



TOWN OF HAMPSTEAD

BUDGET COMMITTEE

MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

November 12, 2015

Revised and approved December 10, 2015

PRESENT: Emily Reschberger, John Skidmore, Steve Londrigan, Bill Keating, Jorge Mesa-Tejada

VISITORS: Penny Williams, Priscilla Lindquist, Tom Lidquist, Kim Lindquist, Tina Harrington

The meeting was called to order by chairman, Jorge Mesa-Tejada at 7:00 PM in the Selectmen's Office, Hampstead Town Hall.

1. Call to Order; Pledge of Allegiance

Bill Keating led the Pledge of Allegiance

2. Approval of Minutes: June 11, 2015

Motion: Steve moved to approve the minutes of September 29, 2015 as written; John seconded.

VOTE: YES 5; NO 0; ABSTAIN 0

3. Discussion: Review meeting with School Board

Jorge asked the Committee's permission to defer this item until Mr. Murphy and Mrs. Lindquist had testified.

Request granted by unanimous consent.

4. Discussion: Town Administrator Proposal – Sean Murphy

The BudCom had invited Sean Murphy, chairman of the Board of Selectmen, to explain his proposal for a Town Administrator, a new position.

Mr. Murphy explained that since any new position must be approved by the voters, he was proposing a warrant article to that effect. This new position is justified based on the increased reporting requirements on the town, such as Storm water management, Obamacare, and the derived benefit of having a full-time employee with full administrative powers to offload the Selectmen. Additionally, that employee could propose ways to streamline processes/procedures; Selectmen do not have the time to do that.

Jorge asked whether he had a job description and whether this would be a new position. Sean answered no to the job description query and yes, it would be a new position and that employee would be the administrative head of the town.

Jorge suggested that the Selectmen develop a responsibility matrix covering the new position and the two existing employees, the Administrative Assistant and the Selectmen's Clerk. Sean agreed to do so.

Sean stated that this position would address the complaints he has received from several department heads. He would not elaborate.

Jorge asked him whether he would make those complaints public. Yes, at a later date, was his answer.

Asked if he had a candidate in mind, Sean replied “no,” it was open to anyone who cared to apply and added that his position would definitely affect the budget but not by much in the context of a \$5 million budget.

Sean further stated that there is a need to activate a Capital Improvements Committee to coordinate and plan Town and School expenditures, such as major repairs, renovations, new buildings, etc.

Jorge pointed out that such authority belongs to the Planning Board by statute, that we had had such a committee until about 3 years ago but, unfortunately, the committee’s work was ignored and the people resigned.

Sean replied that the work is necessary. Jorge pointed out that a plan is only as good as its execution and that had not been the case in the past.

Sean will have all documentation ready for December discussion.

Steve Londrigan, referring to the failed warrant articles for similar position 15 years ago, asked Sean to address whether things have gotten worse, town just getting by, things not getting done, etc. Sean agreed.

John Skidmore thanked Selectmen for giving the BudCom and Taxpayers advance notice of this proposed change.

5. Discussion: Citizen’s Complaint – Kimberly Lindquist

Kim Lindquist was invited to address and explain her objection made during the last School Board meeting to last year’s negative recommendation by the BudCom to the Access Road.

Mrs. Lindquist explained that she couldn’t understand why the BudCom was opposed and reiterated her previous comments that the Saint Anne’s alignment was the preferred route over the one using the school owned right-of-way because it had the least impact on the abusers and the school playing fields.

Jorge reiterated the reasons why the majority of the BudCom favored the school right-of-way alignment primarily because 1) the right-of-way is owned by the School District; 2) it would empty directly into Emerson Avenue, not a private parking lot; 3) the outlet was almost aligned with Little’ Lane thus facilitating rapid fire and police access; 4) the road would be gated to limit access; 5) the line-of-sight argument was specious because the road use would be limited to emergency vehicles with flashing lights for traffic control; and 6) the estimated cost of the reduced one-lane gravel road at \$195K was comparable to the St. Anne’s route.

Mrs. Lindquist asked Jorge whether he had a personal agenda on the subject.

Jorge took strong exception to her statement and replied in the negative.

Mrs. Lindquist then asked whether the BudCom would favor or oppose the Saint Anne’s proposal this year. Jorge replied that she would have to wait till after the Public Hearing in January to learn that since, at this point, there was no official proposal from the School Board for consideration by the BudCom.

Mrs. Lindquist persisted, opining that if the BudCom had voted differently last year, the issue wouldn’t have lost by just 34 votes.

At this point, Jorge indicated that there was nothing else to discuss and closed the discussion. Emily Reschberger stated that the BudCom members, past and present, are not responsible for the 34 negative votes; that's a function of how many voted and/or registered. The BudCom vote reflected the consensus at the time the article was considered after the January Public Hearing.

Mrs. Lindquist continued to argue. Jorge interrupted and informed her that the topic was closed.

6. Review Meeting with School Board

The BudCom reviewed its presentation to the School Board on October 27th regarding its concerns about budgets, enrollment, negotiations, space utilization, maintenance, SAU budgets, food contracts and proposed bond issue and access road.

Bill Keating stated that our concerns were not received warmly by the School Board and he was personally surprised by the Board's reception. Nevertheless, the BudCom agreed that it was definitely better to let the School Board know in advance what its concerns were, in the hope of better communications and open dialogue in the future, rather than waiting till Deliberative Session.

Jorge tempered that feeling by informing the BudCom that at its November 10th meeting, in spite of the presentation, the School Board forwarded the same two articles—Central School construction/renovations and Access Road—to next year's warrant, both at increased cost.

Regarding the easement for the Access Road, Bill Keating asked if anyone knew whether Saint Anne's might be in any closure list for catholic churches and, if so, would the easement survive?

Jorge replied that we did not know and that's why the BudCom had requested a copy of the letter. Jorge will follow up.

7. Informational: Town and School District Budgets Status

The BudCom learned that the Town budget was up 1.99 percent (+\$11,866) over last year for a new total of \$6,047,487.

Similarly, the School District budget is up 2.63% (+\$647,448) for a new total of \$25,291,340. Final figures for Pinkerton tuition will not be available till December. On a positive note, insurance increase was less than expected.

8. SAU budget analysis

The SAU proposed budget is \$1,873,629, an increase of 16.9%. The biggest drivers are salaries, retirement, technology services and increased insurance. Hampstead share is \$430,415, up 18.07% or \$65,863 over the current assessment.

Jorge encouraged the members to attend the Budget Public Hearing on November 18th, the only time the public has an opportunity to offer input.

9. Members comments

Emily: Attended the Solid Waste meeting on October 14th. The committee was busy preparing for the Hazardous Waste collection day in Hampstead at the Middle School. This costs \$21,000, a charge that will be reduced to \$5,000 in next year's budget because we'll participate in a regional collection day. Also, the fuel escalation clause would not be triggered this year because the fuel costs are so low compared to last year.

She also attended School budget sessions. A major expenditure will be about \$100K for English Language arts materials.

Steve: none

Bill: none.

John: Nothing readily different to report because we all have attended most of the budget meetings. Library Board of Trustees working on finalizing the budget. The good news is that the insurance increase came in at 3%.

Jorge: Requested the School Board to provide separate cost figures for the new construction and renovations portions of the proposed bond article. He was informed that BreadLoaf was having difficulty coming up with those figures. Eventually, the School Board emailed the complete, comingled estimate. Apparently, the architect is not willing to separate the two projects. He'll try again and report.

10. Next meeting agenda items

Review current Hampstead Association of School Staff (HASS) and Police Union contracts.
Review BreadLoaf estimates if available.

11. Schedule next meeting date

December 10th

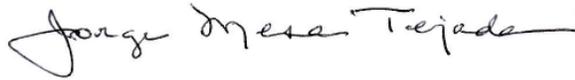
12. Visitors Comments

None

13. Adjournment

On a motion by John, seconded by Emily, the meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM

For the Committee,



Jorge Mesa-Tejada, chairman