

HAMPTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MINUTES
April 20, 2010

Budget Committee Members Present

Larry Stuker, Chairman
Mary-Louise Woolsey, Vice-Chairman
William Lally, Selectman Representative
June White, Precinct Representative
Dick Hansen
Brian Lapham
Eileen Latimer
Mark McFarlin
Michael Pierce
Michael Plouffe
Peter Traynor

Excused

Pat Collins
Jack Lessard
Richard Reniere

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

Dick Hansen led the Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Stuker introduced the members of the Committee.

Chairman Stuker distributed final figures for March and a listing of legal expenses spent by the Town. Chairman Stuker said Dave Lang, Professional Firefighters of NH, had been invited to tonight's meeting to discuss the lawsuit, however he declined.

Chairman Stuker passed out the proposed schedule for 2010-2011 work sessions for the Committee.

Mr. Traynor asked if the Committee would have copies of final expenses for the schools in September. Chairman Stuker said his goal is to speak to people coming in before the meeting to make sure the Committee will have all needed documents. Mike Schwotzer is also putting everything on the website. He has been very cooperative.

Chairman Stuker discussed what he felt this Committee should be doing. He said in terms of goals, the Committee should strive to provide the best services possible with the lowest cost and to maintain the independence of the Budget Committee as it was originally conceived – a check and balance in Town government and the place where the

budget is made. Chairman Stuker said it is also very important to work with other boards to meet the needs of the people of Hampton.

Regarding the meetings, Chairman Stuker discussed the framework of the meetings. He said everyone should be allowed to comment on any item, briefly. Board members who are working on specific subcommittees will be allowed more time to speak. It is important that everyone stay focused and civil.

Chairman Stuker discussed areas of focus for this year. He said he wants to provide the budgetary resources necessary to have strong police, fire and public works services. He would like to bring the mounted patrol back into the budget. An analysis will be needed from the Police Department as to a staffing plan. Chairman Stuker said he would like to reach a determination as to what the Committee's position is on the size of the undesignated fund reserve. How much is too much? At what point should some of that money either be spent on services or returned to the taxpayers? Another question is whether the Town should consider privatizing the sewage treatment plant and what the short and long term costs would be. Another question to be answered is what the cost to the Town will be on the withdrawal from SAU21. Chairman Stuker said the Fire Department should be staffed to the available equipment. It is important that the Fire Department be adequately funded and the Committee should work with the Board of Selectmen on a new fire station plan. Another issue to be addressed is the cost of legal to the Town. There is a consensus that the amount of legal expenditures should be reduced.

Mr. Lapham said that many businesses are trying to find ways to fund the mounted patrol. The mounted patrol is of great help on a crowded day at the beach.

Mr. Plouffe said all issues put forth by Chairman Stuker are important. The mounted patrol has been supported by the public. This Town needs to make a commitment. Mr. Plouffe expressed concern about the fire station project and said the drainage issue is still a large problem.

Mr. Hansen said Chairman Stuker's points were valid. Many towns and cities are in financial trouble. At some point the country as a whole is going to have to face the facts and reduce the federal deficit. Mr. Hansen cited several articles on this subject. He read another article about towns sharing services and said he felt this made sense.

Mr. Lally said the problem is that the State is broke and is handing down mandates to the towns. The retirement system problem is going to make a big hit on the towns. Mr. Lally said most cost is employee related and that he hoped personnel would not have to be reduced. Mr. Lally said he felt the beach fire station should be one of the top goals for this year.

Mr. Pierce said he was against bringing the mounted patrol back. He said his reason was that he has seen nothing change regarding the care of the horses since the incident two years ago. Mr. Pierce said he felt it was appropriate to let the Board of Selectmen deal with the legal costs.

Mr. McFarlin said the Committee should be looking much more closely at health trust monies for employees, etc. and adequate staffing per vehicle. Solid waste also needs to be looked at.

Ms. Latimer said we had a very expensive year related to legal costs. In 2009, there were almost \$500,000 in expenses. This should be examined more closely. Lawsuits that come from outside cannot be controlled. However the Town lost five internal suits this year and there must be a better way. Ms. Latimer said the mounted patrol provides a safety function. She said the sharing of services between towns could be beneficial. However, Hampton is not like many of its neighbors. Hampton would pay for it and everyone else would share it.

Ms. Latimer said the Town is understaffed in crucial departments. The Committee needs to meet with the chiefs and needs to listen. Ms. Latimer said clarity is needed regarding the undesignated funds.

Mr. Traynor discussed the problem of training police officers and then having them go to other towns. This needs to be addressed and also the issue of how many officers there will be this summer.

Ms. White said there are lots of concerns and issues that need to be addressed and this Committee is a good forum.

Chairman Woolsey said that in the 2009 budget the Board of Selectmen put in a line under Personnel Administration for \$450,000. That was setting aside money to work out the budget. The undesignated fund balance is money left over at the end of the year.

Ms. Latimer asked what happened to the \$1.6 million left over last year. Mr. Lally said it went to fund warrant articles.

Ms. Woolsey pointed out that the Board Appointees (Board of Selectmen, Precinct, and School Board) are important members of this Committee and they are not bound by anything their boards or commissions tell them to do. They are expected to make their decisions predicated on what happens here.

Ms. Woolsey said that although the mounted patrol is very important and has great power in controlling crowds, it is a matter of needs and we cannot afford it. It is more important to have officers on the ground. Concentration should be on retaining the people we train.

Regarding the waste water treatment plant, Ms. Woolsey said the Town needs to focus on going through the proper processes to protect the interests of the taxpayers.

Chairman Stuker said items for the May meeting agenda should include initial costs for the SAU withdrawal and Mr. Price to come in and talk about the waste water treatment plant and the drainage issue.

Mr. Pierce said the Board of Selectmen should be trusted on the legal issues.

Some discussion ensued regarding the drainage issue and some disagreements that occurred during the last storm.

Moved by Mr. Hansen, seconded by Mr. Pierce, to end discussion on the drainage issue.

Vote: 9 yes, 2 no (Latimer, Woolsey). Motion passed.

Mr. Traynor asked if the Town is recouping expenditures for the storm. Mr. Lally said help is being received from FEMA.

Approval of Minutes of March 16, 2010

Moved by Ms. Woolsey, seconded by Mr. Pierce, to approve the Minutes of March 16, 2010.

Vote: 10 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention (Lally). Motion passed.

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Rice Secretary