

**DRAFT**  
TOWN OF PELHAM  
BUDGET COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023

1 **CALL TO ORDER** – Ms. Meg Bressette opened the meeting at approximately 6:35 PM.

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4 **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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7 Ms. Bressette called attendance:

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9 **PRESENT:** Chair Meg Bressette  
10 Vice Chair Greg Smith  
11 Secretary Deborah Ryan  
12 Bob Sherman  
13 Ellen Cormier  
14 Paul Grant  
15 David Silva  
16 School Board Representative David Wilkerson  
17 Selectmen Representative Alternative Charlene Takesian  
18 Recording Secretary Heidi Zagorski

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20 **ABSENT:** Garrett Abare – *excused*  
21 Phil Haberlen – *excused*  
22 Selectmen Representative Jason Croteau – *excused*

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25 **BUSINESS**

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28 **MINUTES REVIEW: October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

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31 **MOTION:** (Sherman/Silva) To place the October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Budget Committee Meeting minutes on file.  
32 **VOTE:** (7-0-2) The motion passed.

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35 **REVIEW TOWN BUDGETS**

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38 **ASSESSOR**

39 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 Selectmen approved budget is \$240,825.

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41 **TRUST FUNDS**

42 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 Selectmen approved budget is \$350.

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44 **TREASURER**

45 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and the Selectmen approved budget is \$7,000.

46

47 **CABLE**

48 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request was \$172,066 and the Selectmen approved budget is \$169,186.

49 Ms. Deborah Ryan asked if the new town meeting room would have any further needs for next year that would need to be  
50 included in this cable budget. Mr. Joe Roark said between Mr. Jim Greenwood and the Town Hall, they are paying for the  
51 technical upgrades in that room.

52  
53 **CEMETARY DEPARTMENT**

54 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and the Selectmen approved budget is \$281,002.

55  
56 Mr. Bob Sherman asked about the office administrator position. Mr. Sherman said this salary went up about 43%, \$7,436.  
57 He asked what has changed for this position that requires that amount of increase in salary. Mr. Sean Cunningham  
58 introduced himself as the Cemetery Foreman. Mr. Cunningham said the sexton's job was eliminated and they took his  
59 former position and the secretary position and moved her into an office administrator position and gave her that raise. Mr.  
60 Sherman stated he had hoped a member of the Trustees would be present.

61  
62 Mr. Cunningham said regarding the caretaker position, the part-time employees leave mid-day, and then he is left by  
63 himself on equipment which becomes a safety issue. He said that the caretaker position would provide backup. Mr.  
64 Sherman said his concern is for the office administrator and the amount in the raise. Ms. Bressette stated that they have  
65 the ability to adjust this. Ms. Bressette said this could be changed when they vote in November. She said it went from  
66 \$16.50 per hour to \$21.50 per hour which is a 33% increase.

67  
68 Ms. Bressette said there is also a line for the addition of a part-time recording secretary. Ms. Bressette compared this to  
69 the Library stating that they have a Board of Trustees, and they take their own minutes. Ms. Bressette said she would not  
70 be in favor of this addition as she felt the Trustees should take the minutes.

71  
72 Ms. Bressette discussed the part-time labor budget with Mr. Cunningham. Mr. Bressette said in the 2023 budget, the  
73 hours were listed as 29 and 12, and this year it is listed as 29 and 20, but then it states they were to take 8 hours off;  
74 however, it was increased from last year. Mr. Cunningham said he believed the 12 hours are from the winter months for  
75 snow plowing. Mr. Cunningham said it is hard to tell when storms are going to come in, so they estimated what would be  
76 needed for this and what they would need for the burials. He said they were taking the 8 hours off of the 29-hour part-  
77 time employee. Mr. Cunningham said they were looking to have three part-time positions at 20 hours each week. Ms.  
78 Bressette said this would still be more hours than what was budgeted last year even with the part-time being asked for this  
79 year, plus a full-time caretaker, adding that they will need to adjust this. Mr. Sherman suggested putting those extra hours  
80 into the overtime line in case they were needed. Ms. Bressette reminded the Board that the budget for the possible  
81 addition of a cemetery caretaker with benefits and insurance for April – December only would be \$64,271.12 and a full-  
82 year position would be \$85,528.15.

83  
84 Mr. David Silva said he believed the price per plot was very generous at \$550/plot. Mr. Cunningham said he could bring  
85 this to the Trustees to discuss. Mr. Silva said if they were to raise the price of the plots, it could help offset the costs of the  
86 need for additional hours and employees.

87  
88 **CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

89 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and Selectmen approved budget is \$11,000.

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91 **ELECTIONS**

92 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and Selectmen approved budget is \$65,868. Ms. Bressette reminded the  
93 Board that the budget increase is due to the four elections this cycle and also the need for new voting machines because  
94 the State is changing over to different ones.

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**TOWN CLERK/TAX COLLECTOR**

Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and Selectmen approved budget is \$328,289.

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and Selectmen approved budget is \$10,781.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request is \$3,178,554 and the Selectmen approved budget is \$3,137,264.

Lieutenant John Ignatowicz introduced himself from the Pelham Fire Department.

Ms. Bressette said she had a hard time with the 20% increase asked for the Deputy Chief position adding that the Selectmen did not approve it. Ms. Bressette said she compared annual reports from other towns. She said there seems to be a good range. She said there is also a New Hampshire municipal that had numbers for ranges in different towns. Ms. Bressette said Londonderry had a range of \$90,000 to about \$107,000 depending on when the person came in, where they started, and how many years of service they had. Ms. Bressette said she felt comfortable with the range provided last year, which was \$93,600 since that was from a three-quarter time position to a full-time position last year. Ms. Bressette said in all from last year's budget cycle there would be a \$51,168 increase just for that position if they were to go with the \$18,000 more that was asked for. Ms. Bressette said she could see increasing the \$93,600 by the contractual increase, which is probably 2.5% and would be \$2,340 bringing it to \$95,940.

Lieutenant Ignatowicz said they are having a difficult time filling the position and believe that the salary is part of that problem, adding that they want to make it more competitive and comparable to other communities of their size.

Ms. Ryan said within the comparisons of New Hampshire, they may want to also look at Massachusetts salaries since we are a border town. Ms. Ryan said if they look at the numbers provided to them and look at the size of towns based on population, Pelham is one of the higher salaries that is being asked for. Ms. Ryan said if they stay at the Selectmen-approved budget, they are in line with other comparable towns. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said in looking at the comparisons to other towns, you need to look at the size of the town and the size of the department. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said some of the towns pay more but they have an Assistant Chief, a Fire Chief, one or two Deputy Fire Chiefs, four Captains, and twelve Lieutenants, adding they have layers. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said in Pelham, they have four Lieutenants, a Deputy Chief, and a Chief, and the workload is the same. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said when he and the Chief are home, they are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and do not get paid for this, adding that they know it is the right thing for the community. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said there are a lot of complicated factors to it beyond the population.

Mr. Silva said you need to look at the tax base as well. Mr. Silva said some cities can afford to have multiple layers based on their tax base.

Ms. Ellen Cormier confirmed with Lieutenant Ignatowicz that the most recent candidates did not have the qualifications. Ms. Bressette asked if all internal candidates had already gone through the process who wanted to try. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said yes. Ms. Bressette said her follow-up from this is a letter that was posted on Facebook by the local union on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Ms. Bressette read the following from the letter: "Brothers and Sisters, the Town of Pelham has posted a vacancy for the position of Deputy Fire Chief. The Pelham Fire Fighters Executive Board and the Members of Local 4546 strongly believe that qualified and worthy candidates within the Pelham Fire Department could fill this vacancy and maintain that position. And maintain that that position should go to an internal candidate. As a result, we implore members from outside departments to refrain from applying for the Deputy Fire Chief position in the Town of Pelham." Ms. Bressette said it goes on to state who to contact. Ms. Bressette said as of this morning she has not seen anything from the Local 4546 saying that internal candidates have already been processed and that they would ask for external

143 candidates to now come in. Ms. Bressette said this letter is telling people from outside to not apply, how can she tell a  
144 taxpayer that they have tried everything to get a worthy candidate for \$93,600 when this letter is saying but we don't want  
145 you to apply. Ms. Bressette said she could not justify an \$18,000 increase. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said he could not speak  
146 about what candidates they may or may not have missed out on due to this letter. He said they posted the position two  
147 times within the State and another time Nationally. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said they vetted eleven candidates, and the  
148 closest qualified candidate took a position in Massachusetts for a \$200,000 per year salary. Mr. Sherman asked if local  
149 meant the State of New Hampshire or our own Pelham Firefighters. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said they had one internal  
150 candidate who was qualified for the position.

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152  
153 **HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT**

154 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request was \$2,336,633 and the Selectmen approved budget is \$2,150,070.

155  
156 Ms. Bressette asked to confirm what the cost of the salt was. Ms. Tammy Penny said the cost was \$76.90/ton. Ms.  
157 Bressette said this was not adjusted in the budget yet because it came in lower than it was adding that they will adjust this  
158 later on.

159  
160 Ms. Bressette asked Mr. Jim Hoffman from the Highway Department if they had problems with people entering. Mr.  
161 Hoffman said they have problems with people driving in and taking stuff from the piles. Mr. Hoffman said he came in the  
162 other day and there were people backed up to a stone pile driving right by a sign that states 'taking town materials is  
163 prohibited'. Mr. Hoffman said if they have the garage doors open, people walk in ignoring the signs stating that no one  
164 should be beyond a certain point. Mr. Hoffman said in the winter, they come into the salt shed and take salt. Ms. Bressette  
165 asked if there was a pile of salt that people were allowed to take. Mr. Hoffman said they put out a pile and people are  
166 allowed to take two 5-gallon buckets of sand-salt mix that is left out by the road area.

167  
168 Ms. Bressette asked if there would be a keypad or transponder to access the proposed gate. Mr. Hoffman said they could  
169 do either with a code or a button similar to a garage door opener adding that only the employees that work there would  
170 have them.

171  
172 Mr. Smith asked if they had video surveillance. Mr. Hoffman said yes.

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174 Ms. Ryan asked if Mr. Hoffman could explain the increase in the contracted snowplows and sanders. Mr. Hoffman said  
175 the increase is because they added trucks that weren't on the list. He explained that when the contractors come in, the  
176 trucks change due to breakdowns, or employees are out sick and being replaced causing a change in trucks. He said it is  
177 never the same. Ms. Ryan said this was a substantial increase. Ms. Tammy Penny said there used to be a list of vehicles  
178 that could be rented for storm use, but that changes according to the storm. Ms. Penny said they looked at some historical  
179 data of the hours per storm and the average cost per storm and budgeted in that manner, adding that it may not have been  
180 appropriately budgeted for in the past. Mr. Roark added that these are subcontracted trucks and must remain within the  
181 competitive range.

182  
183 Ms. Cormier asked if they could put a value on what goes missing each year. Mr. Hoffman said he could not say an exact  
184 amount. He added it is also a safety issue.

185  
186 Mr. Silva asked if they had video surveillance then why would you not view the videos and report the license plates? Mr.  
187 Hoffman said they do not monitor the cameras all day long. He said that they do not always know when people are  
188 entering and possibly taking items. Mr. Hoffman explained that when the building was built, the gates were supposed to  
189 be part of it, but they were taken away. Mr. Hoffman said they built the office door with the idea that there would be a  
190 gate right there behind it. Mr. Hoffman said the gates were taken off at the end because they were running out of money,

191 and he made temporary gates the best he could. Mr. Hoffman added that no one has the time to go through the cameras.

192  
193 Ms. Bressette stated that this project is in the Town Buildings Budget.

194  
195 Ms. Charlene Takesian asked if there was a fine or violation for someone who entered the property and stole an item. Mr.  
196 Roark said they do not have a specific ordinance for this, but it would be theft by unauthorized taking and trespassing.

197  
198 **PUBLIC LIBRARY**

199 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request was \$559,072.

200 Mr. Smith asked what the increase was for under the program supplies. Ms. Jennifer Greene from the Pelham Public  
201 Library said \$294 was for updated newsletter software. Ms. Greene said they have priced out of the free version with  
202 subscribers. Ms. Greene said \$450 is for 3-D printing supplies due to the popularity of the service.

203  
204 **PARKS AND RECREATION**

205 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and Selectmen approved budget is \$301,123.

206  
207 **PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

208 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 Selectmen approved budget is \$609,296.

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210 **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

211 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request was \$3,899,690 and the Selectmen approved budget is \$3,896,330.

212 Mr. Sherman asked Chief Anne Perriello about the animal shelter. Chief Perriello said the Board of Selectmen has  
213 approved ARPA funding to fund the animal shelter, adding that it has no impact on the taxpayers and will not be on the  
214 budget. Mr. Sherman suggested placing a \$1 line holder in the animal control repair line.

215  
216 Mr. Sherman asked when the last time the crossing guards received a pay raise. Chief Perriello said they received a pay  
217 raise last year to keep the rate competitive. Ms. Bressette said the increase was from \$5,670 to \$6,804 last year.

218  
219 Mr. Smith said the new union contract passed last year and asked how many years the contract was for. Chief Perriello  
220 said it is a five-year contract.

221  
222 **SENIOR CENTER**

223 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and Selectmen approved budget is \$211,030.

224 Mr. Sherman asked when the Director position would be posted and what the salary ranges would be. Mr. Roark said that  
225 would be a Board decision and they were going to publicly announce the Director's resignation at next Tuesday's meeting,  
226 and it would be a Board decision on how they want to post the position and what the salary would be posted as.

227  
228 **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

229 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and Selectmen approved budget is \$367,459. Ms. Bressette asked Mr.  
230 Brian Demers for an overview of the possible website design upgrade. Ms. Bressette said the one-time cost would be  
231 \$44,000, the civic clerk agendas and minutes would be \$9,200 and asked what the ongoing yearly cost would be for the  
232 town. Mr. Demers said it would be \$13,000 per year and would be a 5% increase annually.

233  
234 Mr. Demers said the current website is about twelve years old. Mr. Demers said he has encountered people having trouble  
235 finding specific items on the website. Mr. Demers said coming with this would be more of an ADA-compliant website.  
236 Mr. Demers said they also have the Pelham Economic Development that is on board now trying to draw businesses in, and  
237 the new website would provide a fresh face for the Town and could be a deciding factor for some. Mr. Demers reiterated  
238 the website is twelve years old and needs to be updated. He said posting to the website is very cumbersome in its current

239 form. He said it requires many steps to post an agenda or minutes. The new website would eliminate this by providing  
240 one page to post and submit. Mr. Demers said it would allow us to have more consistent agendas with the agenda module  
241 with a more systematic approach to how the agendas are built. He said it would be more of a drag-and-drop system. He  
242 said it would not be done on a Word document, it would be logging onto the website and the individual Boards could post  
243 their own agendas eliminating sending the agendas via email to be posted. Mr. Demers said there would be a workflow  
244 in the background that would automatically email specific employees. Mr. Demers said there is a four-year website  
245 redesign built into the cost. Mr. Demers said the current website only allows us to send out one citizen alert from the front  
246 page, adding that many times there are 2 or 3 but at this point in time, they have to pick and choose which alert is the most  
247 important to take top priority. He said the new website would allow as many as needed. Mr. Demers said it would give the  
248 ability to send text messages from the website. Mr. Demers said the website from the phone would also act like a mobile  
249 app so you could create a shortcut on your phone directly to the website. Ms. Bressette mentioned the search feature  
250 available for the new website to access the meeting minutes. Mr. Demers confirmed that someone could enter a certain  
251 keyword and it would do a search throughout the PDFs of minutes. He said it is difficult in its current form to locate  
252 information in the minutes and this would benefit the citizens and help the Boards and Departments.

253  
254 Mr. Grant asked what would be lost without the new website update. Mr. Demers said the website would remain status  
255 quo.

256  
257 Mr. Smith stated that the \$44,000 is the one-year cost for the initial update on the new platform and then there is a  
258 maintenance fee after that. Mr. Demers said for the website and module it is \$13,000. Mr. Demers said the \$44,000 with  
259 the \$9,200 is for the two modules together explaining that the price of the website is with the module purchased. Mr.  
260 Demers said if they decided not to purchase the module the actual cost of the website is \$47,000 adding it is a discount for  
261 the bundle.

262  
263 Mr. Silva asked Mr. Demers if he had compared CivicPlus to other website companies. Mr. Demers said that he did  
264 compare and although they were less money, they came nowhere close to the capabilities of this website.

265  
266 Mr. Sherman asked if there was any chance of negotiating a five-year contract. Mr. Demers said he could go back to the  
267 vendor and ask.

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269 **TRANSFER STATION**

270 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request was \$1,421,329 and the Selectmen approved budget is \$1,333,467.

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272 **DEBT SERVICE – INTEREST/PRINCIPAL**

273 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 debt service interest was \$52,857 and the debt service principal was \$363,170 both a decrease  
274 from last year.

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276 **HEALTH OFFICER**

277 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 Selectmen approved budget is \$69,652 which was a decrease of \$12,064 from the department  
278 request.

279  
280 **HEALTH SERVICES**

281 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and Selectmen approved budget is \$45,800.

282 Ms. Penny introduced herself as the Finance Director. Ms. Penny said she did receive a late request for a donation for  
283 next year from the Pelham Community Coalition for \$3,000. Ms. Penny said someone from this group is looking to add  
284 \$3,000 to the budget possibly at reconsideration. Ms. Penny asked if this Committee would consider adding it next week.

285 Mr. Sherman asked if the Selectmen would be able to change that figure before next week. Mr. Roark said the Selectmen  
286 have already voted for the total budget and do not think they will change it once it has been approved and gone forward to

287 the Budget Committee. Mr. Roark said it can be changed and added to by the Budget Committee or it can be done at  
288 reconsideration or deliberative session. Ms. Bressette said they do not vote on budgets until November 16<sup>th</sup> and if anyone  
289 has changes, they will do it at that point.

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291 **HUMAN SERVICES**

292 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and Selectmen approved budget is \$75,650.

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294 **TOWN INSURANCE**

295 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 budget is \$3,380,115 and added that it will increase and will be changing that once they vote  
296 in November. Ms. Penny said she heard from HealthTrust and those numbers will stand. Ms. Penny said the 4.7%  
297 increase for dental and the 10.5 % increase for medical will stand. Ms. Bressette said with those changes it would be  
298 \$3,506,107. Ms. Penny said those numbers include a worst-case scenario for property liability and workers' comp  
299 because they are on year two of a three-year contribution assurance plan so it is a not-to-exceed rate adding that the rates  
300 could be lower but would not have those numbers to around October 17<sup>th</sup>.

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302 **LEGAL**

303 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and Selectmen approved budget is \$127,500.

304  
305 **SELECTMEN**

306 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request was \$707,040 and the Selectmen approved budget is \$700,741.  
307 Mr. Sherman suggested adding the stipend back. Ms. Bressette said this would be brought up when they vote. Ms.  
308 Bressette explained the Board of Selectmen voted 4-1 to eliminate the stipend. Mr. Silva said he would like to understand  
309 why they voted in favor of deleting the stipend from the budget. Ms. Takesian said the Chairman said he felt since they  
310 were trying to keep the budget and trying to keep it as low as they could for taxpayers, he felt that the Selectmen should  
311 not receive their salary. Ms. Takesian said she voted no because she felt like the people in Pelham feel that the Selectmen  
312 should get some stipend for the work that they do. Ms. Takesian said she could not answer for the others why they voted  
313 the way they did. Mr. Silva suggested putting the stipend back, and if an individual Selectmen chose to not take it, it  
314 would get rolled into the general fund.

315  
316 **RETIREMENT**

317 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request and Selectmen approved budget is \$2,559,197.

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319 **TOWN BUILDINGS**

320 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 department request was \$1,170,394 and the Selectmen approved budget is \$924,491.  
321 Ms. Bressette explained that they provided an outlook for different projects and categorized them as critical, important, or  
322 needed. Ms. Bressette confirmed with Mr. Roark that the critical projects were going to be funded with ARPA the best  
323 that they could. Ms. Bressette said the Selectmen included the important projects in the budget and did not include the  
324 projects that are under the needed category.

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326 **TOWN CELEBRATIONS**

327 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 budget is \$24,960.

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329 **BUDGET COMMITTEE**

330 Ms. Bressette said the 2024 budget is \$1.

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333 **DISCUSSION**

334 Ms. Bressette said the Board will be voting on the budgets during the November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Budget Committee meeting.

335 Ms. Bressette said there is reconsideration in January of 2024 so if any new information comes up that affects the budgets,  
336 then they hear about that and vote on the bottom line of the budget at another time until they get to the deliberative  
337 session.

338  
339 Mr. Smith asked if you are allowed to add a new line to the budgets. Ms. Penny said you do not want to introduce a new  
340 topic because they warrant everything that is going to be discussed. Ms. Penny said you could not propose a new item, it  
341 has to stay within the same line, but you could go up or down.

342  
343 Ms. Bressette said the town and school warrant articles are due on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, then they will review those on  
344 November 9<sup>th</sup>, and vote on those on November 16<sup>th</sup>.

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347 **OLD/TABLED BUSINESS: Bylaw Review – Language related to numeric tallies RSA 32:5, V-a**

348 Ms. Bressette said Mr. Grant would pass out language that the Budget Committee members could review during the week  
349 and review changes or recommendations during the next meeting. Mr. Grant said two RSAs apply to this, and they are  
350 almost identical to each other. Mr. Grant explained that he did not change the language, he only omitted language that  
351 was not specific to Budget, and the only difference between the two RSAs is the last sentence. Mr. Sherman said he would  
352 need to include where to place it in the bylaws. Ms. Bressette confirmed with the Committee that they would table this  
353 until next week.

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356 **NEW BUSINESS**

357 Ms. Bressette said the school site walk would be at 9 a.m. on Saturday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and begin at the Pelham  
358 Memorial School followed by the Pelham Elementary School and then the Pelham High School.

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360 Ms. Bressette said she would forward the budget book by Friday, and they will be reviewing the Elementary School only  
361 the following week.

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364 **ADJOURNMENT**

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366 **MOTION:** (Sherman/Ryan) To adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:18 PM.

367 **VOTE:** (9-0-0) The motion carried.

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370 Respectively Submitted,  
371 Heidi Zagorski  
372 Recording Secretary