



HAMILTON-WENHAM
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
5 SCHOOL STREET, WENHAM, MA 01984 · TEL. 978-468-5310

Quintuple Board Meeting ([agenda](#))

Hamilton - Wenham Regional School District
Town of Hamilton Board of Selectmen
Town of Hamilton Finance Committee
Town of Wenham Board of Selectmen
Town of Wenham Finance Committee

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

[Zoom Meeting:](#)

Webinar ID: 834 9055 6893 Passcode: 015364

Hamilton - Wenham Regional School District

Dana Allara
Michelle Bailey
Jennifer Carr
Michelle Horgan
Anna Siedzik
David Polito (late arrival)
Julia Campbell (late arrival)

Town of Hamilton Board of Selectmen

Shawn M. Farrell
Darcy Dale
Jamie Knudsen
Rosemary Kennedy

Town of Hamilton FINCOM

John Pruellage
Christina Schenk-Hargrove
Nicholas Tensen
David Wanger
John McGrath

Town of Wenham Board of Selectmen

Gary Cheeseman
Catherine Harrison
Dianne Bucco

Town of Wenham Finance Committee

Jim Purdy
Scott Schonberger
David Molitano
David Reid
Susan Mehlin (late arrival)

Also Present:

Eric Tracy, HWRHS Superintendent
Vincent Leone, HWRHS Assistant Superintendent to Finance and Administration
Mahala Lettvin, HWRHS Recording Secretary
Catherine Tinsley, Town Recording Secretary
Joseph J. Domelowicz Jr., Hamilton Town Manager
Alex Magee, Hamilton Finance Director/Town Accountant
Ryan Ferrara, Wenham Town Administrator
Yeimi Colon, Wenham Finance Director & Town Accountant
Carin Kale, Hamilton Town Clerk

1. Call to Order 7:00 PM

With a quorum present, Ms. Allara, Chairperson, calls the *Hamilton - Wenham Regional School Committee* meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Those present: Dana Allara, Michelle Bailey, Michelle Horgan, Anna Siedzik, and Jen Carr. David Polito and Julia Campbell arrive later in the meeting.

With a quorum present, Mr. Cheeseman calls the Wenham Board of Selectmen meeting to order at 7:06 PM. Those present: Gary Cheeseman, Diane Bucco, Catherine Harrison.

With a quorum present, Mr. Purdy calls the *Wenham Finance Advisory Committee* meeting to order at 7:06 PM. Those present: Jim Purdy, Scott Schonberger, David Molatino, David Reid. Susan Mehlin arrives later in the meeting.

With a quorum present, Mr. Knudsen calls the *Hamilton Board of Selectmen* meeting to order at 7:08 PM. Those present: Rosemary Kennedy, Darcy Dale, Shawn Farrell, and Jamie Knudsen.

With a quorum present, Ms. Schenk-Hargrove calls the *Hamilton Finance Advisory Committee* meeting to order at 7:08 PM. Those present: David Wanger, Nicholas Tensen, John Pruellage, John McGrath, and Christina Schenk-Hargrove.

Joseph J. Domelowicz Jr., Hamilton Town Manager and Alex Magee, Hamilton Finance Director/Town Accountant acknowledge their presence in the meeting. Ryan Ferrara, Wenham Town Administrator introduces Yeimi Colon, Wenham Finance Director & Town Accountant

2. New Business**A. FY23 Budget Discussion**

Mr. Leone reviews the details of the Hamilton Wenham Regional School District Superintendent's Initial FY23 Budget Recommendation as detailed in his [presentation](#):

- Assessment Shift;
- Review of level service changes including:
 - Budget challenges (Makeup 1% COLA not included in FY22; additional 2% COLA FY23; steps/column changes (placeholder); elementary grade bubble and 1.0 FTE teacher; increase of 0.5 FTE teacher at secondary level; increased technology needs (amplified by COVID related needs); assessment shifts; FY21 E&D; growing OPEB liability; facilities issues; expiring transportation contract)
 - Grants corrections totaling an increase of \$290,00 to the operating budget, but no change to the net assessment to towns (IDEA grant; Title I grant; ESSER grant)
- Increase to Level Service - New Investments, prioritizing:

- Social/emotional needs; ESL program; Director of Teaching and Learning position; central office payroll clerk; athletic user fees.
- E&D Recommendation:
 - Mr. Leone provides a brief overview of the district's E&D funds:
 - FY21 E&D submitted approximately \$4.2 million (stemming from closures, professional development cancellations, chapter 70)
 - State law states the district may keep 5% however internal School Committee policy states the district may keep 3%. Therefore the district is retaining the \$1.1 million.
 - Last year, the district agreed to return any excess Chapter 70 funds to the towns. The district is fulfilling that commitment and returning \$773,000 through the budget process.
 - \$2.4 million remaining, of which the district recommends dedicating \$325,000 to extraordinary maintenance projects and the balance of approximately \$2 million be invested in the OPEB trust fund
 - Why use E&D on one-time expense?
 - Mr. Leone details the various arguments in support of the district's recommendation, including the impact on future year budgets if all funds were returned instead of invested.

Mr. Leone states that he will present this budget (with refined numbers in place of the placeholder amounts currently listed) during the 12/16/2021 School Committee meeting.

Following the district's budget presentation, the boards ask clarifying questions and engage in a lengthy conversation, including: OPEB investment management and rate of return; E&D options and implications on FY24 budget; major budget drivers; anticipated grant funding amounts/timeline/priorities; Chapter 70 funding; and ESSER I/II grant funding.

Ms. Kennedy voices her frustration due to her belief that the district failed to account for the funding they received when the schools were essentially shut down. Mr. Leone directs Ms. Kennedy to his detailed presentation to the School Committee in August 2021, where funding was accounted for line by line - including the amount of funding, funding source, and where funds were spent. There is further discussion regarding the state of schools during the pandemic, with Superintendent Tracy explaining the extraordinary efforts to continue school operations throughout the year.

In response to Mr. Knudsen's inquiry, Mr. Leone explains the difference between the 11/18/2021 budget (provided to the boards for review) and the budget presented this evening.

- Tonight's budget shows a \$2.3 million increase in gross operating;
- Tonight's budget shows the addition of 2 line items - 1. extraordinary maintenance; and 2. OPEB;
- Tonight's budget and the 11/18/2021 budget show no change to the net assessment to towns.

There is continued discussion surrounding the ESSER grant funding, with Superintendent Tracy explaining the requirements to use 20% of that funding towards elementary social worker and special education positions. There is further discussion about the positions funded by grants and how they are categorized in the budget.

Discussion regarding OPEB investment; positions funded by ESSER grants; considering district budget alongside town budgets; aligning district priorities with towns' priorities; availability of funds once invested in OPEB account (funds become unavailable); step/column changes; etc.

Mr. Leone agrees to provide Mr. Wagner with the requested per capita pupil cost. Mr. Wagner believes that the district's budget is beyond "level service" and he hopes the district can work alongside the towns to reduce the request. Mr. Pruellage appreciates Mr. Leone's work, but notes that such increases are not sustainable.

Discussion surrounding grant funded positions; prior COVID money and where funds were spent; enrollment numbers and anticipated wave/increase of students; per capita costs; budget recommendations; district priorities; district OPEB investment; district and towns working together; next steps; etc.

There is a brief discussion about the format and structure of tonight's meeting, with Mr. Domelowicz noting that the plan was for the towns to absorb tonight's presentation and present their budget at a later meeting. He provides a brief summary of Hamilton's budget and financial status, including discussion regarding town overrides and responsibility to taxpayers.

Mr. Purdy provides a brief overview of Wenham's financial status: the town is facing a deficit; 97.5% of revenue is received from residents; highest tax rate in all of Essex County - \$19.68; etc.

3. Vote to Adjourn

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT ADJOURN THE 12/08/2021 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING AT 8:55 PM.

MOTION by Michelle Bailey; SECONDED by Julia Campbell.

Michelle Bailey	YES:
Julia Campbell	YES:
Anna Siedzik	YES:
David Polito	YES:
Michelle Horgan	YES:
Dana Allara	YES:
Jennifer Carr	YES.

MOTION PASSES unanimously through roll call vote of seven (7) members present.

I MOVE THAT TOWN OF WENHAM BOARD OF SELECTMEN ADJOURN THE 12/08/2021 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING AT 8:55 PM.

MOTION by Dianne Bucco; SECONDED by Gary Cheeseman.

Catherine Harrison	YES:
Dianne Bucco	YES:
Gary Cheeseman	YES.

MOTION PASSES unanimously through roll call vote of three (3) members present.

I MOVE THAT THE TOWN OF HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN ADJOURN THE 12/08/2021 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING AT 8:55 PM.

MOTION by Darcy Dale; SECONDED by Rosemary Kennedy

Shawn M. Farrell	YES:
Darcy Dale	YES:
Rosemary Kennedy	YES;
Jamie Knudsen	YES.

MOTION PASSES unanimously through roll call vote of four (4) members present.

I MOVE THAT THE TOWN OF WENHAM FINANCE COMMITTEE ADJOURN THE 12/08/2021 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING AT 8:57 PM.

MOTION by David Reid; SECONDED by Scott Schonberger.

Scott Schonberger YES;
Susan Mehlin YES;
David Reid YES;
Jim Purdy YES;

MOTION PASSES unanimously through roll call vote of four (4) members present.

I MOVE THAT THE TOWN OF HAMILTON FINANCE COMMITTEE ADJOURN THE 12/08/2021 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING AT 8:57 PM.

MOTION by David Wagner ; SECONDED by Nicholas Tensen.

John Pruellage YES;
Nicholas Tensen YES;
David Wanger YES;
John McGrath YES;
Christina Schenk-Hargrove YES;

MOTION PASSES unanimously through roll call vote of five (5) members present.

Respectfully submitted January 23 2022 by Mahala Lettvin, Recording Secretary.
