

HAMPTON MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
DRAFT MINUTES

Thursday January 9, 2019

Attendance

Timothy "Citizen" Jones, Chair
Michael Plouffe, Vice Chair
Brian Warburton
David Maurer
Jerry Znoi
Regina Barnes, Selectman Representative
Frank DeLuca, SAU90 Representative

Absent

Stephen LaBranche
Robert Ladd, Hampton Beach Village District Representative

Attending: Fred Welsh, Town Manager, Kristie Pulliam, Finance Director

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Call to Order at 7 PM by Mr Jones

3. Introduction of Members

Mr Warburton nominated Jerry Znoi as a member of the Budget Committee to fill the vacant position. Second: Mr Plouffe. In favor: David Maurer, Michael Plouffe, Brian Warburton, Timothy "Citizen" Jones; Not voting: Regina Barnes, Frank DeLuca. Mr Znoi took the oath of office.

4. Old Business

Information Requests: Mr Jones reported that the Committee's request for a written legal opinion from Town Counsel concerning lease-purchase warrant articles had not been received. Apparently answers to legal questions would come from the Board of Selectmen. Ms Barnes said this week the Selectmen decided to keep the current language in the relevant warrant articles rather than adopt the DRA recommendation. The concern remains whether the purchase would survive potential litigation or court action. Mr Warburton commented that generally DRA recommendations had been followed, and felt that the lack of response heightens the public's concern. Some years ago after a lease-purchase warrant for a fire engine, the annual appropriation was put into subsequent default budgets rather than going back to the public. At that time generally budgets passed. Mr DeLuca asked if a response could be offered at tomorrow's BudComm meeting. Mr Jones said despite the nearing deadline, a response would be welcome. Ms Barnes will attempt to have answers at the next BudComm

meeting – if not from the Town Manager, then from Town Counsel. As the Selectmen have already discussed the matter, Ms Barnes thought the answers could be forthcoming.

5. Budget Workshop

School District Warrant Articles: Attending: Kathleen Murphy, Superintendent; Nathan Lunney, Business Administrator, Les Sheppard, School Board Chairperson. The full text of the 2019 School District Warrant Articles can be accessed on hamptonbud.com and/or the SAU90 website.

Article 2. To see if the School District will vote to approve the cost items in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Hampton School Board and the Seacoast Educational Support Professionals Association covering the 3-year period from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2022 calling for certain increases in salary and benefits at the current staffing levels...and appropriate the sum of \$37,246 for the 2019-20 fiscal year...which represents the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the agreement... Recommended by the School Board 5-0-0. (Majority Vote Required.)

Mr Lunney explained the sums have to be estimated because the Academy workday for paraprofessionals has been extended by 15 minutes; the challenge is to stagger coverage at the end of the day. The health care plan is for 6 years with employees picking up more of the cost (75% by the schools, 25% by employees); a dental plan has been added; there is a less costly prescription plan. One holiday in year 1 has been added, another in year 2, and again in year 3; salary and wage increases are capped at 1.75% in each year; annual step increases are approximately 5%. In response to Mr Maurer, Mr Lunney said there are special education aides for some students, aides in the kindergarten, miscellaneous preparation assistance, lunchroom and traffic monitors, Federal Title 1 provides some tutoring. In total there are 48 paraprofessionals during the school year; the top salary is approximately \$21,000 and approximately \$11,000 at the low end. The health care package is approximately \$5,000; there is no retirement package.

Mr Maurer wanted to see the total compensation and benefits costs for analysis purposes. Mr Lunney explained those comprehensive figures are kept for teachers and administration, but up to now not for paraprofessionals where the benefits are so much less. Mr Warburton said the voters need to be provided with complete cost and breakdown details including benefits, and wanted that information before voting; this was agreed by consensus. Mr Lunney will compile additional information for tomorrow's meeting. Article #2 held for further discussion.

Article #3 :To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$300,000 to continue maintenance, repair and modernization ... at the Marston and Centre Schools... Recommended by the School Board 5-0-0. (Majority vote required).

Mr Jones explained this is an annual request. Mr Lunney explained that mostly these funds have been applied to repairs and replacement of the roof at the Marston School. Mr Warburton wondered why some funds for this purpose had not been allocated for the same purpose at the Academy during previous years, and asked if implementing security improvements meant this

function would be completed this year, or will come up every year. Mr Lunney said grants had been secured from the state and completion in the two schools was expected in the coming year. The work would include tools to assure safety in the hallways and prevent uninvited persons from entering the schools, e.g. ID cards, visitor registration, reinforced windows and walls; the growing emotional focus on security issues nationwide is a large factor.

In response to Mr Znoi, Mr Lunney said roofing would be finished with the requested funds. Mr Maurer asked whether the projects would address bullet proof glass and bomb proof doors. Mr Jones said security specifics could be discussed in a non-public session. Mr Warburton asked the money for the security improvements was not coming from the grants. In response to Mr Jones, Mr Lunney explained that all money spent on security for the 2 schools as well as for security in the Academy can be counted as part of the 20% match requirement for the grant. Ms Murphy added that to develop the comprehensive security plan all three schools were evaluated for safety by Homeland Security as well as by a private security firm.

Motion	By Consensus	to recommend to the Public Hearing the 2019 School District Warrant Article #3 – to raise and appropriate the sum of #300,000 ...to continue maintenance, repair and modernization ... at the Marston and Centre Schools...
Second		APPROVED: Frank DeLuca, Michael Plouffe, Regina Barnes, Timothy “Citizen” Jones. Opposed: Brian Warburton, David Maurer, Abstained: Jerry Znoi 4-2-1

Article 4: To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$100,000 for...a second School Resource Officer to serve Centre School and Marston School... Recommended by the School Board 5-0-0. (Majority Vote Required).

Ms Murphy said safety in the schools is a priority. There is already a full-time resource officer at the Academy. Participants in a community meeting concerning safety issues recommended a school Resource Officer for Centre and Marston schools which currently share one officer. The benefits are visibility of an officer who receives special training, a strong deterrent for unwanted individuals, communication with the police department, and sharing their knowledge with teachers, administration, and school board. They receive special training and share their knowledge with staff, administrators, and the School Board.

Mr Warburton had attended the community meeting, and felt there was no ovation, no votes were taken, and the group had no authority. The need is to shore up overall security in the town, which one more officer could not accomplish, although some years ago a resource officer was put into Winnacunnet High School where they could be effective. There are too many open issues in re security. The need is for more patrols on the streets. Many people are opposed to budget increases. Because of the many increases over time, the Town is perceived as wealthy (not in need of project funding). Mr DeLuca said there would be another safety forum. The School Board does not want another situation like Parkland; it is necessary to be vigilant about

safety. There is a consensus not to arm teachers, and to look at other opportunities. Police Chief Sawyer is looking into ways to protect schools. Today you can't predict what will happen so the School Board decided to bring in another full-time resource officer.

Ms Barnes noted that the recommendation for a School Resource Officer who develops relationships with children was expected; she supported this action. Mr Znoi commented that everyone had to use their judgment and collective experience. Mr Jones said this proposal is for mitigation of risk for those who send their kids to schools. The question is how much money can be spent, given that there can never be total security. Ms Murphy said that the police officer for the Academy was billed to the Schools. Mr Lunney expects the schools will pick up the full cost of the additional resource officer(s) by allocation to the police department. Mr DeLuca said just because there have not been shootings in NH schools, doesn't mean it won't happen; you can't put a price on a child's life. The resource officer warrant article is proposed to protect children and their teachers as well as the life and property of taxpayers. Mr Warburton said there are more costs for the police officer than being requested, and expressed concern that the total costs accruing to the town are escalating too fast; the Town should get away from acting out of fear. Mr Jones thought there was too much emotion and not enough logic in these decisions. Mr Znoi thought the police department should bear some of the cost.

Motion	By Consensus	to recommend to the Public Hearing the 2019 School District Warrant Article #4 – to raise and appropriate the sum of \$100,000 for...a second School Resource Officer to serve Centre School and Marston Schools.
Second		In favor: Jerry Znoi, Frank DeLuca, Regina Barnes, OPPOSED: David Maurer, Timothy "Citizen" Jones, Michael Plouffe; Brian Warburton; MOTIONED FAILED: 3-4-0

By petition

Article 5 To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$38,925 to provide child benefit services...for students who are residents of the Hampton School District and attend Sacred Heart School located in Hampton. Recommended by the School Board 5-0-0. (Majority vote required)

Ms Murphy said this covers 39 students and is presented annually. Mr Maurer noted that even with inflation the amount requested is less than in previous years, noting that the cost per student is now above \$15,000.

Motion	By Consensus	to recommend to the Public Hearing the 2019 School District Article #5 - the sum of \$38,925 to provide child benefit services...for students who are residents of the Hampton School District and attend Sacred Heart School located in Hampton.
Second		APPROVED: Unanimous 7-0-0

Article 1 – Operating Budget

Shall the School District raise and appropriate an Operating Budget not including appropriations voted by special warrant articles...or voted separately, the sum of \$23,585,440? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$23,387,188...

Recommended by the School Board 5-0-0. (Majority vote required)

Mr Warburton stated that at an earlier School Board meeting a proposal was made to discuss certain budget matters in a non-public session, which he deemed is illegal. The concern is (the cost of) adding more full-time administrative and/or assisting positions e.g. a resource officer, or interventionist. The focus should be on teachers and process improvements. Additionally, the cost of SAU 90 is far more than what Hampton paid when it was part of SAU 21 (Winnacunnet District), yet the enrollment is going down. Mr Maurer said in his business experience overall budget decreases were mandated causing staff and resource cuts, and asked if there is a way for the school district to save money for taxpayers.

Ms Murphy explained that given the use of technology text-book buying is reduced. They look at staff and enrollment to determine if new positions are needed; every year they have reduced positions or put some on hold; money not used is returned to the town’s fund balance. Class size averages 17-18 in the elementary school, and 23 in 7th and 8th grades. There are retirements and some jobs have been repurposed. Limits are set on dollar amounts for new staff; grants are used e.g. for professional development and training; benefit packages are examined every year and where possible renegotiated; with an emphasis on wellness health insurance costs have gone down; they anticipate reducing the cost of bus contracts.

Nonetheless, generally costs are rising. Mr Lunney added that without the \$1,500,000 debt service. the costs are less that the CPI. Mr DeLuca pointed out that while the enrollment is relatively stable, special end services required under federal law drives costs up, the pre-k program is an additional cost; student transportation has to be provided.

Separately, Mr DeLuca apologized for trying to keep a developing privacy situation in a non-public session; he had erred and did not mean to cause embarrassment. Mr Jones added that the public has the right to hear the sharing of observations, when it involves another (public) body or official, noting that because the Budget Committee has the right to say “No”, it is subject to constant criticism which members do not take personally. Ms Murphy asked if the School

Board Chair could comment. Mr Sheppard said no “letter” had been discussed (in the non-public session). Mr Jones explained that other than the conversation at this meeting, the Budget Committee could go no further. Mr Warburton said he would be pursuing the matter in re a Police Department letter and the non-public session. The matter had been professionally discussed in a December Budget Committee public meeting. When the School Board subsequently discussed the matter in a non-public session it was a serious violation.

In response to Ms Barnes, Mr Lunney said special ed costs for which the administration had no control, were already added to the default budget. The approximately \$198,000 rise over the default budget was comprised of salaries, increases for non-union workers, the family interventionist and the custodian, and transportation. Minimal costs for recommended safety measures were absorbed within the existing budget. Ms Murphy said if the Legislature passes laws affecting the budget the cost will have to be absorbed, pointing out there might be unfunded mandates. Mr Znoi commented that the trend in the entire state is in lower enrollment figures; concentration should be on whether adding full-time employment for a custodian and another special ed person are needed. The family interventionist is a counselor doing the work of a guidance counselor, but is focused on supporting youngsters who have suffered significant trauma as well as their families. Last year the interventionist came to Hampton with the salary paid as part of a 6 town grant. The full-time position covering all 3 buildings is requested because more and more students have severe mental trauma impacting their learning process, primarily due to the drug crisis.

Mr Warburton clarified that he favors grants, but not adding full-time positions. The Academy building isn’t finished yet. The taxpayers need a break, noting that School Board votes are 5-0.0; more discussion is needed. Ms Murphy said 40,000 square feet had been added; cleaning hallways, locker rooms and bathrooms, and taking care of outside space still needs to be done. She and Mr Lunney are always available for financial information and to answer questions. Mr Warburton suggested public forums well in advance of making new position decisions. Positions have been cut because of enrollment decreases; more detail would be provided to BudComm in the future. Mr Jones added that the BudComm is authorized to request detailed information. Mr Maurer agreed that the previous physical state of the Academy building was deplorable, but suggested that money could have been saved by being more frugal in the new building.

Mr DeLuca said they can’t take away services that began as grants. Mr Jones said BudComm had asked lots of questions about grants wanting to know the duration and related costs during and for the long-range i.e. after the grant ends. Mr Znoi called attention to the number of custodians throughout the system, and asked if that coverage could be adjusted rather than adding a new hire. Mr Lunney pointed out that some custodians begin work at 6 AM and leave about 2PM; others work nights. Ms Murphy explained that 169 students have special education plans that by law must be followed; a case manager can go from 8 – 15 hours depending on the situation. Adjustments in case load and hours are made regularly.

Motion	Michael Plouffe	to set the 2019 School District Operating Budget in the Warrant Article at \$23,585,440.
Second	Regina Barnes	APPROVED: Regina Barnes. Michael Plouffe, Timothy “Citizen” Jones, Frank DeLuca Opposed: Brian Warburton, David Maurer, Jerry Znoi 4-3-0

Motion	Frank DeLuca	to recommend to the Public Hearing 2019 School District Article #1 – to raise and appropriate an Operating Budget not including appropriations voted by special warrant articles...or voted separately, the sum of \$23,585,440. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$23,387,188...
Second	Michael Plouffe	In Favor: Regina Barnes, Michael Plouffe, Frank DeLuca; OPPOSED: Jerry Znoi, Brian Warburton, David Maurer,” Timothy “Citizen” Jones; MOTION FAILED: 3-4-0

Mr Znoi cited the public’s concern about the continual rise in costs for town services, commenting that he could not put aside \$1,000/month for property taxes. The Town should make due and keep a flat line in budgets. Mr Warburton commented that the business experience of Messrs Maurer and Znoi was very important to thinking outside of the box.

6. New Business

Mr Jones highlighted the new section on hamptonbud.com where documents that have been distributed to BudComm are stored. Warrant Articles are also listed on the site. The text and snippets from BudComm and Selectmen meetings can be viewed by pressing the id buttons.

7. BudComm Meeting Schedule

Next Meeting of the Budget Committee is Thursday, January 10 when reconsideration can be considered. The Committee could decide to revote everything to account for Mr Znoi’s vote. The Budget Committee Public Hearing is on Tuesday, January 15 at 7PM in Town Hall. Reconsideration can be considered only if requested by a member of the public, and then a motion and second can be made by a Committee member who has voted in the majority.

8. Adjournment

Mr Jones adjourned the January 10, 2019 Municipal Budget Committee meeting at 10:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by

Barbara Kravitz, Recording Secretary, Town of Hampton, Municipal Budget Committee.