

**TOWN OF HAMILTON  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
NOVEMBER 18, 2013**

The Board of Selectmen met at Hamilton Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, November 18, 2013 with Marc Johnson, David Neill, Jeff Hubbard, Jennifer Scuteri, and Scott Maddern present. Town Manager Michael Lombardo, Finance Director Deborah Nippes-Mena, Finance and Advisory Committee Chair John McWane also present.

**Call to order**

Chair Marc Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Public Comment**

Bill Dery, Chebacco Road, read a statement about his perception of Board of Selectmen. Carin Kale from the League of Women Voters summarized the organization's activities (i.e., forum on regionalization of fire departments in Hamilton and Wenham), Jack Hauck, Moulton Street, asked for update on ECO.

**Town Manager's report**

Town Manager Michael Lombardo described recent meeting with municipal officials in Ipswich and Manchester regarding participating in Hamilton's ECO. Ipswich wants research done to assess ECO capabilities in the two towns especially relative to host community. He is working with Police Chief Russell Stevens to create RFQ to evaluate strengths and connectivity costs as specified by qualified vendors. Some of the complexity in this matter is related to other communities dispatching separately for police and fire.

Discussion ensued about Wenham and Essex being only two towns currently served by Middleton ECC with Middleton coming online. Other municipalities committed to the state run dispatch center include Beverly, Amesbury and Topsfield. With this system alarms are no longer being covered for participating communities. The Hamilton ECO continues to administer burn permits.

Lombardo mentioned that the HW Garden Club is creating a rock garden at Depot Square and a garden club member may use hybridized day lilies in Patton Homestead rose garden. He said the renovation of apron at the Depot Square

parking lot is nearly complete and that parking spots on Railroad Avenue would be painted tomorrow.

An ascertainment hearing will be held related to the CATV contract on January 14 at 7 p.m. Lombardo summarized the work the Town is doing with Inspector General's and Attorney General's offices to ensure correct process is followed regarding Hamilton accepting soils from construction sites to cap the landfill. The project has been put out to bid with bids due on December 2. The Town is still working with Brigham and Women's Hospital on this project and expects to realize considerable savings related to the landfill capping project.

Discussion ensued with Ed Howard, Meyer Road, about a distressed property in his neighborhood. Town Counsel is investigating if there are legal outlets to approach the property owner.

Chairman/Selectmen reports

David Neill spoke to the downtown planning event that was held recently at the HW Public Library and noted he was impressed by the presentation by Hamilton Development Corporation.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Johnson read the items on the consent agenda.

- **Sign Grant of Trail Easement** for the Patton Family Property and the Britton Family Property as voted to accept by Special Town Meeting on November 4, 2013, under Article 2013/11 5-2
- **One Day Liquor Licenses: Gourmet Delights Catering** for an event on December 7, 2013 and for event on December 8, 2013. **Essex County Trails Association** for an event on December 5, 2013
- **Approve Minutes October 21, 2013 – Regular Session and November 4, 2013 – BOS & Fin Com Joint Session**
- **Gift Acceptance Agreements to Donald M Keyser Park & Playground Trust to support the renovation and construction of a new aquatic facility: \$100 from donor Jan & Scott Maddern.**

Johnson entertained a motion to accept the Consent Agenda. Jeff Hubbard so moved. Jennifer Scuteri seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

## **AGENDA**

**Chapter 91 Senior Tax Exemption Program** Annual review and discussion regarding age qualification requirement and income qualification requirement. Formally vote to set each for the year 2015.

Discussion ensued about how the Board of Selectmen annually sets the age for the Senior Tax Exemption at 65 or 70 and the income guidelines from \$33,000 to \$49,499 for a single resident and \$49,500 to \$74,250 for a married applicant filing jointly. The exemption is presently at 70 years old.

Last year the Town had 40 applicants and this year Hamilton plans to give out \$56,000 and Town Meeting has approved \$75,000. There are 300 residents in the 65 to 70 age range and 700 residents who are 70 or older. Discussion ensued about whether or not the age or income requirement should be changed. The average award per applicant has been \$1,700.

Town officials and residents discussed if the criteria was changed this could dilute the amount of award resulting in a marginal benefit that would be available to eligible applicants if the number of residents increases. Discussion addressed how the program could be publicized to eligible residents through a strong outreach that could include a postcard mailing or newspaper article.

Hubbard moved that the age qualification requirement for participation in Chapter 91 Senior Tax Exemption Program for the Town of Hamilton for the year 2015 be set at 70 years old, and the income qualification for participation in the Chapter 91 Senior Tax Exemption Program for the Town of Hamilton for the year 2015 be set at (20%) \$39,600 for single applicants and \$59,400 for married applicants filing jointly. Neill seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

## **Special Town Meeting recap**

Discussion ensued about how HWRS D articles went well, that the school department has three seasons to address sprinkler system at Buker School, that other communities have tellers call out votes as they are counted relative to what occurred at fall STM regarding the Patton Park pool project counted vote, that some municipalities rent electronic voting equipment for use with this type of

warrant article, and the importance of Town moderator laying out best practices at the start of a Town Meeting so voters have a thorough understanding of how the Town Meeting process works.

Discussion addressed how there was support for the pool project since twice as many people voting for it versus against it. But the positive vote was shy by two votes to meet the two-thirds vote required due to how the project would be funded through bonding. Town officials reviewed why they thought the two-thirds vote wasn't reached since there was interest by some residents in financial support from Wenham, Hubbard thought the proposed pool was too elaborate, and that more voters in support of pool project needed to attend Town Meeting. Selectmen acknowledged that the Joint Recreation Board is in support of the pool project as was much of the Wenham Community Preservation Committee and many Wenham residents.

Hubbard initiated discussion on shifting effort from pool project to turf field at High School, which was not adopted. But it was noted that since the HWRSD owns the land and this project is in its infancy relative to the pool project it could involve a larger process than the pool project taking years to accomplish, that private fundraising would be essential especially to pay for actual turf material since that would not be covered by Community Preservation Act funds.

The Board started to discuss next steps for the pool project but resident Jack Hauck opined that this would be a violation of the Open Meeting Law since future planning was not on the Board's agenda. So this Board discussion will be conducted at a future Selectmen's meeting.

Lombardo mentioned that language for septic easement addressed at STM should have read Lake Drive not Lake Avenue.

#### **FY 2015 Budget Discussion – Set policy guidelines for FY'15 Budget**

Town officials are looking at a level services budget for FY 2015 with all union contracts negotiated but one. The anticipated budget increase is not known yet but revenue, Free Cash, Town and school contracts are mostly known and consideration will be given to level of services (i.e., downtown maintenance) and capital improvement plan. None of Town's debt will be lessened during FY'15.

Discussion ensued about whether or not the Town officials wanted the Town Hall staff to develop the FY'15 budget based on a particular tax rate. Hamilton's

tax rate is currently \$17.17 and there is expectation that school will be giving back excess funding to the supporting communities and that valuations will be up. The Town is in a strong position with its Free Cash but it is likely to be considered for use relative to warrant articles and capital items.

Discussion addressed how if there is an increase in the tax abatement budgeted dollars this would not represent level services, that ways to reduce cost to taxpayers could be through attrition in Town departments, that Town is waiting for results of Collins Center report to analyze critical CIP, whether or not DPW general maintenance expense for the downtown could be paid for in part with Meals Tax revenue slated for Hamilton Development Corporation that has hired a consultant as part of visioning stage, and if costs were reduced in the FY'15 budget how that could impact Town services.

**Set date for next Board of Selectmen meeting**

The next Selectmen's meetings were set for December 2 and 16.

**NEW BUSINESS**

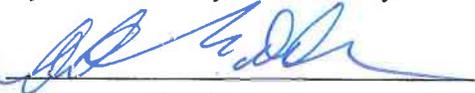
**Consideration of topics for discussion at future Selectmen's meetings**

Topics the Board considered for future discussion included community visioning process and managing growth, how to afford fixed costs relative to running the Town with 2.5% increase in expenses and inflation, the dynamic HWRSD school population and identifying actionable items, next steps for Patton Park pool, and joint meeting with Wenham selectmen.

Johnson entertained a motion at 9:21 a.m. to adjourn the meeting. Hubbard so moved. Scott Maddern seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST:



Clerk

