

Hopewell Township Finance Advisory Committee

Municipal Building Conference Room
November 5, 2015

Secretary Gale Downey called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm and asked members in attendance to state their name for the record. Shortly thereafter, the Chairman Tom Welsh arrived and took over as the moderator of the meeting.

Members Present: Welsh, Clawson, Colina, Downey, Robinson (Alternate)
Guleria (Alternate)

Members Absent: Sauer

Staff Present: Borges

HTC Liaisons Present: Lester

Prior Minutes

The draft of the minutes from the October 1, 2015 FAC meeting was not available. Approval of the October FAC meeting minutes was delayed until a future FAC meeting.

Continuation of Discussion Related to the Cost of Certificates

The discussion of what the cost of issuing birth certificates and death certificates was continued from the October FAC meeting. Bob English's memos and spreadsheets were discussed at length.

Consensus was reached by the FAC on the following issues:

The approximate cash cost of issuing birth certificates, death certificates, and additional copies of both was estimated to be \$20.00 per document. This was derived by taking the total cost for the registrar's salary, etc. and the cash cost of issuing the documents and subtracting from this total the small amount of revenue from the other minor fees that were collected and then dividing by the total number of documents being issued. However, the FAC recommended in previous meetings to only increase the cost of issuing the initial birth certificate and death certificate to \$25.00 and then just charging \$10.00 per additional copy of each type of certificate that is requested. Tom Welsh indicated that using 2014 data, the health department was operating in 2014 at a deficit of \$69,007. Implementing these fee increase recommendations would reduce the deficit by \$42,000 but not eliminate it.

The question of whether to raise the fees for additional copies was discussed and it was decided that it would make requesting three copies of the birth certificate in one visit to be too expensive, namely \$75.00, if the fee for copies was also raised to \$25.00. Thus the consensus of the committee thought that the fee for additional copies for both documents should remain at \$10.00.

Bob English in his original memo had recommended raising the fee to \$20.00 for initial copies of birth certificates and death certificates. However, his recent memo about making change indicated that this was primarily based on the ease of making change for a \$20.00 fee over a \$25.00 fee. This issue was discussed at length. The consensus of the FAC was that the method for making change based on currency denomination was an internal administrative issue and should not be used in considering the amount that these fees should be increased by.

The question was raised as to when the fee for birth certificates was last increased. Gale Downey examined all ordinances that revised the pertinent health ordinance with Laurie Gompf since December 2007. Going that far back, all revisions made by ordinance had only made changes to the language of the ordinance. There have not been any increases in the fees that were charged since December 2007. So the current \$10.00 fee has been in effect since before December 2007. This may have been appropriate back in 2007 when only 5 birth certificates were issued. However, the opening of the Capital Health hospital in Hopewell Township in late 2011 has caused the number of birth certificates issued by the health department to sky rocket. In 2014, the health department issued 1,079 initial birth certificates. A full time registrar was hired in 2014 to handle the heavy work load that the health department now has. However, the fees for birth certificates and death certificates were not increased to cover the cost of the full time registrar. Thus the FAC is recommending increases in the fees for both birth certificates and death certificates to cover the increased costs of providing this service.

Thus Tom Welsh made a motion to reaffirm the previous votes by the FAC to raise the fee for the initial copy of birth certificates and death certificates to \$25.00 but leave the fee for additional copies at \$10.00 each. Al Colina seconded this motion. It was approved by a unanimous vote. Tom Welsh indicated that he would revise his draft memo to reflect that the cash cost of these certificates is approximately \$20.00 and that by including a 20% reasonable estimate for overhead costs, that the FAC's recommendation to raise these fees to \$25.00 is appropriate. This revised memo would be sent to Borges for subsequent forwarding to the administration.

Public Session

Chairman Welsh opened the meeting to the public. Seeing that there were no members of the public present, Chairman Welsh closed the public session.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance Advisory Committee is scheduled for December 3rd at 7:00 pm. Secretary Downey asked the members about their availability for the December 3rd meeting. Three members indicated that at this point in time they were available to meet on December 3rd and a quorum would be available. Chairman Welsh asked whether there would be 2016 budget information available for the committee to review by December 3rd. Neither Borges nor Lester could indicate whether that would be the case. Thus Tom Welsh indicated that he would confer with Elaine Borges on whether there was sufficient budget info to review for the FAC to warrant meeting on Dec. 3rd.

Adjournment

A motion was made for adjournment by Clawson, seconded by Downey, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Gale Downey
Secretary
Finance Advisory Committee.