

**HAMPDEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
February 27th, 2012
Hampden Town House**

Approved March 3, 2012

Meeting called to order at 6:00pm.

Members Present: Doug Boyd, Co Chair, Carol Fitzgerald, Co Chair, Jeff Smith, Jamie Collins and Rick Rubin

Members Absent:

Also present: M. Martin O'Shea, Beth Regulbuto and Norman Charest

Minutes: The minutes from the February 20th regular meeting were reviewed. Doug made a motion to accept the minutes with a correction. Carol seconded. The vote was unanimous, 5-0.

Budget Discussions:

Planning Board: Did not attend.

School Department: M. Martin O'Shea and Beth Regulbuto attended. The school department is awaiting budget approval by March 13, 2012 from the school committee. Budget variables discussed were the declining enrollment. District wide we are down 137 students for the upcoming year, with a proportionally greater drop in Hampden. There are only projected to be 35 kindergarten students at Green Meadows in September, 2012. Even with this decline Chapter 70 was level funded, and Hampden's minimum local contribution increased by \$140,000 to \$5,036,000. Regional transportation costs have held steady even though two buses were eliminated this year. The debt assessment of \$1.7 million is in place with \$400,000 to Hampden. Most contractual obligations expire in June of 2013, with negotiations starting in January 2013. School department has accomplished salary givebacks, the closing, then renting of Memorial school, and has reduced Special Education costs by keeping students in the district. For FY2013 they will eke out a level serviced budget with the hope that in FY2014 they will be able to 'get back in the game' investing in textbooks and technology.

Carol requested the school departments' budget numbers by March 19, 2013.

Assessors: Norman Charest reviewed the budget request sheet with the Board. Line item 015401 remains unchanged from last year. Line item 015402 is now \$41595; an increase of \$11432 over last year's salaries due to the request for the creation of a permanent clerical position. Line item 015043 reflects a decrease of \$500 for training and equipment. Line item 015045 reflects a decrease of \$1450 for software support. Line item 015046 reflects a decrease of \$500 for mapping maintenance. Line item 015048 reflects an increase of \$200 for the field review of building permits. The department would like to be open to the public another 5 hours per week, and after training new clerical help would like to be open 18-20 hours per week. The board has plans to implement systems to track the housing market and complete home visits after property sales to view assessment price versus sales price versus data. The

department has a long term plan of a full time assessor with a clerk and a reduction in the boards function to a signatory basis. Both the clerk and assessor would still be overseen by the board. The assessors are now the point of contact for setting the tax rate. All reports are submitted through Gateway before the Assessor's office submits to the DOR. The department is also trying to bring the majority of permits 'in house' instead of paying a vendor since not all permits require a visit. The board is also trying to bring the majority of all vendor work back into the office by creating a clerical position so that the assessor will have more time and better control over the data. They feel this will reduce outside costs, increase productivity, and increase the quality of data – even if the costs are the same the quality of data and information will be better.

Jeff made a motion to adjourn at 8:05pm. Jaime seconded. The vote was unanimous 5 to 0. The next meeting will be held on March 5th, at 6pm in the Building/Planning Office.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindi Connors, Clerk