

HAMPTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MINUTES
December 6, 2005

Budget Committee Members Present

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman
Michael Plouffe, Vice Chairman
Ginny Russell, Selectman Representative
John Bridle, School Board Representative
John Kane, Precinct Representative
Pat Collins
Maury Friedman
Dick Hansen
William Lally
Eileen Latimer
Jack Lessard
Richard Nichols
Michael Pierce
Charlie Preston

Excused

Russ Bernstein

Chairman Woolsey called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Woolsey introduced the members of the Budget Committee

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Chairman Woolsey said that this meeting was the final work session for the 2006 operating budget.

Chairman Woolsey reviewed an article in "Town & City" by Barbara Reid of the LGC regarding special revenue funds. Chairman Woolsey explained that there is a window available to get rid of the problems we have had with the police detail special revenue fund. It would be possible to establish a revolving fund. In a revolving fund any balance goes back into the general fund. Chairman Woolsey suggested that the Board of Selectmen consult with counsel. There is an opportunity now, at least for the police detail fund to be accommodated.

Moved by Ms. Russell, seconded by Mr. Plouffe, to table all prior motions.

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Woolsey then passed out blank sheets of paper to the members of the Committee and asked them to write down the total number for the 2006 operating budget that they would recommend.

Approval of Minutes – November 22, 2005

Moved by Michael Plouffe, seconded by Mr. Lessard, to approve the Minutes of November 22, 2005.

Vote: 13 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention (Collins). Motion passed.

The recommendations for a number for the operating budget were reviewed. They went from a low of \$22,025,000 to a high of \$24,328,523.

Moved by Ms. Russell, seconded by Ms. Latimer, to approve the following:

Total 2006 Operating Budget	\$24,328,523
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Chairman Woolsey said this number would result in an increase of \$775,000 to the taxpayers.

Mr. Collins said that the Committee spoke of a zero increase last year. He said he could not justify a \$1 million increase. He said that union negotiations are an issue.

Amendment moved by Mr. Collins, seconded by Mr. Preston, to recommend the following:

Total 2006 Operating Budget	\$23,552,795
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Mr. Lally said that the present system sets the Budget Committee up to fail because they don't have knowledge of the warrant articles. Mr. Lally said that if a 3-year period is looked at, it is only a 1.2% increase that has been recommended. He said he did not feel that the \$24,328,523 amount was unreasonable. However, it would have to be an astonishing warrant article to receive his vote this year.

Ms. Russell said that a responsible budget is what is needed to run the Town. The Town has had enormous growth in the last three years and the need for all services has expanded. Ms. Russell said she felt the Board of Selectmen had presented a responsible budget. She said the cut can be made, but that will result in a reduction in services. Ms. Russell then reminded the TV audience to get out and vote.

Mr. Plouffe said that to expect to keep the budget at level is not prudent. Some items need an increase and are justified.

Mr. Bridle said that level funding is not a good idea. The whole picture must be looked at.

Mr. Kane said he thought the budget presented by the Selectmen is a fair budget. The Town is growing and costs are increasing.

Mr. Friedman said it is important to look at the big picture. He said his view of a responsible budget is one with a zero base. Then look at where we are and what we need to provide the

necessary services. He said he believed that several departments in town can operate more efficiently than they have in the past. The only mechanism available is level funding.

Mr. Pierce expressed the opinion that elimination of the marine rescue boat would result in the elimination of the need to keep a four-member crew on standby. Ms. Russell clarified that the boat is merely another form of rescue vehicle and those who man it are otherwise occupied with regular fire fighting duties and are not an extra standby force.

Mr. Nichols said that the overriding issue is "What can we afford to spend?" He said the public has sent a message saying we cannot afford to spend what we are spending now. Mr. Nichols said he is in favor of level funding.

Ms. Latimer said that the voters will decide on the warrant articles. The job of the Committee is to look at the operating budget to see if it is responsible. In 2004 water, heating, power and electric came to \$782,000. We are only three quarters through 2005 and the amount is already \$727,265. There is still one quarter to go and it is a high heating quarter. The Building Department needs help. The departments came in with responsible budgets. Level funding will not work. Ms. Latimer said she felt the \$24,328,523 budget is responsible.

Chairman Woolsey said the members of the Committee have two points of view, both of which are legitimate. She said it would be appropriate, that once a final figure is decided upon, for the Committee to forward a memo to the Selectmen expressing their thoughts on various items.

Chairman Woolsey said she predicts that the public will vote for the lower of the two budget figures presented in the warrant article. High end warrant articles such as the beach infrastructure and the police station have played a part in this. She said she hopes that the majority of the members of this Committee will vote to not recommend a lot of the warrant articles.

Chairman Woolsey said she would suggest that the Selectmen keep their stipends at the current level. She said she did not agree with hiring an Office of Planning secretary. Chairman Woolsey said she feels it is a high priority to equip the Police Department with the Project 54 technology. Chairman Woolsey said she was also opposed to the hiring of a secretary for Fire Prevention. She also recommended that the Town restore the four full time Fire Department positions and that the \$80,000 be approved to replace the scale at the transfer station. She said she felt the minivan belonging to the Recreation Department should be sold. Chairman Woolsey said that the issue of the rescue boat should be taken to the voters to decide. Overtime should be controlled.

Mr. Friedman asked if the public has determined what they are willing to spend. He said the Town by virtue of the way it is operated has not done a very good job of explaining to the public why things are needed. The Town needs to present a solid case or items are going to be turned down continuously.

Ms. Latimer said the rescue boat was voted in by the public. She said this is a town surrounded by water and mentioned the July 4th incident where the rescue boat saved lives. The Coast Guard was 30 minutes away. She said the rescue boat has proved itself and so have the men who operate it. The voters put this in and there is no reason to undo it. Chairman Woolsey said that this is an area of safety that is not in the Town's realm of responsibility.

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Chairman Woolsey then asked for a vote on the amendment reducing the 2006 operating budget to \$23,552,795.

Vote: 8 yes, 6 no (Bridle, Kane, Lally, Latimer, Plouffe, Russell). Motion passed.

Chairman Woolsey then asked for a vote on the main motion to recommend the amount of \$23,552,795 as the amount for the 2006 operating budget.

Vote: 8 yes, 6 no (Bridle, Kane, Lally, Latimer, Plouffe, Russell). Motion passed.

Chairman Woolsey then distributed information on the revenues. The best estimate for 2005 is \$8,142,128 and the estimate for 2006 is \$6,433,022.

Moved by Mr. Plouffe, seconded by Mr. Lessard, to approve the following:

Projected revenues for 2006	\$6,433,022
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Vote: 14 yes, 0 no. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Woolsey said that the school budget would be discussed at the next meeting which is Thursday, December 8, 2005, at 7:00 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Mr. Lessard **moved**, seconded by Mr. Hansen, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Rice
Secretary

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman