

JOINT HAMILTON-WENHAM SELECTMEN MEETING
Meeting of Tuesday, June 22, 2010 ~ 7 PM
Wenham Town Hall, 138 Main Street

Aug. 3, 2010

With a quorum present, Ms. Martins opened the meeting at 7:00 pm and identified that the Joint Board of Selectmen meeting is to discuss the School Operational Audit approved by both town's through a citizen petition.

Hamilton Selectmen Present: David Carey; Jennifer Scuteri; Jeffrey Stinson; Marc Johnson; William Bowler
Also Present: Michael Lombardo, Town Manager
Wenham Selectmen Present: Molly Martins, Chair; John Clemenzi, Vice Chair; Harriet Davis, Secretary
Also Present: Jeff Chelgren, Town Administrator; Catherine Tinsley, Minutes Secretary

Abbreviations used
BOS Board of Selectmen

Public information
Agenda

School Audit

The purpose of this meeting was to determine the overall mission and goals of the petitioners audit of the Regional School system.

Ms. Scuteri talked briefly about the history of the audit saying a citizen petition was brought forth and approved for an operational audit of the schools. She went on to say that the two towns are also in possession of the findings of a study performed by the Blue Ribbon Commission. It was identified that the petition envisioned that the audit would be performed by the Hamilton and Wenham Selectmen and would carry a cost of not greater than \$90,000.00.

She said that the goals and objectives of the audit will be discussed and the scope of the audit determined.

Ms. Scuteri began the discussion offering that one objective is to deliver a high level of education for the public school at a sustainable financial cost for Hamilton and Wenham

Bruce Wadleigh added to that saying it is to deliver a high level of education at an affordable cost to taxpayers with sustainable level being at 2% increase.

Mr. Carey noted that the municipal level of the budget has increased at a rate of 3.5 %; the schools at 6.5%; and Special Education at 12% and these rates are not sustainable.

Ms. Martins questioned if the base budget could be reduced before discussing what is considered a "sustainable growth rate."

As a goal, Ms. Davis questioned if there is overspending; if there are too many employees and /or are wages too high including administration.

Public comment included reducing infrastructure costs; can education be delivered at a reduced cost; are buildings being maintained and used efficiently.

Michelle Bailey reviewed the Blue Ribbon Committee's recommendation to engage a consultant to look at areas that drive the increase in the budget saying that looking at instructional service and Special Education is the best way to approach this audit.

Bruce Wadleigh reiterated the petitioner's prime mission of the audit is not to bring in consultants but to determine how efficiently the school district is being managed and operated in all areas where tax dollars are spent as compared to established best practices; the petitioners outlined 18 areas within the district where money is spent.

There was additional public comment and support that the purpose of the audit is not a review of the system and curriculum but of the staffing and cost efficiency of both regular education and sped programs to be reviewed against best practices. As part of this discussion it was noted that special education is state and federally mandated and including this in the audit should not be a focus—instead it was felt that we should be reviewing in order to determine what we can do better and cheaper for the expressed goal of keeping costs under control.

Bill Dery addressed the BOS maintaining that the petition cannot be amended; it called for an audit and comparisons will be included within the audit itself. He stated the RFP should be accepted as submitted.

There was a discussion if the RFP was included in the petition and if it can be amended by the BOS; the BOS noted the language of the petition is subject to interpretation and the best product will be sought for the money.

Grace Belfiore expressed her opinion that the audit is intended to determine if things are being done efficiently and if programs are organized well, but not to include how teachers teach. She suggested two audits-- Infrastructure VS Program Audit

Bea Britton talked briefly about the history of overrides and how they become the basis for the next year budget and reiterated that the audit is about where the money is being spent citing voters are given overall budget subjects but there is no accountability; an operational budget is necessary to determine what is being done wrong and what can be done better.

Jay Burnham recapped that this discussion is for the RFP for the audit and the scope of the vote is in the motion and supported the program audit be included,

Ruth Ryan questioned out of district expenses, the definition of best practices, and commented that scoring tests (e.g. MCAS) should not be included and that the auditors should not be influenced by other studies (e.g. BRC).

Ms. Scuteri noted that the RFP has not been formally disseminated and that the wording is not the subject of the discussion tonight, goals are the topic instead.

Bill Bowler reminded the BOS that it was their consensus that this would be the public forum and November 1st is the deadline and the 60 days is active.

Mr. Rogers noted that the school/ town already pay for auditing and advised that these services not be duplicated . He also noted that many who voted for the motion did so in “theory” not particularly for the EIE RFP. He observed that the November 1 deadline is unreasonable citing that the new administration will be just beginning.

Operational Audit Review Committee Designation discussion

Concern was raised regarding public participation and it was noted that the meetings of the Operational Audit committee should be scheduled so as to be at convenient times with an eye towards inclusiveness. Ms. Davis suggested that it was important that the BOS , School Comm. liaisons be included on this committee.

The School Committees role was discussed; and it was agreed that there is no input necessary but that they will get copies of all reports.

It was agreed that the final RFP will be approved by a majority vote of the selectmen.

VOTE: Wenham BOS: Mr. Clemenzi made a motion to create an Operational Audit Review Committee comprised of the two chairs of the BOS in Hamilton & Wenham, designees from the Finance Committees of Hamilton and Wenham, and the Town Administrator and Town Managers of respective towns. Ms. Martins seconded. There was a discussion if the petitioners should be included. Ms. Davis suggested that representatives from both the petitioners and school committee should be on the committee, but this recommendation was not adopted. It was noted that the committee will meet as needed, these meetings will be posted as public meetings, and that the new committee will meet soon to begin their process. It was noted by all that the committee is best kept small.

The motion carried by majority vote with Ms. Davis voting in opposition.

VOTE: Hamilton BOS Mr. Carey made a motion to create an Operational Audit Review Committee comprised of the two chairs of the BOS in Hamilton & Wenham, designees from the Finance Committees from Hamilton and Wenham and the Town Administrator and Town Managers of respective towns. Mr. Stinson seconded and the motion carried by majority vote with Mr. Bowler not declaring his vote.

VOTE: 8:36 pm Mr. Carey made a motion that the Hamilton Board of Selectmen adjourn and it was unanimous to do so.

The Wenham BOS took a five minute recess.

Retreat

Present: Patrick Wilson, Affordable Housing Trust

Ms. Martins gave a brief update regarding the Affordable Housing Trust saying that the Trust recently purchased 11 Friend Court & 105 Pleasant Street.

Patrick Wilson went on to further explain that a selling price is based on 70% of the area medium income as determined by Housing & Urban Development (HUD); Wenham requested to be considered for 75% of the income to allow for a slightly higher asking price to help the trust get back some of the cost to renovate the properties; the Department of Housing Community Development (DHCD) approved this request. If no buyers qualify than the process is redone at 70%.

Applications for the affordable housing lottery have been released and are due September 16th; those who initially receive a letter of denial are given an opportunity to appeal.

The lottery will be held on October 18th and as names are pulled, they are placed on the list in the order drawn. Mr. Wilson identified that 11 Friend Court, a two bedroom condo, has been designated for local preference as described in the documents.

Open houses have been scheduled for August 10th.

The trust was commended for their work.

Ms. Martins explained that money is available from the Home Consortium Funds and that a vote was needed to use these funds for an intended purpose. Specifically, funds for FY 09 need to be committed by June 30, 2010 and the funding in question totaled \$6500. Ms. Martins went on to identify that the Trust must commit these funds to a specific project and that it was the request of the Trust that the FY09 funds be committed to soft costs and rehabilitation costs for 105 Pleasant Street and 11 Friend Court. It was noted that this is the first time Wenham has been in the position to use them.

It was noted that the cost of the Marketing Plan is reimbursable under the Consortium.

VOYE: Ms. Davis made a motion to approve the home consortium Funds for FY 2009 in the amount of \$6500 for project related soft costs and housing rehabilitated costs for above mentioned projects being 11 Friend Court and 105 Pleasant Street. Mr. Clemenzi seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

It was noted that next week's meeting will begin at the Airport at 7 PM and will reconvene at Town Hall; this is not a televised meeting.

Mr. Chelgren informed the Board that the advertisement for the Financial Director position will be reviewed at the next meeting. It is expected that interviews will begin in early August.

9:05 pm Ms. Davis made a motion to adjourn and it was unanimous to do so.

Respectfully submitted by

Catherine Tinsley