

WARRANT FOR 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

TO: Cynthia Holland, Constable, Town of Washington.

GREETINGS

In the name of the State of Maine, you are hereby required to notify and warn the voters of the Town of Washington, Knox County, Maine, qualified by law to vote in town affairs, to meet at the Bryant Room of the Gibbs Library, 40 Old Union Road, Washington, on Friday, March 28, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., then and there to act on Article 1 and by secret ballot on Article 2, as set out below, the polling hours therefore to be from 10:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.:

And to notify and warn said voters to meet at the Prescott Memorial School, 100 Waldoboro Road, Washington, on Saturday, March 29, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., then and there to act on Articles 3 through 40 as set out below, to wit:

Article 1: To choose a moderator by written ballot to preside at said meeting.

Town Clerk, Mary Anderson, opened town meeting before the polls were opened for the Town Election. Phil Meunier, Fire Chief, led the Pledge of Allegiance. A motion was made and seconded to nominate Matthew St. Pierre, the only nominee, as moderator who then was elected with 3 votes. The Town Clerk duly swore him into office.

Article 2: To elect all necessary town officers and school board members as are required to be elected.

As Moderator, Matthew St. Pierre read Article 2, inspected and secured the ballot box and opened the polls.

Ballot Clerks, Mildred Melgard, Mary Fernandes, Cathy Blake and Deborah RoyRoberts checked in voters. The polls were closed at 8:00p.m. by Matthew St. Pierre. Ballot Clerks Cathy Blake and Deborah RoyRoberts counted the ballots. Matthew St. Pierre adjourned the meeting until 10:00a.m. Saturday, March 29, 2025 at the Prescott Memorial School.

On Saturday, March 29, 2025, David Martucci was sworn in as Deputy Moderator. Mildred Melgard and Mary Fernandes checked 54 voters into the town meeting. Town Clerk Mary Anderson opened Town Meeting and Fire Chief Phil Meunier led the Pledge of Allegiance. The town clerk announced the results of Article 2 as follows: 236 votes cast:

Select Board/Assessor/Overseer of the Poor – 3-year term

Wesley Daniel	216
Write Ins	5
Blanks	15

School Board – 3-year term

Robert Jones	83
Rachael Morris	152
Write Ins	0
Blanks	1

Mitchell Garnett presented the Spirit of America Unsung Hero Award. The Town of Washington has been presenting this award since 2007. Hazel Kopishke was the recipient of the 2025 award.

David Martucci, moderator, went over the rules of conduct for a town meeting. One unregistered voter was in attendance.

Article 3: To elect seven citizens and two alternates to serve on the Town of Washington Budget Committee.

A motion was made and seconded to elect seven citizens and two alternates to serve on the Town of Washington Budget Committee.

David Martucci called for nominations for seven citizens and two alternates to serve on the Budget Committee. Katherine ‘Kate’ Grinnell moved to read the slate of nominees: Deborah Bocko, Wendy Carr, Jesse Casas, Sean Donaghy, Donald Grinnell, Kathleen Ocean and David Williams. Alternates

Richard Linscott and Joan Tognocci. Motion seconded all were elected unanimously.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 3 passes.

Article 4: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to appoint all necessary town officials.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Select Board to appoint all necessary town officials.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 4 passes.

Article 5: To see if the Town will vote to authorize that the Plumbing Inspector be paid from fees collected from plumbing permits; the E911 Coordinator be paid from E911 application fees; and the Driveway Entrance Coordinator be paid from driveway entrance application fees.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize that the Plumbing Inspector be paid from fees collected from plumbing permits; the E911 Coordinator be paid from E911 application fees; and the Driveway Entrance Coordinator be paid from driveway entrance application fees.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 5 passes.

Article 6: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Municipal Officers to spend an amount not to exceed 3/12 of the budgeted amount in each budgeted category of the 2025 annual budget during the period from January 1, 2026, to the date of the 2026 Annual Town Meeting.

Explanation: This article legalizes municipal expenditures made after the fiscal year ends, but before the next Annual Town Meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Municipal Officers to spend an amount not to exceed 3/12 of the budgeted amount in each budgeted category of the 2024 annual budget during the period from January 1, 2026, to the date of the 2026 Annual Town Meeting.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 6 passes.

Article 7: To see if the Town will fix a date when taxes will be due and payable, and fix a rate of interest to be charged on unpaid taxes after said date.

(Select Board and Tax Collector recommend 2025 taxes will be due and payable on October 1, 2025)

(Maximum interest rate on overdue taxes allowed by State Law for 2025: 7.5%)

A motion was made and seconded to fix a date when taxes will be due and payable by October 1, 2025 and fix an 7.5% rate of interest to be charged on unpaid taxes after said date.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 7 passes.

Article 8: To see if the Town will vote to set the interest rate to be paid by the Town on abated taxes at 4%.

Explanation: If taxes are paid and later abated, the Town must refund the abated taxes and pay interest on them. 36 MRSA, Sub. Sect. 506A calls for interest of 7.5% on abated taxes if the Town fails to set a rate. The rate set by the Town cannot be less than 3.5%.

A motion was made and seconded to set the interest rate to be paid by the Town on abated taxes at 4%.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 8 passes.

Article 9: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Municipal Officers to make a final determination regarding the closing or opening of roads to winter maintenance pursuant to 23 MRSA Section 2953.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Municipal Officers to make a final determination regarding the closing or opening of roads to winter maintenance pursuant to 23 MRSA Section 2953.

Article 10: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to sell and dispose of property acquired by tax liens, other liens, or other processes, and to issue quitclaim deeds for same. The Select Board will have full discretionary power as to property and price. Before disposing of the property, Select Board are authorized to offer the sale of the property to the former owner for back taxes, interests, and costs. If sold to anyone other than the former owner, the Select Board shall follow the special sale process required by 36 MRSA Section 943-C. All net proceeds from any auction shall be placed in the town's road reserve account.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Select Board to sell and dispose of property acquired by tax liens, other liens, or other processes, and to issue quitclaim deeds for same. The Select Board will have full discretionary power as to property and price. Before disposing of the property, Select Board are authorized to offer the sale of the property to the former owner for back taxes, interests and costs. If sold to anyone other than the former owner, the Select Board shall follow the special sale process required by 36 MRSA Section 943-C. All net proceeds from any auction shall be placed in the town's road reserve account.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 10 passes.

Article 11: To see if the Town will authorize the Select Board to appropriate money from the sale of any Town tax acquired lands to pay the costs of said sale.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Select Board to appropriate money from the sale of any Town tax acquired lands to pay the costs of said sale.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 11 passes.

Article 12: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to dispose of town-owned items with a value of \$5,000.00 or less under such terms and conditions as they deem advisable, and to place the proceeds of sale in the General Fund or Reserve Account that is appropriate.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Select Board to dispose of town-owned items with a value of \$5,000.00 or less under such terms and conditions as they deem advisable and to place the proceeds of sale in the General Fund or Reserve Account that is appropriate.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 12 passes.

Article 13: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to sell surplus equipment with expected value over \$5000.00 by sealed bid, and to place the proceeds of the sale in a General Fund or Reserve Account, as appropriate.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Select Board to sell surplus equipment with expected value over \$5,000.00 by sealed bid and to place the proceeds of the sale in a General Fund or Reserve Account as appropriate.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 13 passes.

Article 14: To see if the Town will authorize the Tax Collector to accept prepayment of taxes for the years 2025 and 2026 for taxes not yet due or assessed and for no interest to accrue.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Tax Collector to accept prepayment of taxes for the years 2025 and 2026 for taxes not yet due or assessed and for no interest to accrue.

Motin carries unanimously.

Article 14 passes.

Article 15: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Tax Collector to offer a Tax Club Payment Plan and to waive interest on taxes for those accounts that are kept current.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Tax Collector to offer a Tax Club Payment Plan and to waive interest on taxes for those accounts that are kept current.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 15 passes.

Article 16: To see if the Town will vote to authorize Municipal Officers to apply for Homeland Security and/or other grants that may come available.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize Municipal Officers to apply for Homeland Security and/or other grants that may come available.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 16 passes.

Article 17: To see if the Town will vote to spend any grant money received, not to exceed the amount of the grant, for the stated purposes of the grant only.

A motion was made and seconded to spend any grant money received, not to exceed the amount of the grant, for the stated purposed of the grant only. Janet Martucci asked if there is a listing as to where these monies would go or are there details. Kate stated that it allows us, if there are grants, that we apply for and receive that we may accept the grant money and use it for that. Janet asked if it would be dictated as to what the money is used for. Kate explained that it depends on the terms of the grant; for example, we currently have a grant that we received from MDOT that is going to allow us to do reconstruction on the large culvert on Calderwood Road. That grant is specific to that project. They would follow the terms of the grant.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 17 passes.

Article 18: To see if the Town will vote to move the 2025 overlay, plus supplemental tax assessments and less any tax abatements, into the Road Maintenance Reserve Account.

A motion was made and seconded to move the 2025 overlay, plus supplemental tax assessments and less any tax abatements, into the Road Maintenance Reserve Account.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 18 passes.

Article 19: To see if the Town will vote to move any monies remaining in the Public Safety account on December 31, 2025, to the Fire Equipment Reserve account.

A motion was made and seconded to move any monies remaining in the Public Safety account on December 31, 2025, to the Fire Equipment Reserve account.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 19 passes.

Article 20: To see if the Town will vote to move any monies remaining in the Maintenance of Town Roads account on December 31, 2025, to the Road Maintenance Equipment Reserve account, up to a limit of \$10,000.

A motion was made and seconded to move any monies remaining in the Maintenance of Town Roads account on December 31, 2025, to the Road Maintenance Equipment Reserve account, up to a limit of \$10,000.00. Jesse Casas asked why there is a limit in this article but not the previous one. Kate stated that has been the standard for the last several years because of the size of the budgets. The Road Maintenance budget is much larger so it is likely that if we have a good year, not a lot of snow storms not a lot of sand and salt needed, not a lot of road repairs there may be more than \$10,000.00 at the end of the year. In the past, the town has wanted to limit the amount going into the Road Maintenance Equipment Reserve and then any overage from that would go into the general fund overage at the end of the year. As far as the Public Safety that budget is much smaller. Phil usually does a pretty good job of making sure that we have updated as much of the equipment for the fire department as the budget allows so in the past there has typically not been anywhere near \$10,000.00 at the end of the year.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 20 passes.

Article 21: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the 2025 Snowmobile Refund to the Washington Hill & Gully Riders for the sole purpose of maintaining their snowmobile trails, to be open to the use of the public from November 15 until April 1, and to authorize the Municipal Officers to enter into an agreement with the club, under such terms and conditions as the Municipal Officers may deem advisable, for that purpose, or see what action the Town will take.

Explanation: The snowmobile registration money must be appropriated annually by the Town for whatever purpose it desires. If all or part of it is appropriated to the snowmobile club, one of the conditions of that appropriation must be that the club's trails are open to public use. Otherwise, it would be an illegal appropriation of public funds for a private group.

A motion was made and seconded to appropriate the 2025 Snowmobile Refund to the Washington Hill & Gully Riders for the sole purpose of maintaining their snowmobile trails, to be open to the use of the public from November 15 until April 1, and to authorize the Municipal Officers to enter into an agreement with the club, under such terms and conditions as the Municipal Officers may deem advisable, for that purpose, or see what action the Town will take. John Stewart asked if the snowmobile registrations can be refunded to the Snowmobile Club what about boat registrations being refunded to get us a landing on Washington Pond? Kate explained snowmobile registration funds being refunded to the Snowmobile Club is state statute. As far as boat registrations and the potential of expanding and/or changing the landing on Washington Pond or Crystal Pond is something the town needs to discuss and approve of.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 21 passes.

BREAK: The Grange sold homemade goodies and drinks. The Historical Society had a table with a display and sweat shirts for sale, Food Pantry was there to collect non-perishable items and the Lakes Association had a table top display.

Article 22: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the following General Fund revenues to be applied toward the 2025 property tax commitment, thereby decreasing the 2025 tax commitment by \$613,097.00.

Select Board and Budget Committee recommend:

Excise Tax Revenue	327,500.00
Revenue Sharing	225,997.00
Tree Growth Reimbursement	4,800.00
Building Permits	3,500.00
Mining Permits and Inspections	5,600.00
Interest on Overdue Taxes	10,000.00
Veterans Reimbursement	1,500.00
General Fund Interest	20,000.00
Other Town Fees Collected	<u>14,200.00</u>
Total	\$613,097.00

A motion was made and seconded to appropriate the following General Fund revenues to be applied toward the 2025 property tax commitment, thereby decreasing the 2025 tax commitment by \$613,097.00.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 22 passes.

Article 23: To See if the Town will vote to appropriate up to \$240,000 from 2024 Unexpended Surplus to be applied to the 2025 property tax commitment.

A motion was made and seconded to appropriate up to \$240,000 from 2024 Unexpended Surplus to be applied to the 2025 property tax commitment. John Stewart asked what is the total of unexpended surplus. Kate stated that the unexpended surplus for this year is between \$340,000.00 - \$350,000.00. We like to keep some of that in our general fund for operating expenses so we have cash flow as we get closer to the end of the year before the tax bills go out and we get income again. This is a recommendation by our auditors.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 23 passes.

Article 24: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$358,695.00 from property taxation for 2025 Knox County, Knox County Communications, and Tri-County Solid Waste Management Organization.

Note: Due to ongoing Ambulance budget discussions, Union Ambulance assessment will be voted on in June with the School budget. As of March 1, 2025, the Union Ambulance assessment is expected to be approximately \$169,160.00.

Select Board and Budget Committee recommend as advisory lines:

Knox County Tax Assessment	247,520.00
Knox County Communications	55,765.00
Tri-County Solid Waste	<u>55,410.00</u>
Total	\$358,695.00

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$358,695.00 from property taxation for 2025 Knox County, Knox County Communications and Tri-County Solid Waste Management Organization.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 24 passes.

Article 25: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$76,369.00 from property taxation for General Government Operations.

Select Board and Budget Committee recommend as advisory lines:

Administration		64,369.00
Advertising	1,000.00	
Computer Annual Fees	18,552.00	
Audit of Town Books	9,500.00	
Computer Tech Support	3,000.00	
Maine Municipal Association Dues	3,300.00	
Workshops and Training	1,500.00	
Mileage	2,000.00	
Office Equipment	6,167.00	
Office Supplies	3,200.00	
Postage	3,700.00	
Select Board Discretionary Fund	700.00	
Tax Maps	1,000.00	
Tax Billing	1,600.00	
Town Report Printing	4,000.00	
Tax Anticipation Note	1,500.00	
Money Order Fees	750.00	
Labor Compliance Consultant	1,400.00	
Computer Data Cloud Backup	<u>1,500.00</u>	
Subtotal	64,369.00	

Legal Fees		<u>12,000.00</u>
	Total	\$76,369.00

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$76,369.00 from property taxation for General Government Operations.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 25 passes.

Article 26: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$36,564.00 from property taxation for Insurance.

Select Board and Budget Committee recommend as advisory lines:

MMA Insurance Risk Pool		24,250.00
Unemployment Insurance		0.00
Worker's Compensation Premium		11,404.00
Volunteer Insurance		110.00
Firefighter Accident Insurance		<u>800.00</u>
	Total	\$36,564.00

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$36,564.00 from property taxation for Insurance. Nanne Kennedy asked who is covered through Worker's Compensation does it also cover the Fire Department? Mary Anderson stated Firefighter Accident Insurance is for our Volunteer Firefighters, Volunteer Insurance for all of the committee members and Worker's Compensation is for the employees of the Public Works and Town Office staff.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 26 passes.

Article 27: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$288,634.00 from property taxation for Salaries, Stipends, Employee Health Insurance, and Payroll Expenses.

Select Board and Budget Committee recommend as advisory lines:

Salaries and Stipends		192,132.00
Select Board (3)	25,500.00	
Secretary - Select Board	1,000.00	
Town Clerk/Tax Collector	29,355.00	
Treasurer	16,478.00	

Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector	28,378.00
Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector II	18,566.00
Registrar of Voters	1,654.00
Ballot Clerks	3,200.00
EMA Director	1,000.00
Health Officer	1,000.00
Fire Warden (2)	300.00
Fire Chief	6,500.00
Deputy Fire Chief	4,000.00
Assistant Fire Chief	2,500.00
Fire Captain	1,000.00
Firefighter Stipends	15,600.00
Secretary - Planning Board	1,000.00
Secretary – Appeals Board	400.00
Assessor’s Agent	11,875.00
Animal Control Officer	3,500.00
Code Enforcement Officer	15,000.00
Constable	150.00
Moderator of Open March Town Meeting	250.00
School Board Member Stipend (2)	1,000.00
Sexton	500.00
Custodial Services	<u>2,426.00</u>
Subtotal	192,132.00

Payroll Expenses		96,502.00
Town Portion of Employee Health Ins.	55,261.00	
FICA Payroll Expenses	30,870.00	
Town Portion of SIMPLE IRA	9,371.00	
Town Portion of ME Family Medical Leave	<u>1,000.00</u>	
Subtotal	96,502.00	
Total		\$288,634.00

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$288,634.00 from property taxation for Salaries, Stipends, Employee Health Insurance and Payroll Expenses.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 27 passes.

Article 28: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$420,774.00 from property taxation for Maintenance of Town Roads and related operations.

Select Board and Budget Committee recommend as advisory lines:

Road Maintenance Materials & Supplies	12,000.00
Plow Truck Payment (P600, payoff date 2026)	18,800.00
Truck Fuel	23,000.00
Truck Maintenance - P100	4,000.00
P200	4,000.00
P300	4,000.00
P400	2,000.00
P500	2,000.00
P600	4,000.00
Cutting Edges and Sander Chains	7,500.00
Culverts	4,000.00
Loader and Backhoe Fuel	6,500.00
Loader, Backhoe & Chipper Maintenance	7,500.00
Garage Mortgage (payoff date 2032)	12,290.00
Garage Utilities	8,000.00
Garage Maintenance	2,500.00
Road Maintenance Labor	202,584.00
Equipment Rental & Roadside Mowing	11,000.00

Screening of Winter Sand	30,000.00
Road Salt	50,000.00
E911 and Road Signs	600.00
Mining Permit State Fee	400.00
Driver OSHA & DOT Screening and Testing	600.00
Excavator Maintenance	2,000.00
Trailer Maintenance	1,500.00
Total	\$420,774.00

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$420,774.00 from property taxation for Maintenance of Town Roads and related operations.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 28 passes.

Article 29: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$200,000.00 from property taxation for the paving of Town Roads. Any monies not used from this article shall revert to the Road Maintenance Reserve Fund on Dec. 31, 2025.

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$200,000.00 from property taxation for the paving of Town Roads. Any monies not used from this article shall revert to the Road Maintenance Reserve Fund on Dec. 31, 2025. Jesse Casas asked what roads will be paved. Wesley Daniel stated Leigher Road, Nelson Ridge Road South, section of West Washington Road from Rt. 17 to the Somerville line, parking lots at the town garage, fire department and town office and putting a sidewalk in front of the library.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 29 passes.

Article 30: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$4,000.00 from property taxation for General Assistance.

Select Board and Budget Committee recommend:

General Assistance	\$4,000.00
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A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$4,000.00 from property taxation for General Assistance. Norman Casas asked if that is enough money? Kate stated it has been enough in the past. We do get reimbursement from the state at 70% of our allowable general assistance expenses. This helps keep the town cost at \$4,000.00. John Stewart asked how it is given out. Kate said the state has very strict restrictions that we follow. If someone needs assistance there is an application which is reviewed and we often will call the state to make sure we are following all of the laws and regulations. Anyone in town that feels they need help is eligible to apply, you may or may not be eligible to receive funding. Joan Tognocci stated that Penquis will help with heating oil. Mary Anderson stated that General Assistance is the last resort. Each application is looked at and may be eligible for emergency assistance. Kate also stated that other agencies that provide help are in the back of the town report. Joan asked if the Selectmen Discretionary fund could be used. Kate stated, no it can not be used for General Assistance. Janet Martucci asked if we went over what would we do. Mary stated at the end of the year we would go to Special Town Meeting if any line went over.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 30 passes.

Article 31: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$89,565.00 from property taxation for Public Safety.

Select Board and Budget Committee recommend as advisory lines:

Fire Department General Support	12,500.00
Fire Department Equipment	17,000.00
Firefighter Training	2,000.00
	2,500.00
	31,365.00

Firefighter Physicals	19,700.00
Fire Truck Loan Payment (payoff date 2029)	<u>4,500.00</u>
Tanker Truck Loan Payment (payoff date 2026)	Total \$89,565.00
Hose Testing	

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$89,565.00 from property taxation for Public Safety.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 31 passes.

Article 32: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$10,000.00 from property taxation for an Operating Contingency Fund. Any monies not used from this article shall revert to the General Fund on Dec. 31, 2025.

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$10,000.00 from property taxation for an Operating Contingency Fund. Any monies not used from this article shall revert to the General Fund on Dec. 31, 2025. Kate stated that this is a new article and fund as of this year. It is something that was recommended to the town by our auditors. It will essentially allow us, as Janet was just asking, if there is a category that we go over budget we will be able to move the money from the Contingency Fund into that line item or budget category without having to go to Special Town Meeting. Special Town Meetings have an associated cost with them and this is not a reserve fund it's something that if we do not use the money, it goes back to the General Fund at the end of the year and becomes part of the 2025 unexpended surplus. Once we fund it once as long as we keep it it's just a rolling \$10,000.00 unless something happens where we have a budget category that goes over unexpectedly. Nanne Kennedy asked if this money will only be used for existing categories. Kate stated that yes, it will only be used for categories that exist.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 32 passes.

Article 33: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$62,610.00 from property taxation for Utilities and Building Maintenance.

Select Board and Budget Committee recommend as advisory lines:

Town Utilities	19,500.00
Building Maintenance	11,000.00
Cemetery Maintenance	21,150.00
Grounds & Monument Garden Maintenance	1,300.00
Street Lights	3,500.00
Municipal Complex Snow Removal	<u>6,160.00</u>
Total	\$62,610.00

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$62,610.00 from property taxation for Utilities and Building Maintenance.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 33 passes.

Article 34: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$1,600.00 from property taxation for Boards and Committees.

Select Board and Budget Committee recommend as advisory lines:

Conservation & Parks Committee	200.00
Planning Board Expenses	200.00
Comprehensive Plan and Ordinance Review Committee	<u>1,200.00</u>
Total	\$1,600.00

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$1,600.00 from property taxation for Boards and Committees.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 34 passes.

Article 35: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$89,500.00 from property taxation for Town Carry-Over Accounts.

Select Board recommend \$89,500.00 with advisory lines as listed below.

Budget Committee recommend \$69,500.00 with Revaluation Fund appropriation of \$20,000.00.

Headstone Restoration Fund	1,000.00
Town Record Preservation Fund	3,000.00
Recreation Committee	2,000.00
Trail Committee	1,000.00
Fire Truck Replacement Fund	20,000.00
Road Maintenance Truck Fund	20,000.00
Revaluation Fund	40,000.00
Fire Department Air Pack Replacement Fund	<u>2,500.00</u>
Total	\$89,500.00

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$89,500.00 (recommended by Select Board) from property taxation for Town Carry-Over Accounts. Donald Grinnell, Budget Committee Chair stated this is the only article that the Budget Committee and Select Board did not come to a consensus. Don made a motion to amend the article based on the vote of the Budget Committee to \$69,500.00. The Budget Committee recommend a different number for the Revaluation Fund. Motion was seconded to lower the amount to \$69,500.00 by changing the revaluation fund from \$40,000.00 to \$20,000.00.

Dave asked for discussion on the amendment: Tom Johnston asked the Budget Committee to explain the reduction in the revaluation fund. Don stated that we voted over the last two years to start a fund for a full revaluation for the town. The Budget Committee did not vote unanimously on this. We do not know what the revaluation is going to cost. There are too many unknowns to add an additional \$20,000.00. The Committee asked the Select Board to go out for a Request for Proposal (RFP) to get an idea of the cost, even if it's not done until 2028. Why pay for it now, save \$20,000.00 on your property taxes this year.

Peg Hobbs stated she saw, in the paper, that the town was looking for an assessor. Do you have an idea what that would cost? Kate stated we are staying with our current assessor however; we do have an RFP out to the public for revaluation services. Our assessor has indicated that she will be giving a bid on that but we wanted to make sure that we were getting bids from a variety of sources if that is available. It is currently an active RFP. We are asking for proposals to be submitted to the town office by 4/22/2025. We will be looking at having the revaluation be effective as of 4/1/2028 which would be a multi-year process. As far as cost, the Town of Washington has never had a revaluation done. Damariscotta is looking to have their town revalued during a similar time line as ours. They recently made their selection and their cost is (300 more properties and more commercial properties than Washington) \$240,000.00. We currently have \$40,000.00 plus interest in our fund for this. The reason the Select Board is requesting \$40,000.00 this year to be appropriated to the revaluation fund is so that once that RFP comes in and we make a decision we don't have to, next year, either ask for as much money or we don't have to take out a loan for as much money.

Jesse Casas, Budget Committee reiterated that this is the only place where the Committee and Select Board differed and it was not everyone on the Committee but was a majority. The Budget Committee and Select Board do a really good job looking at every line in the budget. The revaluation is going to happen, just how are we going to finance it. As a citizen, we should appropriate \$20,000.00 less from the tax payer. Property taxes are a problem even in our small town which are reasonable compared to other towns. Anything that we can 'kick the can down the road' until next year I'm in favor of. This is the only thing, in this budget, we can 'kick the can down the road'. With all the respect to the Select Board this is the only item we disagree on.

Todd Bennett asked if this cost of the revaluation is something that we will have to appropriate money for several upcoming years? There is an estimate that it could cost \$200,000.00. Todd does not want to take out a loan at all. If we have money, he'd like to set it aside. If we don't know how much it will cost, yes let's 'kick the can' if we have an idea of the cost, we should start paying for it.

John Stewart said our taxes went up last year. Kate stated that our Assessor essentially did a market adjustment. She didn't change any property data in the system. Maine State law for minimum assessing standards for property taxation which is 36 MRS section 327 states that minimum assessed ratio of comparing what the town assessment is to the states assessment of the town is must be at least 70% and can not exceed 110%. Our reimbursements from the state for everything from your Homestead and Veterans Exemptions, Tree Growth, Income Sharing is based on that %. She took us to 100% so we are getting as much of a reimbursement from the state as we can get. Most people's taxes went up this year. No one enjoys that. A revaluation is a little different in that it is eyes on every single property and every structure on a property. We have never had this done. We have had multiple assessors over the years and each had their own methodology of writing property cards. A revaluation is done to make it fair so no one is paying more than their fair share of taxes; it puts everyone's property on a level playing field. Typically, what research we have done as a Select Board and what we are seeing in other towns is that some taxes may go up, most will remain the same, some may go down because they have been subsidizing a greater part of the tax base than what their fair share is.

Peg suggested to amend the amendment to \$30,000.00 as a compromise between the Budget Committee and Select Board.

Dave stated there is a motion on the floor to amend the amendment from \$20,000.00 to \$30,000.00, is there a second; seconded. Right now, the discussion is whether to change the \$20,000.00 to \$30,000.00.

Joan Tognocci stated that the state mandates that the revaluation is done every ten years. This is not optional for the town as it has never been done.

Janet Martucci asked if it was kept at \$40,000.00 how much more would that add to our taxes per person? If we did lower it and it ended up being more, would we have to go to Special Town Meeting to reappropriate? What is MRSA? Dave said MRS is Maine Revised Statutes; MRSA is Maine Revised Statues Annotated. Kate stated there is approximately \$41,000.00 in the revaluation fund so this would bring it to \$81,000.00 + interest. We would not require a Special Town Meeting on that because if we do enter into a contract with a revaluation firm anything due in payments this year, typically the payments are staggered through the process; this year would be covered with what is in the fund and anything appropriated this year. Next year, depending on the quote from the revaluation firm is whether we have much larger line item or if the town votes to not have a larger line item but to take out a loan. I'm not saying we will take out a loan, there is a possibility in the future that we could pay for this rather than having a larger line-item next year. As far as cost per property owner, there are between 1500 and 1600 parcels in town (land, businesses, houses) dividing that out on average – per \$100,000.00 of value it would be just over \$2.00 if left at \$40,000.00.

Sarah Masters stated if the money is put away in an interest-bearing account the more money we put away the more interest will build seems like that would be less interest we would potentially have to pay if we took out a loan, if we need to. Kate stated, that is correct.

Don stated there is a 3rd option, we do not have to borrow the money we can wait, put out an RFP now to be completed in 2028 or put it off until 2030.

Dave clarified; we're on amendment two to change the \$20,000.00 to \$30,000.00. If you want to spend \$30,000.00 on the revaluation fund you would vote yes. If not, vote no. Amending the amendment vote (\$30,000.00). Motion fails.

We revert to the original amendment of \$20,000.00 for the revaluation fund. Motion fails.

We go back to the original proposed Article 35 for \$89,500.00 which includes \$40,000.00 for the revaluation fund. Motion passes.

Motion carries unanimously after two failed amendments.

Article 35 passes.

Article 36: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$41,841.00 from property taxation for Miscellaneous Accounts.

Select Board and Budget Committee recommend as advisory lines:

Town Miscellaneous Accounts		22,350.00
Washington Library Association	15,000.00	
Washington Community Scholarship	1,000.00	
Minnie Weaver Scholarship	1,000.00	
Washington Historical Society	2,500.00	
Washington Food Pantry	2,000.00	
Flags for Veterans' Graves & Town Parks	<u>850.00</u>	
	Subtotal	22,350.00
Social Agencies and Concerns		19,491.00
Pope Memorial Shelter	2,723.00	
Midcoast Conservancy	550.00	
New Hope Midcoast	1,275.00	
Waldo Community Action Partners	7,415.00	
Spectrum Generations	1,050.00	
Pine Tree Chapter, Red Cross	1,500.00	
Life Flight of Maine	796.00	
Penquis	3,882.00	
Garry Owens House	<u>300.00</u>	
	Subtotal	19,491.00
		Total \$41,841.00

A motion was made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$41,841.00 from property taxation for Miscellaneous Accounts.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 36 passes.

Article 37: To see if the Town will vote to authorize spending up to \$71,280.00 from the Local Roads Assistance Program (LRAP) for Capital Road Improvement.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize spending up to \$71,280.00 from the Local Roads Assistance Program (LRAP) for Capital Road Improvement.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 37 passes.

Article 38: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate all quarterly revenue funds received from Axiom for the town-owned utility, to be utilized for liability insurance. Any revenue funds remaining at the end of Dec. 31, 2025 shall be moved to a Broadband Reserve Fund.

(Note: This fund will be a Roll-Over Account to be used for catastrophic events requiring repairs to the broadband infrastructure.)

A motion was made and seconded to appropriate all quarterly revenue funds received from Axiom for the town-owned utility, to be utilized for liability insurance. Any revenue funds remaining at the end of Dec. 31, 2025 shall be moved to a Broadband Reserve Fund.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 38 passes.

Article 39: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate up to \$10,000 from the headstone restoration fund, and to raise and appropriate \$13,200 from property taxation to repair, restore, and clean the headstones of the Maple Grove Cemetery.

A motion was made and seconded to appropriate up to \$10,000.00 from the headstone restoration fund, and to raise and appropriate \$13,200.00 from property taxation to repair, restore and clean the headstones of the Maple Grove Cemetery.

Jesse Casas, Cemetery Committee Chair they have been doing an inventory of the cemeteries in town and looking at the condition of each. Maple Grove Cemetery was the first one to have work done well

over 20 years ago. It's time for more work to be done. You may have noticed the maple trees had to come down. This is about the stones, cleaning and repairing. It's a two-fold article using \$10,000.00 from the headstone restoration line that we already have and appropriating through taxation an additional \$13,200.00. We have a quote of \$23,200.00 from Stevens Memorial. The town does a wonderful job with the cemeteries and he would like to see that continue. Committee meetings open.

Don Grinnell, Cemetery Committee stated in 2001 the town looked ahead towards the bicentennial celebration in 2011. They started a 10-year process and eventually cleaned and restored all the town owned cemeteries. 25 years later so the work needs to be done again. Even if you vote to do this that does not encumber the town to continue this process. Every year, over the next 10-12 years, the committee will make their recommendation to the town to vote.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 39 passes.

Article 40: To see if the Town will vote to permanently increase the property tax levy limit established for the Town of Washington by State Law in the event that the municipal budget approved under the preceding articles will result in a tax commitment that is greater than that tax levy limit.

A motion was made and seconded to permanently increase the property tax levy limit established for the Town of Washington by State Law in the event that the municipal budget approved under the preceding articles will result in a tax commitment that is great than that tax levy limit. Jesse Casas asked that this be translated in laymen's terms.

Dave explained the state has a rule about how much money we can raise above and beyond what we raised last year. The only way to change that by a vote at a town meeting. This article says that in the event we have exceeded that limit we are going to allow ourselves to exceed that.

Norman Casas asked what the % this commitment will be over last year's commitment?

Kate said that the state has rescinded this rule, however, we found out after the warrant had gone to print. We were not able to change it. The state no longer requires this rule. This year, 1.3% increase in the municipal budget; does not count the school or ambulance.

Motion carries unanimously.

Article 40 passes.

Mitch Garnett stated we have an urgent plea for our Recreation Committee for our youth. Right now we do not have a Recreation Committee. Please get the word out. We have little league, soccer, etc. We do want to get this committee back online. If you are interested please send a letter of interest with your name and contact information to the town office.

Joan Tognacci Comprehensive Plan Committee stated that Nanne Kennedy was having a hard time getting a ride to the hospital. Joan pointed out that in the town report, Waldo County Community Action Partners will provide rides, some stipulations.

Given under our hands on this 7th day of March, 2024:

Katherine A. Grinnell
Chairperson, Select Board

Wesley F. Daniel
Select Board

Mitchell A. Garnett
Select Board

Attest:
Mary Anderson, Town Clerk