

**PRESENT:** F. J. Ferreira, Jr., Chairman; M. J. Caruso, P. G. Robart, Selectmen; E. N. Small, Town Administrator; L. A. Ruest, Administrative Assistant

**ACCEPTANCE OF FEDERAL FUNDS – HIGHWAY SAFETY PROJECT:** F. J. Ferreira, Jr. opened the public hearing. Police Chief R. Dirsra stated that the Department has applied for and has been granted money to purchase a new in-cruiser camera. He explained the costs of the equipment noting that a portion (\$2,500) will be reimbursed to the town. The balance of the costs has been applied to and paid from the 2003 budget.

He noted that this is a good project and that money is not always available to obtain equipment such as this. The camera assists with investigation as well as keeps officers safe from false accusations. He explained that the camera is a newer model than those owned by the Department.

Discussion was opened to the Board and public. No comments were heard. F. J. Ferreira, Jr. closed the public hearing.

**MOTION:** To accept federal funds for the purchase of an in-cruiser video camera for the highway safety project.

**MOTION:** M. J. Caruso  
**SECOND:** P. G. Robart  
**Unanimous**

**2004 BUDGET PROPOSAL:** F. J. Ferreira, Jr. opened the public hearing. The Board conducted a department-by-department review of the proposed 2004 budget (\$1,781,400) answering questions of the public. Increases and decreases in budget lines were noted as well as offsetting revenues. Proposed money articles were reviewed as well. Questions relating to the Homeland Security Act and grants available were answered by the Police Chief and Fire Chief. Another money article in the amount of \$3,600 will be added to cover the cost of a 10% match for funds granted for a ventilation system at the Public Safety Building. Discussion relating to the SB2 form of voting and issues relating to the default budget took place. Concerns with payroll were noted relating to the difference of a contracted versus non-contracted employee. Board members indicated that this matter will be addressed during this year.

Hearing no further comments or questions, E. N. Small noted the difference between the proposed and default budget is \$13,850. F. J. Ferreira, Jr. thanked the public for attending and closed the public hearing.

**PROPOSED \$2.5 MILLION BOND ISSUE FOR OPEN SPACE:** Conservation Commission Chair T. Beattie began discussion by providing information with respect to the work being done to obtain open space land easements by the Commission. Many members of the Commission were present. It was explained that the Conservation Commission has been working on a project over a two-year period where a purchase and sale agreement has been drafted but not yet signed. Other projects are under consideration as well. The Commission has been working toward achieving the goals, needs and desires expressed over the years to maintain the rural character of Hampton Falls.

The Commission plans to apply for federal and state grant matching funds for proposed projects. There is approximately \$1,000,000 in the Conservation Fund at present. Most of these funds have been raised through current use taxes.

Public comment included questions regarding purchasing land outright versus obtaining conservation easements or development rights. Discussion of how the bond would apply took place as well as the mechanics of bringing a proposal to public hearing. Question was raised with respect to the amount of buildable land versus wetland of a prospective parcel. K. Ayers noted that the price would be based on a real estate appraisal for what could be developed.

T. Beattie noted that the Conservation Commission will be holding a public hearing on January 26, 2004 addressing a program called "Saving Special Places." At this time, the Conservation Commission will be showing potential properties for consideration and explaining the cost effectiveness of open space. She also noted that during the year, the Commission has been including information as part of the Library Newsletter. A flyer is being prepared for mailing at present.

In response to G. Wenger, the Board stated that the current use tax money will remain with the Conservation Commission. Discussion of the tax impact to taking development rights and the length of a bond took place. It was noted that large parcels in current use are currently not generating a great tax. Suggestion was made to reconsider using the words "to purchase" as part of the warrant article.

Hearing no further comments, F. J. Ferreira, Jr. closed the public hearing.

**MOTION:** To adjourn the meeting at 9:23 p.m.

**MOTION:** M. J. Caruso  
**SECOND:** P. G. Robart  
**Unanimous**