

Town of Hampton
Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
April 14, 2021
7:00 PM
Zoom Meeting

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

Roll Call: Kathy Donahue, Diane Gagnon, Ed Adelman, Nick Brown, Jessie Samios, Kathi Newcombe. Staff and Others Present: First Selectman Allan Cahill, Selectman Bob Grindle, Treasurer Ellen Rodriguez, Town Clerk Shannon Haddad, Green Energy Committee Chairman Kate Donnelly, Recording Secretary Dayna McDermott-Arriola.

Citizen Comments: none.

Presentations:

Green Energy Committee: Chairman Donnelly presented the committee's request for \$2,500, an amount consistent since the formation of the committee in 2011. She explained that the funds are used for general education for the community, naming a film series and a citizens' guide as examples, and instructional materials for the elementary school. Currently the committee is working on composting and recycling efforts and applying for a DEEP grant which will provide residents with affordable compost bins.

Town Clerk: Town Clerk Shannon Haddad presented her request for \$60,151; there was discussion regarding the Assistant's compensation, which increased from \$2500 to \$6000. Ms. Haddad explained that this reflects actual hours and is largely due to an increase in real estate transactions, which has also raised the revenue line substantially and which is expected, per her research on trends, to continue. Kathi Newcombe asked if the Assistant was appointed by the Board of Selectmen as required by ordinance. Ms. Haddad said she was unaware of the ordinance, and though neither she nor her assistant were appointed by the Selectmen, she would speak with them so that the Office is in compliance. Chairman Donahue inquired as to the rate and hours worked weekly, noting that Town Hall has been closed for over a year and that Assistants in the past covered the Office in the absence of the Town Clerk due to training, vacations, and sick time. Ms. Haddad stated that the pay rate is \$17 per hour, that the Assistant works in the Office on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:30 to 2:30, with additional hours during the election cycle, and that while her predecessor used resources within Town Hall for assistance, namely the Assessor, she does not have that option for day to day operations. Jessie Samios noted that the budgeted amount covers seven hours per week. Chairman Donahue expressed concern that the Assistant, without formal training, covers the office when the Town Clerk is not present, and asked if he is willing to receive training. Ms. Haddad was reluctant to speak for him, though she stated he does not seem interested in pursuing courses.

Though they received an invitation and the agenda, there were no representatives from the Fire Department and the Building Department in attendance to present their budget requests.

Approval of Minutes:

March 3 Special Meeting:

Motion: Diane Gagnon, seconded by Ed Adelman, to approve the Minutes of the March 3, 2021 Special Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Jessie Samios noted that she contacted asbestos abatement contractors for the Fletcher Memorial Library but did not receive a response.

March 10 Regular Meeting: Since some members did not receive the Minutes, Approval was tabled.

Reports/Actions

First Selectman: First Selectman Cahill reported that the Scott Air Packs have arrived and that the contract with KB Ambulance has been renewed at an increase of \$2000, though this annual cost of \$53,600 is not reflected yet in the draft version of the budget which still lists the previously anticipated amount of \$110,000. Mr. Cahill explained that KB Ambulance expects to use the funds from the American Rescue Plan Act to compensate for their \$170,000 deficit resulting from decreased calls. He expressed the hope for consistent numbers in the future to facilitate 3-5 year contracts. Mr. Cahill also reported that a paving contract has been awarded for Station Road, and that the Office of Policy and Management's Economic Development Committee has approved reconstruction plans for the tennis courts using the STEAP grant funds awarded to the Town. Mr. Cahill announced that the Selectmen decided against assembling for Memorial Day this year, that there will be a tax auction for delinquent properties on June 2, and on May 26, the Planning & Zoning Commission will hold a virtual hearing on affordable housing. Though no further meetings of the committee to discuss collaboration between Hampton and Scotland elementary schools have convened, the schools' superintendents met, and Scotland has offered a rate of \$7,800 per student to tuition Hampton students to Scotland Elementary School.

Tax Collector: The Tax Collector report, which was distributed, notes a 97.3% collection rate to date.

Treasurer: Treasurer Rodriguez requested three transfers.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Jessie Samios, to transfer: \$75 to #6013-17 Community Center Supplies/Maintenance from #6013-11 Community Center Oil; \$1320 to #6100-10 Building Inspector Clerk from #7000 Contingency; \$558 to #6010-00 P & Z Clerk from #6010-08 P & Z Legal/Engineering. Motion carried unanimously.

After Treasurer Rodriguez reported on the municipal protection on the Town's current bank accounts, it was agreed to discuss Certificates of Deposit at the next meeting. To Kathi Newcombe's question, Treasurer Rodriguez replied that State Law provides for the Town Clerk's use of a discretionary account. She also explained that the function of #66900, Reconciliation Discrepancies, is meant to balance voided payroll checks with deposits, per the auditor's suggestion.

Boards of Education:

Hampton Elementary School: Chairman Donahue reported that the school board at its last meeting adopted a \$2,118,230 budget, a slight increase over last year, though several questions were raised, specifically on staffing, the need for three buses, and the use of grant funding. She is compiling questions for the Board of Education; members may submit additional questions as well.

Regional District #11: Chairman Donahue reported that the school board adopted a \$6,532,372 budget and a public hearing is scheduled for May 3, followed by a May 4 referendum from noon to 8PM. She stated that although the budget represents a slight increase, the school has \$556,308 in unrestricted, unassigned funds, \$300,013 from the American Rescue Plan Act, and unspent money from the earlier Covid relief funds. The school board has been asked to apply some of the surplus to the towns' assessments.

Board of Finance Committees

Policies and Procedures Committee: Chairman Donahue announced that the auditor is still reviewing the draft version of *Accounting Policies and Procedures*. She also relayed that the auditor is available on April 26 and 28 to present the Audit. By general consent it was agreed to schedule a Special Meeting on April 28 at 7PM for the Audit Presentation.

Review and Possible Action on Approval of *Budget Management Policies and Procedures for Town Agencies*: Chairman Donahue reported that the auditor is also reviewing this document. Ed Adelman asked if the documents should also be subject to a legal review by the Town's counsel.

Chairman Donahue stated that after the auditor reviews the documents, the finance board will revise accordingly, and lastly the finance board's attorney, as fiscal matters are her area of expertise, will review the documents.

Correspondence: Chairman Donahue reported receipt of correspondence from the auditor, and from the First Selectman regarding a report from the Health Department which is now posted on the Town website. She also reported that she has communicated with Laura McCabe, Eastern Regional Tourism District Representative, on the Airline Trail Pamphlet and will be providing a list of donors for publication, and with RD#11 Superintendent Ken Henrici regarding enrollment and Hampton's assessment.

New Business

- a. Review and Approval of Board of Finance Annual Report:** tabled. First Selectman Cahill suggested that the Town Audit be mentioned in the report, and Chairman Donahue suggested that the membership of the Policies and Procedures Committee be noted.
- b. Discussion of KB Ambulance Contract:** covered during the First Selectman's Report.
- c. Discussion of Fire Department Length of Service Award Program and Fund Deficit**

Chairman Donahue reported that, in response to her request for information on the Length of Service Award Program and the Fund Deficit, Robert Sagistano, Vice President of Hometown Firefighter and EMS Services, is compiling a comprehensive Actuarial Report package and can meet virtually with the Board of Finance on May 11, 12 or 13 to answer questions. Nick Brown asked that the information be distributed at least ten days in advance of the meeting for members to adequately prepare. Chairman Donahue will distribute documentation received to date with personal information redacted. To Ed Adelman's question, Chairman Donahue affirmed that the fund deficit will definitely impact this year's budget.
- d. Discussion of Request for Proposal for Town Auditor:** Kathi Newcombe read the exceptions to the bidding requirements, which did not list the Town Auditor. Nick Brown will locate the original Request for Proposal.

Old Business

- a. Discussion and Approval of Dairy Farm Abatement Application:** Chairman Donahue distributed information from the Assessor on tax exemptions for agriculture/farming, including personal property and real estate, totaling \$603,210 in exemptions taken in Hampton. Ms. Donahue also distributed information on the Farm Abatement from the Windham Tax Collector. Applicants Eva South Farm, LLC and Clark W. Woodmansee III Trust Agreement currently take a \$205,939 in personal property and real estate exemption; the Dairy Farm Abatement at 50% for Eva South Farm, LLC and Clark W. Woodmansee III Trust Agreement would amount to \$7,357, based on the current mill rate. Chairman Donahue noted that she could not confirm the Board of Selectmen's vote on the Dairy Farm Abatement as the Minutes of their April 5, 2021 Meeting are still unavailable.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Ed Adelman, to approve the Dairy Farm Abatement at a rate of 50%.

Nick Brown advocated for continuing the traditional rate of 50%. Kathi Newcombe noted that the rate was 25% during the former administration, and Ed Adelman said that some towns do not provide the abatement, suggesting that it be reconsidered at some point. Jessie Samios stated that the exemption and the abatement total over \$12,000, and suggested that the Town offer 25% this year due to the impact of the pandemic on taxpayers' ability to pay, and revisit the abatement at a later time. Chairman Donahue expressed concern as well over the impact on this year's budget of the Fund Deficit for the Fire Department's Length of Service Award Program.

In Favor: Nick Brown

Opposed: Jessie Samios, Diane Gagnon, Kathy Donahue

Abstained: Ed Adelman

Motion failed, 1-3-1

Motion: Jessie Samios, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to approve the Dairy Farm Abatement at a rate of 25%. Motion carried unanimously.

Since both the Boards of Finance and Selectmen must approve the Dairy Farm Abatement and the rate, Jessie Samios asked what would happen if there was disagreement. Chairman Donahue stated that the Board of Selectmen will need to meet and revisit the issue.

- b. Review of *Citizens' Guide to the Town Budget*:** The amendments, that monthly meetings be noted in the timeline and that explanations of revenue sources be included, were reviewed.

Motion: Jessie Samios, seconded by Nick Brown, to approve the *Citizen's Guide to the Town Budget* as amended. Motion carried unanimously

- c. Review and Approval of *Accounting Policies and Procedures*:** Chairman Donahue reported that the auditor is reviewing the document.

Additions to Agenda: none.

Citizen Comments: Nick Brown apprised members of the efforts of the Green Energy Committee to secure a DEEP grant to provide residents with compost bins at a cost of \$20. Members will be at the Transfer Station to encourage the use of the bins, and the local Scouts will be involved in the distribution.

Suggestions for Next Agenda:

Approval of *Budget Management Policies and Procedure for Town Agencies*

Review and Approval of *Accounting Policies and Procedures*

Approval of Annual Report

Discussion of Fire Department Length of Service Award Program and Fund Deficit

Presentation of Hampton Elementary School Budget

Discussion of FY2021-22 Budget

Discussion of Certificates of Deposits

Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting: May 12, 2021, at 7PM.

A Special Meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 28 at 7PM for the Presentation of the Audit.

Chairman Donahue will contact the Hampton Elementary School Board of Education Chairman on scheduling a Meeting for the presentation of the budget.

A Meeting with the representative concerning the Fire Department Length of Service Award will also be scheduled for early May.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Board, the Meeting adjourned at 8:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott Arriola
Recording Secretary

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