



Town of Hopkinton

Office of Select Board

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**SELECT BOARD
BUDGET WORK SESSION MINUTES
Hopkinton Town Hall – 330 Main Street
Monday, November 20, 2023
Approved**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Dunlap called this Select Board Budget Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 20, 2023, and introduced the members of the Board.

**Hopkinton
Select Board**

Members Present: Sabrina Dunlap; Ken Traum; Steven Whitley; Thomas Lipoma; and Jeffrey Donohoe

**Webster Select
Board Members
and CIP Committee
Members Present**

(via Zoom): David Hemenway; Normandie Blake; Marlo Herrick; Dana Hadley; and Russ Tatro

Staff Present: Neal Cass, Town Administrator; Dan Blanchette, Director of Public Works; and Cara Johnson, Administrative/Assessing Assistant

Public Present: Bonnie Christie; Scott Clay; Loren Clement; Steve Eckberg; Liz Gilmore; Meredith Hatfield; Pat LaPree; Katherine Mitchell; and Gary Rondeau

Before proceeding to the items on the agenda, Mr. Traum acknowledged the efforts of all those who volunteered at the Wood Bank on Saturday. He noted what a good turnout there was, and how great it was that there were so many high school students volunteering.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE:

- A. The Board reviewed documents for signature, and approved (5-0) the Consent Agenda of November 20, 2023, taking the following action on a motion made by Mr. Traum and seconded by Mr. Whitley:

TOWN OF HOPKINTON - SELECT BOARD CONSENT AGENDA NOVEMBER 20, 2023			
<u>ITEM</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
AP MANIFEST			
AP MANIFEST DATED 11/20/2023	11/20/2023	APPROVE	\$1,630,690.42
AP MANIFEST DATED 11/20/2023	11/20/2023	APPROVE	\$1,900.00

PAYROLL			
EMPLOYEE PAYROLL	11/20/2023	APPROVE	\$96,633.81
DIRECT DEPOSIT: \$92,016.14			
CHECKS: \$4,617.67			
VETERAN CREDIT APPLICATION			
104/007/000 - MAIN ST	11/20/2023	APPROVE	\$4,500.00
NOTIFICATION OF ABATEMENT			
102/013/000 - CEDAR ST - SEWER USAGE	11/20/2023	APPROVE	\$91.00
TAX WARRANT			
2023 PERIOD 2 PROPERTY TAX WARRANT	11/20/2023	APPROVE	\$15,066,331.00
INTENT TO CUT			
210/022/000 - OP #23-227-11-T - MAPLE ST	11/20/2023	APPROVE	
256/028/000 - OP #23-227-12-T - BROCKWAY RD	11/20/2023	APPROVE	

VOTE: Dunlap, Traum, Whitley, Lipoma, and Donohoe voted in favor of the motion, no votes against. **MOTION PASSED 5-0.**

- B. The Board reviewed the Select Board Budget Work Session Minutes of Monday, November 13, 2023. After requesting the addition of one note to the minutes, Mr. Traum made a motion, seconded by Mr. Whitley, to approve the Select Board Budget Work Session Minutes of Monday, November 13, 2023.

VOTE: Dunlap, Traum, Whitley, Lipoma, and Donohoe voted in favor of the motion; no votes against. **MOTION PASSED 5-0.**

- C. The Board reviewed the Select Board Nonpublic Session I Meeting Minutes of Monday, November 13, 2023. Mr. Traum made a motion, seconded by Mr. Whitley, to approve the Select Board Nonpublic Session I Meeting Minutes of Monday, November 13, 2023; Mr. Traum noted the minutes are sealed.

VOTE: Dunlap, Traum, Whitley, and Donohoe voted in favor of the motion; Lipoma abstained. **MOTION PASSED 4-0.**

- D. The Board reviewed the Select Board Nonpublic Session II Meeting Minutes of Monday, November 13, 2023. Mr. Traum made a motion, seconded by Mr. Whitley, to approve the Select Board Nonpublic Session II Meeting Minutes of Monday, November 13, 2023; Mr. Traum noted the minutes are not sealed.

VOTE: Dunlap, Traum, Whitley, and Donohoe voted in favor of the motion; Lipoma abstained. **MOTION PASSED 4-0.**

III. BUDGET PRESENTATIONS – Joint meeting with the Wester Select Board:

A. Transfer Station/Solid Waste-Landfill/Solid Waste-Community Well – Mr. Blanchette reviewed the line items with increases and among the noted items were:

- Transfer Station Alarm line is up, and this year was over budget, due to mice chewing the wires, heat sensors that needed replacement, and rental of a lift to make repairs.
- Figures on the TS Trash Transport and Disposal line were off a year; figure corrected to \$93.13 per ton, with \$298,016 being the correct average tonnage per year figure.
- TS Demolition Haulage and Tipping Fees lines reflect increases, and fuel surcharges, based on an average, are part of the Haulage increase, as well.

Discussion ensued regarding status of TS trailers and the packer, and Mr. Blanchette noted that previous CIP figures were off, and costs have increased dramatically. He added that the packer is quite old, and has only had minor repairs over the years; however, a replacement was in the CIP for this year, so it has been ordered.

Transfer Station staffing and enforcement of usage by Hopkinton and Webster residents only were discussed, and it was noted:

- Some have observed non-residents using the Transfer Station and others have not, but it was pointed out that it may be likely that those with out of state license plates have seasonal camps in Hopkinton or Webster.
- Seasonal property owners must obtain proper windshield stickers, just as residents must do.
- Enforcement of windshield stickers would likely require full-time staff just for this purpose, and staff would need to be prepared for potentially unruly behavior by non-Hopkinton or Webster property owners.

Regarding Solid Waste Cleanup, Mr. Cass reviewed the Nobis Engineering contract figures. Mr. Hemenway and Mr. Traum questioned the proposed \$60 Thousand that was budgeted for SW Professional Services (Lagoons) in 2024, and Mr. Cass noted he would check on and clarify this figure.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the Hazardous Waste Day held in Henniker, and Mr. Cass noted:

- This is a worthwhile event, with great participation; people had to be turned away, due to capacity being reached before the end of the event.
- There is no year-to-date figure, as the bill has not been received yet.
- He will check with Henniker for the breakdown of how many residents from each of the three towns (Hopkinton, Webster, and Henniker) participated.

The Community Well figures remained the same, with the reductions in wages and associated lines being due to the vacancy in the superintendent position. In response to Mr. Hemenway's question about the reduction, Mr. Cass explained that the previous superintendent was a full-time employee, so the extra hours working at the community well cost more; for whomever is hired as a replacement, the community well work will be part of the job's regular duties.

Regarding the recycling area and reduction of incoming waste, Mr. Hemenway asked about planning for the ability to work on improvements to facilities and processes, and discussion ensued. Mr. Blanchette noted:

- Recycling bailer is not an option at this time.
- Recycling building is in bad shape; considering options, but tall concrete back and side walls, may be the best solution (2030 is currently the proposed year).
- The brush compost section needs about \$30 Thousand in work and upgrades before food waste could be added to the area.
- Mr. Hemenway asked that at least a portion of the \$30 Thousand be considered by the CIP committees in the future.

The following residents, some of whom are members of the Waste Reduction Committee, provided their suggestions and opinions or asked questions related to the Transfer Station budget, planning, hauling, and staffing: Bonnie Christie; Steve Eckberg; Meredith Hatfield; Pat LaPree; and Gary Rondeau.

B. Capital Expenditures – Although there were not too many changes to the Capital Plan, Mr. Cass reviewed each line, and the following were among the items noted:

- A new ambulance is scheduled for 2024. It takes two years from order to delivery.
- Replacing two Fire Department tankers with one.
- Generator added to proposed appropriation for Town Hall Renovation after the Hazard Mitigation Committee findings noted that Town Hall should be able to operate if power is out for an extended period of time. There may be grants available.
- One small dump truck, a six-wheel dump truck, and the Ferris mower are scheduled for replacement in Public Works Vehicles and Equipment. Most of the vehicles are on a ten-year rotation, as historically, beyond ten years, down time, breakage, and maintenance costs increase substantially.
- In the Road and Bridge proposed appropriation, discussions at Town Meetings have indicated that residents seem to want to set funds aside. This amount is for road rebuilding, instead of having to bond for this in the future. As bond payments come off, this amount could continue to rise.
- Sludge removal can go to the Transfer Station lagoons and all be closed and capped at the same time, which results in a substantial savings. More information is forthcoming on the cost to remove the sludge, but due to PFAS, new regulations and handling are involved, so the estimates are moving closer to \$1 Million.

- In Bond Payments:
 - The Rice Open Space Bond will be paid off in 2025; this will complete all the Open Space Bonds we have had for a number of years.
 - The Highway Garage Bond will be paid off this year.
 - The Refinanced Bond cost will drop significantly in 2027.

Discussion ensued regarding the interest rate on investments and grant funded projects, and Mr. Cass noted that by the end of next summer, the Wastewater Treatment Plant should be fully solar-powered; this was funded by a DES grant.

Mr. Cass reviewed the various Town Facilities Maintenance and Technology Trusts, and noted:

- Multiple projects were completed this year.
- Due to savings in other areas of the Houston Barn project, a metal roof will be going on the barn in the next few weeks.
- Town Hall and Bates Building furnaces are quite old, so money has been allocated for replacement; however, they will not be replaced until they stop working. It was later noted that options will be explored as to what kind of heating systems would be best for these older buildings.
- Exterior paint on Town Hall is in very bad shape, especially on the sides, where the paint is chipping off; with the number of young children in the neighborhood, this is particularly concerning.
- Mr. Traum extended thanks to Sharon Nall for the help toward getting the grant for the solar array at the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

IV. PREPARATION OF THE SELECT BOARD BUDGET:

Details of the proposed figures in the budget and fund balance were reviewed, and discussion ensued among Board members and Mr. Cass, with various ideas shared on options that might be worth exploring, working toward lowering the tax impact. Among the items noted were:

- Regarding Roads, it was proposed that Shimming and Paving would be for basic maintenance; the CRF for intermediate maintenance; and another source of funding when rebuilds are needed. Mr. Lipoma said he would research and run the numbers to confirm the best approach in this area. The Board agreed to move the Capital Reserve Fund from \$400 Thousand to \$100 Thousand.
- Mr. Lipoma explained the Housing Committee's request for a code audit, and how it compares with an audit being requested by the Planning Board. It was later added that, if possible, it would be good to have more information on details of these audits and information on who might be performing them. Mr. Cass noted that the Planning Board was talking about putting together an RFP.
- Based on history, the Legal Services request was changed from \$25 Thousand to \$20 Thousand.
- The Town will be looking into whether there are less expensive health insurance plans for employees. Resident Katherine Mitchell asked if there is an incentive for employees with other coverage, who don't select the Town's insurance plan. Mr. Cass noted that

there is a stipend for those who opt out, and this is one of the reasons the Health Insurance line increased by only 8%, rather than 19%.

- The recommendation is that there be no increase in the total Cemeteries budget.
- The decision was made to hold off on the Police Department grant proposal.
- The recommendation is that the Ambulance Overtime line should be reduced to \$55 Thousand and the Ambulance Call/Training/Courses line reduced to \$10 Thousand. Mr. Cass will check on the training requirements before changes are made.
- Fire Dept. PT/Call Wages recommended to be reduced to \$15 Thousand and Fire Dept. Conferences/Training recommended to be reduced to \$2.5 Thousand. Fire Dept. Advertising is recommended to be \$0. Mr. Cass will check on the phone bills for the Fire Dept. Telephone line.
- The recommendation is that the Public Works PT Wages be reduced to \$15 Thousand.
- Regarding the Transfer Station staffing, Mr. Lipoma will provide some numbers and Mr. Cass will provide some figures for the addition of one full-time employee.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Mr. Donohoe moved that the meeting be adjourned. Mr. Lipoma seconded the motion. All members voted in favor and the meeting was declared adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cara Johnson
Administrative/Assessing Assistant