

**Town Meeting from page 7**

filing correspondence, reviewing applications. We want to be sure we're serving the town, but we're finding we're behind in the work we need to do.

We also need to be carrying through on the Master Plan, which we haven't been able to do. We've been trying to bring several warrant articles forward, but we weren't able to because we got bogged down in work. It's going to be a posted position and will be up for review annually, like all Town positions.

The Planning Board has not turned in a budget for the last several years, which accounts for a lot of the increases you see. When expenses were incurred, Marj has had to be creative about finding the money to cover them.

Chuck Keyser: Could this part-time position become a full-time position with benefits and everything?

Marj: That is not the plan. That's not even been talked about.

Toby: Why is building maintenance up over \$4,000?

Vicky Mishcon: We had an energy audit of the Town Hall done at no cost several years ago, and it showed that there's almost no insulation in the walls in the library section of the Town Hall. This money is going to be used to insulate those walls. We did fix the broken window in the attic. We also need ventilation in the vault, because there's mold in there and the records are rotting.

Greg Stetson: Why is the Custodian

line item up \$5,500?

Marj: We haven't had enough money built into past budgets to have anybody do anything but clean. This new position will be shared between the Town Office, the Police Department, the Andover Public Library, and Bachelder Library.

Chuck Keyser: Cemetery Labor went away last year when we hired two part-time Town employees, but now it's back.

Marj: In this year's budget, we've put those employees' expenses in the departments that they'll be working for. So their expenses show up in the Cemetery section, in the Recreation section for the work they do in Blackwater Park, and in Buildings for the Town Office mowing. We're trying to show expenses in the sections where they actually happen.

Herbie Barton: What is the \$7,700 in projects under Cemeteries?

Bill Keyser, Cemetery Trustee: In the East Andover cemetery, we'll do some roadwork on the interior; at Proctor Cemetery we'll extend the waterlines; at the church cemetery in East Andover we'll repair and paint some of the roadside pipe. The hedge at Proctor Cemetery needs to be clipped and trimmed, which requires a small lift because the hedge is so tall. We'll repair six or eight headstones; buy Memorial Day flags; pay the sexton; take down a maple tree in Proctor Cemetery, and remove two stumps. (Applause.)

Mark Stetson: Historically, the John Proctor Trust [one of the Cemetery trust funds held by Andover's Trustee of Trust

Funds] has paid for the hedge trimming.

Toby: \$15,329 is more than we've been paying private people to take care of the cemeteries. My cousin Jackie did it a few years ago for \$9,000.

Marj: There was a lot of clean-up that was done, and I believe that the cemeteries were mowed more frequently.

John Thompson, Road Agent: Proctor and East Andover cemeteries went to weekly mowing instead of biweekly or sometimes monthly. Some of the money in earlier budgets wasn't reported in the right place; when you put it in the right place and add it all up, the cemeteries were well over \$18,000. Now we're at \$16,000. Next year you'll be able to compare apples-to-apples.

Herbie Barton: Why are we paying to have private stones repaired?

Bill Keyser: After 150 years, I'd say the Town owns them. Most of the stones getting repaired date back into the 1800s.

Herbie: I hope the Town doesn't start paying for private stones that break. Does the Town own the shrubbery we're trimming at Proctor Cemetery?

Marj: Yes

Andy Guptill: Usually when a cemetery plot is bought from the Town, it's bought with Perpetual Care, which means that the Town is responsible for all maintenance from that point on, including the stones.

Toby: Why are we at \$21,000 on health insurance?

Marj: Part is due to rate increases; part is that we have to budget for what they call "maximum exposure." Because the Highway budget includes making the two part-time employees full-time, we have to show their new benefits here in the Insurance section.

We're looking at other alternatives that might be less expensive. And everyone who's on Town insurance went to a lower plan last July in order to cut the Town's cost. We're very aware and trying to keep it as low as we can.

Wood: What is MainStay?

Marj: MainStay Technologies, out of Belmont, is our IT department. That line item covers our contract with them for the Town Office, the Town Clerk and Tax Collector, the Police Department, and the Cable TV station. The service contract amount seems high,

but we don't pay them an hourly rate. We call them whenever we want, and they come and we don't get billed.

IT is so all-encompassing at this point – there's not a department that operates without it, not even the Transfer Station – that it needs to be a section in the budget by itself. The IT section includes software support for the Town Clerk, the Tax Collector, assessing software, and accounting software, each of which is a separate software package. It also includes the postage meter, the copier, and our Internet connection.

Tina Cotton: When there was a Cable TV Committee, Comcast was supposed to provide free service for the Town, the libraries, and the schools.

Marj: I've talked at length with them, and it's only cable TV service they provide for free, not Internet access.

Karen Brule: Could you give us an update on Lawrence St Bridge, which isn't in this year's budget?

Marj: Jeff Newcomb suggested going to a bond when it comes nearer time to do the Lawrence Street bridge. That's what's being looked at now, and that's why there's nothing in this year's budget for it. It could be 2022 before the state is ready to move forward on the bridge.

Karen: Seriously?

Marj: Yes.

Karen: Does the Town have an emergency evacuation plan for the people who live on the other side of the bridge, should it fall in tomorrow?

Marj: It's not in that kind of condition.

Vicky Mishcon, Selectman: The part you drive on and the substructure that support it are in good condition. It's the stonework and abutments that are slowly deteriorating. Water and sand have gotten in and are making the concrete slowly flake off.

We met with bridge engineers and they said it's in no danger of falling down before it gets repaired. They said it will be useable, though we'll have to limit weight.

The other news they gave us is the cost. The "Cadillac" version would be \$2.5 million, and they're not anticipating we'll need the Cadillac version. It will be much smaller, probably less than \$1 million burden on us.

Karen: I'd really like the Town to See Town Meeting on page 9



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