

Town of Hampton  
Board of Finance  
Special Meeting: Budget Workshop  
May 15, 2024  
7PM

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:05PM.

**Roll Call:** Kathy Donahue, Nick Brown, Joan Fox, Ed Adelman, Judy Buell, Kathi Newcombe  
Staff and Others Present: First Selectman Allan Cahill, Selectman John Tillinghast, Hampton Elementary School Board of Education Vice-Chairman Mark Becker and member Juan Arriola, Treasurer Ellen Rodriguez, newly appointed alternate Regina DeCesare, and Recording Secretary Dayna McDermott-Arriola  
Kathi Newcombe was seated for Diane Gagnon at her request.

**Citizen Comments:**

Board of Education Vice-Chairman Mark Becker requested that the finance board members respect their roles in determining financial, rather than educational needs, when considering line items in the elementary school budget. He also stated that, though the Superintendent's position decreased from .4 to .2 after the draft version of the budget was adopted, the board intends to use some, or all, of the surplus for an administrative assistant.

Board of Education member Juan Arriola stated that the school board approved a salary of \$52 - \$53,000 for the Superintendent for a .3 position prior to negotiating a contract. He also noted that the line item for legal fees is \$13,000 - \$14,000 over budget due to representation to settle Freedom of Information violations and complaints filed with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. He also stated that raising taxes will not attract families to town.

**Discuss and Possible Action on FY2024-2025 Budget**

Chairman Donahue clarified that the Minutes of the May 9, 2024 Special Meeting of the Board of Education document that the Superintendent was hired to fill a .3 position at a rate of \$52,439 before a contract was negotiated. She questioned the need for an administrative assistant, reading from the school's recent notice that advertised a secretarial position to assist the school's principal and superintendent. From the items she requested, Ms. Donahue has only received the matrices and is still waiting for staff contracts and schedules. She is also waiting for a version of the budget that reflects a 3% raise for non-certified staff as well as the current, 3.5% version, reminding members that last year the school submitted separate versions with 4% and 5% raises. She reminded members that she always has asked for this information, as a citizen prior to membership on the Board of Finance, and does not believe that requests for this type of information constitutes overstepping, as the finance board oversees all of the town's expenses and must look at the spending plans as a whole. She noted that 509 residents are 65 years of age and older and on fixed incomes, that 775 are 55 years of age and older, and that 35% of the student population at the school qualifies for free or reduced lunch.

Chairman Donahue has also asked school officials to review the actual expenditures to date, noting there are surpluses in several line items, including substitutes, recording secretary, special education director, instructional supplies, text books and work books. She is suggesting that some of the surplus funds could be used toward next year's purchases. There was some discussion regarding whether purchases needed to be ordered, billed, or delivered in order to be included in the current year's expenses. Ms. Donahue will contact the Auditor for an answer. To Nick Brown's concern that the school's information is imperfect at this point as the spending plan has been developed for the following year, Chairman Donahue stated that she is seeking information the school used to build the budget and reminded members that she is asking officials to approach the school budget in the same manner as the town government budget, line by line.

Treasurer Rodriguez distributed the latest version of the FY2024-25 Town Government budget, which included the removal of the computer for the Town Clerk, a \$500 reduction in the Inland Wetlands Clerk line item, the removal of \$3000, and the line item itself, for the finance board's legal counsel and adding \$1500 to the Town Counsel line item, the removal of \$50,000 from the Fire Department Capital & Non-Recurring Account, and \$23,500 from the Conservation Commission's request. Chairman Donahue announced that the Conservation Commission was meeting at the same time and discussing the costs of the proposed crossing and signage. By general consent it was decided to include an additional \$800 in the Library's request to cover the cost of an E-Book service as patron participation will count toward grant funding requests. Changes to date lower the Town Government's increase to 2 – 3%. To Joan Fox's question concerning rental income, First Selectman Cahill explained that a house on East Old Route 6 which was owned by the Town has been purchased by the tenants who were paying rent, resulting in a decrease in rental revenue. He explained that the Town is renting the lower level of Town Hall for use as a school for \$1000 per month and in-kind services. This includes utilities. Mr. Cahill was asked to check the market value per square foot for the space.

Chairman Donahue reported discussions with the First Selectman and the Tax Collector concerning the deficit from the loss of revenue from the Solar Park for the last three years, \$1.16 million to date, and its inclusion on the Grand List. Though the court case has been scheduled for June, it has been subject to postponements and continuances and the Town cannot count on receiving it.

First Selectman Cahill reported that the Board of Selectmen is discussing the possibility of eliminating the Transfer Station Stickers. Though the stickers bring approximately \$12,000 in revenue, collection entails much clerical effort.

By general consent, a Budget Workshop Session will be scheduled for May 29 at 7PM if needed, and a Public Hearing will be scheduled for June 5 at 7PM, followed by a 7:15 Meeting of the Board of Finance to finalize and approve the budgets.

**Citizen Comments:**

To Danielle McGiver's question on the mill rate, Nick Brown explained the process of collecting citizen input during the Public Hearing prior to the adoption of the budget, and citizen approval of the budget by referendum vote prior to the setting of the mill rate.

Juan Arriola expressed concern at the number of students requiring special education services at the elementary school, approximately 25% of the population in comparison to a State average of 13%.

Ed Adelman said, as a retired special education teacher, his former school considered exiting special education services a success.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business to come before the Board, the Meeting adjourned at 8:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott Arriola  
Recording Secretary

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