

TOWN OF HAMILTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
And FINANCE COMMITTEE
MARCH 12, 2012

Board of Selectmen met at Hamilton Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, March 12, 2012 with Jennifer Scuteri, David Carey, Marc Johnson, Jeff Stinson and Jeff Hubbard present. Town Manager Michael Lombardo, Finance Director Deborah Nippes-Mena, and Finance Committee members John McWane, Joe Santarelli, Laurie Wilson and William Boesch also present.

Call to order

Chair Jennifer Scuteri called the meeting to order. Town Manager Michael Lombardo mentioned that water sample survey that some residents may have received was not from Hamilton's water department. There was no public comment.

Sign Cemetery Deeds

Selectmen signed cemetery deeds.

CPC Project Updates

Marc Johnson reported on joint meeting with Community Preservation Committee where costs were identified if the Town accepted the Patton property gift until development plans are put in place. The CPC was generally in favor of gift proposal and funding carrying costs for two years through Community Preservation Act categories of historic preservation, recreation and open space. A caretaker for the property would not fall into these categories. Discussion about possibility of adding cost of picnic tables to Patton property proposed budget for public use before property is developed.

The Patton Family Gift Advisory Committee is meeting on Wednesday night. Johnson had recently walked the property with an individual who is helping the Town to evaluate the property and feedback is expected soon.

Jeff Hubbard mentioned his discussion with CPC about using CPA money for downtown enhancements including replacing gas lanterns, trees, and benches. Historic District Commission will discuss items on March 21 to determine if they

have historic significance for the Town. Hubbard noted that strong community support is needed for the enhancements. He said other communities have used CPA money for shade trees.

Also, the enhancements he is championing were included in the Town's Master Plan as part of preserving character of Hamilton (i.e., downtown). Discussion ensued about restrictions of CPA law where existing playgrounds cannot be renovated although pending legislation could provide relief in recreation category and replacement of historic structure.

Lombardo mentioned early discussions on study of Town Hall renovations and that projections are being increased as part of developing a plan. Scuteri raised issue of priorities for Hamilton since the Town is facing many capital costs with needed maintenance of school buildings and water distribution system.

Meals Tax Revenue

The Meals Tax Revenue is currently \$76,323.58 and can be spent with Town Meeting approval. Discussion ensued with Economic Development Committee member Bob Bullivant about getting the Hamilton Development Corporation in place with finalized Home Rule Petition by Legislature that hopefully will come to fruition soon.

However, citation notice was not filed correctly so that is being addressed in upcoming Hamilton Wenham Chronicle with ultimate goal to have action taken on Home Rule Petition while the Legislature is in session.

Also mentioned was action taken at last May's ATM regarding Stabilization Fund and Meals Tax Revenue. Hubbard is interested in Town supporting downtown merchants with their fall fair through use of some of these funds without Town Meeting approval. Discussion about how to assist merchants before HDC is in place.

Discussion was about possibility of Town Meeting setting up a revolving fund for downtown improvements. Town Counsel Donna Brewer opined that money in a Town revolving fund could not be targeted for private use, there has to be a public benefit as well. Also, that the Town could decide to no longer charge downtown merchants \$800 for insurance related to commercial events.

Discussion about possibility of placeholder on ATM warrant for funding HDC. It was noted that the Town manager is responsible for managing celebrations in Hamilton. Town will follow up with Legislators on status of Home Rule Petition.

Purple Heart Trail Program

Scuteri presented idea of designating a symbolic Purple Heart Trail on Asbury Street that honors the military. Selectmen would vote on adopting next week. Three trail markers could be placed at Patton Park, intersection of Highland and Asbury Streets and at Patton family homestead.

The source of revenue for this project could come from the American Legion or Rotary Club. Lombardo will research cost of signs. Johnson suggested a smaller sign could be used at the outset of project allowing time to fundraise. Local veteran agent Terry Hart was in support of proposal.

School Budget Update

Finance Committee Chair John McWane called the Finance Committee meeting to order. He then summarized the proposed allocation of Excess and Deficiency Funds related to the FY'13 Hamilton Wenham Regional School budget.

He noted that there is an expected spending increase of \$608,000 in the FY'13 school budget. E and D funds have been identified at \$3.2 million. The HWRSD wants to retain 3% totaling \$800,000 for school use, and \$250,000 will be used for Circuit Breaker transfer for out of district placements.

Items discussed by the two boards included recurring expenses totaling \$441,350, one time expenses totaling \$769,695 and \$500,000 to balance the budget with kindergarten and preschool income as well as a \$500,000 reduction in appropriation by the towns.

Discussion addressed in recurring expenses: increasing IT support to full year for \$60,000, additional IT support for \$85,000, adding a human resources manager for \$60,000, adding more hours for Middle School assistant principal for \$45,350, adding Elementary School math support for \$66,000, increasing Buker library media specialist time for \$11,000, adding half-time Winthrop teaching assistant for \$11,000, reducing user fees for families for \$83,000 and increasing athletic scholarships by \$20,000.

Discussion was also on one time expenses: information technology for \$216,287, maintenance for \$292,245, addressing Americans with Disability Act issues at Cutler and Buker Elementary Schools for \$75,163, and improvements to the Ferrini Auditorium at the HWRHS for \$186,000.

Discussion ensued on state mandate for teacher evaluations and proposal to hire human resources manager that Lombardo and Finance Committee member Joe Santarelli said they did not support.

Hubbard, Santarelli, David Carey and Finance Committee member William Boesch expressed view that Town officials should not be micromanaging regional school budget rather that responsibility was for the HW Regional School Committee/school district officials and that a realistic baseline should be used.

Scuteri, Stinson and Johnson noted that identifying efficiencies in how money is spent for the school district and ways to save money in the school budget moving forward are priorities. This could include reducing the amount of staff through attrition and not hiring replacements. Finance Committee member Laurie Wilson emphasized that maintaining effective class sizes was essential to education and that teacher contract changes would not occur until next year.

McWane said that School Committee had not provided the leadership that the towns had hoped for but the amount of money that the school district has is now known. Scuteri and Johnson suggested the School Committee should be asked to go back and in a neutral process, dig deeper to come up with a budget that does not present an increase to the taxpayers.

McWane will report consensus of Town officials' discussion on proposed allocation of E&D Deficiency Funds to the School Committee as: there is support for reduction in user fees for \$83,000, increase in athletic scholarships for \$20,000, and maintenance funds of \$292,245, addressing ADA issues at Cutler/Buker school for \$75,000 and improvements to High School auditorium for \$186,000. There is not support for staffing or information technology increases.

He noted that the group had mixed views on \$600,000 increase in the budget and use of the E&D funds. McWane reported that Wenham Board of Selectmen has sent a letter to the School Committee stating it wants a level funded budget and will not fund the \$600,000 increase. He noted that Wenham Finance Committee has not taken a position yet.

McWane added that consensus across town boards in Wenham regarding paying the municipalities' expense for the Cutler School boiler installation is that funds should come from E&D rather than through bonding.

The Hamilton Finance Committee adjourned its meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Warrant Articles

Lombardo said a placeholder has to be added related to easement on Discover Hamilton trails.

Scuteri said Town counsel needs to opine on warrant articles for Hamilton accepting Patton property as a gift and to enable use of CPA money for recreational use to cover property's carrying costs for Town.

Discussion on school maintenance projects as part of \$4 million expense and related warrant article, as well as bonding of \$5 million for upgrading 60-year-old water distribution system to stave off potential costly water main break repairs, relative to taxpayers' concern about high tax rate. The Town currently has little debt and is carrying well under 5%.

Board emphasized importance of educating public on proposed warrant articles so they can decide what expenditures to support. Lombardo said there is \$14 million in capital infrastructure and \$20 million in water distribution upgrade expenses that have to be addressed when Town decides what to fund.

Discussion about not bringing pool design and engineering for \$125,000 forward to ATM and that pending legislature could allow CPA funds to be used. CPC cannot support now since pool would have to be located on acquired land, and if fund raising was possible for such a project.

Discussion was about funding three years of school maintenance projects and importance of replacing Winthrop School roof and prioritized list of projects developed by Capital Management Committee.

Lombardo said retained earnings would pay for public works trucks and it is an emergency to replace department's front-line vehicles especially those to be used for snowplowing next year. This cost could be supported through free cash as a one-time expense or by incurring debt over three years. Hubbard stated his

opposition to Town incurring any debt and was in favor of contracting out work that would be done with these trucks.

Lombardo agreed to break down top-tier costs for upgrading water distribution system for Board to discuss in the next week. To fund the \$5 million upgrade would cost \$180 a year more for the ratepayer who owns the average house.

Discussion about whether to appropriate funds for this two-stage project, or to use bonding or state's water solution revolving fund grant that would have a 2% interest rate. The Town currently has leaks in the water distribution system resulting in a large expense related to amount of water going into the ground.

Discussion was on 3.5 miles of existing sidewalk requiring repair and maintenance and if there is support for appropriating \$50,000 for the next several years. Some work could be done in-house but outside contractor would likely be used for sidewalks on Route 1A. Hubbard reiterated opposition to increasing tax rate with additional expense in operating budget.

Discussion was about citizen interest in sidewalk study on Essex Street. CPA funding could not be used to pay for study. The expected expense for the sidewalk is \$800,000 and if Town would be receptive to this large cost for such a project was questioned. Carey suggested interested citizens be referred to residents and Town officials involved in the Woodbury Street path project. Scuteri recused herself on this discussion since she lives on Essex Street. Lombardo said the community has to decide as a rural town whether or not it wants sidewalks.

Discussion was about CMC narrowing down capital project number for school buildings in consideration of health, safety and welfare of the students.

Two placeholders will be put on the warrant for establishing an HDC funding mechanism and hearing costs, and for drainage easement on Gregory Island Road where Chapter 90 money could be used for reimbursement.

Selectmen will close the ATM warrant at the March 19, 2012 meeting.

Other business

Next BOS meeting is March 19.

Scuteri entertained a motion for the Board to adjourn at 10:11 p.m. Hubbard so moved. Stinson seconded motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: _____

Clerk