

HAMILTON FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE
CAPITAL COMMITTEE
Minutes of Meeting
October 2, 2019

FinCom members present: John Pruellage, Christina Schenk-Hargrove, Valerie McCormack,
and Nick Tensen (Acting Chair).

Others Present:

This Hamilton Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm at the Council on Aging Building, Bay Road, Hamilton.

Public Comment

Committee member and liaison updates.

Christina Schenk-Hargrove said she had met with the Council on Aging (COA) Director, Mary Beth Lawton. Ms. Lawton reportedly hoped for a Master Plan for the seniors. The COA served ages 70+ and that the group would be expanding with a large demand for services. Ms. Lawton wanted to hire someone who could run programs and write grants. The 15 hour per week position would be expanded. Ms. Schenk-Hargrove suggested to Ms. Lawton that potential capital improvement be brought to the CapCom. Ms. Lawton had reportedly said an interior wall would be installed to allow for two separate groups to use the facility at the same time. Ms. Lawton had hoped to replace the old addition behind the building so a second office could be built to allow for more privacy. Mr. Lawton hoped something, such as an accessible elevator and fire escape could be done to make the upstairs attic space usable.

Nick Tensen had attended the meeting to discuss compost, refuge and recycling. The meeting had discussed the increase in solid waste and decrease in composting. Mr. Tensen reported that China was no longer accepting recycling. The cost of regular trash had increased from \$70 to \$90 per ton. Mr. Tensen said recycling was increasing to the high \$80's. Composting was \$49 per ton. Solid waste use had dropped off when the composting program started but had started to increase again. Mr. Tensen said the Town could experience savings by incentivizing people to reduce trash or as an alternative, taxes could increase or residents could pay more for individual trash use. The compromise appeared to be moving trash collection back to every other week and buying bags for trash collection. John Pruellage thought it was a good idea. The Trash Committee hoped the FinCom would review the cost side of the proposal. Christina Schenk-Hargrove noted the importance of understanding the contract limitations.

Nick Tensen discussed the Housing Master Plan presentation. Of the 9,500 acres in Hamilton, only 10% was available for housing development. The overarching question of the presentation was to decide if the town wanted to stay the same size or see development growth, which would spread the cost to new residents. Housing in Hamilton produced 97% of the revenue. Hamilton

was comprise of 85% single family housing. According to Mr. Tensen, the presentation included what kinds of housing and where housing would occur. Another alternative would be to convert spaces to commercial use. Biolabs and Gordon Conwell were both used as examples of potential commercial and housing developments that would be beneficial to the town. John Pruellage said Gordon Conwell was the biggest opportunity as the seminary currently paid no taxes or were slow to offer payment in lieu of taxes. An open dialogue with the school was ongoing. According to Mr. Pruellage one-third of the housing on site was vacant. It would be beneficial if the Town could have the apartments deed restricted affordable housing.

Nick Tensen met with the Town Hall Building Committee and had sent members of the FinCom a memo of what they intended to present at Town Meeting. The tri-fold pamphlet would present Options A and B. Option A would be proposed at Town Meeting but information regarding Option B would be available, including differences between the two options. The costs were reportedly higher than proposed for both options. Option A would cost \$8.5M and Option B would cost \$700,000 more. The \$700,000 difference financed over 30 years would cost an average home \$15 more per year for a project that would last 100 years. It was agreed that the cost difference should not be the issue but rather what features and benefits of either option were desired.

Discussion regarding Warrant Articles for Special Town Meeting, and if required, re-voting any recommendations on such articles.

Discussion regarding draft FinCom recommendations commentary for Special Town Meeting.

David Wanger had drafted the commentary dated September 24, 2019. John Pruellage discussed how he had enhanced the formatting to be similar to the one offered the previous year. Valeri McCormack was asked if she wanted the FinCom to revote the articles to include her vote, but she declined. The votes would remain 4-1 in favor of approval.

The introduction text was read aloud. Members offered suggestions and minor rewording was completed.

Article 2-1 was simplified to include that the FinCom recommended the following bills be paid, followed by a listing of the bills.

Article 2-2 was simplified to reflect that Wenham rejected their share of the OPEB budget. Valerie McCormack suggested adding the School budget was a shared budget and the difference was Hamilton's proportionate share. Nick Tensen recalled that Hamilton's objective was to pay for their share of the \$30M liability. John Pruellage said the liability should be funded but it did not occur. Christina Schenk-Hargrove thought the commentary should start with that idea. Mr. Pruellage said the OPEB for Town employees would be fully funded by 2030.

Article 2-3 was in regard to a budget adjustment. The wording was simplified for clarity.

Article 2-4 was in regard to the water compensation tables. It was noted that borrowing had been authorized. The word "capacity" would be removed from several locations. Nick Tensen added that the previous phases had been approved at a previous Town Meeting.

Article 2-5 proposed to grant from the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) to the Affordable Housing Trust \$200,000 for a Habitat for Humanity 40B project on Asbury St. The commentary was simplified. Members discussed if their recommendations were promotions of the article or a listing of the reasons why the proposal was on the Warrant. It was the FinCom's understanding that objections had not been raised by abutters. There was a question if the CanterBrook contribution was going to the CPC or to Habitat for Humanity. John Pruellage noted that the \$30,000 per unit would be requested at a later date. It appeared that CanterBrook would be funding the account. The land purchase was \$200,000.

Article 2-6 Nick Tensen discussed the benefits of Options A and B. John Pruellage said the recommendation would be in forward section of the recommendation. It was noted that if sentiment were not a factor, it would cost less to sell the property and build a new Town Hall elsewhere. One option would be to build a new Town Hall on an old school site, which would not occur for three to five years. The cost of new construction would be one-third less than Options A or B. Christina Schenk-Hargrove suggested starting the recommendation with the fact that the FinCom supported the renovation and why the needs should be completed urgently. Arguments would be included in Article 2-6 and Article 2-7 would set forth the reason why the town should do the project. The history of the project would be included. Records would be digitized. Nick Tensen said office spaces would be reduced and employees were upset with the impact.

Article 2-7 was discussed. The history of the Building Committee and FinCom recommending Option B with the Selectmen recommending Option A due to financial constraints was discussed. The FinCom believed the financial difference was negligible over 30 years and hoped the decision would be determined on which option was most wanted rather than cost. The FinCom wanted to ensure that planning for the future and keeping the stairs were important aspects of Option B.

Nick Tensen said the Historic District Commission wanted to maintain certain interior features and the exterior. Mr. Tensen said he would speak with Mike Twoomey regarding the potential of expansion if Option B were chosen as it was not included in the pamphlet but was discussed at a previous meeting. Mr. Tensen said it was the biggest driver. The \$15 per year per average household was discussed and it was noted that it may not be a significant amount for some but the \$40,000 difference could be used for another need, which might be important to others. Discussion ensued regarding using the existing Town Hall as a potential condo conversion with another site for a future Town Hall with a DPW merger. John Pruellage said the FinCom would

be supportive of Option A but would support an amendment to appropriate the amount for Option B on Town Meeting floor. Mr. Tensen said the Selectmen anticipated a discussion regarding the options.

Article 2-8 was in regard to garage doors at the Public Safety Building. Verbiage was changed to indicate that the quality was not poor but doors were not properly installed. Installation was done too long ago to pursue remediation.

Article 2-9 would be presented as written. The article was in regard to water treatment.

Article 3-1 included the changes to the compensation table. Article 2-3 was a budget adjustment, which had previously explained the table.

Article 3-2 was explained by Nick Tensen and John Pruellage. The question considered if the Town should be taxing a historic home on a State owned park. Willowdale in Ipswich was in a similar situation and did pay taxes but was also a commercial entity. Previous measures were only an advisory vote, which was not enough to overturn the tax liability, according to the State. The description was reworded for clarity and simplicity.

Article 3.3 defined the senior tax relief allowed for residents who made less than \$58,000. The article was reworded to clarify the issue. John Pruellage recalled that the article would affect about ten residents.

Discussion with Finance Director and/or Town Manager regarding any Special Town Meeting or finance related updates.

Discussion of FinCom liaison assignments, goals, and projects for FY20.

Other Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated as Determined by the Chair

Adjournment

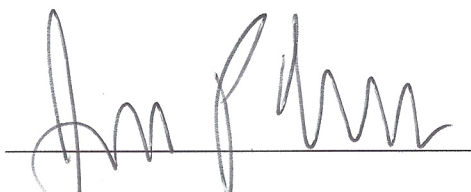
John Pruellage made motion to adjourn.

Seconded by Valerie McCormack.

Vote: Unanimous in favor to adjourn at 9:47 pm.

Prepared by:

Marcie Ricker



Attest

Date