

Approved 1/3/06

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

December 5, 2005
7:00 pm

625 Main Street
Town House

Present: James D. Smith, Duane E. Mosier, John D. Flynn
Guests: Paul Gagliarducci, Ed.D, Cindy Bailey, Doug Farmer, Wilbraham-Hampden Times, Sgt. Joe Henry, Dick Jones, Ed Gorski, Willard Flynn, Rita Vail
Board of Assessors

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

7:00 pm Tax Classification Hearing: The Board of Assessors held the annual Tax Classification Hearing at 7:00 and presented the Board of Selectmen with the options available in setting the tax rate. We currently have a residential tax factor of 1, there is no split tax rate and the community consists of 94% residential and 6% commercial. There is a residential exemption available but is generally used in communities with a large number of rental properties. There is also a commercial exemption available (which could be used by 11 commercial properties in town) which enables owners to receive some tax relief if they rent to a business with fewer than 10 employees. The Board is reluctant to accept this option since it just shifts the tax burden to those businesses in town. The Board does not see any benefit to splitting the tax rate in any way, and want to encourage businesses rather than shift the tax burden to them.

A motion was made by Duane Mosier to maintain the tax rate with the 1:1 ratio, using a residential factor of 1, with no exemptions for residential or commercial uses. Second by John Flynn. VOTE: Duane Mosier yes, John Flynn yes, James Smith yes.

7:30 pm School Committee Members, Scott Chapman and Lisa Morace, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Paul Gagliarducci: The School Committee members were invited to this meeting by the Board to encourage a line of open communication between the two groups for preliminary discussions of budgets issues which include the Minnechaug study and the proposed Minnechaug building. Part of the discussion centered on the use of the E&D account.

Superintendent Gagliarducci is in the process of reviewing the budgeting process and procedures. He would like to have the review complete by June 30th rather than letting it go through the summer so no misinterpretation exists with the town residents. He reported on the utilization of unaudited funds in the E&D account over the past few years

and noted that the District gave most of the unused funds back to the communities. Superintendent stated that \$2.3 million has been returned to the towns over the last 5 years.

Current funds have not been certified as of yet. The District normally carries a very low amount in the E&D account and the school committee would like to increase that amount for any unforeseen emergencies.

In 1994 and 2001, Wilbraham had financial issues and requested a reduced assessment from the school district which they were given.

There was additional unanticipated revenue this year which came from transportation. Regional transportation money came in higher than expected, and the district received additional transportation funds from the State.

Regional transportation money (is an estimated amount based on the previous year's expenditures which then must be certified).

The state law allows for the District to retain 5% or \$1.6 million in the E&D account, but given the financial status of the towns, the District's goal is to retain \$200,000.

There was discussion about making the school's budget subject to an override vote. The Board would like to restore town services to the levels provided in prior years and any funds available after that restoration would be available for consideration for the District budget. If the District budget, however, exceeds those available funds, then that portion would be subject to an override vote.

Paul Gagliarducci added that the formula for Chapter 70 funding could be changed to a per capita formula which would not be good for either community.

The Board sent a letter to the School Committee in support of the district moving forward on the study for the school.

James Smith has reconsidered his decision and feels that it should go to a town vote.

Duane Mosier would like to have a community with services. Funding for the school district cannot be at the expense of the services for the community.

John Flynn thanked the members for attending our meeting and thinks there was a perception problem with the E&D money. He added that schools add value to the community, not just to the students. John feels that our focus should be with our legislators in helping with the financial situation in town.

Paul Gagliarducci has been asked to join 6 other superintendents to review a proposed new process which schools would have to go through for State funding for a new school.

The school committee will wait to hear what the new regulations are before they go any further with the Minnechaug building process.

Survey work will have to be done at the site and environmental questions will have to be addressed before moving forward for a school building.

The question was asked as to what the formula is for rebuild vs. remodel and the Superintendent does not know yet what that formula will be.

James Smith recommends that the district get the public involved early on in the process for a successful override vote.

The point was made that a town has 60 days to disapprove a school committee borrowing decision.

Paul Gagliarducci mentioned that in Barnstable County, a number of towns started a regional caucus to get state legislators for Regional School Districts together to join forces to garner support for Regional transportation disbursement.

There are 2 issues that need to be addressed according to Paul Gagliarducci, 1) Chapter 70 funding, ask legislators to not re-think the formula currently used for our allocation as that would punish our communities, and 2) Regional transportation reimbursement.

Infrastructure problems in town which currently exist may be even more important to our town's welfare than the school issue. The Town may be looking at a bond in the three million dollar range in the near future to cover costs for repairs.

1. Minutes of November 21 and November 29, Open and Executive: The minutes of November 21 were reviewed and a motion was made by Duane Mosier to approve as corrected, second by John Flynn. VOTE: All in favor and so voted. The Executive Session minutes of November 21 were reviewed and a motion was made by Duane Mosier to approve as presented, seconded by John Flynn. VOTE: All in favor and so voted. The minutes of November 29 were reviewed and a motion was made by Duane Mosier to approve as corrected, seconded by John Flynn. VOTE: All in favor and so voted. The Executive Session minutes of November 29 were reviewed and a motion was made by Duane Mosier to approve as presented, seconded by John Flynn. VOTE: All in favor and so voted.
2. Transfer Station Bid discussion: The Board has been approached by an individual from town who is interested in taking over the operation of the Transfer Station at no additional cost to the Town. Insurance and bonding are issues that would need to be discussed. There will have to be a bid process and the Board is in need of a committee to work on this. The Board will work on a separate hauling bid, a full operation bid, etc. Transfer station committee members are needed.
3. Charter Cable renewal: James Smith will review and sign off on a corrected form for our cable extension agreement.
4. State of Emergency status: The Board reviewed the status of the State of Emergency declared on October 15th. A motion was made by Duane Mosier to change the status of our 10/15 declaration to a limited state of emergency, seconded by John Flynn. VOTE: All in favor and so voted.
5. Scott Trombly reappointment: A motion was made by John Flynn to continue Scott Trombly's appointment as Police Chief until the end of December, and was seconded by Duane Mosier. VOTE: All in favor and so voted. The Board will meet on Wednesday morning at 8:00 am to determine where it will go from here in selecting a new Chief.

Items for Discussion:

John Flynn brought up the issue of the Town's funding of insurance for employees and the need for further discussion.

COA Appointment: The Board received a letter of resignation from Arlene Fisher from the Council on Aging.

The Board discussed a request from Allen Kinney from Wilbraham who wants a joint capital planning committee to oversee the maintenance schedule of Minnechaug. John Flynn suggests looking at energy efficient ways in which to maintain the schools within the district and worries that there are no advocates to push for such maintenance.

A motion was made Duane Mosier to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 pm, seconded by John Flynn. VOTE: All in favor and so voted.

Respectfully submitted:

Pamela B. Courtney
Administrative Assistant

/pbc