

Approved 11/3/14

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

September 29, 2014
6:00 pm

625 Main Street
Hampden, MA 01036

Board Members: John D. Flynn, Norman Charest, Vincent J. Villamaino
The meeting was called to order by John Flynn at 6:05 pm.
Guests: Tyler Witkop, The Wilbraham-Hampden Times

Financial Discussion: The board invited numerous staff to the meeting to begin discussions relative to the tax rate and our overall financial status. Town Accountant, Cliff Bombard, Town Treasurer, Dick Patullo, Tax Collector, Eva Wiseman, Carolyn Reed, Assistant Assessor, Bob Makuch, Chairman of Board of Assessors and Jeff Smith from Advisory were present at the start of the meeting.

The free cash number is \$460,356 currently. The question was asked as to what makes up this number. It is derived from unspent budget numbers and excess revenue. Cliff says the majority of it comes from excess revenue and it is typical that Cliff predicts a lower revenue number that what actually comes in.

There was discussion about the warrant articles and money needed for those. There is an article dealing with the Riverside Drive residence's water along with the Federated Church's water issue. We don't have a firm number yet as to what the remediation costs will be for those projects.

Norman noted that there is an increase in property valuation and it is up about 3 million, which amounts to about 9 cents on the tax rate.

There is no help from large growth this year, but January 1 there will be an increase coming in from the Hampden Country Club for next year's taxes. Given the scope of the work up there, the assessors will need help from a consultant; but the board can capture structural buildings now. Some of the golf course property is shielded with the Chapter Land designation.

The new substation will come online in January for taxes and that value will be a tricky one to determine, as the utilities give their own valuation to a particular project.

There was then discussion about the tax rate and Fall Town Meeting. Transfer some money into stabilization and some to reduce the tax rate.

Should we cap at 6% increase?

Solar Discussion with two companies; Soltage, Renewable Energy Provider and Tetra Tech
Marc Miller and Douglas Distefano from Soltage and Stephen Campbell and Drew Lent from Tetra Tech came before the board to discuss a possible solar installation at the transfer station. These groups have installed these across the country with great success, generating a lease payment to the towns in which they are installed.

The discussion started with Soltage stating that the existing condition at our Transfer Station is a capped landfill, which requires a closure report (which Soltage has received from the town) and will need a major use permit for the installation.

If there was a hiking trail, going across the landfill, it would be a minimal disturbance.

Solar installation is a major use and a major change of use, and the cap cannot be disturbed. With the installation the permeable barrier will stay in place and the permitting process can be a bit tedious.

The system is installed with ballasts and engineered to withstand wind gusts, etc.

We currently have 6 acres or so of useable property.

The rent would remain the same overall years and only if technology improved and additional energy was generated, would the town benefit with additional rent and/or step payments.

John mentioned that the town has applied for an Owner's Agent Technical Assistance (OATA) grant and are waiting to hear on the outcome.

Soltage wants to lease the land and anticipates being able to give the town 60 to 80k a year. That would include any taxes they would be required to pay in property/equipment taxes.

To even begin the process it would take approximately 25 to 30k to complete an application and to have a feasibility study done to determine if we could be in the game. There are also other applicants in the queue before us that may or may not be viable contenders.

The application fee is \$7500 and the feasibility study would be about 20k.

There was also discussion as to whether this project would have to go "out to bid" or if we could avoid that process. That will have to be determined.

Soltage wondered if there was other town property that might be used and that generated a conversation about school and roof top units. Typically when those are installed, the energy generated gets used by the building on which they are housed.

An engineering study would have to be done for roof loading, calculation of snow load and frame loading to determine where and how much weight can be held by the roof.

The board stated that the concept would have to have to be approved at town meeting.

It was noted that the equipment alone would be valued at 2.5 million.

Marc Miller suggested that we pursue a grant of 30k and go from there.

They are not interested in having to go out to bid and we would need confirmation from Dave Martel that we didn't have to go through the RFP process.

The board committed to getting back to Soltage within a couple weeks' time.

Transfer Request for Generator overage: The board reviewed the invoice for the generator installation submitted by Ed Poulin. It came in \$1,666.32 over budget. A motion was made by Vinnie Villamaino to transfer \$1,666.32 from the Reserve Account to the Generator Account, seconded by Norman Charest. VOTE: All in favor and so voted.

Invoice for Cartographic Associates, Inc.: It was explained by Carolyn Reed from the Board of Assessor's that when this service was contracted, a budget amount of \$1,800 was never established for the annual usage fee for the internet access. Now that the board understands the reason behind the invoice, Norm made a motion to pay the \$1,800 for the ongoing service to

Cartographic Associates, Inc., seconded by Vinnie Villamaino. VOTE: All in favor and so voted.

Change of Sunday Hours Notification from Grog Shoppe: The owner of the Grog Shoppe has submitted information to the board stating that a new law for Sunday hours has been passed and it is his intention is to open earlier in the day starting October 26, 2014. The board acknowledged and will forward information to the ABCC for their records.

HWRSD: The District has sent a request for volunteers to work on the Middle School Task Force to study the declining enrollment. The district is looking for school committee members and interested residents from both towns to be part of the task force. At this point, Lisa Morace, Peter Salerno and Marc Ducey are members and Scott Chapman has expressed an interest as has Cynthia Flynn, an educator in Connecticut and resident of Hampden. John Flynn will continue on has an ad hoc member of the team.

State Grant for Remote ID Director Services: This grant is offered by DLS at no cost for the first year. The board are not interested as they surmise the expenses will be too great in later years.

Special Employee: There was conversation about designating James Donahue's position in representing the ZBA in a lawsuit as special counsel employee, but it was determined that this was unnecessary.

Building Inspector Discussion: The board and Lance suggested starting a posting in the Beacon where a number of town positions are posted on a monthly basis. There must be discussion with Advisory as to how to fund the position as Lance recommends a 20/24 hour position with the additional responsibility of overseeing all town owned buildings.

Seeing no further business, a motion was made by Vinnie Villamaino to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 pm, seconded by Norm Charest. VOTE: All in favor and so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela B. Courtney
Administrative Assistant

/pbc