



Tuesday, March 12, 2024
Hanson Select Board
Select Board Meeting Room, Town Hall
Open Session

Members Present: Laura FitzGerald-Kemmett, Joseph Weeks, Edwin Heal, Ann Rein;
Members Absent: David George
Others Present: Lisa Green, Town Administrator; Lynn McDowell, Executive Assistant;
Emily Sprague, Administrative Assistant; Eric Kinshurf, Town
Accountant; Kevin Sullivan, Finance Committee; Katherine Feodoroff,
Town Counsel

I CALL TO ORDER

Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett called the meeting to order.

II PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING MEETINGS

Ms. Rein read the public announcements and upcoming meetings.

III NEW BUSINESS

1. John Madden presentation

Mr. Madden thanked the Board for inviting him back. He noted some of his information is a review of his last presentation and some has been updated due to conversations with department heads as well as changes in trends, revenues and expenses. Using this process he created projections for the Town for the next five years, including a possibly override.

He reviewed the Town's tax rate, state aid, local receipts (net of the Water Fund) and other financing sources, including free cash. He noted that free cash is the happy accident of budgeting for more than is spent. This money is best used for one-time purchases, funding capital expenses, or replenishing other reserves. It should not be used for closing budgetary gaps.

For the projected general operating budget, based on trends, sees an increase of 7.78%. Mr. Madden did note that it is fluid process. While he did note there will be change, it will not be dramatic. Other budget highlights included the Regional Old Colony call center, Plymouth County Retirement and purchase of snow and ice materials.

For the projected revenue budget, other than increases in Penalties and Interest on Taxes and Payments in Lieu of Taxes, the number were relatively flat. Mr. Madden praised the Town Assessor for her work determining new growth and calculating the numbers.

On to projected expenses, which he also based on trending, were also flat.

With all he reviewed, he projected the FY25 budget to have a \$1.69M deficient. If trends continue, he predicted by FY30 the deficient will be in excess of \$5M.

For the preliminary outlook, with an average increase of 6.23% annually, he stated it is not sustainable. Free cash being used to supplement will not last. And the capital budget cannot be implemented for one-time expenditures. He recommended both discipline in spending and realistic budget requests. Lastly, he stated an operation override will be needed.

Mr. Madden then presented operating budget based on revenues actually collected. For FY25, he presented anticipated total revenues and mandatory expenses, leaving available funds totaling \$386,022. He stated this amount to increase the FY25 budget. Then continued with examples through FY30.

Referencing the earlier pie chart with percentage allocations, he suggested to use those percentages to distribute the available funds to the Operating budget. Since starting at a deficient, the Town would still be struggling for three years due to mandatory expenses. He stated while it may be good on paper, realistically it would come with many cuts to services as it would only maintain the status quo.

For recommendations, he suggested the Town adopt, through Town meeting action, to create an account to transfer available funds to an unemployment compensation fund. He noted the average annual appropriation was \$30,000 while the average annual expense was \$16,126. By removing the line item from the appropriation process, and instead fund unemployment compensation fund with Free Cash, the account would not need to be addressed for four-six years. Then it can be replenished as appropriate.

Mr. Sullivan shared it's not the big fix but a way to build free cash. It is not dissimilar to the Town's use of reserve funds. Mr. Kinsherf favored the concept. Ms. Feodoroff did not have any legal concerns. Ms. Green will add to as an agenda item.

Mr. Madden continued, discussing the reserve levy debt. He recommended to review and determine if it would be worth using the delta for one-time purchases or new long-term debt. Mr. Kinsherf noted the Town is already doing this in the budget for the Maquan School.

Mr. Madden proceeded with his next recommendation, noting the three outstanding bond anticipation notes; currently only interest payment and irregular principal payments. He suggested converting the payments to long term debt, as it would be easier to budget. Mr. Kinsherf stated, although the Town is being assessed on the interest only, it has been making principal payments.

Lastly, Mr. Madden stated an operational override of \$5M for the Town will be inevitable. While preparing this presentation, he thought it would be needed for FY26 but noted changes related to the deficient.

As an operational override, it will be subject to compliance with Proposition 2½ and becomes part of the operating levy. And as part of the levy, 2.5% will be added on the \$5M for each year, with year 5 totaling \$5.3M. The override will allow free cash to be used for funding capital and one-time purchases.

Mr. Madden stated, based on the FY24 projections, when the override is implemented, it will not be a big hit to residents as it will not be funded on the entire requested amount of \$5M. As the purpose of the override is to last five years; there will be incremental increases. The first year will increase the tax rate by \$1.08, totaling the increase to \$540.53 for an overall total of \$7229, based on a home value of \$499,999. He emphasized this is only year one; many changes can occur during the five years. Mr. Madden said this will cover the projected \$2M deficit for FY26.

Mr. Madden reiterated the \$5M will be available on Day 1 but he does not recommend using all immediately. Year one the predicted deficit is \$2.05M, year two is predicted to \$2.73M of the available override funds. He acknowledged he did not factor in the proposed added expense of the vocational school building a new 900-student facility within the next few years. He also reminded the Select Board makes the hard decisions, including ballot issues. Town meeting will also make decisions. He again reiterated this is an operational override, to make ends meet; it is not to resolve outstanding capital issues. Spending must be kept in check.

Mr. Madden queried if the School has a five-year plan. He noted the version he reviewed did not include the numbers now being requested. The Board will still push back on budget requests, as the Town does not anticipate further new growth. The Schools did have a five-year plan; however, it may not have been updated to reflect the changes to staffing in the past few years.

Mr. Madden noted there is a very high level of expected services provided to the Town. And it comes with a price to sustain. If the Town decides not to move forward with a \$5M override, the deficit will be addressed thorough cuts.

In comparison to other towns addressing these issues, Mr. Madden noted several towns have had overrides. He shared, in the post Covid world, using one time funding by schools and not able to generate the replacement of free cash seems to be a reoccurring theme.

He continued by stating reducing budgets to bare minimum, the option of having any free cash generation at yearend disappears as there will not be an option of a surplus. He stated some towns are now increasing the reserved funds as there is less room for the unexpected. The Board noted it ends with other departments making sacrifices for another. And the improvements in town came from several grants.

Mr. Madden continued on to discuss the Town's inconsistent relationship between the general fund and the water fund. The current system is making the health insurance fund a revolving fund. Same with other employees' benefits; include the Town's share of Medicare. Services by other departments also need to be included. This will be a cleaner accounting record moving forward. Mr. Kinsharf stated billing is directed to the Treasurer/Collector's office, who pays the bill, then invoices the Water department for reimbursement. Moving forward, the Select Board would prefer prorating the portions and make two separate payments, or a direct expense to the Water department. Mr. Madden suggested creating an article to raise through Water revenues to raise and appropriate x amount of dollars, and to further transfer x amount of dollars to the general fund for its share of costs related to the Treasurer/Collector's office.

The Board would like Ms. Green to meet with the Treasurer/Collector's office, the Town Accountant and the Finance Committee to review these recommendations and possible timelines, and bring back to the Select Board to discuss.

To hear the detailed discussion, please view the meeting here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmZNIyuoZVs> at the 3:16 mark.

This presentation as well as his prior in December 2023 are posted to the Select Board webpage.

2. Discussion regarding possible school override

Mr. Sullivan work with Mr. Kinsherf to create possible five scenarios, including Mr. Madden's. he acknowledged each were math exercises to better understand how the numbers worked out. For Mr. Madden's scenario, it would be about a \$500 increase to average tax payer, if the School remained at 10.2% requested assessment and free cash was excluded. He stated this is a reoccurring issue that will not stop until a change is made. Again, it is not spending \$5M, it is raising a number that could be used.

Mr. Sullivan also noted that the tax rate has been flat for several years, and years where it was lowered. The Board noted the School did not make cuts to its budget as both Whitman and Hanson did, especially those unrelated to student needs. Mr. Sullivan agreed, suggesting both Select Board meet for a united message. He also reminded the School Committee is advocating for students. He emphasized they need to be advocates and good partners with the respective towns.

The Select Board has not decided when to have the override, but agreed with Mr. Sullivan it will occur. However, it will not be funding exorbitant budget requests from any department, include the School. It will follow the recommendations provided by Mr. Madden, for a five-year plan.

Ms. Green noted several other towns recently passed overrides, with amounts ranging from \$5M - \$8M. Mr. Sullivan stated more and more towns are addressing this issue as they used one-time funds and based the budget with them included. Nor has the State funded mandates to towns. Ms. Feodoroff reminded the Board that if both Whitman and Hanson present a united front, and equally appropriated its portion, it would force a push back to the school budge. Both Town Administrators have coordinated as well as Board Chairs. There was still some belief the School Committee will continue to examine its budget and make some changes.

Ms. Feodoroff also shared Chapter 70 funding has decreased, from 18% to 3%. The School, anticipating this funding for programming, pushed it out in assessments. And it still kept one-time expenses as incorporated line items. Which led to an enormous increase in the overall budgeting. The Board will continue to work to be a good partner, but will not concede unquestioning; it will trust and verify.

Ms. Green will speak with the Town Administrator in Whitman to ensure both towns are united.

3. Discuss contract renewals:

During the February 27, 2024 executive session, the Board discussed contract renewals for the Deputy Police Chief, the Town Administrator and the Highway Director.

a. Deputy Police Chief

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. Rein, to enter into negotiations with the Deputy Police Chief to discuss renewing his contract. **Voted 4 – 0**
Roll call –Rein-Aye; FitzGerald-Kemmett-Aye; Weeks -Aye; Heal-Aye

b. Town Administrator

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. Rein, to enter into negotiations with the Town Administrator to discuss renewing her contract. **Voted 4 – 0**
Roll call –Rein-Aye; FitzGerald-Kemmett-Aye; Weeks -Aye; Heal-Aye

c. Highway Director

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. Rein, to not renew the Highway Director's contract. **Voted 4 – 0**
Roll call –Rein-Aye; FitzGerald-Kemmett-Aye; Weeks -Aye; Heal-Aye

4. High Street Park Committee discussion

Mr. Weeks stated the committee has a presentation for the Select Board but has not yet met to finalize. He requested to table for next week, March 19, 2024.

Ms. Green has not yet met with the Highway Director to address the suggested barriers and trash cleanup. She will reach out and have an update for next week.

5. Accept Jean Dean's resignation from the Maquan Reuse Committee

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. Rein, to accept Jean Dean's resignation from the Maquan Reuse Committee, with regret. **Voted 4 – 0**
Roll call –Rein-Aye; FitzGerald-Kemmett-Aye; Weeks -Aye; Heal-Aye

6. Accept Terice Jordan's resignation from the IT Department

Ms. Green met with Ms. Jordan, who informed her that she is moving out of town. As she does not have a vehicle and the position is parttime, the commute would not be well suited for her or the Town. Ms. Green will post the opening with social media platforms.

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. Rein, to accept Terice Jordan's resignation from the IT Department, with regret. **Voted 4 – 0**
Roll call –Rein-Aye; FitzGerald-Kemmett-Aye; Weeks -Aye; Heal-Aye

7. Appoint Cameron Allegra to the Highway Department as the Heavy Equipment Operator

Ms. Green stated as there was an opening in the Highway department, she coordinated with Mr. Shave to post the position, then interviewed candidates. There were several candidates. Mr. Allegra comes highly recommended. Previously worked the Town of Hingham's Department of Public Works until he joined the military. He also has all needed licensing.

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. Rein, to appoint Cameron Allegra to the Highway Department as the Heavy Equipment Operator, commencing March 20, 2024, contingent upon completing the pre-employment requirements. **Voted 4 – 0**

Roll call –Rein-Aye; FitzGerald-Kemmett-Aye; Weeks -Aye; Heal-Aye

8. Fireworks Site letter of support discussion

Per the Select Board's request, Ms. Green crafted correspondence to be forwarded to the governor's office as well as cc list at the bottom. The Board made a few tweaks and signed off.

IV OLD BUSINESS

1. Planning Board report for MBTA Zoning bylaw

Ms. Green updated and reiterated the plan Mr. DeFrias presented previously. It is currently under review with the MBTA Zoning Regulations committee. She expects to receive feedback and any revisions prior to Town meeting.

She noted there is still a great deal of misinformation related to the plan. As Mr. DeFrias stated previously, Ms. Green noted this plan is only to create the zoning; construction is not set to commence as no one has been hired to start any building. The Select Board also noted the Town does not have town sewer, the location is near wetlands. It also acknowledged it is not happy with this decision but need to be compliant as it is the law; the MBTA required a designated community. Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, as a representative of the Economic Development committee, noted this area has been earmarked for revitalization and designated for development. As it is the law, lack of compliance by the Town would eliminate all the grant money it has been receiving, such as the land grant, as well as thirteen possible awards for this year, including the Library grant currently in development.

The Board requested a comprehensive list of grants, historical and forward moving, that would impact the Town if the MBTA communities' article does not pass. While there is a need for affordable housing in Hanson, the State did not create a palatable presentation. It would also like to have the Town Planner speak to the criteria and process for developing the zone to clear up any continued misinformation.

2. May Annual/Special Town meeting warrant review
 - a. Special Town Meeting
 - b. Annual Town Meeting

Ms. Green noted that most of the placeholders have been updated but a few are outstanding. She is working with Mr. Kinshurf to finalized all money articles. She also shared draft copies were forwarded to all with article requests to confirm accuracy. Several responded back with either updates or corrections.

The Select Board noted if an override needs to be included, the Town Clerk's office would need thirty-five days, which would be April 13, 2024, to place on the ballot. The Town Clerk will need the exact language at that time too. It is a tight deadline to provide educational materials to residents. Ms. Green is working with the Town Accountant to present two budget scenarios – one with no override and deep cuts to all departments and services, and one with the override. The Board would like also a proposal of how all information will be presented – website, social media, interviews, etc.

Ms. Green encouraged any one to come and speak with her for clarification of information. The Board also suggested a public forum with the Town Accountant and the Finance Committee. It would provide residents an opportunity to understand the process and need prior to Town meeting. Ms. Green will reach out to the school for the first week of April.

V APPROVE OPEN SESSION MINUTES

1. February 13, 2024
2. February 27, 2024

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. Rein, to approve the meeting minutes as presented on the agenda. **Voted 4 – 0**

Roll call –Rein-Aye; FitzGerald-Kemmett-Aye; Weeks -Aye; Heal-Aye

VI APPROVE ONE DAY LIQUOR LICENSES

1. 04/06/24 – 6:00pm – 11:00pm – Meagan Silva – Birthday party
2. 04/27/24 – 5:30pm – 10:30pm – Danielle Coletti – Wedding
3. 06/23/24 – 2:00pm – 7:00pm – Maria Courtney – Graduation party
4. 08/03/24 – 4:30pm – 9:30pm – Jim Kleberg – Wedding
5. 08/09/25 – 4:00pm – 10:00pm – Krista Brown – Wedding

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. Rein, to approve the one-day liquor licenses as presented on the agenda. **Voted 4 – 0**

Roll call –Rein-Aye; FitzGerald-Kemmett-Aye; Weeks -Aye; Heal-Aye

VII COMMITTEE UPDATES

1. Economic Development Committee

No update. Meeting next week

2. High Street Park Committee

Please see item #4 under New Business.

3. Highway Committee

Next meeting is scheduled April 25, 2024.

4. Maquan Reuse Committee

Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett would like to reschedule the next meeting. She requested Ms. McDowell reach out to the other committee members for days and times.

5. Recreation Commission

No update.

6. Transfer Station Taskforce

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. Rein, that the Select Board will no longer participate in the Transfer Station Taskforce. ***Voted 4 – 0***
Roll call –Rein-Aye; FitzGerald-Kemmett-Aye; Weeks -Aye; Heal-Aye

7. Whitman Hanson Regional School Agreement Committee

No update, as the Superintendent's office is waiting on MARS.

8. Other Committee updates

No other updates to report.

VIII TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

- Ms. Green recognized Town Clerk Beth Sloan, Assistant Town Clerk Jean Kelly and the election workers for their great job with Tuesday's Primary day; the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk worked from 5:00am to 11:30pm that day. She also recognized the Highway employees, including Charlie Baker, who assisted with moving and setting up equipment, then breaking down and returning all the equipment back to Town Hall. Kudos to all for a great job.
- The Hanson Community Garden, located at the Plymouth County Hospital site, has 100 plots available for residents. Ms. Green noted the Community Garden has become very popular as some of the vegetables have been provided to the Hanson Food Pantry. Evelyn Golden stepped down after 10 years of overseeing the Community Garden; John

Seamans and Phil Clemons are now the co-chairs. The committee will be meeting on Thursday, April 18 at the Council on Aging. For more information, please contact, John Seamans directly at hansongarden@gmail.com. The Select Board office only accepts signed waivers on behalf of the committee.

- She shared a Perch Solar audit was conducted by WRPA Services, as this company has been used by other Towns for this type of audit. After reviewing the National Grid credits and the contracts, it determined Hanson is receiving all credits in accordance with the Perch Solar contracts. It is now working with National Grid to allocate some credits from one account to another account to balance out the received credits.
- She stated, for the Mass One Stop for Growth Grant program, the Town Planner submitted five expressions of interest. He received positive feedback on four; one, a generator for the Library, was deemed ineligible as the project is not in line with the underutilized properties program. He also submitted expressions of interest for Open Space and Housing Production plans.
- Last month, Ms. Green completed and submitted to Plymouth County ARPA a close out memo for a new Ambulance and the Pratt Place Culvert replacement or repair, meeting the first timeline. She also completed the related applications to submit within the next week.

IX ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. Rein, to adjourn to Executive Session.

Voted 4 – 0

Roll call –Rein-Aye; FitzGerald-Kemmett-Aye; Weeks -Aye; Heal-Aye

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn McDowell