

Town of Hampton
Board of Finance
Special Meeting
January 9, 2018
7:00 pm
Hampton Town Hall Community Room

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Members/Alternates Present: Jeff Clermont, Ed Adelman, Perry Matchinis, Rick Matejka, Nick Brown, Dave Fowler

Staff and Others Present: First Selectman Al Cahill, Selectmen Bob Grindle and Mike Chapel, Treasurer Ellen Rodriguez, Recording Clerk Dayna McDermott-Arriola

Chairman Clermont seated David Fowler for Mike Higgins

Citizen Comments: none.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: Rick Matejka, seconded by Nick Brown, to approve the December 12, 2017 Regular Meeting Minutes with the following amendment: to include under the Report of the First Selectman: *“Mr. Brown stated that tuition costs have increased by about 30% since the 2009 Dissolution Study, and therefore projected savings in dissolving the district have decreased significantly. The previous study predicted a savings of 3.7 mils under full dissolution of the middle and high school; now the savings are much less, due to an increased tuition rate per student, and fewer students.”* Perry Matchinis also noted that the number of alternates on the Board of Finance is determined by ordinance, which in Hampton’s case allows for three.

Motion carried 5-0, Dave Fowler abstaining.

Presentations: Chairman Clermont approved the notification to be sent to all departments requesting presentations on budget proposals, which should be sent to Chairman Clermont and the Recording Clerk and forwarded to the Treasurer. First Selectman Cahill reported that only the Inland, Wetlands & Watercourses Agency and the Seniors have submitted proposals, and that departments will be reminded of their obligation.

Reports/Actions

First Selectman: First Selectman Cahill reported that the Board of Selectmen’s monthly meeting was cancelled because of the snow storm. He praised the Department of Public Works for their response to the storm. All equipment functioned, and more sand and salt has been ordered. The window replacement project at Town Hall is complete. Mr. Cahill said that the Town will need to make a decision regarding the Circuit Breaker Program, as the State is no longer contributing 50%, or \$19,000, to fund the program which offers tax abatement for approximately two dozen elderly or disabled residents on limited incomes. The Town will need to decide whether to phase out the program after this year, or fund the entire amount. Treasurer Rodriguez explained that the financial consequence this year will be \$19,000 less in revenue.

First Selectman Cahill spoke to the issue of the Dissolution Committee’s decision to recommend against dissolving Regional District #11, and consequently, the people’s right to vote on the matter. Mr. Cahill stated that he disagrees with the recommendation, claiming that dissolving the district and tuitioning students to area high schools could save the district one and a half million a year in taxes. Mr. Cahill said that the current situation devalues our property, distorts our taxes, and skews our demographics as elderly people, rather than families, move to town. He stated his belief that those demographics are not going to change until we offer school choice. He also expressed alarm for the high rate – 25% -- of students receiving special education services at Parish Hill Middle/High School, concern over subsidizing other

towns with tuition rates as low as \$7,500 when our per pupil cost is \$25,000, and disappointment in the lack of a referendum vote for citizens, a sentiment which he said was shared by the Selectmen of the other towns and the Lieutenant Governor at a recent meeting. Mr. Cahill announced that he is not signing the check from the Town of Hampton to pay the monthly bill of approximately \$100,000 to RD#11, in the hopes that the State will pay attention to our situation, and that he took an oath to serve the financial interests of Hampton and cannot, in all good conscience, continue to sign the checks.

Chairman Clermont expressed his concern that the bill be paid and asked who is authorized to sign the checks. Treasurer Rodriguez said that, per statute, checks require the signatures of the Town Treasurer and two Selectmen. Selectman Grindle said that he has signed the check, as he views this as an obligation on the part of the Town. Selectman Chapel said he would consider signing the checks, and would most probably fulfill the town's obligation, but that he agreed with the First Selectman with regards to the need for the State to look into the situation, the exorbitant costs of education, the potential for cheaper educational options, and the fact that the taxpayers are not able to vote on the matter. He reminded members that the State will continue to reduce town funding, and that federally, the possibility of private school vouchers would place more financial pressure on Towns. Nick Brown, the finance board's representative on the committee, said that he was not pleased that, per statute, the citizens' vote was dependent on the recommendation, but defended his stance, reiterating his position on the lack of potential savings in dissolving the district. He also voiced the belief that if residents started supporting the school, students from other towns would prefer Parish Hill over Woodstock Academy due to the small school environment which affords a more individualized education and increased opportunities for students to participate in sports. Ed Adelman stated that towns are devalued when they have no school.

Tax Collector: Chairman Clermont reviewed the Tax Collector's Report, which reported deposits for the month of December of \$975.51, with \$14,784.79 in online payments, for a total of \$204,080.53 through December 31, 2017. Year to date the Town has deposited \$2,361,141.71 and received \$104,984.57 in online payments for a total of \$2,479,409.58. The Town has paid \$2,271.38 in refunds and bounced checks for \$2,433.51, leaving a net collection of \$2,474,704.69. Chairman Clermont also reviewed the two refunds totaling \$89.66 approved by the Board of Selectmen in December due to Certificates of Corrections.

Motion: Perry Matchinis, seconded by Nick Brown, to approve the Tax Collector's report. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer: Treasurer Rodriguez reported that the draft version of the audit is complete and will be forwarded to finance board members.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Rick Matejka, to approve the following transfers: \$52.00 to #6010-04 DEP Land Use Fees from #6010-07 P & Z Supplies; \$276.00 to #6013-16 Community Center Alarm from # 6013-17 Community Center Supplies/Maintenance. Motion carried unanimously.

Board of Education: none.

Board of Finance Committees:

HR Committee: none.

Fiscal Policy and Procedures Committee: none.

Correspondence: none.

Old Business

Review Board of Finance By-Laws: tabled.

New Business

Discussion of Procedure for Scheduling Budget Presentations: discussed under Budget Presentations

Discussion of Establishing Account for Fluctuations in Student Enrollment at Parish Hill: Chairman Clermont concurred with Stan Crawford's comment at the last meeting in opposition to the notion of pre-taxing residents. Ed Adelman stated that the demographics suggest that increases in student enrollment at Parish Hill are unlikely. Perry Matchinis noted that an increase in the assessment to Parish Hill would provide an opportunity, as in a previous year, for voters to decrease the Hampton Elementary School budget by the same amount.

Citizen Comment: Dave Fowler asked if the Minimum Budget Requirement had been changed. First Selectman Cahill said that the language that initially meant to decrease the MBR by the amount of the reduction in the Educational Cost Sharing Grant was eliminated.

Suggestions for Next Agenda:

Budget Presentations

Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting: February 13, 2018 at 7 p.m. in the Community Room at Town Hall.

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dayna McDermott Arriola
Recording Clerk

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

