be able to get a big dent on some of the more problem areas in town. Again, we presented \$100,000 and \$200,000 and \$300,000 and I've heard from some RTM members who have said to give us the whole \$300,000 because there are areas of town that need to be done now but I think a \$100,000 bite right now is something we can go ahead and get done during this period that the ARPA funds are available. We can come back and ask for another couple of hundred thousand if it's effective but I want to start prudently and see how this works and how much we can get done. I think that will go a long way.

Mr. Mandell:

I'm uncomfortable with this in researching the ARPA expenses. I understand that this is considered resiliency but when you really look at what the ARPA money was for, it was for building infrastructure or taking care of expenses during COVID. This doesn't quite

rise up to that level. Bus shelters are infrastructure. Five years from now we can look back and say look what we did with the ARPA money. We got Federal money and we did something productive with it. We have something to show for it. Five years from now, we are going to look at trees that may or may not have fallen, may have needed to be taken down, or not, and I wonder about that. I'd rather spend \$100,000 on putting solar panels on a school or solar panels on a building. I think that we can look at in the future and say 'Hey, look what we did with Federal money. We did something special with it.' This is not special. Last week I was up at the Economic Development Summit and I was lucky enough to have a few minutes with the Governor and also with the Commissioner for Economic Development. We talked about ARPA money. I asked what should we do with the ARPA money. Where should it be spent? The Governor said we should spend it on infrastructure, things related to COVID. For instance, people who lost their jobs to figure out how Health and Human Services work. One thing he said to me was 'Don't spend it on deferred maintenance.' Not cutting our trees and doing it now is deferred maintenance. I would be the first one to say that I would ask for \$50,000 out of our regular budget this year to start cutting trees and \$50,000 next year. To do it out of our budget. But I don't want to spend \$100,000 of Federal money that I can't see a productive piece of infrastructure that I can say 'We did this' with. I'm voting no on this because of the spirit of it, not because I don't think we should be doing it. We should be doing it but it is just a matter of what bucket it comes out of. I don't want it coming out of the Federal money. I want it coming out of regular tax money. Pete ask for \$50,000 and I'll be voting for that in January if that's when you come forward with it. But I'm uncomfortable with the \$100,000 out of ARPA money.

Ms. Gertzoff:

I agree with what's been said. I don't think the money should come from ARPA funds; however, I admit I go around and look at trees a lot. One of the trees that I looked at, I knew something was going to happen. A few years ago. And then it hit a school bus and then it took a very long time for them finally to take that tree down. I do think we need to take money out of our budget to take those most dangerous trees down. We don't want a repeat of what happened on the Merritt Parkway. I saw what happened that night. Those people were killed instantly. That could happen again. Not out of ARPA but we do need to get these vulnerable trees taken down or trimmed so that we don't have any more disasters and someone gets killed by a tree coming down.

Mr. Mall:

I agree with Matt. I think this is an entirely inappropriate use of ARPA money. When we look back and say 'How did Westport use its COVID relief money?' We pruned trees but we didn't take care of those who needed it the most. This is the first time in my 10 years on the RTM that we've had a request from the tree maintenance division. As we had in our committee discussion, I looked at the budget and in 2021, we were in \$220,000 and went up to \$285,000 which was a 29 percent increase. If we add this \$100,000 to it, it would be a 75 percent increase to tree maintenance in one year. Twenty-nine percent is a lot and just as Pete has pointed out tonight, they hadn't even requested the money. It was the Board of Finance insisting on raising the amount to \$285,000. So, there was no urgency back then at budget time to have more money for tree pruning and tree

maintenance. I have some other issues. I am a strong advocate of taking care of what we have, maintaining our trees, taking care of the urban forest, as we like to say, but this doesn't include our parks. It doesn't include our schools. It doesn't include our State roads and it doesn't include the electrical lines that Eversource maintains. I feel like there has been a lack of transparency and oversight in the tree maintenance area. We don't know who is contracted to do the work, what areas they have done. This is the first thing that I have seen that talks about what might be areas of concern. The other thing I think is that until we know who, what, where and why, there isn't an urgency. The budget is \$285,000. I asked the question if we've spent it all. We haven't even spent half of it. There is no frantic need or urgency. All the leaves are off the trees. The dead trees, as Arline pointed out, I've noticed them and pointed them out, as well. Maybe we should start focusing on how we're going to get to trees that are really a safety and hazard issue to the general public. So, I am going to vote no on this and will wait until there is appropriate planning and send this money back to the Board of Finance. If we need to buy an ambulance, I think that's pretty COVID related and if they need \$100,000 for an ambulance, hey, let's get an ambulance.

Ms. Karpf:

We've just covered almost everything I wanted to say. I'm looking at the selection process and I don't understand how this fits into this. I'm not seeing or understanding how it fits in. Matt and Lou covered it. I raised my hand before they spoke. But, I'm hung up on that.

Ms. Batteau:

Without repeating everything that everybody else has said, I do agree with Matt and Lou but a couple of other points. Having been part of a study for the last couple of years on resiliency and climate change and that sort of thing, what we should be doing if we are going to be spending money on trees is we should be planting trees and finding ways to do it and, as Matt said, we should also definitely be putting up solar panels on our public buildings. I think we should re-look at the question of resiliency with regard to this. The other thing is, Pete, do you approximately what percentage of our population lives on private roads?

Mr. Ratkiewich:

I would guess about 40 percent of the roads are private roads.

Ms. Batteau:

So this would not affect 40 percent of our population and as we think about uses for ARPA money, we might think about stuff that might be useful to more of the community.

Harris Falk, district 2:

I guess I am going to agree with everything that everybody has said which is going to drive me absolutely insane. This is something that is important and it shouldn't be spent with ARPA funds. I'm not saying the bus shelters aren't important. The bus shelters are very important but it's more of a nice thing. It is not vital to the town. This is a vital thing. This is not what ARPA is supposed to be spent on. This is a general maintenance. It

should be in the regular budget. This is not what this money should be for and, yes, I totally agree, an ambulance would be far better spent. I think it's pretty obvious that I'm voting no on this one.

Jessica Bram, district 6:

I'm going to speak very briefly because it is getting late. This is not tree beautification. I think some people might be confusing it. This is an emergency. This is a very serious safety issue. We just took down a beloved tree from our front lawn because we are having 100-year hurricanes about once a year to the magnitude we've never had before. So, I think a tragedy is waiting to happen. I agree with Arline Gertzoff. I also want to say that the RTM has a Long Range Planning Committee led by Jack Klinge where these comments are perfectly appropriate to bring on all the different funds that are coming to us now or ever in the future. That's where the conversation should come up but, in terms of the trees, I think it's critical that we do that now.

Mr. Lowenstein:

All the arguments I've heard tonight on this particular subject say that we need a plan. We just can't go one by one by one. I voted against the bus shelter for that reason and I'll vote against this one. But consider all of you who voted for the bus shelter but were in favor of long range plans, here's the time to show that you really mean it by voting no on this one. I hope that the administration will not only start saying what you're going to do but what you're not going to do so we can start to see the tradeoffs involved.

Mark Friedman, district 3:

Before I speak, I noticed Jack Klinge has had his hand up for a while and I wonder if I should defer to him.

Mr. Wieser:

Jack, we have to figure out how you can raise your yellow hand. We can't see you.

Mr. Klinge:

I understand why people would feel this is not exactly COVID related or crisis type expense and we should go back and look at \$8.4 million before we trim trees but I have to tell you, tree trimming is a serious need in Westport. Trees do fall down during storms. Property gets damaged. There is a property on my street with a big branch on a neighbor's yard with three kids under five years old. That's a problem. That's a safety issue. I wouldn't spend \$300,000 this year but I would sure spend \$100,000 out of the \$8.4 million trying to get the worst tree situations dealt with. Nothing about looking at the whole plan, this is a small part and I'm sure it qualifies as an important emergency safety issue to be dealt with like we did with Health and Human Services which helped protect human lives and quality of life. Trees falling on people and things affect quality of life. I'm going to vote for this because, to me, it's more important as a safety issue and I'm not going to wait for a whole plan to be developed on this item. When we get to the next item, I'm going to vote no. On this one, I'm going to vote yes.

Mr. Friedman:

Like the comments that Jack made, I do see this as an emergency issue. I am concerned about the health and safety. I am concerned also about what it was like recovering from Isaias. It was a week. I feel like the house is on fire with this one. Given that urgency, I'm going to vote for it although I'm also mindful of the need to consider the bigger picture also so on the next item, like Mr. Klinge, I'm going to vote no on that one.

Mr. Keenan:

I'm going to actually agree with both Mark and Jack but also agree with Wendy with the need when we take down trees to plant new trees, maybe two or three for every one we take down. Every time we have a storm, and in the 25 years of living here it hasn't just be Isaias, it's been several, huge swaths of this town are down for seven or 10; two storms ago, I was down for 14 days. It's all tree related. It's all trees falling on wires. We have to go around the entire town. The town has the ability to take care of trees on town roads and the town right of way. We don't have control of the State roads and Eversource takes care of their own thing. They sometimes coordinate with us; they sometimes don't. So I think it's very important. I think I am the person who said to Pete, 'If you asked for \$300,000, I would give you \$300,000. We do need a plan. I think it would be good to meet with the new Tree Warden when he gets onboard to maybe set some priorities around the town and I know Pete, I talked to Pete about that as well. But, I think it is very important that, ARPA or no ARPA, the money should be spent on the trees so we take care of the residents and we are not losing power for seven to 14 days every time we have a major storm. So, I will be voting for this.

Mr. Shackelford:

Pete, if this is voted down tonight, are you going to come back and go through Finance and all to ask for a general appropriation for this purpose?

Mr. Ratkiewich:

I supposed so. From what I am hearing, that is what is desired, one way or another, either in the operating budget or in capital. The fact is, and I'll have Gary comment on this, these funds are available for resiliency. So, this is the opportunity to take a little chunk and accelerate the process of making us more resilient right now. I believe based on the budget that I have, based on some feedback, I would ask for another \$50,000. If I were to get this appropriation request, that may not happen.

Mr. Shackelford:

In terms of timing, if this is approved, are people going to be out trimming trees in a week? Are we losing a month or two months if you have to come back to us? In terms of planning, is this not going to happen in three months anyway?

Mr. Ratkiewich:

I would say, if this was approved, we could start at the new year. I don't expect a lot of activity between now and January but tree trimming can go on all year long. A dead tree is a dead tree and a lot of trees that we find are ash trees that are obviously dead. So,

yes, we can do this work all year long and to wait until July to get an operating budget increase is just going to waste six months.

Mr. Shackelford:

If you get started as quickly as January and you have to come back to us for a special appropriation, that will cost you at least a month, maybe longer. Is that what I'm hearing?

Mr. Ratkiewich:

If I start from the beginning, I have a two month process for an appropriation request.

Mr. Liccione:

Pete, can you explain to the rest of the RTM, during Tropical Storm Isaias how bad the tree damage was. I understand that we need this money. I agree with Matt and I also agree with Jay. In my district, in the downtown area, trees were down for days and days. Businesses were closed. Residents were not able to get into their houses. We need to get this money for that reason, right?

Mr. Ratkiewich:

At the height of the Isaias inventory, I think we had over 100 locations that were either blocked partially or blocked totally. I know that we had at least 80 locations including public and private roads that were trapped. It would be a dead end that was trapped. So, our purpose, part of our charge is to make sure that those trapped roads get open. We don't necessarily go up and clear the private roads but we do make sure the people can get in and out because that, also, includes emergency services going in and out of those private roads. So, we had at least 80 instances in Isaias that were what we call "traps". Those went on for three to four days. The trimming program, to be absolutely clear, would not cover private roads but 50 percent of those traps were on public roads that were cul de sacs. So, those are places where everybody is at risk until we can get emergency services up there. What we do is we try to make it passable.

Mr. Liccione:

So, back to my comment and question. Every time we get a storm like this, can you tell the public and tell the RTM how important these trees are to be trimmed and done with seniors and people being trapped in their houses with food issues and things like that. Andrew Colabella could agree. We need a lot of help with this, the trees being down. I think this money is a good thing.

Mr. Ratkiewich:

The \$100,000 for mitigation is probably a big number when you compare it to our operating budget but that will do about six miles of roads. I can hand that to a contractor and be proactive or we can wait for a storm and we can react. That's basically the choice we have.

Ms. Briggs:

Stephen got to one of my questions which was if we don't approve this, would it be happening soon? It seems like time is of the essence is happening here. But where I'm confused, I'm no expert; I have not looked at ARPA, it seems like there is some talk that maybe this isn't a use that can be used under ARPA. Is it something that can come back and hurt the town or has it been definitely approved that these funds can be used for this project? Has it gone up to any of the attorneys or anywhere like that?

Mr. Ratkiewich:

I'd like to turn that over to Gary Conrad, our Finance Director, to answer.

Gary Conrad, Finance Director:

That falls in perfectly with something I was going to say. I made a presentation today for one of the COGs, which handles everything from Fairfield right down to Greenwich up to above Danbury. I was asked to give a presentation today on that and that was one of the interesting things that came up on that. A lot of the people asked how does this fall into that? If you look at how it affects the people in the town, as trees fall down, you lose your internet connection; you lose your phone, land lines. We looked at that and we had two people from CCM, the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. That question came up and they agreed it was a legitimate item because it impacts so many people. If you take an area and knock out the connections going to one part of the town, it not only impacts the low income people, the high income people, it impacts the whole area. One of the crucial points about ARPA is how can you make sure people have internet access so they can continue to monitor their own medical things, maintain contact with their friends and relatives, their family. We had close to 40 people on the zoom and that was one of the highlights of the meeting today. CCM is actually following through on this with the treasury but from the two experts that were there, they said this is probably one of the key areas, if you can protect your infrastructure. That is highlighted as one of the top two or three items. It affects everybody. It was well thought of by our people here and we have a lot of interest by all the rest of the COGs throughout the State.

Andrew Colabella, district 4:

I will be voting in favor of this because it is a necessity. You are talking about \$100,000. Jay said it best. This happens during every single storm. Just to give people perspective of one storm in particular, Isaias, it was the first time ever that our Westport emergency team was already operating, not only to respond to COVID but also to respond to Isaias. You had 97 percent of the town that lost their power. That is roughly 12,000 people without power. The incoming call log for that was 2,600 for police and 2,500 for fire. With that being said, Eversource is supposed to be tree trimming every three years. That's part of their plan. It's public knowledge. They are more than seven years behind on their tree trimming. Also, Public Works cannot go near any lines that are down. During the storm, guess what happened? There were 274 instances where trees went down on primary and secondary roadways. Public Works could not go near any of those trees because there were lines that were involved. Any line that you see on the ground is considered a live wire. When I was working for Norwalk, we were trying to communicate with Eversource. It was next to impossible. Westport had to rely on a resident named Chris Swan who was an expert and former employee and came in and

helped Westport. During that time, there were trees down all over the place. Everyone was without power. I was without power for 12 days. Sal alluded to this. There was over 1200 tons of wood removed from the roadways between Aug. 8 and Aug. 21. That's 5,100 yards of chips removed from the site. I don't see this being a Public Works or a Parks and Rec. problem. I see it being a problem with Eversource. They dropped the ball and left us behind and we had to struggle to make it work and we did. But this \$100,000 is proactive. What we're trying to do with this \$100,000 is reduce the problems we will have in storms. As Mr. Keenan said, with every tree that you cut down, you should plant trees. It's completely necessary especially with the overcutting that is going on with the development in Westport currently with less than 118 acres of green space left in the town. So, I'm going to be voting in favor of this because I think it would be insensitive for us to not vote for it because this is what we need. We want to keep our town safe. We don't want to have an incident like in Naugatuck where a 66 year old man was crushed by a tree. This \$100,000 is completely necessary and I am voting in favor it.

Mr. Mall:

That's all fine and dandy. I've been battling about a tree on Riverside Avenue and Treadwell Avenue that is as dead as can be and you don't have to be an arborist to see it. But it's on private property. So, then it becomes a case of we have to come up with something that says who has jurisdiction of this tree and how can we get the tree removed or the dead branches that are falling off of that tree and taken care of. That's why we have a Tree Warden. I was under the impression that we had a Tree Warden to work with the public and residents to resolve some of these issues. Let me back up and tell you that I went back and looked at some old budgets and since 2015, we have spent approximately \$1.8 million, roughly \$225,000/year, including this budget for tree maintenance, \$1.8 million. If I take the 123 miles that I'm told we have of public roadway times \$15,000, that's \$1,845,000. So, roughly, we have done every single road in Westport. We should be safe. Let me say something about Isaias. Four days before that storm, I had had contractors come in and do the entire perimeter of my property for safety reasons, for my own family's safety and my neighbors' safety. Then that storm hit and branches broke that weren't dead branches and I couldn't get ahold of any tree maintenance company to be had anywhere, anytime. Everybody was taken and I couldn't get ahold of the tree warden either about some of the tree that were down in the public right of way. There has been a total lack of transparency here and a total lack of oversight. I think we need to spend more time focused on who is doing what than to say 'Here is \$100,000 of ARPA money and let's take that and go with it. We have \$140,000, some odd, in the budget, unspent. There is not an urgency to get our hands on this money until this is cleared up. I'm still opposed to use ARPA money for something such as this. It's an embarrassment.

Mr. Braunstein:

I don't want to rehash. Everyone has made some excellent points here this evening. I would just say I think the point about accelerating our progress is an important one. My question to Pete is: Is there a way to compare the cost/mile on a proactive basis versus the cost/mile on a reactive basis? One hundred thousand dollars spent in preventative

maintenance, what would you estimate that would equate to post-storm emergency situation? Is there a way to come up some rough equivalents?

Mr. Ratkiewich:

I can only give you a practical comparison. Any contractor that we hire during a storm gets paid a premium for storm work. Our costs go up. All of our Public Works people who come in during a storm are on overtime. The cost is basically 150 percent of what we would do on regular time. And a contractor who is going to do this on a blue sky day is certainly more efficient than he is during a storm. So, I would say it's 150, if not 200 percent more.

Mr. Braunstein:

That's very helpful. I would just put more meat on the bone for what Jessica said earlier. There is no question. The scientific data is there. The empirical evidence is there. The wind speeds and rain amounts are increasing. Thus, the frequency of severe outcomes is only going up. I see the point that is being made about ARPA funds versus tree maintenance expense. That's a valid point. Our underlying budget for tree maintenance may need to be increased. But \$100,000 will hopefully go a long way towards removing those sorts of risky situations that these trees pose, I think that's money well spent. To stand on principle and say ARPA versus non-ARPA, I think that misses the point, a bit, about the town taking an effective step towards a) Creating a better safety environment and b) Making sure we can recover as quickly as possible. So, I am going to vote in favor of this.

Mr. Mandell:

I think it's 100 percent clear that all of us want to trim trees. I think it's 100 percent clear that all of us would spend \$100,000 on trimming trees. Pete, you have \$140,000 in the budget right now. Spend \$100,000 in January with the third parties that you are going to hire. Immediately, got to the Board of Finance and ask for \$100,000 more. I said \$50,000. I'll increase my support for \$100,000 in February. Then there is no issue about timing. We take the money we have, we start spending. We take care of it. That way, we still have \$100,000 of ARPA money to put into real infrastructure which is what it was meant for. Again, as I talked to the Governor, he said 'Don't do it on deferred maintenance.' Taking down trees that are dead is deferred maintenance. That's where I stand. I think it's the case. It's not a safety issue if we can start doing it in January because we have the money right now. So, that's not an argument that should sway any RTM member. We can start it now. We have the money and we augment it with regular budgetary money or special appropriation in January or February and we are in the same place we would be if we took \$100,000 of ARPA money. Pete, if you don't have the \$140,000, tell us. Pete, go ahead.

Mr. Ratkiewich:

If I may respond Jeff. What I was going to tell you is that I have an operating budget that I monitor very closely. We had an operating budget of \$280,000 and we are about half way through the fiscal year and we have \$140,000 left. I have been prudent with this not expecting this additional capital infusion. This capital infusion is, again, for an

acceleration of the program. The program is continuing as always and we adjusted our program to our new budget that the Board of Finance gave us last year. But, if you look at our budget, we're going right along at the same burn rate that we would normally go at because we're six months into the fiscal year and we've burned about half of the budget. We are probably going to slow down now through the dark days of winter but we will accelerate in the spring.

Mr. Mandell:

We will give you \$100,000 toward that acceleration. The point now is which bucket it comes out of. I'm not against giving money. I want to trim trees. I think everyone on the RTM wants to trim trees. If you know you are going to get \$100,000 in February, Feb. 4, I believe, why not start the acceleration knowing it's coming in? That way, we can save ARPA money for infrastructure and we spend money as a budgetary appropriation in February to do the exact same thing you want.

Mr. Ratkiewich:

Very clearly, because I don't know that I'm going to get that. I'm asking for it now. I don't know that I'm going to get it and I do need some time to plan for things.

Mr. Liccione:

Pete, can you repeat again for Mr. Mandell, during Tropical Storm Isaias how bad it was that people were trapped in their houses, they couldn't get out, handicapped people; we couldn't get ambulances and fire trucks to places.

Mr. Ratkiewich:

To answer your question, Sal, anything that we do to mitigate what happened a year and a half ago is certainly going to improve our response time. It's going to improve our resiliency time. It will improve our recovery. Again, the definition of resiliency is recovering quickly. If all the trees come down like they did in Isaias, then we can't recover quickly. If it's a smaller number of trees that come down, then we can recover more quickly. So, whatever we add to that equation on doing things proactively is going to help us in recovery and that is more resiliency. That clearly is what ARPA is earmarked for.

Mr. Mandell:

Since Mr. Liccione was suggesting that Mr. Ratkiewich speak directly to me, may I speak to Mr. Liccione? At no point, Sal, am I against cutting of the trees. Nor do I negate the fact that we have an issue that must be addressed. It's just a matter of which bucket of spending is what we're talking about.

By roll call vote the motion passes 18-16.

Those in favor: Keenan, Meiers Schatz, Friedman, Gertzoff, Izzo, O'Day, Colabella, Hammond, Banks, Bram, Braunstein, Briggs, Klinge, Shackelford, Kail, Liccione, Schneeman, Wieser.

Those opposed: Mandell, Milwe, Tait, Falk, Mall, Bairaktaris, Gold, Kramer, Lowenstein, Shaum, Talmadge, Karpf, Lautenberg, Batteau, Newman, Church.

Ms. Cohn left before the vote.

The Secretary read item #9 of the call - To approve an appropriation of \$250,000.00 for COVID Reimbursement to the General Fund Covid-19 Expense account from the ARPA CLFRF Grant Income account

Presentation

Mr. Conrad:

Unfortunately, there were some communication problems with the committee which I didn't have a chance to respond to. I was up at the CCM meeting with a couple of the RTM members and also our new First Selectwoman, Jen. Some of the information that came through didn't flow through properly. One of the things that comes into the ARPA funding, I've sat through quite a few of these, one of the key areas is to respond to COVID-19 public health and negative economic impacts on a municipality. We have asked for two different appropriations. The first one was for \$400,000 and the second one was for \$380,000. We have applied for the reimbursement and we've gotten back around \$390,000 right now. The idea behind this is that as the Cares Act sort of fell out, running through this, we had no idea what impact it would have; we had to put an estimate together and we got that money back. So, here we are going ahead, we're looking at spending somewhere near \$1 million on the pandemic. We have two appropriations which add up to \$780,000. What we have spent is about \$846,000 at the time of this report. In addition to that, we've put purchase orders or encumbrances out there for another \$104,000. So, our total as of right now is \$951,000. We have an appropriation in place of \$780,000. We have a shortfall of \$171,000. If you look at the encumbrances, we are spending that as we go along. Because this is an emergency, a pandemic, it is no different than a hurricane and anything else like that, we have to address this. What we have done is we are looking at the expenses between now and the end of the year and it's taken a different turn because of the new variant. Right now, I know there are a lot of people who have said we don't want to reimburse the General Fund but this is not to reimburse the General Fund. We have taken the money from the General Fund to pay these expenses. This is truly one of the things ARPA was set up for, to keep your expenses [inaudible]. We have a new variant here and the money we are spending now is for filters, we have ventilation systems. It's not part of our normal budget. When we put in the budget last year, we were given a directive of the budget as normal. We thought this was going to be gone. That hasn't happened. Now what we are looking at is how do we handle this? What do we do? One of the biggest expenses here is testing our employees. During a normal time of the year, we have well over 300 employees. During the summer, with the Recreation Department, we have an additional 400 employees. The last quarter of the year, we are going to be doing a lot of testing. Testing right now is costing us \$6,000/week. We have employees coming in. We have Public Works employees; we have Fire; we have Police Department; we have random sampling of all of our people in the office and this is critical to the town. We have to keep these people tested and do still have some people who do not have the full vaccinations and it's still not clear from the CDC and the Federal and State Government. So, we have to have these people tested to protect all the other

employees. That's what we're doing now. Looking to the end of the year, looking at the bottom line, we're looking at another \$78,000. We're still going to test those employees. It is an emergency operation system. We have to spend the money. Whether it comes from ARPA, which as I said, that was designation as the number one item up there, that we have to cover these costs or we come back for an appropriation and we draw it down from our reserves. The ARPA money, that's what it was designated for and that's why we're requesting it. I can answer any of your questions.

Committee report

Finance Committee, Mr. Shackelford:

This was part of the long meeting on Nov. 30 to consider this request. This was presented by Mr. Ratkiewich at the meeting. Mr. Ratkiewich explained that the Town has been keeping very close track of expenditures that are directly related to unexpected and non-recurring COVID costs. We have received various reimbursements through government programs, we have currently spent, in estimates compiled by Mr. Conrad, \$180,000 more than the previous COVID reimbursements, and we have relative certainty that that number will grow by at least \$80,000 in the months ahead. With this outlook this request is asking for \$250,000 from the ARPA funds, as anticipated by that activity. The Committee discussed whether to use ARPA funding to cover the shortfall and generally agreed it was an appropriate use of ARPA funding, but there was some discussion and debate of whether to use the ARPA funding should be used to reimburse already spent COVID funds. Right now, \$180,000 has already been spent by the town and \$80,000 is expected to be spent for testing. We agreed that we would move this to a vote by the full RTM on the basis that we could get a general accounting from Mr. Conrad which he just provided to the RTM today. On a motion by Jeff Wieser and second by Cathy Talmadge, the Finance Committee voted in favor of the request, 4-0-1, with Mr. Shackelford abstaining.

Members of the Westport electorate – no comments

Ms. Karpf read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by the Finance Director, the sum of \$250,000.00 for COVID Reimbursement to the General Fund Covid-19 Expense account from the ARPA CLFRF Grant Income account is hereby appropriated.

Members of the RTM

Mr. Klinge:

I've learned to be fast! Here's an example of money asked-for that I'd much prefer to put in the line with everything else we're considering for the rest of this situation, the \$8.4 million. We've just about authorized \$780,000 between this month and last month. At this point, I want to say "Stop." Let's get everybody together. Look at the entire list. Add some new stuff. This goes, to me, not to the back of the line but at least into the pile of possible ways to spend the money. I'm not willing to spend this tonight until we look at everything else in the plan so, as I said earlier, I'm going to vote no on this one.

Mr. Gold:

I'm going to vote no on this for the reasons I gave on the bus shelters. I think we need to see the whole thing before we can make a decision. Even if that weren't the case, I would still vote no on this. We have already spent \$180,000. It's a sunk cost. It's gone. Did we miss it? I don't remember missing it. I don't remember anybody saying, 'Oh, gee, we have to turn something else down because we spent \$180,000 on COVID expenses and we have to wait until we get it back.' The testing money, COVID is going to be with us for a long time in one form or another. These things are going to be normal operating costs...face masks and testing and all the other stuff that goes with it. It's going to be with us for months and months if not longer. I don't think this is what these funds were meant to be used for. If we approve this money, it's going to go back into the General Fund and maybe \$80,000 will be spent on testing, going forward. But the other \$180,000 is going to be spent on postage stamps and post-it notes. It's not special. This money is like a gift from grandma for your birthday. She says, 'Go out and buy something special.' (For me it would be a really nice bicycle.) Instead of doing that we're going to spend it on buying tissues and carrots for the refrigerator, things I'd buy anyway. To Matt's point earlier, when he spoke to the Governor who said to spend it on infrastructure, this isn't infrastructure either. It's reimbursing us for things we've already spent on and the remainder is going to be spent on something that I think will be treated as normal operating costs going forward. I would put this in the budget as part of normal operating costs and say that we need this for health and safety just like we need to buy towels for the men's' room and whatever else we buy. So, I would vote no on this even if I wasn't voting no for other reasons.

Mr. Wieser:

At this point, unfortunately, the discussion is open to RTM members. If an RTM member asks you a question, we'll get back to you.

Mr. Shackelford:

Mr. Conrad, is there something you'd like to say? If you have a substantive response to what Mr. Gold was saying, we'd like to hear it.

Mr. Conrad:

What we are spending this money on is to test our employees. Public safety employees, police officers, Fire Department, DPW, these people are being exposed to people who possibly have COVID. We are responsible for these employees. This is a health issue. This is one of the things that this whole ARPA program is about. I think we are looking at this in different ways. The most important thing is to protect our employees and that's what I'm here for. I'm saying that this money should be spent there. I don't want to get into an argument with anybody but Peter I really do take some exceptions to that idea that we're spending money on supplies, straws or something. I don't understand that.

Mr. Shackelford:

I did have another question for Mr. Conrad. Is there any chance that these expenses in the past or testing going forward would be reimbursed in part or in full by any other grant source? I know that we've had a lot of what we've spent in the past reimbursed

and I know this is a shortfall. Is there any chance that this could be reimbursed through a different source?

Mr. Conrad:

We take a look at every one of those. As we went through the original Cares Act, we applied for everything we could and we got reimbursed close to \$400,000. We had all of our claims in there with the State. We did get the money back. There are a lot of items that did not get reimbursed because of how they qualified as an expenditure on COVID. What we're really looking for is what do you want this money to be used for and this is one of the high priorities, testing our employees. We get them tested and we've put filtering systems in and whether you think this is going to be an ongoing thing, our budget directive last year was look at your budget and let's go back to normal. Well, we're not back to normal. Unfortunately, we have to come back for an appropriation whether it comes from ARPA or another source. If you reject this, we go back to the Board of Finance but as far as the money being expended, there is no question about that. This is an emergency pandemic and there is no difference between this and a hurricane. In a catastrophe, we do spend the money ahead of time to take care of our town and we come back to you afterwards. There's no appropriation ahead of time. We ask for the appropriation afterwards.

Mr. Shackelford:

I don't think there is a member of the RTM saying we shouldn't be protecting our employees. We're glad that you're doing that testing and that's obviously a priority for all of us. I think Mr. Gold will say that when he speaks again, as well. What we are hearing from a lot of us is that you've told us you're going to spend this money anyway. We've got to protect our people. We're going to spend the additional \$80,000. We've already spent the other money. The town has to pay that bill one way or the other. If we end up taking this money out of the ARPA funds, what we are, in effect, doing is putting this money back into the General Fund which means we're funding something else we're not thinking about right now, talking about right now. Putting aside the \$80,000 and, even that, you've said you're going to get that money to get that testing going, it seems strange to say we've got this extra money that the Federal Government is sending our way to do big things and we're going to use it to reimburse. We're not going to create a new project. We're not going to create something we wouldn't have otherwise done. We're just going to put some more money back in the General Fund which, theoretically, might lead to something happening that wouldn't have otherwise happened but what that something is, we don't know. I hear you that you are going to go back to the Board of Finance and get the money for the testing and you are going to do the testing. I'm glad. It's similar to what we heard from Pete on the tree trimming. I think you should do that. I think I'm going to vote against this. I'm going to listen to my fellow RTM members. I'm inclined to vote no because we know we're going to spend the money. I agree with Peter. This is money that we're going to have to start spending regularly and put into the budget. We're not going to get back to the normal where we don't have money in the budget for testing or masks or anything else. At least for now, I'd rather, instead of reimbursing the General Fund for this, I'd rather see what other items that we wouldn't otherwise spend the money on.

Kristin Schneeman, district 9:

It's almost morning, I'll try to be brief. This does seem to be the most appropriate use of this money of the three pieces that we've entertained this evening so it's kind of ironic that we may get even more bogged down on it than the tree trimming. To me, it's perfectly obvious that we should approve this appropriation because it is directly COVID related expenses. Gary made an excellent point just now when he said the baseline budget this year was intended to be a non-COVID budget. These are all COVID expenditures so we did not budget for them in the current year budget if that was the explicit directive. The second thing I wanted to say is that my husband is an economist and I don't know a lot about economics but I learned time ago and it stuck with me that money is fungible. To Peter's point that the ARPA funds are a gift from grandma, it's not really true. It's money. It's money that we can use for things. The idea that we're not doing things because we got this extra money seems backwards to me. If we're funding new projects with this money, leaving aside the COVID expenses, if we're funding new projects with this money, it just means that we're doing things that we've already identified as priorities that are on the five-year capital plan, or whatever, and we can do some other things with our own money that are further down on the five-year capital plan, maybe. So, you may not all agree with the specific things that have been pulled forward, we can talk about those things as they come up but we're not losing opportunities. We're creating new opportunities. The last thing that I wanted to say was just that I think that there's an issue that threads through RTM meetings and this is one of them where one of the things we're looking for, as a body, is some accountability on the back end so after we appropriate funds for stuff, having some reporting back on a regular basis from Gary, from Pete, from the rest of the town about what actually transpired with that money... Yeah, we spent that \$100,000 on the trees. We did it over three months and here's what happened... Here's what happened with the testing and it cost \$96,000 instead of \$80,000. I do hear a persistent desire from the people in this body for what happened then after we appropriate the funds? That's a longer conversation. Thank you very much for everything you're doing.

Mr. Izzo:

Kristen, that was very well said. Thank you and I agree. We're looking at a crisis now where if our town employees are safe, we're safer. This is a good cause. I know a lot of people are having a hard time grasping the process and I think that's one of the biggest things we do at the RTM level is we analyze the process, whether we like it or don't like it or don't think it's the right way. It's not free money. It's money and we have to use it the right way. I can't reiterate enough from a public safety point how important it is that our employees are tested and safe; that our kids are safe when they go into Town Hall. We do mask up when we're in certain areas. We do set examples for our constituents and I think this sets a good example, approving this, that we do care about our town employees. Sure, you can go back to the Board of Finance and go through all that but it doesn't look good and we're going to need it anyway. So, I am going to vote 100 percent for this and I think everybody else should, as well.

Ms. Batteau:

I think that this probably is the kind of thing that we should be spending money on; however, we already have spent money on it. There is nothing emergent about this appropriation. We don't have to do it right now. There could be a case made. There was a case made for trimming the trees and the bus shelters but, in this case, it doesn't seem to me that there isn't a reason to table this for a month or so until we can get with the rest of the Long Range Planning Committee, look at the priorities they are looking at, see where this fits in and appropriate the money at that time if it seems appropriate and in context. It's not like the money is needed right now. We already spent it so we can wait a little bit and perhaps follow the procedure that we were talking about as being so important at the very beginning of the meeting.

Mr. Liccione:

I agree with Jimmy and Kristen. We have a new variant coming out. I also think a long range goal, I'm requesting from the town more accountability what the spending of COVID funds are and what our new budget will be and hopefully add in a new line of COVID testing. It's going to be with us for a long time and I do think these are urgent issues as a public safety standpoint and for the great town employees that we have working for our town. We do need testing and we need for everybody to be vaccinated. I think it's urgent. Ms. Tooker and Gary probably agree how important this is. So I am going to vote yes but to Stephen's point, we have to have more accountability and I would love a year end statement of, over the last two years, how much we spent on COVID because we keep loading on COVID expenditures. My only request is end of the year and what we are going to spend next year on COVID.

Mr. Falk:

This is the second project this evening where the town is going to fund a project anyway but suddenly grandma gave us the money so we are going to use it for that. In the last item, cutting the trees, the town should be spending the money cutting the trees but the ARPA money would be more of the money for planting the trees. This is another one. The money is spent. The money was going to be spent. I'm sorry the town made some bad decisions and didn't think that COVID was going to continue but that's what happened and this is a misspending of the ARPA funds. It's not what ARPA is for. It is for future projects. It's for the infrastructure. The town didn't want to do the tree cutting. Rather the town gave more money but needed more money. And this, the town just didn't plan ahead right and I'm sorry that it happened but, as we said, we spent the money. Everyone is going to be tested, no matter what the gentleman from district 3 thinks. We're not saying 'Don't test people.'

Mr. Mandell:

Just as a comment, the prior debate was excellent. I thought that was very productive and well done by everybody and no one got nasty. We started out the new session well. An 18-16 vote means that if one person had voted no, it would have been a tie and it wouldn't have passed. So, it really was one person who actually made the decision. As for this one, in my research of ARPA, which I was doing for the other one, this expenditure is right down the line of what ARPA is supposed to do. You are supposed

to be taking care of COVID-related issues which is exactly this. I'm not sure if we spent it prior or not spent it, that is what it is meant to do. So, I'll be supporting it.

Mr. Klinge:

I just want to ask the RTM to take a look at all the other options that are available to us before we commit this \$250,000. We can all do that in the next month. There's no urgency to fund the reserve account in our budget now, tonight. There is a lot of money out there and a lot of projects to have it spent on and I would much rather you wait and look at all the options, weigh them, prioritize them, add new ones. The last money we spend should be to put money back into the town's budget reserve. So, I would say vote no on this and look at all the opportunities.

Mr. Lowenstein:

Jack's comments were totally appropriate and I will be voting no for the same reasons Jack said.

Mr. Mall:

I agree with Matt. These are for COVID-related expenses. Trees aren't. Trees were there before the fact. They will be there after the fact but this is related to COVID. That's what these funds were meant for. I will be voting for it.

Ms. Meiers Schatz:

I have a logistical question here. If we vote no on this, are we actually going to have another chance to vote yes? Generally, when appropriations come before us, we generally get the shot for the term and then that's it for a while so I'm just wondering how this is going to work.

Mr. Conrad:

My understanding of this would be if it is rejected at this point, we could go back before the Board of Finance for another appropriation from another account. I can't weigh in on what account it is.

Ms. Meiers Schatz:

You said you could go back to the Board of Finance for another appropriation from another account so I think what you are saying is this wouldn't come back to us for ARPA funding.

Mr. Conrad:

No. If it's rejected by the RTM, it would have to go back, and I'd have to rely on Eileen Flug on this, but it would have to go back for another appropriation before the Board of Finance and say it's a separate appropriation because it was rejected. We would have to go back for \$250,000 or whatever the number is at that time and they would have to reapprove it. We would take this money from whatever account. It could be from the General Fund. They could vote to say that the original decision was correct to take it from the ARPA money or they could find another funding source. It would come back for another vote before the RTM.

Ms. Meiers Schatz:

I know it has to come back to us but could it come back to us for ARPA funding?

Mr. Conrad: That is not my call. That is the recommendation of the Board of Finance.

Point of order, Ms. Batteau:

We could table this for a date certain and simply reconsider it. So, say the Long Range Planning Committee met in January, we could table this until our February meeting and just reconsider this motion again. If Eileen's here, she could confirm that. That's certainly doable.

Mr. Wieser:

We could but if we voted this down, it is my understanding that this was a request by the Finance Director which the Board of Finance approved. I don't see any reason why the Finance Director could not come back, request it again, if we turn it down tonight. If we don't turn it down, he ends up with the funds. If he doesn't get it tonight, he could come back perhaps in a different format that would be acceptable to those who voted against it.

Ms. Batteau: Either would work.

Ms. Meiers Schatz:

So, Jeff you are saying they can come back and request to get this money through the ARPA funds.

Mr. Wieser: I believe so.

Mr. Klinge:

I can't imagine that we can't decide in February, March or April or when we get down to the second tranche when we'd have two years to decide on this \$250,000. It can always come out of ARPA when there is still money left unappropriated in the APRA funds. The clock does run on those things, \$4.2 million and a second \$4.2 million. I am sure that they can always come back from the Board of Finance with any source they want including ARPA.

Point of order, Mr. Gold:

I think what Christine Meiers Schatz was referring to has to do with ordinances. Ordinances which don't pass in a session have to start from scratch to be reintroduced. I think that is what she was referring to. This isn't an ordinance so I don't think that would apply.

Ms. Batteau:

That was what I wanted to say. We could postpone it to a date certain or a date uncertain.

Nancy Kail, district 9:

This question is for Gary. Gary, why is the timing now so important for this request. I can understand why the timing is important for the trees but, help me out, regarding this request.

Mr. Conrad:

We actually meet every week on an ARPA update because we get so much information from other towns and the COGS and the Federal Government and the Treasury. We constantly look at our forecasts. It's probably one of the things that we pay more attention to than town budgets that are departmentalized. Everything changes weekly on this. We have a new variant coming in and we're trying to figure out how much money will be spent on that. That's why we're looking at this. The whole idea of the ARPA funding is to support the town and soften the impact of it. That's what we're looking at. The idea that, the predictability of this, it's not like doing a budget for a department, like Parks and Rec. or DPW or how many roads you're going to fix. It blindsides us every day. Who knew that there was going to be another variant that was going to come up? I went down to talk to the people who were doing the testing today and as of 11 o'clock, we have 35 employees. Usually, at that time, we have 20. We are at 70 employees that we have to have tested every week and at \$90/person, this is going to continue. It's not going to stop and the whole idea is if we can pick one person who has tested positive and we can pull them out of the workforce and get them out of their department as quickly as possible and put them in quarantine. They can't come back to work. They get tested again. That's what we're doing now. That's what we're spending \$6,000/week to do this. We're not taking the chance of shutting the town down. If we have somebody in Public Works or the Police Department or the Fire Department, if someone becomes sick on a shift, that whole shift goes away.

Ms. Kail:

The resolutions we have been dealing with tonight have been fast-tracked. They're not going to go into Jack's Long Term Planning ARPA funds consideration. I'm trying to understand this particular request. It's not like you're not going to test; you're not going to spend the money. But, why was this fast-tracked? What happens if we don't fund it, if you fund it from somewhere else later on? Are we going to be spending more? Why is it so dire that we fund this tonight?

Mr. Conrad:

I would have to turn this over to the First Selectwoman. My personal opinion would be I'm not going to stop testing people. I think that's the right thing to do. That's the standard we had before when Jim Marpe was here and, hopefully, the new administration will agree with that.

Mr. Wieser:

Eileen Flug is back on and I've asked her the question: If we reject this tonight, can the Finance Director come back with a new ARPA request in February or later? Ms. Flug has said she is pretty certain there is a deadline for spending ARPA. I think that means

that Gary could initiate a new request if this is turned down to come back at us again as long as all the funds aren't spent. Is that kind of what you think is the answer to that?

Assistant Town Attorney Eileen Lavigne Flug:

I would actually defer to Gary because I haven't been involved in the ARPA funding. I don't know what the deadlines are or the thinking about the timing of requesting the funding.

Mr. Klinge:

I can update you on that. Based on the Oct. 1, first tranche of \$4.2 million must be underway by 12/31/2024. Underway. The second tranche, the second \$4.2 million, underway by 12/31/2026. So, in theory, we have until the end of 2026 to spend the last \$250,000 from our \$8.4 million grant.

Mr. Conrad:

You are actually correct on that. If you go back to March of 2021, any expenditures after that are qualified expenditures under ARPA. We do have a cutoff date of 2024. You have to make a commitment on that or spend the money. You have to have something locked in that says you are committed 100 percent to pay that, a contract or something like that. There are people who are looking at ways of getting around this, a long-term contract, we're not getting involved in that. We're looking at, we want to address the problems that we have right now. Do you want to spend the money to an ARPA project that is a number one priority, that is to cover expenses and, as I see it, testing is one of the biggest things out here. That's what we have on the table. A lot of the things we are looking at benefit the town in multiple ways. We don't have to use the money on a capital project to bond it or put it in the tax base. It's totally up to the Board of Finance and totally up to the RTM and the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen. This is my recommendation. I feel it's a legitimate expense. I feel it should be covered.

Mr. Gold:

First of all, let me make it absolutely abundantly clear, I think our employees are worth protecting. I think they should be kept safe. I was never, ever, suggesting otherwise. If you put the money into the General Fund, it can be spent on testing. It can be spent on postage stamps. It can be spent on whatever you want if it's in the General Fund. I'm not saying that you're going to spend it on that, Gary, but you could spend it on that. To me, yes, a dollar is a dollar and money is fungible but there is only so much money to go around and there are a lot of needs and a lot of projects but we're going to fund the testing anyway. If you come back for another appropriation out of the General Fund, we'll give you the money for that. But if you come to the General Fund for an appropriation for something else, we may not give you the money for that because we say that is an extraordinary expense which is in the six year capital plan and we're only going to fund the five year capital plan because that is all we have money for. Before we spend all this extraordinary funds that we have, let's see if we have any extraordinary expenses that we wouldn't spend for anyway and use it for the extraordinary expense instead of the ordinary expense. It's up to us to set the priorities and we're going to spend the money on the testing. It's going to be spent but let's not spend it, from Matt's

point on the trees, out of this pot of money. Let's spend it out of the proper pot of money. You've made the point, Gary, that testing is going to continue. It's not going to stop. So, what happens if we're still testing a year from now and we've already spent the \$240,000? You are going to come back to us for another appropriation for more money for more testing. Come back to us for an appropriation for testing and let's use the ARPA money for something special. That's all I'm saying.

Mr. Liccione:

To Gary's point, can we hear from the First Selectwoman on where she is on this?

Mr. Wieser:

I think we've heard some commentary from her already. I think that's probably all we need to inform us for this decision.

By roll call vote, the motion passes 21-11.

Those in favor: Mandell, Tait, Keenan, Mall, Meiers Schatz, Gertzoff, Izzo, O'Day, Bairaktaris, Colabella, Hammond, Kramer, Banks, Bram, Braunstein, Briggs, Karpf, Kail, Liccione, Schneeman, Wieser.

Those Opposed: Falk, Friedman, Gold, Lowenstein, Shaum, Klinge, Lautenberg, Batteau, Newman, Shackelford, Church.

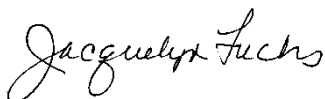
Ms. Milwe and Ms. Talmadge left before the vote.

Mr. Wieser:

Thanks to everybody. Good conversation. Welcome again to our new members and returning members. Have a wonderful holiday season and we'll see you again at upcoming committee meetings or our next RTM meeting. Thank you for your support and confidence.

The meeting adjourned at 12:04 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeffrey M. Dunkerton
Town Clerk



by Jacquelyn Fuchs

ATTENDANCE: December 7, 2021

11/16/21

DIST.	NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT	NOTIFIED MODERATOR	LATE/ LEFT EARLY
1	Matthew Mandell	X			
	Liz Milwe	X			Left 11:45 pm
	Kristin M. Purcell	X			Left 9:00 pm
	Chris Tait	X			
2	Harris Falk	X			
	Jay Keenan	X			
	Louis M. Mall	X			
	Christine Meiers Schatz	X			
3	Mark Friedman	X			
	Arline Gertzoff	X			
	Jimmy Izzo	X			
	Don O'Day	X			
4	James Bairaktaris	X			
	Andrew J. Colabella	X			
	Noah Hammond	X			
	Jeff Wieser	X			
5	Peter Gold	X			
	Karen Kramer	X			
	Richard Lowenstein	X			
	Claudia Shaum	X			
6	Candace Banks	X			
	Jessica Bram	X			
	Seth Braunstein	X			
	Cathy Talmadge	X			Left 11:45 pm
7	Brandi Briggs	X			
	Lauren Karpf	X			
	Jack Klinge	X			
	Ellen Lautenberg	X			
8	Wendy Batteau	X			
	Rachel Cohn	X			Left 10 pm
	Lisa Newman	X			
	Stephen Shackelford	X			
9	Lori Church	X			
	Nancy Kail	X			
	Sal Liccione	X			
	Kristin Schneeman	X			
Total		36	0		

Roll Call Vote: Item # 7 Bus Shelters

11/16/21

DIST.	NAME	ABSENT	YEA	NAY	ABSTAIN
1	Matthew Mandell		X		
	Liz Milwe		X		
	Kristin M. Purcell	X			
	Chris Tait		X		
2	Harris Falk		X		
	Jay Keenan		X		
	Louis M. Mall		X		
	Christine Meiers Schatz		X		
3	Mark Friedman		X		
	Arline Gertzoff		X		
	Jimmy Izzo		X		
	Don O'Day		X		
4	James Bairaktaris		X		
	Andrew J. Colabella		X		
	Noah Hammond		X		
	Jeff Wieser		X		
5	Peter Gold			X	
	Karen Kramer		X		
	Richard Lowenstein			X	
	Claudia Shaum		X		
6	Candace Banks		X		
	Jessica Bram		X		
	Seth Braunstein		X		
	Cathy Talmadge		X		
7	Brandi Briggs		X		
	Lauren Karpf		X		
	Jack Klinge		X		
	Ellen Lautenberg		X		
8	Wendy Batteau		X		
	Rachel Cohn		X		
	Lisa Newman		X		
	Stephen Shackelford		X		
9	Lori Church		X		
	Nancy Kail		X		
	Sal Liccione		X		
	Kristin Schneeman		X		
Total			33	2	

Roll Call Vote: #8 Tree Maintenance

11/16/21

DIST.	NAME	ABSENT	YEA	NAY	ABSTAIN
1	Matthew Mandell			X	
	Liz Milwe			X	
	Kristin M. Purcell	X			
	Chris Tait			X	
2	Harris Falk			X	
	Jay Keenan		X		
	Louis M. Mall			X	
	Christine Meiers Schatz		X		
3	Mark Friedman		X		
	Arline Gertzoff		X		
	Jimmy Izzo		X		
	Don O'Day		X		
4	James Bairaktaris			X	
	Andrew J. Colabella		X		
	Noah Hammond		X		
	Jeff Wieser		X		
5	Peter Gold			X	
	Karen Kramer			X	
	Richard Lowenstein			X	
	Claudia Shaum			X	
6	Candace Banks		X		
	Jessica Bram		X		
	Seth Braunstein		X		
	Cathy Talmadge			X	
7	Brandi Briggs		X		
	Lauren Karpf			X	
	Jack Klinge		X		
	Ellen Lautenberg			X	
8	Wendy Batteau			X	
	Rachel Cohn	X			
	Lisa Newman			X	
	Stephen Shackelford		X		
9	Lori Church			X	
	Nancy Kail		X		
	Sal Liccione		X		
	Kristin Schneeman		X		
Total			18	16	

Roll Call Vote: #9 COVID Reimbursement

11/16/21

DIST.	NAME	ABSENT	YEA	NAY	ABSTAIN
1	Matthew Mandell		X		
	Liz Milwe	X			
	Kristin M. Purcell	X			
	Chris Tait		X		
2	Harris Falk			X	
	Jay Keenan		X		
	Louis M. Mall		X		
	Christine Meiers Schatz		X		
3	Mark Friedman			X	
	Arline Gertzoff		X		
	Jimmy Izzo		X		
	Don O'Day		X		
4	James Bairaktaris		X		
	Andrew J. Colabella		X		
	Noah Hammond		X		
	Jeff Wieser		X		
5	Peter Gold			X	
	Karen Kramer		X		
	Richard Lowenstein			X	
	Claudia Shaum			X	
6	Candace Banks		X		
	Jessica Bram		X		
	Seth Braunstein		X		
	Cathy Talmadge	X			
7	Brandi Briggs		X		
	Lauren Karpf		X		
	Jack Klinge			X	
	Ellen Lautenberg			X	
8	Wendy Batteau			X	
	Rachel Cohn	X			
	Lisa Newman			X	
	Stephen Shackelford			X	
9	Lori Church			X	
	Nancy Kail		X		
	Sal Liccione		X		
	Kristin Schneeman		X		
Total			21	11	