

HAMPTON MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday January 23, 2019

Attendance

Timothy "Citizen" Jones, Chair
Michael Plouffe, Vice Chair
Brian Warburton
David Maurer
Frank DeLuca, SAU90 Representative
Jerry Znoj
Robert Ladd, Hampton Beach Village District Representative

Absent

Regina Barnes, Selectman Representative
Stephen LaBranche

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Call to Order at 7 PM by Mr Jones

3. Introduction of Members

4. Old Business

Information: none

Article #45

Mr Jones explained there had been some adjustments to the language in Article #45 relating to a Conservation Fund land purchase in the Timber Swamp Road area. He felt the changes were insubstantial and recommended that the 8-0 vote stand. Agreed by consensus.

5. DRA Communications re Budget

Impact of Tie Votes: Mr Jones had been apprised of a communication from the DRA to the effect that there would be serious implications if the Budget Committee did not vote in favor of the 2019 Budget. Therefore, he contacted the DRA for clarification of the prior understanding and learned it was in error. According to a DRA supervisor, voting on budgets is subject to a number of laws based on a Budget Committee having approved a proposed Budget. If the Committee had not voted in favor, it would be considered that it had not created a budget. In that event, the number proposed by the Selectmen as the Governing Body would be deemed to be the proposed Budget and would appear in the warrant article. Effectively, if the Budget Committee were to submit a proposed budget to the DRA without a favorable vote, that budget would not be acceptable.

Mr Warburton thought if that happened, any figure the Budget Committee might have cut from the Selectmen's budget (hypothetically, even \$600,000) would be restored for the warrant article. He believed the solution was for the Budget Committee to declare the default budget as the approved budget, and commented that he'd encountered younger voters who applauded BudComm for its efforts to lower expenditures. Mr Jones explained that the language of the Warrant Article was the same every year; only the figures change. Although included in the warrant article, the default budget is determined by the Selectmen and would be unaffected; a few years ago a warrant article designating that the default budget be set by the Budget Committee passed, but did not get the required 60%.

Mr Jones said going forward the task is to find the best number that the Committee can recommend. In response to Mr DeLuca, Mr Jones said the Committee's vote would stand if the Selectmen's figure had not been reduced by approximately \$50,000. In response to Mr Znoj, Mr Jones said that a court had nullified a proposed budget that used a default budget as the basis. Mr Znoj recommended that in the future line-items be voted on when discussed and then rolled out for the proposed budget figure; had that been the process he would have voted to cut certain lines.

General Discussion Points: the Budget Committee process should include the default budget; the effect of reducing the number of members on the Committee (i.e. narrow votes, more orderly procedure; a lingering perception that somehow reducing the size of the Committee was a punishment; reduction of voter representation), there is no general leaning as a group; the members need to do homework, prepare recommendations, and apply an analytical approach; the financial impact of the warrant articles (in 2019 approximately \$3,000,000) needs to be added in; and, to take more time for an overarching look at town financial procedures. Mr Jones noted that hamptonbud.com is a vehicle to institute the town historical memory.

DRA re Vote Tallies

Mr Jones reported that in reviewing ballot votes over the years he found many tie votes that were stated as "not recommended" which is incorrect. The Town Manager has agreed to list a vote simply (e.g. 4-4-0) without any recommendation reference. The DRA supervisor did not have an issue with that, but said the Committee could (i) have a rule stating that tie votes mean "not recommended" or (ii) vote to submit the tally votes as is without any commentary.

Mr Ladd said under the statute the Budget Committee may require its tallies to be placed on the warrant article, but it does not stipulate that recommendations "for" or "against" be included; a tie vote could just as well be deemed as approved; the warrant article should follow the language of the relevant statute as closely as possible; he suggested questions about the relevant statute(s) be asked of the NHMA. To Mr Znoj and Mr Warburton a 4-4-0 vote would sufficiently indicate to the public that the Committee is divided. Mr Warburton was disturbed that for 12 years tie votes had been determined as "not recommended"; he and Mr Znoj wanted to see the relevant

statute(s). Mr Jones repeated that according to the DRA at least for the Budget Warrant Article there must be a recommended vote. Mr Znoj believes that in ambiguity the [Committee's] judgment should prevail. Mr Jones believes that as the ballot is created by the Selectmen its judgment would prevail. By consensus the Committee rules will be addressed as part of the March reorganization.

Mr Jones said this meeting is the last time the Committee could change a vote, and suggested it might want to revote on tie-vote articles because the understanding had been that a tie meant not recommended. By consensus, the Committee declined to revote any warrant article. Mr Jones added that if there should be an amendment to a special money warrant article (e.g. petitions, loans, transfer from one fund to another, capital projects, or non-lapsing items) at the Deliberative Session, the Budget Committee could change its vote thereafter. There can be no revote on a Budget Warrant Article because it is not a special money warrant article.

6. BudComm 2019 Summary Form MS-737 to the DRA:

Mr Jones called attention to DRA Form 737 showing the Operating Budget Appropriations (\$28,141,882), Special Warrant Articles (\$2,495,519), and Individual Warrant Articles (\$341,213) amounting to the Total Appropriations (\$30,978,614). When Estimated Revenues and Credits are deducted, the Estimated Amount of Taxes to be Raised is \$22,266,717. Committee Members present signed this form for delivery to the DRA.

7. BudComm Meeting Schedule

The Deliberative Session is February 2, 2019 at Winnacunnet High School. The Budget Committee will meet at noon.

The Agenda for the February 19, 2019 Budget Committee Meeting includes the Hampton Beach Village District, an item on flooding requested by the Conservation Commission, Selectman Barnes' report on a Drinking Water Conference, and a general review of and comments concerning the 2018-19 BudComm Sessions.

Mr Jones noted that the Budget Committee will meet after the March election for reorganization purposes, electing the Chair/VP, determining the rules of procedure for 2019-2020, and assuring how members will have adequate and consistent information. .

8. Adjournment

Mr Jones adjourned the January 23, 2019 Municipal Budget Committee meeting at 8:13 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by
Barbara Kravitz, Recording Secretary,
Town of Hampton
Municipal Budget Committee