

Tuesday, February 22, 2022
Hanson Board of Selectmen
Selectmen's meeting room, Town Hall
Open Session

Members Present: James Hickey, Kenny Mitchell, Matthew Dyer, Laura FitzGerald-Kemmett,
Joseph Weeks

Members Absent:

Others Present: Lisa Green, Esq, Town Administrator; Lisa Federoff, Town Council; Lucia
Silveira, Executive Assistant; Todd Hassett, Accountant; Kevin Sullivan,
Chairman of Finance Committee

I **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Dyer called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II **Public Announcements and Upcoming Meetings**

Mr. Weeks read the public announcements and upcoming meetings.

III **FY23 Budget Update**

Todd Hassett, Town Accountant, stated that while they are behind on FY23 operating budget, he has a sense of what the town's recurring and non-recurring sources of funds are available. The primary source of revenue is property taxes. Second would be local receipts and to a lesser extent, the Town has state aid. The state aid component is more of a factor for the regional school district than it is for the Town. Property taxes is projected to go up about 3.4 %, which is made up of the Town's statutory 2.5% available (\$613,000.00). The estimated new growth is around \$250,000.00 (1% for construction). This is lower than we have had in the last few years. Due to a supply issue, construction has slowed down. There has been a slowdown in construction which relates to supply. There has also been a slowdown in permit revenue which typically forecasts out to 12 to 18 months for new growth. There are also a few debt exclusions for the police station and the regional school district. This portion has gone down slightly by about \$21,000.00. The governor's proposed budget does reflect a 41% increase in revenue, which isn't very much. It's roughly about 2.5% as compared to our current state aid. Mr. Hassett further mentions that with respect to local receipts, he is forecasting just over a 5% increase. This relates to the motor vehicle excise tax, permits and licenses and other departmental fees and investment earnings. In total, the recurring revenue is projected to increase by just under 3.5%. There are other sources of funds that are typically used to support the Town's capital plan and other special one-time expenses or article requirements. The Town has healthy free cash. The two enterprise funds have retained earnings or their free cash, both are on the low side compared to prior years. The Town also uses the septic loan reimbursements from homeowners to pay off related septic loan debt service.

Mr. Hassett summarized the budget requests that were handed out in the meeting. The budget reflects a second year of three-year collective bargaining agreements for all of the Town unions with the exception of water union. The water contract is up on June 30th, 2022 and they are on another cycle than the other unions. The Water contract is currently being negotiated, which isn't an issue since it's fully funded. Non-union colas are built into the budget at 2%. In terms of staffing, Mr. Hassett mentions that it is important to know that the budget includes the IT Director moving from .5 to 1. These costs were previously being shared with the Town of East Bridgewater, which they opted not to renew the agreement. The building inspector's position also changed from a .5 to 1, so that's another half position added in going forward. The Police Chief has requested a patrolman's position, which is approximately an \$80,000.00 expense for the community. There is also a need for a police vehicle, which will be challenging to fund. The Police Chief has also submitted a budget for regional dispatch which includes a \$200,000.00 assessment, which is covered by a state grant for another year. Eventually, the Town will have to assume full cost. The Highway Department, with some reconstruction of their salaries, has recently filled a laborer's position that was not technically in this year's budget. That position is roughly \$40,000.00 to 50,000.00. The snow budget also a modest increase. There is also an increase on Council on Aging's salary's budget, which is a part time, 19 hours a week, non-benefit eligible position for outreach.

Mr. Hassett explains that the audit line has increased by \$5,000.00, which is a result of receiving federal funds (CARES & ARPA). In addition to that, every other year we need to have actuarial work done to update the Town's post-employment benefit liability, which is about a \$7,000.00 cost. The legal has been proposed at a \$20,000.00 decrease. Technology has one of the larger percentages increase, which relates to a number of initiatives which includes the permitting and planning software that is currently being implemented. There will also be three elections next year which will incur more expenses. More support staff will be needed for the Town Clerk to support early and absentee voting.

Mr. Hassett continues that the largest assessment is from the educational budget, which will need to be addressed and possibly modified. The employee benefits section has a 6% increase. There are some preliminary indications that it might come in slightly lower. There's a \$140,000.00 Plymouth County pension assessment increase. Mr. Hassett states that the debt service is fairly stable. The Transfer Station and Camp Kiwanee Recreation Enterprise funds are challenging in terms of the revenue side. Their expenses and their requested expenses far exceed their ability to bring in revenue to support those salaries and expenses. This would require a \$300,000.00 subsidy from the general fund if the Board supports these requests. Free cash was used this year with no subsidy for recreation.

Based on the requests, Mr. Hassett explains that there is about a \$966,000.00 shortfall. There are a number of decisions that have to be made in terms of what the Town can

support. There will need to be some partnership and cooperation from the regional school district. The Town is not in a position to fund the budget as initially requested.

Mr. Hassett states that the Town is not in a position to propose a balanced budget this evening. There's quite a bit of work to do over the next several weeks. State aid may improve although it's not a large source of revenue. Mr. Hassett emphasized that the education budget needs to come down to a manageable amount. He mentioned that he and Kevin Sullivan will work together more closely to try and close this gap. Mr. Sullivan also reiterated what Mr. Hassett presented. The Town is starting behind and there's a significant deficit. Mr. Sullivan mentioned that he retained earnings just aren't there anymore. At some point some very difficult decisions will need to be made. The hope at this point is that the school assessment will come down.

Discuss and Vote Marijuana Article to Planning Board

Chairman Dyer explained that there was a citizen's petition to legalize retail marijuana in the community. The Board wants to work together with the petitioner to make sure that the right language is documented.

Ms. Green further elaborated that the discussion was tabled by the petitioner, so that Town Council and the Planning board can review the petition for the Annual Town Meeting. Kate Federoff mentioned that with all the reiterations of the bylaws, some clean-up will be needed. Ms. Federoff mentioned that she and the Town Planner, Tony DeFrias, discussed maybe putting two articles forward to have a comprehensive overhaul. There will be a meeting next Monday. Mr. Weeks had concerns about the timeline and making sure that we have enough time to review. Ms. Federoff assured the Board that there is enough time, especially if the Planning Board submits a report. Mr. Milisi thanked the Board for continuing this discussion that he tabled back in October. Mr. Hickey emphasized that the language needs to be in laymen's terms, so that it's easy to understand, specifically if it gets on a ballot. Ms. Feodoroff indicated that they will work on making the language as easy to understand as possible.

MOTION by Ms. Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Weeks, to refer this article to the Planning Board for their consideration and action. **Voted 5-0.**

Discussion to adopt Recreation Commission Policies and Procedures

Mr. Milisi explained that the Recreation Commission has 20 pages with typo errors. One of the most recent changes that was voted on was to make sure that the policies and procedures reflected the clause in the vendor contract. Mr. Dyer understands that there's a relatively new commission, but he would like to see a business plan drafted. This is something that the Board has requested in the last several years. He further states that having a financial plan from an operational standpoint is crucial, especially since the camp will be looking for another subsidy. Mr. Milisi will add this request to the agenda for their next meeting on the 28th. Mr. Milisi also mentioned that there have been discussions on more ways to generate income, including applying for ARPA funds. The

rate increases that will come into play will be reflected in FY23. Mr. Dyer also mentioned that we should be moving away from 80/20 splits. Ms. Federoff expressed that from a policy perspective there are a host of reasons why there should be a move away 80/20. After working with Recreation and changing the contracts, Ms. Federoff is less concerned now about liability as she has been in the past. Mr. Dyer also mentioned implementing two day passes at the Cranberry Cove. This was something that was discussed in the past and agreed on, but was never implemented. Mr. Dyer expressed that this needs to be put into the policies. Ms. Kemmett also mentioned that there should be an ethics footnote indicating that in the event of a conflict between the state regulations, the Town's bylaws and employment laws would prevail over the policies. Mr. Milisi stated that he would update the policies with the requested edits and send it over to the Board for review. There were further discussions regarding fees. Mr. Dyer also mentioned defining revenue as referenced in contracts to state if it's 20% of net profits and not gross profits.

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. Kemmett, to approve the Hanson Recreation Commission policies and procedures with the edits from this meeting. ***Voted 5-0.***

Vote to adopt and implement Highway Department Timecard policy

Ms. Green mentioned to the board that one of the Town's previous audit managers recommended a time card policy and procedures for the Highway Department. The Highway Director has developed the policy and procedures, which was forwarded to the Board for review and approval. This new policy and procedure would only allow management to change or alter timecard information. Matt Dyer asked if this policy and procedure can be implemented to other departments. Ms. Green said that the Highway Department is the only department that uses a time card system.

MOTION by Mr. Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to vote to adopt and implement Highway Department Timecard Policy. ***Voted 5-0.***

Vote to confirm the Middle School as location for the Annual Town Meeting on May 2, 2022

MOTION by Mr. Mitchell, seconded by Mr. Hickey, to vote to confirm the Middle School as location for the Annual Town Meeting on May 2, 2022. ***Voted 5-0.***

Selectmen Sponsored Articles for Town Meeting

Mr. Dyer confirmed March 4, 2022 as the deadline to submit articles to the Board of Selectmen's office.

After listening to the Town Accountant's presentation about our large financial deficit, Ms. Kemmett understands that this may not be the year some of these requests will be addressed. The following articles were submitted by Ms. Kemmett:

1. ***To require all elected appointed boards to videotape their meetings.***
In order to increase transparency and citizen engagement, the Town of Hanson should make the video of all meetings available to the general public. There are nuances and discussions that happen in meetings that are not necessarily captured in minutes for meetings. Although we currently have a policy that requires BOS appointed boards to videotape their meetings, several of our appointed boards do not comply. In addition, many of the elected boards do not comply. This article would improve the transparency of all elected and appointed Hanson boards and committees.
2. ***Maquan Elementary School.***
The Maquan Reuse Committee has explored many possible reuses for the former Maquan Elementary School property. We have concluded that it is not economically feasible to reuse the school and that the existing building should be torn down and the remaining property should be used for other municipal needs. Possibilities for the use of this property are limitless but might include expansion of the Senior Center/Library and/or additional sports fields for baseball, football, soccer, lacrosse, etc. Municipal Use of some sort.
3. ***To commission a study regarding town hall administrative staff and efficiencies that might be gained by cross training and shared software.***
There is currently little or no cross-training of administrative staff and inadequate sharing of software programs amongst the various departments. The net result of this is that we are unable to optimize the skills of our administrative staff and unable to provide clear career paths in Town Hall for those wishing to seek them. The focus of this study would be to determine if we might gain some efficiencies by making modest changes to the software being used and the training we are providing our employees.
4. ***To fund the purchase of a generator for Library/Senior Center.***
This article will allow us to purchase a generator for use at Library/Senior Center when there is no power. This will insure that we will always have a heating and cooling center for those in need when weather related events cause power outages. In addition, it will insure that the essential services performed by the Library/Senior Center are able to continue to be performed even when there are power outages.
5. ***To permit an individual to hold only one of the following elected offices: Board of Selectmen, Water Commission, Board of Health and Planning Board.***
This article will ensure that officials who are elected to certain boards/commissions have adequate time to dedicate to their respective duties and that we have the most public engagement possible in carrying out the duties of these elected offices.
6. ***This article will allow us to purchase a generator for use at the transfer station when there is no power***
This article will allow us to purchase a generator for use at the transfer station when there is no power.

7. *To fund the purchase of a generator for Library/Senior Center.*

This article will allow us to purchase a generator for use at Library/Senior Center when there is no power. This will insure that we will always have a heating and cooling center for those in need when weather related events cause power outages. In addition, it will insure that the essential services performed by the Library/Senior Center are able to continue to be performed even when there are power outages. Funding both generators will hopefully be done through ARPA funds.

8. *Hire a Facilities Director responsible for overseeing the maintenance of all town-owned property.*

The Town of Hanson owns several pieces of properties and buildings but currently lacks sufficient personnel to address all of the ongoing maintenance needs for those properties and buildings. This individual will be responsible for assessing the overall condition and needs for all town owned buildings and properties, performing maintenance on town owned buildings and property as they are able, coordinating with town departments on what work can be done by town personnel and coordinating with the Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen and Capital Improvement Committee on which projects need to be outsourced to outside contractors and overseeing the work performed by outside contractors. This will insure that Hanson's real estate assets are maintained and that we are being cost-effective and proactive in needed repairs.

9. *Hire a Grant Writer/Procurement Officer for the Board of Selectmen's Office.*

The Town of Hanson has historically not received its fair share of state and federal grant money. Given the current financial environment, it is more critical now than ever to be proactive in seeking grants and actively engaging in procurement best practices. Currently, the responsibility of applying for grants is falling to our Town Planner and Town Administrator (and other departments on an ad hoc basis). By adding a position who is responsible for applying for grants and coordinating all grants, we are likely to see an increase in grant revenue as seen in other towns who have implemented similar positions.

Mr. Mitchell asked for the Meals Tax to be put as one of the articles. Mr. Dyer also mentioned changing Selectmen to Selectboard, per conversations that were had in the past. Mr. Dyer also mentioned adding another meeting in March to actively discuss all articles.

Vote to approve Hanson Little League Baseball Annual Opening Day Parade, Saturday, April 9, 2022, from Town Hall to Boteri Baseball Complex.

MOTION by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to vote to approve Hanson Little League Baseball Annual Opening Day Parade, Saturday, April 9, 2022, from Town Hall to Boteri Baseball Complex. ***Voted 5-0.***

Vote to accept two donations of \$25 (Total \$50) made to the Senior Center in memory of a longtime volunteer, Theresa O'Brien.

MOTION by Mr. Mitchell, seconded by Mr. Hickey, to approve two donations made to the Senior Center in the amount of \$50. **Voted 5-0.**

IV. ONE DAY LIQUOR LICENSES

- October 6, 2023, from 3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. – Katelyn McSweeney – Wedding

MOTION by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Hickey, to approve the One Day Liquor Licenses as listed above. **Voted 4 - 0.**

V. APPROVE OPEN SESSION MEETING MINUTES

Open session 12/28/22, 01/25/22

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Mr. Hickey, to approve the open session meeting minutes 1/25/22 (with amendments discussed by Ms. Kemmett). **Voted 4 – 0 – 1 (Kenny Mitchell absent from 1/25/22 meeting).**

MOTION by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Ms. Kemmett, to approve the open session meeting minutes 12/28/22 (Virtual Meeting with Ms. Kemmett, Matt Dyer and Jim Hickey). **Voted 3 – 0 – 2.**

VI TOWN ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Ms. Green updated the Board on recent events, as follows:

1. **Snow and Ice fund:** The snow and ice fund has depleted. Ms. Green has drafted a memo, as requested by the Town Accountant, authorizing the Highway Department to deficit spend for snow and ice. There will be a storm this weekend that will require the additional spending.
2. **Green Communities:** Ms. Green stated that due to supply issues, the Town was unable to complete the water department LED lighting installation by February 11, 2022. The missed deadline makes the Town ineligible for the spring round of the Green Communities. Missing the deadline, however, will allow the Town time to prepare for the fall round of the Green Communities. Ms. Green mentioned that in-depth HVAC systems information will have to be gathered for Town Hall, Library and Council on Aging. Having this additional time to gather all the auditing information will make the work more complete and thorough. Mr. Dyer asked Ms. Green to send a memo to Marianne Dimascio referencing the information presented. Ms. Kemmett asked if there was any exceptions or possible appeals process for the spring. Ms. Green mentioned that she contacted the Green Communities representative, Lisa Sullivan. Ms. Sullivan indicated that many communities are in the same situation. Supply issues made it difficult for many communities’ complete work and as a result miss the deadline. Having the time to prepare, with a Green Communities representative, will have the Town in good shape for the fall round.

3. **COVID update:** Ms. Green stated that based on the PCR tests, there are 26 active cases in the Town. This is a significant drop in COVID cases.
4. **ABCC Zoom Training:** Ms. Green and Ms. Silveira attended a Zoom training by the ABCC. A new e-portal has been implemented for license renewal submissions. The training provided the necessary resources to help with licensing issues. The training will be useful for the next rounds of license renewals.

Ms. Kemmett inquired about the parade and if there are any updates. Mr. Hickey mentioned that are plans for a big parade this year. There has been a ceremony instead of a parade the last two years because of the pandemic. For that reason, there is a lot of excitement to have a bigger and better parade this year.

Ms. Kemmett mentioned having a collaborative meeting to discuss the school budget. She further stated that it is important for the Board of Selectmen and Town Accountant to ask the necessary questions to advocate for the Town budget. Since the Town is funding the school budget, it's crucial to understand and have active communication. There were further discussions regarding the importance of actively communicating budget needs and presenting it to the board. Ms. Green mentioned that the proposed date for the joint meeting between the Town of Hanson and WHRSD is March 8, 2022 via Zoom.

MOTION by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Mr. Weeks, to recess the Selectmen meeting to attend Wage and Personnel. **Voted 5 - 0**

VII

ADJOURNMENT TO ATTEND WAGE AND PERSONNEL TO BE FOLLOWED BY EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION by Ms. Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Hickey, to adjourn the Selectmen meeting to attend Wage and Personnel. **Voted 5 - 0**

Respectfully submitted,

Lucia Silveira
Executive Assistant