



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

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday February 20, 2024

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

Absent: Edward Bryan

Audience: Jean Gallant, Chief Witham, Chief Chaves, Cody Haddad, Sandy Nolan, Ellen Snoeyenbos & Katie Esposito

Todd Dargie called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm

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

ACCEPTANCE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES FROM February 12, 2024: Minutes from the Finance Committee meeting from February 12, 2024, have been circulated to the committee members prior to the meeting for review.

Todd entertained a motion to accept the Finance Committee meeting minutes from February 12, 2024

Motion: Michael Bennett

Second: William Smith

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

(Cheryll Zarrella Burke abstained as she was not in attendance for this meeting)

Motion Passes 5/0

DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVIEW – POLICE DEPARTMENT: Todd turns the meeting over to Chief Chaves to review his proposed budget. Cody shares his screen to show the committee and guests the Police Department line items being discussed.

- Line 44 – Chief Salary & Deputy Chief Salary: There was a large increase in this line item due to the added position of Deputy Chief.
- Line 45 – Wages: The requested amount differs from the TA recommendation due to the vacation buyout coming from a different line item. Jim asked about the overtime wages and if additional funds should be allocated for this. Cody states he is confident in this number and feels it is stable.
- Line 46 – Training: This line item is level funded and covers training and ammunition.

- Line 47 – Clerical: The requested budget includes an additional part time staff member. Cody has taken this out in his recommendation. Cody stated he will be meeting with the chief and explain his recommendation.
- Line 48 – Expenses: Level funded. It was asked about the cost associated with the new comfort animal. The Chief explained that this funding comes from the DA's office.
- Line 49 – Station Maintenance: The increase is due to the rising cost of electricity which is putting the departments in deficit.
- Line 50 – Cruise Maintenance: This is a level funded expenditure.
- Line 67 – Animal Control Officer: The chief is currently awaiting a new contract proposal. He has called the agency multiple times and has yet to receive a response. Jim asked how many times the department utilized this service in previous years. The Chief explains they have hundreds of calls dispatching the ACO annually. Bills suggested the regional ACO program. He states the cost may be less and the town pays a user fee.

DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVIEW – FIRE DEPARTMENT: Todd turns the meeting over to Chief Witham to review his proposed budget. Cody shares his screen to show the committee and guests the Fire Department line items being discussed.

- Line 51 – Chief Salary: Contractual Salary
- Line 52 – Clerical: Executive Assistant Salary which was set during the compensation study which was just completed.
- Line 53 – Wages: This line item includes an increase in overtime wages. It also incorporates contractual incentives for fire personnel including additional certifications and college courses. If a staff member would like to participate in this program, they will need to notify the Chief in January to allow for budgeting. Education reimbursement is 50% with a cap of \$2,500. Training courses also include a stipend and promotional incentives. The Chief also explains they are having a hard time finding firefighters/paramedics. To assist with this, he took away part-time positions to create two more full-time positions. This will allow the department to have fully staffed shifts including 4 firefighters and 4 paramedics. This will in turn lower the overtime hours needed.
- Line 54 – Training: Only major change was for \$2,000 allocated for new radios.
- Line 55 – Expenses: New hires means they need to get fitted for new equipment. This budget allows for the purchase of gear and equipment for three new hires. Todd asked if the part-time members will be filling the new full-time positions. Unfortunately, they will not due to PT staff not being firefighter/paramedics or working full time already for another town.
- Line 56 – Station Maintenance: Increase due to a repair to the apparatus floor as well as an increase in electricity costs.
- Line 57 – Vehicle Equipment Maintenance: Increased to allow for scheduled testing of the equipment ladders.
- Line 58 – Ambulance Supplies: Chief Witham has spoken with his supplier and is confident in this number for the upcoming year.
- Line 59 – Ambulance Biling: Increased due to more runs completed.
- Line 60 – Emergency Management: This budget was decreased by \$1,000, however he believes this number will be sufficient to assist with a shelter if needed.

DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVIEW – LIBRARY: Todd turns the meeting over to Jean Gallant to review her proposed budget. Cody shares his screen to show the committee and guests the Library Department line items being discussed. Jean reviews the library requirements with the committee and explains the total appropriated municipal income (TAMI) and how it's calculated. In previous years they aim to have the TAMI and the library requirements similar however this year they will not be able to due to the increase from compensation study

- Line 611 – Salary: This line item is \$91,217 and was determined during the compensation study.
- Line 612 – Wages: This is a fixed cost of \$192,600 which accounts for staff meetings and shift coverage if needed.
- Line 613 – Expenses: Like other departments the library has seen a large increase in electricity expenses, which was accounted for in the proposed budget. Other than that Jean was very cautious about increasing the expenses due to TAMI. Any increase from this fiscal year will affect the fiscal years in the future.
 - Jean explained this was the budget she submitted to Cody. However, after speaking with Ellen, she does not believe it would be best practice to pay for the network fees from the incentive grant received from the state. Last year the network fees were \$13,000 which is paid to the sales network. In previous years this fee was split between her town budget and the grant. However, this year to keep the TAMI low they plan to pay the whole cost from the grant. The Halifax Library received \$18,778 from the state-aid grant in FY24. Cody asked Jean what caused the change in her budget. He mentioned during the department meeting with Sandy, Jim, and himself she had no concerns about using the grant to pay for the full network fee in FY25. There is around \$30k in unused assets in the grant currently.
 - Ellen then asks to speak on the subject and informs the committee it is not encouraged to use this grant for continued expenses including network fees. She is concerned about the line item being completely removed from the town budget. She suggests using the grant to pay for some of the materials instead of the full network fee.
 - Jean mentions due to the library being open 41 hours a week they are only required to spend 16% not 19% like other towns. Jean stated because of this the bottom line doesn't change it is just how the funds are allocated. Cody suggested bringing the library's overall budget down because of this requirement which will assist with the TAMI. Sandy mentioned that the library is already \$30k over what they are required to spend because of the classification study. This will affect the town every year going forward. Cody mentioned that this is state-aided funds the town receives every year, it's not a grant with a competitive application process.
 - Funds are in the incentive grant budget, and it rolls over every year. Jean uses this account for emergencies or unforeseen expenses. Cody mentions that a reserve fund transfer can be used for library emergency if needed.
 - Jean wishes to purchase a new Projector system for the library and would like to use this account to purchase it. Ceasar explains the library has a projector right now but it is outdated (2016) and they wish to modernize. The new projector was requested by the Board of Trustees. Cody states right now the library can still move forward with the new projector due to the excessive funds currently in the account as well as pay the network fees.

RESERVE FUND TRANSFER REQUESTS: There are no reserve fund transfers scheduled for the current meeting. Todd asks Sandy about a previous water department reserve fund transfer's account number. Sandy did investigate this and found it was not accurate. She stated the committee does not need to recirculate an updated request and she will make the change on her end.

ARPA FUND BALANCE REVIEW: The current balance in the ARPA account is \$185k. Cody mentions \$50k of this funding needs to be used for the allowed purposes. The fire department needs HVAC work done. This was originally requested for a capital item, but Cody believes he can submit this through ARPA funding instead. They are also considering using this funding for fire gear for a one-time request. Going forward he would like to get fire gear as a rotating capital item. Cody mentions there are some water concerns over at Halifax Elementary School. They will know more about the expected costs in the coming months. There are lead concerns linked directly to the HES. Cody believes utilizing APRA would be beneficial use of the funding.

ASSOCIATION OF TOWN FINANCE COMMITTEE SPRING CONFERENCE: Todd updated the committee on the Association of Town Finance Committee Spring Conference which has been scheduled for Saturday April 6th from 9AM – 1PM at Pineridge in Oxford MA. The registration link will be released in the coming weeks along with the agenda items. Once available Todd will share with committee members. He thinks it's a good opportunity to network with other towns.

COMMITTEE LIAISON UPDATES: Nothing to review.

CORRESPONDENCE & AS MAY ARISE: nothing to review.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None

NEXT MEETING PLANNING: Wage and Personnel will be next Tuesday February 27, 2024. Todd and Cheryll have conflicts and will not be able to attend. Micheal will run this meeting on behalf of the Finance Committee. The upcoming Finance Committee meeting are below.

- February 26th at 6:00 PM with the Building Maintenance Department. (Frank will be absent)
- March 4th at 6:00 PM with the Water Department.
- March 11th meeting has been cancelled.
- March 18th at 6:00PM with the School Department.

Selectmen Meeting is scheduled for March 26th to approve the warrant for Town Hall. Cheryll is not available on Tuesdays and asked if we could move this meeting to that Wednesday the 27th. Cody will check with the selectmen to see if this can be accommodated.

Todd Dargie entertained a motion to adjourn at 7:57 PM

Motion: Michael Bennett

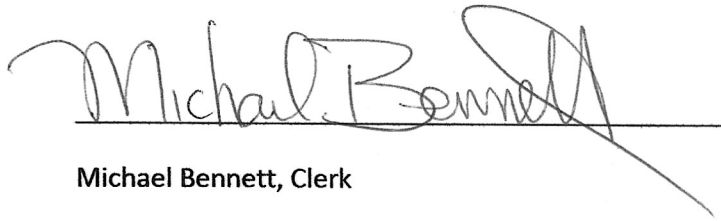
Second: Cheryl Zarrella Burke

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

All in Favor 6/0

EXHIBITS: FY25 Budget Sheet – Town Administrator & Library TAMI Breakdown

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Bennett", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "M" and a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Michael Bennett, Clerk