

Hampden Advisory Board
625 Main Street, Hampden, MA 01036

MEETING MINUTES
February 28, 2005, 6:30 P.M.

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

Guests: Bill Olmstead; Representatives from the Council on Aging (COA): Rebecca Moriarty, Rita Vail, Arlene and George Fisher, Dick and Shirley Gouvan, John D. Flynn

Council on Aging budget request included increases in:

1. **Building Maintenance and Utilities** - COA Director, Rebecca Moriarty (Becky), said that they will have a shortfall of about \$2K to \$3K for this fiscal year for building maintenance and utilities. She will therefore need to adjust the FY06 figures she submitted in her budget request to reflect increases for these two items.
2. **Salaries** – Aside from the salary increase (scheduled step increase plus 2.5% cost of living adjustment) for the Director, COA is also requesting for restored clerical hours so that there will be paid staff in the building at all times, especially in the event of an emergency. (The submitted budget request does not reflect the \$ amount for restored hours. Becky will include it on the revised budget request that she will submit. Advisory also asked her to indicate which is more important, the pay raise or additional hours.)

Advisory asked if the COA has any data in terms of the use of the building – how many people come for lunch, activities.... something that can justify the extra staff hours being requested. Becky said the center is a very busy place, which hosts an average of over a hundred people on a daily basis. This includes people stopping in to use the facilities, attend class offerings, have lunch, request information, etc. An average of 40-50 people come for the lunch program alone.

Over 130 volunteers work in various programs of the center, including Meals on Wheels and other outreach programs. These volunteers' services save the center a huge amount money. More information regarding volunteer figures are available on this month's "Scribe".

Advisory asked if there is any legal exposure if there was no paid staff in the building when the building is open. Rita Vail said that there is no legal exposure and that volunteers are covered by insurance. However, when

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something serious, such as a medical situation happens, volunteers don't usually feel confident enough to take on the responsibility involved, whereas paid staff come through immediately.

Where else can we get \$?

- **Fund Raising.** Advisory asked if the Friends of the Seniors (the fundraising arm of the Senior Center) can raise money to fund the center's operations. Rita said that they already are. The Friends have paid for telephone repair, Becky's conferences, stripping and rewaxing floors, painting, fixing the automatic door opener, and other general maintenance work.

In the event that the Friends can fund the entire maintenance of the center, the budget line item for maintenance can show a zero amount, with the understanding that the Friends will provide the funds for it.

- **Fee-based use of the center.** When the state gave the grant to build the center, it restricted the use of the center to only the seniors until November of 2006. After this date, it can be opened up to the rest of the town. Advisory encouraged COA to look into various creative ways of generating funds such as renting out portions of the center for events, charging fees for activities, etc. Becky and Rita said they are certainly looking into this.

The Advisory Board said that it has pared down the COA budget as far down as it can possibly go in the past 4 years, not because they want to but because the essential services such as police and schools have to be funded first. They acknowledged that the budget request is very modest and \$75K a year for a building that gets a lot of use and serves a big part of the town is cheap. They said that they wish they could fund all the requests that have been brought forth to them and that this is why they would like to go for an override. But if an override does not pass, they will not have a lot of choices, except cut. So far, there is a \$300-\$400K gap between the anticipated revenues and budget requests. This is about the same amount of money that the town had been short by for the past 3-4 years. Had the town been successful in passing a general override, the base to start from would have at least increased.

Peter Nossal said that here's a case where the senior center can be a very active participant in working with the Advisory Board and the Selectmen, to try and get the seniors to take a good hard look at the override. Rita said that last year, the seniors' response was the most positive she had seen in a long time. Who knows why the override does not pass? Certainly, nobody wants to pay more taxes.

Last year, we had stabilization fund and we used the last of it (~\$120K) to fund requests and only had to cut \$200K from everyone's budget. Also, last year, Advisory projected local receipts to be higher than what they turned out to be. If not for the state coming

heavier than they had expected, they would have been back to the town meeting asking for more cuts.

This year, there is no stabilization fund. Advisory has tried to be as creative as they could to give everyone as much as they asked for.

Other Items:

- Rita mentioned that the Town had a combination bond of over \$1M and the senior center portion (~\$200K) will be paid in a year or two.
- Generator: The COA has a generator in their facility but it is not installed. This generator is an older machine that Dana Pixley of Highway got in exchange for a line striper from Riverbend Medical Group. It is a perfectly good generator that was regularly serviced by its previous owner. For a while, there was talk that it will be used as a mobile unit for the town, but most likely, it will be installed at the senior center. (The Senior Center is a designated emergency site).

Minutes from January 27, 2005 and February 14, 2005 meetings were approved.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Next meeting will be held on March 14, 2005 at 6:30 pm in the Melville Room. Dana Pixley from Highway will be our guest.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth M. Perkins

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