

Town of Hampton
Board of Finance
Special Meeting
May 20, 2020
6PM
Zoom Meeting

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:08 PM.

Roll Call/Seating of Alternates: Lisa Sanchez, Kathy Donahue, Diane Gagnon (6:18), Perry Matchinis, Ed Adelman, Nick Brown, Kathi Newcombe, and Stan Crawford.

Staff and Others Present: First Selectman Allan Cahill, Selectman Bob Grindle, Treasurer Ellen Rodriguez, Recording Clerk Dayna McDermott-Arriola.

Citizen Comments: none.

Old Business:

a. Discuss and Possibly Act on 5-Year Plan

First Selectman Cahill reported that the Selectmen are planning a minimalist approach this year with projects dependent on funding, assuring members that town roads and infrastructure are in “good shape”. He also reported that the legislative body must approve the 5-Year Plan by August 1, 2020.

Motion: Kathy Donahue, seconded by Nick Brown, to approve the 5-Year Plan. Motion carried unanimously, Lisa Sanchez abstaining.

b. Discuss and Act on Dairy Farm Abatement

Ed Adelman reminded members that the abatement has been approved annually for several years. Nick Brown added that dairy farms are an important part of the town and should be supported.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Ed Adelman, to approve tax abatements on two dairy farms, Eva South LLC and Clark W. Woodmansee III Trust at a rate of 50%. Motion carried unanimously, Lisa Sanchez abstaining.

c. Discuss and Possibly Act on Town Government Budget

Motion: Kathy Donahue, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to provide cost-of-living-adjustments of 1.6% to all full and part-time employees.

Perry Matchinis suggested that raises be limited to hourly employees and not extended to elected officials this year. Nick Brown supported a 2% increase for all employees.

In Favor: Lisa Sanchez, Kathy Donahue, Diane Gagnon, Ed Adelman

Opposed: Nick Brown, Perry Matchinis.

Motion carried, 4-0.

The savings in reduced raises from 2% to 1.6% is \$1,665.

Kathy Donahue asked if funds in the Capital Non-Recurring Account for the Ambulance could be returned to the General Fund. First Selectman Cahill reported that, per the Governor’s Executive Order, funds can be transferred from CNR accounts by a vote of both the Boards of Selectmen and Finance, confirming that this order replaces the statute on approval by the legislative body until further notice. Ms. Donahue suggested that, with the exception of the Land Acquisition account, which requires annual funding per ordinance, the Capital Accounts should be frozen this year as they have in the past due to economic hardship. She suggested that if major purchases were necessary, they could be financed as rates are very low. Nick Brown agreed, adding that the General Fund could also be used for specific purchases if necessary.

Motion: Ed Adelman, seconded by Kathy Donahue, to approve the FY2020-21 Town Government Budget.

Chairman Sanchez suggested that the vote be postponed until after members reviewed the budget proposal. After discussion on various items, it was decided, by general consent, to review each department chronologically, which included the following discussions and decisions.

Tax Collector: Since several items are now included in the contract with Windham's Tax Collection Office, certain line items will be eliminated when the record of FY2018-19 and FY2019-20 no longer need to be included.

Town Clerk: Diane Gagnon questioned the increase to the Town Clerk's Assistant, which Treasurer Rodriguez explained as necessary for coverage in the Office while the new Town Clerk is taking classes toward certification, though First Selectman Cahill confirmed that an assistant has not yet been appointed by the Selectmen.

Town Counsel: First Selectman Cahill agreed with Perry Matchinis' suggestion that the line item could be reduced by \$1000.

Motion: Kathy Donahue, seconded by Nick Brown, to reduce the line item for Town Counsel from \$4000 to \$3000. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board recessed at 7:12PM. The Meeting reconvened at 7:18PM.

Planning & Zoning: On Kathi Newcombe's suggestion, since the Conservation Commission now has a separate listing, the line item for Conservation Commission Supplies will be moved from 6010.11 to 6008.02

Board of Finance: Chairman Sanchez noted that expenses now include computer support for remote meetings; Perry Matchinis suggested a line item be added for the finance board.

Motion: Kathi Newcombe, seconded by Perry Matchinis, to appropriate \$250 for 6012.03 Computer Support. Motion carried unanimously.

Town Buildings: Nick Brown asked if the line items for utilities and oil used in Town buildings could be reduced due to decreased use and costs. First Selectman Cahill stated that, though energy is a volatile market, reductions could be made.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to reduce the following items by 5%: Transfer Station Electricity, Town Hall Electricity, Town Hall Oil, Town Garage Electricity, Town Garage Oil, Community Center Electricity, Community Center Oil, Fire Department Oil. Nick Brown amended his motion to include the savings.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to reduce the line items for Transfer Station Electricity, Town Hall Electricity, Town Hall Oil, Town Garage Electricity, Town Garage Oil, Community Center Electricity, Community Center Oil, and Fire Department Oil by 5%, for a total savings of \$1,895. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Safety: Treasurer Rodriguez advised that, because the line item was underfunded this year, the Building Inspector Office Manager/Clerk should increase from \$7,500 to \$12,000 which approximates the amount actually spent. Perry Matchinis stated that this year's increase was reportedly due to problems with the filing system, and suggested that the Building Department should determine the level of support required for the position.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to increase the line item for Building Inspector Office Manager/Clerk to \$12,000.

In Favor: Nick Brown, Diane Gagnon, Lisa Sanchez

Opposed: Perry Matchinis, Ed Adelman, Kathy Donahue.

The motion failed 3-3.

Public Works: Perry Matchinis asked First Selectman Cahill if it would be appropriate to reduce the gasoline and diesel line items. Mr. Cahill suggested a 5% reduction.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Perry Matchinis, to reduce the line items for gasoline and diesel by 5%, or \$1,463.

In Favor: Kathy Donahue, Ed Adelman, Nick Brown, Perry Matchinis

Opposed: Lisa Sanchez, Diane Gagnon.

Motion carried, 4-2.

Perry Matchinis suggested that the line item for Road Paving be separated from Public Works as its own department to protect its funds.

Motion: Perry Matchinis, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to separate the line item for Road Paving to its own Department.

In Favor: Perry Matchinis, Kathy Donahue, Diane Gagnon, Lisa Sanchez

Opposed: Ed Adelman

Abstentions: Nick Brown

Motion carried 4-1.

Health & Welfare: There was discussion regarding the \$2000 increase requested by the Seniors' organization. Diane Gagnon stated that the funding has been level for 29 years, and that the increase was due to the fact that luncheons have become monthly events providing for approximately 70 people. She also noted the need for kitchen supplies. Stan Crawford countered that the current appropriation has been in place since 2006 and that the organization has \$4,300 in its checking account, noting that the Seniors used to raise their own funds. Chairman Sanchez reminded members that the majority of residents are seniors, the town's most vulnerable constituents, who are, necessarily, charged only a minimal fee for their lunches. Nick Brown noted that the senior luncheons have been, and might continue to be postponed indefinitely. Perry Matchinis stated that the funds could be used for other improvements, and Kathy Donahue added that funds could be used for other services that benefit seniors.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Kathy Donahue, to maintain the line item for Seniors at last year's amount of \$2000.

In Favor: Nick Brown

Opposed: Diane Gagnon, Lisa Sanchez, Kathy Donahue, Ed Adelman, Perry Matchinis.

Motion failed, 1-5.

Contingency: Perry Matchinis asked the First Selectman if Contingency needed an increase due to the various uncertainties related to the pandemic. First Selectman Cahill recommended level funding at \$15,000.

Miscellaneous: Chairman Sanchez reviewed the history of the town's association with C.A.T.S. Northeast, noting the success of the program in dealing with feral cats.

Motion: Lisa Sanchez, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to maintain funding for C.A.T.S. Northeast at \$500. Motion carried unanimously.

First Selectman Cahill reported that the Selectmen have not taken a position yet on whether or not there will be a Fall Fest, suggesting that Contingency can fund the festival if it takes place. Treasurer Rodriguez asked that a minimal amount remain to maintain the line item.

Motion: Perry Matchinis, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to reduce the line item for Fall Festival to \$100.

After Kathi Newcombe recommended that the motion clearly state that the rationale for defunding the Fall Fest is due to the unlikelihood of having it, and not a lack of support, Mr. Matchinis withdrew his motion.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to reduce the line item for Fall Fest to \$100 because of the unlikelihood, due to Covid 19, that it will be held; and if it is held, money from Contingency will be used to fund it. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board recessed at 8:19PM. The Meeting reconvened at 8:23PM.

Capital & Non-Recurring: Kathy Donahue suggested that these accounts, with the exception of Land Acquisition which is funded annually per town ordinance, and Revaluation, which is required, be frozen this year as in prior years during difficult economic times. She asked First Selectman Cahill for his recommendation. He reiterated his position on a minimalist approach to projects this year, but left the ultimate decision to the finance board on funding the accounts. He concurred that the General Fund, or a low interest loan, might be used for major projects if necessary. Treasurer Rodriguez provided the amounts in the following accounts: \$4661 in Trucks & Equipment; \$88,587 in Open Space Acquisition; \$123,000 for Fire Trucks; \$72,000 for Ambulances; \$500 for Solar Energy/Efficiency, though there was no information available on what this fund is specifically used for; and \$40,290 in the elementary school's CNR account. Nick Brown suggested that the funding for accounts be reduced rather than eliminated, suggesting \$10,000 for Trucks & Equipment, \$6000 for Building Maintenance, \$10,000 for Fire Trucks, and \$5000 for Solar Energy/Efficiency. Perry Matchinis, advocating for consistency, said that the Town and the school should rely on low interest loans, if necessary, this year. As the Town is not earning substantial interest, Nick Brown agreed, as did Ed Adelman due to this year's financial circumstances.

Motion: Kathy Donahue, seconded by Perry Matchinis, to reduce the funds in the CNR accounts to zero, with the exception of Land Acquisition, Revaluation, and \$2000 in the Solar Energy/Efficiency Account. Motion carried unanimously.

First Selectman Cahill confirmed that he has received no further information on revenues or when the legislative session will convene.

Motion: Kathy Donahue, seconded by Nick Brown, to approve a \$5,274,820 budget for FY2020-21. Motion carried unanimously.

d. Discuss Board of Finance Access to Town Website

First Selectman Cahill supported Kathy Donahue's request that the budget be presented on the front page of the Town website prior to the public hearing. He also suggested that, for the long term, the Board of Finance have its own website linked to the Town's.

New Business:

a. Discuss Assessing CNR Accounts

Chairman Sanchez suggested that the boards of Selectmen and Finance revisit the issue of transferring funds, particularly those in the Ambulance CNR Account, periodically as the pandemic and its restrictions lift or intensify.

b. Discuss and Possibly Act on Dissemination of Budget Information

Kathy Donahue expressed her opinion on the importance of disseminating information on the budget prior to the Public Hearing. She relayed the costs of a flyer mailed to all residents. Other suggestions included making copies available outside of Town Hall, the Library, and in the Post Office. Ms. Donahue volunteered to develop information for distribution, and to send the draft to members for review. Approval would require a Special Meeting.

Citizen Comments: none.

Suggestions for Next Agenda:

Suggestions for the next agenda are to be sent to the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, or the Recording Secretary. There was discussion on holding the Regular Meeting immediately following the Public

Hearing. First Selectman Cahill reminded members of the necessity of setting the mil rate in a timely manner in order for the tax bills to be distributed.

Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting: Public Hearing on June 10, 2020 at 6PM.

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 10PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott Arriola
Recording Clerk