

**HAMPDEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
February 27, 2017
Hampden Town House**

Approved March 6, 2017

Called to order at 6:00pm

Members Present – Carol Fitzgerald & Doug Boyd, Co-Chairs, Matt Fisher and Heather Turcotte

Members Absent – Jeff Smith

Also Present – HWRSD representatives Beth Regulbuto and Al Ganem, Superintendent of Schools, Selectmen John Flynn and Norm Charest.

FY18 Budget Process:

General discussion:

Heather asked if the full cost of the fire fighter supervisor would be the \$51,000 shown on the budget sheets. With the mandatory Medicare, workmen's compensation, payroll, county retirement and insurance that cost would actually be slightly over \$71,000. Firefighters would go from base salary of \$42,000 to a salary of \$59,536 with benefits. Doug commented that calculations would be needed to show the impact to residents.

Carol stated that there had been some salary chart discussions. The chart had been the source of frustration and tension for staff and she is thinking that this may be the year to recognize that and have a 2 ½% increase which would be more in line with the unions and those nonunion personnel who are off the chart. Doug agreed at the increase overall but would like to wait until after adding all budget requests to insure we are not short. He went on to say that the bargaining units have set a benchmark and that other employees are feeling shorted.

Short discussion about the CPI and it currently being approximately 1%

Carol said this should be the last thing added into the spreadsheets – we need to be careful as to what we can afford.

Doug made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 13th meeting as presented, Carol seconded, 4-0 in favor.

HWRSD: Both Doug and Carol had attended the joint meeting of the Wilbraham Finance Committee and the HWRSD.

Beth commented that enrollment has changed and the district is down 48 students and that Hampdens assessment percentage/cost share had also decreased. Overall, the district is below the 3000-student mark. She went on to say that Chapter 70 has increase by .25% and that Medicaid reimburses for Autism expense. Doug asked if health insurance number was part of the negotiations and Beth doesn't want to decrease the number at this point. Al added that they laid the ground rules today and that they are hoping to get a hybrid contact by June with all five bargaining units.

Doug asked if there were any big issues and Al replied there were some things that they were looking at. Both of our budget requests will be in before the assessment is known. The public presentation of the budget will be on March 22, Beth added that they will have knowledge of the shortfall prior to that meeting and Al added that he is hoping for earlier knowledge of the shortfall amount. Al added that we are below the state average expenditure per pupil.

They are still undecided on the number of school choice student slots they will have available and they are estimating that they will have \$100,000 to offset their utility bills from solar energy credits. They have locked their electric and gas rates for the next three years as well. With MCAS2.0 coming, they are needing to upgrade computer labs at a cost of \$23,000 each for grades 4-8

Carol asked if by sending the fifth graders back to GM and saving space will there be a cost savings by closing areas of TWB. Beth responded that by closing off a wing there will be some savings in custodial costs but that TWB is oddly configured so it may be difficult. Al added that the entire community uses the building and that he can't see a huge savings.

The HWRSD assessment is approximately 60% of the towns budget and any changes in it have a huge impact on the rest of the towns budgets

Board of Selectmen: John Flynn and Norman Charest reviewed their offices budgets. There will be a \$7000 transfer this year to the property & liability line. Most budget lines have the same requested appropriation as FY18 except for property & liability (+ \$7,000), office equipment supplies (+ \$500), and traffic control (+ \$7,000) John also informed the committee that the four main electric accounts, PD, Sr Center, Street lighting and the Townhouse will all realize up to a 25% reduction in costs due to the solar credits as well as LED bulbs being installed in current street lighting. The street lighting budget will not be decreased – the PD has requested that new lights be added in town. John mentioned that the Animal Control Officer has requested a vehicle, contractors will now add road details to their bids before submitting.

Doug asked if the salt issue has been resolved and was told that there will be the need for continuous testing of the water.

The selectmen are meeting with the Fire department at 6pm next week and will accompany them to their meeting with Advisory at 6:30pm.

John also mentioned the freedom of information seminar and the two sessions that are available.

Next meeting scheduled for 6pm on March 6, 2017

With no further business, Doug made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45pm, Carol seconded, all in favor 4-0

Respectfully Submitted,
Cindi Connors, Clerk