

## ADVISORY BOARD

### MEETING

JANUARY 30, 2006

Approved 3-6-06

Present: Doug Boyd, Carol Fitzgerald, Timm Marini, Kathy Pessolano

Absent: Michael Crowley

Also Present: John D Flynn (selectmen's liaison), James Smith, Duane Mosier, Cliff Bombard, Charles Schmidt, Eva Wiseman, Beth Burger, Patty Elhers, Cindy Bailey, John Ramsey, Ray Andree, Bill Olmstead, Doug Farmer, and other residents.

Doug Boyd motioned to accept the minutes of January 9, 2006, Carol Fitzgerald seconded, all agreed. Minutes of January 23, 2006 were deferred to next week for approval.

Kathy told the board that she had a phone call from Cliff telling her that all this new information had come in and that he has a revised revenue sheet, which all board members have a copy of this evening. She asked the board if they recalled that we had tried to ballpark the figures a few months back, and not having the charges against revenue available at that time we were projecting \$9,217,532 for potential revenue to work with. As we look at our revised sheet we now have some estimates with respect to snow & ice deficit, tax title certification, other government assessments, and overlay, for a total of \$176,243. Kathy said that she is a little concerned that we are including the projected increase in the lottery proceeds to the town of Hampden, we have a very realistic charge against revenue that may possible increase depending on how much more snow & ice we get. So right now we are looking at \$9,154,494 in available revenue, but that is with the Governors' budget, which, experience has taught us in the past, is usually not what ends up being in effect as of July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Cliff Bombard joined the conversation at this time and said that our net state aid is up \$150,000. Kathy said it potentially up that amount. Cliff said that traditionally the Governors budget is lower than the house, but he doesn't think that that is the case this year and Kathy agreed. Cliff said we should probably take a conservative view with the lottery money. Doug Boyd wanted to know how conservative a view. Cliff said probably 60% and he feels more comfortable using a conservative number, he has giving us numbers and as soon as the House comes out with their numbers we can adjust ours accordingly. Right now he has no basis to go by expect by what the Governor is telling us. Doug asked Cliff if he thought we should use 60% of that increase as a figure, so use \$80,000 instead of \$150,000 which would reduce it by \$70,000. Cliff said that figure is still good for us, considering we haven't even gotten 10% in the last two years. Kathy said so now we get \$9,084,494 for a figure and that's about as high as we should go, for right now, until we get additional information.

Cliff said that the snow & ice deficit figure is what our deficit was last year. He thinks that that is a high number, at this rate, the way the projections are going, compared to last year, when we had that really bad storm, we are running dramatically behind. So barring horrible situations between now and April, that's a high number. Cliff also wanted to know if we received any

information from the schools on their debt. Kathy said she had not received any at this time. Cliff said that these numbers are projecting last year's numbers forward, and they won't affect the bottom line numbers because if they go down the excludable debt goes down. Kathy said she hasn't received any type of formal budget yet from the school district, she attended the meeting they had and will be attending several more, but she thinks they were waiting for numbers from the Governor. Now that the governor has provided the numbers, hopefully they will be working at a faster pace, and hopefully they will be conservative.

John D Flynn said that he spoke with Gale Candaris last week and that she echoed what cliff has been saying, that although the Governors budget has historically been a base line and that there are an awful lot of charges out there and that she would be very surprised if his budget materialized to be the base line.

Charles Schmidt from the Conservation Committee addressed the committee. He said that they have been a reconstituted board for 1 ½ years, trying to catch up to where the former board was in terms of mastering the filings, the forms, practice and so forth. We have done a good job, have gone through a few members since then and have continued their meetings, 12 scheduled a year with an extra meeting about every 3 months. We do the bulk of the work for the state, and there are serious provisions that go with that as far as professionally doing our job. We conduct public meetings and hearings, most of those who come before us are requesting a request for determination or a notice of intent regarding their particular situation. It always entails a site visit and we usually make a report that Judy then puts together. The communication was not good prior to this, between the town and the commission, and it's a difficult message to get out when most people see their properties being sacrosanct, we get request for enforcement in places that we don't have jurisdiction and we have cases where we have to threaten enforcement orders when people don't believe that we do have jurisdiction. By and large we have been trying to work cooperatively with people and get the word out to try and reduce the cost that people have, even to come in and talk to us. We have a responsibility to let people know, for example in the wake of the flood, how and when to file papers. Everything has to be forwarded to the Department of Environmental Protection and often to the Department of Fish & Wildlife for anything that falls under there jurisdiction. So in an effort to do this in a professional way and get the information out, our clerk, Judy is of great importance to us. We presently do not have our own computer or our own telephone line and we have to share these with the planning board. As far as time, Judy's hours need to be improved badly. She has 6 paid hours a week now, but she puts in about 14, so if we could get to 10 that should help. Kathy said that what we received for a request was line number 22.1 - \$5,300 for clerical, and wanted to know if that includes a pay increase. Charles said no, that is just an increase in hours only, the remaining \$1200 is for computer and continuing education, right now we don't even have enough copies of the environmental laws for all members, and we have to share them. Kathy asked Charles if he could include in the \$5300 any other things that your clerk is entitled to and submit that to the board as soon as possible. Selectmen Jim Smith stated that he is aware that the conservation committee is allowed to collect fees for professional services and wondered if they could use that money to offset costs, what he said he was asking was, of the fees that they collect, does that come into the general account and is that then rolled over. Charles said that they do collect fees for services, but that they did drop those fees for 6 months after the recent flood. There is a second fund that they have whose ultimate destination they are still trying to parcel out with the town. We have a revolving account in addition to our other account. Kathy asked how much is in the revolving account at any given time. Charles said about \$3000, but there were originally some restrictions on it, as to what it could be used for, such as education, materials for seminars,

or whether it was strictly tied to investigation of parcels that were under consideration for RDA's and so forth, and we are still trying to work that out, and would be glad to make that conditional and have that be something that would be available to use, but right now we haven't figured out what that is. Doug asked if he had any idea on when they would know what the revolving account can be used for, because he was thinking maybe it could be used to purchase a computer. Charles said that was the question that they had, could they use it for capitol outlay or can it only be used for education and materials. We have used some of it for Mac training and there doesn't seem to be a problem with that. Pat Cote, our treasurer, is looking into it and we hope to know in about two weeks. John D Flynn said that they could possibly get the old Board of Health computer. Initially they were going to give it to Cliff, the town accountant, but he said he had no real use for it. John said to keep in mind that there isn't a network jack in the conservation committees' office and that if they are going to get more hours, we would have to consider maybe moving the office to a different location. Charles said the most important item on there agenda is the salary.

Beth Burger from the Library committee (Trustee) addressed the advisory board in regards to the library's budget requests. Kathy started off by telling Beth that the advisory boards goal is to fund the library with, at the minimum, the bare bones budget so that the library can at least reopen. All the members agreed with Kathy 100%. Beth stated that the bare bones budget does represent what the library needs in order to get the certification that we keep talking about. Doug asked if that was a state formula and Beth said yes it is, and she said that John Ramsey, from the Regional Library System, has the specifics on that and was good enough to come to tonight's meeting. Ellen Bump worked out the numbers for the library and she knew that that would cover the requirements. Kathy asked Beth if the library is open 35 hours as opposed to 25 hours, why the staff would have to double to be open 10 additional hours. Beth said they were referring to the restored budget and what they had with that budget. Carol asked how many of those employees were full time. Beth said they did have 2 positions that were full time, the Children's librarian and the Director, and with the budget cuts in the last few years the Children's librarians hours had to be cut so she was no longer full time and no longer had benefits. So all the positions would have to be considered part-time, except for the Director. Ellen worked with the hours for coverage, how it would work with everyone. Kathy asked, if we had money available, once we get firmer figures from the state, to do a little bit better than the bare bones budget, that would change the formula, would it not. We want to make sure that you would be able to plug it in where you need to plug it in. Beth mentioned that they will not get any state aid next year because they were not certified this year. Once we have our certification back for a full year we can then apply for state aid. We also have no borrowing privileges for this year without being certified. Kathy asked if the library was reopened and would be eligible for certification next year, did Beth feel that the surrounding towns may revisit the issue of borrowing privileges. Beth said we could certainly address the other libraries about that. Beth said that if they could have more money they could certainly put it to use, that Ellen worked out the budget to the penny. Doug said his concern is, if the goal is to reopen the library and get recertified, are we cutting the figures to close, wouldn't it make sense to put an extra \$1000 on the budget figure to make sure we don't fall short of getting recertified. Kathy and Beth agreed. Kathy also said that it is important to be able to project a couple of years ahead to make sure that we will be able to support and fund the library, we want it to reopen and stay open forever, so that if we ever experience the cuts in state aid it's not going to affect us like it has in the past few years. We need to become as self reliant as possible and be able to provide the citizens of Hampden all of the services we can with the money we have to work with. Beth said they have a lot of people who have said they will volunteer, and we will be calling on those people to help out. There are

a lot of uncertainties, such as a Director, but Ellen will help us get up and running. Cliff Bombard asked why it's going to take a year to get back our accreditation if it didn't take a year to take away our accreditation. Beth said that as soon as you do not meet the standards it is taken away, and that the statutes say that you can only get accredited once the library has been meeting the standard for one full year. Cliff asked how much of the \$68,394 represents expenses and books. Beth said \$13,000 is library materials, \$947 is for expenses, and \$3710 for software programs. Cliff also asked that they have approximately \$30,000 in unused prior years state aid money that the library trustees have allowed to accumulate, how much of that money can be used to offset some of the expenses this year? Beth said the MEG money that Cliff is talking about has always been used for the computers, technology, anything that we don't ask the towns for; we have never used that for our operating expense. We had also allotted \$10,000 of that that was going to go for the study of possible rebuilding, that didn't happen so that money is back in there again. It was always the intent of the board to use this money for major purchases. Cliff stated that they could use \$3000 to buy books because they are a year behind in buying books and Beth said they would absolutely consider that. Cliff wanted to make a comment that there has been a tremendous amount of positive things that are going to happen as a result of this library closing and the people that have been energized to support the library and hopes that they, the friends of the library, can find a way to supplement the budget in an ongoing way. Beth said she feels they will stay energized, it's going to be a new library, and we have sent letters and asked people what they want, such as the Homework Center which is so important. There is nothing in the bare bones budget for the homework center. John Ramsey of the Regional Library Committee addressed the board. He said that the Regional Library Committee works with 310 library in Western Mass. And that he was at the "Grand closing" of the Hampden Library. He said that he thinks the other libraries in the area would be more receptive and would look favorable on Hampden if the budget was a little higher than the bare bones budget. He has thinks that, even if we are not certified officially, if the other libraries see that you are making a good faith effort to come back, and that he, Mr. Ramsey has a lot of influence with the libraries, and they see positive numbers, the other libraries will be more receptive to Hampden residents. IF he sees positive things here in Hampden, he will certainly help us in terms of the other libraries positions with Hampden. Raymond Andre addressed the board in regards to the library. He said that the Friends of the Library are going to put the Children's Summer Reading Program on this year, entirely funded by the Friends of the Library.

Eva Wiseman addressed the board in regards to her department's budget issues. Kathy mentioned that when ever she comes to the town hall Eva is here, nights, weekends, and holidays. Eva stated that that is the only time she can get things done. When she is open to the public it is hard to accomplish things. Kathy felt that more clerical help was in line and had told Eva to add more into her budget for more clerical hours. Eva said that she needs to increase money for elections because she has a lot of elections this year. Eva submits 3 budgets, She is requesting on line 11.1 -\$761, line 11.2 -\$2900, line 11.3 -\$1900, this is the Board of Registrars Budget. Regarding her Tax Collectors Budget, she is requesting an increase in clerical from \$7,282 to \$7,700 and her Town Clerk Budget; she is requesting an increase in clerical from \$4,723 to \$5,071. Carol asked if these figures included a step increase as well as increasing the hours. Eva explained that the clerk she had had was at a higher rate than the clerk she has now. Kathy said between the 2 clerical items Eva is asking for an increase of \$800. Doug asked if that was enough. Eva said probably not, that she has been making due as it is, what my clerk doesn't have time to do then Eva does it, and that's not a problem for her, it's finding the time to do it. Doug said he respects what Eva is doing but his concern is that there has to be honesty in budgeting, we can't expect people to be doing more than they are being paid for, and the other

board members agreed with Doug on this issue. They asked Eva to return to them with a revised clerical figure that reflects the truer situation. Timm said we need to communicate the truth to the people about the budgets, and they got that truth last year when we cut the budgets. Eva said that when we cut budgets, we have to cut the little perks that saved us time with our work , and you get to a point where you're backed into a corner, and you either need the clerical help or the budget restored to get the things done that you had done before.

Next meeting is on February 6, 2006 at 6:00pm. We will be meeting with the Assessor at 6:15, Police at 6:30 and Treasurer at 7:00pm.

Cliff mentioned that the town audit should be finished by tomorrow.

Bill Olmstead commented on the Friends of the Seniors and that they have been responsive to the needs of the senior center, but they will not be holding out a blank check , maybe they should have a budget that they can draw on each year like the Friends of the Library has.

Timm motioned to end meeting, Carol seconded, all agreed. Meeting ended at 7:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Murphy