

Hamilton Capital Committee
Joint meeting with Finance Advisory Committee

2021 DEC 15 PM 2:33

MINUTES OF MEETING

Via Zoom call

September 23, 2020

Attendees:

Finance Advisory Committee:

John Pruellage, Chair
Christina Schenk Hargrove, Vice-Chair
Nick Tensen
David Wanger
Valerie McCormack

Members Present:

Heather Ford, Chair
Jack Lawrence, Vice-Chair
Dave Thompson
Bill Wilson
Bob Woodbury

Guests:

Joe Domelowicz, Hamilton Town Manager
Darcy Dale, Board of Selectmen
Rosemary Kennedy, Board of Selectmen
Marcie Ricker

1. John and Heather called the meeting to order for the FinCom and CapCom at 6:34 PM and 6:36 PM, respectively.
2. Conversation regarding STM/ATM preparation
 - a. John: FinCom is resurrecting the 5-year financial plan which they want to share with the Town. Look at big picture and coordinate with the CapCom is important to prioritize spending and educate town citizens. There are tradeoffs between low taxes/quality schools, open space/tax revenue, etc. Gearing up for STM
 - b. Heather: CapCom met Monday, 9/21. Looking at capital needs for 5 and possibly 10 years to smooth out needs. Gearing up for FY'22. We will report to Town Manager by early October.
 - c. John: Bottom line is the tax rate. Financial plan is an evolving document every year. Need to be prepped for STM and ATM.
 - d. Jack: We need to work in conjunction with Wenham and the Schools.
 - e. John: Schools are the starting point every year even though we don't control. \$250k has been allocated at the schools for planning.
 - f. Jack: The schools are old/obsolete.
 - g. John: The capital plan is due to Joe in early October in preparation for the STM What's the ask? It was \$507k.

- h. Heather: We now need to include the Town Hall. This will change the \$507k but don't know by how much.
- i. Dave: He has spoken with Tim Olson regarding water costs. Need new treatment plant for roughly \$1MM ASAP and \$500K for distribution system improvements. The water system is requiring significant investment for the next several years totaling \$10 to 15MM. We need to explore alternative water resources including North Coastal, Ipswich River and other towns to provide for growth.
- j. Bill: Need to look at the big numbers among Schools, Town Hall and water. Need to prioritize over the next 5 years.
- k. John: Higher capital expenses will result in higher taxes. FinCom perspective is to keep this within reason.

3. Town Hall discussion

- a. Darcy: Town Hall is an important resource. Need to prioritize among Town Hall, water, Patton Homestead. Potential to finance part of Town Hall with sale of Patton Homestead. She made an "emotional appeal" for the Town Hall. Fire safety is subpar, not ADA compliant.
- b. Heather: Is the Patton property sale proceeds comparable to the Town Hall costs?
- c. Darcy: Other nonprofits in addition to Patton could be considered for funding. Sell the Patton Homestead building but keep most of the land.
- d. Bob: What other nonprofits are being considered?
- e. Darcy: Affordable housing, Asbury Grove housing. CPC should focus on the Town only, not nonprofits. For example, the church near the Town Hall is looking for six figures.
- f. Rosemary: The Town Hall is the heart and soul of the Town. No fire suppression, ADA, water deterioration on the building, cramped and disorderly working space, no orderly storage of documents. Town Hall should be top priority. CPC has voted to allocate \$3MM to Town Hall.
- g. Jack: Need to digitize the records.
- h. Joe: Town has identified software for \$60k to store records digitally. Document scanning done in phases over time. All Town documents could be in one spot/address. Scanning takes time and money. Could possibly use CPC funds or CARES Act funds.
- i. Darcy: Town Clerk needs some hard copies which is why additional vault space is needed.
- j. Bob: What are the cost and time estimates associated with the scanning?
- k. Joe: We're in the process of getting an estimate. This supports the Town Hall project. There's no ADA, only a ramp to the first floor and one handicap bathroom. No fire suppression, water seeping into the basement, inadequate bathrooms, outside of building needs work. If not approved, we'll need to find an alternative site. The good news is that the pandemic has brought the cost estimates down.

- l. John: Just keeping the Town Hall viable/useable is half the total cost. The rest is to modernize and make usable for many years which will help Town citizens find the cost more palatable.
- m. David: FinCom continues to be supportive of the Town Hall project. It may make sense to distribute information to the citizens in advance of STM to help educate them.
- n. Joe: Tuesday, Sept 29 Selectmen meeting has the Town Hall as the first issue. Joe as Town Manager can't promote the Town Hall project.
- o. Jack: There is flooding in the basement and no generator.
- p. Joe: The Town Hall project predates him. CapCom can review and make a judgement as to whether it's a wise investment. Joe said that he values the CapCom judgement.
- q. Nick: is the CapCom looking at the financing source of projects?
- r. Heather: Not really looking at financing, only the cost and priority of projects.
- s. Nick: Town Hall and the water project should be financed over longer time periods to help make it more palatable to taxpayers.
- t. Jack: a 30-year bond to finance has always been the plan. \$3MM from CPC will take historic money for the foreseeable future.

4. School discussion

- a. Nick: What are the School asks?
- b. Bill: No ask as they're preoccupied with the School openings and the School Capital Committee has been formed but not met yet. They spend \$2.5-2.8MM per year over the 10-year plan. The turf field is a big item. An application has been made to the MSBA (MA School Building Authority) to look at a strategy for the three elementary schools in the HWRSD.

5. Next steps in FinCom/CapCom collaboration

- a. Another meeting in January in preparation for ATM?
- b. Jack to attend FinCom meetings as CapCom liaison
- c. CapCom to copy FinCom in addition to Joe on the capital plan

6. Adjourn: FinCom adjourned at 7:48 PM and CapCom adjourned at 7:49 PM.

