

HAMILTON FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting
Via Zoom 82892584696
May 21, 2020

Members present: Valerie McCormack, John Pruellage, Christina Schenk-Hargrove, Nick Tensen and David Wanger (Chair).
Others present: Darcy Dale, Joe Domelowicz, Harriet Davis, and Marisa Batista. Rosie Kennedy.

This Hamilton Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

Public Comment

Discussion of FY21 budget and fiscal projections, currently contemplated revisions to prior determination and related subject matter.

David Wanger announced that the Selectmen had not closed the Warrant. Articles discussed were as follows:

Article 2.2. General Town appropriation for FY21 plus 5% for the Schools. No discussion. Motion made by John Pruellage to favorably recommend Article 2.2. Valerie McCormack seconded.

Roll call vote: Valerie McCormack- aye, Christina Schenk-Hargrove – aye, John Pruellage – aye, David Wanger – aye, and Nick Tensen - aye. Unanimous in favor.

David Wanger noted the Selectmen had determined that the Town should maintain the split warrant articles. Article 2.3 defined the balance of the School request between the 5% and the 8.25%, the difference being 3.25% or \$603,000. Mr. Wanger said voting in favor would be approving the entire proposed School budget. Valerie McCormack said she had listened to the School Committee meeting the night before when it sounded as if children were upset about programs being cut. Ms. McCormack did not hear the School Committee was appreciative of the current tax situation. John Pruellage, who also watched the meeting, agreed with Ms. McCormack. Mr. Pruellage said he would not change his vote in support of the article but wanted to ensure that residents understood favorable action should have a qualification that cuts would be enacted instead of asking for an appropriation if State aid was cut. The article provided the same budget as was proposed in February. \$1.247M in cuts were considered as a result of State aid shortfalls with no plan to reduce local aid requests from the towns. David Wanger reiterated that the second article would be the proposed increase to 8.25% above the FY21 budget and that if the article did not pass, the Schools would need to stay within a 5% increase. Mr. Wanger added that the Town had decreased their budget by 3% from FY20 while

the Schools proposed an 8.25% increase. Mr. Wanger did not think the Schools were being fluid in response to fiscal considerations.

Joe Domelowicz said the State would present their FY21 budget for municipal managers on May 28, 2020. Mr. Domelowicz said the Schools had not changed their position since February. In response to Nick Tensen's question as to why the vote needed to be taken now, David Wanger said it was the responsibility of the FinCom to inform and advise the Town Meeting using current factual context. Mr. Wanger added that if circumstances changed, the FinCom could further review the article. Mr. Tensen noted the FinCom had passed on recommendations in the past. Valerie McCormack said the FinCom could indicate that their opinion was based on the Schools not getting State funding and would reserve the right to amend their opinion on the floor of Town Meeting.

Marisa Batista was concerned that additional information would not be provided until June 21, 2020 and information regarding State aid might not be forthcoming until September. Nick Tensen said if State aid was not provided, the Town could go back and increase the School budget at Fall Town Meeting. Joe Domelowicz agreed. Mr. Tensen said one option would be to take the \$1.25M cut and that could become the budget approved. If funding was not provided, the budget could be up to that amount. Mr. Domelowicz said Wenham would also need to approve the same funding.

It was noted that the School Committee had not yet voted on their budget. David Wanger said Annual Town Meeting was set to undertake town business, which had been greatly reduced. The Schools had not changed their budget and the FinCom had a responsibility to vote. The Schools had opened the door to show that they could manage without the money from the State. The Town could revisit the budget if the Schools did not get the State funding. Nick Tensen said it was a fair way to handle the Schools' budget while sending a message that the Schools needed to be more fiscally prudent.

Christina Schenk-Hargrove did not think the Schools could function without the \$600,000. Nick Tensen responded that the Town could revisit the request in the fall. It appeared that Wenham would not be having a Town Meeting. David Wanger said that if Wenham did not have a Town Meeting, Hamilton might be drawn into the one-twelfth approach to the budget. Members discussed the practicality of the one-twelfth budget including that each month had to be one twelfth of last year's budget but not necessarily one twelfth of the same month the previous year. Approval would be required of the Selectmen and the State. Marisa Batista noted the savings experienced by paying insurance premiums and retirements in July causing a higher than one-twelfth payment for that month.

John Pruellage said the Town would not hear from the State on whether aid was cut or not by Town Meeting. It was agreed that the budget would fail as Wenham would not be having a Town Meeting before July 1, 2020. Joe Domelowicz added that Wenham needed an override to

balance the Town and School budget. Hamilton did not need an override unless it spent more than both articles 2.2 and 2.3.

Motion made by Nick Tensen to recommend favorable action on Warrant article 2.3.

Seconded Christina Schenk-Hargrove.

Roll call vote: Valerie McCormack – aye, Christina Schenk-Hargrove – aye, John Pruellage – aye, Nick Tensen – nay, and David Wanger – nay. Majority vote 3-2 in favor.

Article 2.4. School Committee capital request of \$15,000. David Wanger noted that future year costs were undetermined. The number of years of interest was unknown so it was difficult to have good estimates. It was assumed that if all debt was issued at once, there would be about \$50,000 to \$75,000 in interest in future years. Joe Domelowicz said it would be subject to a ballot question if a positive vote was issued at Town Meeting.

Motion made by John Pruellage to recommend favorably article 2.4.

Nick Tensen seconded.

Roll call vote: Valerie McCormack -aye, Christina Schenk-Hargrove - aye, John Pruellage – aye, Nick Tensen – aye, and David Wanger –aye. Unanimous in favor.

Article 2.7. CPC appropriations. Marisa Batista said the money went into four accounts. Open Space and Recreation would receive \$110,000, Historic Preservation reserve would receive \$60,000, Community Housing would receive \$60,000, and \$27,000 would be appropriated for administrative costs. Ms. Batista said the administrative position was no longer part time so wording needed to be changed. At least 10% of estimated revenues had to be deposited into each category. Many applications had not been received so money would be moved into reserve funds. Debt service for Sagamore Hill needed to be funded as well.

Motion made by Nick Tensen to recommend favorably article 2.7.

John Pruellage seconded.

Roll call vote: Valerie McCormack - aye, Christina Schenk-Hargrove - aye, John Pruellage - aye, Nick Tensen – aye, and David Wanger – aye. Unanimous in favor.

Members discussed the recommendation for the Patton Park pool and recreation program. Joe Domelowicz said the Selectmen would determine if the pool would be opened. It cost \$30,000 to \$50,000 to run the pool operation. There was a \$3,000 to \$4,000 profit made each summer. It would cost \$7,000 to \$10,000 to take the cover off and turn on the equipment for annual maintenance. It was hoped that drop-in fees could be received if the fee structure was changed for flexibility. Christina Schenk-Hargrove thought people might use the pool instead of going on vacation. The income might cover the cost to take the cover off. The costs would be shared with Wenham. The \$6.00 drop-in fee would be raised to \$8.00 to \$10.00.

While data indicated that sharing the Covid-19 virus was difficult in a pool, no guidance had been offered by the State. Joe Domelowicz said CDC required no more than 25% deck capacity before those people had to leave, the pool cleaned, and another 25% entered. Mr. Domelowicz thought it would be difficult to break even under those circumstances but the pool needed to open to run machinery for a month. It was hoped that if the pool were opened for a month, the maintenance cost of \$7,000 might be covered by drop-in visitors. Boston would not be opening their public pools this summer. Sean Timmons was reportedly concerned that 180 camp children could not be served by this summer's park program due to social distancing requirements. Mr. Timmons thought he might start with a reduce capacity of 40 children on a weekly basis in July. The residents of Hamilton and Wenham would be asked to set up an enterprise account for the pool and recreation merged programs.

Discussion regarding ATM, including scheduling, logistics, warrant articles, and related subject matter;

The FinCom's commentary needed to be submitted by June 3, 2020 and would be sent to the printer on June 3, 2020. If the Schools adopted a budget that didn't make cuts and assumed the State didn't make cuts, the FinCom could change its recommendations. John Pruellage would write recommendations for articles 2.2 and 2.3. David Wanger would write the opposing view. Valerie McCormack and Christina Schenk-Hargrove would also write why they supported the proposed articles.

Christina Schenk-Hargrove discussed the plans for Annual Town Meeting including use of tents and siting of chairs. While a \$30,000 tent would be useful for rain or beating sun, David Smith had reportedly suggested residents bring an umbrella instead.

Members discussed the Housing Production Plan and their purview over its approval.

Next Meeting

The FinCom would meet again on May 28, 2020 at 6:30 via Zoom.

Adjournment

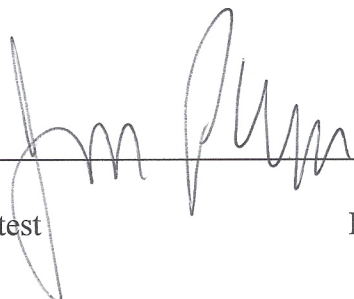
Motion made by Valerie McCormack to adjourn at 7:58.

Nick Tensen seconded.

Roll call vote: Valerie McCormack – aye, Christina Schenk-Hargrove – aye, Nick Tensen – aye, John Pruellage – aye, and David Wanger – aye. Unanimous in favor.

Prepared by:

Marcie Ricker

_____  7/22/2020
Attest Date