

HAMPTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
BUDGET WORKSHOP
MINUTES
July 15, 2008

Budget Committee Members Present:

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman
Michael Plouffe, Vice-Chairman
Maury Friedman
Dick Hansen
Jack Lessard
Michael Pierce
Larry Stuker

Not Present:

Pat Collins
Victor DeMarco
Eileen Latimer
Norman Silberdick
Peter Traynor

Chairman Woolsey called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Chairman Woolsey introduced the members of the Committee

Chairman Woolsey introduced Jeane Samms, Municipal Accounts Auditor, Department of Revenue Administration.

Ms. Samms presented an overview of RSA 32:6, Appropriations Only at Annual or Special Meeting. She discussed Budget Preparation. Statements are to be prepared of estimated expenditures and revenues for the year.

Ms. Samms discussed the duties and authority of the Budget Committee. She said the main objective is to assist with the prudent appropriation of public funds. This includes budget preparation, conferring with the governing body and individual department heads, the conducting of public hearings, recommendation of special warrant articles and having the final budget ready 20 days prior to the annual or special meeting.

Mr. Friedman asked if there was any way the Committee can reduce expenses because of increased utility costs, etc. Ms. Samms said it can be seen in a particular budget line whether too much money was appropriated and it wasn't needed or money had to be taken from somewhere else. The Committee should analyze what has gone on in the past.

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Mr. Friedman asked if there was a particular activity that was being staffed by six people when they could get along with four, can the Budget Committee become involved with staffing issues such as this. Ms. Samms said the Committee can always make a suggestion, but can never be involved in hiring and firing. The Budget Committee's mandate is to make suggestions on ways to save the taxpayers money.

Mr. Pierce asked if a warrant article came in and the Committee's consensus is that it is too much money, can the Committee ask that it be resubmitted for a lower amount. Ms. Samms said this can be done.

Mr. Friedman said that Ms. Samms had said the Committee should get together with the Board of Selectmen to justify what they are asking for various departments. Mr. Friedman said he felt this Committee has not done that and has only talked to the department heads. Ms. Samms said the Committee should get together with both the Board of Selectmen and the department heads. The best results come from working together.

Mr. Stuker asked to what extent the Budget Committee can make a determination as to the format of the budget and to what extent they can question or analyze a department's budget. Ms. Samms said the Committee's objective can be reached from recommending or not recommending.

Mike Schwotzer, Town Finance Officer, said that one of the things that must be remembered on the MS7 is that the lines are quite broad. When the departments come to the Budget Committee, we are down into the nitty gritty detail. However, when you sign off on the budget there are only about 15 lines. The final product is very broad.

Ms. Samms said that there is a law that says if there is no money in a line, you cannot transfer money into that line. Chairman Woolsey said that for that reason sometimes the Committee will put \$1 in a line to keep it open.

Ms. Samms said there has to be at least one public hearing on a proposed budget. All articles need to be disclosed at that public hearing.

Chairman Woolsey said that a couple of years ago, the Town was given a grant for \$1 million. Before the money was received, it was indicated as receipts. The following year it was put on the revenue sheet which caused a \$1 million shortfall. Chairman Woolsey asked Ms. Samms if her department kept an eye on situations like this. Ms. Samms said they do have a comparison sheet for revenues and look at grant money, but don't always see everything. Chairman Woolsey said she hoped someone in Concord is watching this.

Mr. Friedman said that everyone has been going through the process, but the voters keep rejecting expenditures. He said he would like to see some public input prior to the ending of the budget process. He asked Ms. Samms if other towns do this. Ms. Samms replied that all towns are frustrated due to lack of participation. This is an issue throughout the State of New Hampshire. All you can do is advertise, let them know what is going on. Chairman Woolsey said a lot of comments are received from the public who watch Channel 22.

Mr. Pierce asked if there can be public comment at Budget Committee meetings. Ms. Samms said this is up to the Committee.

Mr. Hansen asked if some type of questionnaire could be mailed out to voters asking for their feelings on various important topics. Ms. Samms said she has not heard of questionnaires, but some towns do have monthly newsletters, websites, etc.

Chairman Woolsey thanked Ms. Samms for her fine workshop and discussion.

Chairman Woolsey said she was going to issue a public challenge to the Board of Selectmen. She said this Committee has asked for as much information as possible regarding the construction of a fire facility on Winnacunnet Road. The Committee was promised that by the middle of July there would be a proposal ready. Chairman Woolsey said she has asked Chairman Lally to call an emergency session next Monday night so she can speak to them. She said that after watching the BOS meeting last night she feels there is a big problem. It is unfair to ask the Fire Chief to juggle square footage, etc. Chief Lipe has been operating on very little money for a number of years. Chairman Woolsey said she did agree with Mr. Nichols saying specifics are needed. This Budget Committee and the public deserve a specific proposal and specific dollar amounts. She said she will ask for a special election on a single money article to fund an architectural study for this fire facility. Chairman Woolsey said that every day that passes, the Town is losing and a reliable emergency service cannot be run. This is a public safety issue.

Mr. Pierce said he felt there should be a public hearing on this issue. Chairman Woolsey said an architectural study is what is needed. She said she wants to see a set of professional plans.

Mr. Stuker said that when Chief Lipe met with the Committee, he focused on 8 areas of functionality. He said the Committee needs to stand firm on these 8 areas and the architect needs to meet this requirement.

Mr. Lessard said the Town Manager and Board of Selectmen need to take care of this problem as soon as possible.

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Chairman Woolsey said that she is no longer willing to vote without specifics and you can have that with an architectural study. Construction figures can be established and the Town Manager can tell the Committee and the public about extending the bond out over 25 years. The Manager can only do that after he has specific figures.

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 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Rice
Secretary

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman