Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday , January 31, 2022**

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

Also, in attendance in the audience were: Cesar Calouro, Sandy Nolan, Jean Gallant, and Sue Lawless

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

**Tom entertained a motion to accept the minutes of 01/24/2022**

Motion: Michael Bennett

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Tom asked about the Fy23 budget. Sandy said she updated the Fin Com Sheet in the Shared Folder. She said that she went up $150,000 on the estimated revenue for excise. She said she is generally very cautious on her estimates but after reviewing the first excise commitment for Halifax it seems to be in line with the State estimate that excise revenues will go up 7% from FY22. She feels safe with this higher number based on all the information she has seen. She said that with that increase it puts us in the black on the overall budget but that does not include the Silver Lake Assessment which we have not been given yet. She said this will put us back in the red for sure. Tom asked if he was correct in believing that Gordon had said it was expected to be an increase of about $340,000. Sandy wasn’t sure. Linda Cole said that she believed that Gordon had said he estimated the SL Assessment would be about 1 million higher and Halifax’s portion of that would be close to $350,000.

Tom said that in the correspondence there was a request from the Board of Selectmen to have their new recording secretary brought in at a Step 3. Tom said the BOS had voted their portion of the Wage and Personnel vote to move her to a 3 at their last meeting.

Tom entertained a motion to recommend a Grade 2 Step 3 rate for the new hire for the BOS recording secretary, based on her experience.

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Michael Bennet

AIF

Under public participation Linda drew the Committee’s attention to the correspondence she had sent saying that they could expect the figure for health insurance to go down slightly. She said the original number had been based on a 7% increase and the Steering Committee for MMHG had recently recommended a 3% increase. She said the vote still had to go before the General Board for MMHG, but it was likely it would come in at the 3%. She also said that number would fluctuate quite a bit during open enrollment, but she would as usual give a more solid number closer to ATM.

Tom said he still hasn’t been able to reach Mike O’Brien but he did leave him a voice message. He believes it is important to keep Mike on the Committee even though he currently has a conflict with Monday night meetings. Tom want to suggest to him that he stay in touch with his departments, and stay on the committee and make any meetings that he can. Tom wanted to know what everyone else thought. Everyone agreed that was a good idea and Tom said he would reach out again.

Cheryll said she has already been in touch with and met her departments. Cheryll said that the Police Chief said he will be requesting two cruisers again this year. Tom said that was expected as they had previously laid out a plan to request two new cruisers every year so that the cruisers were cycled through without having to buy all brand new cruisers at once. Cheryll said the chief said he will also need extra money in the overtime account. He said that they will lose their auxiliary police force because now auxiliary police have to have gone through the academy. The officers would be forced to pay for it themselves so it is likely many of them just won’t bother. Therefore the town will have to pay overtime to full time officers to fill shifts that normally would have been filled by auxiliary police officers. Cheryll said that Scott may be asking for a new truck. Cheryll said that the fire department didn’t have many requests and that they level funded but there was a good chance that the ambulance supplies would be going up. Tom asked if the ambulance line was a self funding enterprise line. Sandy said it is not, the ambulance receipts go into the general fund. She said we have reached the total of about $600,000 that the Chief had predicted when we went to outside billing. Tom asked if prices could be increased to cover the increased costs for supplies. Sandy said it could be raised but you have to go through the Board of Selectmen and she believes that the Chief is very good about checking rates with other towns and we are already pretty competivily priced.

Jean asked who her library liaison was because she has not heard from anyone. Tom said it may be him and he had set a goal to be in touch with all his departments by this upcoming Friday.

Sue Lawless wanted to say that she expected the auixiliary police issue would have a big impact on the overtime account. Tom wondered if there was an issue with recruiting people who were willing to pay for the academy themselves and wondered if others towns require them to pay. He said maybe the Chief could be asked to come in and talk about the overtime account and auxiliary police.

Linda told Jean that Mike O’Brien was the library liaison. Tom said that made sense and he would try and reach out to Mike and mention the library.

Tom asked the committee’s thoughts on setting up a subcommittee for the revenue ideas that Todd had suggested. Todd said that he thought maybe dropping brainstorming ideas into a shared folder might be a good way to start. Sandy said she could ask Cesar to set up a folder on the One Drive. Todd suggested maybe the Board of Selectmen could drop in ideas as well and so could the interim Town Administrator. Todd said it is also a good idea to ask department heads for their ideas as they would be the ones who could maybe have opinions on if fees etc, should be raised. Sandy mentioned that on the Revenues page of the Fin Com spreadsheet you can see the local receipts revenue. She said that even if you raise fees you won’t make huge gains there. Mike said that is true but if you get a lot of little moves in the right directions from many places, it can make a difference. Sandy agreed. Sandy said she would ask Cesar about sending an invitation to the folder once he set it up.

Jean mentioned that when Covid hit and the library had to start quaranting books, they stopped charging late fines. She said she turned those fines over to the town previously. Sandy said they only equal about $1,000 a year in total. Jean said there has been a lot of discussion by the Trustees about not returning to late fines. Linda said that Hanson had recently voted to go that path as well. Jean said her department may stay fine free but that her Board of Trustees would have to vote any changes.

**Tom entertained a motion to adjourn at 6:25pm**

Motion: Michael Bennett

Second: Cheryll

**Respectfully submitted,**

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

Michael Bennett, Clerk