

Town of Hampton  
Board of Finance  
Regular Meeting  
May 8, 2024  
7PM

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:03PM.

**Roll Call:** Kathy Donahue, Nick Brown, Ed Adelman, Joan Fox, Diane Gagnon (virtually), Kathi Newcombe, Stan Crawford.

Staff and Others Present: First Selectman Allan Cahill, Selectman John Tillinghast, Treasurer Ellen Rodriguez, Hampton Elementary School Board of Education Vice-Chairman Mark Becker, Recording Secretary Dayna McDermott-Arriola  
Kathi Newcombe was seated for Judy Buell at her request.

**Citizen Comments:** none.

### **Approval of Minutes**

**Motion:** Kathi Newcombe, seconded by Ed Adelman, to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 10, 2024 with the following amendments: under Regional District #11 “Hampton’s assessment, \$1,667,892, based on enrollment, is the lowest of the three towns”; under Hampton Elementary School, “the Educational Cost Sharing grant, frozen during the period of the Covid pandemic, will result in substantial cuts over the next seven years, which *may* be even more significant due to *changes* in school enrollment; under Correspondence “the HVAC system *reviewed by Eversource was received*”; under Preliminary Discussion of FY2024-2025 Budget “some line items, previously covered by American Rescue Program Act funds, will have to be covered by the Town now, *such as the KB Ambulance Service and expenses for the Fire Department equipment*”. Motion carried unanimously, Nick Brown, Ed Adelman and Joan Fox abstaining.

### **Reports/Actions**

**First Selectman:** First Selectman Cahill announced the Board of Selectmen’s appointment of Regina DeCesare as an alternate on the Board of Finance, replacing Alyssa Languth whose term ends in June. He also announced that the RD#11 budget proposal failed at the May 7 referendum. He reported on the retirement of, and replacement for, the Town’s web-host. He also reported the search process of finding a replacement for the Director of the Northeastern CT Council of Governments (NECCOG) who retired. Mr. Cahill reported on a contract for the painting of the exterior of the Community Center, and that Route 97 will be partially closed next week until mid-August for the Fuller Brook Bridge project, suggesting that residents use North Bigelow and Station roads and noting that the signs direct drivers to alternate State highways as the State is disallowed from offering local roads for detours. Mr. Cahill reported a generous donation by resident Paul Cichon toward the purchase of the fire truck, which will, along with the down payment and interest earned, cover approximately 75% of the amount required for the purchase. He also reported that the \$500,000 check for the deposit he hand-delivered to Firematic was subsequently lost when the company mailed it to Florida. As a result, Chairman Donahue contacted Treasurer Rodriguez to close all Town accounts and open new ones as a precaution. Reportedly, the Town will be reimbursed for interest during this period, related administrative time, and bank charges for opening the new accounts.

Ed Adelman questioned the appointment of Regina DeCesare as Ms. Languth was a Democrat, stating that replacements are usually of the same political party; however, Ms. DeCesare stated that she is unaffiliated, and Chairman Donahue reminded members that during the last municipal election, citizens weighed in on Ms. DeCesare serving on the Board of Finance when she garnered a substantial amount of votes, coming within a small margin of 26 votes, for a seat on the finance board.

**Tax Collector:** The monthly report was received and distributed.

**Treasurer:** Treasurer Rodriguez requested several transfers.

**Motion:** Nick Brown, seconded by Joan Fox, to approve the following transfers: \$16 to # 6006-06 Assessor Computer Support from # 6006-11 Assessor Web Hosting; \$720 to # 6007-04 Town Hall Fire Extinguisher from # 6007-03 Town Hall Maintenance; \$28 to # 6009-03 Election Training from # 6009-02 Election Other Workers Pay; \$420 to # 6009-04 Election Postage from # 6009-02 Election Other Workers Pay; \$28 to # 6201-06 Safety from # 6201-04 Gasoline; \$214 to # 6201-07 Town Garage Maintenance from # 6201-03 Road Maintenance Payroll OT. Motion carried unanimously.

The request to transfer \$1983 to # 6001-12 Tax Collector Misc. from # 7000 Contingency was tabled till the next meeting with the proper forms submitted.

Treasurer Rodriguez also reported that, to date, there is \$850,397, or 15.9%, in the undesignated fund balance. Ms. Rodriguez also distributed updated information on the Town's bank accounts, and it was decided to add a discussion of possible transfers to the Agenda.

### **Boards of Education:**

**Regional District #11:** Chairman Donahue reported that Andy Snarzynski was hired as the new Superintendent for the Central Office, serving Parish Hill Middle/High School and Chaplin Elementary School; though the motion did not specify the amount of time, Hampton Elementary School Board of Education Vice-Chairman clarified that the appointment was for a .8, or four day, position.

**Hampton Elementary School:** Chairman Donahue reported that the Board of Education is meeting on May 9 to appoint Mr. Skarzynski as Superintendent of Hampton Elementary School, stating that, since the position was originally budgeted for .4, or two days per week, the proposal would probably be altered accordingly. Mr. Becker confirmed that Mr. Skarzynski, who has been serving as the interim Superintendent, stated that one day per week for the school was ample. Ms. Donahue also stated that she is still waiting for information to confirm enrollment and the additional information requested.

### **Board of Finance Committees**

**Policies and Procedures Committee:** none.

**Correspondence:** Chairman Donahue reported receipt of financial reports from the schools, the updated Town government budget, and information on the Suspense List and the Dairy Farm Abatement.

### **Old Business**

#### **a. Update on Annual Reports**

Chairman Donahue reported receipt of all contributions with the exception of the schools due to administrative transitions.

#### **b. Discuss and Possible Action on Budget Workshop Dates**

Chairman Donahue reported that she has requested from the Superintendent the information she listed at the last budget workshop meeting, listing them once again:

- matrices for the certified and non-certified staff along with totals including grant funding;
- teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, nurses, janitorial, psychological services, speech and occupational therapists, bus and any other contracts for the 2024-25 proposal;
- class schedules for specials -- art, music, gym, resource room, psychological, and other therapies;
- special education paraprofessional schedules including IEP total hours and needs breakdown by categories (speech, occupational, psychological, and any other categories) -- this does not require identifying or personal information of students;
- current legal expenses and breakdown and anticipated expenses for next year;
- a budget version that reflects a 3% raise for non-certified staff, and a .2, one day per week, adjustment to the Superintendent's line item.

Ms. Donahue also asked school officials to review actuals for any anticipated surplus funds from this year which could be used to help offset next year's budget purchases.

Ms. Donahue also reviewed the State's Educational Cost Sharing formula, previously frozen during the Covid pandemic, which will decrease revenue for our Town by approximately \$83,500 per year, eventually resulting in a decrease of \$584,801 in the next seven years, noting that this does not include changes in enrollment. Some members questioned the State's intent to continue with the projected amounts; Ms. Donahue explained that the districts deemed as requiring additional revenue will be receiving their new amounts over the course of two years, while the State is giving the Towns deemed to require less, seven years to incrementally decrease their revenue accordingly. Ms. Donahue noted that, currently, the school's legal expenses are approximately \$13,000 over-budget, but there will be savings in the Superintendent's salary, as the interim Superintendent has suggested that one day per week, rather than the two days budgeted, is sufficient.

In response to Nick Brown's question on the Chairman's "game plan", and Ed Adelman's question on the Chairman providing information she attains through attendance at meetings, Ms. Donahue said that all of the finance board's decisions should consider the Superintendent's responses to the requested information, some of which she received that afternoon, which she read, and will forward, to members. Upon request, she also once again read her list of requests, which will also be forwarded to members.

In terms of the budget process timelines, First Selectman Cahill stated that he hopes to schedule a Town Meeting in early June with a referendum vote in mid-June. Nick Brown stated that he would like the tax bills to be sent on time, but Ms. Donahue reminded him that, with the defeat of the RD#11 budget, those numbers will not be available until that budget is approved by referendum. By general consent it was decided to schedule the next budget workshop on May 15 at 7PM and to tentatively schedule a Public Hearing at that time. Kathi Newcombe reviewed the finance board's by-law timeline, which stipulate that a two week notice is required for the Public Hearing, which must be held no less than two weeks prior to the Town Meeting.

### **c. Preliminary Budget Discussion**

Members reviewed the Town Government's line items. First Selectman Cahill explained that the additional costs in communication, for the alert system, and computer support, due to the failed Homeland Security Audit, is already in place and being paid with Contingency funds. The Town Clerk's Computer/Equipment line will be reduced by using this year's surplus for the purchase. Chairman Donahue suggested that department review their actuals to ascertain possible surpluses in this year's budget. To Joan Fox's question on increases in computer support, Treasurer Rodriguez explained that these are for software. There was much discussion on the Conservation Commission's request for \$40,875. While members agreed to remove the \$10,000 for Land Acquisition, as this amount is already in the Capital & Non-Recurring (CNR) section of the proposed budget, the \$10,000 requested for legal advice regarding unimproved Town roads, and the \$3,500 for bird blinds, the Commission will be asked to submit quotes for signs and additional details on crossings. The finance board reduced the Inland Wetland Clerk's line by \$500, based on actuals, and removed the \$3000 line item for Board of Finance Legal, adding \$1,500 to the Town Counsel line of \$6,000 with the stipulation that the finance board may need independent counsel if there's a conflict with the Board of Selectmen which would have to come from Contingency. Chairman Donahue reminded members that the American Recovery Program Act funds previously applied to the Fire Department Equipment and Ambulance line items have been spent, adding \$12,800 and \$36,400, respectively, to the FY2024-2025 budget. It was decided to fund the \$50,000 for Fire Department Volunteer Incentive and remove that amount from the Fire Department CNR Account. Mr. Cahill explained that the increases in Public Works were due to the need to replace culverts resulting from this year's rain storms. It was noted that the Seniors did not submit a budget request, and that the Recreation Commission will be asked to check their balance against their request. There was also discussion of the Youth Sports account, which has money remaining in it. Members Joan Fox and Ms. Donahue expressed interest in the library acquiring E-services, though Ms. Donahue said she would check to see if this would count toward grants dependent on participation. Treasurer Rodriguez explained that the line items for Collection Agency and LOCIP Expenses are off-set by their respective revenue line items. Chairman Donahue requested five years of budget actuals for review.

### **New Business**

#### **a. Discuss and Possible Action on Suspense List**

The Suspense List and accompanying explanation and information was distributed.

**Motion:** Ed Adelman, seconded by Kathi Newcombe, to approve the Suspense List. Motion carried unanimously

#### **b. Discuss and Possible Action on Dairy Farm Abatements**

Information on the Dairy Farm Abatements was distributed.

**Motion:** Ed Adelman, seconded by Nick Brown, to approve Dairy Farm Abatements for Clark W. Woodmansee III Trust Agreement and Eva South Farm LLC at a rate of 25%. Motion carried, Kathi Newcombe abstaining.

### **Additions to the Agenda:**

**Motion:** Nick Brown, seconded by Joan Fox, to discuss and possibly act on the transfer of funds from a Money Market account to a STIF account. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Discussion and Possible Action on the Transfer of Funds from a Money Market Account to a Short Term Investment Fund (STIF) Account**

Treasurer Rodriguez distributed information on all of the Town's accounts, including interest rates and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) protection. There was concern expressed on the amount of money still at risk. Approximately 2.3 million of the Town's funds are not FDIC insured, \$912,610 in STIF accounts. Treasurer Rodriguez will submit an updated version of the accounts at the next meeting, after the suggested transfer and the replacement payment to Firematic.

**Motion:** Nick Brown, seconded by Joan Fox, to transfer \$200,000 from the Money Market Account to the STIF Account. Motion carried unanimously.

**Citizen Comments:** none.

**Suggestions for Next Agenda:** Members were encouraged to send suggestions to the Chairman.

**Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting:** Budget Workshop May 15 at 7PM in the Community Room of Town Hall.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business to come before the Board, the Meeting adjourned at 9:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott Arriola  
Recording Secretary

*This is a draft version of the Minutes until approved by the Board of Finance.*