

Town of Hampton
Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
December 13, 2023
6:30PM

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:32PM.

Roll Call: Kathy Donahue, Ed Adelman, Kathi Newcombe, Stan Crawford.

Staff and Others Present: Selectman Bob Grindle, Treasurer Ellen Rodriguez, Hampton Elementary School Board of Education Chairman Rose Bisson, Recording Secretary Dayna McDermott-Arriola
Chairman Donahue seated Kathi Newcombe and Stan Crawford for Nick Brown and Diane Gagnon, at their requests.

Citizen Comments: none.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Kathi Newcombe, seconded by Ed Adelman, to approve the Minutes of the Special Meeting of November 15, 2023 with the following amendment: under Citizen Comments “Kathi Newcombe mentioned that two former *members* of the Board of Finance, Dan Meade and Jeff Clermont, *former Chairman*, recently passed away.” Motion carried unanimously, Stan Crawford abstaining.

Motion: Ed Adelman, seconded by Kathi Newcombe, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of October 11, 2023. Motion passed unanimously, Stan Crawford and Kathi Newcombe abstaining.

Ed Adelman stated that, after review of the October 11 Minutes, he found that the information on the Hampton Elementary School’s HVAC system was accurately recorded, but suggested that the finance board refrain from recording details of projects in the Minutes prior to formal presentations and plans. Chairman Donahue responded that the information she reported on, which formed the basis of Mr. Adelman’s initial concern, was presented at a Board of Education committee meeting.

Reports/Actions

First Selectman: First Selectman Cahill reported that the fiscal audit is currently taking place, though an extension might be needed, and a technical audit of Town Hall is also underway. He also reported that the Town has received the enumeration information from the two schools, and that discussion on the elementary school’s HVAC system continues. The highway department truck, for which the Town approved its purchase, will be delivered soon, fences have been installed at the Hammond Hill preserve, and the State has announced its plan to pave Route 97 next summer, from south of Route 6 to Route 14. Mr. Cahill also reported that the Transfer Station is in need of new trash compactors, a cost of approximately \$25,000 to be shared with the Town of Scotland, and that the estimated cost of the Fire Department’s alarm system is \$9,800.

Tax Collector: Chairman Donahue will distribute the monthly report she received from the Tax Collector, which reported the collection of \$2,352,363, or 58.2% of \$4,041,656, significantly higher than the previous two years at 54.08% and 54.31% respectively. As 2nd installment letters for real estate and personal property were mailed November 29th, the agency expects a continued increase in collections with an anticipated spike in December. The Tax Collector also reported a large increase in Prior Year taxes, directly related to the 14 “Identify for Tax Sale” letters sent, which resulted in the collection of \$61,438.21 in five weeks. This was 77.26% of the total owed; only four accounts were sent to the Tax Sale Attorney. The collection agency is also credited with the higher Prior Year collections of \$63,114 in the last five months, substantially higher than last year’s \$23,422 and \$25,039 of two years ago. The report also noted that “Hampton has a pending lawsuit against Huntington National Bank which is approximately 10% of the levy for the 2022, 2021, and 2020 Grand Lists. The total tax due (without interest and fees) is \$1,006,220.84 for the 3 years”.

Treasurer: Treasurer Rodriguez requested four transfers.

Motion: Stan Crawford, seconded by Ed Adelman, to transfer: \$400 to #6008-08 Selectman Communications from #6000-05 Selectman Mileage; \$278 to #6001-12 Tax Collector Miscellaneous from #6001-08 Tax Collector Postage; \$26 to #6009-04 Election Postage/Supplies from #6009-02 Election Other Workers Pay; \$82 to #6013-17 Community Center Supplies/Maintenance from #6013-03 Town Hall Electricity. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer Rodriguez recommended the transfer of \$400,000 from Berkshire Bank Small Cities Miscellaneous Income account to Centreville Bank Money Market Savings Small Cities Miscellaneous Income.

Motion: Kathi Newcombe, seconded by Stan Crawford, to transfer \$400,000 from Berkshire Bank Small Cities Miscellaneous Income account to Centreville Bank Money Market Savings Small Cities Miscellaneous Income. Motion carried unanimously.

At Kathi Newcombe's request, Treasurer Rodriguez agreed to adjust formatting of reports so that the financial information is included on a single page.

Boards of Education:

Chairman Donahue reported receipt of the schools' monthly financial reports and enumerations.

Regional District #11: Chairman Donahue reported that the Board of Education recently conducted an expulsion hearing.

Hampton Elementary School: Chairman Donahue reported that a December 11 Special Meeting of the Board of Education approved the cleaning of HVAC vents at the school, though she did not receive information on the funding.

Board of Finance Committees

Policies and Procedures Committee: No report.

Correspondence: Chairman Donahue reported receipt of financial reports from the schools, the Tax Collector and Hometown Firefighters.

Old Business

a. Update on Contributions to Annual Report

Chairman Donahue reported that requests for contributions to the Annual Report were sent to all reporting agencies, requesting responses by February 5, 2024 to allow ample time to collect, proof, and publish the Report.

New Business:

a. Discuss and Act on Regular Meeting Dates for 2024

There was discussion on the convenience for members and citizens of a 6:30 versus a 7PM meeting time.

Motion: Stan Crawford, seconded by Kathi Newcombe, to schedule the 2024 Regular Meeting dates for the second Wednesday of every month at 7PM. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Donahue noted that the January Meeting will be a Special Meeting.

b. Discuss and Act on Budget Requests and Timelines

Chairman Donahue stated that the requests for agency budgets will be sent in accordance with the timeline established in the by-laws.

Additions to Agenda

Motion: Kathi Newcombe, seconded by Stan Crawford, to add the amendments to the July 12, 2023 and August 9, 2023 Meeting Minutes per the Auditor's recommendations. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion: Kathi Newcombe, seconded by Stan Crawford, to add a discussion of the Fire Department's truck. Motion carried unanimously.

Amendment of Minutes for July 12, 2023 and August 9, 2023

Motion: Kathi Newcomer, seconded by Ed Adelman, to amend the July 12, 2023 Minutes as follows under Treasurer's Report: "Motion Nick Brown, seconded by Judy Buell, to approve the following transfers *for FY2022-2023*"; and to amend the August 9, 2023 Minutes as follows under Treasurer's Report: "Motion Stan Crawford, seconded by Kathi Newcombe, to approve the following transfer and department request for budget appropriations *for fiscal year 2022-2023*". Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion of Fire Department Truck

Chairman Donahue reported on some details regarding a new fire truck, recently discussed at a meeting of the Fire Department that she attended. The current truck is 30 years old, which is the life expectancy of a new truck. The Department is considering seven different trucks from five different companies, ranging in price from \$925,000 to \$1.1 million. Some offers include annual inspections and payment options. Ms. Donahue reported that there is \$159,058.68 in the Capital and Non-recurring account intended for its purchase, and another \$395,000 in American Recovery funds that can be used toward the purchase, for a total of \$554,000. There is the possibility of grant funding, though sometimes, Ms. Donahue said, these are dependent on the number of calls. She said the Town will also have to look into financing. First Selectman Cahill stated that the trucks are built to order, with a two to three year build time, and the cost will increase due to the new emissions standards. Ms. Donahue reminded members of our good fortune in having a volunteer Fire Department.

To Stan Crawford's question, membership was clarified as follows: Judy Buell and Joan Fox were elected to six-year terms which expire in 2027; and Ed Adelman and Nick Brown were elected to six-year terms which expire in 2029.

Citizen Comments:

Hampton Elementary School Board of Education Chairman Rose Bisson reported on the recently negotiated teachers' contract, which awarded a 12% raise to certified staff over a period of three years. The agreement, which was reached without arbitration and its consequent costs, includes raises and step increments and no increases to staff contributions to insurance premiums as members are already paying amounts above the State average. Chairman Bisson also reported that the cost of the HVAC vent cleaning will be covered by a grant.

Suggestions for Next Agenda: Chairman Donahue urged members to forward suggestions for the next meeting.

Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting: January 10 at 7PM in the Community Room of Town Hall.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Board, the Meeting adjourned at 7:10PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott Arriola
Recording Secretary

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