Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday April 5, 2021**

**Committee Members Present**: Fred McGovern, Joe Vetrano, Tom Connolly, Cheryll Zarella Burke and Deb Pasquale

Also, in attendance in the audience were: Charlie Seelig, Chief Chaves, Sandra Nolan, Jean Gallant, Bob Ross, Barbara Gaynor and PJ Hogan

The meeting was recorded by Zoom

**Fred called the meeting to order at 6:00pm**

**Fred entertained a motion to accept the meeting minutes from 3/31/21**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Joe

**AIF**

Fred addressed that Sandy had said they could increase the Water budget without it having an effect on the Raise and Appropriate because the Water department is an enterprise account and they have a very healthy retained earnings account.

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend Line 100-Water Meters at $50,000**

Motion: Tom

Second: Cheryll

AIF

Tom asked if the town was still working on collecting the outstanding water debt and Sandy said they were and it was already lower than before

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend Line 102 Water Vehicle Maintenance at $15,000**

Motion: Tom

Second: Cheryll

AIF

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend Line 103 Water Town Wells Maintenance at $125,000**

Motion: Tom

Second: Cheryll

AIF

Fred reiterated that if Kingston and Plympton choose to pass the Silver Lake budget at the amount requested than Halifax will have to pay the requested amount and that will mean with just that vote, we will be slightly into the $300,000 buffer on the levy. Sandy said she is hoping the vocational line will come down slightly, around $30,000 which would give us a little more wiggle room with cutting into the $300,000 buffer.

Charlie wanted to let the committee know that he had spoken with Cesar again about the Data Processing budget and the increase between theFY21 and FY22 budget requests. Charlie said the Assessors new mapping software was about $7,000 of the increase. Charlie said this software was very helpful during COVID and other departments can use it as well. He would like to continue it but if we have to lose it, we could operate without it. Charlie said the other big increase is for the Town email system. Cesar was increasing it from 100 users to 300 users. He is adding on members of boards and committees so that they are all using Town email for public records tracking requests it is easier. Charlie said that if we level fund these two could become an issue, particularly the email system. The Town would have to tell the Boards and Committees members they would have to use personal email which could be an issue. Charlie said he just wanted to make sure the Fin Com was aware of the issue. Fred said he fully agrees with these expenditures but he has concerns with raising a budget line before we know what is available for funds. Tom asked if the Assessors software was drone based and if so, does it have any privacy violation implications. Charlie said he believed it is simply satellite based. Fred said the committee could certainly revisit these two concerns if money became available. Tom said he is also concerned with Cesar’s hours. The committee decided to wait until they know if money becomes available before they consider increasing this line.

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend A47-Highway barn garage doors at $21,250**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Tom

AIF

Fred entertained a motion to recommend B1-Zoning flood plain changes

Motion: Tom

Second: Cheryll

AIF

Fred asked about article A51-LIngan St Fencing. Charlie said he had just added it. He said Tom Schindler, park commissioner had requested it be added. Tom had gotten a price over a year ago of $12,000 and Charlie anticipated it would be closer to $15,000 now but he did not have a new price. The committee decided to give a recommendation at ATM and ask Tom to come in in the meantime with a quote.

Fred asked about the article for the new PA system. Charlie said he still did not have any information about price. He suggested the Finance Committee wait until ATM to give a recommendation and hopefully he would know a price in the meantime.

Fred entertained a motion to recommend Article B2-ban on small alcoholic beverages

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Tom

1-4 ( Tom was for the ban, all others against,) Fin Com does not recommend

Fred entertained a motion to recommend article B3-Selectmen from 3 to 5

Motion: Tom

Second: Cheryll

0-5 The Finance Committee does not recommend

Fred asked if there would be an additional cost for running an additional election based on this article. Charlie said he had done some research on the process. He said the article would have to pass at ATM then the State legislature would have to approve it, then it would have to go as a question on a town ballot. So the process would take about 3 years and it would fall during regular elections and meetings so there would be no additional cost in that sense. Fred said it would cost 2 additional stipends of $1500 each to add two new members. Fred said in his research he found that most towns the size of Halifax only have 3 selectmen. It seemed as if the ones that had 5 selectmen, generally have a population over 10,000. Joe asked Charlie if he knew why there was a push to go to 5. Charlie said he was not going to comment on that. Charlie said it was a petition article from a resident. A committee member asked who had proposed it. Charlie said it was proposed by Gordon but as a resident and the Board of Selectmen had not even had a discussion about it yet.

Fred entertained a motion to recommend article B$ - Silver Lake Stabilization account

Motion: Tom

Second: Cheryll

0-5 Finance Committee does not recommend

Sandy said that she had spoken to the business manager for Silver Lake and Christine had said that if they are given this stabilization it would be put in as part of the budget request going forward. Therefore, we would be tied to the stabilization if the other two towns voted for it as and it was part of the budget. Sandy and Charlie agreed that Halifax would lose all control over how the money is spent if it is voted through. Currently it takes a 2/3 vote of town meeting to put money in or take money out of Stabilization. Therefore residents have the right to say how it is spent.

Fred entertained a motion to recommend Article B5-Stormwater Management

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Tom

AIF

Charlie said this was just wording about the penalties that the Attorney General said had to be changed and the penalties must be levied in a different manner than proposed originally

The Fin Com discussed article C1-Pine Street bridge easements. Tom said he had concerns because the way it is written seemed like a blank check to spend whatever amount on getting the easements. Charlie said he understood the concerns and his belief was that Steve Hayward had hoped most of them would be donated, but he would have to double check with Steve given the wording. He said Steve would have to give a specific amount if he was looking to pay to purchase easements. The Fin Com decided to wait until ATM to give a recommendation so that more information could be provided.

Charlie said he is not sure that the Selectmen have taken an official votes on anything to do with Wage and Personnel.

Fred said he had requested that the new members of the Fin Com get a brief overview of communication (electronic) and the open meeting law, after he had watched some Planning Board videos and saw that there were Open Meeting law violations that may have happened because members did not understand how the open meeting law and electronic communications worked together. Tom asked how Executive session is any different if you have a quorum but public isn’t allowed. Charlie said you can only enter Executive session for a limited number of reasons and you have to give prior public notice of executive session. Fred said if members wanted to add something to the agenda for Fin Com they could just send it to Linda, they didn’t need his prior approval. Fred suggested that everything flow through Linda for disbursement. He mentioned members should avoid sending group emails to other members about topics of discussion, however things such as, “I can’t make the meeting” are fine.

Fred brough up about the RFP for Zoning. Members hadn’t had time to review the full RFP during the budget season. They need to see specifically what the firms were proposing for the $65,000 and decide if they want to pursue it or just say use the $65,000 to focus solely on multifamily because that is where the most concern is. Fred said members should review the RFPs exactly and come back with opinions. He said they would probably need to dedicate more a meeting to the RFP and not just a few minutes. Fred said push it off until at least Monday.

Sandy asked if Fin Com was meeting Wednesday, 4/7 and they said they were not. Charlie said he agreed that Fin Com had decided it was not necessary to meet until 4/12.

Calendar: Fred suggested Fin Com be posted for 4/12, 4/26, 5/3 and 5/10 (this would be a meeting before ATM)

Fred took a roll call to enter into Executive Session at 7:10pm

Cheryll-yes, Tom-yes, Joe-yes, Deb-yes, Fred-yes

Respectfully submitted,

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

Tom Connolly, Clerk