

**Town of Hampstead
Board of Selectmen
MEETING MINUTES
January 10, 2024**

Members Present: Selectman Eaton, Selectman Guthrie, Selectman Morse, Selectman Warnock: and Selectman Worthen

Public Announcements:

Waste Oil and other items are collected at the DPW garage on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month from 8 am to 1pm

Visitor's Comments:

Vic Geary Center- Jay DeRoche

Mr. DeRoche is the current President of the Vic Geary Center, was present to explain what the center offers the Town of Hampstead. He noted that there are about 18-20 residents on average. They have guest speakers monthly, run breakfast socials, have games and programs. There is a monthly list of activities. They are the site of Meals on Wheels as well. There is a loaners closet for medical equipment for people to borrow when needed. They have a plastic recycling program at the site and have a clothing collection bin. The current amount requested from Hampstead is \$6,000. Mr. DeRoche explained after a question by J. Guthrie, that they have thought about increasing the amount, but they struggle with it. The costs for the building have gone up in the last few years, but they decided against an increase. He noted that the amount they currently receive is enough to help do what they aim to get done. L. Warnock asked if they had completed the paperwork for the Budget Committee and Mr. DeRoche responded that they had. The Selectmen thanked him and the other members for attending.

Public Hearing on the 2024 Budget

The Selectmen began the discussion by going through warrant articles. S. Theriault noted that there were a few more items added since the Monday night meeting. The costs for the union contract were added and there was a petition article that was added.

The first few articles were planning board articles. They jumped to the operating and default budget. Article 4: Town Operating Budget requesting \$10,274,080.00 and a default of \$10,004,478.00.

L. Warnock had some questions on a few items in the budget. She asked why Isaiah 58 was not in the budget. S. Theriault noted that it was voted down last year so it is a warrant article this year. The line did not state WA on it which led to some confusion. L. Warnock asked about the increase in the Cable Committee budget. S. Theriault explained that all money spent by the cable committee is reimbursed by them. There must be an increase in programming to account for the increase in salaries. She asked about the land acquisition in conservation expenses and was told that it was for legal work on properties. S. Theriault explained that maybe it was accounted for differently in the past. L. Warnock also asked about the overspending in other purchased services in the administration line. T. Harrington stated that it was for the "finder's fee", the fee paid to the vendor that worked the cell tower sale.

There were no further questions on the budget or default.

Article 5- the NEPBA Local 37 Union contract- S. Theriault reported that she went over the contract costs with Deputy Chief Kelley and they both came to an agreement on the amounts. L. Warnock noted that it was a very amicable negotiation and that the contract was reviewed and everyone is comfortable with the end result. She then read the contract numbers.

Year 1 total increase (9 months) \$80,902.00, Year 2 proposed increase \$50,334.00, Year 3 projected increase \$33,974.00 and Year 4 projected increase (3 months) at \$8,519.00

There were no questions on the contract.

Article 6- The ability to call one meeting if Article 5 is defeated.

Article 7- To place \$10,000 into the Building Repairs and Maintenance CRF. This is the existing fund for emergencies to any building, such as a furnace failure.

Article 8- To fund the Vic Geary Center for \$6,000- There were no questions.

Article 9- To fund the SoRock program for \$8,657- There were no questions

Article 10- To fund Isaiah 58 for \$5,000- There were no questions.

Article 11- To fund Waypoint for \$1,200- There were no questions

It was noted that some of these agencies were at the meeting on Monday, January 8th to explain what they do for Hampstead. L. Warnock asked the Budget Committee if they received all the information they needed from those agencies and B. Weimar responded that they had. There was discussion between himself and L. Warnock about determining the value to Hampstead for these agencies and what they will look at. The primary thought was the direct correlation of the cost to the benefits received. There may be some years that an agency may provide more than others.

Article 12- There are 7 town parcels that the Conservation Commission is looking to move into Conservation. The 7 lots are: Map 2 lot 59, map 10 lot 1, map 10 lot 8, map 13 lot 87, map 13 lot 118, map 6 lot 27 and map 19 lot 40.

B. Weimar asked about the land that abuts the Kent Farm Transfer Station (Map 10 lot 1). He had mentioned that it may be worth looking at the site to determine if there is more that can be done there and asked if that lot could be held back. S. Morse noted that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the parcel shows as wetlands but agrees that it would be better to hold back on the transfer of the lot until they had time to explore the options.

Article 13- To fund \$12,000 for the Library Building Maintenance CRF- There were no questions.

Article 14- Creation of a CIP- This article is to be taken out and there are two articles following regarding a CIP funding mechanism.

New Article 14(listed as 15)- To change the purpose of the Building Capital Improvement Capital Reserve Fund that was created in 2022 and rename it to include all the provisions under RSA 674:5, which will include, but are not limited to road construction, construction, reconstruction, and acquisition of capital improvements, and the acquisition of equipment. This would require a 2/3rd vote to change.

K. Colbert, Chair of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) explained that they are looking at a way to create funding for the new CIP coming forward. The article approved in 2022, limited the purpose for which it could be used for, such as equipment. She went on to explain that the reason for a fund is to help stabilize the budget for capital expenses. J. Guthrie stated that he looked at the Master Plan and doesn't see any plan of projects listed. He noted that without knowing what the projects are, how can they approve what to spend. K. Colbert responded that it is better off not speaking about particular projects but of the plan. There are no projects right now because the committee

just started their work and will have a list of projects for the next budget. They are asking for funding so that once approved, the work can go forward. L. Warnock noted that she understood that this fund is under the purview of the Board of Selectmen and that when that fund was set up, there were no projects. K. Colbert did state that the Selectmen make any decision before any funds can be spent and that the committee will only recommend. If the article gets repurposed, it is still the Selectmen that are agents to expend.

L. Warnock noted that there seems to be some confusion between this fund and the Town Building Maintenance Fund. S. Theriault explained that this fund is for emergency purposes that may happen throughout the year. J. Guthrie asked what happened if this passes on purpose. S. Theriault responded that the \$300,000 in that fund would become available for use for the CIP plan.

B. Weimar pointed out that development of a Capital Improvement Plan is a way to hear the various projects of capital expenses that departments are planning and to review them and set a rating process for them. It is ultimately the Board of Selectmen decision to agree to it or not. J. Guthrie asked if a CIP plan comes forward and the Selectman doesn't agree with it or don't approve it, can they spend funds without the CIP recommendation. S. Morse responded that they could move the priorities around if they believe otherwise from the plan submitted.

New Article 15 - If Article is defeated, this article is to create a new fund and to open it with \$1.00. This would at least get a funding process started. It was noted that there needs to be a way to fund the CIP.

New Article 16- is by petition and that is to discontinue a portion of Whitcher Road. There were no questions on this article. S. Theriault did report that there was some research that needed to be done to see if this is a town road or state road. She also noted that the petitioner is required to notify all abutters to the proposed change, at their cost.

New Article 17- is by petition and it is to create a Municipal Budget Committee under RSA 32:14 S. Theriault noted that there were two petition articles that came in but only the one listed had enough signatures to be put on the warrant. The article that didn't have enough signatures explained how the new committee would be set up. S. Morse asked what would happen if that didn't get on the warrant. L. Eaton responded that the Town Moderator would make the appointments to get it established. J. Guthrie asked if this article could be amended and S. Theriault explained that it could be only at the deliberative session. B. Weimar noted that he didn't know the intent and knew nothing about this coming forward, even though one of the budget committee members signed off on it.

The RSA is specific as to how it is set up and it was stated that they will need to prepare amendments and an explanation of the consequences of moving in this direction.

B. Weimar noted that in the past the budget committee hadn't been proactive in their review of the budget and maybe voters felt that they weren't doing their job. The current budget committee has been more progressive in looking at the budgets this year. He also noted that the budgets prepared this year are reasonable and that there are some that are beyond control. L. Eaton responded that the school has the majority of their budget costs are mandated costs. L. Warnock also noted that another concern is that this introduces politics into the town elections and it is the job of the selectmen to remain non-partisan.

B. Weimar noted that they have had a hard time getting two more members on board for this committee. With a municipal budget committee, the committee would be putting a lot more work into it and may have a hard time getting people to run for it.

That finished the articles as known coming into the meeting. The Selectmen agreed to discuss the potential for an article to change the elderly exemption. The Selectmen discussed the recommendations from the assessor. The current exemptions are 65-74 at \$150,000; 75- 79 at \$200,000; and 80+ at \$230,000. The current income limits are for a single person at \$35,000 and for a married couple at \$50,000.

The Selectmen discussed the various options such as move the 65-74 to \$210,000, 75-79 to \$280,000 and 80+ to \$322,000 and to also look at the blind exemption (currently \$50,000), and the disabled exemption (currently \$50,000) and to move those two to \$70,000.

J. Guthrie noted that there are a lot of 71- to 79-year-old people that are still working and with costs increasing like they are being pushed to their limits. There was also concern about the property values with the upcoming revaluation.

After some discussion on the values, L. Eaton made a motion to move forward with the following changes 65-74 exemption to \$210,000 from \$150,000, 75-79 exemption to \$280,000 from \$200,000, and those that are 80 and up to put the exemption at \$322,000 up from \$230,000, the limit for a single person at \$35,000 and for a married couple to \$70,000. M. Worthen noted that he thought the single should be a little higher than \$35,000, that it didn't meet the social security increases for the last few years.

A motion was made by S. Morse to amend the motion to put a single person at an income level of \$40,000. The amendment was seconded by L. Eaton and passed 4-0-1 (J. Guthrie abstained). The motion as amended, (65-74 exemption to \$210,000; 75-79 exemption to \$280,000; 80+ exemption to \$322,000, income levels to be for a single \$35,000 and for a married couple \$70,000). The motion passed 4-0-1 (JG abstained).

A motion was made to move the blind and disabled exemption to \$50,000 by L. Eaton with a second by M. Worthen. The motion passed 5-0-0.

There was a question as to when this will take effect and it was stated that it would be with the December bill, if the article passes.

A motion was made to close the public hearing on the 2024 budget by S. Morse with a second by L. Eaton. The motion passed unanimously 5-0-0.

Nonpublic Session

A motion was made to go into a nonpublic session at 8:36 pm by S. Morse under RSA 31:II, a- employee matters and a second by L. Eaton. Roll Call vote:

L. Eaton: Yes; J. Guthrie: Yes; S. Morse: Yes; L. Warnock: Yes, M. Worthen: Yes.

The recording secretary was dismissed.

The Selectmen held a discussion with S. Theriault.

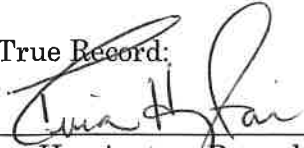
A motion was made to come out of the nonpublic session at 9:00 pm

L. Eaton: Yes; J. Guthrie: Yes; S. Morse: Yes; L. Warnock: Yes, M. Worthen: Yes.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn at 9:00 pm by S. Morse and a second by M. Worthen. The motion passed unanimously 5-0-0.

A True Record:



Tina Harrington, Recording Secretary

Approved By:

Selectman Eaton:



Selectman Guthrie:



Selectman Morse:

Selectman Warnock:



Selectman Worthen:

