



Finance Committee
TOWN OF HALIFAX
499 Plymouth Street
Halifax, MA 02338

Meeting Minutes

Monday February 5, 2024

Committee Members Present (Remotely): Edward Bryan, Todd Dargie, Frank Johnston, Cheryll Zarrella Burke, William Smith, Michael Bennett & Jim Walters

Audience: Chief Chaves, Cody Haddad, Sandy Nolan & Katie Esposito

Todd Dargie called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm

This meeting is being conducted remotely and being recorded by Area 58.

ACCEPTANCE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES FROM JANUARY 22, 2024: Minutes from the Finance Committee meeting from January 22, 2024, have been circulated to the committee members prior to the meeting for review.

Todd entertained a motion to recommend the Finance Committee meeting from January 22, 2024

Motion: Cheryl Zarrella Burke

Second: Michael Bennett

Roll Call: Todd Dargie, Frank Johnston, Cheryll Zarrella Burke, William Smith, Michael Bennett & Jim Walters

(Edward Bryan abstained as he was not in attendance for this meeting)

Motion Passes 6/0

RESERVE FUND TRANSFER REQUESTS: There are no reserve fund transfers scheduled for the current meeting. Todd did mention to Sandy they are still waiting for the updated reserve fund transfer request from the meeting on January 22, 2024. Sandy stated she will get them to the members this week for signature.

FY25 BUDGET LIAISON UPDATE: Every finance committee liaison has now met with their assigned departments.

DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVIEW: Cody proposed a new process this year regarding department heads presenting their budget for the Finance Committee as a whole. He recommended having only the larger departments in for meetings with the committee. Many of the smaller departments are level funded and they do not have major changes this year. They have also already reviewed their budget with the Town Administrator, Town Account and Finance Committee Liaison at the beginning of the year. The committee members agreed and thought this would expedite the budget review process.

Cody then reviewed the level funded budgets with the committee. Cody shares his screen to allow the committee and public to view the FY25 Budget Spreadsheet. Most line items were level funded but a few items with increased were explained.

- The Union and non-union salaries reflected a 2% increase from the Wage and Personnel Study.
- The cost for Town Hall Electric had an increase from \$16,000 to \$20,000 due to the rising cost of electricity. The town has partnered with an energy saving program which they are hoping will help with cost at any municipality building.
- The Audit cost increases by \$1,000 each year. This is a contracted agreement between the town and the audit company.
- The banking and payroll expenses have doubled from \$8,000 to \$16,000 for FY25. This is a flat rate by Custom Data Processing (CDP), the town's current payroll company. This figure is based on reports run and the number of employees. The town is currently not in a contract with CDP. In the future this would be something the town would consider bringing in house. Town employees are not mandated to enroll in direct deposit, which is a very small expense for the town to have checks generated. Most employees opt to enroll in the automatic deposit.
- The increase for the Election/ Registration line item is because it is an election year. This causes added expense for the town including paying the poll staff.
- Jim asked how the longevity bonuses are calculated into the budget. Cody informs him that it can be found in the Salary line item. This longevity bonus is paid to qualifying employees on their anniversary date.
- The conservation agent increased from \$28,000 to \$30,000. This is to allow for additional hours that may be required for meetings outside of the 24 hours per week he will be currently be on site.
- Bill asked about the planning board wages only being on the FY23 budget. Cody explains that previously each board had a 15 hour a week secretary. When he accepted the position with Halifax both the Planning Board Secretary and Zoning Board Secretary were vacant. The decision was made to make it one full-time position instead. This new position can be found under Regulatory – Clerical

Cody then explains that he plans on having two department heads every week during the Finance Committee meetings to review their upcoming budget proposal. Cody is hopefully to be able to have all department meetings completed by the end of February.

FY25 CAPITAL PLANNING UPDATES: The Capital Planning Committee had a meeting last week reviewing requests from the Fire Department and Police Department. They have another meeting scheduled for next week where they will review the rest of the department's requests. Then once Cody has the free cash amount in March the committee will be able to move forward with their recommendations.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST TRAINING: Todd reminded the committee about the mandatory Conflict of Interest training for all town personnel. The link to complete the training was emailed to you by Sue.

FINANCE COMMITTEE SPRING CONFERENCE: There is a conference held annually by the Massachusetts Municipality Association. The date and location for this year has not been released, however it is typically held in April or May. Todd asks the committee members if they would be interested in attending. Cheryl stated she would like to go as she has gone in the past and found it beneficial. Other members interested in attending are Michael, Jim, and Frank.

COMMITTEE LIAISON UPDATES: Jim stated the Zoning Board is still working on updating the zoning by-laws. Frank spoke on the MBTA project. They are expecting to receive a draft soon which will then be submitted to the state for approval. The next zoning meeting will be on February 22, 2024.

CORRESPONDENCE & AS MAY ARISE: Frank asked about the ARPA funding and if there was a balance of what is left in the account. Cody will get the balance for the next meeting but most of the funding has been utilized. Jim asked if the budget cuts from the governor's office will impact Halifax directly. Cody has reviewed the changes and the only big modification for Halifax is for the treatment of the ponds. The town budget has decreased to \$50,000 from \$100,000.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Nothing currently.

NEXT MEETING PLANNING: February 12, 2024 - The committee will be meeting weekly until the Town Meeting

Todd Dargie entertained a motion to adjourn at 6:39 PM

Motion: Michael Bennett

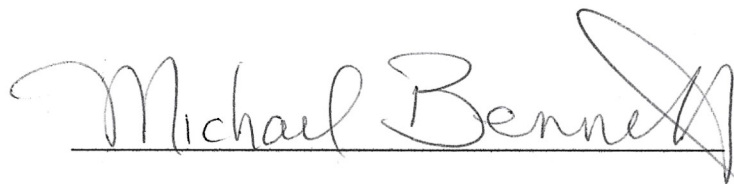
Second: Cheryl Zarrella Burke

Roll Call: Todd Dargie, Edward Bryan, Frank Johnston, Cheryl Zarrella Burke, William Smith, Michael Bennett & Jim Walters

All in Favor 7/0

EXHIBITS: FY25 Budget Sheet – Town Administrator

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Bennett". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Michael Bennett, Clerk