

Approved 6/7/05

TOWN OF HAMPDEN, MASSACHUSETTS
BOARD OF SELECTMEN/BOARD OF HEALTH

May 24, 2005
5:30 pm

625 Main Street
Town House

Present: James D. Smith, Duane E. Mosier, John D. Flynn
Guests: Bob Richards, Highway Department, Martha Fila, AFSCME representative

At 5:32 pm meeting was called to order.

A motion was made by Duane Mosier to go into Executive Session to discuss the impact of the failed Proposition 2 ½ vote and to impact bargain with the AFSCME (Highway Union) with return to Open Session. Second by John Flynn. VOTE: James Smith yes, Duane Mosier yes, John Flynn yes.

At 5:55 pm a motion was made by Duane Mosier to go into Executive Session to discuss the impact of the failed Proposition 2 ½ vote and to impact bargain with the IBPO (Police Union) with return to Open Session. Second by John Flynn. VOTE: James Smith yes, Duane Mosier yes, John Flynn yes.

At 6:20 a motion was made by John Flynn to go into Executive Session to discuss the impact of the failed Proposition 2 ½ vote and to do impact bargaining with the AFSCME (Police Dispatcher's Union) with return to Open Session. Second by Duane Mosier. VOTE: John Flynn yes, Duane Mosier yes, James Smith yes.

**OPEN SESSION – THE BOARD MOVED THE MEETING TO THE
AUDITORIUM TO ACCOMMODATE RESIDENTS**

The meeting was structured so Town employee's had an opportunity to get questions answered as to how the failed Proposition 2 ½ override vote might affect them and their departments.

There were many members (100 or more) of the community present to ask questions and to offer their opinions on the subject.

James Smith opened the meeting by explaining that the Park and Recreation Department and Library are separate entities and they are at the meeting only to receive technical information regarding layoffs and benefits provided by the Board of Selectmen. The goal of the meeting is to get an idea of questions and concerns from those that are most affected by the budget cuts.

The Board's goal is to have full recommendations from Police, Highway and Council on Aging, within a week's time so it can vote on those recommendations since the Board is the controlling authority for these three departments.

Ellen Bump, Director of Library Services – Will be laid off.

Ellen started by explaining that the library will close its doors on June 30th.

The plan is to keep the collection on the shelves and to cover materials to protect them.

They inquired as to whether they would be required to box and move books. The answer was that the books and material could remain.

Circulation will end mid month and an inventory will be conducted.

The question has been asked as to whether the insurance coverage should be increased and the Board is investigating that.

The Town House custodian will check on all closed town properties.

We will have lay off notices by next week as well as benefit packages when needed.

Becky Moriarty, Director of the Council on Aging – will be laid off.

Becky spoke about the COA and her concern for the staff.

Can benefits be banked? How is the payout determined? At what rate? At time of layoff?

It is the Town's intention to pay out as required in the employee handbook

Jay Fenlason, Director of the Parks and Rec Department – will be laid off.

Jay asked if their clerk could continue to be paid out of fees generated by sports programs? Park and Rec think that they are able to do that through the revolving account. The Board needs to find the answer to that question.

Dana Pixley, Superintendent, Highway Department

Dana explained that two employees will be laid off as of June 30, 2005.

He asked if they can bank any benefits now or do they need to buy out? Take sick time buy out?

Vacation time payoff will have to come out of FY05 budget since there is nothing in the budget for them in FY06.

While collecting unemployment, do they have obligations to come back to work as needed, can they be called back in for a 40 hour week, or just for the duration of the work needed?

They would come back as independent workers, not town employees.

Terms of the layoff means that a 5 member crew will be reduced to 3 members. Public grounds is one assignment.

Winter season with snow and ice removal; what obligations does the remaining crew have and what rights do they have?

Can their vacation time be restricted?

10 weeks of payroll come from State aid, and usually start around September 1; can they be asked to come back to work for those projects?

The following is a list of questions, concerns and information relative to budget reductions in Town:

Council on Aging

- Impact on the building
- Close the building
- Drain the pipes
- Security alarm
- Bills that will need to be paid
- Fire alarm
- Change billing address
- COA board will remain intact for the time being
- We do have a \$5,000 grant that will remain as long as COA board remains
- Two programs at the center – outreach coordinator, 12 hours a week, GSSS services, as well as the meal program
- Home delivered site maintained
- Congregate site available?
- Meal site has a paid staff thru Greater Springfield
- Tedi-Ann Busha, Outreach Coordinator does get grant funding and will need space in which to meet with seniors
- Will need a locking file for her confidential information
- Phone service for COA – grant person and volunteer to do that?
- No money for personnel – who would supervise Tedi-Ann? Through the formula grant perhaps?
- The Center was built with a grant from HUD – fiscal requirements reached their term, we have a contract requirement still in effect; we are changing the use as we are closing the door which breaches our contract
- Town might owe \$584,000 back to HUD
- Requirements are up in August of 05; we could have to prorate that amount
- Volunteer staffing to keep the doors open?
- Could the funds be raised by townspeople?
- Is it legal to keep the doors open with donations alone?
- Town employees get more benefits than would be raised through fundraising efforts
- Departments are restricted by the State as to how to use a revolving fund

Highway Department

- Some funding thru state funding – Chapter 90 funding
- Going from 4 members to 2 members; as one will be on grounds
- Winter maintenance of the roads could be effected, a 5 person crew was the perfect
- number with four sanders operating and one crew member operating the loader to fill trucks with the other four sanding
- Rely on relief drivers?
- Pay them what?
- Discussion of minimum pay of 4 hours to relief drivers as well

- The possibility of school delays was mentioned by residents with the lack of timely snow removal
- 9 hours straight time to remove snow
- The existing department knows the routes and have proven their dedication to getting the job done as quickly and efficiently as possible
- Will rely on licensed, relief drivers

Police Department

- Reductions will mean the loss of 3 full time officers
- Significant reduction in service
- 2 officers on, one dispatcher on
- Will need reserves to fill 6 hour shifts, 4 hour shifts, some will not be filled at all
- Will not have the funds available for overtime for regular officers
- Cruiser maintenance; will save money because the cars will not be in service
- Impact bargaining comments will be relayed to Acting Chief
- Dispatching will be maintained in town and not go out to regional dispatch
- Dispatch will be maintained 24/7
- No ability for new 911 capabilities as there is no money available
- Are the State Police available to us? Yes, from Holyoke, or anywhere, they will not refuse a call from town but response time is the issue
- Emergency response – if only one officer is on, what’s the game plan: Will we request mutual aid?
- We aren’t charged for mutual aid, but if they are injured while here, they become the Town’s responsibility
- Are we going to look for a police chief?
- Medical emergencies; if only one officer is on, our response time from the ambulance is about 7-10 minutes.
- What if an officer needs help in a situation? Jeff Farnsworth explained that he would be called in, as would Sgt. Joe Henry to help.

Library

- Many local library trustees will not allow lending outside of the residents; they do have the right to charge or to refuse
- Town residents will not be allowed to borrow from surrounding communities
- Only taxpayers are allowed to borrow

The question was asked of the Town’s policy on people who cannot pay taxes. Does an abatement exist? There is a relief program available that that is explained in the Scribe publication.

State mandated projects that are no longer funded

School district transportation reimbursement

Catch basin material is now considered a hazardous waste and must be funded for disposal

There were many school related issues brought up:

The Town does not have much say in their budget

We would like the town to have an opportunity to refuse their budget

Town needs to better address the 2 1/2 override vote and look at a way for the town to fail the school's budget

Home schooled children have lost their entire curriculum with the library and Senior Center closing

Lose the library, hurt the children, the seniors

Schools

Residents are disappointed with the lack of school representation at this meeting, James Smith explained that the schools had not been invited, it was only for those department directly affected by the layoffs

How do we get money that is allocated from the State?

The school needs to be held accountable

We did not anticipate this being a joint meeting with the school involved

The idea of scheduling a joint meeting with the school committee and residents was brought up and the Board will work with Scott Chapman from the School Committee to set that up.

School Superintendent Paul Gagliarducci who arrived after the end of the School Committee meeting was asked if he would facilitate a meeting with the School Committee.

Our assessment is driven by state revenues

Level funded for the last 3 years

It will be mid-July before the budget is released from the Governor

We've lost all of these services due to our own vote; it was the decision of the residents of town.

Can the library go into the school system?

The Trustees are the controlling authority

The schools are open limited hours

There is no late bus available for school children

What will we lose next year in terms of services, in order to comply with school budget?

Look at separate vote to take the school's budget out of the ballot question

Question asked: Can we take this back to vote? Talk of petitioning for a special town meeting; residents must speak with Town Clerk

Can the Board of Selectmen can be petitioned to seek a re-vote on the override question?

The Board answered that the decision is determined by the Board, however residents can petition for a special town meeting.

At 9:30 pm, after all questions were asked and there was no further discussion, the meeting was then continued back in the Selectmen's office.

The meeting continued at 9:50 pm.

A Planning Board member contacted Duane Mosier regarding Scantic Meadows proposal and maintaining drainage. The Board requested information on if an association is formed, and the system requires additional maintenance, the association will bear the cost of any maintenance costs not located in the town's Right of Way.

Jim would like to stay at arm's length but would support a responsible plan brought forward by Planning Board.

A motion was made at 10:10 pm by John Flynn to go into Executive Session to discuss impact bargaining with no return to Open Session. Second by Duane Mosier. VOTE: James Smith yes, John Flynn yes, Duane Mosier yes.

Respectfully submitted:

Pamela B. Courtney
Administrative Assistant

/pbc