

**Board of Selectmen
Hopedale Town Hall – Draper Room
March 18, 2020
Regular Minutes**

Present: Selectmen Brian Keyes, Thomas Wesley and Louis Arcudi. Interim Town Administrator Robert Reed
Also present was Mr. Samuel Hockenberry

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Brian Keyes at 6:05 PM and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present.

Mr. Wesley read a statement prepared by K-P Law on changes in the Open Meeting law due to the Covid-19 virus.

Mr. Reed updated the Board of Selectmen on changes in the Town Hall staffing and procedures and how personnel were coping with the health emergency.

New Business

The Board then met with Mr. Sam Hockenbury, Chair of the Hopedale Finance Committee to discuss the budget process and FY 21 budget. Mr. Hockenbury went over a budget scenario of cutting town services by one fifth. Mr. Wesley noted that fixed cost items that have increased and the Town has little or no control over them. There was discussion on the various fixed costs and how they caused the budget deficit.

Mr. Hockenbury drew various budget scenarios on a whiteboard showing the increases in each component of town government. Increases in operating budgets and discretionary funding was discussed.

Mr. Wesley voiced a concern about moving forward with an override when the limitations on gatherings due to the Corona Virus hindered public education and public input. It was possible that Town meeting might be postponed beyond June 30th. An overall strategy was discussed for presenting an override to the public and the timing of presenting that override.

Mr. Arcudi asked if budgets were level funded and non-discretionary costs were added would revenues cover that total cost; he requested that the Finance Committee look into this. Mr. Keyes added that it would be important to know what non-discretionary items level funded budgets would not cover. We should also know what additional obligations throughout departments would not be funded with level budgets.

Mr. Arcudi asked for updated spreadsheets showing present budgets and requested budgets and Mr. Hockenbury said that he could send those out that evening. Mr. Keyes added that he wanted to see a budget that did not include the use of remaining free cash.

The board then reviewed a draft Annual Town Meeting warrant and Mr. Reed said that he was preparing to put it in final form. The order of the articles could come at a later time. He went over with the Board articles that had been added including a stormwater by-law, accepting the state statute to allow to charge sales tax for marijuana retailers, a receipts reserved account for cable tv, adopting the energy stretch code, changing the date of the town election to be after town meeting, a revolving fund for the health agent. The Board will further review at its next regular meeting.

Mr. Keyes read a declaration of local emergency due to the Covid-19 virus. Mr. Wesley mover to adopt the declaration and to declare a local state of emergency effective March 19, 2020. Mr. Arcudi seconded. The vote was unanimous.

With no further comments from the Board or from attendees Mr. Keyes said that he would accept a motion to go in to executive session to go into executive session to discuss contract bargaining for Non-union personnel and not return to open session Mr. Wesley so moved, Mr. Arcudi seconded, the vote was unanimous.

Adjournment

At 9:25 PM the Board of Selectmen adjourned their regular meeting convening into executive session.

Respectfully submitted
Robert T. Reed
Interim Town Administrator