

HAMILTON FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting

Via Zoom 856 4829 8480

Password 677979

September 30, 2020

Members present: Valerie McCormack, John Pruellage (Chair), Christina Schenk-Hargrove (Vice Chair), Nick Tensen, and David Wanger.

Others present: Tim Olson, Mike Twomey, and Jack Lawrence

Please of Allegiance

This Hamilton Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm via Zoom. Roll call: John Pruellage –aye, Valerie McCormack - aye, Christina Schenk-Hargrove – aye, David Wanger - aye, and Nick Tensen – aye.

Public Comment Period

Discussion regarding Warrant article related Town Hall renovations project

Mike Twomey updated the FinCom noting the bid documents were 100% complete and out to bid. Subcontractor responses were expected in late October and general contractor responses were due right before Town Meeting. The design process was being fine-tuned. A variance was pending from State boards for the handicapped ramp as the State had mandated that two separate handicapped egresses were required. The front entrance would become ceremonial.

The budget (just over \$6.4M), which had been estimated by a third party, was on target. The project would be \$9M including soft costs. The Town previously approved \$1.1M. Pilgrim Hall at Gordon Conwell Seminary would be used for Town functions for approximately one year. While the facility would be rent free, some changes to bring the site up to code would be necessary.

Once approved at Town Meeting, the vote would occur in early December. Construction would start one to one and one-half months after the vote. The lease agreement (\$1) for Gordon Conwell would be approved at Town Meeting. Small expenses such as building cleaning would occur. The \$200,000, which was carried for office space rental would be removed from the budget. The final number for the debt exclusion would be voted upon at Town Meeting. The Town would hold the liability for the office space at Gordon Conwell and the Town Hall would be removed from the policy and be added to the builder's risk insurance.

Members discussed how the proposal would be promoted. Mike Twomey explained that the Committee had anticipated questions and would provide answers. The timing of the project was beneficial due to low interest rates, free office space, and the need to fulfill ADA and building

code requirements in an overall project. Debt schedules for 20 year financing had been distributed. Marisa Batista would provide the cost per average sized home.

Members discussed that the new normal (due to Covid) might not require as much office space that had previously been required. The proposal did not add office space but did add conference rooms, which at some point in time, could be used as office space. The heating/cooling system was industry standard but not a heavy duty system. Parking for the DPW would not be impacted and the cell tower would not be an issue. The cell tower had been pushed back (away from Bay Road) to allow for more room in the back of the building.

Discussion regarding the Warrant article related to water infrastructure

Phase IV water improvements would cost between \$500,000 to 600,000. The water lines at Beech St. and Village Lane area and Woodbury St. and Partridgeberry Lane area would be replaced. The safety of the Essex St. and Woodbury St. intersection would also be improved at the same time. Tim Olson indicated that if he were to choose, he would choose to improve the pretreatment services as it benefited the entire town.

Tim Olson discussed the quality of water at the Idlewood ii well. Even though organics were lower at the well, the plant would need to treat the water for iron. Granulated, activated carbon (GAC) filters would be used. The equipment was expensive but the maintenance was low cost. GAC filters would treat organics and allow the Idlewood ii well to go back on line. Tim Olson had previously put together an estimate before Covid. Temporary measures, such as flushing had been used to appease DEP temporarily.

The Master Plan would be changed if the Town pursued tying into the Beverly/Salem District. The reservoir at Brown's Hill had four separate cells, which caused issues with circulation and water aeration. There were four small overflow pipes that connected the four cells but four separate aeration cells would be needed, which were expensive. A second tank might be proposed at Cilly's Hill. Cilly's Hill was not Town owned land. Flushing as a way to maintain the quality of water was a concern due to the current drought. Rates were raised this year and would be reviewed every year to reflect annual expenses.

The wells were currently meeting demand. Tim Olson said water supply was sufficient for fire coverage if the plant was in operation. The tank alone would not be sufficient. It was noted that Essex, Ipswich, and Wenham were in more dire straits regarding water than Hamilton.

A consultant (\$100,000) would be needed for long range planning to determine the water needs of the town. The CapCom did not have enough information to evaluate the \$600,000 for Phase IV and \$1M for water plant pretreatment system. The Ipswich River did not appear to be a source of a solution. Beverly and Manchester, which were both in the North Coastal Basin, would be better resources. Perhaps Wenham and Ipswich could also join the larger district. Manchester had reportedly asked Hamilton to take over the management of its plant. Obtaining

an inter-basin permit might be complicated and hiring a level 4 staff member would be required. The system might need to be broken in two and having an emergency valve to transfer water in an emergency would be incorporated.

Early indicators suggested that the \$80 fee would cover what the Town needed currently but would not cover the additional projects. The usage fee would need to be used. If both projects were approved at Town Meeting, a bigger increase in rates would be projected for the next year.

The DPW mechanic was set to retire and a trainee for the position would be hired at \$56,000. The unfunded Stormwater Management mandate was also part of the \$507,000 request. Other items included the fuel facility in Wenham, which had been in effect from July. The existing facility needed to be decommissioned. The estimate was \$250,000 and would be in connection with the Town Hall construction project. The 30 year old fiberglass tanks would be removed and the area would become parking. Even if the Town Hall project was not approved, the tanks would be removed and an above ground facility would be constructed in Hamilton or Wenham.

The Town was looking at public buildings to determine solar suitability. The Public Safety Building was the most likely. The landfill site was still in land court.

Overview of Warrant articles to be voted on at STM

The meeting on October 28, 2020 would be the last meeting before publication of the FinCom's recommendation. Special Town Meeting was scheduled for November 14, 2020. Members would vote on articles on October 14, 2020. The commentary would be reviewed on October 28, 2020.

Jack Lawrence noted the five year wish list, which included the DPW (\$507,000), the Public Safety Building boiler (\$70,000), police cruiser (\$55,000), Stormwater Management permit (\$54,000), Patton redevelopment drainage (\$50,000), and the eco repeaters (\$28,000). Mr. Lawrence suggested delaying the boiler, policer cruiser, and drainage project, reducing the costs by \$170,000. Police and Fire leases (\$25,000) were capital items but treated as operating expenses under the budget. The three items to be funded totaled \$332,000.

Joe Domelowicz had reportedly estimated the cost of the Master Plan. The funds for the planner could possibly be shared with the Schools. The topic would be discussed on October 28, 2020. A survey would indicate what residents wanted. \$250,000 had set aside for School planning. The site of Winthrop School was discussed as a potential smart growth, prime development opportunity that could produce income for the town. Nick Tensen would speak with Joe Domelowicz to determine if the request could be delayed until spring. Wenham would be contacted to see if coordination was possible.

Discussion regarding FinCom commentary for STM

Nick Tensen would write about the Town Hall proposal, the CPC and alternative office space. Valerie McCormack would follow up with the CPC regarding the First Church request. \$60,000 was requested for the paperless Town Hall software package. David Wanger and John Pruellage would discuss the water requests. Christina Schenk-Hargrove would write about the DPW retirement overlap and the Citizen's Petition if it came forward. The COA By-law amendment to expand their board to include alternate members would be written by Ms. Schenk-Hargrove.

The two unpaid bills totaled less than \$100.

Determine/Discuss agenda for next meeting

The five year model would be discussed after Town Meeting but kept on the agenda. The Master Plan would be discussed in two weeks.

Liaison reports

The Town Clerk had asked poll workers to volunteer their time. The FinCom was focusing on cooperation with the Selectmen regarding revenue sources. Members discussed the contingency plan for having Town Meeting outside in November. While having a Special Town Meeting in the fall might make the budgets more accurate, most items could wait until Annual Town Meeting. Christina Schenk-Hargrove would follow up to determine if the Town Meeting was planned for the outside field or the high school gym.

Adjournment.

Motion made by Nick Tensen to adjourn the FinCom meeting.at 9:19 pm.

Christina Schenk-Hargrove seconded.

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

Prepared by:

Marcie Ricker

 11/28/20

Attest

Date