

TOWN OF HAMILTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MAY 12, 2012

The Board of Selectmen met at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 12, 2012 with Jennifer Scuteri, David Carey, Marc Johnson, Jeff Stinson and Jeff Hubbard present. Town Manager Michael Lombardo, Finance Director Deborah Nippes-Mena, Finance Committee Chair John McWane, and HW Regional School Committee members Roger Keubel and Larry Swartz also present.

Call to order

Chair Jennifer Scuteri called the meeting to order.

Town Meeting articles, recommendations and BOS presentation discussion

HWRSD School Budget

Finance Committee Chair John McWane described Finance Committee's standpoint in the spirit of collaboration with School Committee on proposed HWRSD school budget. The Fin Com supports capital expenses being included in the operating budget, that due diligence should be done and plan in place for how school department would spend IT money, that percentage of Excess & Deficiency funds from FY11 should be given back to the towns to reduce last year's assessment by \$420,000 and this includes \$70,000 in unused choice money, and that School Committee refuses to acknowledge that \$100,000 in additional funds will be coming to the school district from the state this year.

Selectmen Chair Jennifer Scuteri agreed that the schools have fallen behind in IT. School Committee Vice Chair Roger Keubel concurred that an IT plan should be put in place for HWRSD.

McWane recommended that the HWRSD school budget for FY13 be amended from \$15,437,356 to \$15,151,673. Discussion ensued about whether or not funds from HWRSD E&D above 3% would come back to the towns in time for fall Special Town Meetings so the reduced assessment could be applied to the municipalities' tax rates.

Scuteri entertained a motion to support proposal to amend HWRSD school budget figure for FY13 to \$15,151,673. Marc Johnson so moved. Jeff Stinson seconded motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Free Cash

Town officials also discussed a proposal to amend the Free Cash figure to be applied to offset the tax rate from \$300,000 to \$350,000. Town Manager Michael Lombardo explained that the reasoning behind \$300,000 was in consideration of Hamilton's lagging property values and \$14 million in capital expenses the Town is facing in near future. McWane was in favor of the \$350,000 in an effort to advocate for the taxpayers and due to expected return of funds to the towns by HWRSD resulting in a lower assessment for school costs.

Scuteri entertained a motion to support proposal to amend Free Cash figure to be applied to offset the tax rate from \$300,000 to \$350,000. Jeff Hubbard so moved. Johnson seconded motion. VOTE: 3-2-0 with Stinson and Carey opposed stating they supported \$300,000 and did not want to amend Town manager's budget.

Downtown Improvements/Meals Tax Revenue

Discussion ensued about ATM article for \$23,000 of \$73,000 in Meals Tax Revenue to be used for downtown improvements including trees, flower boxes for Hamilton's traffic islands, and landscaping. The Hamilton DPW would oversee the project work to be done on Town-owned land. Hubbard, who is driving the initiative, had spoken with tree warden, fire department and downtown merchants about proposal as well as Corliss Brothers, HW Garden Club and Jim O'Brien, landscaper, for estimates on cost of improvements.

Discussion addressed potential opposition from voters who are in support of Hamilton Development Corporation that is nearing fruition in state legislature relative to a Home Rule petition. HDC would ultimately manage similar efforts in Town and would view approval of this article in conflict with its charter.

Scuteri entertained a motion for Selectmen to make a favorable recommendation on Article 2-17, Fund for Downtown Improvements. Johnson so moved. VOTE: Unanimous.

BOS presentation review

Selectmen reviewed slides for Board presentation to ATM and decided specific information comparing data from similar school districts (i.e., median income, student population, and per pupil cost) should be discussed with community at a future appropriate time.

Intention is to explain challenge for two towns to do more when spending school budget such as adding more languages and advanced placement classes, and working towards students increasing their SAT scores at the HW Regional High School. Part and parcel with ongoing effort in Hamilton by elected officials to provide residents with opportunity for high quality public education for their children at a manageable cost.

Scuteri entertained a motion at 8:55 a.m. to adjourn the Board's meeting. Stinson so moved. Carey seconded motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: _____

Clerk