

Hampden Advisory Board
625 Main Street, Hampden, MA 01036

MEETING MINUTES
January 10, 2005, 6:30 p.m.

Present: Beth de Sousa, Peter Nossal, Mike Crowley, Doug Boyd

The meeting began with the introduction of the new Advisory Board clerk, Beth Perkins, to the members of the board.

Bill Olmstead, a town resident, came in briefly to ask if the Advisory Board has guidelines from the Board of Selectmen as to the budgets they're looking for. Beth de Sousa told him that during the department head meeting, the Advisory Board asked the Board of Selectmen to level-fund from prior year and provide a separate item for salary increases for non-bargaining employees. If there happens to be any money for it, the Advisory Board will consider any increases.

Bill asked if the salary increases will be automatic. Beth said no, the Advisory Board can choose not to recommend the increases. Also, the pay increase will either be the 2.5% inflation rate increase **or** the step increase based on tenure.

The Advisory Board members discussed the following:

- Possibility of changing the Town Meeting date. Beth said that during the department head meeting on Dec.2, 2004, the Selectmen were not inclined to go to the Town meeting to request to change the date of the Town meeting. Instead, they want to continue as long as it is necessary and have the moderator adjourn the meeting and reconvene 30 or 60 days later.
- "Artificiality" of the temporary budget. The average citizen does not understand that when they vote the first time, they are voting for a temporary budget only and that 3 months later is when we truly know what we are going to do. A lot of times they are told that the sky is falling in April and then it doesn't happen. This fuels skepticism and we look disingenuous. What goal are we trying to achieve by going through that process? In June, we know more because usually the school is getting firmer nos. and the state budget is much closer.
- Recent Revaluations vs. Town Revenues - The board discussed revaluations which increased most homeowners' property values and how it will affect revenue for the Town. It was pointed out that one of several factors why the revaluations may not produce significantly higher revenues for the town is because the levy gets capped at 2.5%.

- Should we be more optimistic about our revenue projections instead of preparing for a worst case budget scenario every time, like what we've been doing in the past 3 years? This is hard to do with a reserve of \$23K on an 8.5M budget. Capital needs will not go away.
- Is this the year when we really dig our heels in and have a do or die override? The town people have not really felt any real pain from the budget cuts. It will only be when an entire non-essential department is closed down, i.e. the parks and rec or the library, that the town people will truly feel any pain. Perhaps we ought to be more specific on the purpose of the override to give it a chance to pass.
- Septic installment account was brought up as a source of funds for capital expenses. Need to talk to someone from the state about this then the auditors need to sign off.
- The need for a Town Administrator.
- Capital planning meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 19, 2005.
- The board would like to have the Selectmen and the Accountant present on their next meeting on January 24. Will talk to the BOS about change in the town meeting to the end of May or early June.
- Clerk's action items:
 - Contact the Accountant and the Board of Selectmen about attending the Jan. 24th Advisory Board meeting.
 - Furnish the board members copies of the budget packet before the Jan 24th meeting.
 - Order a free copy of the new edition of the Finance Committee Handbook.
 - Check with the Treasurer regarding status of School Committee payments.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Next meeting: January 24, 2005 at 6:30 pm, in the large meeting room.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth M. Perkins