

**TOWN OF HAMILTON  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
FEBRUARY 3, 2014**

The Board of Selectmen met at Hamilton Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, February 3, 2014 with David Neill, Marc Johnson, Scott Maddern and Jennifer Scuteri present. Town Manager Michael Lombardo, Finance Director Deborah Nippes-Mena, HDC President Brian Stein, Fin Com Chair John McWane, interim DPW Director Dave Hanlon and Planning Board members Ed Howard, Rick Mitchell and Claudia Woods also present.

**Call to order**

Marc Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Town Manager's report**

Town Manager Michael Lombardo said landfill capping had begun with erosion controls in place and soils expected to be delivered next week. Site will be cleared of trees and intent is to have capping completed by September with seeding done in spring 2015. A parallel path is occurring on possibility of a solar project at site. The public works director position has been posted and responsibilities may be shared with Wenham regarding facilities and grounds. Changes could occur in the job description relative to Collins Center report. The Patton Homestead land RFP has been posted and pre-bid conference is expected next week and a meeting is scheduled with Planning Board tomorrow night.

**Chairman/Selectmen reports**

Scott Maddern spoke to League of Women Voters forum addressing campaign finance reform. David Neill was enthusiastic that the final capping of landfill had started. Jennifer Scuteri spoke to possible application for Patton Homestead grant where funds could be used for a feasibility study on best use for Homestead, and infrastructure study to identify needs (i.e., upgrading septic).

**PRESENTATION**

Brian Stein, President of Hamilton Development Corporation, spoke to ATM warrant article that dedicates Meals Tax revenue to HDC (done in the last two years), that corporation is recognized by state, that insurance is handled separately by Town and HDC has used Town staff for administrative services.

Discussion ensued about \$25,000 grant that funded planning sessions held with public relative to a village plan done by MAPC. Report will be put on Town's website. Also addressed was wastewater study for the downtown and continuation of citizen outreach meetings. Report suggests potential zoning changes for downtown that could spur development. It also addresses expansion of existing overlay district to most of downtown, greater density and height limits, and less cumbersome parking requirements all of which would go through public process with Planning Board and Town Meeting. Also considered is improving transportation and adding crosswalks (i.e., 300 Main) for safer access to stores as well as bike paths. Streetscape improvements including period lighting were also mentioned with possible funding through HDC budget.

Discussion ensued about \$25,000 a year for administrative and legal services. Going forward the HDC would have an independent person that would manage accounting. Overall the corporation's annual budget is \$43,000. Also addressed was that 10% of HDC budget from \$65,000 annual Meals Tax revenue is allocated to downtown improvements for the merchants (i.e., flower boxes). HDC members attend meetings with business owners.

Discussion addressed HDC's balance sheet of \$330,000 that is in a simple interest investment since the HDC is working on opportunities where funding might need to be readily available. Much of the improvements under consideration are likely to occur in the next five years or beyond. Discussion was on how HDC is just getting up and running and what could possibly be done with studies for downtown improvements (i.e., septic). Also, the importance of Town expanding its marketing presence and outreach communication to community. In addition, that all land use boards would be involved with analysis of MAPC report and outcomes such as tying Patton Park playground into downtown and continuity of lighting and identification of sidewalks and crosswalks. It was noted that the Planning Director position could be the lynchpin for this coordination.

Discussion addressed how FY'14 Meals Tax revenue was already allocated and transferred and that the FY'15 Meals Tax revenue number would be known when the ATM warrant is printed.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Johnson read the items on the Consent Agenda.

**Approve Minutes** – January 13, 2014 – BOS & Fin Com Working Session; January 13, 2014 – BOS & Fin Com Executive Session.

Request from the **Hamilton Wenham Garden Club** to use the front lawn of the Senior Center for its annual plant sale on Saturday, May 17, 2014 from 9 am to 1 pm. Permission is also sought to hang a banner on poles dedicated for purpose at the Senior Center, advertising the event from May 11 through May 17, 2014.

Johnson entertained a motion to accept the Consent Agenda as read. Neill so moved. Maddern seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

**AGENDA**

**Consideration of the creation of the Department of Planning and Inspection**

Discussion ensued about job description and organization chart for department level position of Planning Director and creation of the Department of Planning and Inspection that Selectmen had reviewed and provided input to Town manager. Input will be received from Planning Board tomorrow night.

Discussion was on how land use functions and health department staff report to Town Manager Michael Lombardo and the statutory rights of the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals. The proposed position would lend more support to these Town boards where a director could focus on a higher level of planning, move projects through with more depth and provide synchronization (i.e., aesthetics at Gulf Station that were approved by ZBA and caused concern for Planning Board).

Discussion addressed how this director's position would facilitate interaction and increase efficiency with developers by overseeing process across departments as well as putting charrettes into action. Discussion ensued with Planning Board members Ed Howard, Rick Mitchell and Claudia Woods. Specifically addressed was memo from Town Counsel Donna Brewer relative to how the Planning Director position does not conflict statutorily with the Planning Board's responsibilities and that the intent is to improve functioning

service of various boards and does not change the statutory authority of any Town boards including the Planning Board.

It was noted that the Board of Selectmen approve all department head hires. Also, that once the director's position is in place, some staff would work across organizations. The intent of creating the department and director's position is to enhance the process to achieve a common goal of which improved communication across departments is one aspect to unify direction across boards and committees with a central authority. ATM has approved the salary and position and \$70,000 was budgeted.

Johnson entertained a motion to approve the creation of the Department of Planning and Inspection and the job description (for Planning Director position) will evolve after the discussion with the Planning Board. Scuteri so moved. Neill seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

**Detailed discussion on FY'15 Budget**

Discussion ensued with interim DPW Director Dave Hanlon about aesthetics in the downtown relative to public works budget and first priorities to mow school properties and that consideration should be given to a few spots in Town to be mowed regularly such as Walnut Road. Discussion addressed interest in a heightened level of care such as removal of weeds, painting, signage, and removal of banners and if this can be accommodated with existing DPW staff or is this an increased cost.

Discussion was on infrastructure improvements and routine maintenance relative to beautification and if seasonal or full time staff would do the work and how it would be paid for. It was noted that weekly weed control would require more help. The public works department is currently recruiting for two FTEs. If more beautification work were done downtown this would require more resources that were not used before and staff would be redeployed from other tasks such as mowing lawns at schools. There is interest on the Board to elevate the appearance of the downtown to the level of the park and cemetery where there is currently staff focus on routine maintenance. Neill said the downtown is taking on more significance relative to the well-being of the community and he was in favor of a policy commitment.

As part of further budget discussion, Finance Director Deborah Nippes-Mena explained that \$30,000 of Free Cash was added to Town manager budget for

consulting fees. Also, that \$12,000 has been budgeted for a consultant or part time public relations employee to work 13 hours a week at \$17.40 an hour with the Town departments to publicize what is going on in Town (i.e., pool, turf field, COA) that can be posted on the Town's website and through social media platforms. This position would be kept under benefit eligible. Details on this position will be worked out by Nippes-Mena and the Town manager.

Discussion ensued about \$50,000 being added into budget that was overlooked, and that same dollar amount has been budgeted for Hamilton's allocation of HW Public Library budget. There is interest in a wage and classification study being done before increases for wages are done at library. There is an \$18,000 increase in library materials. Fin Com Chair John McWane noted that the library should have a third-party do a wage and classification table and if there are any changes this would be addressed at STM in the fall. Discussion addressed how the library currently has a last step that is above the average on all positions. Also, that a wage and classification study would take a couple of months, that Wenham which manages the library could potentially participate in Hamilton's wage and classification study and pay a proportionate share of the cost.

Discussion addressed group health insurance cost going up by 6% according to MIIA. This increase is managed in the budget. Town is working with insurance representatives to analyze its health plan design relative to ongoing increases in costs and current 75/25 cost share. Nippes-Mena summarized that active employees participate in HMO and annual cost is \$16,000 per person and just under \$20,000 for a family. Possible plan changes would impact day surgery, emergency room visit, MRI and similar testing tools as well as prescription billing. The biggest changes would be with the retirees group with open enrollment shifting to January and a tiered plan for prescription co-pays with cost changes from \$10, \$30, \$35 to \$20, \$40, \$70. The Town would lose a federal prescription drug subsidy. A retiree under the new Medex plan would save \$168 monthly under the new plan. The Town's cost for healthcare insurance with proposed changes could drop to \$750,000. There could be migration costs and the savings would not be seen until FY'16. The Town's healthcare insurance costs are still less expensive than GIC.

Discussion ensued about 2% to 3% budget increases annually for a level service budget for Hamilton prompting consideration of changes in healthcare insurance benefit. Discussion noted that there could be a \$200 savings per individual per month but the plan is still generous. Also addressed was how there is legislation

that allows municipalities to change healthcare insurance plan design. An insurance committee would have to be convened.

Discussion addressed school budgets: HWRSD budget with Hamilton's share at \$16,073,663, and North Shore Vocational Technical school assessment of \$14,000 per student for an expected nine students and it will be operating under the new school structure combined with Essex Agricultural school. Hamilton's share for the debt handling cost for the combined school is \$36,000. Discussion was on \$18.14 tax rate, and HWRSD budget that could potentially be \$15,266,799 if the school district uses \$1.5 million to reduce its assessment which would bring the tax rate to \$17.52. Discussion ensued about this being a re-valuation year.

Discussion addressed HWRSD being asked to return \$1.2 million to supporting communities and that school district's level services budget is up 3.76% or \$1 million. McWane said towns would accept 4% increase in spending. School budget includes \$427,000 for new programs to be absorbed in level services budget due to identified savings. HWRSD is proposing taking over its own facilities maintenance by adding 2.5 staff which may be part of a larger facilities maintenance plan. Discussion ensued on HWRSD still being \$2,000 more over its peer school districts in per pupil cost (i.e., Ipswich and Lynnfield). Town officials expressed interested in knowing the HWRSD per pupil cost expenditure. Discussion addressed if HWRSD would give \$1.5 million back to the towns so the schools would stay within 4%. Also noted was one-time expense of High School technology upgrade of \$100,000. Discussion was about Town official interest in HWRSD trying to stay within a 4% budget increase for the schools. Also mentioned was if more Free Cash should be applied to tax rate in the fall and how the HWRSD is addressing declining enrollment.

**Set date for next Board of Selectmen meeting**

Board and Fin Com will attend joint meeting with Wenham and HWRSD Wednesday at Burnham Hall. Johnson entertained a motion at 9:54 p.m. to adjourn meeting. Maddern so moved. Neill seconded motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST:

  
Clerk