

Hanover Finance Committee

January 8, 2025

Location: RW Black Community Center, Community Lounge

Attendees: Committee Members – Antonia Barry, Carey Callaghan (Selectboard Member), John Dolan, Richard Greger, Greg Snyder (Chair), Peter Solberg, Tara Velozo (School Board Member– attending via phone)

Ellen Bullion (Hanover Town Finance Director)

Absent HFC Members: (none)

- 1) **Call to order** – 4:14 PM
- 2) **Public Comment** - none
- 3) **Approval of Minutes of December 11, 2025** – Approved Unanimously
- 4) **Report of School Board Member** -
 - T. Velozo summarized recent deliberations of the Hanover and Dresden school boards respectively, regarding finalization of their budget plans.
 - Hanover School district budget proposal seems close to completion, with cutting of various expenses undertaken to partially offset very significant healthcare expense increases which cannot be controlled and represent the combination of ~20% increase in employee insurance costs combined with a “special assessment” additional bill for the current year to cover unanticipated covered expenses. The budget proposal submits that Administration has made a good faith effort to accommodate these major headwinds without materially impacting on the core educational program, and anticipates a budget increase of 7.06%. Combined with a 7.48% increase in the Dresden assessment to Hanover, Hanover taxpayers appear to face a potential 6.38% increase to their school tax rate, before consideration of additional school warrant articles, based on materials available to us at the time of the meeting.
 - One added budget item in the Hanover is a proposed warrant article for \$477k to establish a pre-school program (modelled after one already active at Marion Cross which is currently likely subject to *reduction*). Though the plan notes some reduction in current cost to the district to send 7 children on IEPs to private school with aids, this plan would add 8 children without special needs but no clear criteria to select from the very large pool of potential preschoolers. The HFC agreed to further review but sentiment raised that this may not be the best year to incur this added expense.

- Dresden School Districts budget committee asked administrators from the Richmond School (RMS) and Hanover High to prepare budgets with an anticipated 7% increase, but also to come up with rank ordered lists of cuts which could deliver and increase of only 6% respectively. To this point, the Dresden Budget Committee has not voted to select one of those proposals and there is concern that the “6%” list will include some unpalatable cuts on core program. Full background materials to evaluate the contrasting budget options have not yet been made available to HFC, though there is work to get those ASAP. Dresden is experiencing the same key healthcare increases as Hanover (same union contracts) and has the added budget variance created by voter approval for a middle school sport program last year. Complicating the decisions around which cuts can be made at each school is the perception by some that RMS may be running “leaner” going into this process, and that perhaps same numerical benchmark should not be applied to each school.
- Critical upcoming Board meeting will offer final budget proposals and votes to approve on Tuesday January 13th for Dresden (7pm at the High School Library) and January 14th for Hanover (7pm at the Ray School Music room). It was agreed that these meetings will be a key opportunity for the HFC to give meaningful feedback *prior* to final budgets being submitted for public voter review at the Hanover and Dresden School district meeting on Saturday February 28, following by voting day on March 3. HFC member participation in the two meetings was assigned.
- January 23rd is the deadline for the HFC to submit its formal statements of support for budgets, for inclusion in the February 26 materials. HFC will plan its next meeting to review discussion of the meetings on the 13th and 14th and assign writing of the statements.
- Additional supporting documents for the budget presentations, not yet available in Simbli particularly for the Dresden Finance committee, will be needed for the HFC to complete a thorough review.

5) **Report of Selectboard Member -**

- Presentation and discussion was foreshortened for this meeting, given the need to focus on above school discussions.
- E. Bullion and C. Callaghan reminded HFC that the town’s budget process has started with a series of 5 PM public meetings at the Town Hall Boardroom to review all departments plans for the new budget
 - January 12th for the small department budget presentation
 - January 26th for the police, fire, parks and recreation budget presentation
 - February 9th for the DPW budget presentation
 - Followed by April hearing for budget approval
- There is an upcoming public feedback meeting at the Howe Library on Tuesday January 13th at 4pm to review capital improvement plans for South Main street, which

will be a major project. The CIPC (chaired by HFC member John Dolan) will have a role in evaluating that project.

- Again discussed was the NH DRA notification that there is a \$500,000 tax collection shortfall currently for the Dresden School District. There are preliminary plans to send a supplemental tax bill or increase the spring tax bill, but clearly this will also impact on the above Dresden budget discussions.

6) Report of Chair -

- New (returning!) member Antonia Barry was welcomed to the HFC.
- Next meeting will be on January 15th at the Black center.

7) Other Business

- none

8) Adjourn – 5:42 PM