**FINANCIAL TOWN MEETING**

**June 6, 2016**

**Call to Order**

Moderator John Murphy called the Annual Financial Town Meeting to order at 7:18 p.m. in the Lawn Avenue School Gymnasium, 55 Lawn Avenue, Jamestown, and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Moderator Murphy called for a moment of silence in memory of Jamestown Police Officer Ryan Bourque.

Town Council members present:

Kristine S. Trocki, President

Mary E. Meagher, Vice President

Blake A. Dickinson

Michael G. White

Thomas P. Tighe

Also in attendance:

John A. Murphy, Town Moderator

Andrew E. Nota, Town Administrator

Christina D. Collins, Finance Director

James R. Bryer, Jr., Fire Chief

Lisa W. Bryer, Town Planner

Donna J. Fogarty, Library Director

Kenneth S. Gray, Tax Assessor

Edward A. Mello, Police Chief

Fred F. Pease, Town Sergeant

Howard F. Tighe, Deputy Fire Chief

Andrew Wade, Parks and Recreation Director

Wyatt A. Brochu, Town Solicitor

Cheryl A. Fernstrom, Town Clerk

School Committee members present:

Catherine L. Kaiser, Chair

Julia Held

Sarah Baines

Bruce Whitehouse

Melissa Mastrostefano

Also in attendance:

Carol A. Blanchette, Superintendent

Jane Littlefield, Director of Finance

Lewis W. Kitts, Director of Buildings and Grounds

Carole Peterson, Melrose School Principal

Nate Edmunds, Lawn School Principal

Ken Duva, Director of Student Services

Samira Hakke, Director of Technology

**Budget Process, Meeting Procedures and Voting Overview**

Town Moderator Murphy alerted those in attendance to the location of all the exits and directed each section which exit to use in case of an emergency. Moderator Murphy explained the procedures that will be followed this evening. This is one of the larger Financial Town Meetings on record and the Board of Canvassers will give us a count of the number of voters shortly. The members and staff of the Jamestown School and the Fire Department were thanked for setting up this room for tonight’s meeting. Our objective tonight is to have a fair, open and efficient meeting. Remember the golden rule - treat others as you would like to be treated. Please be polite and respectful.

Explanation of the Financial Town Meeting format, which operates under State law, followed. Moderator Murphy stated Town Council President Kristine Trocki will speak on behalf of the general Town budget. School Committee Chair Cathy Kaiser will speak on behalf of the School Department part of the budget. All voters in this room should have a white card to be used for paper ballot voting. All guests should be seated in the cafeteria.

**Speaking at the FTM**

Moderator Murphy stated discussion and voting is limited to registered voters (those who received white cards). However, a department spokesperson who is not a voter may answer a question directed to them by the Moderator. Voters wishing to speak must use the microphone provided in the center aisle, stating their name and address. Discussion is limited to three minutes per voter, and voters should not repeat statements presented in previous voter comments.

**Voting on Motions**

Moderator Murphy explained that voting on motions is as follows: the first alternative is to have a voice vote. Voters in favor of a motion are called upon to speak (not yell) “yes.” The Moderator will then call for the voters opposed to that motion to speak (not yell) “no.” If there is no clear majority voice vote, there will be a call for raising hands or a standing vote, holding up the white card to identify you as a voter. The Board of Canvassers will assist with the counting of these votes. Voters should not move about the room while hand or standing counts are being taken. If a voter requests, and twenty percent of the registered voters present at this meeting support that request, we will have a paper ballot. This takes about an hour to complete. There will be a commentary by Council President Trocki, followed by a commentary by School Committee Chair Kaiser, then a motion to adopt the budget. Our Town Charter requires that any proposal to amend the Council’s recommended budget by $10,000 or more be filed in writing 20 days in advance of this meeting. We have received two such filings to amend the budget to reduce the bike path and police department. So there can be such motions to amend the budget. Once a motion is seconded, we can proceed to vote on the motion or engage in discussion pertaining to the motion.

**Town Council President Kristine Trocki**

Moderator Murphy introduced President Trocki, who thanked Moderator Murphy and addressed the assembled voters:

**INTRODUCTION**

Good evening. I’m Kristine Trocki, President of the Jamestown Town Council. On behalf of the Town Council and the School Committee, I would like to thank you for joining us this evening. There are a lot of you here tonight. I am excited to see so many people turn out to support the community. I promise we will get to the 2 important warrant issues that I suspect most of you have come out for — the 1st that calls for a Forty Thousand Dollar ($40,000) reduction in the Bike Path and the 2nd that calls for a Six-Hundred Thousand Dollar ($600,000) reduction in the Police Department.

**FTM PROCESS**

But first…I would like to explain briefly what the FTM is all about for all of the new faces in the crowd. I am proud to be a part of tonight’s Financial Town Meeting, a tradition that dates back over 300 years. We are continuing this process tonight by outlining priorities and future needs of the Town for the next Fiscal Year, which runs from July 1st 2016 through June 30th 2017. By the end of tonight’s discussion, it is our hope that you as voters will approve both the Town and School Budgets that we believe will add services and improve the quality of life for ALL residents.

**BUDGET PROCESS**

Although all Budgets are a year-round process, the formal structure begins in the months of December and January. It is at this time, the Town Administrator, Andy Nota, lays out the process and timeline for individual Town Departments and staff to develop recommendations. These recommendations are then submitted to Andy for consideration. Andy reviews each request in light of community priorities, while balancing the Town’s most immediate needs with the financial impact on Town residents. The School follows a similar process that they will soon speak about.

In order to provide as much community input as possible, the Town Council held a total of Nine (9) Public Discussions to allow for sufficient time to discuss and review the Town Administrator’s and School Department’s budget recommendations.

Since January 1st, not including today’s FTM, we as a Council have met on more than 34 separate occasions, on Council business and other dedicated discussions on specific Town issues or services. As the weeks progressed, and more information was provided by Department Heads and the Public, the budget was continuously updated and refined by the Town Council, School Committee and the Town Administrator.

**FISCALLY SOUND**

From my perspective, we are an incredibly fortunate community. Jamestown is in great financial shape due in part to the past Council’s hard work, all the challenging, yet rewarding, work and leadership that the current Council provides, but mostly due to the ongoing hard work of our highly qualified Town Officials, as well as continued and regular participation by our citizens as evidenced here tonight.

In short,Jamestown continues to offer its residents some of the Lowest Tax Rates, Highest Quality Municipal Services, and a Spectacular Community-Based Quality of Life. In FY 2016, Jamestown was *again* able to offer its residents and taxpayers the *3rd lowest residential tax rate*, 3rd lowest commercial rate, and 4th lowest motor vehicle rate in Rhode Island which will remain fixed at $14.42 this year.

**TAX RATES**

There have been a lot of rumors, discussions, and information circulating online about the cost of government and Town services in Jamestown. I want to remind you, in 2013, the tax rate was Nine Dollars and Thirty Five cents ($9.35). This year, we propose a tax rate of Eight Dollars and Fifty Eight Cents ($8.58), which results in a Total Rate Reduction of Seventy-Seven cents ($ 0.77 cents), realized since the 2013 Fiscal Year. This is occurring during a time that our neighboring communities are proposing Municipal and School operating budget increases in the range of 2% - 4%. In the meantime, Jamestown remains financially stable not at a 1, 2, 3 or 4 percent increase, but instead we areproposing a mere .65 Tax Levy Increase this coming fiscal year for a combined Town and School budget.

Although everyone’s property values are different and some went up, some went down and some stayed the same, what this means in terms of dollars and cents to the average household here in Jamestown is that if we go with the budget as proposed, and we select a just above median average Jamestown household valued at $500,000.00 (that saw no increase or decrease in their property taxes), that household will receive approximately a One Hundred dollar ($100) reduction in their tax bill this year as opposed to last year.

**MISCELLANEOUS: BOND, OPEB, STATE FUNDING**

I am also very proud to report that we achieved a great accomplishment only a few short months ago that will have a significant impact on this budget and in the future. The Town’s Bond Rating has been upgraded from a Aa2 to a Aa1rating. This is the *highest* rating in Rhode Island and we are only the fifth community to achieve this distinction in the State. This is huge — in a community that has such a small commercial district. This Administrative achievement alone has already saved the Town approximately Six-Hundred and One Thousand Dollars ($601,000) in debt service during the remaining years of the recent refinancing of General Fund Bonds.

Another great item to report is that the Town and School have jointly entered into a program to address their respective Other Post Employment Benefit liability or better known as (OPEB). Together the School and the Town are developing an Irrevocable Trust specifically designed to address retiree benefit costs. This program will be managed by the Rhode Island Interlocal Risk Management Trust, the Town’s Insurer. This is an affordable and comprehensive way for us to manage our Liability and its Trust investments that will serve the Town and the taxpayers well in the years to come.

Other important facts are that Jamestown is expecting a Ninety Three Thousand Dollar ($93,000) increase again in both Local and State revenues. The Town’s Unassigned Reserve remains funded at a very favorable level as of June 30, 2015, with the Town and Schools combined Unassigned Fund Balance totaling $4.8 million or a significant 21.34% of the Total Town and School Budgets (another factor which helped procure our new bond rating).

For those that are new to the FTM, the budget itself consists of many, many line items and is primarily looked at in 2 parts — Operating and Capital. The Operating Budget represents the budget that includes all annual costs to manage the Town in a given year. The Capital Improvement Program in Jamestown is a short to mid-range plan (6-years) and is not in and of itself a separate budget. Instead, it is a line item within the Operating Budget of the General Fund. The Capital Program establishes a planning timeline and a corresponding funding plan and addresses Equipment Needs and Capital Infrastructure Projects (things like buildings, grounds, roads, parks, consultant services, etc.), that are generally over Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000).

**CAPITAL PROGRAM**

Over the past three years, our Capital Programhas aimed toimprove the community’s infrastructure with respect to the Town’s roads, sidewalks, drainage systems, buildings, schools, parks, fields, and Forty Getty, as well as various shoreline improvements through mostly one-time large investments.

One of the reasons we can afford such a robust Capital Program is because of the Town’s highly skilled staff which perform much of this work in-house, thus greatly reducing project cost and expanding the scope of work for many of our town projects.

This year’s Capital Program is recommended to decrease by Seventy Thousand Dollars ($70,000.00) from last year. In spite of this reduction, this year's Capital program again focuses on numerous areas of need within the community, including some of the following:

1. A continued commitment to the Pavement Management Program to improve our road network and sidewalks;
2. The second of four phases of North Road improvements, which includes expanding drainage systems and paving;
3. A continuation of Fort Getty improvements including the ongoing work at the Pavilion including landscaping and parking, the replacement of the Gatehouse structure; and the installation of new restrooms, office, and material and equipment storage area at the entrance to the park. If you haven’t already been out to see the work at Fort Getty, please take a drive out—it is beautiful.
4. Various mechanical, energy efficiency and interior improvements at the Library;
5. New roof at Fort Wetherill and completion of windows and exterior restoration;
6. Parks and Rec projects include improvements at our various sports fields; the Recreation Center entry floor way and modernization of restrooms; Replacement of a restroom at Mackerel Cove; needed interior work at the Senior Center; Enhancements to our Public Rights of Way; and the replacement of aging equipment;
7. Hopeful, expansion of the Fire Station; and
8. The acquisition of new equipment to support sidewalk cleaning, mowing and various landscape projects during the spring through fall; as well as really new *cool* versatile machines for snow removal for the walkways to the Schools and for the clearing of snow from the Business District in the winter months. These new machines will provide quicker and safer access to our downtown area, regardless of the weather.

These community priorities as proposed address our Community’s needs in a fair, thoughtful and fiscally responsible fashion. Simply put, they deserve all of our support.

**OPERATING PROGRAM**

With respect to the Operating Program, we are recommending a slight decrease in the Town’s Operating Budget of approximately Fifty Thousand Dollars Five Hundred and Twelve Dollars ($50,512) or a .49% decrease in municipal spending while maintaining the existing service levels. The School is requesting an increase in spending of Two Hundred and Sixty Nine Thousand, Four Hundred and Thirty Four Dollars ($269,434) or 2.1%, for a total operating increase of only one percent .95%.

Also in the Budget as proposed, you will see a slight cost reduction in Public Safety Services, Parks and Recreation, Debt Service and Capital Improvements with no loss or deterioration of service levels.

**PERSONNEL**

With respect to Personnel, several changes have recently occurred that will favorably impact this budget including the consolidation of two, 30 hour clerical positions in the Police Department involving the Harbor Clerk and Police Administrative Assistant, to one 37.5 hour position; the consolidation of local dispatch services to the Police Department of all Fire, EMS and Police dispatch services. The dispatch center at the Fire Station will now become the required secondary redundant center for dispatch; and we have repositioned the Fire Dispatcher and Maintenance Engineer position from the Fire Department to Public Works, and have outsourced the custodial work at the Fire Station.

Andy has also filled important town positions in the recent months. We have hired our new Parks and Recreation Director, Andy Wade, our new Building and Zoning Official, Chris Costa and our new Environmental Scientist/GIS Coordinator Jean Lambert.

**TWO WARRANTS**

 Now, what you have all been waiting for….the two warrants.

***Warrant 1 is the Bike Path Warrant – to reduce the Capital Budget by $40,000***

The Bike Path Project has been a priority of this community for more than a decade and continues to be highlighted as one of this Councils’ priority Goals and Objectives in order to add value to our community, provide safety to our children and improve connectivity for our residents. Over the years, we have put money aside for the Bike Path Project and the Project’s design and permitting phases are now complete.

However, without the State and Federal funding that previous Councils were hoping for, we are now at a point where it’s been discussed and agreed that the Town Staff can handle and are willing to take on this Project. Thus, we have budgeted Forty-Thousand Dollars ($40,000) for this coming year so, if approved, Town staff can complete the project in-house when they’re finished with the North Road Improvements, a couple years from now. Although it will take longer than many of us would like, it is prudent to budget for larger projects in this manner.

By doing so it allows for Town staff to perform the work, which in turn will reduce the Project’s overall cost *significantly*. It will also make it possible to avoid any additional Debt Service. The extra time will allow Andy and his team to search for grants and other funding partners. As the saying goes, “*Good Things Come to Those That Wait.”* Our Bike Path is in the works and is worth waiting for.

As voters, when considering this issue, the question really comes down to Do You Want safer community access for pedestrian and bicycle travel between the Village and the Northern sections of Town and a beautiful place to take the family?

If the answer is yes, then I encourage you approve the allocated Budget amount by Voting NO for this Warrant that seeks to remove it.

The next warrant is, the Police Department Warrant – requesting a reduction to reduce the Operating Budget by $600,000.

Unlike the Bike Path Project, the community has not had a chance to respond to the claims being made by some, that our Police Department is over funded, that we have too many officers, or that we should investigate and rely on other options to provide for Public Safety services here in Jamestown. The Council has hosted numerous budget hearings, special meetings regarding State Accreditation and Community Policing, and other public discussions with little, to no participation from members in the community voicing concern over these issues.

As Jamestowners when we look back at some of the major issues that have challenged our community in years past, residents in Jamestown traditionally turn out in large numbers to participate in the process, so their voices can be heard. As a Council, we have not yet experienced that level of interest regarding the financial implications of funding the Police Department.

Before I express my personal opinion about this issue, I would like to highlight several things that have occurred in recent years with respect to the Police Department that have added value to the community and saved you money. There has been a negotiated reduction in sworn Police Officers from 15 to the 14 we have today, there has been the consolidation of 2 Clerks positions to 1, as I previously mentioned, the negotiation of the last Police Contract greatly altered and decreased the Pension Benefits of our Future Officers to more closely parallel that being offered to other Town Employees and that of other Law Enforcement Members around the state. The Department was recently awarded the New England Association of Chiefs of Police – Community Policing Award - as only one of two departments in New England to receive the award in 2016. The Department is also continuing to successfully navigate the process for State Accreditation that we will hear more about in the coming months.

I imagine that there will be ongoing discussion and debate tonight on the two warrants, but first I would like to share my thoughts and I encourage my fellow councilors to chime in as well throughout tonight’s discussion.

It is my personal belief that this Warrant has the potential to decimate our Police Department and fracture our community. I do not believe there will be any true cost savings. Instead it may have the opposite result due to the Town's contractual obligations with the Police Department and could potentially lead to lawsuits. In addition, if the Warrant were to be approved, it has the likelihood of putting the Council in the extremely difficult position to being forced to remove Six Hundred Thousand Dollars ($600,000.00) elsewhere in both the Town and School budgets for 2016-2017. Right now, I cannot tell you what it is that would get chopped, but I can tell you that it has the potential to effect line items that impact everyone in this room and Island wide.

Conducting the process by this type of referendum without vetting the impacts of a *reduction* and holding public meetings for everyone to participate, learn the facts, and voice their opinions is not representative of what I know to be at the heart and soul of what makes our community so special.

Thus, the way I see it, the questions here are, Do you want police available around the clock? Do you want our officers safe on the job with backup? Do you want a fully functioning police department that is efficient in its staffing and not have to pay ridiculous amounts of overtime to cover shifts? Do you want our officers and the Town there to help out with our community events like the Fools Rules Regatta, Annual Bike Race, our Halloween Events, 4th of July Fireworks, The Lighting of the Tree, Penguin Plunge; our numerous Marathons and other Charity events?

Most importantly, if something terrible happens and you need police services, wouldn’t you rather a local Jamestown Officer show up at your door in a couple of minutes or do you want to wait for a State Trooper to arrive?

If your answer is YES to the above questions, then I encourage you to approve the allocated Budget amount by Voting NO for this Warrant that seeks to remove it.

Now Back to the Budget Overall….

I believe this proposed budget is fiscally conservative. I know the Town is fiscally sound. The Capital Improvements we’ve made in recent years, as well as the Capital Improvements we are proposing in this Budget, are not only necessary, but are designed to improve services, maintain the integrity of our buildings and infrastructures, and provide safety and quality of life to all residents. This benefits all of us, as well as our future generations to come.

Thus, the argument to decrease this Proposed Budget by Six-Hundred and Forty Thousand Dollars ($640,000), with the two proposed warrants, I believe would be detrimental to the quality of life and public safety of all Jamestown residents. I believe it would also undo the collective effort, by all of those whom we’ve entrusted, who have been deeply involved and assigned, the extraordinary task of continuously balancing the budget, day by day, line item by line item.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Town Administrator Andy Nota, Finance Director Tina Collins, Superintendent Carol Blanchette and Director of Finance Jane Littlefield, who were instrumental during the most critical months of our budget process. I really want to commend Andy Nota for his painstakingly thorough review of all of our Budgets from top to bottom with a fresh approach. This strict scrutiny allowed for outdated line items to be eliminated or re-categorized for greater transparency.

I also thank the School Committee team, led by Cathy Keiser, my fellow Town Councilors and to all of the Department Heads who carefully “sharpened their pencils” and made this Fiscal Year 2016-2017 Budget,possible for the residents and taxpayers of Jamestown.

With these efforts, the recommended, and unanimously approved by all 5 Town Councilors, Annual Town budget for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 is Ten Million Three Hundred and Seventy Three Thousand Five Hundred and Thirty Five Dollars ($10,373,535).

The recommended, and unanimously approved by all 5 Town Councilors, Jamestown School Department budget is Twelve Million Seven Hundred and Ninety Five Thousand Eight Hundred and Ninety One Dollars ($12,795,891).

The total recommended Town and School Department budget for fiscal year 2016-2017 totals, Twenty Three Million One Hundred Sixty Nine Thousand Four Hundred and Twenty Six Dollars ($23,169,426).

On behalf of the Town Council, I respectfully request your support for the Fiscal Year 2016-2017 Budget as it is presented. Thank you. (Applause)

Moderator Murphy thanked President Trocki for sharing that information.

**School Committee Chair Cathy Kaiser**

Moderator Murphy introduced Chairwoman Kaiser, who thanked Moderator Murphy and addressed the assembled voters:

Let’s get right to the nitty gritty. The bottom line. This budget calls for a 2.47% increase in the town contribution, a total of $10,975,649. Even with the increase, however, this figure is still 2.5% below the town contribution of FY2010, the year we first implemented zero-based budgeting.

This method of budgeting, by definition, produces numbers that correspond directly to needs rather than the previous year’s figures “plus-some.” Thus, the community can have confidence that the budget before you tonight represents a judicious use of taxpayer dollars.

We didn’t reach the 2.47% increase by inflating the budget with new programs and services. We reached it by holding costs down in the face of increases in transportation, tuitions, and contractual obligations.

Two years ago, the school committee voted to reduce the town contribution by paying the annual cost of retiree benefits from the school reserves. We did this because we were anticipating a year-end surplus that would offset this expense in the upcoming budget year. At the time, however, we cautioned the community that we would have to re-evaluate this strategy every budget season.

Last year, we again transferred reserve funds to pay the yearly cost of retiree benefits. Because we were able to -- and because we considered this a reasonable step on behalf of island taxpayers. But we have now reached the tipping point.

As our fiscal efficiency has increased, any potential for surplus has decreased. With the annual cost of retiree benefits now exceeding any anticipated surplus, we can no longer fully fund yearly retiree benefits from the reserves.

For the budget before you, we are still partially funding these costs from the reserves. Absent any future windfall in state aid, however, taxpayers can expect this annual cost to be shifted back to the town contribution in coming years.

But taxpayers can also expect that the school committee and administration will continue to bring you budgets that exemplify prudent cost containment practices and that preserve and support rigorous programming in our schools.

The budget before you was passed by unanimous vote of the school committee. As we ask for your approval tonight, I would like to acknowledge the invaluable guidance and leadership of Superintendent Carol Blanchette and Finance Director Jane Littlefield. And now it’s in your hands. Thank you. (Applause)

**Canvassers Count of Voters Present**

Moderator Murphy announced the Board of Canvassers report there are 570 registered voters present tonight. This is the largest attendance since 2010.

**Voting on the Budget**

Moderator Murphy entertains a motion to approve the general budget and noted the two resolutions to amend the budget.

**A motion was made by Town Council President Trocki with second by Town Council Vice President Meagher to approve the annual Town Budget for the fiscal year 2016-2017 in the amount of $10,373,535.**

Moderator Murphy stated as there were two warrants submitted he will give the people who support those warrants an opportunity to speak to those warrants and asked if anyone would like to speak on behalf of the bike path warrant.

Richard Koster of West Reach Drive stated he has concerns for the $50,000 allocated last year and $40,000 this year, and he has never seen the total cost for the project, and what is it.

President Trocki stated the estimated cost is $226,000 for the town to do the work right now unless we receive grant funding.

Mr. Koster stated we are talking about spending a quarter of a million dollars that will be fully supported by the taxpayers. Why aren’t we voting on the total cost of the project first then decide whether to spend it? His second concern is recreational uses of watershed areas in Jamestown, including bicycle and walking paths, which are prohibited, and he wonders if this should be determined before going forward with funding the $40,000 line item before we have all the answers.

Moderator Murphy asked Mr. Koster if he was moving adoption of the warrant to reduce the budget by for the bike path. Mr. Koster stated yes.

**A motion was made by Richard Koster with second by William Brennan to reduce the one line item for the shared recreational path for $40,000 and reduce it to $0.**

Moderator Murphy asked if anyone else would like to speak in favor of the motion to reduce the budget by $40,000 for the bike path.

William “Bucky” Brennan of Narragansett Avenue stated he agrees with the prior speaker. He thanked the Council and School Committee for a good solid budget. He takes umbrage with the concept there is no room for these debates and we should go to every meeting to have an open dialog. The fact that we are here in such numbers is a testament to the fact that warrants are a good democratic thing to have and good for democracy and our community. He asks Council to answer questions regarding the land where the bike path is proposed. Does it go through a conservation easement deeded by RIDEM to the Town of Jamestown in 2001 on Plat 4 Lot 86?

Town Administrator Nota stated not that he is aware of and noted this is property that is managed by the Water and Sewer Commission. Mr. Nota stated there was significant property owned by RIDOT that has been shifted to the RITBA, and this can be researched further, but it is not believed the bike path would traverse the property.

Mr. Brennan again asked if the bike path goes through Plat 4 Lot 86 in an easement granted by RIDEM to the Town of Jamestown for $157,000 back in 2001.

Mr. Nota answered that he doesn’t have a plat map in front of him and he is not familiar with the lot he is referencing.

Mr. Brennan stated he believes it does, and this is a document on file with the town in Book 392 Page 95. He calls attention to the description of areas and items that cannot be done on the easement the town accepted. Prohibited activities listed include bicycling, walking or running on the designated trails, camping, fires, littering, cutting or removing matter, collecting plants or animals, timber harvesting, soil grading or excavating, or dumping of materials. He believes we don’t have a legal right to do what we are doing without a change to that easement.

Mr. Nota asked if the property he is referring to is the Eldred playing field area.

Mr. Brennan stated no, it is on the Community Farm and Reservoir side when the highway was done. We don’t know what the ultimate cost is, we don’t have grants, and we are not hearing a clear answer, so he moves again as the gentleman before him, to strike this line item and approve the warrant.

Town Administrator Nota stated the Town Council first approved the bike path concept in 2000 and it was called the Conanicut Island Greenway Trail System. Since then every Council at every meeting has supported the furtherance of this bike path. In 2008 the Council appointed a Committee to study alternatives to safely travel from neighborhoods north of Route 138 to the village. In 2010 the Committee completed the Bike Path Design Report providing a concept across the reservoir connecting East Shore Road to North Road. Prior to that this project, in conjunction with RIDOT, was included in the TIP Program and is still in that State Program in the design phase seeking funding. The Town has not received support for funding. The evolution of the bike path project has changed significantly, and it has morphed into a hybrid of the original a plan that would traverse the Jamestown Bridge to where it is now as a connector from North Road to Eldred Avenue. In 2012 the voters approved $21,000 to develop design drawings and a wetlands application to RIDEM. That has been completed and all permitting approved, and in 2013 the Town received the permit from RIDEM going across the reservoir for the bike path.

The Council as the Water and Sewer Commission is still discussing the idea of allowing recreational use of that property. The Charter provides the Council the authority to allow recreational use as they see fit. This has been discussed at multiple meetings, and Council will continue to discuss it before the Water and Sewer Commission to use this property as they see fit. In 2015 the voters approved $50,000 to complete the design element of the bridge and the connector from the reservoir property on North Road to Eldred Avenue. The Town is contracted with PARE Corporation for an updated consulting estimate with Town staff performing the work at a cost $226,000. To outsource the project to a private contractor it is estimated the cost would triple. Town staff is trying to save a project that has been before the town for 16 years.

The Green Bond that will be before the voters in November was noted and the town may be able to tap those funds. The Town is also pursuing additional grants and alternate funding sources so the Town taxpayers will not have to totally fund the project, but we don’t know if that will be successful. That is the history of the project. The cost estimate to complete the work is $226,000. The goal of Town administration was to present to Council the amount needed to fund the project over three years so that Town staff would be available to construct the project when North Road construction is completed.

Moderator Murphy asked for a point of clarification. The permits for the project were approved by RIDEM, the agency who developed and approved the conservation easement. Mr. Nota stated yes.

Ronald Ratcliff of Ship Street stated he would like to speak in favor of the bike path warrant. He appreciates the lengthy history of the bike path. He remembers the basic question - needs vs. wants. He lives in the Shores where we are going through parking restrictions. He doesn’t know how many bikers there are in Jamestown and what percentage would use the path. He goes back to needs vs. wants. He has never seen how the plan is laid out. We are looking at a quarter of a million dollars doing the work ourselves and three quarters if we don’t, basic estimates. The question is do we need a bike path to support our lifestyle? The ProJo article this weekend stated we have a good place. Putting three quarters of a million dollars into a bike path when our roads are too narrow in the Shores and we are looking at new regulations doesn’t pass the giggle test. Before allocating more money for the project, we should have our questions answered. He strongly supports the warrant to reduce this. It goes back to the question of do we need it or do we want it. Thank you. (Applause)

Moderator Murphy asks if anyone else would like to speak on the motion to adopt the warrant.

Albert Gamble of Sampan Avenue commented when the Route 138 bypass went in it cut the Island in half. There is no reasonable safe way for children to cross from the north end to the south end of the Island on bicycles without supervision. This is not for $226,000, it is $40,000, and it is well worth it to continue the project. We have been working on it since 2000. The people have no way to cross safely from the north end to the south end. We have been working on this for 16 years. We should put it through. Thank you. (Applause)

Maureen Ryland of Columbia Lane stated she is not in favor of the warrant. As a cyclist herself, if you try to go through the marsh on a bicycle you are taking your life in your hands. She has children who would like to get a job in town but they can’t get there safely if there is no one to drive them, as it is not safe. Perhaps the other speaker has not seen people bicycling because it is not safe. If the path is built and safety improved, you would see more children and adult cyclists getting around town safely. (Applause)

Don Dauphinee of Spirketing Street stated he cycled from Heads Beach to town and thought he would take North Road, wearing a yellow shirt and helmet. He gets going and a big truck behind him stops and he can’t bail out on either side of the road and it backed up traffic on both sides. He is not in favor of the motion to amend the bike path budget. (Applause)

Bob Sutton of Rosemary Lane stated in 2008 the Council appointed a Bike Path Committee and he was chair. He would like to address two points. A lot of work went into looking at the bike path and how we could get people safely from the both the north end and the south end, to the soccer fields, the golf course, and into town. The southern part of North Road is not safe for bicycles. An example was given of a young girl bicycling on North Road on her way to school yesterday and luckily she was assisted by a police car. The land to be crossed through was purchased from RIDEM and there may or may not be an easement on it, but the Town of Jamestown owns the property. The easement may recognize uses for that property, but it is not carved in stone, and it could be easily negotiated with RIDEM, and he knows that as a former employee of that Department and has worked on bike paths in other communities. He asks the voters to vote no on this proposed budget amendment. (Applause)

Bucky Brennan of Narragansett Avenue stated he has a copy of the Easement which states what can and cannot be done and he is willing to share it. It would be nice to get it changed, but you can’t just say it can be negotiated away, that is not how it is done.

Dennis Webster of Mt. Hope Avenue stated he is in opposition to the warrant to cut the $40,000 for the shared recreational path. The primary principle in the Jamestown Comprehensive Community Plan has been to maintain the rural character of Jamestown. Part of the rural character is the ability of our children to get around on their own without their parents having to drive them. With North Road so unsafe to negotiate, they cannot do that. This is one step in the direction of giving our town’s children more freedom. We have been planning this for 16 years and it is time we took the first step. (Applause)

Robert Sutton of Rosemary Lane stated he was Chief of the Division of Planning and Development at RIDEM for 15 years and working there when this land was purchased by the Town with a grant from RIDEM. In response to the comment made, going back to negotiate with RIDEM is exactly the way it is done. (Applause)

Moderator Murphy stated as there are no more people to address this issue we can vote on it.

**Moderator Murphy called for a voice vote; all those in favor of adopting the warrant to cut the $40,000 out of the budget, vote yes. “Yes”. All those opposed to it say no. “No”. The motion fails by a majority vote in the negative. (Applause)**.

Moderator Murphy states we will go onto the Warrant related to the Police Department and asked if there is anyone who would like to move forward that warrant.

Frank Prete of Frigate Street stated after hearing many points that have been made loud and clear that $600,000 is drastic and it is almost considered brute force, and people in Jamestown don’t like brute force, he proposes reducing their Warrant to $200,000 of the Police Department’s budget. They feel the Town spends too much on policing relative to similar communities in RI with more crime per capita and larger patrol areas, and we should be able to do it for less. They have never indicated that they wanted the money to come from the Town budget or the School budget or the Fire Department or to have any dispatchers reduced. At no time do we want this removed from any other accounts. We have no personal animosities. He asks the Moderator’s guidance to move to amend the proposed Warrant.

Moderator Murphy asked if his proposal is to present a $200,000 reduction. Mr. Prete stated that is his motion.

**A motion was made by Frank Prete with a second by a voter in attendance to reduce the Police Department budget by $200,000.**

Moderator Murphy asks if there is any further discussion.

John Romano of Hammett Court stated he is in favor of the warrant to cut the Police Department budget. The Jamestown Police wrongfully arrested him in 2014 and they were mean to him because of his sexuality. He feels the Jamestown Police should have their budget cut as there are too many police officers who are doing things that are unneeded and therefore he seconded the motion.

Richard Murphy of North Main Road stated if he understands the process you can’t introduce a change of this nature, which is still above $10,000. The warrant itself has to be voted up or down, and the next time someone wants to have a motion for this type of warrant there has to be another warrant.

Moderator Murphy stated this is not specifically addressed in our Town Charter or State law. A notice has been given proposing that the Police Department budget item be reduced by $600,000. Since $200,000 is within that figure of $600,000, the proponents of that motion are in his view permitted to reduce it. That is why he allowed Mr. Prete to amend his request from $600,000 to $200,000.

John Kalooski of Seaside Drive stated he is not in favor of cutting any money from the Police Department budget. Look who is around you. Whether we are Republicans, Democrats, or Independents, we are all getting older. We need these services. I’ve called the Police on several occasions. One time he had an incident with his boat and called on his cell phone. By the time he crossed the street, the Police were there. One time he saw someone go across his property with a backpack. He never knew we had unmarked cars until that incident, and they were there right away. As we are becoming an older population we depend on them even more, and cutting the Police Department is not the answer. I commend them. And the Fire and Rescue, where else can you go where you call the Rescue and they are not there yet but the volunteers are already there to assist. To reduce the budget is not right. (Applause)

Beth Babbitt of Beacon Avenue is here with her son Jack and stated she is absolutely against reducing anything from the Police Department budget. The Police have been there for her and her son more times than she can count. Without them she doesn’t know if Jack would be here. On numerous occasions Jack was having seven or more seizures a day and she has relied on them constantly. One time her house was broken into and the Police stayed outside her house for several nights and she felt safe. We have an amazing Police Department and she doesn’t know why anyone would contemplate picking it apart and it would be very careless. (Applause)

Ray Ianetta of Maple Avenue stated he is against this Warrant and he is particularly disturbed about changing this Warrant from $600,000 to $200,000. He spoke to Mr. Prete about two weeks ago at a restaurant and asked him why he introduced this warrant and what his main objective was. Mr. Prete commented we have too many police in our department and we spend too much money. I asked him what he thought the proper number would be. His answer was one, we need a sheriff, and only a sheriff, and eventually rely on the State Police to do here what they do in Exeter. This is not Exeter, we are not a distressed community, we are a financially stable community, and other towns would be upset to have the State Police patrol Jamestown at zero expense. This is not going to happen, and it probably would cost us more money. He looked at statistics on other comparable towns’ websites and found that Little Compton has 12 police officers, Foster has 10, Hopkinton has 18, Scituate has 17, West Greenwich 12, Glocester 15, Richmond has 14, and Charlestown has 20 officers. Most of those towns have less population than Jamestown other than Glocester. Take Charlestown out with 20 policemen, there are no comparables; Jamestown is unique with 5,400 residents per the 2013 census. Jamestown’s population increases by 2,000 in summer months, and also increases by 1,500 to 2,000 per day depending on what is happening in Town in summer for our parks. Other towns do not have the number of parks or visitors we have. Factoring that in, we have less police coverage per capita than these other towns, not more. We need to reject this as it is not a reasonable request, and he will vote against it. (Applause)

Ken Froberg of North Main Road stated last year he participated in the Citizens Police Academy sponsored by the Police Department. He met all members of the department individually, worked with them, they put us through a gauntlet, and it was a great experience. The gentleman proposing the Warrant was not at the academy, as if he had been, he would not be making this motion tonight. Mr. Froberg commented he has lived here and been a first responder for 50 years, going on fire calls and rescues, and is now retired, previously working in merchandising in industry and business. If you think we live in Disneyland here in Jamestown you are wrong. A lot is going on we are not aware of. He wants to say he strongly objects to this warrant and this should not be before us tonight. (Applause)

Steven Sparhawk of Dumplings Drive stated he is in favor of a strong fire department, strong local government, and strong local police force and believes we should have at least two officers on patrol on each shift. In 2015 JPD responded to over 6,000 calls for service and handled 72 felony and 215 misdemeanor cases, as printed in the newspaper ad. Do you think the State Police would take care of all that? They would not. JPD also conducts many community oriented activities, including our Seniors, youth, reading at the schools, taking young people to concerts, sports activities, and they generally go above and beyond what other police departments do. He has heard online and in person that people want to cut the Police Department because people are afraid of getting DUI’s. This is preposterous as drunk driving is illegal, dangerous, and people die as a result. The Free Jamestown website referenced a citizen who was social and liked to go out in town to drink and didn’t agree with the DUI enforcement. Driving under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, or other intoxicant is illegal and not up for debate. We hear references to Exeter. This is not Exeter. How many kids have died on the roads of Exeter in the last five years? Growing up in East Greenwich he knew the back roads of Exeter, where the kids could drink, and he knew enough to stay sober; some of his friends did not. He has lived on this Island since 2009 and has always felt safe and has never feared the police or felt targeted. If there is an emergency he wants to have a local police officer respond in a timely manner, not the State Police. He wants an officer he knows - that is community policing. (Applause)

Stefan Gislason of Beavertail Road referenced the gentlemen who noted discrimination by the police, and that is a public issue with accountability. When he reads the Police Beat in the *Jamestown Press* it is not entirely representative of everything the Police are doing. It seems most of the arrests are for drug possession. Drugs are illegal, but society is progressing as seeing it as a victimless crime. Furthermore this is a public health issue, and every dollar spent for a punitive response is counter-productive and is not a productive way to combat drug abuse that is humane and compassionate for people who are suffering health problems.

Unknown female audience member stated she takes umbrage with what the prior speaker stated. It is not true that if someone is using drugs it is a private thing and does not affect anyone. If they are driving on the same roads as the rest of us, then it affects us. She feels the motion to amend the warrant from $600,000 to $200,000 is absurd and an attempt to barter with us. (Applause)

Moderator Murphy stated we will now take a voice vote on the amended Warrant in the amount of $200,000.

**All those in favor say yes. “Yes.” All those opposed say no. “No.” The No’s have it. (**Applause)

Moderator Murphy asked President Trocki to reiterate the motion on the General Budget.

President Trocki stated the motion as it stands was made by her and seconded by Vice President Meagher to approve the annual Town Budget for the fiscal year 2016-2017 in the amount of $10,373,535.

**Moderator Murphy asked for all those in favor of the motion vote yes. “Yes.” All those opposed vote no. (no response) The motion passes unanimously. (Applause)**

**A motion was made by President Trocki with second by audience member in attendance to approve the Jamestown School Budget in the amount of $12,795,891.**

Moderator Murphy calls for a vote on the motion.

**All those in favor please say yes. “Yes.” All those opposed say no. (no response) The motion passes unanimously.**

**A motion was made by President Trocki with second by Vice President Meagher to adopt the combined recommended Fiscal Year 2016-2017 budget for the Town and School Department for $23,169,426.**

Moderator Murphy calls for a vote on the motion.

**All those in favor vote yes. “Yes.” All those opposed vote no. “No.” (one no) Motion passes by a majority vote in the affirmative.**

Moderator Murphy entertains a motion to waive the reading of the four Resolutions.

**A motion was made from a member of the audience present and seconded by a member of the audience present to waive the reading of the four Resolutions. Moderator Murphy called for all those in favor to vote yes. “Yes.” All those opposed vote no. (no response) Motion passes unanimously.**

**Resolution Number 1 – Sewer Line Frontage Tax Rate**

Moderator Murphy entertained a motion to approve Resolution 1 – Sewer Line Frontage Tax Rate.

**A motion was made by Council President Trocki with second by Council Member White to adopt Resolution 1. There was no discussion. Moderator Murphy called all those in favor of Resolution 1 say yes; “Yes”. All those opposed say no. (no response). The motion passes unanimously.**

**Resolution Number 2 – Borrowing in Anticipation of Taxes**

Moderator Murphy entertained a motion to adopt Resolution 2 – Borrowing in Anticipation of Taxes.

**A motion was made by Council President Trocki with second by Council Member White to adopt Resolution 2. Moderator Murphy called all those in favor of Resolution 2 say yes; “Yes”. All those opposed say no; (no response). The motion passes unanimously.**

**Resolution Number 3 – Disposition of Collected Back Taxes**

Moderator Murphy entertained a motion to adopt Resolution 3 – Disposition of Collected

**A motion was made by Council President Trocki with second by a voter in attendance to approve Resolution 3. All those in favor say yes; “Yes”. All those opposed say no. (no response). The motion passes unanimously.**

**Resolution Number 4 – Setting the Tax Rate**

Moderator Murphy entertained a motion to approve Resolution Number 4 - Setting the Tax Rate.

**A motion was made by Council President Trocki with second by Council Vice President Meagher to order the assessment and collection of a tax on the ratable real estate and tangible personal property in the sum not less than $18,847,145 or not less than $8.58 nor more than $8.68 per thousand dollars of assessed value. Moderator Murphy asked all those in favor say yes; “Yes”. All those opposed say no; “No”. Resolution 4 is approved by a majority vote in the affirmative.**

**Adjournment**

Moderator Murphy calls for a vote to adjourn.

**A motion was made by a voter in attendance with second by a voter in attendance to adjourn. Moderator Murphy asks all those in favor vote yes; “Yes”. Those opposed vote no (no response). Motion to adjourn passes by unanimous vote.**

The Financial Town Meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Attest:

Cheryl A. Fernstrom, CMC, Town Clerk

Copies to: Town Council

 Town Administrator

 Finance Director

 Town Solicitors

 Town Moderator