

## OFFICIAL MINUTES

North Hampton Budget Committee Meeting

Monday, March 1, 2010

Mary Herbert Conference Room

**Call to order:** Chairman Jim Maggiore called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

*Budget committee members in attendance:* Robert Copp (North Hampton School Board), Michael Golden, Robert Hamilton (Little Boar's Head), Jim Maggiore, Paul Martino, Larry Miller, David Peck, Jon Rineman (Select Board), Jennifer Simmons

Also in attendance: Town Administrator Steve Fournier, Library Director Susan Grant, Library Trustees Emily Creighton and Peter Parker, Fire Chief Dennis Cote, Hampton Union reporter Valerie Cellucci. John Savastano recorded the meeting for Channel 22.

# **1. Review of Town warrant articles, continued**

## **a) Contribution to the Library Capital Reserve Fund - \$50,000**

Mr. Rineman said the Select Board was satisfied that the library reserve fund would be used for library planning or construction and voted 3-0 to recommend this article. Mr. Maggiore asked if a bond for a municipal master plan would include the library. Ms. Creighton said the Select Board would decide bonding but her understanding is that they will include all appropriate capital reserve funds as part of the bonding. By law, library reserve funds can only be used for the library. The town has roughly \$260,000 in its own building capital reserve fund, according to Mr. Fournier. Mr. Miller asked if the articles would appear in the same order on the ballot. Mr. Fournier said not necessarily, but the intent is to place the health benefit article near the top of the ballot.

***The Budget Committee voted to recommend the article as presented: 9-0.***

## **b) Contribution to the Health Benefit Stabilization Capital Reserve Fund - \$70,000**

Mr. Fournier said the DRA advised removing the words "up to." The school district included "up to" in its own health benefits article only because the district cannot keep unreserved funds at the end of the fiscal year. The Select Board chose \$70,000, as it is the difference between last year's budgeted and actual numbers.

***The Budget Committee voted to recommend the article as presented: 9-0.***

## **c) One Year Collective Bargaining Agreement With the Professional Firefighters of North Hampton, IAFF, Local 3211**

Mr. Rineman introduced the new Fire Chief, Dennis Cote, who said his first weekend as chief had been a busy one due to the storm and Hampton Beach fire.

***Motion by Larry Miller to approve the Fire Department agreement as written on the warrant article handout. Second by Paul Martino.***

*Discussion.* Mr. Hamilton said the agreement was good except that it did not include provisions for a paramedic. The town voted to support the addition of a paramedic last

year. Mr. Hamilton would not recommend this article because if provisions for a paramedic were not included next year he would be sorry he had not expressed himself clearly. He said Hampton has a paramedic and 60% of their billing is not for basic but for paramedic services, which is one-third higher. If North Hampton had a paramedic on each of four shifts, the town could collect \$20,000 more per year, said Mr. Hamilton. Mr. Peck asked about the financial impact of the agreement, if passed. Mr. Fournier said it would be a 1.7% increase, which is still under or right around 3%. Mr. Martino said it was not fair to punish employees because paramedic provisions had not been included. Mr. Miller said two parties negotiated. Mr. Miller said the only thing he could do to promote adoption of the paramedic was to use his one vote to express his dismay. Mr. Golden said he felt negotiations were a work in progress and if people kept talking about a paramedic then good things would come. He asked if anything precluded hiring of a paramedic now. Chief Cote and Mr. Fournier both said no. Mr. Miller noted that a pay step for a paramedic was not included. Mr. Martino said his view of the Budget Committee's role was to oversee budgeting, not run the government and set policy. Mr. Miller said the budget did not buy services he thinks the town needs. Mr. Hamilton said that at least 2 votes not to recommend would send a signal that the committee is serious about this. Mr. Peck said he felt it was a work in progress and all sides, including the Select Board, were in favor of adding a paramedic. Mr. Peck said he would vote in favor of the agreement this year but if a paramedic was not included next year he would not support an agreement.

***The Budget Committee voted to recommend the article as presented: 7-2, with Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Miller opposed.***

#### **d) Lease Purchase Agreement for Fire Engine**

Chief Cote said the 5.15 rate is not firm; a lower rate may be negotiated. The 1987 engine (#3) to be replaced has had extensive repair: the \$40,000 expended so far equals one-third the original cost of the vehicle. The NFPA recommends running an engine as first response vehicle on average 10 years and replacing at 20. Open cabs are no longer permitted, and new vehicles incorporate black boxes and other safety features. The body of the 1987 engine is beginning to separate and spread. Chief Cote said smaller vehicles cannot carry both equipment and a small tank. Mr. Miller asked why the department needs two engines. Chief Cote said Engine 3 brings the water supply and Engine 2 is the primary response vehicle. Both engines can be staffed when necessary. Committee members reviewed pump hours, repair costs, fire hydrant coverage, and other statistics and comparisons. Mr. Peck noted that Engine 2 would be placed in semi-retirement if a new engine were to be purchased and it is not old enough to be replaced yet. Chief Cote said Engine 2 would be a "second do" truck, and also serve as the main mutual aid vehicle. The majority of local communities have primary and secondary vehicles. Mr. Hamilton noted that a \$500,000 engine used over 20 years would cost the town \$25,000 per year. Mr. Peck noted that Engine 2 was being semi-retired after just 13 years. Mr. Golden noted the number of North Hampton fires per year (3 or 4) vs. mutual aid calls (30-40) and said it is troubling that North Hampton taxpayers are subsidizing other towns. Mr. Miller noted that Stratham has never come to North Hampton. In 2009, Engine 2 went out on 332 calls, sometimes to support the ambulance or respond to a car accident, other times because the department did not know enough about a call and wanted to be prepared for any necessary response, said Chief Cote. Mr. Hamilton suggested viewing the Seacoast region as a big city with substations available to support a large fire in the region. Chief Cote shared a cost comparison of a

mini-pumper truck vs. the engine. Initial costs, maintenance and replacement schedules suggest the engine costs less over a 20-year lifespan. Mutual aid is an insurance plan for the town, said Chief Cote, and North Hampton is also part of a fire compact with the state. He gave examples of recent large-scale fires in NH and MA. He noted that the fire equipment fund is around \$460,000 and will still be added to if this lease-purchase passes. The price may be lower – around \$400,000 - if the department can purchase a stock or demo model. Engine 3 cannot be sold – it will be scrapped or used as trade-in. Mr. Peck thanked Chief Cote for a professional presentation and said he can understand now why the mini-pumper is not the right choice.

***Motion by Michael Golden to approve the warrant article as stated for the lease purchase agreement for a fire engine. Second by Robert Hamilton.***

*Discussion.* Mr. Miller questioned whether the way the article was written allowed for spending less. Mr. Fournier said the DRA does not require that the entire amount be expended. Mr. Peck said he agrees that the town needs an engine rather than a mini-pumper but that he did not think a 13-year-old engine needed to be replaced yet. Chief Cote said it was not being replaced, just “moved down” to be a secondary response vehicle as well as primary response for mutual aid. Last year, the engine proposal was voted down 319-430, said Mr. Fournier, in response to a question. Mr. Copp asked about Hazmat capability. Chief Cote said North Hampton firefighters had entry-level training but no one was currently serving on the regional team except as group technicians. Chief Cote said his goals as fire chief include getting paramedics and becoming more involved in area teams like Hazmat.

***The Budget Committee voted to recommend the article as presented: 7-2, with Mr. Peck and Mr. Golden opposed.***

## **2. Review February 17 minutes**

Mr. Maggiore noted several corrections, including the vote on the Accrued Benefit Capital Reserve Fund, which should read “7-0-1, with Mr. Miller abstaining.”

***Motion by David Peck to approve the minutes as amended. Second by Paul Martino. The minutes were approved 8-0. (Ms. Simmons was not in attendance on February 17.)***

## **Adjournment**

***Motion to adjourn by Michael Golden. Second by Paul Martino. Approved 9-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.***

Respectfully submitted,  
Amy Kane

(Minutes were approved at the March 11, 2010 meeting.)