

Town of Hampton
Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
April 13, 2022
7:00 PM

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

Roll Call: Kathy Donahue, Diane Gagnon, Ed Adelman, Nick Brown, Joan Fox, Kathi Newcombe, Stan Crawford
Staff and Others Present: Selectmen Allan Cahill and Bob Grindle, Treasurer Ellen Rodriguez, Fire Chief Rich Schenk, Recording Secretary Dayna McDermott-Arriola.

Seating of Alternates

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to seat Stan Crawford for Judy Buell. Motion carried unanimously.

Citizen Comments: none.

Presentations:

Fire Department: Chief Richard Schenk presented the department's detailed proposed budget request which decreased from \$74,350 to \$71,475. He cautioned, however, that the oldest engine tanker recently experienced a short in its electric system, which was dealt with before the building was jeopardized but caused serious damage to the truck, which is 27 years old. He stated that he doesn't feel the need to budget for emergencies because of the good relationship the department has with the current administration, including the Board of Finance, who respond to the department's needs. To Stan Crawford's question on the price of a new truck, Mr. Schenk estimated a half of a million, and Chairman Donahue stated that there is \$65,134.22 in the Fire Department's Capital and Non-Recurring fund. First Selectman Cahill noted that the Town of Eastford recently purchased a tanker truck for \$600,000, and that in the future towns might need to share services due to fiscal and human resource constraints. Mr. Schenk stated that, with some of the new members, our current Fire Department is well staffed for at least the next five years.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to approve the Minutes of the March 9, 2022 Regular Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to approve the Minutes of the March 24, 2022 Budget Workshop Session. Motion carried unanimously.

Reports/Actions

First Selectman: First Selectman Cahill reported that the Department of Transportation has scheduled an emergency meeting for April 14 in response to the recent accidents and fatalities on Route 6. He relayed that, along with repairing the road, the DOT plans to install rumble strips. He also announced that the reports of both the Governance and Programming sub-committees of the Ad Hoc Committee for Interdistrict Cost Sharing are nearing completion. To Ed Adelman's question, Mr. Cahill said that the reports should be presented to the public in three to six weeks.

Tax Collector: The Tax Collector reported a net collection of \$3,553,574.18, or 91.2%, in February's report.

Treasurer: Treasurer Rodriguez requested six transfers.

Motion: Stan Crawford, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to approve the following transfers: \$570 to #6004 Town Counsel from #7000 Contingency; \$337 to #6010-02 P & Z Legal Notices from #6010-01 P & Z Enforcement Officer; \$176 to #6010-08 P & Z Legal/Engineering from #6010-01 P & Z Enforcement Officer; \$1607 to #6013-13 Fire Dept. Oil from #6013-15 Community Center Cleaning; \$2704 to #6201-07 Town Garage Maintenance from #6201-03 Road Maintenance Payroll OT; \$2368 to #6201-09 Equipment Maintenance from #6201-03 Road Maintenance Payroll OT. Motion carried unanimously

To Chairman Donahue's question on legal fees and Town Garage expenses, First Selectman Cahill stated that there were three separate legal expenses – attorney fees for the Ad-Hoc Committee, and two lawsuits concerning the solar panels and the campground, and that the Town Garage costs were due to HVAC issues. To Diane Gagnon's question, Mr. Cahill said that the crew that cleans the Town Hall cleans the Community Center, though the latter hasn't been cleaned in a while.

Treasurer Rodriguez notified members that a Certificate of Deposit has matured, and that the transfer of funds is reaching the cumulative total of \$20,000, the threshold allowed prior to Town Meeting approval.

Boards of Education:

Regional District #11: Joan Fox reported that there were no tri-town residents in attendance at the public hearing for the proposed budget, which increased by 2.14%, largely due to the costs of health insurance and special education. She stated that she is one among a group planning to discuss with legislators a change in the formula for special education reimbursement, an initiative for which Chairman Donahue offered her support. Ms. Fox reported that the 9th and 10th graders were on a trip to Washington, D. C. and that the Empty Bowls event, which benefits the Soup Kitchen and other charitable organizations, will take place on April 29, with the public invited to make pottery bowls at Parish Hill on Saturday, the 16th and the 23rd.

Hampton Elementary School: Since the school board has not met since their presentation to the finance board, there was nothing new to report.

Board of Finance Committees

Policies and Procedures Committee: Chairman Donahue reported that the committee is still waiting for the information requested of the Hampton Elementary School's Business Coordinator.

Ad Hoc Committee for Inter-district Education Cost Sharing: To Mr. Cahill's report on the Committee, Chairman Donahue added that the Governance Committee is meeting on April 18 and the Programming Committee on April 21.

Correspondence: Chairman Donahue received Regional District #11's financial reports and a communication from Hampton Elementary School Superintendent Frank Olah questioning the school's enrollment figures quoted in the finance board's Minutes; Chairman Donahue responded that the figures quoted were received from Dr. Olah and explained to him that the birth rate numbers must take into account that some children will be attending the Mennonite school rather than Hampton Elementary. The finance board also received from the Tax Collector the February Tax Collector's Report and the Suspense List. The information required for the Dairy Farm Tax Abatement was sent to the Tax Collector, and the letter approved by the finance board was sent to Wilcox and Reynolds Insurance; Ed Adelman suggested that the finance board's attorney review any response the finance board receives. The finance board also received a correspondence from Jessie Samios suggesting that, based on the increases in utility costs, the rental fees for town-owned properties should be increased.

Old Business

a. Update and Possible Action on Fire Department Length of Service Award Program

Chairman Donahue has discussed with the Board of Selectmen catching up with the funding of the LOSAP account, at an approximate rate of 75%, possibly using the money now deposited in some of the Certificates of Deposit, which will mature over the course of the next three months. Nick Brown asked if the Town intended to continue with Hometown Insurance. First Selectman Cahill expressed his confidence in the company, reminding members that they alerted the Town to the deficiencies in the account. Chairman Donahue concurred, adding that the Fire Department now receives reports from Hometown, which has also committed to meeting at least once a year with the finance board. Mr. Brown stated that, while he agreed that Hometown could continue to disperse the funds, a change in the investment component might be financially beneficial. Chairman Donahue stated that index funds are not insured and that she would need to check with the Town Auditor and the Office of Policy and Management to see if municipal funds can be invested that way. She also expressed her opinion that, as some investment opportunities pose a risk factor, the taxpayer should be able to vote on investing municipal funds into a less secure account. Mr. Brown suggested that the finance board obtain competitive quotes for investments. To Kathi Newcombe's question, Treasurer Rodriguez stated that the administration fees for the Length of Service Award Program, which have not been paid this year, have traditionally been deducted from the plan. First Selectman Cahill suggested that a line item be added to the budget to cover this expense.

b. Discussion of FY2022-23 Budget

Chairman Donahue stated that the Municipal Budget will be reviewed, and a public hearing scheduled, after the Regional District #11 budget, which is subject to a May 3 referendum, is approved. She suggested that some budget items might be covered by American Recovery funds.

New Business

a. Review and Approval of 2021 Suspense List

Chairman Donahue confirmed the accuracy of the total amounts recorded.

Motion: Joan Fox, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to approve the Suspense List. Motion carried unanimously.

Additions to the Agenda

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to add discussion and action on renewal of the Certificate of Deposit and discussion on in-person versus virtual meetings to the Agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

Discuss and Act on Renewal of Certificate of Deposit

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to renew the \$110,038.66 Certificate of Deposit with Berkshire Bank for three months. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion of In-Person versus Virtual Meetings

Chairman Donahue explained the difficulty in facilitating hybrid meetings and the need to purchase additional storage if ZOOM meetings return, noting that the members were polled regarding their comfort level before returning to in-person meetings. Ed Adelman expressed concern for the health and safety of members and the public with the recent rise in cases. Ms. Fox asked if masks could be required, and Mr. Cahill relayed that many local places require masks of unvaccinated people. It was decided that decisions on the method of meeting would be made on an individual basis.

Citizen Comments: none.

Suggestions for Next Agenda: Review of the Annual Report and the Municipal Budget. A meeting with the Auditor, who will attend virtually, will also be scheduled.

Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting: Chairman Donahue alerted members that the Regular Meeting on May 11 at 7PM may need to be rescheduled as a Special Meeting due to a possible conflict.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Board, the Meeting adjourned at 8:04PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott Arriola
Recording Secretary

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