

**TOWN OF HAMILTON
FINANCE & ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 7, 2016**

The Hamilton Finance & Advisory Committee: David Wanger, Nick Tensen, John Pruellage, Phil Stearns met at the Senior Center at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 7, 2016. Planning Board Chair Jeff Melick, Director of Planning and Inspections Patrick Reffett, Selectman Jeff Hubbard (arrived at 7:20 p.m.) also present.

Call to order

David Wanger called the Finance & Advisory Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He noted that Richard Boroff was also in attendance.

Approve minutes from prior meetings

The Committee is reviewing draft meeting minutes from July 26 and August 3, 2016.

Presentation by Jeff Melick, Planning Board Chair, and Patrick Reffett, Director of Planning and Inspections

• **Zoning By-law review/rewrite**

A year ago the Town began review and rewrite of zoning by-laws in two stages. The first phase does not include substantive changes while phase two would do so to make land use in Hamilton make more sense. The first phase is nearly complete as orchestrated by a consultant in concert with steering committee composed of members from the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, HDC, Director of Planning and Inspections Patrick Reffett, and Town Manager Michael Lombardo.

Substantive changes were done as required to comply with law. Last July there was a Town Meeting vote to change site plan review from the ZBA to the Planning Board. This does not include the commercial overlay district. Work on phase two has begun and was prioritized. Discussion addressed how the Town is looking at how large tracts of land could be developed including through the use of cluster housing which would be located farther back from streets than traditional subdivisions.

In addition there is a medical marijuana statute in Massachusetts and if the Town wants to implement zoning that would protect it from that use. This could also apply to any use of marijuana. Modifications proposed in zoning by-laws are based on state law, and reflect changes in federal law such as accommodations for those with mobility impairments (i.e., fair housing act). There was also case law that has changed in 20 years relative to modifications in land use law. The zoning by-law document should be more workable to home owners, developers, and builders. A clearer document will make enforcement easier. The current zoning by-law does not allow developers to make good projects work based on guidance of review process, and due to elevated property values in Town.

Phase two focuses on vision for Hamilton as much as 80 years from now, and incorporates concept of cottage housing. Discussion addressed how Patton Ridge housing was put farther back to preserve open space. Cottage housing is basically worker housing (i.e., 4,000 square foot lots) which could be duplicated similarly to what is seen in Concord. The housing could be located downtown and in some of the more rural areas of Town. Cottage housing is more compact than ordinary subdivisions and accentuates land forms. The concept has to be workable for developers while preserving open space.

Two public hearings held by the Planning Board will occur on zoning by-law rewrite followed by a public hearing on cottage housing. Discussion addressed how areas identified in the existing zoning by-law by the consultant were put on the Town's website. The new zoning by-law document will be amended over time as needed and provide flexibility. John Pruellage as liaison to the Planning Board will attend upcoming meeting.

• **Renovation of Town Hall proposal**

Town officials will be submitting to the Community Preservation Committee a project application request for Community Preservation Act funding to preserve and revitalize Town Hall. An addition is proposed in the back of the Town Hall building which will include elevators, stairs, plumbing, as well as meeting room and utility space. Town Hall has major issues with mobility and regularly residents come to Town Hall that cannot make it to departments upstairs. The historic building needs serious revitalization.

The current renovation proposal is a combined \$6 million for revitalizing Town Hall and constructing the addition. The first request to the CPC is for building and property evaluation of existing building from sub-basement to the top of the ceiling and roofing. This will include every system such as plumbing, structural, geotechnical, how the beams and floor work and do not work, how the building is utilized (i.e., air quality). The entire design is \$550,000 combined valuation for the addition, Town Hall, and property and design work done in 20 to 24 months. This will provide a full understanding of how the project should be designed. Of the \$550,000 based on Town Hall building there is \$430,000 targeted of CPA historic preservation funds. The remaining \$120,000 is for geotechnical as well as design of the addition which would be paid for with a general obligation bond. The Selectmen had voted affirmatively to support the request.

Discussion ensued about how the Town has been continually trying to manage the Town Hall building but there is ever increasing indications of wear and tear (i.e., leaks in the roof). Also, the building is not accessible to those with mobility issues that have to visit Town departments located on the second floor. Some of the deflection in the second floor is an impending issue indicative of need for repair. To increase efficiency, the second floor would have to be changed, and more meeting and private office space is needed.

Consideration has been given to construct a new municipal building but there is not enough Town owned land to serve this purpose. The basement of the building could be a useable space but there are air quality issues and basement floor has flooded a number of times. Evaluation should be done on how the building drains as part of understanding how to make the basement useable. Estimates are that it could take four years for a Town Hall renovation to occur and reach completion.

The cost estimates for the Town Hall renovation were based on reconstruction of Weston town

hall and Reading library. Expected increases in cost over time could occur in construction materials. The proposed evaluation would provide real data. The cost of the town hall renovation in Wenham was not known for this discussion. Also noted was if there were other buildings in Town where CPA funds have been used that could potentially be used for municipal meeting space (i.e., American Legion and Community House).

Discussion ensued about how municipal records could be electronically stored and protected. A draft RFP has been created and needs the Town's department heads to analyze the scope of the work. Hamilton has \$69,000 to embark on digitizing its records from 13 departments. The RFP asks for consultant services to provide a process flowchart outlining responsibilities (i.e., digitizing scanning) including department heads' prioritization of work. In addition, the Town would need a large scale printer to recreate drawings.

- **Public Comment**

None.

- **Committee member comments/reports**

Phil Stearns reported on Affordable Housing Trust meeting noting that there is a group of people in Town opposed to every possible alternative for affordable housing in Hamilton. The small single house sites are not contentious. The following sites in Town are being considered to locate affordable housing: Senior Center site, Longmeadow Way, Cutler property, former Mac's shoe on Willow Street. AHT is moving forward to reach a recommendation for a site for affordable housing.

Discussion addressed how there is potential with Harborlight Community Partners for a friendly Chapter 40B affordable housing project. This may not be the case in a different scenario with another developer. Also noted was that there is resistance from senior population about proposal to tear down existing COA building and construct a larger structure that would contain affordable housing and space for a larger senior center.

Discussion ensued about Patton Homestead incorporators putting out an RFP for non-profits interested in the property. Other options for the property include selling it. A gravel parking lot has been proposed for the site.

Wanger described the thorough process associated with the Selectmen's meetings and his meeting with Town Manager Michael Lombardo about how more support/structure could be provided to the FinCom. Moving forward when FinCom meeting agendas are created a copy will be sent to Lombardo so he could gather information and he plans to attend the Committee's meetings. The administrative assistant to the manager, Anabela Batista, will assist with posting agendas. Also mentioned were capital projects being considered by the Town that may not require an override to fund but will impact Hamilton's tax rate.

- **Budget forecast and analysis topics**

The Committee reviewed a summary from Lombardo which noted that the Finance Director position is being reposted, how the budget process will begin once joint meeting occurs with FinCom and BOS, and figures were supplied on Fire Department union contract settlement.

Discussion addressed how the Committee felt adrift without the oversight of a Finance Director providing a financial statement which identifies budget trends. Also that person works with department heads as they create their budgets for the next fiscal year. Specific projects are also analyzed relative to capital spending. In addition, information is provided on budgeted funds and actual spending.

The FinCom requires information regarding 2016 budget forecast relative to what is driving growth factors, and actual spending done by year-end. More contemporaneous data will be given to the FinCom. A separate spreadsheet used in the past outlined capital items (i.e., sidewalks, roads, Town Hall renovation, water filtration plant). The FinCom will ask Lombardo for electronic copy of information on budget forecast for a few years out, FY'18 budget as well as fiscal status of FY'17 budget, percent changes, and debt expense. Discussion addressed how the Assessors do a valuation every three years. It was noted that houses valued at less than \$1 million are selling quicker than houses in the \$1 million range.

Also mentioned was the conversation that is occurring in Town to raise CPA surcharge from 2% to 3%. The median home value in Hamilton is \$444,000. The annual CPA surcharge for this home would go from \$119 to \$168 if the surcharge were increased to 3%. In addition, the increased surcharge would result in a 100% increase in the state match which is currently \$400,000 and it would go up to \$800,000. The state match could vary and has been a 27% match in the last few years. If the city of Boston adopts CPA this could effect the state match, and the state is facing budget challenges with revenue which could effect state aid.

Wanger reported that he had a meeting with HW School Committee chair. In addition, he and his counterpart in Wenham, Mike Lucy, are planning for an informational meeting with Jeff Sands, Assistant Superintendent of HWRSD.

- **Schedule of future FinCom meetings**

Discussion ensued on how September 24 is not a possible date for a joint budget session between FinCom and BOS. October 1 was considered as a possibility. Some Committee members suggested they could meet on a Sunday.

- **Discuss level service/level funding concepts**

This discussion was tabled until the Committee's meeting on September 21.

- **Advance of funds in lieu of borrowing \$240,000**

A paper transfer of funds to pay interest and principal for cost associated with capping landfill was approved by BOS. Funds will come from Free Cash. The funds have to be paid back to the General Fund and bonded by the end of the year. This issue had not been presented to FinCom for discussion and recommendation. The Selectmen already voted affirmatively on this issue.

- **Discuss PILOT analysis and recommendations**

The FinCom will analyze list from Town manager.

- **Waste Enterprise Account – Hauler**

A deficit of \$156,000 is anticipated versus appropriation and funds required with new trash hauling contract. This may be included in a warrant article for fall Town Meeting. Funding sources include Free Cash, and Stabilization Fund (requires 2/3rds vote). A debate will occur as to whether trash pickup should remain biweekly or happen weekly. Apparently either scenario will not effect cost since the trash hauling truck is picking up solid waste (black barrel one week, blue bag second week). Once a week pickup could reduce the revenue stream from sale of blue bags required for off week trash pickup. In addition, the bag fee may be increased. Bulk items will need a sticker for removal.

Also, the waste enterprise is unlikely to be a full fledged enterprise fund since it is subsidized with General Fund money. Discussion was on pay as you throw and how cost per household would be measured. Nick Tensen will research how pay as you throw works in Manchester.

- **Town wide survey**

Discussion was on how 820 people responded to this survey. For a prior survey 500 responded. As much as 72% of responders thought Hamilton's tax rate was too high. Also mentioned was how the Town does better when there is trash hauling for the community versus what it would cost an individual household to pay for trash pickup.

- **FinCom process issues**

The FinCom will participate in FY'17 and FY'18 annual Town reports.

- **FinCom liaison roles for HWRSD and AHT**

Phil Stearns offered to be liaison for HWRSD and AHT. Also noted was that Wenham will not be participating in a work group related to retiring fire chiefs to understand if there should be a regional fire manager. There may be some interest in shared IT but a common senior van between the two towns is unlikely.

- **Consideration of and adoption vote as to, OPEB Trust Investment Policy and Investment Policies statement**

Wanger entertained a motion to adopt the Town of Hamilton OPEB Trust Investment Policy statement and the Town of Hamilton Investment Policy statement in substance, subject to non-substantive changes. John Pruellage so moved. Tensen seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

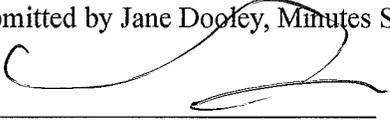
- **Determine agenda for next meeting**

The Committee planned to meet on September 21. AHT Chair Peter Britton will be invited to a future meeting. There was a brief discussion on if some funding from the Town could be applied to a friendly Chapter 40B project and impact on local preference. The FinCom revisited when a joint budget meeting could be scheduled with BOS.

• **Adjournment**

Wanger entertained a motion to adjourn at 9:13 p.m. Pruellage so moved. Tensen seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: 

David Wanger, Hamilton Finance & Advisory Committee Chairman