

Town of Hampton
Board of Finance
Special Meeting: Budget Workshop
June 29, 2024
7PM

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:04PM.

Roll Call: Kathy Donahue, Joan Fox, Ed Adelman, Judy Buell, Kathi Newcombe
Staff and Others Present: First Selectman Allan Cahill, Selectman John Tillinghast, Treasurer Ellen Rodriguez, newly appointed alternate Regina DeCesare, and Recording Secretary Dayna McDermott-Arriola

Kathi Newcombe was seated for Diane Gagnon at her request.

Citizen Comments: none.

Discuss and Possible Action on FY2024-2025 Budget

Treasurer Rodriguez distributed the revised FY2024-2025 budget. Chairman Donahue reported that the Regional District #11 budget was reduced by \$75,000 after its referendum defeat with reductions in line items for legal expenses, electricity and tuition. Hampton's new assessment is \$160,368.

Chairman Donahue reported that the Recreation Commission has \$3,463 left in their account, with an anticipated \$3000 after outstanding bills are paid. According to the auditor, the amount in Youth Sports could be transferred to the Recreation Commission line item, approximately \$7,900 of the \$9,376 reported in the last audit, after outstanding bills are paid. This amount, coupled with the balance, would provide the Recreation Commission with approximately \$11,000. By general consent, members agreed to transfer the amount remaining in Youth Sports, after bills are paid, to the Recreation Commission, and reduce their \$6,000 budget request to zero. Ms. Donahue also reported that, after meeting with First Selectman Cahill and Treasurer Rodriguez, it was agreed to award Ms. Rodriguez a salary adjustment to align with the other Town employees. Ms. Donahue expressed concern that a previous plan to compensate Ms. Rodriguez with full insurance would set a precedent for part-time employees. The new plan will reduce the amount in the insurance line by \$9,904 and increase the Treasurer's salary by \$4000.

Motion: Kathy Donahue, seconded by Ed Adelman, to raise the Treasurer's salary by \$4000. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Donahue urged members to review five-year actual expenses for potential savings in preparation for adoption of the final budget after the public hearing.

Chairman Donahue reported that the Hampton Elementary School Board of Education met and reduced their budget to \$2,179,600, a \$39,312, or 1.84%, increase over last year. Reductions were made to the supply line items, house-keeping services by replacing the current contract with two, part-time, second-shift employees, and the superintendent's salary, as the position has been reduced from .4 to .3, though the hiring and terms were set without a negotiated contract. She explained that the board voted to purchase eight air conditioners and a water bottle filling station with the amount remaining in the SR3 account, approximately \$9,000. She also noted that the amount spent on legal expenses this year exceeds the amount budgeted. Ms. Donahue also reported that none of the documents she requested were received, except for the matrices which she distributed to members. To the question on student enrollment, she reported that, though there is no definitive information on pre-school, there are currently 4, and an anticipated 7, students in Kindergarten, 8 students in 1st grade, 13 students in 2nd grade, 7 students in 3rd grade, 8 students in 4th grade, 9 students in 5th grade, and 7 students in 6th grade, for a total of 52 students

in the school, and 11 students tuitioning to the STEM Academy. Ms. Donahue stated that these numbers suggest that staffing levels are high, which is why she requested the specific information she has yet to receive. She also suggested that the non-certified staff, currently slated for a 3.5% raise, receive the same as the Town employees, currently budgeted to receive 3%.

Ed Adelman objected to the Board of Finance making educational decisions which he believes are best made by the school board and took exception with Chairman Donahue's characterization of the school as "over-staffed". Ms. Donahue clarified that she stated the staffing levels seem high considering the amount of students in attendance at the school, noting that the last figures from the State Department showed a per pupil cost of \$30,364. She stated that the school has the documentation she requested as the budget is built upon that information, and confirmed that the Board of Finance only votes on a bottom line, and that the school board decides how to spend the amount.

To Joan Fox's question on whether or not the town will approve a 5% increase, Ms. Donahue stated that taxpayer history shows they might not. Ms. Fox also inquired as to the rent paid for the lower level of Town Hall by the Believers' Mennonite Church for use as a school. First Selectman Cahill again explained that the rent is under contract, and has been increased each year when re-negotiated and includes in-kind services. He clarified that only the two northern rooms are rented for use as a school; the rest of the lower level is community space, which has been used regularly by the Seniors' organization and is the designated emergency shelter for the town.

Motion: Kathi Newcombe, seconded by Ed Adelman, to approve the Hampton Elementary School's \$2,179,600 budget proposal.

In Favor: Ed Adelman, Joan Fox, Judy Buell

Opposed: Kathy Donahue, Kathi Newcombe.

Motion carried, 3-2.

There was some discussion concerning the removal of the Solar Park from the Grand List as there is 1.6 million owed to date. Treasurer Rodriguez reported that the mill rate would be 21.13 with the budget presented, and noted that the revenue from transfer station stickers was not included in the budget. There was also some discussion on the Selectmen setting the dates for the Annual Town meeting and referendum, tentatively June 20th and 27th respectively, and including additional questions on the ballot.

Citizen Comments: none.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Board, the Meeting adjourned at 8:06PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott Arriola
Recording Secretary

This is a draft version of the Minutes until approved by the Board of Finance.