

**TOWN OF HAMILTON
FINANCE & ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 21, 2016**

The Hamilton Finance & Advisory Committee: David Wanger, Nick Tensen, John Kain, John Pruellage, Phil Stearns met at the Senior Center at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 21, 2016. Town Manager Michael Lombardo, Selectman Jeff Hubbard (arrived at 7:14 p.m.) also present.

Call to order

David Wanger called the Finance & Advisory Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approve minutes from prior meetings

The Committee will approve draft minutes at an upcoming meeting.

Public Comment

None.

Committee member comments/reports

Phil Stearns reported on HW School Committee discussion of budget, capital plan including turf field, updating regional agreement, and policy review process. There has been discussion about a joint meeting between the HW School Committee and two supporting towns' FinComs.

He also mentioned the Affordable Housing Trust which is meeting two times a month. The Trust is working on mission statement, and is speaking with Harborlight Community Partners and Habitat for Humanity related to Host Community Agreement. The Trust is considering six sites in Town including some Town owned land for affordable housing to work toward increasing this housing to meet state requirement of 10% where Hamilton currently has 3.3%.

John Pruellage provided an update on Planning Board progress on zoning by-law rewrite, and that Board's varying viewpoint on urgency to bring a cottage housing by-law forward to fall Town Meeting.

David Wanger spoke to waste hauling discussed at the Selectmen's meeting where that board voted to increase blue bag fee to \$2.50 each, added a \$15 tag system for bulk items excluding those received from public behind Town Hall, and solid waste pickup at curbside has returned to once a week schedule.

Nick Tensen provided information on his research of pay as you throw program in Manchester where residents pay for bags which funds waste hauling for the community. Town Manager Michael Lombardo noted that the Selectmen were not interested in a full pay as you throw

program for Hamilton.

Discussion addressed the FinCom's interest in being involved in budget decisions earlier in the process (i.e., BOS deciding on waste hauling program, and advance of funds in lieu of borrowing) as well as how permission was not needed from the HW School Committee for FinCom members to meet with representatives from HWRSD.

Budget Forecast and Analysis Topics

The FinCom discussed with the Town manager need to fill the Finance Director's position, and how assistant accountant and treasurer/collector have been sharing the financial work including getting the Town audit done. Other topics of discussion were interest in analysis of prior years budgets for accuracy, to identify excesses, all relative to forecasts.

Also addressed was the level services approach to budgeting to maintain services within manageable expectations (2% or lower increase per year). A level funded approach would likely require sizeable cuts. The largest driver to the budget is personnel (70%) with most departments being run by one to two people with the exception of the police and public works departments. The Fire Department has adopted the new wage classification table. Town officials are looking at the table as it relates to market data. The Town has adopted a new insurance plan that is less expensive.

The Town manager is analyzing why the budget was underspent in FY'16 and discussion was on how some of this money could be spent on increase in waste hauling cost and possibly applied to the tax rate. Also mentioned was increased revenue from excise tax and building permits, as well as how the Town will be reviewing inspectional fees which have not been raised in three years. The FinCom is interested in doing a detailed review of FY'16 and FY'17 budgets.

The FinCom discussed PILOT analysis of tax exempt properties including churches, private schools, American Legion. On average 25% of services provided in Town budget go towards non-profit organizations. In the case of Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, the Town has received a gift of \$75,000 since the seminarian students have children in the public schools. A next step for the FinCom is to draft a policy related to PILOT.

The Town manager provided an update on status of Patton Park pool explaining that soil and gravel used were not an issue, and details associated with subcontractor payments. He also discussed with the FinCom how he and his administrative assistant as well as the Town clerk can help with posting of FinCom meeting agendas and information on the Town website.

The FinCom is trying to schedule a joint meeting with the Selectmen (i.e., September 24) and its next meeting is on September 28.

Adjournment

Wanger entertained a motion to adjourn at 9:16 p.m. Tensen so moved. Kain seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST:



David Wanger, Hamilton Finance & Advisory Committee Chairman