Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday, March 2, 2020**

**Committee Members Present**: Melinda Tarsi, Fred McGovern, Cheryll Zarella Burke, Drew McGlincy

Also, in attendance in the audience were: Sandy Nolan, Charlie Seelig, Gordon Andrews (attended for about 10 minutes at the end).

The meeting was recorded by Area 58

**Melinda called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm**

**Melinda entertained a motion to table the discussion on budgets until later in the meeting.**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Melinda discussed the Reserve Fund Transfer request for the Law ill for January for KP Law and pointed out that the reason for the request was due to the lawsuits the Town is currently facing. The total request was for $270.77

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend the Reserve Fund Transfer request.**

Motion: Fred

Second: Drew

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to Accept the Meeting Minutes from the 2/10/20 meeting**

Motion: Fred

Second: Drew

**AIF** (Cheryll abstained since she was not at the meeting on 2/10)

**Melinda entertained a motion to Accept the Meeting Minutes from the 2/24/20 meeting**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Melinda

**AIF** (Drew and Fred abstained as they were not at the 2/24/20 meeting)

Under the correspondence item on the agenda Melinda discussed the letter from the Assessors stating they would have to increase their expense budget by $1500 for new software that has been mandated by the DLS. Melinda discussed the memo from Charlie about recodifying the zoning bylaws. She reminded everyone that this topic has come up before and the Finance Committee was in favor of seeing something done to help with the inconsistencies in the zoning bylaw and had asked what the cost would be to recodify. Melinda asked Sandy if the quote of $65,000 included all the steps in the email. Sandy checked with Charlie about how many phases there were supposed to be in the recodification because the email seemed somewhat unclear. Charlie agreed it was somewhat unclear and said he would clarify with the attorney if the $65,000 was for all the steps or just step 1. Sandy said that if we could, splitting up the project into smaller steps and therefore smaller incremental payments might be a good idea based on the number of capital requests the Town is facing.

Melinda asked Sandy if she would be ready to present the information from the Capital Planning Committee. Sandy said the projects are listed in priority order (according to the Committee) except for the fact that the two largest requests were at the bottom of the page. Sandy said that the $150,000 that we have been allotting for road maintenance is not enough to give each year. She stated that Capital Planning wanted to make the amount $500,000 each year but there are just too many capital requests. She suggested that when this line comes up at Town Meeting we might want to put it up for reconsideration so that if at the end of the meeting there are any funds unexpended that could instead be allocated to Road Maintenance then we could vote it to that. **See the attached list of projects and their priorities.** Melinda asked Sandy as an aside before they started if anyone in the Town Hall had heard of the new Ford pursuit-rated hybrid vehicle. She said that she had seen it in information from the MMA and they suggested it might be good for a situation where the vehicle spends a lot of the time idling but still needs to be fast at other times. Sandy said she would have to check with the Chiefs on if they had heard of it but it sounded like a reasonable consideration. Sandy discussed the requests about new radios and said it was to bring the radios up to digital standards. She discussed the new roof for the COA and said that we have no set price yet but we do have $104,000 from and old COA bond that we could use to put towards the roof project. Sandy said more then likely we would either need Stabilization of $145,000 for the project or we would have to cut money from other Capital projects in order to get the roof done. Capital Planning thought maybe it would be ok to try and get the remaining money from Stabilization. Sandy said that the Building Maintenance department is working on replacing the overhead doors at the barn and that is what the Overhead door capital request is about. Sandy said that the library has been asking for noise reduction panels for many years and had a quote of $45,000. She said that the library already has some panels though and that Building Maintenance said they might be able to work with someone and get it done for about $6,000. So the library is requesting the $6,000. Sandy said the Highway department is requesting a backhoe for $150,000. The Water department has offered to buy the old backhoe from the Town for about $8-$10,000 because they also need one. That money could go towards the $150,000 for the cost of the new one for the Highway department. Sandy said that the request for capital funds for repairing the drooping portico (front of the Town Hall off the outside deck off the Great Hall) is one that Scott told her might be able to wait one more year if Capital planning needs to not fund a project this year. Sandy said that the Capital Planning Committee has requested more information on the 4 assault rifles that the Police department is requesting. Capital Planning would like to know if it has to be this year or if it can wait. Sandy stated that Capital Planning will not recommend the request for a motorcycle for the Police Department because they do not feel it is necessary here in Halifax. As far as the two major requests go, Sandy reported that Steve Hayward said he has spoken to other Highway Departments and he needs about 6-9 million dollars for bonding for new roads in Halifax. Sandy said that road bonds are only allowed to be spread over a 15-year payback period. Sandy said that if we bonded for 2 million dollars, which would cover about 11.4 miles of roads and spread it over a 15-year bond, it would be about $71.67 on the average taxpayers bill. Sandy stated that Capital Planning voted three to one to recommend the articles for Town meeting, mostly just so the residents will at least know the cost to repair roads and then the decision is on them if they want to add that amount to their tax bill or not. Melinda asked Sandy if we bonded for the other 7 million for new roads then how much would that cost. Sandy stated the cost for the first year would be about $236 on the average household so if we bonded for the both requests totaling about 9 million dollars the combined costs on the average taxpayer would be about $300 on their tax bill. Sandy stated that she thought that raise the amount we give to road maintenance every year seemed like a more sustainable idea for taxpayers.

Sandy then spoke about the articles they included in their recommendations, which they did not feel rose to the level of capital requests, but they did feel needed to be on the list because the money would have to set aside if the articles were approved. Sandy pointed out that the part of the list with these articles is not prioritized (see attached list). Sandy spoke to the article requesting $22,000 for the Town to reimburse the Housing Authority for monies paid to Plymouth County Retirement. Sandy explained that it had been discovered during a PCR audit that PCR had incorrectly been charging the Housing Authority (state run) for a Town of Halifax employee and the Housing Authority had paid it. Charlie is investigating this situation further, but we will probably have to pay the Housing Authority the difference of what should have been assessed to us. Sandy discussed the Truck inspection station request on Walnut St. A resident has made a request for the Town to put a trained person there to inspect trucks for proper weights and sizes. There is also a request for grading of public and private roads in Halifax. There is an article requesting that the Town make repairs to Pasture Lane to bring it up to standards. The developer never finished the job and the Town never held monies against the developer (instead they held a lot) and now the residents want the Town to fix it. Charlie said there is also another article for residents requesting that we put out trash totes at the Route 58 state owned boat ramp and the fishing area closer to the intersection of Route 58 and 106. Charlie said it would cost us about $6,000 to have a dumpster/tote at either place (based on what we spend for the Youth and Rec ones) and that the Town has preferred a “Carry in / Carry out” policy in the past for these areas. Sandy stated that there is an article from the Conservation Commission regarding funds for a secretary but she said she was going to reach out to Con Com to have them remove the article because there already seems to be enough money in the fund and it is not being used as it is. Sandy stressed again that if there is any money at the end of Town meeting, “left on the table”, Capital Planning would strongly urge that the money be put in the Road Maintenance account. Sandy also wanted Fin Com to be aware that she and Charlie are keeping an eye on the Meals Tax and Excise tax revenue because they feel the revenues are starting to level out. Sandy suggested to Fin Com that they bring the two Chief, Scott Materna and Steve Hayward in to discuss their articles before they make any final decisions. Melinda requested that the secretary reach out to those department heads and request for them to meet with Fin Com on 3/16/20. Melinda said to put them on the agenda in the following order (based on # of requests or how complicated the requests were): Fire, Building, Police, Highway.

Melinda said that she had just received another Reserve Fund Transfer request from Charlie for Attorney Gilman and the request was for $858

**Melinda entertained a motion to approve the RFT request for $858 to Michael Gilman**

Motion: Drew

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Fred asked the secretary for the balance of the Reserve Fund and she said it was $62729.23 prior to this request but after the one voted earlier in the night.

Charlie told the Finance Committee that at their next meeting he would need some guidance from them on what they were considering for finance as far as what he could allocate for negotiations (ie: 1%, 2%, etc)

Melinda said that she would like to start to go through the budget at this time and do some initial approvals for level funded budgets. The committee agreed they would vote on budgets that were level funded or had decreases so they could get a starting base for the budget. They agreed they would not vote on lines that involved wages as no decisions had been made for any kind of across the board, aka COLA increases. They also agreed that they would look at budgets that only had minimal increases.

**Melinda entertained motions to approve the following line items**:

The following is the list of lines approved:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Line item | Description | ? or comments | Motion | Second | **Vote** |
| 1 | Moderator salary |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 2 | Selectmen salary |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 5 | Selectmen Expense |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 7 | Town Hall Electricity |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 8 | Town reports |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 9 | audit |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 11 | Fin com expense |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 14 | Accountant expense | Sandy once again clarified that she will be hiring a new Asst and the new asst will need more training | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 16 | Assessor salary |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 19\*\*\*\* | Assessor expense | Melinda clarified that this increase is in regard to the email from correspondence for an increase in software DLS requires us to do | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 20 | Office machines |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 23 | Treasurer expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 24 | Collector expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 25 | Treas banking/payrll |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 26 | Treas tax title |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 29 | Clerk expense |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 30 | E&R |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 32 | W&P expense |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 33 | Recruit & employ | Charlie said physicals and drug tests are happening more often | Cheryll | Drew | **AIF** |
| 34 | Con com expense |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 35 | Planning board exp |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 36 | Zoning board exp |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 39 | Bldng comm expens |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 41 | Town bldng expense |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 42 | Bldng preventative mntce |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 43 | Bldng snow and ice costs |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 46 | Police training |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 49 | Police station maintenance |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 50 | Police cruiser maintenance |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 58 | Fire medical supplies |  | Cheryll | Fred | **AIF** |
| 60 | Emergency management |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 63 | Building inspect expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 65 | Sealer of W&M expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 67 | Animal control expense | Fred ? difference is actually expended | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 80 | Highway expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 81 | Highway barn maintenance |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 82 | Highway Equipment |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 83 | Highway Town Roads |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 84 | Highway Snow and Ice |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 85 | Street lights |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 86 | Traffic lights |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 87 | Tree warden salary |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 88 | Tree maintenance |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 89 | Insect and pest control |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 92 | Cemetery supplies and equipment |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 96 | Water supply |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 97 | Water insurance |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 98 | Water retirement |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 99 | Water legal fees |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 100 | Water meters |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 101 | Water gas and oil | Drew asked what this is for and Sandy said for gas for trucks | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 102 | Water vehicle maintenance |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 105 | Recycling expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 109 | Trash collection/disposal |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 111 | Health expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 113 | Health nursing services |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 114 | Landfill engineering and monitoring |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 117 | Coa expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 118 | Pope’s Tavern Electricity |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 120 | Vet agent expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 122 | Veteran’s benefits | Sandy Nolan said this figure comes from the state and we must pay. | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 123 | Housing Authority |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 124 | ADA expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 129 | Youth and Rec expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 131 | Parks Wages |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 132 | Parks expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 133 | Cable Television |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 134 | Patriotic celebrations |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 135 | Historical Commission |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 136 | Historical District Commision |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 137 | Holidays in Halifax |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 138 | Halifax Fireworks Committee |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 139 | Beautification Committee Expense |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 141\*\*\*\* | Website committee expense | Fred asked if there was a committee and Charlie said actually just expense for running website | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 142 | Music rights |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 147 | Debt WPAT |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 148 | Debt WPAT II |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 149 | Landfill capping |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 149a | HES roof and repairs |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 149b | HES Fire suppression | Sandy said to vote this because we have to approve and pay no matter what | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 150 | Interest on Temporary loans |  | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 151 | Plymouth County Retirement | Sandy stated this amount is given to us by PCR and we have to pay it | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 152\*\*\*\* | Group Insurance town share | Sandy suggested level funding for now even though it is requesting less. Linda Cole agrees. | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 155 | OPEB trust | Melinda reiterated that the Fin Com had voted in an earlier meeting to set a policy to increase the OPEB budget by $5,000 every year. | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 157 | Gas and Oil all departments | Drew asked for clarification: this is for gas needed for all department vehicles | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 158 | Heating oil all buildings | Drew asked for clarification: this is to cover costs of heating buildings | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |

**\*\*\* 152 Melinda entertained a motion to change the budget line to $1,068828. In order to level fund for now with a better figure expected closer to ATM.**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Sandy Nolan suggested not voting the library expense line for now because if wages goes up the expense line goes up also because it is part of a formula for library grant funds.

There was some discussion about voting the Law line item (6) through. It is obvious that we are already out of money again this year and it is only March. Charlie said one case has been put to bed but the other major lawsuit against the Town is not likely to go anywhere anytime soon. Charlie said that union contracts and negotiations also raise the law amount as we need to consult with labor attorneys more often. Fred said he felt it is likely that the major case will probably continue as there are Planning Board members who clearly support Gordon Andrews’ position and so they would be likely to continue to have issues with the Appeals Board issuing permits.

Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Line 6. Fred said he thinks we should take a wait and see approach to make sure the number Charlie is requesting is even high enough. No vote was taken.

Melinda asked Sandy if she thinks the Fin Com is keeping on schedule with their votes and moving along in the budget process. Sandy said that after tonight’s work them seem to be in a good place.

Melinda asked about the agenda item of needing a representative to the Facilities Needs Committee. She said she knew Drew was interested and he confirmed.

**Melinda entertained a motion to name Drew as the appointee to the Facilities Needs Committee**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Melinda asked Linda to let the proper people know that Drew will be the appointee.

Melinda opened the discussions for Public Participation. Gordon Andrews said that the HES School Committee added $30,000 to the budget. Line 71, Title 1 is being cut from their budget. He said that this position is the Math Interventionist. He said we won’t be getting State funding for it anymore. The School Committee is doing a level service budget, but it is not level funded because they need to pay for this position now since the State won’t be. Gordon said they are trying to look at reducing costs in other lines.

Charlie said that at the meeting on 3/9 he would like to discuss the budget and how much money may be available for contract negotiations.

Melinda said that we should expect that 3/16 will be a long work night. She said we need to make as many Fin Com recommendations as possible that night so that the recommendations will be ready for the printed warrant. Fred asked when we would vote on the recommendations for articles being put for at ATM. Melinda said probably on 3/23 or 3/30 and 3/16 will be the last information gathering night.

Sandy said some articles are easy and standard. Melinda said that the Fin Com can vote the easier articles on 3/16 or 3/9 if they want.

**Melinda entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:52pm**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Fred

**AIF**

Respectfully submitted,

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

Fred McGovern, Clerk