Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday , December 6, 2021**

**Committee Members Present**: Tom Connolly, Michael Bennett, Cheryll Zarella Burke, Jon Schmaling and Todd Dargie

Also, in attendance in the audience were:, Cesar Calouro, and Sandy Nolan

**Tom called the meeting to order at 7:00pm**

Tom announced that since the meeting and agenda had not been posted with 48 hours notice, there would be no official business done or votes taken during the night. He just wanted to informally `discuss with the members the sense of the FY23 budget outlook from the Selectmen and where to find information they would need.

Tom asked other members what their sense of the BOS meeting on 11/30/21 had been since he was not able to attend. Cheryll said they asked for level funding. Sandy said they did say that level funding was the request, not level service, but that they did say departments should include steps for their employees who were due them. Mike Bennett said that summed up what the BOS were looking for in regard to the budget. Sandy said retirement assessments, health insurance and the school budgets are the biggest driving forces behind constant increases. Sandy said the retirement and the health insurance are fixed costs we can’t do anything about, and that we can’t count on the schools to level fund the budget even if it is requested. Tom said he wondered why Pluympton is kicking our butt when they are such a tiny town. He said in infrastructure and pay they are doing better than us. He realizes they have a smaller impact from Silver Lake but that can’t be all of it. He wants to know what is holding Halifax back. Is it an expense problem or a revenue issue. Sandy said that Sysco helped Plympton out a lot. The facility has great access to Route 44 and they have generated a lot of revenue in Plympton. Mike said he believed that Sysco had been given a 10 year exemption on taxes from Plympton but in return they had purchased many items for the town like ambulances, highway equipment etc. He said the 10 years was almost up though and that Plympton had thought it could be almost a million dollars a year in taxes from Sysco once they started paying. Tom mentioned that Plympton will be losing the HUBL light plant. Jon said it was a bleak overview given by our BOS and he wants to find solutions to the problems. Jon said that Wage and Personnel increases also impact the problem. Tom said that was true, but that Halifax is already most definitely the low payer in the region. Todd said he thinks we need to find a way to drive more revenue. He said the expenses going down seems unlikely. Todd said that Gordon mentioned that Halifax will continue to lose employees because we pay so much lower and if we continue to not give increases it will only get worse. Todd said that Town Meeting needs to understand that we need to find ways to get revenue. We need to drive that point home. Cheryll said residents need to understand that voting big ticket items means you will pay more in taxes. Cheryll said the fact that Silver Lake just keeps going up is causing issues. Tom asked how much the tax rate and assessments have gone up in the last five years. Tom said we have added residents and income per capita in the Town. So he is curious how that correlates to the Town budgets in the last five years. Sandy said she didn’t have the figures right then, but she knows that we have been going up over the 2.5% each year. Sandy said she could bring the figures to the next meeting. Tom said we need to keep long term dedicated employees in the Town. He said we are going to pay through the nose for letting Charlie go. He said we are paying a consultant to find a new TA, we are paying an interim TA and we will most definitely have to pay a higher salary if we want to get another qualified TA.

Tom asked if members of the Fin Com could be sent a link to get into the shared One Drive. Cesar said he would get that done. Cheryll asked ithe BOS sent a letter to the departments to level fund. Sandy said the Selectmen’s Assistant had sent a letter saying the budget sheets would be going out, but she hadn’t mentioned the level funding. Sandy said she had sent an email with the budget sheets and she mentioned the level funding but she would like the BOS to send a letter since it was in their meeting.

Sandy said she knew certain accounts would not be able to be level funded. She said she had already spoken to the Town Clerk who was going to need more in her E&R budget because there is a primary this year and there wasn’t last year. She said the told the Clerk to request what she needed and then just explain why she needed it. Things like that can’t be helped.

Cesar asked if future meetings would be at 6 or 7 and Tom said 6 always.

The meeting was ended at 7:18pm

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

Michael Bennett, Clerk