

HAMILTON FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of Meeting
September 18, 2019

FinCom members present: John Pruellage, Christina Schenk-Hargrove, Nick Tensen (7:04), and David Wanger (Chair).

Others Present:

This Hamilton Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm at the Council on Aging Building, Bay Road, Hamilton.

Public Comment

Discussion regarding Warrant Articles for Special Town Meeting, voting recommendations on such articles, and drafting of recommendations document to be sent to town residents.

Warrant articles had previously been voted upon except for the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) contributions to the Town Hall renovations and the appropriation and borrowing for Town Hall renovations. David Wanger noted debate regarding Options A and B need not be attended to for the vote.

Motion to recommend favorably Article 10-2-6 made by John Pruellage pending Nick Tensen's vote.

Seconded by Christina Schenk-Hargrove.

Vote: Unanimous in favor (3-0 due to Nick Tensen not having arrived at the time of voting).

After Nick Tensen arrived, the article was re-voted.

Motion to recommend favorably action on Article 10-2-6 made by John Pruellage.

Seconded by Christina Schenk-Hargrove

Vote: Unanimous in favor (4-0)

Article 10-2-7 was discussed. David Wanger distributed information from Joe Domelowicz and Marisa Batista. Mr. Wanger described the meeting with Joe Domelowicz and Darcy Dale the previous Monday wherein he requested that the article be rewritten to allow for a clear decision between Option A and Option B. Mr. Domelowicz reportedly said he would consult with Town Counsel and inform the FinCom. The opinion had not been received. The printer deadline was October 4, 2019.

John Pruellage said a FinCom commentary would be appropriate. David Wanger responded that the language and money request were unclear. Mr. Wanger wanted to ensure that residents did not need to vote on the recommendation of the Selectmen or FinCom without having someone amend the article on Town Meeting floor. Mr. Wanger wanted to have a generic presentation for Town Meeting.

John Pruellage wanted to explain both scenarios and have a recommendation presented on the floor of Town Meeting. Mr. Pruellage said he wondered which option the FinCom would recommend if there were no difference in costs. The options were currently \$8.5M and \$9.3M with a borrowing cost difference of \$40,000 per year. It was noted that the Town Hall Building Committee had recently been informed that the unanticipated cost of required rods for the second floor would affect both options. A median house tax increase would be \$15 for Option B over Option A per year. David Wanger said the \$9M cost was a distraction that might prevent analysis of the project. Nick Tensen added that the analysis should include what was best for the Town regarding function and flexibility in terms of growth in the future. Mr. Tensen added that he liked Option B as it offered the opportunity for additional space as it had an elevator outside the current building envelope. Keeping the stairs was a bonus but not a high criteria for Option B.

Christina Schenk-Hargrove and Nick Tensen thought Option B was preferable. John Pruellage wanted to ensure a FinCom consensus as he did not feel strongly about either option. David Wanger noted that excavation for Option B might uncover tainted soil, which would require remediation. Joe Domelowicz reportedly said a 10 to 15% contingency would cover unknown situations. Parking and DPW impacts were concerns of Option B. An addition to the rear of the building might be an aesthetic concern for Option B. Members debated the benefits of having future expansion noting that the historic stairs were only one benefit even though they had been a focus of discussion. It was noted that handicapped access would be provided on the side of the building and other towns such as Wenham also had main entrances that were not in the front of the building.

The FinCom reviewed the plans for Option A. Nick Tensen said both options required the relocation of gas tanks. The first floor had a conference room, flex office, bathrooms, and storage. Both options provided second floor meeting space for 80 people, a conference room for 14 people, and a small enclosed conference room for four to eight people. Both options had a grade level access to an elevator at the rear of the building. Both options removed the current Americans with Disabilities ramp.

Nick Tensen wanted to offer a recommendation based on the functionality of the building now and in the future rather than the stairs or dollar amount. It was agreed that Option B allowed for easier expansion in the future. Concern that the project might not be approved due to the additional \$800,000 cost was noted.

Discussion ensued regarding how to allow residents to choose between Option A and Option B. Town Counsel would determine the phrasing. Nick Tensen was concerned that supporting the CPC funding of the project might be confusing if the FinCom did not support the funding of Option A if it were the only option presented at Town Meeting. John Pruellage suggested writing the commentary that supported the Town Hall renovation with a preference to Option B.

The commentary would outline the history of how the Town Hall Building Committee had preferred Option B but based on financial concerns, had agreed with the Selectmen to promote Option A. The FinCom thought the financial concerns had been overstated. The FinCom was supportive of both options but would prefer Option B.

John Pruellage suggested making a recommendation at Town Meeting and directing residents to the commentary but David Wanger hoped the FinCom would be more definitive in its recommendation. Mr. Wanger wanted to state that the FinCom was in favor of Town Hall renovations but was in favor of Option B. If Town Counsel only presented Option A, the FinCom would not be in favor of the article. Mr. Pruellage said he would not vote against Option A and did not want to delay the process. It was agreed that there was a possibility that neither option might be approved. Nick Tensen said he preferred Option B but if only Option A was presented, he would vote for it.

The expected request was for \$357,767 in addition to the \$250,000 granted by the CPC. Christina Schenk-Hargrove reiterated that it would be confusing for the FinCom to recommend favorable action on the CPC article and unfavorable action on the article for Option A. It was agreed that the FinCom supported the renovations but the article did not appropriate enough money to support Option B. David Wanger said the FinCom had a responsibility to make a clear and definitive recommendation and that the Selectmen voted for Option A (4-1) due to money, which the FinCom had determined was irrelevant. If the language did not change in the Warrant, the FinCom would explain that they preferred Option B but would not vote unfavorably for Option A. Mr. Wanger would go to the Selectmen and alert them to the FinCom's preference to have both options on the Warrant.

Discussion with Finance Director and/or Town Manager regarding any Special Town Meeting or finance related updates.

Neither the Town Manager nor the Finance Director were present.

Discussion regarding any follow ups from joint meeting with CAPCOM

David Wanger distributed the draft proposal for an umbrella agency, which he had sent to Heather Ford (Chair of CapCom). The proposal was to establish a uniformity in the expenditure of volunteer time in the immediate and long term timeframes. The goal would be to shape the committees into a common discourse within their individual expertise that would go beyond capital expenditures and cover issues that various committees were discussing. Christina Schenk-Hargrove said it would allow all committees to work together rather than cross purposes. The Selectmen currently oversaw committees. Members would review the draft proposal.

Discussion regarding any FINCOM vacancies.

David Wanger recalled that he had received an e-mail regarding the potential school committee bias of the potential candidate. The candidate spoke with Mr. Wanger and assured him that no bias existed. Mr. Wanger was supportive of her appointment, which was fortunate as Bill

Bowler had appointed the candidate earlier that day. Mr. Wanger asked members if they wanted to discuss the potential conflict at the meeting as he did not intent to circumvent the discussion. Members agreed to support her appointment as her previous run for the School Committee and potential liaison with a School Committee member who did not have a positive relationship with the FinCom had been surpassed.

Discussion of FINCOM goals and projects for FY20.

Discussion would be delayed until the new member was present.

Committee Member and Liaison Updates.

David Wanger said that he had learned the Police Department had hired an additional police officer even though he believed the hiring should have been deferred until the School Resource Officer question had been resolved. If the funding issue were not resolved favorably after this year for the next fiscal year, FinCom would take a negative view of paying for it by Hamilton alone. Hiring an officer might have proven to be an improvident decision due to a potential layoff of the position. Reportedly Joe Domelowicz was working with the Schools to include the cost in the School Budget with reimbursement to Hamilton for associated costs. While Alex Begin had been contacted regarding the topic, he had not responded. A joint meeting with the Schools was scheduled for October 16, 2019.

Reportedly Joe Domelowicz was cognizant of the lack of parity in terms of School employee increases with Town employee increases. Mr. Domelowicz had indicated that merit increases had been approved by the Union and were part of the contract. The merit increases would help make up the difference between the two entities.

Christina Schenk-Hargrove said he had been in contact with Mary Beth Lawton (COA) and Bill Wilson (CAPCOM). Nick Tensen recalled that he had spoken with the Police Chief who did not mention that the new officer had been hired. Mr. Tensen also spoke with Ray Brunet. David Wanger would meet with Rick Mitchell. The new member would be assigned liaison roles at the next meeting.

According to David Wanger, Darcy Dale and Joe Domelowicz agreed that the Patton Homestead should be self-sustaining within a two to three year period. Nick Tensen added that without outside support for renovations, the Homestead would never be self-sustaining.

Review and approval of available minutes

Motion made by Christina Schenk-Hargrove to accept the minutes of August 21, 2019 with minor changes.

Seconded by Nick Tensen.

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Motion made by Christina Schenk-Hargrove to accept the minutes of August 28, 2019.

Seconded by John Pruellage.
Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Determine/Discuss agenda for next meeting.

Other Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated as Determined by the Chair.

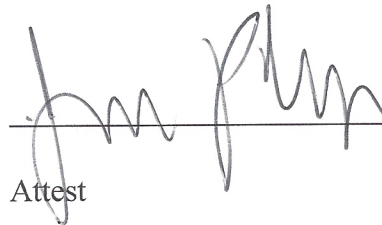
The FinCom agreed to accept any changes to the contract made between the Fire Chief and the Town Manager.

Adjournment

John Pruellage made motion to adjourn.
Seconded by Christina Schenk-Hargrove.
Vote: Unanimous in favor to adjourn at 8:48 pm.

Prepared by:

Marcie Ricker


_____ 10/23/14
Attest Date