

**Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes
August 2, 2022
Hingham Town Hall**

In Attendance: G. Danis, N. MacDonald, T. Sherwood, B. Black, D. Cooper, A. Macdonald, A. McElaney, S. Melia, K. Curley, L. Kruzer, J. Price. C. Tully, K. Dziergoski, J. Griffin, Town Accountant S. Nickerson

Absent: Caitlyn Kirk

Call meeting to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:06pm by Chair Danis.

Questions from the public on items not on the agenda

None

Presentation by Erin Walsh, Director of Assessing and Chrissy Roberts, Chair, Board of Assessors

“Town of Hingham Assessing Overview” presentation was given by Erin Walsh, Director of Assessing

Ms. Walsh did an overview of the Hingham’s Assessors’ responsibilities including discussion of inspections, home improvements, year-over-year changes, tax rates, the levy limit, tax rate calculations, historical valuations, abatements, exemptions, and the FY23 Revaluation.

A question-and-answer session followed the presentation. AdCom members engaged in questions and discussion regarding home additions, tax payer impacts, commercial property tax rates, unused levy capacity, and the number of requested exemptions versus reductions granted.

Questions from the public on items not on the agenda

None

Discussion of Public Safety and Foster School Building Committees presentations

Chair Danis noted that the Advisory Committee is often referred to as the proxy for Town Meeting. After seeing presentations from the respective Building Committees at our July 19, 2022 and their Architects and OPMs, Chair Danis asked if the Committee is satisfied with the size and scope of these projects? Do members have any additional questions or concerns that could be answered by the building committees at our next meetings?

The Advisory Committee discussed many questions:

- We have the cost breakdowns for the PSFB and would like to see the detailed cost breakdowns for the Foster project - itemizations and justifications for things that are not

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eligible for reimbursement from the MSBA. How is the Building Committee making business decisions as to what to include that is ineligible for reimbursement?

- Given the economic conditions today, is this a good time to move forward with this project? Would there be a reason to wait?
- Why is the 'per square foot' cost higher for Foster than the PSFB?
- Can we look at comparable costs for other towns with similar projects; as an example the Scituate Public Safety Complex, or other buildings that have been, or are in the process of being completed now? If other towns have buildings that were substantially less in cost, what are the differences?
- If we are adding programs and facilities to the school for things that we do not offer now, given the issues we have with our existing operational costs, how much will new programs cost and what are the plans to pay for them?
- What is the value of the current North Fire Station? Do we have a plan for it going forward? How is it going to be used, or is there a possibility to offset the costs of these projects by selling it?
- For new programs at Foster that will be tuition-based, could those programs cover or offset some of the costs?
- If Foster is being built for 605 students and has 400 currently enrolled students, if the class sizes are smaller than other elementary schools in town, will the School Committee look at redistricting to make the class sizes even?
- If we are designing classrooms to meet specific needs for Special Education, will that offset needs for other kids in town who may be going out of district? And, will all the kids in town benefit from these programs and travel to Foster to access them?
- Can we see the offset of the savings we will see for the energy efficiencies we are building into Foster? And for the PSFB?
- Is there a way to stage these projects in such a way that we could also stage borrowing over time?
- Are there current plans for the new Senior Center? Do we know how much that project is going to cost?
- In these new buildings, firefighters, police and educators' jobs have changed substantially. It would be helpful to see more description about how programmatic needs have changed that require the designs to meet these requirements.
- What are the future climate impacts that have been taken into account for the PSF and Foster sites?
- How do we benchmark this kind of debt exclusion against what other towns are doing? Even though this is a large spend, are we in line with what our benchmark towns have done?
- Given that the 'need' is not the hard sell for the Foster project, why is this \$113mm building the responsible plan? Could there be a \$70-\$80mm plan?

Approval of Minutes from July 19, 2022

The Committee unanimously approved the minutes for meetings held on July 19, 2022.

Liaison Reports

Brenda Black – Climate Action Planning Committee

The Committee has posted their Community Engagement survey. It includes 8 questions to help the Committee figure out what citizens want to see, and what kind of information they need for a Climate Action Plan. Please help spread the word to residents to fill out the survey.

Tina Sherwood - Cleaner Greener Hingham

Cleaner Greener Hingham is studying a 'Single Plastic Water Bottle Ban' bylaw for Town Meeting in the spring. They have been working with Art Robert and will be meeting with other stakeholders to discuss the initiative.

Tina Sherwood - Capital Project Financing Options

The working group had its first meeting, together with Tom M, Michelle M, Sue N and Jon Asher. It was a productive meeting and the working group will keep AdCom members updated on continued progress.

Discussion of Advisory Committee housekeeping items

Brenda is the team lead, together with Kristen and Carol, to update the AdCom rules this year. It will be taken up at a future meeting for review.

Chair Danis issued a reminder that the Advisory Committee stays neutral on Warrant related issues and members cannot advocate publicly for projects or Articles until they have been voted.

There was a discussion about future meetings. Most members agreed that in-person deliberation was preferable and all members should attend meetings in-person if possible. But the option to offer a hybrid meeting solves travel, Covid and other unforeseen issues. It was noted that a hybrid meeting requires an in-person quorum.

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee will be Tuesday, August 16th, 2022 at 7pm.

Matters not anticipated within 48 hours of meeting

Sue Nickerson noted that every year Hingham submits an Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) to the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). Hingham received an award for our financial reporting for the 26th consecutive year.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Documents Distributed for this Meeting:

AdCom Agenda August 2, 2022

"Town of Hingham Assessing Overview" by Erin Walsh

AdCom Meeting Minutes July 19, 2022

AdCom Rules as of 1_25_22

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