

**TOWN OF HAMILTON  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
NOVEMBER 16, 2015**

The Board of Selectmen met at Hamilton Town Hall at 7:03 p.m. on Monday, November 16, 2015 with Scott Maddern, Marc Johnson, Shawn Farrell, Jeff Hubbard, Bill Wilson (arrived at 7:10 p.m.) present. Town Manager Michael Lombardo, Finance Director Brian Connelly, Board of Assessors: Gelean Campbell, Steve Ozahowski, Peter Kane, Director of Assessors Tina Zelano, Valuation Consultant Tom Hogan also present.

**Call to order**

Scott Maddern called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**Public Comment**

Duke Seaver, Essex Street, expressed dissatisfaction with annual rate increase from Comcast. Kevin Kaminski inquired about why the property at Bradley Palmer State Park where he and his wife are curators and are renovating is being taxed by the Town. The Town has the discretion to tax a property of this nature and Hamilton is one of few municipalities to do so in the country. A future discussion with the BOS on the matter will be scheduled.

**Chairman/Selectmen reports**

Jeff Hubbard acknowledged American Legion for role associated with Veteran's Day and awards given to Alex Dale, Brian Shaw, and Greg McKenna. He also recognized Superintendent of Schools Michael Harvey for the forward thinking in the HWRSD that was presented during Master Plan presentation for the school district at the Legion hall.

Marc Johnson concurred about HWRSD Master Plan presented at LWV sponsored event at the Legion which addressed school buildings, curriculum, capital needs, and analysis of use of modular walls in classrooms. He acknowledged success of soccer and cross country teams. He also spoke to presentation at library on GMOs.

Bill Wilson agreed about Dr. Harvey's presentation on HWRSD Master Plan and noted short term curriculum improvement (i.e., project based learning), SBA contribution, and that FinCom will be recommending 2% budget increase at upcoming meeting with HWRSD. The HW School Committee will be discussion turf project.

Shawn Farrell mentioned continued public hearing with Planning Board for Canterbrook 23-unit project, Sagamore Hill discussion regarding parking and access, Black Cow is extending the restaurant space where Jolie Tea was formerly located, Conservation Commission discussed HWRSD Audubon education proposal where Hamilton pays 69% from Conservation Commission fund and Wenham has not contributed its share for 10 years so the HWRSD charges students a fee to participate in field trip to make up difference. Also noted was CPC project evaluation system, CPA surcharge, sunset clause for CPA funding projects, public safety building safe trade zone, acknowledgement of Donna Whipple and Bill Cook during the Community House Harvest Dinner, Acord annual food drive on November 21.

Maddern provided update on award for Mimi Fanning for her years of service with COA, access to Patton Homestead and CPA application, meeting with his counterpart in Wenham regarding land acquisition and how Wenham may move its ATM to May due to attendance as well as potential partnering on ECO (Manchester is going to Beverly), plans for a Chapter 40B affordable housing seminar coordinated with State Representative Brad Hill and Senator Bruce Tarr.

### **Town Manager's Report**

Town Manager Michael Lombardo reported on meeting with owner's agent for proposed solar field at landfill, cell tower rebid is out and bids are due back in early January, upcoming groundbreaking for Patton Ridge development, pool bids due on Thursday, informative Veteran's Day presentation.

### **Annual Report – The Hamilton Foundation – Heather Ford**

Heather Ford summarized 10-year mission of The Hamilton Foundation to help residents with an immediate one time need during the year (i.e., paying a monthly utility bill) when there is a family illness, job loss, as a short term solution. Lori Johnson is the new coordinator for the Foundation who works confidentially with families in need. Referrals are received for those in need sometimes from neighbors and the Hamilton Housing Authority.

### **Tax Classification Hearing**

Director of Assessors Tina Zelano presented information for annual tax classification hearing along with Board of Assessors and Tom Hogan, Valuation Consultant. Four

options are voted every year by the Selectmen. The Assessors did not recommend the adoption of any of the discounts or exemptions.

#### Open Space Discount

Discussion was about how Hamilton does not have any land classified as open space. Exclusions include land taxable under the provisions of Chapter Land or land taxable under a permanent conservation restriction or used to produce income.

Farrell moved that the Town not adopt the Open Space Discount. Johnson seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

#### Residential Exemption

This exemption applies to every residential property which is owner occupied. Age and income are not factors, and the tax burden shifts within the residential class. Exclusions include seasonal homes/residential apartment buildings, and non-owner occupied residential property.

Wilson moved that the Town not adopt the Residential Exemption. Hubbard seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

#### Small Commercial Exemption

Established in 1995 to benefit small businesses with average annual employment of not more than 10 people during prior calendar year as certified by Dept. of Labor & Workforce Development. The tax burden shifts within the commercial and industrial classes. Hamilton does not have enough commercial properties greater than \$1 million in value for the tax burden to shift.

Johnson moved that the Town not adopt the Small Commercial Exemption. Farrell seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

#### Residential Factor

The total valuation of the Town is \$1,434,911,406 which is 5% increase compared to last fiscal year. The tax levy is \$24,752,222 which is up 6.1% compared to last year. The value of the average single family house is up 5.1% compared to last year. The average commercial property value is \$829,900 or up 3.5%. The FY16 tax rate is \$17.25 or up

0.9%. Hamilton only has 3.9% commercial property so if the burden were shifted it would be overly burdensome for commercial property owners with little relief for residential property owners.

Hubbard moved that the Town maintain a single residential factor of 1 for both residential and commercial properties. Wilson seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Discussion ensued about how residential values are increasing faster than commercial properties in Town. Also discussed was how assessed valuations exist for the equitable dispersion of the tax levy. The total assessed valuation of the Town increased by 5.1% so the tax rate is now \$17.25.

### Consent Agenda

Maddern read the following items:

- Vote to appropriate \$20,000 from the Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund for FY'16 Cemetery purposes, to be used as another source of funding for setting the tax rate. This is an appropriation voted annually and represents interest only.
- Appoint Lori Johnson to the Board of **The Hamilton Foundation** until June 30, 2016, to complete the term of Susan Lawrence who resigned.
- Appoint Christopher J. Currier to the **Conservation Commission** for a term expiring June 30, 2018.
- Approve Minutes: November 2, 2015 – Regular Minutes

Johnson moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Wilson seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

### Agenda

- Review of Special Town Meeting

Discussion ensued to review Special Town Meeting which the Board concurred went well with new Town moderator's oversight, and information presented to educate voters including new voter cards. Discussion addressed how the HW Regional High School is the preferred location to hold Town Meeting in part due to the sound system versus Winthrop School and it is less expensive because chairs do not have to be rented. Although there can be scheduling conflicts at the High School and date needs to be determined for ATM in April. Suggestion was made that daycare should be provided

for children in the overflow room to allow both parents in young families to attend Town Meetings.

- Three-year Financial Forecast

Discussion was on key points of three-year financial forecast with figure for Free Cash to be certified to be determined for FY'17 forecast which effects growth factor revenue percentage. The Free Cash percentage is kept at 5% for the Town. For personnel there is a 2.75% increase in growth factor relative to expenses and this number will change once step increases and other factors are added. For FY'17 operating expenses there is a 2% increase for general government, protection of persons and property, public works, health department, recreation, and 3% for library, 2% for allowances and abatements, state assessments (.2%), and retirement increase is unknown but could be 8%. The increase for health insurance is 11% and an agent has been brought in to get quotes from other vendors using RFP process. GIC is an option. Other expenses include property and casualty insurance, and Medicare and unemployment.

OPEB will have \$50,000 more added than the \$25,000 that has been budgeted annually to work toward reaching \$175,000 a year to manage the unfunded liability for the Town. There is a related OPEB expense associated with the HWRSD where Hamilton will be paying a percentage of that expense. An in-depth explanation of OPEB unfunded liability could be included with the water bill mailing.

Also addressed was the prior year snow deficit, and amount that is budgeted annual to support waste enterprise and if this enterprise fund were self-funding the program would have to be restructured (i.e., fewer trash pick-ups or strict PAYT). In addition, this year the Assessors are not recommending \$20,000 be released from reserves.

Discussion was on CIP spreadsheet with five items on list, 2% projected HWRSD expense increase, 1% increase for Essex Tech. Also addressed was how the tax rate could be broken down into how the Town is spending its money as part of budget presentation in a simpler graphical view. It was noted that the FinCom is recommending a 2% increase for the Town and the HWRSD for operating expenses. Information on Free Cash, snow deficit, and CIP will be presented at a follow-up meeting. Discussion addressed importance of reviewing the total actual money spent to date for operating expenses for the Town and HWRSD, and how the valuation effects the tax rate and how essential it is to look at the total tax bill to understand cost to run Hamilton. The Finance Director will be developing a quarterly financial report.

- Initial Land Acquisition Committee Charge

This discussion was postponed to a subsequent BOS meeting.

- Set date for next meeting

The Board of Selectmen will met again on December 7.

New Business

- Consideration of topics for discussion at future Selectmen's meetings

Topics the Board will discuss include: three-year forecast update, taxing curator at Bradley Palmer, ATM date, HDC status on what is being done with Meals Tax money downtown as well as ULI update, status of annual reports and associated policy, and budget process.

Maddern entertained a motion at 9:18 p.m. to enter into Executive Session, pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, sec. 21(a)(2), to conduct a strategy session in preparation for collective bargaining with non-union personnel and M.G.L. c. 30A, sec. 21 (3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with AFSCME Administrative Assistants union as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Town as I so declare and not to return to open session. Wilson so moved. Johnson seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Johnson, yes, Hubbard, yes, Maddern, yes, Farrell, yes, Wilson, yes.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: Shawn M. Farrell  
Clerk