

Hamilton Capital Committee
MINUTES OF MEETING
Via Zoom call
December 15, 2020

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

Guests: Joe Domelowicz, Hamilton Town Manager

1. **Heather called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM.**
2. **The purpose of this meeting was to hear from Joe about the Capital Budget process and do a 2021 recap.**
3. **Debrief on Town Hall Building Project:**
 - a. Jack said the Town Hall project was approved at the Special Town Meeting (STM) with only one dissenter raising the concern of dollars being taken from the schools and turf field. However, it failed at the polls on December 3rd.
 - b. People do not understand the need for the investment in the Town Hall building as many never use the building. The social media commentary has been negative.
 - c. Despite this, Jack feels the Town Hall building project needs to come back in some form in the Spring at the Annual Town Meeting (ATM). There needs to be a better understanding as to why the project failed and how it can be repackaged for broader acceptance.
 - d. Joe acknowledged that the school turf field issue needs to be addressed as part of any discussion with the schools. Often a project (i.e.-Town Hall building project) does not pass on its first time at the polls. People need to see it a couple of times to understand the need and how to balance it with other budget priorities. The voter turnout was only 19% and the project could potentially do better with higher turnout.
 - e. On 12/17/20 the Wenham Finance Committee, Hamilton and Wenham Board of Selectmen, and the School Committee will meet to discuss the budget. The School Committee is supportive of the need for the Town Hall project and would be helpful in communicating the need to the parents of students as a balance between school and town needs
 - f. Joe noted that CPC funds cannot be used for the schools.
 - g. Hamilton and School master plans that are going to be underway this year need to be collaborative. The Town's budget often gets squeezed as the school

budget rises. Under the school agreement, this year it is Hamilton's turn to have their Town Manager (Joe) on the negotiating committee for the schools.

- h. Joe noted that another issue to consider regarding the Town Hall is the need for a new school building. Preliminary issues are which school to replace and where it should be located. A complicating factor is that each of the three elementary schools include all grades K through 5. A system where the grades were spread among the 3 elementary schools (i.e.-Cutler K-1, Winthrop 2-3 and Buker 4-5) might provide more flexibility.

4. **FY'22 Capital Budget**

- a. Joe feels that the capital spending needs to be constrained for FY'22. Roughly \$700k was included in the 2021 capital plan. Joe asked the Department Heads to reduce this amount to the extent possible for 2022. Marissa wants to balance the budget this year. Currently there is ~ \$1MM in the Capital Stabilization Fund and the intent is to not spend nor add to this total in FY'22. The hope is to fund capital spending entirely from free cash. Free cash represents 5% of the operating budget. We are ahead of schedule on the Capital Stabilization Fund. Target capital spending for FY'22 is \$650k.
- b. Joe does not believe that DPW will have any major water requests this year.
- c. Other issues on Joe's mind are that Hamilton may need an override at this year's ATM and that Hamilton should get out of the Ipswich River Watershed. Discussion was on both those issues.
- d. Joe was comfortable with the Capital Committee schedule of getting him a capital spending plan in the January 22 to February 6, 2021 time frame. Since the ATM is pushed back to May 1st, we have a little more time than last year. The Department Head budgets will be forwarded to Joe by 12/18/20 and Joe will forward to Heather who will distribute to the rest of the Capital Committee. Capital Committee members can begin outreach to their respective Department Heads. No changes were made to the Department Head assignments on the Capital Committee.

5. **Other business**

- a. Joe told Bob that there have been recent meetings about the Library roof. Going forward, it is important for Bob to meet with other library focused persons, (Mike Hardy, Jackie Bresnahan and the Finance Director) in addition to Kim Butler, to understand the budget priorities. As it stands now, Wenham is the lead on spending and then allocates a majority (65.95%) of that cost to Hamilton. Hamilton needs to be involved in this process prior to budget decisions.
- b. Tom Deery is the liaison for Bill regarding the School's capital budget.
- c. We confirmed that \$25k is our threshold for a capital (not operating) expense.
- d. Bill will build our spreadsheet with a FY'21 tab retaining our history and a FY'22 tab for populating with new data.
- e. Our conversations with Department Heads should include questions about their priorities and include comments on the lower capital spending anticipated for this year.

- f. Jack will attend the 12/17 Town Hall meeting and express our interest in having the Town Hall remain in some form on the capital budget.
 - g. The minutes from our last meeting on October 5, 2020 were approved.
 - h. Our next meeting was scheduled as a Zoom call at 5 pm on Monday, January 11th.
6. **Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:21 pm.