

**HAMPTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
HAMPTON, CT**

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

September 5, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM by Board Chair John Burnham. Members present were Joan Fox, Carol Misak, Ann Gruenberg, Catherine Wade (7:12 PM), Lisa Siegmund, Rose Bisson, and Doug Stewart. Also in attendance were Superintendent of Schools Paul Graseck, Principal Elise Guari, and Business Coordinator Sally Lehoux. Unable to attend was board member Maryellen Donnelly.

2. Audience for Citizens and Staff: Richard LeBlanc read a statement on behalf of the staff thanking the board for their efforts and perseverance on behalf of the school and community.

Mark Becker had conversations with members of the community regarding the depth of the cut to the budget of an additional \$83,000 was too severe and speaking personally he thought the budget may be able to be reduced slightly but not to the level requested.

3. Written Communications: None

4. 2013-2014 Budget:

The board started their discussion by reviewing the history of 2013-14 budget proposals. The administration had originally presented a budget with a 3.92% increase that was reduced to a 1.82% increase. The board then reduced the budget to a flat (0% increase) budget which was defeated. The board then cut \$41,109 from the first proposal and that was defeated. The Board of Finance (BOF) then requested the board cut an additional \$83,000 from that budget and held a referendum to gauge the taxpayer approval of such a cut, but that question and additional cut was rejected by the townspeople. Mr. Burnham commented he would like to bring a proposal to the BOF for their next meeting on Tuesday when the results of the referendum are considered. Mr. Burnham invited Dr. Graseck to initiate the discussion on the budget proposal for next year. Dr. Graseck felt the original request in March represented a responsible budget needed to implement the educational responsibility of the school. He is also concerned with the combination of the assessment of Regional District 11 and the elementary school to calculate the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR). The MBR was established to protect schools from devastating cuts to funding and subsequent evisceration of programs. The school has already experienced unanticipated expenses with the well pump and the school has almost exhausted maintenance funds for the tractor, and the carryover to cafeteria account was reduced and equipment in the cafeteria is experiencing problems. Dr. Graseck respectfully requested the board does not consider additional cuts. The board then discussed the following issues and their impact on the budget:

- a. the Business Coordinator position;
- b. schedules of "specials", including music and PE;
- c. classroom structure and their dynamics;
- d. substitute line item and the possibility of the allocation of current staff to allow for internal coverage;
- e. instructional supply line item;
- f. current mill rate;

Allan Cahill, First Selectman of Hampton, commented that there was a lot of uncertainty at the last referendum since a budget had not been submitted so residents would not know the consequences of their vote if they approved the question.

The school is currently running on last year's budget with 1/12 (one twelfth) of the budget released each month to cover expenses. The board also expressed concern with the morale and sustainability of the current programs.

Doug Stewart moved the Board of Education reaffirm the budget proposal of \$2,215,079 with a \$41,109 cut from a flat budget proposal is the budget necessary to provide the students with a quality education. Joan Fox seconded the motion and it failed with the following vote:

YES: D. Stewart, J. Fox, L. Siegmund, and A. Gruenberg

NO: C. Misak, C. Wade, R. Bisson, and J. Burnham

The board discussed the instructional supplies budget. Ms. Guari assured the board that textbooks were not part of this item. It includes consumable supplies such as workbooks, pencils, crayons and consumable technology such as apps for the ipads. The board also discussed the substitute line item, including the 5-year average as well as possible cuts to various administrative and program staffing positions and the impact of those cuts to the budget. The board opened the floor to citizens' comments at this time. Comments included:

Nick Brown – Mr. Brown voted “no” in support of the school—the proposed cut was too much, but in his discussion with other voters there were comments he'd like clarified including the criticism of too much administration, administrative raises in light of resentment from townspeople regarding salaries, the Board of Finance was appointed, not elected, and that something should be offered.

Kathy Donahue—some people just traditionally vote “no”, but others were upset there wasn't a budget presented with known impact included in this referendum. Mrs. Donahue would like the board to take some sort of action so people could know what the board is thinking. It is not the duty of the Board of Finance to set a budget and the Board of Finance action wasn't arbitrary, they had a lengthy discussion at the last meeting.

Doug Stewart commented that the board of finance voted for a 0% increase to the mill rate.

Craig Philps asked who was responsible for tying the elementary budget and regional budget together for the MBR calculation. Mr. Philps was told it was the BOF that made than decision.

Mrs. Donahue commented that the discussion has gone both ways in recent years and asked the board to tape meetings so people unable to attend evening meetings can hear the scope of discussion.

Mr. Burnham also commented the state legislature will again be reviewing the statute controlling the MBR.

After continued discussion of the process and impact, **Rose Bisson moved to cut \$2400 from the Instructional Supplies line item. Ann Gruenberg seconded the motion and it passed with the following vote:**

YES: C. Misak, A. Gruenberg, R. Bisson, J. Burnham, and C. Wade

NO: J. Fox, D. Stewart, and L. Siegmund

Rose Bisson moved to reduce the Business Coordinator position to 28 hours. Carol Misak seconded the motion and it failed with the following vote:

YES: R. Bisson, C. Misak, J. Burnham

NO: J. Fox, A. Gruenberg, C. Wade, L. Siegmund, and D. Stewart

Mr. Cahill appreciated the diligence that created the 12-13 surplus and noted the selectmen have approved a proposal for a joint facilities utilization study to be performed with the towns of Scotland and Chaplin. Mr. Cahill had forwarded the information to Dr. Graseck and Mr. Burnham. The board needs to put together a proposal the community will support.

The board then discussed additional impacts on the school and staff including the new evaluation requirements, school readiness and the impact on budget as well as what was and wasn't controlled by Hampton. Mrs. Bisson commented on the administrative staff currently in place and noted it was skeletal compared to other districts and reminded the board of the impact on student performance and community comfort that less administration had triggered.

5. Audience for Staff & Citizens:

Carrie Boron noted that residents just don't want more taxes, but also noted that the town was able to find funds to purchase additional open space. People need to go to meetings and understand the decisions being made.

Nick Brown thanked the board for the evening, the clarity he had gained, and thinks the school budget should be balanced with the general fund.

The board reminded audience members that the Board of Finance will meet on Tuesday at 7 PM at the Town Hall.

Joan Fox moved to adjourn at 10:45 PM. Lisa Siegmund seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Nelson, Recording Clerk

Note: Per C.G.S. 10 – 218, Board of Education meeting minutes are provided in a draft format. With the exception of motions and votes recorded, these minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote of the Board. Should edits be necessary, they will be made at the next regularly scheduled meeting, noted in the meeting minutes, and voted upon.