

COMMITTEE OF PRECINCT CHAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2023 7:00 p.m.
GREAT ROOM, TOWN HALL/HYBRID

7:00 p.m. Kathryn Holmes, COPC Chair, called the COPC meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

GUESTS PRESENT: Richard Serkey, TMM Precinct 2
Jerry Sirrico, TMM Precinct 3
Kevin Canty, Chair, Advisory & Finance
Lynn Barrett, Director of Finance
Al DiNardo, TMM precinct 17 - remote
John Mahoney, Select Board
Mike Babini, TMM precinct 3
Derek Brindisi, Town Manager
Maureen Renaud, TMM precinct 6 - remote
Don Williams, TMM - remote
Kelly McElreath, Town Clerk-remote

Those present participated in the Pledge of Allegiance

INTRODUCTION OF PRECINCT CHAIRS:

Precinct 1	Christine Pratt - remote
Precinct 2	Thomas Pinto
Precinct 3	Dale Webber
Precinct 4	Clare Montanari, Clerk
Precinct 5	Not present
Precinct 6	Bill Arienti - remote
Precinct 7	David Golden
Precinct 8	George McKay
Precinct 9	Kathryn Holmes, Chair
Precinct 10	Alan Costello
Precinct 11	Frank O'Brien - remote
Precinct 12	Pat Adelman
Precinct 13	Susan Wentworth - remote
Precinct 14	Kristopher Houle
Precinct 15	Wrestling Brewster
Precinct 16	Betsy Hall - remote
Precinct 17	Joe Hutchinson
Precinct 18	Alyse Bruneau - remote

7:10 p.m. Richard Serkey, TMM Precinct 2: He addressed the COPC regarding graffiti and the Bylaw provision, which was written in 2010; Mr. Sirrico and he were involved with the Bylaw which Bylaw has provisions with removing graffiti from both public and private property. A complaint is made to the Office of Community Development; with respect to public property and the DPW will remove the graffiti; with private property the OCD (Office of Community Development) notifies the property owner and a third party contractor is authorized to remove the graffiti. Mr. Serkey outlined the procedure with removing graffiti from signs. He noted a

\$5000. fund was established for removal which fund still exists. Mr. Serkey sent a description of the product that could easily remove graffiti and asked if high school students could be utilized to remove it; he noted this project might interest a service club or scout group. Mr. Serkey said he presented this to the Select Board and it will be an agenda item for the SB at a future meeting; an appointment has been made for him to appear before the School Committee on March 27. Ms. Pratt ask if the graffiti was now more than in 2010; Mr. Serkey noted the areas he has seen that has graffiti and the Town should not tolerate it, and citizens could help clean, not just the DPW. Ms. Pratt noted that at one time this work was contracted out, Father Bill's was mentioned and asked if Father Bill's was still part of the program (Father Bill's was for private property removal). Mr. Costello agreed that there is a problem with graffiti asked if the \$5000 fund existed now for private property. Mr. Serkey said for cleanup on Town's property, the OCD is notified which office notifies the DPW; Mr. Costello asked what happens now with Town property. Ms. Holmes said graffiti is on her street, the Town was called, message left and it has not been removed. Mr. Costello asked if there have been arrests made, Mr. Serkey said the Bylaw does say the perpetrator shall remain liable and the OCD is suppose to file the form with the Police. Mr. Serkey said if it happens again, the cleanup will happen again. Ms. Adelman said it was pointed out that the chemicals used to remove it might be harmful to children and asked if this is a union issue with respect to volunteers doing DPW work? Mr. Webber that the union has no objection to any help they can get, and the DPW will do the work if they are directed to do so, and if there is a disconnect it needs to be corrected. Mr. Serkey, in response to the safety of the cleaning agent, said we all use these products and it should not be an issue. Ms. Holmes noted the high school has an automotive program, wood shop, etc., that uses products. Mr. McKay said he removed graffiti from a sign which was maintained by the Mass Cultural District which is neither private or Town sponsored and asked who would be responsible for removal; Mr. Serkey said the Bylaw addresses "public", not specific to "Town", but should be reported to OCD. Ms. Pratt said the Plymouth Growth and Development Corporation funded the \$5000., asked if the PGDC continues to fund that account and asked if the funds have been utilized. Mr. Serkey said he spoke with Mr. Hartmann and he said there is about \$5000. in the account and how often it has been utilized was not asked. Ms. Barrett said she has no knowledge about the fund and will get back to the COPC; Mr. Serkey said he will contact Mr. Hartmann. Mr. Sirrico said the program was funded under Bruce Arons' department and Mr. Arons later reported that his department could no longer fund this program and Ms. Pratt and Mr. Quintal were able to get the money from the PGDC, and that money was never spent; he said when first started he personally went with Father Bill's for a day, the biggest project was on Carver Street. He note there was a problem with the seawall and the Town cleaned that; he said the money now in the fund was never used, and the Town should look for funding and ask Father Bill's again for support. Ms. Holmes added that this project should be addressed by the Select Board and added that "Make American Beautiful" group might be contacted as well. Ms. Bruneau reported that an "anti graffiti" paint is available which doesn't allow graffiti to stick and if it does it can be cleaned up easier.

7:25 p.m. Mr. Al DiNardo, TMM, precinct 17, addressed the COPC regarding 4 motions which he is proposing.

Article 8 Special Town Meeting which gives the Select Board sole authority to accept donations of land; "The SB to be authorized to accept gifts of land and easements or any other interest in land for any and all purposes on behalf of the Town without a vote of Town Meeting provided no funds need to be appropriated." He said now the Town Meeting has that authority. He said his amendment would allow the acceptance by the SB of easements of half an acre or under. He said this would be applicable to all land if it doesn't have a financial interest. Mr. Arienti noted the new Charter outlines chapter 3-13-8 there is a setup of a land acquisition committee comprised of 7 members to do this and asked if this would supersede a Bylaw; Mr. DiNardo

said this is generated from the SB, in response to them. Mr. Arienti said if this Charter passes he asked who would be the acting authority, the SB or the 7 member commission? Mr. Brewster said the SB would have the ultimate responsibility. Ms. Barrett said this is only the referring to chapter land and not a gift of land or purchase of land, so it would still be under the SB. Ms. Pratt indicated that Mr. DiNardo's motion is to add "one half acre or under".

Article 7A, Spring Town Meeting: proposed is to take \$75,000. from free cash and move it to the Town Manager's account for the purpose of Special Town Meetings. He said Town Meetings are expensive, \$10,000 to \$15,000; he said this is a statement to government that Town Meeting wants an easy access to Town Meeting; he said Town Meeting has two scheduled Town Meetings, and a Special can be called; he noted that if the Charter passes a Special can be called in January; he wants a message that Town Meeting is committed to overlooking costs; he noted a Special called last June by the SB to purchase property on Sandwich Road; he said with the issues facing the Town the Town is going to need more Special Town Meetings.

Article 7A, non-union employees: Mr. DiNardo said every year Town Meeting has to approve new policies, and this would make it so that Town Meeting no longer has charge of those policies for non-union; he noted an example with life guards given that no applications for that position at \$ 15/hour were submitted, a Town Meeting would have to be convened; the amendment would be that just the "financial" matter would have to be approved by the Advisory & Finance Committee.

Article 3 - Revolving Accounts: Mr. DiNardo noted he had a discussion with the Town Moderator and he was uncomfortable with the scope of Town Meeting; he noted at a previous A&F Meeting there was a member who didn't understand revolving accounts, which are fee based accounts, there are 20 revolving accounts which come to a total of \$2,000,000. He would like Town Meeting to instruct the Finance Committee for a detailed study and report back to Town Meeting at the next annual a review of the revolving accounts with respect to interest in money collected, he said the Financial Committee is our watchdog, he said our moderator is not sure that legal counsel wants to accept this. Ms. Holmes asked if he was going to withdraw this article or not withdraw it; Mr. DiNardo said the Chair of the Finance said that when required there will be a review of these accounts. Mr. Canty was asked for a response. Mr. Canty noted some members of the A&F are new and some questions are related to some A&F members becoming educated about this; Mr. Canty said he told Mr. DiNardo that if we could in two parts: ask Lynn in the Fall to come and do an educational talk on Revolving Funds, how they are different from Enterprise and Operating Budget; he said most of the Revolving Funds are tied to departments and Article 3 explains what the Revolving Funds are about; he noted while they are doing Budget Review next Spring they could include an explanation of the revolving funds. Mr. Canty said this would be a better way to handle this and not require Town Meeting approval. Ms. Pratt asked Mr. DiNardo if this is asking the A&F Committee to conduct an informal audit of the revolving funds and then report their findings to Town Meeting? Mr. DiNardo said this is a review of the revolving funds, not an audit; he said Town Meeting has to increase the limit every year. Ms. Pratt said she would like to better understand how a Finance Committee member can look at numbers and this would not culminate into an informal audit of the use of the funds; there is confusion. Mr. DiNardo, noted last month's meeting, and questions that were asked. Mr. DiNardo will be pulling this motion.

7:45 p.m. John Mahoney, Select Board, Article 11: Mr. Mahoney noted that on April 2014 Town Meeting voted to approve the meals tax option granted to all communities which was followed up with a home rule petition that said that the revenue that came in through 3/4 of 1% on a meal would go into a separate interest bearing account to be used to pay for principal and interest for the new Town Hall. This tax was collected from 2015 to 2018 and a 30 year note was taken out

from 2018 to 2047, there was a sunset provision which said that of July 1, 2040 it could get buried in the general fund. It was reported by Ms. Barrett that the account would grow, cover the note for the Town Hall which was 1.8 million dollars a year and there would be a surplus in the 15 to 20 million dollar range July 1, 2040 where the money would end up in the general fund and the Town would have the 15 to 20 million dollars to pay the mortgage on the Town Hall for FY 2041 to FY 2047, roughly about 12.6 million dollars, in theory leaving the Town in 2047 with a 48 million dollar surplus. He cautioned that the Town cannot allow that to happen, the Town is in a perpetual state of trying to fund infrastructure: he cited that the former DPW director last summer requested a DPW annex of 100 million dollars, School Superintendent was at a SB meeting looking for permission to apply for matching MSBA funds for Hedge, Cold Spring for potentially a single new school to replace both of those schools; he cited the issues with the Fire Station and the "tweaking" of this language would allow the Town to handle a small infrastructure project or partly a larger infrastructure project and not put all of this financial burden on the property tax.

Mr. Babini said he had a concern that the money would not be spent for anything else until Town Hall is paid, Mr. Mahoney said "no". Mr. Babini asked that if each year the money set aside for the Town Hall would be paid before the other projects received funding for that year. Mr. Babini said that is what he understood is the intent, but that intent is not written anywhere. Mr. Mahoney said that concern was raised by another Town Meeting member; Mr. Mahoney noted that the Town doesn't want to take funding from one project to pay another; example given was excise tax not going to "roads" which was noted in 2017. He said they would do their best to ensure that the money is not rated for other uses, language has been included for the three biggest needs for infrastructure and it is Ms. Barrett's intention is to go to the SB and codify in our fiscal policies exactly what should happen to this fund. Ms. Holmes asked if the Town Hall would be paid off first: Mr. Mahoney said there are three mortgages for the Town Hall, one expires in FY2045, second one expires FY2046 and third in FY2047 which add up to 1.8 million dollars; Mr. Mahoney said the current revenue is coming in at the 1.9 to 2 million range, you need to leave it alone, but you also want to build up a "delta" and also build up a reserve in the fund, you want to have in the fund at least a 1.8 million dollar cushion; he said on top of that you want to build a delta, in the spreadsheet there is a 3.5% a year, so in 5-10 years you will approach 3 million dollars and you might want to use 60-80% of that delta which would pay for a new fire station, etc. Mr. Houle asked about the term "infrastructure" but the language in the booklet says "facility improvements" and asked for clarification. Mr. Mahoney said "infrastructure" is potential support of the DPW, public safety, police station and schools. Mr. Mahoney said he would not want it to go to roads because we already have a road tax. Mr. Houle said clarification should be made in the amendment, so it is clear what is meant by the term "facilities". Ms. Holmes said that clarification could be put in the "motions".

8:00 p.m. Town Manager and Director of Finance - Budget: Mr. Brindisi reviewed the 2024 budget. Mr. Brindisi noted this budget has been presented to the SB, joint meeting with Finance Committee and School Committee was held, he said his goal was to educate. Slides were shown to illustrate Mr. Brindisi's comments. The budget is \$280,000,000. Mr. Brindisi gave a detailed report on New Revenues which subtotal is \$7,384,960., excess levy capacity is used at \$2,828,127. with total at \$10,213,087 for new revenues to balance. Mr. Brindisi explained "excess levy capacity" as money stored in an account to use if you need to, and once you draw it out you need to pay on it. He noted that the Town should not use "free cash" to balance the budget. A slide was shown illustrating the increases: Town 2.04%, School 3.8%, Fixed costs 5.83%, Debt Service 3.14%, other items to be raised 1.67%, Total requests 3.80%. A slide was shown illustrating Plymouth Budget Drivers: Salaries at 50%, Fringe Benefits 25%, Expenses 16%, Departmental Equipment 0%. Regarding Sources of Funding for General Fund Budget slide shows property taxes at 77%, State Aid 13%, Local Receipts at 8%, other 2%. He noted

the vast amount of money comes from the residents. A chart showing New Growth was shown from 2003 to 2023; this past year there was 5.2 million dollars in new growth. Slide showing Excess Levy Capacity; he noted that Plymouth has a substantial amount of excess levy capacity; he said most communities raise to the full levy limit every year. He noted the Town has approximately 9.2 million dollars today in excess levy capacity. The budget being presented at Town Meeting is recommended to use 2.8, so the Town should have a balance of about 6.12 million dollars at the end of Town Meeting. He noted there is a concern for next year. The excess level capacity could vaporize; he noted that when zero level capacity occurs and a budget deficit of 1 million dollars we have to do an "over-ride". He said Plymouth has not seen an over-ride. He noted that if an over-ride is needed, Town Meeting needs to vote as do the voters; because we have excess levy capacity we don't have to do that but if we continue to trend down we will have to ask taxpayers to raise the levy limit in order to pay the bills. A slide showing home values and the increases in home values from 2013 to 2023; average increase for fiscal 2024 over previous year will be 5.27%, with average value of home at \$485,802., average tax bill at \$7,155.87, average increase in taxes at \$367. ; with respect to the State-wide average Plymouth is in the middle with respect to 2023 totals. A slide was shown showing Excess Tax Levy Effect; this year the 2 million dollar excess tax levy will equate to about \$66. for the average homeowner for the year. He noted that legally they could ask for all of the Excess Tax Levy to be used in one year (all of 9.2 million). He noted the School Department had a budget gap of \$800,000. (represents \$26. to the average tax payer). The \$66 and \$26 adds up to \$92. in addition to the average taxpayer. In summary, Mr. Brindisi noted the budget cuts on the Town's side 9 FTEs, School side lost 15 positions and buy the infusion of \$800,000. the School side was able to save another 12 positions by getting the \$800,000. infusion. All Town insurance is being put out to bid; that has not been done for some time; they are working with PEC negotiations, he said there were great conversations with the unions and compromise. Mr. Brindisi noted a number of positions were not funded because of the pandemic, under facilities and management, one of the HVAC positions was restored, some of the contracted services were cut and were used in order to restore full time positions; there is a restoration of one position in Facilities Management. They are looking to include an assistant HR Director, previously they were outsourcing. He said the Fire, Police Chiefs, Assistant Town Manager are working with the Sheriff's Department to move the 911 Dispatch Center over to the Sheriff's Department. The Town is still working with the School Department in consolidation ideas.

Ms. Adelman noted the 5.2 million dollar new growth and asked how much in services it cost the Town. Mr. Brindisi said last year's new expenses were \$10,000,000., of that 50% is for the Town's services. Mr. Brewster asked what it costs for a new house? Ms. Barrett said no specific analysis on what that growth of 5.2 is, as new growth could be additions and improvements to an existing; she noted the apartments at Oasis, condos at Pine Hills, etc. and the costs are different depending on what that growth is. Mr. Brewster said a cost benefit for households was done within the last couple of years. Ms. Holmes said conversation with the COPC last year or before concerned a lot of development in Plymouth and the cost of each child and services to the development. Mr. Canty said the 5.2 is all new growth, new residential and commercial; the average residential household consumes more services than they pay for, but not necessarily, ie retired couple moving in pay more than they consume. He noted commercial taxpayers pay for more services than they consume. Mr. Brewster noted with respect to new growth there could be a figure as to what it is costing with respect to the type of new growth: new house vs. addition to existing house. Ms. Holmes noted that Indian Brook is crowded and there was discussion about redistricting; she noted the validity in exploring the cost of services, i.e. because of the growth more fire trucks/fireman and police are required to support the new growth. Ms. Adelman asked how much of new growth is commercial? Mr. Brindisi said they can get that number; Ms. Barrett said it tends to be heavier on the residential and she noted that the apartment buildings are coded as "commercial" but really they are residential; Ms. Barrett said apartment

buildings are coded as commercial because they are not a single family home or condominium; it was not that anything over 11 units would be commercial. Mr. Costello asked how are apartment buildings assessed? Ms. Barrett said the average single family, condos, etc., all have separate codes: apartment building figures can be produced; whoever owns the apartment building would be the one who gets the tax bill; Ms. Holmes asked that this information be sent to her so she can send it out. Mr. Costello noted there are 3 in the Human Resources department in the Town side; there are two HR departments, one for the Town and one for the schools; he asked what is the employee ratio on the Town side to the staff? Mr. Brindisi said there are 600 employees on the Town side; Ms. Barrett said on the School side they probably have an HR department that is twice the size, employees are probably three times the size of the Town. She noted that the Town handles all retirees for health insurance for both Town and School. Mr. Costello noted that excess tax levy raised is more than what was needed; Ms. Barrett said the levy limit is the property tax revenue that can grow every year, it can only increase by 2.5% and it can increase in addition to that by your new growth. She noted usually the budget proposed needs more than what is available with the new revenues so the Town draws from the excess levy capacity. The excess tax levy is 9.2 million, they are projecting to use 2.8 million which will reduce it down to 6.4. Ms. Barrett said the Town can go up to our levy limit, but the Town has not so the difference between what is actually taxed and what the limit is, that is the excess (Ms. Barrett compared it to a credit card). Mr. Costello asked who contributed to that money, Ms. Barrett said it is like a line of credit. It was noted that it keeps the tax rate down. Mr. Pinto noted that when the Town taps into the levy it will be down to 6.4. Ms. Barrett said they are projecting 3 million in new growth, and using what the Town has in excess levy capacity, if the new growth comes in greater than 3 million, that 6.4 will increase. Ms. Barrett said new growth is declining, there is a decrease in licensing, the new growth is calculated by using the previous year's tax rate.

Mr. Brewster asked with all the new development, what has been done to our taxes and tax rate; he noted the taxpayers are saying with all the new development shouldn't our taxes go down. Ms. Barrett said development is contributing to the value in the new growth, more revenue coming in from that development but it doesn't equate to a decrease in your tax bill. Mr. Brewster said people are asking when they will start seeing benefits from this new growth; concern of the citizens is that we are developing too fast. Ms. Barrett said the tax bill gets raised by the amount of money the Town needs to raise to cover the budget. Mr. McKay thanked Mr. Brindisi by making the increase a 2% but we should be looking at a 2.5%; Mr. Brindisi said under prop 2 1/2 the Town is allowed to raise taxes from previous year by 2.5%. Mr. McKay noted that the Town side was kept at a 2% increase but the Schools kept theirs at a 4+% increase which put the taxpayers in a difficult situation. He noted that if nothing is done next year the Town will be faced with a similar situation, and the tax bill will go up another \$360; he said he is retired, on a fixed income and can appreciate what the taxpayers are talking about. Mr. McKay asked if the Town has a plan to do things differently? Mr. Brindisi said Ms. Barrett is working on a five year plan to expenses can be projected, he noted there are fixed costs at 5.8% which are our pension obligations which went up 7% and health insurance went up by 8%, he said they have been working closely with the unions since January to try to control costs with health insurance, regarding pensions the Town is required by law to fully fund pension by 2035. He noted with the Schools, there are costs which are beyond their control: transportation is one, one of the biggest drivers had a 14% increase. He noted that the Town staff is stretched, there is a lot going on in this Town, and the answer is not going to be by cutting staff, services and demands are increasing. He noted that the SB has a 5 page plan with goals and priorities. He said the Town is not going to save money by cutting staff. Ms. Renaud said she has a child in the school system and she noted the some of the issues the teachers have, they are buying supplies, every student needs something and there is stress on the classroom. She said the schools also lost employees through attrition.

Mr. Hutchinson asked if there were any systemic corrections that can be made. Mr. Brindisi said he would focus on core municipal services, the ancillary programs that are offered are a drag on the budget. Ms. Holmes asked for examples. Mr. Brindisi, as an example, asked what does the airport do for the taxpayers in this community and questioned if municipalities need to run airports; this Town is subsidizing the airport. Mr. Weber said the airport is subsidized by the rate payer, that taxpayers do not support the airport. Mr. Brindisi said the Town does support the airport; Mr. Weber said the airport is 100% funded by the enterprise account, Mr. Brindisi said it is not. Mr. Brindisi said last year FY23 the cost was \$400,000. and said if he could reduce spending from one or more programs that could save the Town a million dollars, that's money he doesn't have to get from the taxpayer. Mr. Weber asked Mr. Brindisi to share with the COPC what is the percentage of the enterprise accounts today, what is funded by the user and what is funded by the general fund via the average taxpayer; he said the Water Department is 100% funded by the rate payer, solid waste is 100% funded by the rate payer and it is his understanding the airport is 100% by the rate payer. Mr. Brindisi said he will get that information to the COPC. Ms. Pratt noted that 7 to 8 years ago the Town created a Revenue Ideas Task Force which came up with about 13 suggestions for the Town to generate new revenue, within the last year or so the Town resurrected that committee with new members, and the solution for increased budget, increased expenses hits the taxpayer. She said the plan should include how the Town is going to generate new revenue and not put the burden of an increased budget on the taxpayer, one of those 13 recommendations was accepted and that was the marijuana excise tax; she said Mr. Costello increased the recommendation which was accepted by Town Meeting. Ms. Pratt said she agrees with Mr. McKay, if the Town doesn't do something different all they are going to do is hit the taxpayers next year with another \$300. increase. She asked Mr. Brindisi how creative is the Town in generating new revenue, we have a grant writer now funded and asked if there would be a report to the Town/Legislative Branch in how successful that grant writer is in bringing into the Town new grants and asked how does that accomplishment level compare with the grants that were solicited by Mr. Gould or the DPW; she said she would like to hear about some creative ideas to generate new revenue to the Town and not continue to rely on the same resources, ie. property taxes and state grants. Mr. Brindisi said a grant writer is not going to "write" us out of this problem, grants are great for capital improvements, you will not get a grant to fund fire or police departments; he noted the Town had a meeting this morning led by a grant writer who is in the process of writing a \$15,000,000. grant to help support some of the capital needs of the school department; he said the Town is looking at other sources of revenue. He said he is hearing taxes are going up but the Town doesn't want new development. Ms. Holmes said the impression that people feel is that new development is a tax loss. Mr. Brindisi said there are a lot of special interest groups and some people want development, others don't want development because they want to preserve open space, the community needs to find a balance. He said the Master Plan should give us some guidance on that. He said he wants a plan to allow for community engagement; he said they get phone calls every day.

Ms. Holmes said there is void because there is no long term strategic plan; she asked about the HR role which was requested a couple of years ago and it was cut because it was going to cost the Town over a million dollars based on the salary and benefits; she noted outsourcing was discussed and asked if this has been pursued, she noted that every company she knows now is outsourcing their HR, she asked if outsourcing can be looked at, the Town will continue to grow and creating a position lends taking on the burden of paying insurance and all benefits for that position. She asked Mr. Costello about his position of hiring technical staff: Mr. Costello said the Town was looking for 3 positions, electrician, master craftsman and a general foreman; he said there was discussion and the pandemic occurred and three years later he heard that positions were not in place which was not know to Town Meeting; he is asking if the Town still needs those positions. Mr. Brindisi, noting the excess levy, said that the Town could fund anything up

to 6.8 million dollars, but not advisable. Ms. Holmes noted a lot of this discussion comes from before he, Mr. Brindisi, was Town Manager, said there was concern on Town Meeting floor because the buildings were falling apart, and comments were heard that the Town was outsourcing and it was costing the Town more to outsource electricians, etc., that regular maintenance was not being done and Mr. Costello wanted these positions in place to hopefully prevent the building maintenance neglect that the Town had; Ms. Holmes said when the Town is asking to bring in an HR person but knowing that we have fireman with asbestos issues impacting health, that needs to be looked at first. Mr. Brindisi said the HR position was fully funded within the budget and the line items for consultants were removed in order to fund that position, and this is what was done with the HVAC position (about \$100,000. yearly was being spent to outsource HVAC) and decided it was more prudent to hire someone. Mr. Brindisi said the Town did not increase the budgets beyond what was previously planned. Mr. Brindisi said the Town needs an electrician and other craftsman but the Town has been trying to be conservative and he didn't think it prudent to come back and say the Town would like to hire for these four positions. He said Town Meeting could make a motion to use money to fund these positions. Mr. Costello asked what it cost the Town to not have those three positions filled and having to outsource. Mr. Brindisi said the HVAC was the only line item that could be funded. Mr. Costello said there was an HVAC employee prior to Covid; Mr. Brindisi said it was not funded through Covid. Ms. Barrett said the HVAC was cut along with the electrician, the foreman and the craftsman; she said the HVAC was here for 2-3 weeks. Mr. Brindisi said Nick Hill is the Director of Facilities Management; Ms. Holmes suggested inviting him to come before the COPC. Ms. Holmes noted that the costs of outsourcing given at the time was far greater than hiring. Mr. Webber said the issue at the time was in response to hiring a new management team for facilities management and he stood up at Town Meeting and proposed more "boots on the ground" instead of more managers, there were only 2 employees and today we have 3 employees but 2 managers. Mr. Webber said the HVAC employee only lasted a few weeks, the amount of money the Town paid is not comparable to what the industry is paying; he said even if the Town paid an overtime rate the Town would still be paying half the money of the prevailing wage rate that we are forced to pay outside contracts. Mr. Webber stressed that the Town needs more "boots on the ground" in all areas of public service. Ms. Holmes would like for the next COPC meeting a report from Nick Hill on the money spent on building maintenance, money paid in consultants for these fields, what we would pay to hire, and consolidation of resources with the School Department. Mr. Canty said it would not cut costs to consolidate, it would increase efficiency but not reduce the costs; he said the needs that the two entities have to do the work would not be reduced through consolidation; he said in the long term it could, he noted for efficiency it could, example, someone on the school side filling in for someone on the Town side. Ms. Holmes noted that now the Town has no electricians and if we have several on the School side we should be able to look at that. Mr. Canty said you would not reduce costs on the IT side, building maintenance you might be able to. Ms. Holmes asked Mr. Brindisi if he could give us a report if there is anywhere that we could consolidate and he agreed to do so.

Mr. Hutchinson commended Mr Brindisi on his statement about the Master Plan and working on Town priorities. Mr. Hutchinson asked about "core" services. Mr. Brindisi said "core" is Fire, Public Safety for municipal services, managing an airport is not a "core" especially when the taxpayers are subsidizing it. He said we have museums we manage and the Town should not be in the business of managing museums, that historians do a much better job of doing that. He said he would like to do an analysis across the spectrum of what is happening in Town government and come back with recommendations for the SB, some for cost savings, some for efficiency purposes. Core services include the Finance Department, Collectors, Procurement, Public Works, Public Health, etc. Mr. Webber said we really need to look at consolidation and invite Mr. Hill to come before the COPC; he said on the School side there is one carpenter, two electricians, two HVAC and a plumber and they are understaffed on the School side and the

Town is grossly understaffed on the Town's side. He said every department in this Town is understaffed, Police, Fire, DPW, School Services all are understaffed and all are having a terrible time in recruitment and retention. He said some schools have state of the art technology but also there are old schools that have antiquated technology. Ms. Holmes said there really are no resources to fix the problems, we should have a manager hired to manage all of the facilities employees: that would be consolidation, not several managers managing a small amount of employees.

Mr. Golden, noting the Charter forum which was held earlier this week, said that Ms. Barrett informed the public that if the Charter passes the Town would need another 1.4 million dollars to implement what is needed for the Town to comply, which is 8.5 full time equivalents and asked Mr. Brindisi what does that do to this budget. Mr. Brindisi, if Charter passes, said he, Ms. Barrett, Mr. Hartmann reviewed the proposed Charter and 1.4 million is a one time cost, and there is another \$700,000-\$800,000. in Full Time Employees (FTEs), and the Town would have to tap into the excess capacity. Mr. Pinto indicated there is a continual conflict, the Town wants services, want the best education, wants our best fire and police, wants to fix our buildings, so we have to pay good wages but we don't want taxes to go up and there is a conflict. He said things come at a cost and the Town needs to come up with creative ways to get money. If we want great education, we need to recruit great educators, that comes with a cost. There is an internal conflict going on. Mr. Brindisi supported Mr. Pinto's comments, it is push and pull, people complain about taxes but they want more services, complain about development but they want more preservation. Mr. Brindisi noted what he said to the SB: Tuesday night you take your vote, Wednesday morning we execute. He said his job is to make recommendations but Town Meeting sets the policy. Ms. Adelman said Mr. Golden noted the proposed Charter and that Mr. Brindisi said it would cost; she added: "I think we are worth it".

9:25 p.m. Public Comment: Don Williams, TMM: he noted that Through the Citizens for a Better Plymouth and he said they sent Mr. Brindisi and Mr. Parker a letter regarding the large increase of cutting on Great Herring Pond, on Little Herring Pond people are being hired to cut down trees on public land and there is no one taking responsibility and there is confusion about whose responsibility it is to enforce the Bylaws and the Town has refused to enforce the laws. He said Mr. Hartmann visited the site and the clear cutting and Mr. Parker also visited the site and have indicated that the courts will not enforce the Bylaw. Mr. Williams said the Town has 400 ponds, this is the Town's water supply. He said the PFAs that are in our water are increasingly showing up, the limit on the PFAs is 20 parts per trillion, regarding our aquifer which is billions of gallons 80 pounds of PFAs would render that water useless for drinking. He noted that with cutting down the trees rain hits the ground faster and more soil is carried into the ground and the ground contains PFAs and other contaminants. He said the Herring Pond Watershed Association had a water quality plan done and in the summer the pond has 160 kilograms, about 350 pounds of phosphorous, in the water. He noted concerns about the Town allowing sand to be taken from the areas covering the watershed. He is concerned about our drinking water. He said two wells have a trace of PFAs, but there is talk of lowering the amount of PFAs from 20 parts per trillion to 6 parts per trillion. Mr. Costello said this topic should be discussed; his concern regarding clear cutting of trees by private individuals on public land and noted that a few years ago there was a fine that the Town imposed and received, which doesn't address the issue but did address the improper tree cutting; he asked who in Town government would address this and enforce the Bylaw? Ms. Holmes said Mr. Brindisi and Mr. Randy Parker, Conservation Commission Chairperson. Mr. Costello asked that this issue be addressed by those responsible for enforcing the Bylaw. Ms. Holmes suggested inviting Mr. Brindisi to our next meeting; Mr. Williams said he has been in touch with Mr. Brindisi and there is confusion as to who will enforce this. Mr. Costello said this is on public land and the Town should be able to impose enforcement. Ms. Holmes said this will be on the agenda at our next meeting. Mr. Houle noted

that the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act is the law being violated and Mass Department of Environment Protection is the wetlands protection department (MDEP) for enforcement; if the MDEP chooses not to enforce the violation there is recourse for any person to file enforcement action through MDEP, can be done on line and MDEP will take the authority to issue an enforcement; he said if the Town's Conservation Commission does not act on a violation any resident can follow up with MDEP. Mr. Williams said the incidence of MDEP stepping in and superseding a municipality is rare. Ms. Holmes said this will be a topic at our next COPC meeting. Ms. Adelman suggested the COPC have the Director of Inspectional Services and David Gould be invited to attend. Mr. Webber said this needs to be addressed with the Town; we have a Tree Warden on the Town's staff, this violation is on public land; he suggested to call the Tree Warden and they can go down and issue a cease & desist. Mr. Hutchinson suggested calling the Environment Police.

9:40 p.m. MINUTES: Ms. Montanari noted that the minutes of February 16, 2023 were sent out Tuesday; No corrections, revisions were noted. Mr. Brewster made a motion to accept, motion seconded by Ms. Holmes. Vote was 15-0-1.

9:45 p.m. Article 12 - Special Town Meeting: Mr. Webber reported that Precinct 3 is sponsoring this article; he said to date the Article has received the support of the SB, Advisory & Finance, Downtown Steering Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Water District and they will be going to the Planning Board. They will be presenting on March 20 at the Presentation Forum. He has reached out to the Precinct Chairs and has scheduled with the caucuses. He asked for support of this Article.

9:50 p.m. NEW BUSINESS: Mr. Costello spoke about the Charter review which took place recently and he noted that Mr. Hutchinson represented the COPC and did a fine job but he asked how he was the representative of the COPC, as there was no vote. Ms. Holmes said she was asked to attend the meeting, she had a work conflict, Mr. Brewster, a Charter Commission member could not attend, and where Mr. Hutchinson had worked with the League of Women Voters was asked if he could attend and represent the COPC. She did not ask for a vote because she was replacing herself. Mr. Costello, noting that Mr. Hutchinson did a great a job, questioned whether a vote of the COPC would have been appropriate; Mr. Costello asked if Mr. Hutchinson's position was that of the COPC? Ms. Holmes said there was really no guidance, she advised Mr. Hutchinson to speak with no opinion, he had to be neutral, as he was not representing the COPC. Mr. Hutchinson said he presented the facts of what the Charter called for and the impacts regarding appointments; as neutral as you can get. Mr. Costello said he was only asking about the procedure of having one person picked to represent a body. Mr. Hutchinson said it was an invitation by PACTV. Ms. Costello noted that he wanted to know how the COPC is going to respond. Ms. Adelman said she called Julie Thompson, she was the person who made the invitation; Ms. Adelman said it was biased. Mr. Golden said the SB and the Planning Board voted on whom they were sending and that is the reason why this question is asked. Mr. Houle asked does the COPC have the ability to take votes by email? Ms. Holmes said she asked and she was told "no". Ms. Pratt said she didn't believe you could take a vote by email, it needs to be in a public forum. She noted that all past Chairs have been invited to various meetings, committees, etc. and the Chair is able to make that decision. Mr. Houle said he was under the impression that caucuses did not have to following the meeting law which extends to the COPC. Ms. Holmes noted that on a previous recommendation she made she was told there is no policy as to how that is done, she suggested the COPC could create a policy. Mr. Brewster said previously both he and Mr. Costello have been asked to go before the SB on behalf of the COPC; he noted where there is a request for a member of the COPC to go to a meeting and the COPC is not meeting before then you need to ask someone to cover that. Mr. Houle suggested taking a vote in terms of providing authority to the Chair to appoint

representatives to committees when needed. Mr. Canty said various departments/committees were asked by PACTV to designate someone to attend, he designated himself as he is the longest serving member as well as the Chair; it is appropriate for the Chair to appoint. He said the COPC under the current charter has roles and abilities, where the caucuses are different. Mr. Costello said if the proposed charter goes through the COPC will have an instrumental role; he noted he felt they could have asked as a COPC member how the committee felt with the new roles and responsibilities that are being proposed. Ms. Holmes said there is no way that a member of the COPC could have attended and expressed an opinion representing the COPC; the only thing we could say is how it will impact us if it gets approved. Ms. Holmes said this will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. Ms. Pratt noted that Mr. Hutchinson presented a neutral position. Mr. Houle said he was not aware of the situation but would like to form rules for the future; he said the nomination should go to the Chair first, then the Vice Chair and the Clerk and then as a group designate another appointee should we need one; he would like to establish rules for the future. Mr. Golden noted the rationale with the Charter is to increase the COPC's engagement; he noted that Chapter 2-3 calls for the COPC to create subcommittees of town meeting members to review bylaws, town meeting rules, track status of past town meeting actions, he is asking for the COPC to do that. Ms. Holmes said the new charter is asking for that and Mr. Brindisi and Ms. Barrett are saying it will take 8 people that they will have to hire to get the reports being asked. Mr. Costello noted that the Legislative Oversight was proposed a few years ago and that can be re-visited without the new Charter. It was noted that Ms. Keane had put a binder together. Mr. Golden suggested creating committees from the Town Meeting members to review Town Bylaws, review and proposed rules for Town Meeting and track legislative action.

OLD BUSINESS: Ms. Holmes noted that Ms. Montanari has tickets for the "Night for Mike" event to be held March 31 at Memorial Hall. She noted the caucus schedule; Precinct 16 is not scheduled. Ms. Canty reported that it came in after the deadline but they will have representation from the A&F. Ms. Holmes said the League of Women Voters asked to come before the caucuses to talk about the Charter. Mr. Mahoney has asked to talk at the caucuses about Article 11. She noted that for caucuses offering the zoom link, the caucuses need to be recorded and submitted to the Town Clerk. Ms. McElreath said the Town has zoom accounts through the IT department. Ms. McElreath said if you are using your personal zoom account just to be sure it is recording so it can be sent to her. Ms. Adelman asked about storage, response was that if you are using zoom it will be recorded on the cloud. Mr. Brewster clarified: if you use the Town Zoom account just hit "record", if you use your personal zoom you will record it and send it to the Town Clerk. Ms. Holmes reminded the Chairs that they can send their agenda to the Town Clerk and she will post it. It was noted that there is a request from the League of Women Voters regarding the caucuses, and it was noted that this is to distribute information. Ms. Holmes noted there are lists of the candidates, one of which involves the Precincts and the town meeting members who need to run in May, TMMs who had a one year term. Ms. McElreath will be sending out emails to those candidates who have not responded.

Mr. Brewster made a motion to adjourn, motion seconded by Ms. Pratt, motion given unanimous approval: meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Clare Montanari, Clerk
Precinct 4

