



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

## Meeting Minutes

**Tuesday March 4, 2024**

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

**Absent:** Michael Bennett

**Audience:** Bill Lindsey, Bert, 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 February 26, 2024:** Minutes from the Finance Committee meeting from February 26, 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 26, 2024**

Motion: Cheryll Zarrella Burke

Second: William Smith

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

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

*Motion Passes 5/0*

**DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVIEW – WATER DEPARTMENT:** Todd turns the meeting over to Bill Lindsey to review the proposed budget for the Water Department. Cody shares his screen to show the committee and guests the Water Department line items being discussed.

- **Line 96 – Water Supply:** The department increased their electrical expenses due to unknown rates for the coming year. An additional increase was added for testing and chemicals. This is because of the rising cost of chemicals and the town is now required to perform more annual testing than in previous years. There was a \$55k set aside for "Other Expenses", Sandy informs the committee this inclines the Verizon bill, fittings for new services, service boxes and other misc. expenditures.
- **Line 97 – Insurance:** The town bills the water department for Insurance. This was the 5% increase requested by the Town Accountant.

#### Veterans Agent:

- Line 119 – Salary: This is a stipend position which increased to \$17k
- Line 120 – Expense: The agent is required to attend training courses and meetings which will be covered in this budget item.
- Line 122 – Veterans Benefits: This will account for all the veterans currently utilizing the benefit as well as additional new enrollments.
- Line 134 – Patriotic Event: The budget was \$300 which will help fund the banners and other items. Cody mentioned that the town receives a lot of donations as well to help offset these costs.

#### Youth and Recreation Department

- Line 131- Wages: This increased to account for the new seasonal beach attendant position posted.
- Line 132 – Expenses: Level Funded

Frank mentioned the Park Department received funding last year for modification, he asked Cody if these have been utilized yet. Cody stated they have work currently going on and will be adding signage soon once placement is approved by the engineer.

#### Miscellaneous Line Items Reviewed

- Line 133 – Cable Television: This is credit received however the town uses this to pay the costs associated with area 58. Therefore it is level funded.
- Line 135 – Historical Commission: Increase in electrical costs.
- Line 136 – Historical District Commission: Increased by a few dollars from last year from \$446 to \$450.
- Line 137 – Holiday in Halifax: This is level funded. The cost to pay for police detail wages comes from this account as well as donations made.
- Line 138 – Halifax Firework Committee: The town receives donations from local businesses for this event. This is level funded.
- Line 139 – Beautification Commission: Includes clean up events as well as flyers. This is level funded
- Line 140 - Agricultural Commission: We have not used this for years.
- Line 141 – Website Expense and Music Rights: This expense has been reallocated to the IT budget.
- Line 62 - Asst Building Inspector Wages: This was added to the budget at the request of the new Building Inspector. This will allow for the assistance of a surrounding town inspector if needed in the absence of the Town Inspector.
- Line 63 - Bldg. Inspector – Expense: Small decrease but includes the upcoming expense associated with the new code books being released.
- Line 66 – Animal Control Officer Salary: They are still waiting on the vendor for a contract proposal. Cody has budgeted for a 3% increase while they wait.
- Line 69 – Dispatch Services: The Chief has spoken with the dispatch center and the proposed amount of \$220k is accurate.
- Line 15A - IT Expense: There is a 5% increase this is associated with the website expenses and music rights being added to the IT budget. The town is also updating their financial software and the annual fee has increased. This account also includes the new online licensing and permitting costs.

- Line 98 – Retirement: Requested 8% increase from the Town Account. During the town meeting the Water Department allocated \$75K, this request for \$38K is the remaining amount needed.
- Line 99 – Legal Fees: No legal fees are expected this year.
- Line 100 – Meters: There is a new system going in soon. This will be a cloud-based database where residents can view their bill online.
- Line 101 – Gas & Oil: This is increased due to fluctuating prices.
- Line 102 – Vehicle Maintenance: No Changes
- Line 103 – Tower/Wells Maintenance: The new well being installed has lowered the expected maintenance expense for the wells.

Jim asks about the run rate for the electricity. Bill states he is getting rid of outdated items from the well. The new equipment is supposed to use less energy. Cody states they are still increasing the budget to stay on the safe side because it is hard to predict costs with the wells being offline currently. Jim also asked about the cost of chemicals and if they are confident in the budget suggested. Cody agreed and increased the chemical budget to \$45k.

**DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVIEW – BUILDING MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT:** Todd turns the meeting over to Cody and Bert to review the proposed budget for the Building Maintenance Department. Cody shares his screen to show the committee and guests the Building Maintenance Department line items being discussed.

- Line 41 - Expense: Last year the approved budget was \$35,360 and this year they are requesting \$58,765.
- Line 42 - Preventative maintenance: Last year the approved budget was \$53,616 and this year they are requesting \$30,211.
  - Line items 41 & 42 have been flipped this year. They are still requesting the same amount however they are reallocating the line items they are funding.
- Line 158 – Heating Oil (All Buildings): This is level funded and provides heating for all town buildings.

**DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVIEW – MISC. DEPARTMENTS:** Todd turns the meeting over to Cody to review the proposed budget for Misc. Departments. Cody shares his screen to show the committee and guests the Building Maintenance Department line items being discussed.

Recycling Department:

- Line 105 – Expense: There was a \$1K increase this fiscal year to account for additional postage costs. The department is now sending 2 bills for recycling and trash removal.
- Line 106 – Wages: This increased to account for the additional 2% wage and personnel increase.

EJ asks about the impact of the new program and if the hauling costs have decreased. Cody explained that the trash level remains the same. He likes the new vendor and states the cost is where they expected.

Health Department:

- Line 111 - Expenses: This is level funded. They did cut the budget by \$2,500 but left funding for the Bevers.
- Line 114 - Landfill - Engineering & Monitoring: The town is currently on year 2 of 3 on this contract.



**COMMITTEE LIAISON UPDATES:** Todd asks for an update on the free cash figure. Sandy has completed an quick estimate of \$250K. This still needs to be submitted to the state which will happen at the end of next week. Once approved Cody will be able to provide an exact figure and make his Capital request recommendations.

**CORRESPONDENCE & AS MAY ARISE:** nothing to review.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None

**NEXT MEETING PLANNING:**

- March 13<sup>th</sup> – Wage and Personnel (in person) at 6PM
- March 18<sup>th</sup> at 6PM with the School Department.
- March 25<sup>th</sup> at 6PM – Review line items and vote
- March 26<sup>th</sup> (In person with BOA) at 6PM for a Budget review

**Todd Dargie entertained a motion to adjourn at 7:48 PM**

Motion: Cheryl Zarrella Burke

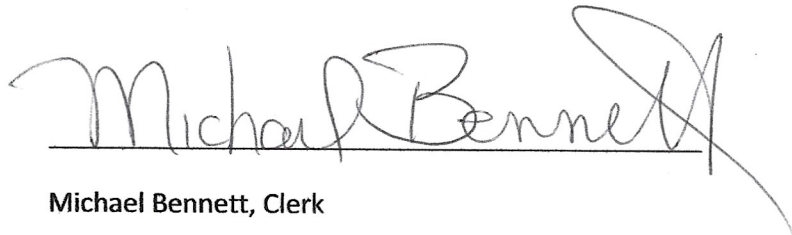
Second: William Smith

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

*All in Favor 6/0*

**EXHIBITS:** FY25 Budget Sheet – Town Administrator

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Michael Bennett", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "M" and "B". A long, thin vertical stroke extends from the end of the signature, crossing the line.

Michael Bennett, Clerk