

02/07/2008 - Budget Committee Minutes

Hopkinton Budget Committee Public Hearing Hopkinton High School Auditorium Minutes February 7, 2008

Present: Karen Irwin, Chair; David Lancaster; Danny Coen; Tom O'Donnell, HVP Representative; Joy Bloomfield, School Board Representative; Tom Congoran, Selectmen Representative, Patrice Gerseny, Mark Hemmerlein, Alternate CVP Representative and Barbara Unger.

Absent:; Bob Carpenter, CVP Representative.

Presenters: Marshall Rowe, School District and George Chase for the Library.

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm.

Chairman Karen Irwin opened the meeting and introduced the representative membership. Several handouts' were presented at the meeting and are included in these minutes for public review. The Budget snapshot was reviewed first and the overall Budget Committee budget of \$22,184,643 versus a total Selectman Board proposed budget of \$22,241,643. A \$57,000 variance for the Town budget from the selectman proposed budget to the budget committees proposed budget. An overall budget increase of 2.4%.

The combined operating budget of the Town and School were up 2.96%. The overall projected tax impact of the budget committees proposal based upon last years property values of \$761,804,120 is 5.92% or a 1.25 increase over last years tax rate. A major component per thousand of this increase is the projected increase of the county portion of the tax rate of 22% or .49 of the per thousand impact.

Large Increases in the Hopkinton Village Precinct (HVP) budget were for water services which increased from \$49,407 to \$166,846 due to the cost of drilling the mandated new well. The amount to be raised by taxes is less than last year by \$1,374. The Contoocook Village Precinct (CVP) large increase was for a capital reserve for the relining

of the water main and increased from \$100,000 to \$215,000. The amount to be raised by taxes for CVP is less than last year by \$9,200. Large Increases in the school were \$339,490 for salary increases, \$201,382 in special education costs, \$26,626 in early retirement, \$13,558 in regular and vocational transportation, principal payment of debt of \$45,000 and increases in benefits, fica, retirement and tuition obligations for additional personnel in the amount of \$58,904, dues, books and access fees of \$33,636, additional administrative personnel in the amount of \$48,391 and other major increases /decreases of \$11,547. Major decreases were \$36,000 for transportation out of district, \$77,643 in benefits for health insurance and sick bank and decreases in general supplies, periodicals, software, reference materials and repair and maintenance accounts.

For the town large increases included \$64,243 for assessing, \$20,691 for the Slusser Senior Center for a full year impact of operating costs, \$52,623 for the paramedic firefighter, \$7,000 for police radios and \$50,606 for highway and streets. The large

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decreases were \$95,639 for principal and \$17,335 for the retirement of the library bond, \$38,500 for Personnel administration, \$8,240 in buildings and grounds, \$6,000 in economic development and \$4,321 for the transfer station. The budget committee had made the following adjustments to the Town Budget: 1) \$1,000 in the executive department for conferences this was \$1,000 higher than usual. 2) Highway administration in the amount of \$6,000 higher than usual for seasonal employees 3) Highway and Streets in the amount of \$5,000 for lease equipment this was also higher than usual. 4) Recreation in the amount of \$17,500 for payroll and benefits, 5) Buildings and Grounds elimination in the buildings repair line in the amount of \$5,000 6) Patriotic purposes by reduction by \$400 for an additionally proposed concert 7) Conservation Committee eliminate the two conservation camp scholarships in the amount of \$825 8) Reduction in the amount of the reserve for Town Facility repairs by \$15,000. The current balances in the Town Hall and town facilities fund are \$67,170 and 9) Library in the amount of \$6,275 for the increase from 32 hours to full time of the reference librarian.

Each of the individuals representing the Contoocook Village Precinct, Hopkinton Village Precinct, Library, Town and School districts presentation explained their budget proposal. Tom O'Donnell from Hopkinton Village Precinct further explained the mandatory well and where the decrease in the operating costs was due to a decrease in costs for an audit. Mark Hemmerlein of Contoocook Village Precinct explained the relining of the water main and the need for that relining.

George Chase of the Library went over the reduction that the budget committee had made for the reference librarian going from full time to part time he explained the number of research requests that come in and that they had a need for the full time position.

Marshall Rowe of the School Board presented the School Board proposed budget increases in further detail. He explained the reductions that had taken place and that the Budget Committee and the School Board had come to some agreement on the direction and the amount of the change. The School Board was going to fund a reserve for future retirement obligations. However, as a result of the state of finances in the Town, the School Board recommended holding off on the creation of that fund.

Tom Congroran went over the Town budget and the differences between the Town and Budget Committees proposed budgets number 1) executive department was for educational conferences for employees actual cost ranged from \$300-\$700 in the past. 2) highway administration \$6,000 for additional part time help for snow removal 3) Highway and Streets \$5,000 to lease paving equipment 4) Recreation Department results of last year for 7 weeks of camp and 219 attendees was a loss of \$3,875. Justin is hoping to hire two additional employees which will put this program in the black and alleviate the waiting list they had from last year. 5) Buildings and grounds \$5,000 equipment for field maintenance and contracted services 6) conservation commission felt the two scholarships were still worthwhile to have 7) Patriotic Purposes felt that one additional concert was not a lot to ask. 8) Town Facilities expendable trust the Selectman felt that they needed more than \$46,170 to deal with repair needs of the

Towns 21 properties other than town hall that has its own fund.

Public Comments:

Louise Carr: Asked about town hall repairs and the fact that no dollars were added to the fund. Tom Congoran said the Town Hall fund had \$21,000 currently and that they will look at windows and siding in the future.

Scott Flood: Asked about unfunded mandates and retirement. Marshall Rowe answered that school board officials and local representatives have looked at how to address this issue and may phase in the impact. The School Board has joined in a potential lawsuit. Asked a second question regarding "contractual obligations" and the salary increases staff receive. Marshall explained that it is made up of three components 1) annual increase 2) steps for advanced degrees and 3) longevity increases.

Arnold Coda: Asked a question regarding the schools request for authority to expend in article IV. Marshall explained that without the authority for the maintenance expendable trust they might be in the unenviable position of having to wait to make an important repair or perform the repair at a good time.

Richard Kennedy: Asked unfunded mandates and suggested that the reference librarian be put back in as it was a reference librarian that helped research material regarding the construction and demolition debris an issue that was important to our town.

Beth Taylor: Asked a question to the school about not reducing a teacher at Harold Martin. Marshall Rowe stated that last year the school cut one teacher as a result of declining enrollment and that it is not a school board policy to have 20 students in a class in fact the state average is 15 students. He also said they need to invest additional teacher resources in the earlier years which create the greatest efficiency in later years. This year they did cut a .50 teacher in kindergarten.

Cameron Ford: Stated that there is funding to pay for kids in camp and that we should go after it.

Beth Bloomquist: Questioned the additional cost of the Slusser Senior Center last year it was \$12,000 and this year it is \$32,000. Tom Congoran said that last years budget impact was for 5 months and this year it is for twelve months.

Arnold Coda: How do we measure quality in a school district? Concord's school district proposal was to eliminate 6 teachers suggest we look at all programs and classes.

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Diane Lachance: Stated that she had worked on the goals and process subcommittee which suggested that the school and town come up with program measures and it would be really nice to measure the quality of our school and town programs.

Al Bloomquist: Al pointed out that Hopkinton is 16th highest out of 222 in costs of taxation. Homes that are \$300,000 have to pay \$1,500 more than the statewide average.

Russ Turcotte: How do we measure and quantify our school education. We do an excellent job of preparing our students for their future.

Sam Delgado: Thanked the school board for welcoming them as a family his family picked Hopkinton for there schools. He said that they have a special needs child and Hopkinton has the best program they have seen.

Chairman Irwin asked if there were anymore public comments. Seeing none she closed the public hearing. The hearing ended at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Irwin
Chairman