Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday March 10, 2021**

**Committee Members Present**: Cheryll Zarella Burke, Fred McGovern, Drew McGlincy, Tom Connolly, Joe Vetrano

Also, in attendance in the audience were: Charlie Seelig, Sandy Nolan, Jean Gallant, Chief Chave and an unidentified resident.

The meeting was recorded by Zoom

**Fred called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:03 pm**

**Fred entertained a motion to accept the meeting minutes from 03/08/2021**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Tom

**AIF**

There were no Reserve Fund Transfers

Fred asked Charlie if there were any Wage and Personnel amendments to be discussed or if the Selectmen had made any recommendations. Charlie said the Selectmen had a discussion about the fact that they felt the higher level positions such as the Chiefs’ positions and the Town Administrator should become Ungraded Positions with salaries associated with them. The salaries would reflect the numbers currently in their contracts.

Charlie also told the Fin Com that Gordon Andrews had mentioned that he felt it was important for the Fin Com to reach out to the HES School Committee along with the Selectmen and give the committee guidance on the fact that Halifax has determined that there is no way they will have the money to support the proposed budget and that cuts need to be made. Gordon would like something written that says what Fin Com already told the Town departments, which is that we are asking all departments to level fund. Fred said he was surprised the school hadn’t already given a second set of numbers. Fred also said he was concerned that the high school seems overly concerned with sports in general and some certain sports getting extra funding. He said he believes they need to just focus on the academics first. Charlie said he also believes that the Silver Lake budget includes a 1.6% across the board salary increase, which neither the Town or even the Halifax elementary school have included in their budgets. Fred asked what order the Towns will vote in while reminding the other Fin Com members that if 2 out of the 3 towns vote for the Silver Lake budget, then the third town is stuck with paying it even if they voted it down. Charlie said Kingston will probably not be voting until the end of May. Plympton will likely vote a couple days after us and Halifax will likely be voting first. Fred said he is concerned that if Silver Lake gets voted through after Halifax has already voted for other things above the budget at Town meeting, then the Silver Lake budget could kill the Town. Charlie said we would likely have to use the Stabilization account to fund Silver Lake budget if that happened. Sandy mentioned that the American Recovery Act had just been discussed during a conference she was in that day. She said it will send money directly to Counties, Towns and schools. Sandy said there is a website where you can find out what each entity is supposed to receive, and she would look it up and send it to Charlie so he could investigate it. Fred said he still didn’t understand how if enrollment is going down as has been the recent trend, the School budget keeps going up. He said it might be time to consider staffing cuts if the classes are getting smaller. Charlie also cautioned that even if money comes directly to the school for the American Recovery Act then we should understand it is a one-time payment and the school shouldn’t be using it to balance operating expenses.

Fred suggested that the Committee begin to vote numbers in the budgets (as printed in 3/10 spreadsheet, see attached).

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Account | Motion | Second | Vote |
| W&P expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Recruitment and Employ | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Con Com expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Planning expense | Tom | Cheryll | Aif |
| Appeals expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Building comm expense | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Town building expense (Joe noted the correct figure was 35,360) | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Town building preventative maintenance | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Town building snow & ice | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Police training | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Police expense | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Police maintenance | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Police cruiser maintenance | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Fire expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Fire station maintenance | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Fire vehicle equipment | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Fire medical supplies | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Ambulance billing | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Emergency Management | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Building Inspector expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Sealer weight & measures expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Animal Control expense | Tom | Cheryl | AIF |
| Dispatch services | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Silver Lake Debt exclusion | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Highway barn maintenance | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Highway expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Highway Equipment | Tom | Cheryll | AIf |
| Highway Town Roads | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Highway Storm Water | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Highway snow and ice | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Street lights | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Traffic lights | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Tree warden salary | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Tree Maintenance | Tom | Cheryll | AIf |
| Insect and Pest control | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Cemetery supplies and equipment | Cheryll | tom | AIF |
| Water supply | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Water insurance | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Water retirement | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Water legal fees | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Water meters | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Water gas and oil | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Water vehicle maintenance | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Water well maintenance | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Recycling office expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Recycling center expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Hazard waste collection | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Trash collection/disposal | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Health expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Health nursing services | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Landfill monitoring | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| COA expense | Tom | Cheryl | AIF |
| Popes tavern electric | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Veteran’s agent expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Veteran’s benefits | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Housing authority | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| ADA expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Youth and Rec expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Parks expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Cable television | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Patriotic celebrations | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Historical commission | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Historic district commission | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Holidays in Halifax | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Beautification expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Website committee expense | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Music rights | Tom | Cheryll | AIF |
| Debt WPAT2 | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Debt landfill cap | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Debt HES roof | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Debt fire suppression | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Interest on Temporary loans | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Plymouth County Retirement | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Group insurance town | Cheryll  | Tom | AIF |
| Medicare town | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Insurance | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| OPEB | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Telephone | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Gas and oil all depts | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |
| Heating all buildings | Cheryll | Tom | AIF |

Budget vote notes:

Sandy suggested skipping all the school budget votes for now while we await new numbers. She said it is likely the vocation numbers for school would be changing also.

Fred asked if Highway Town Roads was the same money as the article, we usually fund for Road maintenance. Sandy said Town roads is for small repair jobs like patching potholes. Road maintenance article is for major road work.

Charlie said the Recycling Committee had approached the Selectmen about helping fund some of the recycling costs out of the general fund. Charlie said the Selectmen would vote it in the next couple of weeks.

Jean Gallant said the library expense budget had been voted earlier. Sandy said yes it had, it was up overall by $4,000 but we need to fund it so we can keep the library certified.

Tom asked why we pay $198,000 for cable television. Charlie said it is part of the local access package. Residents pay a fee on their cable bill, Comcast pays it to us and then we pay it back out for the local services

Fred asked Sandy to explain to members about what the debt categories were. Sandy explained that WPAT was for septic.

Joe asked about why the OPEB figure was being voted up $1,000 instead of level funded. Sandy explained it was part of a policy voted by the Finance Committee to try and up OPEB by $5,000 every year but at a minimum $1,000.

Tom had to leave the meeting at 7pm17 on articles. Sandy also said that members should notice that she had increased new growth to $100,000 based on Charlie’s estimates. Sandy said changes there and in insurance meant we were now about $280,000 in the black, but she is still concerned that will go quickly when the school send new numbers in.

Fred asked about contractual obligations still to be filled. Charlie said there are none to report right now. Unions are still in negotiations about wages. Cheryll asked why unions don’t have 3 years contracts. Charlie said they do except for the fact they have the opened every year to discuss wages. It has been an agreement for several years and has helped the Town in times of tight finances.

Fred asked Linda to add an executive session to Monday night’s meeting so the Fin Com could discuss Charlie possible negotiations with unions to make sure all employees are being treated equitably.

There was no public participation.

Sandy said she and Charlie had been working on a draft of the warrant and they hoped to have it to Fin Com for Monday night. Fred asked if there were zoning articles in it. Charlie said maybe one and it was about flood plan updates.

**Fred entertained a motion to adjourn at 7:12pm**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Joe

**AIF**

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Cole, Secretary \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Tom Connolly, Clerk