

**HAMPTON MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE**  
**PUBLIC HEARING**  
**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Tuesday April 16, 2019**

**Attendance**

Brian Warburton, Chair  
Michael Plouffe, Vice Chair  
David Maurer  
Steven Henderson  
Stephen LaBranche  
Joyce Skaperdas  
Rusty Bridle, Selectman Representative  
Robert Ladd, Hampton Beach Village District Representative  
Ginny Bridle-Russell, SAU90 Representative

**1. Call to Order at 7 PM by Mr Warburton**

**2. Pledge of Allegiance – Steven Henderson**

**3. Introduction of Members**

**4. Review and Approval of Minutes**

**February 19, 2019**

Mr Warburton expressed appreciation for excellent minutes and asked for comments. Mr LaBranche asked that “town” be changed to “taxpayers”; Ms Kravitz called attention to a typo in Mr Znoj’s name and noted that the time of the Circus event at the Village District should be “evening”

<b>Motion</b>	<b>Stephen LaBranche</b>	<b>to accept the Minutes of February 19, 2019, as revised.</b>
<b>Second</b>	<b>Michael Plouffe</b>	<b>APPROVED: Brian Warburton, Michael Plouffe, David Maurer, Stephen LaBranche, Robert Ladd Abstained: Steven Henderson, Rusty Bridle, Ginny Bridle-Russell, Joyce Skaperdas</b>

March 19, 2019

<b>Motion</b>	<b>Michael Plouffe</b>	<b>to accept the March 16, 2019 Municipal Budget Committee Minutes as written.</b>
<b>Second</b>	<b>David Maurer</b>	<b>APPROVED: Brian Warburton, Michael Plouffe, David Maurer, Robert Ladd, Rusty Bridle, Joyce Skaperdas Steven Henderson, Abstained: Ginny Bridle-Russell, Stephen LaBranche</b>

### **5. Review of NH RSA 32:1**

Mr Warburton explained that the Budget Committee is an official elected body, not an advisory committee. It receives budgets from town and school officials and prepares and makes recommendations before submitting the budget to the Town Meeting Deliberative Session. The Committee meets with department heads and/or other town and schools officials and asks questions about expenditures and revenues to make educated and prudent decisions on behalf of the voters. Committee hearings generally take place in January when the public can make comments on the budget before it is forwarded to the deliberative session. Voting takes place in March. Mr Warburton emphasized that the Committee reviews expenditures but does not control them. Once the budget is passed by the voters, it is up to the Selectmen to maintain the bottom-line. He noted that the Committee also reviews the budgets of the SAU90 and the Hampton Beach Village District which is a separate body of the Town.

### **6. Discussion of 2019 Election Results - Town and Schools**

Mr Warburton commended the previous budget committee for its work in drilling down and asking questions which is important when dealing with taxpayer dollars. He asked Members for their comments on the election results: Mr LaBranche said the various boards present all the information they can and then it is up to the voters whether something passes—that is democracy. He felt that a lot of Hampton people watch the meetings and are informed when they vote. Mr Warburton commented that many current members had knowledge gained from serving for many years. Ms Skaperdas was glad to be part of the process going forward, believing that her experience would benefit taxpayers.

Mr Maurer was proud that BudComm did a good job asking questions this year; the Selectmen also did a good job. Commentaries both for and against the “Yellow Sheef”, that appeared in the newspaper, were appreciated because all sides of an issue are needed to get better insight. BudComm’s job is to ask the tough questions on behalf of the taxpayers because ultimately it is up to the voters. Mr Ladd thought it would be a good idea if during the process the [finance department] could estimate the probable revenues for the next year, and also show what would

be lost if the vote were to result in a default budget. Mr Plouffe said although voters turned the budget down, they chose to approve monies earmarked for specific purposes via a number of warrant articles that should get done because that revenue cannot be moved around.

In Mr Henderson's experience Hampton taxpayers want and get very good services for their money; i.e. schools, departments, employees, water, sewer, gas. The concern is problems arose because fixing them was put off for a number of years. Now the town is at a point where deteriorating roads, sewers, garbage, waste transfer and other DPW issues need to be prioritized and addressed—important things have to get done, even a little at a time. Projects can't just be put off; taxes will have to go up to get the infrastructure back to where it should be. BudComm has to look at this as well as what the taxpayers can afford so they can stay in Hampton. Based on last year's performance, Mr Henderson sees a more positive atmosphere and the Budget Committee, with courtesy and working with others, would do an important job well. However, information is needed much sooner. .

Mr Bridle thought the voters spoke loud and clear, leaving the town with a default budget. Some favor warrant articles to pick and choose what they want; others want all items inside the budget. One year they were 70 warrant articles; this year 50. But lot of infrastructure is slowly going away if it is not worked on periodically -- beginning now. Ms Bridle-Russell said the School Board is excited, dedicated, and appreciative of the town support. The Academy addition will be opening in September and teachers will start moving in in June. She urged people with questions to call the school administration or herself.

Mr Warburton thought it remarkable that voters accepted approximately 85% of the Budget Committee's recommendation, and noted they were definitive when voting in the negative (e.g. 4 new firefighter positions). An important question is why voters choose a default budget when the surplus is near \$400,000. The vehicles and contracts passed. He called attention to the in-depth questions asked about the schools budget, as well as the message passed to the school superintendent and school board that in light of the enormity of the taxpayer investment in the Academy, some items could be in warrant articles.

Mr Warburton noted that in 2018 the school budget passed by 8% compared to 1% in 2019; the school resource officer passed by 12% in 2018 compared to 0.13 % in 2019. The Winnacunnet budgets passed by 10% in 2018 compared to 0.73 in 2019. He thought the fine tuning would continue on this large budget item.

## **7. Discussion of Tie-Votes (Not Recommended or Blank)**

Mr Warburton recalled that tie-votes had historically been recorded as "not recommended". However, late in 2018 a letter from the Town Manager stated that a tie-vote recording should be designated as "blank". The then BudComm Chair, Timothy "Citizen" Jones, was told by the BRA

that legally the Committee could vote for either way. It was decided not to make a change for the 2019 election -- 4 BudComm tie-votes were on the ballot. Mr Warburton opened discussion.

Mr LaBranche, Mr Maurer, Mr Plouffe, Mr Henderson, and Mr Warburton favored to retain “not recommended”. Ms Skaperdas, Mr Bridle, Ms Bridle-Russell, and Mr Ladd favored the “blank” designation. Ms Skaperdas asked why some favored “not recommended” when the vote actually was split. In response to Mr Ladd, Mr Warburton said that was not a bad designation, and meant that the BudComm vote was not positive. Mr Ladd recommended asking the NHMA for an opinion. Mr Warburton did not favor approaching NHMA as that had been problematic in the past, but if the Committee wanted, he would work through the administration.

<b>Motion</b>	<b>Robert Ladd</b>	<b>to seek an opinion from NHMA on the “not recommended” or “blank” question in re tie-votes.</b>
<b>Second</b>	<b>Ginny Bridle-Russell</b>	<b>(withdrawn: see below)</b>

Mr Warburton’s understanding was he could not access the NHMA directly; Mr Maurer asked why Hampton was the only town in the state where [elected board/committee members] could not contact NHMA, but had to go through the Selectmen for review. If that could be changed it would be in keeping with educational objectives. Mr Bridle clarified that the Chair(s) can speak with NHMA -- the Selectmen asked to know if there was a difference of opinion. Mr Henderson felt that the Budget Committee should always have had direct access to NHMA, but two years ago it was made clear that Members could not do so without getting an ok from the Selectmen. He felt the BudComm was a separate [elected] group and should have direct access with questions, especially since the town paid a yearly fee.

Mr Plouffe recalled that at the hearing on the night the vote had to occur, the BudComm would not have a positive vote for the Budget. Information from the BRA was introduced saying that if the BudComm presented a Budget without an affirmative vote it would not be accepted. Therefore, the Selectmen’s Budget would appear on the ballot. Ms Skaperdas read from Ms Barnes report from the October 16, 2018 Minutes indicating that Selectmen would allow questions to be put to BudComm Chair(s) who could then consult with the NHMA. Mr Warburton had been disappointed, recalling that when he was a selectman, any Member could make a direct contact with the NHMA, and believed that should be the policy today.

Mr Maurer disagreed with having only Chairs/Vice Chairs able to contact NHMA after letting the Selectmen know of the intended questions and reporting back to the BOS. He recalled that a previous BudComm Chair had been shut out of consulting with the NHMA, even though the

Town Counsel would not take questions from the BudComm and had instructed NHMA to refuse such contact. This all seemed to be word of mouth and not written policy, despite the NHMA inviting questions from anyone who attended a seminar (except from Hampton people). Mr Maurer asked for a policy in writing. Mr Warburton requested delaying a vote until he could gain sufficient clarification, after which he would pursue an opinion if Members so wanted. [The Motion was withdrawn pending clarification expected from Mr Bridle at the next BudComm meeting.]

## **8. Old Business**

### **Review financials on-line**

Mr Warburton reported that the Finance Director had distributed the March financials, and commended her reports. Similar reports from SAU 90 would be welcome. Members could bring up questions at subsequent meetings.

## **9. New Business**

### **Selectman's Report**

Mr Bridle called attention to budget cuts and that certain transfer station hours were reduced, noting that costs for weekend openings were at time and one/half. Other cuts were in signage, tree maintenance, sewer, sidewalks. Mr Ladd commented that voters would be better educated if they knew what would be cut in the event of a default budget.

### **School Representative Report**

Ms Bridle-Russell said SAU90 was pushing ahead to open the Academy on schedule and to assure the work was properly finished. She will provide a copy of the reconstruction/renovation financial summary. It is hoped that the graduation ceremony will be in the new auditorium. Mr Warburton noted the many school expense areas, and the \$22,000 per pupil cost. He asked for BudComm to be provided with a summary of federal and/or state mandate costs, detailing the percentage of total costs, a 3-year comparison of expenses, and information about how savings are being achieved. Mr Maurer added that 5-year comparative data would be very helpful to analyze trends. This was particularly important for educating the public in light of the decreasing enrollment trend. Ms Bridle-Russell said the driver of mandated costs was 100% of the federal special education program including transportation, which cannot be refused. Some services now can be provided internally, which would save money.

Mr Warburton explained that the school resource officer is paid through the SAU90 budget, but when that person is absent a replacement comes from the police department at time and one half by the town. He felt that all town elected boards should better educate the public about such matters. Ms Bridle emphasized that money for Sacred Heart must be spent on services for Hampton children only. Mr Warburton invited the SAU 90 Superintendent and Business

Manager to attend the BudComm September 17 meeting to provide a year-end report, as well as a view of the coming year.

### **Village District Report**

Mr Ladd said the Village Budget was approved and the focus now is on activities like the Circus Program. Weather is the unknown.

### **Coastal Risks and Hazards**

Mr LaBranche distributed a summary of the Coastal Hazards Adaptation Team (CHAT) which he attended representing the Budget Committee. The group is studying flooding, sea level rise, high tides, storm surge and the like in a very professional manner. Today's meeting included a focus on coastal mapping. In response to Mr Maurer, Mr LaBranche said this group is focused on Hampton, but there is another group encompassing Seabrook and other towns; some participants are the same. Mr Maurer commented that the ocean doesn't distinguish among towns—it would make sense to meet all together. Mr LaBranche will pose that question to CHAT. Mr Bridle said that Meadow Pond has been reduced to sediment, and may have to be dredged to hold more water flow. Fully removing some of the phragmites, although expensive, might also help. The Grist Mill Dam is almost finished. Mr Warburton said this is a BudComm concern because money or even grant funding may be needed.

### **10. BudComm Meetings**

Mr Warburton announced that Budget Committee meetings will be scheduled for the third Tuesday of the month. Scheduled meetings are May 21, June 18; September 17, and October 21; no meetings in July or August; fall and winter meetings likely twice weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays. A full schedule is being prepared.

### **11. Adjournment**

Mr Warburton adjourned the April 16, 2019 Municipal Budget Committee meeting at 8:16 PM.

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