

HAMPTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MINUTES
January 15, 2009

Budget Committee Members Present

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman
Michael Plouffe, Vice-Chairman
Richard Nichols, Selectman Representative
Chuck Rage, Precinct Representative
Pat Collins
Victor DeMarco
Dick Hansen
Eileen Latimer
Jack Lessard
Michael Pierce
Larry Stuker
Peter Traynor

Excused

Maury Friedman
Norman Silberdick

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

Chairman Woolsey said this meeting was the Public Hearing for the operating budgets and warrant articles for the Hampton School District and the Town of Hampton.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Hampton School District

Chairman Woolsey then began the Public Hearing for the Hampton School District.

Article #1 – Operating Budget - \$18,197,975 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

Art Gopalan said he would like to put forth an amendment to level fund this operating budget. The budget has been increasing at a rapid rate while enrollment has been declining. Staff has been increasing. This is of concern with current economic conditions.

Chairman Woolsey said an amendment could not be made at this time, but at the end of the Public Hearing the Budget Committee would revisit this issue.

Cathy Terry said she agreed that the operating budget should be level funded.

Article #2 – SESPA Contract - \$30,536 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Article #3 - Long Term Maintenance - \$300,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

Mr. Gopalan said that last year a similar article was passed. It would be helpful to know what items were completed.

Keith Lessard said there are ongoing improvements. To complete everything would cost over a million dollars. This article amount allows things to be done a little at a time. Some projects are phased.

Mr. Nichols asked how much square footage was involved. Mr. Lessard said Marston has 72,000 square feet, the Academy has 85,000 square feet and Centre has 63,000 square feet.

Article #4 – City Year Program - \$15,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

Chairman Woolsey said there were some questions about this program from the Budget Committee. However, Assistant Superintendent Maureen Ward provided information that this is a contract service and therefore appropriate.

There was no public comment.

Article #5 – Child Benefit Services - \$54,000 – Not recommended by the Budget Committee

David Schwab, Chairman of Sacred Heart School Advisory Board, said this program was created by the State of New Hampshire. This program allows a school board to provide certain items such as nursing services, health services, testing, textbooks, etc. to private schools. In 1975 the opinion of the Justices was that these items are not ideological and don't foster religion. The aid is constitutionally permissible.

Mr. Schwab said this money stays in the Town's hands and goes directly to the vendors who provide said services. The request this year increased by \$1,000 due to increased costs for these services. Mr. Schwab said it had been said that the public schools could absorb the students into the school system at no cost. Mr. Schwab said the Board of Education still says the cost of a student is about \$12,000/year.

Ms. Latimer asked what exactly the money was going for. Mr. Schwab said a list is submitted every year and he read the list. Ms. Latimer asked if Hampton was the only town that contributes. Mr. Schwab said yes. Other towns have been approached, but have not contributed.

Mr. Lessard said Sacred Heart School is great for the Town of Hampton and this Article should definitely be recommended. Mr. Collins agreed.

Mr. Pierce said that last summer the Budget Committee's education sub-committee had asked some questions from Sacred Heart and had problems. This influenced him to vote for non-recommendation. Mr. Schwab said it was the manner in which the questions were asked that was the problem.

Father Maurice LaRochelle, Pastor of Miraculous Medal Church and Sacred Heart School, said he would like to address the issue of the other towns contributing. He said this is dealing with Hampton only and would ask that the Committee reconsider their non-recommendation of this Article and let the voters decide.

The Public Hearing closed at 7:48 p.m. and the work session began.

Chairman Woolsey asked if there were any comments on Article #1 – Operating Budget.

Moved by Mr. Pierce, seconded by Mr. Nichols, to recommend to level fund the School Operating Budget at \$17,845,884.

Vote: 3 yes, 9 no (Collins, DeMarco, Latimer, Lessard, Plouffe, Rage, Stuker, Traynor, Woolsey). Motion defeated.

Chairman Woolsey asked if there were any comments on Article #3 – Maintenance.

Mr. Nichols said he felt this was a reasonable article.

Chairman Woolsey asked if there were any comments on Article #5 – Child Benefit Services.

Moved by Ms. Latimer, seconded by Mr. Lessard, to recommend Article #5 – Child Benefit Services

Vote: 10 yes, 2 no (Nichols, Pierce). Motion passed.

The work session concluded at 7:54 p.m.

Town of Hampton

Chairman Woolsey opened the Public Hearing for the Town of Hampton at 7:55 p.m.

Fred Rice called a point of order. He said there was no publishing of the warrant articles and that no member of the public had the means to know what was going to be addressed at this public hearing. Fred Welch, Town Manager, said that the warrant is not completed and publishing would be a violation. Mr. Rice pointed out that they had always been published in the past.

Art Gopalan asked if the spiking is a separate item in the budget. Mike Schwotzer, Finance Officer, said it is fed into the budget as a separate line item. Mr. Gopalan then asked if this number then represents the worst scenario. Mr. Schwotzer said that was correct. Mr. Gopalan asked what would happen if this happens with additional employees in the future. Mr. Welch said that when additional employees retire a spiking allocation could be charged to the Town within 45 days and must be paid. It is not known if this will occur. The legislature must come up with the calculation. Mr. Gopalan asked where this money would come from. Mr. Welch said it would go into the tax rate. Mr. Welch said only the Fire Department is involved in this because the other unions have signed off.

Mr. Gopalan asked what the long term projection was on debt service. Mr. Nichols replied that is it about \$3.2 million this year and will gradually go down.

Elderly Exemption – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Collective Bargaining Agreements – Recommended by the Budget Committee

Brian Warburton asked how much money had been spent in negotiating these contracts over the last few years. Chairman Woolsey said that over the past three years a total of \$80,100.27 had been spent.

Mr. Rice said that when he was on the Board of Selectmen, all six contracts were negotiated and were for three years. This saved the Town a lot of money and ensured that all Town employees got the same thing. Otherwise, each union can “leapfrog” another and hold out for more than the previous one got. He said he did not see anything wrong with waiting until all six can come up together.

Chairman Woolsey said that in 2008 all six were presented and failed. She said she prefers the alternating method.

Jamie Sullivan, Police Chief, said these three contracts are reasonable and are saving the Town a lot of money because of the sign off on spiking.

Mr. Welch said that the plan was to have all six, but only three unions cooperated.

Mr. Gopalan asked about the Evergreen Clause. Chairman Woolsey explained that the legislature passed a law saying that this clause must be in all contracts signed after August, 2008. This applies only to step increases.

Appropriation of Balance Remaining in the rescinded 1996 Special Revenue Fund – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Cemetery Burial Trust Fund - \$38,650 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Cable TV Origination Fund - \$100,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Basketball Courts - \$72,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Police Forfeiture Fund - \$90,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Street Improvements - \$300,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

Mr. Warburton said when he was on the Board of Selectmen, they raised and appropriated \$300,000 and had a second warrant article that appropriated \$300,000.

Chairman Woolsey read a memo she sent to Mr. Welch stating that it was her opinion that the wording of this article would indeed have the effect of raising and appropriating \$300,000 this calendar and in addition would authorize the withdrawal of \$300,000 from the existing capital reserve fund this year as well, which would make a total of \$600,000

available to DPW for road work in 2009 and \$300,000 of that money would indeed impact on the tax rate. Chairman Woolsey said she looks forward to having this wording corrected before the Deliberative Session.

Salt Storage Shed - \$223,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

Mr. Gopalan asked if there was any way to do this for less money. Chairman Woolsey said it had been thoroughly studied and it could not be done for less. Mr. Pierce said he thought it was reasonably priced.

Town Hall Energy - \$35,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

Mr. Rice said this is another example of “under doing” it since little can actually be done for this amount. He recommended that this article should be for the full amount of \$100,000 so that meaningful steps could be taken.

Rescue/Pumper Truck - \$576,360 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Architectural Services for Winnacunnet Road Fire Station - \$30,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

Chairman Woolsey said that although this was recommended, the Committee has been waiting for an adjustment from Chief Silver.

Mr. Warburton said it is imperative to come up with a valid number. \$30,000 will not buy anything.

Chris Silver, Fire Chief, said he wanted to go through the necessary phases of this project. The first phase is a feasibility study, the second phase is programming (space), and the third is a schematic design. This design would contain a floor plan and elevation. This is the point where you can estimate cost. Chief Silver said he felt it would be prudent to bring it through the schematic design phase as this will give the voters something concrete to vote on. Chief Silver said he would like to expand this to include the Beach fire station and change the wording to “Fire Department Facilities”. Chief Silver estimated that this would cost approximately \$60,000.

Public Works Capital Reserve Fund - \$340,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Mosquito Control - \$50,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Human Services Agencies - \$166,700 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Transportation Assistance - \$6,400 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Meals on Wheels - \$5,051 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

Cemetery Pavilion - \$30,000 – Recommended by the Budget Committee

There was no public comment.

The Public Hearing closed at 9:10 p.m. and the work session began.

Chairman Woolsey asked if there were any comments on the Operating Budget.

There were no comments.

Moved by Mr. Pierce, seconded by the entire Budget Committee, to support Chief Silver's efforts in the initial step of moving forward the Fire Department facilities.

Vote: 12 yes, 0 no. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Woolsey reminded everyone that the Deliberative Session will be at Winnacunnet High School of Saturday, January 31, beginning at 8:00 a.m.

Approval of Minutes – January 13, 2009

Moved by Mr. Plouffe, seconded by Mr. Stuker, to approve the Minutes of January 13, 2008, as amended.

Vote: 11 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention (Rage). Motion passed.

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Correction made to the Minutes was as follows:

Page 4, 10th paragraph should read: “Ms. Latimer withdrew her Amendment. She said she would suggest the Committee revisit this when they have the correct number.”

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 was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Rice
Secretary

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman