

Advisory Committee Public Hearing  
4/19/22

Approved 7/11/22

Meeting began at 7:00 PM

Present: Doug Boyd, Carol Fitzgerald, Kathy Pessolano, Heather Turcotte, Sandra Sheehan

Residents:

Craig Rivest, John Flynn, Cliff Bombard, Tad Brown, Dick Patullo, Eva Wiseman, Don Davenport, Carrie Joseph, Tyler Witkop, Ed Poulin, 3 unknown names

Non-residents:

Bob Markel, Rebecca Moriarty, Sarah from Reminder Publications

Review of Annual Town Meeting Warrant

Doug led the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. He reviewed the purpose of the meeting to review the articles for public input prior to Advisory recommendations for Annual Town Meeting on May 9, 2022 at 7:00 PM at TWB School.

Article 1 – Town Report

This is a standard article. Don reported that this is in process, but not finalized yet.

Article 2 – Budget

The town's operating budget has been prepared by Advisory with the assistance of the Treasurer, Accountant, Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator. The budget represents the requested budgeted items from each town department. Doug reviewed each line item in the budget. The following are items that warranted discussion or clarification.

6.0 County Retirement. Don Davenport indicated that the town is joining with other local communities to sue the Hampden County Retirement Board for their mismanagement. This year's amount has been reduced due to the changing in overall staffing from the outsourcing of dispatch. It is likely to increase again next year.

30.0 Parks and Recreation. Carrie Joseph requested that we add \$5000 to the budget for maintenance and use of a vehicle that is being handed down to them. They anticipate storing the vehicle within the park depending on the season.

35.0 Gasoline. This was left at \$60,000 to see what fuel prices do in the near future. If more is needed, we can review at the fall Town Meeting.

56.5 Water District. Craig Rivest requested that the figures should total \$13,000, not \$10,000.

70.0 Debt. It was noted that the Green Meadows debt has now been paid off, so our overall debt figure has been reduced.

Article 3 – Prior Bills

There are no prior bills outstanding.

Article 4 – Revolving Funds

This article is required to authorize the use of the revolving accounts for several departments.

Article 5 – Enterprise Fund Transfer Station

John Flynn indicated that they will have a figure for Town Meeting. Trash company is increasing fees and requesting a fuel surcharge. We have one more year on this contract.

#### Article 6 – Community Preservation Committee

Doug reported two requests for CPA funds – Housing Authority has a request to change all of the locks at Centennial Commons. The school district is requesting funds for the field project. The committee has made this contingent on a positive vote in Wilbraham.

#### Article 7 – Conservation Fund

This is an annual article to ensure we can apply for certain grants. Usual amount is \$1000.

#### Article 8 – Chapter 90 State Highway Aid

This is an annual article to be able to accept state aid if available.

#### Article 9 – Library Additional State Aid.

This is an annual article to be able to accept state aid if available.

#### Article 10 – Additional Compensation for Assessors

Bob Markel indicated that the Assessors brought this forward to allow for up to \$1000 in additional compensation for certain certification.

#### Article 11 – Additional Compensation Collectors and Treasurers

Similar to Article 10, this allows for additional compensation with certain certification.

#### Article 12 – Transfer Assessors' Stabilization Funds to the General Fund

Dick Patullo explained that this article will end the Stabilization Fund. The Assessors' revaluation is tied to the calendar year, not fiscal year, and this presents an easier solution administratively. Article 13 will now be the new boiler plate language at each town meeting.

#### Article 13 – Assessors Funding for State Mandated Programs

This represents a better internal procedure to manage the revaluation funding. It is the companion article to Article 12.

#### Article 14 – School Resource Officer

This article provides funding for Hampden's share of the resource officer at Minnechaug for FY 2022. The amount is \$11,650.

#### Article 15 – Municipal Light Plant

Craig Rivest explained that this is the second article at town meeting needed to establish the exploration and opportunity for broadband service in town. The first was approved in the fall. There is no funding required for this article.

#### Article 16 – Special Act for a Hampden Firefighter

This article allows a volunteer firefighter to continue to the age of 70, he is currently 65.

#### Article 17 – Local Option Acceptance of Clause 22 – Veterans Exemption

This article reduces the years of residency required from 2 years to 1.

#### Article 18 – Procedure for Filling Board and Committee Vacancies

This is a bylaw amendment. Don stated this article is to standardize how board vacancies are filled. Vacancies would be advertised and boards meet jointly to select and appoint members. Don would like the BOS to be part of the interview process and not just receive the recommendation of final candidate from the board. Carol indicated that the wording of the article can be misleading and is up for interpretation. It defines “board” in one section as “any Board, Committee, Commission or other body of the Town...” and then references it differently in other parts of the article. Carol asked Don what problem this article is trying to solve. Don indicated that this doesn’t change the current process, but provides standardization across all boards and committees. Kathy suggested that if elected boards had authority over who replaced board members it would open the door for too many personal opinions and potential conflicts. Don confirmed that his interest is in meeting jointly to interview the candidates. The discussion was deferred to Town Meeting.

#### Article 19 – Citizen’s Petition

A group of citizens has asked that the Board of Selectmen take steps to determine the feasibility of purchasing the properties that were recently considered for the self-storage facilities at 2 and 16 Somers Road. The group would like the BOS to ask the current owners if they are willing to sell the land to the Town. This article does not require funding at this time. However, if a purchase was determined to be reasonable, that decision would go before a future town meeting. Discussion ensued about possible purchase price and usage of the property. However, this discussion was tabled as it is not relevant to this specific article. This article is to authorize the BOS to investigate these options.

#### Article 20 – Advisory Committee Reserve Fund

This is a standard article to fund the reserve account at \$25,000.

#### Article 21 – General Stabilization Fund

Advisory will recommend no action on this article as it is relevant to fall Town Meeting.

#### Article 22 – Reducing the Tax Rate

Advisory will recommend no action on this article as it is relevant to fall Town Meeting.

Public Hearing adjourned at 7:47 PM.

Recorded by Carol Fitzgerald