

HAMPTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MINUTES
May 15, 2007

Budget Committee Members Present

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman
Michael Plouffe, Vice-Chairman
Rick Griffin, Selectman Representative
Jim Desrosiers, School Board Representative
Pat Collins
Victor DeMarco
Maury Friedman
Dick Hansen
Eileen Latimer
Jack Lessard
Richard Nichols
Michael Pierce
Norman Silberdick

Excused

Russ Bernstein

Chairman Woolsey called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Chairman Woolsey introduced the members of the Committee.

Mr. Lessard asked for a moment of silence for former firefighter and Harbor Master Fred Clews, Sr. and George Burgon of Burgon Tool Steel company who died this week.

Approval of Minutes – April 17, 2007

Moved by Mr. Lessard, seconded by Mr. Plouffe, to approve the Minutes of April 17, 2007.

Mr. DeMarco said he felt something should have been included in the Minutes regarding the exchange between a Committee member and the Selectman representative which resulted in the departure of the Selectman representative. Mr. Hansen said he saw no reason to make any further mention of this incident. Chairman Woolsey said all that is required in the Minutes is a recording of motions and votes. It was the consensus of the Committee to approve the Minutes as written. Motion passed.

Chairman Woolsey said there will be a great many changes in this budget year. She said she was very impressed by the new Town Manager. Chairman Woolsey said the purpose of this meeting would be to get an idea where the Committee is going this year.

Chairman Woolsey said she had written a letter to the Town Manager and Selectmen inviting them to tonight's meeting. They were not able to attend. Chairman Woolsey has issued an invitation to Chairman Moore requesting that Mr. Welch and Mr. Schwotzer join the Committee at the June 19th meeting. Chairman Woolsey said the Committee would like to receive guidance, opinions, etc. from the Manager.

Selectman's Report

Mr. Griffin said he was happy to be on the Committee. He said things will be different with the arrival of Mr. Welch and he is looking forward to good things for the citizens of Hampton.

School Board Reprot

Mr. Desrosiers said that work is being done with the Legion to install a plaque recognizing veterans of World War II at the Hampton Academy.

The current focus is now on curriculum and enrichment programs. They are going forward with the Selectmen's recommendation on audit programs.

Chairman Woolsey discussed Mr. Schwotzer's recaps through April. The recap said that a new account, 8907 0000 April'07 Storm, has been set up in Police, Fire and Public Works. These will be used to accumulate costs that will be reimbursed through grants or insurance. The Police Department is well within budget. However some costs related to the mounted patrol will have to be reduced. The Fire Department is within budget in total, but two areas, Fire Suppression OT and Vehicle Maintenance are showing the restricting effect of a default budget. The maintenance account is also being impacted by an aging pumper fleet which is not being replaced in a timely fashion.

Chairman Woolsey said she has been hearing at least a preliminary discussion on the possibility of pulling the EMT function out of the Fire Department. She said Mr. Welch seems to be looking for creative ways to manage the budget.

Chairman Woolsey discussed encumbrances. Mr. Schwotzer has said that invoices will be lapsed and the money will go back in the '06 budget. Mr. Nichols said a letter should be sent to the Selectmen asking for clarification on encumbrances.

Chairman Woolsey said she would like to ask the members of the Committee to put together a list of questions to ask Mr. Welch and Mr. Schwotzer at the June meeting.

Mr. Nichols discussed the Police Station refinancing. He said the Budget Committee had proposed this previously, but Mr. Welch has said he didn't like the idea because of the costs associated with refinancing. Mr. Nichols said it is important to look at the effects of inflation. The bottom line is that present value refinancing over 15 years instead of 5 years would cost less than \$100,000. Mr. Nichols said this issue should be looked at again. Chairman Woolsey said she did not want to burden the taxpayers with accelerated payoffs on the Police Station loan. If that loan can be restructured, the Town would then have the ability to fit in necessary bond items. Chairman Woolsey said that when engaging in building a capital project, payment should be spread over the life of the project. Mr. Silberdick said the Committee should bring this issue up again with Mr. Welch. Mr. DeMarco said collection expense needs to be taken into consideration. This needs to be clarified.

Mr. Silberdick said that all companies have long-term strategic plans. If the Town has one it is not well communicated. Mr. Silberdick said the Town needs a vision and then they can measure the budget against that.

Mr. Pierce discussed employee health care and retirement. He suggested that everyone contact the legislature and ask them about these issues.

Mr. DeMarco said that if Mr. Welch was not able to make the June meeting, a letter should be written incorporating the Committee's concerns. Chairman Woolsey said that she did not want to do that at this time because the statute says "confer" (meaning in person) and this is what she would like to do. She said she would wait for a response before deciding further action.

Ms. Latimer brought up the Fire Station issue. This should be addressed now. People have been talking about it for way too long. The Board of Selectmen's requiring everything in writing is going to slow things down. Ms. Latimer said she is not in favor of the refinancing of the Police Station, but if it is necessary to do that to solve the Fire Station problem then it should be done.

Ms. Latimer expressed concern, shared by the Committee members, over the four firefighters out on workers comp/disability, etc. The Committee also expressed concern over the lack of any plans to build an expansion of Station 2 and substation at the beach.

Mr. Griffin said that a group of experts will be coming in, at no expense to the Town, to make recommendations for the Town's government center. There will be public meetings. Mr. Friedman asked if there could be a press release on this. Mr. Griffin said he will find out.

Mr. Friedman asked Mr. Griffin if he could find out about the possibility of dividing dispatch between the Fire and Police Departments. Mr. Griffin said it is probably too late for this now, but there are still options. Mr. Friedman said he was personally concerned about communicating only by paper. It is necessary to have a meeting where there is discussion. This Committee needs to establish priorities and concentrate on them.

Mr. Pierce discussed the possibility of privatizing ambulance service. Some citizens feel they are paying twice, once through their insurance or own funds and once to pay salaries of the EMT's. Ms. Latimer said that under the present system, if there is someone who cannot pay that is alright. However, a private ambulance service operates "for profit" and could not do this. Chairman Woolsey said the revolving fund is set up to take care of emergency medical services, but salaries are not factored in.

Chairman Woolsey said she is concerned about the ISO rating. If the Town loses its current 03 rating,, insurance costs will go up for homeowners.

Mr. Collins said that the problem is communication. Everything brought up at this meeting by Committee members pointed to different ways to do things. Mr. Collins said this was a good thing and that he is basically looking for structure and framework.

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Chairman Woolsey said that the public is looking for problems to be addressed with limited resources and getting the most for the money.

The next meeting is June 19, 2007. Chairman Woolsey asked everyone to write down one or two items of high priority to be discussed.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Mr. Lessard **moved**, seconded by Mr. Hansen, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Rice
Secretary

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman