

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday July 17th, 2017

MINUTES

Hampden Town Office

Attending:

Councilor Stephen Wilde, Chair

Mayor David Ryder

Councilor Dennis Marble

Councilor Terry McAvoy

Councilor Mark Cormier

Councilor Greg Sirois

Councilor Ivan McPike

Town Manager Angus Jennings

Tax Collector Barbara Geaghan

Mayor Ryder called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Meeting Minutes

- a. **June 19th, 2017** – Motion by Councilor Marble seconded by Councilor McPike to approve the minutes as written. Motion passed 6-0.

2. **Review & Sign Warrants** – *Warrants were reviewed and signed.*

3. **Old Business** – *None.*

4. New Business

- a. **Request for authorization for the expenditure of \$2,940 from Reserve Account (3-719-00) for the purpose of the restoration of vital records pursuant to Title 5 § 95-B** – *requested by Paula Scott, Town Clerk – Councilor McAvoy asked to clarify whether the proposed work relates to the actual physical town records, and Manager Jennings said that it does. There was a motion by Councilor Marble seconded by Councilor McAvoy to recommend Council authorization for the expenditure of \$2,940 from the Town Records Reserve Account for the purpose of the restoration of vital records pursuant to Title 5 § 95-B. Motion passed 6-0.*
- b. **Request for authorization for the expenditure of \$12,700 from the Marina Reserve Account (3-773-00) for the purpose of providing the required local match for the Submerged Lands Grant award** – *referral from Services Committee – Councilor Marble,*

Chairman of the Services Committee, summarized the Committee's recommendation. There was a motion by Councilor Marble seconded by Councilor McAvoy to recommend Council authorization for the expenditure of \$12,700 from the Marina Reserve Account (3-773-00) for the purpose of providing the required local match for the Submerged Lands Grant award, which will allow for replacement of the floating dock using \$15,000 of awarded grant funds. Motion passed 6-0.

- c. Request for authorization for abatement of ambulance bills generated in 2014 and 2015 that remain delinquent beyond the two year collection threshold** – *requested by Rosemary Bezanson, Administrative Assistant – Manager Jennings summarized the reports in the packet. Councilor McPike asked about the percentage of uncollected ambulance billings. Manager Jennings said that different insurances provide different levels of payment. Councilor Sirois asked why unpaid amounts aren't sent to a collection agency. Manager Jennings said this has not been Town policy but would be an option if that was the will of the Council. Councilor McAvoy asked if we should be reducing the amount that we bill since the full amount of billing exceeds what is generally collected. Manager Jennings recommended that the Committee table this item until the next meeting when Chief Rogers and Rosemary Bezanson can be present to better respond to the Committee's questions. The Committee agreed to table the matter until the next meeting.*
- d. Request for authorization for the establishment of a Tax Club for 2018 taxes pursuant to Title 36 § 505-506** – *requested by Tax Collector Barbara Geaghan – Tax Collector Geaghan presented that there needs to be formal Council authorization in order to offer a Tax Club, whereby taxpayers may pay property taxes in installments rather than twice a year without incurring interest for amounts paid late. Councilor McAvoy asked what interest rate is typically applied to late tax payments and Ms. Geaghan said it is the 7% set by statute. There was discussion of whether the program adds administrative burdens or costs to the Town but these were reported to be minimal. There was discussion regarding lost revenue due to unbilled interest but Manager Jennings noted that, under the structure of the Tax Club, some amount of taxes are actually prepaid so this would offset some amount of lost interest. Councilor Marble, noting that the Town has offered a Tax Club for many years, asked the Tax Collector whether she was here simply to formalize this program, and she responded yes, this requires annual Council authorization. There was a motion by Councilor Marble seconded by Councilor Wilde to authorize the establishment of a Tax Club for 2018 taxes. The motion passed 7-0.*

- e. **Review and discussion regarding the Town Council Compensation Ordinance** – *requested by Councilor Wilde – Mayor Ryder noted that Councilors are paid for two meetings on nights when there are both Finance and Council meetings. There was discussion of whether to retain the per-meeting amount of the stipend or to move to a fixed quarterly stipend, but the Councilors preferred the per-meeting amount. However there was unanimous support for modifying the ordinance to provide that Councilors would be paid for a single meeting if two meetings are held on the same night. There was a motion and a second, and unanimous consent for that policy change. Manager Jennings said he would draft a proposed ordinance amendment and bring it to the Committee for referral.*

- f. **Department of Education’s statement about the 2017-2018 budget and its effect on ED279s** – *Items 4(f) and 4(g) were considered and discussed as a single item.*

- g. **Department of Education notice and calculation for funding public education for RSU 22** – *Items 4(f) and 4(g) were considered and discussed as a single item.*

Manager Jennings reported that the School Board was meeting this evening to formally propose its budget, but that the budget expected to be proposed would include an approximately 1% local increase, less than what had been proposed in June. The result of the lower proposed local increase was an increase in State Aid to Education, even though the gross proposed budget was greater than what was proposed in June. Manager Jennings asked if the Committee would like to take a formal position on the budget provided it does meet a stated percentage local increase (such as less than 1%) when it is referred by the School Board later tonight. The Committee was not comfortable taking a position on the School budget without actually seeing what is proposed. Manager Jennings asked for direction regarding the mailer to residents that the Councilors had previously requested, and there was discussion regarding the message to be conveyed in the mailer.

Councilor McAvoy noted language in the Department of Education notice regarding the requirement that half of the State Aid increase be used to reduce the local share, and Manager Jennings said he would get an answer from the School Board.

5. Public Comment – None.

6. Committee Member Comments – *Councilor Sirois asked why the Children’s Day Committee’s request for funds to pay for insurance was not on tonight’s agenda and Manager Jennings said this had been an oversight. The Services Committee did refer this matter, and it will be on the August 7 agenda.*

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted –
Angus Jennings, Town Manager