

**HAMPDEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
March 6, 2017
Hampden Town House**

Approved March 13, 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 – From the HVFD Chief Mike Gorski and Dave Markham, Selectmen John Flynn, Vinnie Villamaino and Norm Charest, BOS Admin Pam Courtney, Tyler Witkop, Editor of the Times, Moderator Bob Howarth and Mary Ellen Glover.

FY18 Budget Process:

Carol made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 27th meeting as amended, Heather seconded, 4-0 in favor.

A transfer request in the amount of \$1300 from the Reserve fund for office supplies was received. *Carol made a motion to approve the transfer request, Heather seconded, all in favor 4-0.*

Fire Department:

Selectman John Flynn stated that the Selectmen feel that the proposal submitted by Chief Gorski should go forward to the Annual Town Meeting and that the Chief feels this is the direction that the department should go.

Doug asked John is the BOS will take a position at ATM and John said that they would.

Heather asked about overtime and Chief Gorski said that would be a town counsel question. He went on to say that career guys can decide to go or not to go to off hours calls and if they got called back in they would then get the call rate. Carol asked if the fire starts two hours before the end of shift will this result in overtime? John stated there would be a restriction on the number of hours they can be on scene. Doug added this could be a wage and hour issue. Vacation coverage was questioned – would there be a third person to cover and Chief Gorski said there would not be.

Selectman Flynn said one of the goals would be going out to school and seniors and more monitoring. Chief Gorski said currently tests aren't being done, maintenance & educational aspects are not reaching the elderly – Selectman Flynn added that education would solve a lot of things.

Doug asked if there would be any changes to the firehouse.

The department has a two-year approach to capital, a \$200,000 request for a two-bay addition to the firehouse for FY18 and a \$500,000 request for a hybrid fire truck for FY19. The addition would bring the current building to a five-bay building. These costs would be explored with the Capital Committee.

Carol Fitzgerald questioned the salaries, stating that these were salaries for 'new' firefighters and asked if we would be taking them before training. Chief Gorski replied that there would first be an internal post for someone who had already gone through training and that salaries are all entry level

Matt questioned the grant and asked if it was a onetime shot.

Both Selectman Flynn and Chief Gorski replied that it was a three-year grant that didn't run on a fiscal year. Carol asked if the grant request had already been submitted and if we would hear back from them before ATM?

Selectman Flynn responded that we wouldn't hear until around December.

Chief Gorski went on to explain in the case of a medical emergency the PD responds to the 911 call and EMT's would respond with a fly car and leave if a fire call comes up.

Carol questioned what the estimated implication on the tax rate would be; approximately .17-.18/100,000

There will need to be two articles on the FY18 warrant – one for the operating budget and another for the addition.

Matt questioned Chief Gorski if he had three guys, a new truck would the outcome of the recent fires have been different? Chief Gorski replied that is something you can't tell.

Matt commented that he would like to see some water connections around town and Heather agreed adding that even with three guys and a new truck you still need water.

Chief Gorski stated that having a hybrid truck would be a way of carrying more water and large capacity hoses.

Doug asked if full timers would respond to mutual aid calls to which Chief Gorski replied it would be on a case by case basis. He went on to explain that when East Longmeadow sends a truck here it only comes with 750 gallons of water, while both Wilbraham and Monson respond with 1,000 gallons while we carry 2,000 gallons.

Carol asked what the number of volunteers is that we have in town and Chief Gorski provided the following currently there are 20 firefighters that live in town, five that live in surrounding communities and that of the four recent applications, one person lives in town while three others do not. Chief Gorski went on to say that we train them then they leave to go to other communities to use their skills. Dave Markham added that it costs the town \$2500 to 'gear' a new person.

Matt asked if this was an overly optimistic budget and if the Fire Department would end up spending \$75,000-\$100,000 over the budget later. Chief Gorski replied that this was the first time he had done this.

Heather asked what the liability for the town was from a volunteer firefighter to a paid firefighter? Chief Gorski replied that they are considered town employees and covered by workers' compensation.

As an employee, if you are injured on the job the employer is responsible for 72% whereas if you are a volunteer and injured on the job as a member of the HVFD the town would pay only your health expenses. The liability and disability questions will be looked into further.

General Discussion: The Selectmen will be closing the warrant on March 31st. The Planning board has three to four bylaw changes that they are working on. The Advisory Committee will hold their public hearing on April 10th at 7pm in the auditorium of the Town House. Capital expenses are the loader for highway and the firehouse. Revenue figures are needed.

Next meeting scheduled for 6pm on March 13, 2017

With no further business, Carol made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:36pm, Matt seconded, all in favor 4-0

Respectfully Submitted,
Cindi Connors, Clerk