

HAMPTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MINUTES
June 16, 2009

Budget Committee Members Present

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman
Michael Plouffe, Vice-Chairman
Jerry Znoj, Selectman Representative
Charlotte "Peppa" Ring, School Board Representative
Pat Collins
Victor DeMarco
Dick Hansen
Brian Lapham
Eileen Latimer
Jack Lessard
Michael Pierce
Richard Reniere
Larry Stuker
Peter Traynor

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Chairman Woolsey introduced the members of the Committee.

Chairman Woolsey welcomed Chris Silver, Chief, Hampton Fire Department. She gave a brief biography and list of certifications for Chief Silver.

Chairman Woolsey said the Committee had asked Chief Silver for an update on his progress in trying to resolve the situation with the physical plant for the Fire Department.

Chief Silver said one of their biggest projects is the planning for the replacement of the Town fire stations. They were somewhat successful in getting some funding for the planning process. Both stations have to be looked at together. This makes the most sense so as not to create redundancies. The programming and schematic fees and construction estimates will be done with this funding. It is important to take a fresh look at the project and to approach everything systematically.

Chief Silver said he began with requests for qualifications in May. Fifteen were received. They were reviewed and reduced to seven. Last week a pre-proposal conference was held. There was 100% attendance by those who had submitted qualifications. All of these architects have done projects that we are familiar with. Chief Silver said there are a number of different sites which can be used for the beach fire station. The headquarters will be at Fire Station #2 on the property which it now occupies.

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Chief Silver said it may be possible to obtain a lot of information from studies which have already been done. The cost proposals are due back on June 18th. Once they are received, the firms will be interviewed again. Chief Silver said he would like to have this process completed in the early fall. There should then be something to help move forward to next year's warrant to begin part of the project.

Mr. Traynor asked about what square footage will be required for the headquarters station. Chief Silver said he could not answer that at this time because he is taking a fresh look at the entire project.

Mr. Stuker said it was good that the department was taking advantage of prior data. He asked if these architects have built "green" buildings. Chief Silver replied that most are going "green".

Mr. Stuker asked if the building would be multi-purpose. Chief Silver said his first concern is to build an adequate fire station and other uses can then be looked at.

Mr. Stuker asked if there will be a grass roots effort to educate the voters. Chief Silver said they are working on that. Chairman Woolsey said leadership by the Board of Selectmen will be critical.

Mr. Reniere asked if the cost that will be determined will include the cost of the building or just conceptual items. Chief Silver said it will include feasibility work, selection of the best site and schematic design. After that is done, a cost proposal for construction will be done. Mr. Reniere asked about the site at the beach. Chief Silver said it will be selected based on how it fits response time and traffic conditions.

Chairman Woolsey said the Committee has been concerned about focusing on the land. Chief Silver said it would be necessary to evaluate sites. Some may not work for various reasons.

Mr. DeMarco said he would like this to be done in two phases. The uptown fire station could be negatively impacted by too much attention to the beach fire station. He said he would like to keep the two projects separate. Mr. DeMarco said there are only three locations for the beach station – the Ashworth lot, Island Path and the location where it now stands. Otherwise land would have to be purchased and that would be very expensive. Chief Silver said those are the sites that are being evaluated plus one other. He said it is most reasonable to approach these two projects over the next few years and it is not his intention to do them simultaneously.

Chief Silver said there may be funding available for an operations center. The department has a new telephone system from the EOC that can be easily transported into a new building. There is a radio system from the State of NH that can also be easily transported. During the ice storm a number of connections were lost. The department has now installed a radio microwave link to the beach. This is a high speed connection which is entirely independent of wire. All of these things are transportable into a new facility.

Mr. Hansen asked if the addition to Station 2 would be attached to the present building. Chief Silver said parts of the existing structure would be used. Mr. Hansen asked how large the addition would be in comparison to the existing station. Chief Silver said he couldn't answer that because at this time it would just be speculation.

Ms. Latimer said that after the ice storm there was some discussion about the Fire Department getting some independent generators, pumps, etc. She asked if anything could come through FEMA, Homeland Security or Unutil. Chief Silver said they had secured some equipment that would serve as generators and variable message sign boards. Funding is still the big problem.

Ms. Latimer asked if there was a shelter component. Chief Silver said this was being discussed. At the time of the storm it was felt that the Red Cross was responsible for setting up shelters. The emergency managers were not aware that the Red Cross would do this on a regional rather than community basis. Again funding is a problem for a community shelter. Ms. Latimer said many residents are very upset about this. Chief Silver said they do have a plan, but do not have funding or staff to support it. He said he and Chief Sullivan have discussed a Citizens Emergency Response Team.

Mr. Pierce said that the earlier the plan for the Fire Stations gets out, the better it will be. Chief Silver said they have a very aggressive schedule.

Chairman Woolsey made reference to an article written by Patrick Cronin regarding staffing of emergency services and asked Chief Silver to comment on this. Chief Silver said this article was based on a presentation he made before the Board of Selectmen in early May. Due to a reduction in funding from the state, Hampton has had to reduce some operating costs. The Board of Selectmen said this would be between all of the departments. The department is trying to achieve that level of reduction and make up for it in the 7 months remaining. Some operating expenses were reduced, but the majority fell to wages. After being through the lay off of personnel in 2005, the first choice was not to do this again. Reducing the number of people doesn't reduce overtime expense. There are not enough staff to have a "0" overtime situation. The only way to reduce overtime is to reduce the number of positions on shifts. Presently there are 3 positions at the beach and 4 at the Winnacunnet station.

Chairman Woolsey talked about the recent drowning incident. Since there must be four people on the boat, how can this be managed? Chief Silver said the department relied on call back. Chairman Woolsey asked for the name of the firefighter who jumped into the water during this incident. Chief Silver said it was Jimmy Correll and this is the second time he has done that. A while back he also entered a burning building for a rescue. Chief Silver said there were also some Hampton residents who played a crucial role as well.

Mr. DeMarco said the situation is now back to where it was before and in trouble. The Police Department is having the same problem so there is less police backup for the Fire Department. This is critical and people don't fully understand the gravity of the situation. Mr. DeMarco said it would be only 20 cents per \$1,000 to solve this problem and be assured of emergency services. He said he didn't think most people would have a problem with that. It is important to remember that for fire call ins can be used, but that is not true for Police.

Mr. Pierce said that in Hampton it is fortunate that nobody has been laid off. Mr. DeMarco said even if layoffs had occurred, the problem would remain the same.

Chairman Woolsey said the Town has the money, but doesn't have some of the sources of revenue. The decision this year is how do you plan what you are going to spend with what you expect from revenues. The decision must also be made whether to increase the tax rate.

Mr. Traynor asked if Chief Silver would have an idea of a figure that could be set aside for a local emergency shelter that could be put into an emergency fund for a catastrophic event. Chief Silver said he didn't have that figure, but would talk with Chief Sullivan.

Chairman Woolsey thanked Chief Silver for his input.

Approval of Minutes of May 19, 2009

Moved by Mr. Plouffe, seconded by Mr. Lessard, to approve the Minutes of May 19, 2009.

Vote: 11 yes, 0 no, 3 abstentions (Collins, Reniere, Ring). Motion passed.

Selectman's Report

Jerry Znoj said the Selectmen are waiting for the State of NH budget to settle out. Then they will have a discussion on shelters, etc. for an emergency. This is definitely going to be a topic of discussion.

Chairman Woolsey asked about commercial trash collection.

Mr. Znoj said there will be a public hearing on this subject and the Selectmen are also working on this topic.

Regarding the next budget, Mr. Znoj said the department heads will have to argue their case and there will be much discussion.

Volunteer fire and police were discussed. Chairman Woolsey said that would not work for a variety of reasons at this time.

School Board Report

Chairman Woolsey said she had attended the Adult Education graduation and it was very exciting.

Mr. Traynor asked what the School Board anticipates as a surplus this year. Ms. Ring said they don't know at this time.

Mr. Traynor said some people are upset about the surplus. Chairman Woolsey explained that the School Board plans 18 months in advance and there are a number of variables such as enrollment, teachers, etc. that cannot be anticipated in advance. If there is money left over it is returned to the general fund.

Ms. Latimer mentioned Special Education. One student can cost thousands of dollars and there is no way to know if a new student like this will enter or if one will leave. There has to be wiggle room.

Mr. DeMarco asked about the stimulus money for Special Ed. He said he would like to have a report from the School Board in September on this subject.

Chairman Woolsey said Jamie Steffen, Town Planner, is looking for a representative for CIP from the Budget Committee. Peter Traynor volunteered to be the representative.

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Chairman Woolsey asked Richard Reniere to get her on the Agenda at the next Precinct meeting in July.

Mr. Pierce offered to help anyone with Budget review over the summer.

Chairman Woolsey said the next meeting will be Tuesday, September 15, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. in the Selectman's Meeting Room. This will be the annual meeting with the Hampton School Board.

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Rice
Secretary

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman