

# Town of Litchfield, New Hampshire

## Board of Selectmen

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Meeting Date: 10/19/20

Call to Order: 6:35 pm

Meeting Location: Town Hall

**Meeting Called By**

Board of Selectmen

**Type of Meeting:**

Selectmen's Meeting

**Facilitator:**

Steven J. Webber

**Note Taker:**

Matthew Sullivan

**In Attendance:**

Troy Brown, Town Administrator  
Peter Dionne, Building Inspector  
Ben Sargent, Police Chief  
Karen White, Finance Director

**Selectmen in attendance:**

1. Steven J. Webber, Chairman
2. F. Robert Leary, Sr., Vice Chairman
3. Kevin A. Lynch
4. John E. Pinciario

**One Selectman were absent:**

1. Richard W. Lascelles

**Memo:**

**Agenda Topic:** Call to Order

**Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. 5:30 pm - Paperwork Review
2. 6:35 pm - Call to Order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance

**Agenda Topic:** Review and Approval of Consent Items

**Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. A/P Manifest: 10/13/2020 - \$122,132.27, and 10/20/20 - \$51,300.59
2. P/R Manifest: 10/01/2020 - \$100,325.10, and 10/22/20 - \$62,095.48
3. Treasurer Reconciliation - August
4. Town Clerk Reconciliation - September
5. General Election Warrant
6. Michael J. Clater Full-Time Police Officer Appointment

**Motion:** ( Selectman R. Leary / Selectman J. Pinciario ) Motion to accept the Review and Approval of Consent Items.

**Vote:** ( 4-0-0 ) The motion carried

**Agenda Topic:** Items Moved from Consent

**Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. None

**Agenda Topic:** Items Added to Consent

**Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. None

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**Agenda Topic:** Approval of Meeting Minutes

**Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. September 28, 2020, Meeting Minutes.

**Motion:** ( Selectman J. Pinciario / Selectman K. Lynch ) Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from September 28, 2020

**Vote:** ( 4-0-0 ) The motion carried

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**Agenda Topic:** Business

**Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

**Deputy Town Clerk Appointment:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown mentioned that Amanda Mulrooney was hired by the town to be Deputy Town Clerk, pursuant to RSA 41:18.

RSA 41:18 Deputy Clerk - Each town may have a Deputy Town Clerk who shall be qualified in the same manner as the Town Clerk and who shall perform all the duties of the Town Clerk in case of his or her absence by sickness, by the elected Town Clerk with the approval of the Selectmen.

**Discussion:** None

**Motion:** ( Selectman K. Lynch / Selectman J. Pinciario ) I move to approve the appointment of Amanda Mulrooney as Deputy Town Clerk / Tax Collector, pursuant to RSA 41:18.

**Vote:** ( 4-0-0 ) The motion carried

**Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Radio Grant Acceptance - \$4,750:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown commented that the Litchfield Police Department, through Captain Scotti and Chief Sargent's efforts, applied for a grant. The grant was approved for \$9,500 and required a 50% match from the town. \$4,750 will be paid to the town as a cash payment, and the other 50% is an in-kind match from the town.

Chief Sargent informed the Select Board why the Police Department chose to apply for the grant. Chief Sargent explained that the Police Department needed to upgrade their radio equipment, and the grant allowed for the upgrade while minimizing the cost to the town. Chief Sargent asked for the Board to approve the acceptance of the grant.

**Discussion:** Town Administrator Troy Brown stated that the motion for the grant is very specific.

**Motion:** ( Selectman John Pinciario / Selectman Robert Leary ) The Select Board, in a majority vote, accepted the terms of the Emergency Management Performance Grant as presented in the amount of \$4,750 to purchase portable radios for the communities Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Furthermore, the Board acknowledges that the total cost of this project will be \$9,500 in which the town will be responsible for a 50% match (\$4,750).

**Vote:** ( 4-0-0 ) The motion carried

**Union Negotiating Team:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown said that the town would soon begin negotiations with the Litchfield Police and Dispatch Union. The union has identified their negotiating team members, Sergeant Dennis Tessier, Jr., Sergeant Heath Savage, and Master Patrol Officer Rachael Lang. Mr. Brown commented that he would like to see if the negotiating teams could limit the number of members. Mr. Brown suggested that the Board nominate a team that would consist of the Police Chief, Town Administrator, and Finance Director.

The three members would meet with the Board and receive direction from the Select Board. The members would then meet with the union team to negotiate a new contract. Mr. Brown noted that the smaller negotiating teams could negotiate quicker and more efficiently. The negotiating team for the town would not be able to agree to a deal but would only be collecting information.

A few Select Board members agreed that they would like to see at least one Selectman on the negotiating team. Mr. Brown stated that he had spoken with Chief Sargent and the President's Union. Both agreed with Mr. Brown's suggestion to limit the size of the negotiating teams. The Select Board concluded that Chief Sargent, Mr. Brown, and Ms. White would negotiate with the union. A member of the Select Board would attend the negotiation as an observer.

**Discussion:** None

**Motion:** ( Selectman J. Pinciario / Selectman K. Lynch ) Motion to allow the Town Administrator to set up his negotiating team and return to the Select Board with their information. Only one Selectman at a time may observe the talks.

**Vote:** ( 4-0-0 ) The motion carried

### **Building Permit Fees:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown commented that Building Inspector Peter Dionne had presented the proposed plan to increase the building permit fees at the last Select Board meeting. Mr. Brown stressed that the Board needs to take its time to understand the proposed increase, whenever the town decides to increase fees. The Board would then decide to proceed to a Public Hearing. After the Public Hearing, the Board would vote to approve or deny the building permit fees increase.

Mr. Brown mentioned that COVID-19 is not slowing down, and now would be the appropriate time to discuss the topic of increasing the fees. Concerning the increase of Building Fees would allow time for a Public Hearing, a vote to have the increased fees begins on January 1, 2021. Mr. Dionne stated that the last time the building permit fees were adjusted was in 2011. Mr. Dionne noted that he compared Litchfield's fees to the fees charged by Pelham, Hudson, Hollis, Merrimack, Bedford, and Amherst. Mr. Dionne added that he was trying to place the Litchfield building permit fees in the middle of the fees charged by surrounding towns.

The Selectmen mentioned their concerns with the dramatic increase in fees. Selectman K. Lynch noted that the fees were increasing by over 100%. The Board asked Mr. Dionne questions regarding the fees, and Selectman K. Lynch pointed out the towns used as comparisons are mainly commercial towns, and Litchfield is primarily a residential town. The Selectmen agreed that they wanted some time to review the proposed increase in building permit fees.

Mr. Brown explained that the town charges fees to help cover the operating costs. The fees are intended to cover the expenses from the beginning of the build to the completion. The costs include the software licensing fee, town employee's salary, and the inspection costs. The belief is that all the taxpayers of Litchfield should not pay the costs for one resident's building permit. Chair S. Webber stated that the Board should table the vote until the next meeting.

### **2020 Year-End Projections:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown commented that the town currently has \$187,930 remaining from the 2020 Budget. Mr. Brown believes that the town is in good shape. He thanked the Board for freezing the budget from any unnecessary expenditures. Currently, the town has a radio communications project being installed. The town keeps an eye on the project, but there will be an overage in spending because of some changes to the project.

Mr. Brown reviewed the Budget Projections for the rest of 2020. The significant savings came from Legal Expenses, Personnel Administration, Police Administration, Fire, Code Enforcement, and Road Maintenance. The savings from the Police Administration is because a Police Officer has been out for most of the year, and two other vacancies occurred. The

Fire Department savings occurred because COVID-19 has prevented them from performing their training. Code Enforcement savings came from the health insurance.

Mr. Brown mentioned that the \$187,930 would allow the town to purchase items now that are in next year's budget. The idea is by buying items this year; the town would save on the Tax Cap coverage for next year. Mr. Brown reminded the Select Board that along with the \$187,930, the town also has the GOFERR and FEMA funds. Mr. Brown believed that the town has about \$60,000 available in COVID-19 related funds. The Select Board will review the Budget Projection at every meeting for the remainder of the year.

	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Projections</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Total</b>	\$7,064,927	\$6,876,997	\$187,930

**2021 Budget Adoption:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown stated that the Budget Committee had finished their review of all the departments. The Department Heads did a great job presenting their information to the Budget Committee; the next couple of Budget Committee meetings, the Committee will either adjust the budgets or even add money to the budgets. After the last Select Board meeting, the Department Heads were contacted and asked to make voluntary reductions to their budgets. At the same time, the town received their money from the insurance companies.

Mr. Brown commented that the volunteer reductions totaled \$110,469 in revisions to the budget. During this time, there have been \$59,765 in additions to the budget. Currently, the town has a Net Tax of \$4,797,933 and a Tax Cap coverage of \$28,705. Mr. Brown mentioned that he is concerned with the revenues for the town. He does not believe that the state will come out and provide the Rooms and Meals tax number. Mr. Brown stated that he has reached out to other towns, and heard that towns expect a 20% reduction. He also heard that some towns are not going to make a reduction. A loss of 20% is equal to a decrease of \$87,610 in revenue for the town.

Mr. Brown said that the town continues to see the unassigned fund balance grow. In the past, the Select Board has informed Litchfield taxpayers that the fund is used for one-time capital needs, and to stabilize the tax rate. Mr. Brown suggested that 2021 should be the year that the town uses the money to offset what the town will lose with the Rooms and Meals Tax. \$87,610 would be removed from the unassigned fund balance to make up for the 20% reduction in revenue. Mr. Brown covered the 2021 Expense Reductions (Pre Purchase). The pre-purchase total is \$55,520 and consists of:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Savings</b>
1. GO Purchase - Five Computer Upgrades	\$6,620
2. GO Purchase - Two LPD MDT Replacement	\$8,700
3. GO Purchase - Four Chromebooks	\$1,800
4. PD Purchase - Portable Radios	\$13,400
5. FD Purchase - Thermal Camera	\$5,000
6. FD Purchase - ½ of Mobile & Portable Radios	\$20,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$55,520</b>

After the Pre-Purchase item reductions, the Net Tax is \$4,742,413, and the Tax-Cap is -\$26,815, not including the Litchfield Police Department contract. Mr. Brown believes the first-year of the agreement is typically around \$30,000. Mr. Brown pointed out that if the Rooms and Meals Tax decreases by less than 20%, then the Board could reset the revenue figure in September 2021.

**Discussion:** None

**Motion:** ( Selectman J. Pinciario / Selectman R. Leary ) I move to authorize Town Administrator Troy Brown to amend the Budget as presented.

**Vote:** ( 4-0-0 ) The motion carried

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**Agenda Topic:** Public Input @ 7:52 pm

**Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. Nikki Fordey - 85 Page Road - Ms. Fordey said she had been trying to get the latest PFAS municipal well readings from Pennichuck. Ms. Fordey mentioned that she was able to find two results from the well readings. She added that the tests occurred in March 2020. Ms. Fordey noted that the new maximum contaminant levels that were passed set the level for acceptable PFOA at 12 parts per trillion. Pennichuck said that Litchfield is at 10.5 and 11 parts per trillion.

Public Input closed at 7:55 pm.

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**Agenda Topic:** Other Business

**Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

**2021 Draft Warrant Articles:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown reviewed the Warrant Articles with the Board of Selectmen.

**Article #2 - Operating Budget**

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts outlined in the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by the vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$0.00. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$0.00, which is the same as last year with certain adjustments required by the previous action of the Town of Litchfield or by Law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: \$0.00.

Pending Budget Committee adoption.

**Article #3 - Police Department Collective Bargaining Agreement**

Shall the Town vote to approve the cost items for wage and related costs that have been included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Town of Litchfield and Council 93 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which provides for the following increases in wages and benefits at the current staffing level and further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$00,000 for the current fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: \$0.00

Negotiating Team would consist of the Town Administrator Troy Brown, Finance Director Karen White, and Police Chief Ben Sargent.

**Article #4 - Full-Time Town Clerk Position**

To see if the Town will vote to change the part-time clerk position to a full-time clerk position effective April 1, 2021, at an estimated annual increase in salary and related costs of **\$18,804** and further vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$9,579** for wages and benefits for the period of April 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: **\$0.00**.

<b>Wage &amp; Benefits</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
Wages	\$4,795	\$12,787
Health	\$2,779	\$3,706
Dental	\$127	\$281
NHRS	\$675	\$1,798
SSI	\$60	\$185
Medicare	\$18	\$47
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,579</b>	<b>\$18,804</b>

The Board chose not to take any action at this time.

**Article #5 - Human Services and Health Agencies**

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$0.00** to support Human Services and Health Agencies providing services to the Town of Litchfield. If approved, the Health and Human Services Funding Committee will review funding requests and submit recommended funding amounts to the Board of Selectmen for approval. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: **\$0.00**.

To be determined in November 2020. \$15,000 was approved in 2020.

**Article #6 - Road Improvements**

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$100,000** for road improvement projects. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: **\$0.00**.

The Board chose to support this Warrant Article, but only if the Warrant Article was reduced to \$100,000.

**Article #7 - Purchase of a Plow Truck**

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$100,000 to purchase a plow truck with equipment for the Highway Department. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Estimated 2020 tax rate impact is **\$0.00**.

The Board chose to change from lease to cash purchase; approved for now.

**Article #8 - Property Revaluations Expendable Trust Fund**

Shall the Town vote to establish a Property Revaluations Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a to fund future property revaluations and to raise and appropriate **\$25,000** to put in the fund; further to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: **\$0.00**

The Board agreed to support this Warrant Article at this time.

**Article #9 - Health and Dental Care Expendable Trust Fund**

Shall the Town vote to establish a Health and Dental Care Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a to fund unanticipated health and dental insurance-related expenses for Town and library employees and to raise and appropriate \$25,000 to put in the fund; further to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: \$0.00

The Board agreed to support this Warrant Article at this time.

**Article #10 - Fire Station Bond Proceeds**

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$23,582.86 to pay a portion of the 2021 Fire Station Bond payment and to authorize the withdrawal of that amount from the December 31, 2020 fund balance for this purpose. (This amount will represent the interest earned on bond proceeds that was transferred to the general fund on or before December 31, 2020).

Estimated Fund Balance - \$27,448.18 (\$3,865.32 bond / \$23,582.86 interest)

The Board chose to support this Warrant Article at this time.

**Article #11 - Fire Facilities Capital Reserve Fund**

Shall the Town vote to discontinue the Fire Facilities Capital Reserve Fund created in 2000. Said funds and accumulated interest to the date of withdrawal shall be transferred to the Building Systems Expendable Trust Fund. Estimated Fund Balance - \$612.93

The Board chose to support this Warrant Article.

**Article #12 - Solar Exemption**

Shall the Town adopt the provisions of RSA 72:61-64 inclusively, which provide for an optional property tax exemption from the property's assessed value, for property tax purposes, for persons owning real property, which is equipped with solar energy systems intended for use at the immediate site? Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount equal to (enter \$ amount or % amount) of the assessed value of qualifying solar energy system equipment under these statutes. Estimated 2020 tax rate impact: \$0.00. The total value of solar in the Town from 61 properties is \$1,238,890. \$23.65 \* \$29,299.75

The Board agreed to support this Warrant Article at this time.

**Article # - Purchase of Tanker Truck**

Shall the Town vote to authorize the selectmen to enter into an eight-year lease-purchase agreement for the sum of \$682,000 for lease-purchasing a fire tanker truck with equipment and attachments for the Fire Department and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$95,103 for the first year's payment for that purpose. This lease agreement contains an escape clause. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: \$0.00.

2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Total
\$95,103	\$95,103	\$95,103	\$95,103	\$95,103	\$95,103	\$95,103	\$95,103	\$760,827

The Board agreed not to support this Warrant Article at this time.

**Article #X - Plow Truck Lease Purchase**

Shall the Town vote to authorize the selectmen to enter into an eight-year lease-purchase agreement for the sum of **\$100,000** for lease-purchasing a plow truck with equipment and attachments for the Highway Department and to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$14,076.00** for the first year's payment for that purpose. This lease agreement contains an escape clause. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: **\$0.00**.

2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Total
\$14,076	\$14,076	\$14,076	\$14,076	\$14,076	\$14,076	\$14,076	\$14,076	<b>\$112,604</b>

The Board agreed not to support this Warrant Article at this time.

**Article #11 - Purchase of Backhoe**

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate **\$125,000** to purchase a backhoe with equipment and attachments. This sum of **\$100,000** comes from the unassigned fund balance, and the sum of **\$20,000** to come from the Recycling Revolving Fund. No amount to be raised from taxation. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: **\$0.00**.

The Board agreed not to support this Warrant Article at this time.

**Article #X - General Assistance Expendable Trust Fund**

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$0.00** to be placed in the General Assistance Expendable Trust Fund as previously established. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: **\$0.00**.

The Board chose not to support this Warrant Article at this time.

**Article #X - Technology & Communication Expendable Trust Fund**

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$12,000** to be placed in the Technology & Communication Expendable Trust Fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: **\$0.00**

Estimated Fund Balance - \$38,076.86. May not be needed waiting for the Radio Tower Project completion.

The Board chose not to support this Warrant Article at this time.

**Article #15 - Recreation Facilities Expendable Trust Fund**

Shall the Town vote to establish a Recreation Facilities Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a to repair, renovate and replace recreation facilities and buildings and raise and appropriate **\$50,000** to put in the fund; further to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Estimated 2021 tax rate impact: **\$0.00**.

The Board chose not to support this Warrant Article at this time.

**2020 Preliminary Tax-Rate:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown said that last week the town received information from the Department Revenue Administration (DRA). The DRA has all the information they need from the town, school, county, and state agencies. The DRA was able to set the tax rate.



	2020 Approved	\$ Change	% Change
<b>Municipal</b>	3.92	- \$0.88	-18.33%
<b>County</b>	0.96	- \$0.24	-20.00%
<b>Local Education</b>	11.99	- \$3.36	-21.89%
<b>State Education</b>	1.71	- \$0.59	-25.65%
<b>Total</b>	18.58	- \$5.07	-21.44%

**Conference Room Use:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown wanted confirmation that the Town Hall Conference Room is only available for use by Town Departments and Town Boards, Committees and Commissions.

**Agenda topic:** Administrator’s Report

**Presenter:** Town Admin. Troy Brown

- Nothing to report

**Agenda topic:** Selectmen Reports

**Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

**Selectman Richard W. Lascelles - Heritage Commission:**

- Absent

**Selectman Robert Leary Jr. - Budget Committee:**

- The Budget Committee will start voting this week on the Town Budget.

**Selectman Kevin A. Lynch - Planning Board:**

- The Planning Board met and approved a couple of signs. The Committee was supposed to meet but the meeting was canceled. Selectman K. Lynch mentioned that there is a light out at the intersection of Hillcrest Rd. and Albuquerque Ave. He stated that someone should call Eversource and inform them of the situation.

**Selectman John E. Pinciario - Conservation Commission:**

- Matt Lepore from the Conservation Commission will have a trail opening on Sunday. The planting of trees down at Moore’s Falls has started. The Board agreed that Matt Lepore has done an excellent job for the town. Town Administrator Troy Brown mentioned that the trees that were planted grow out, and not up. The trees will be less affected by the power lines. Selectman J. Pinciario wanted to know if the company doing the work for Pennichuck had completed the paving. Selectman K. Brown noted that the company had not finished the paving.

**Selectman Steve J. Webber - Rec Commission & CIP Committee:**

- The Rec Commission met on October 13.

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**Agenda topic:** Non-Public Meeting

**Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

**Discussion:** None

**Motion:** (Selectman R. Leary / Selectman J. Pinciario) Motioned to enter non-public session per RSA's cited below:

- a. RSA 91-A:3, II(a) - Compensation of an Employee
- b. RSA 91-A:3, II(b) - Hiring of an Employee

**Roll Call Vote:**

1. Selectman R. Leary - yes
2. Selectman K. Lynch - yes
3. Selectman J. Pinciario - yes
4. Selectman S. Webber - yes

**Entered Non-Public Session:**

8:24 pm

**Reconvened Public Session:**

8:45pm

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**Agenda Topic:** Adjournment

**Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

**Discussion:** None

**Motion:** Selectman Pinciario / Selectman Leary motioned to adjourn the meeting.

**Vote:** (4-0-0)

The next meeting will be held on November 9, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Approved by the Board of Selectmen:

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Steven J. Webber, Chairman

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F. Robert Leary, Sr., Vice Chairman

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Richard W. Lascelles

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Kevin A. Lynch

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John E. Pinciario