Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday , February 28, 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, Toni Ross, Chief Chaves, Darlene Regan and Ashley Disesa

**Tom called the meeting to order at 6:01pm**

**Tom entertained a motion to accept the minutes of 02/14/2022**

Motion: Cheryll

Second:Todd

**AIF**

Tom asked Chief Chaves to talk about his budget. The chief said he had a power point presentation he would like to run though. He shared it on the screen (please see attached). Linda requested he send it to her for the minutes. The Chief showed that in 2000 there were 17 personnel in the department including the ACO and Admin Asst and matrons. He then showed that in 2022 there were only 13 personnel in the department. He said there are no longer permanent part time officers due to new regulations from Police Reform where even part time officers had to go through the academy. The Chief said if a person was going to invest their money to go to the academy, they would find a full time position. The Chief provided more information about the Town that can be seen in the presentation attached. The Chief thinks thye need ton increase the department size by 3 officers in the next two years. Tom asked if there were 7 part time officers previously (based on the first slide). The Chief said yes there were, and they were made up of Special Police Officers and Permanent Intermittent officers. He said once those officers can no longer work due to police reform, he will not be able to rely on the full timers to cover all that time. The Chief then presented how many hours and how much money was covered by part time officers. The Chief spoke about how police reforms affects the training budget as well. He says as officers ravel for new trainings he has to fill more shifts for the time those officers are out. Tom asked if the training was mandatory in person and the Chief said sometimes they do hybrid and he could maybe look into that. The Chief said there is also a burden on this Admin Asst to keep up with records requests and it effects sergeants also. He said those are some of the reasons he wants a lieutenant position. He said he put about $92,000 in the current budget for the lieutenant salary but he expected if they gave it to someone it would be much closer to about $110,000 due to what the sergeants already make with stipends, which is close to $105,000. He said that marijuana fees could go to funding the position but the retail shops are not open yet. He said he would like to start an SRO in the elementary school because he thinks it is more effective to work with the kids when they are young for drug awareness. The feels a full time position that covered SRO during the day and other shifts would be the second position he would request in the next couple of years. He mentioned that Plympton had one and they found it helpful. The Chief said he only funded the lieutenant in the budget because he felt it needed to be there even if the Town couldn’t afford it this year. Tom asked if the $70,000 in the budget covered all non wage expenses necessary. The Chief said it did. Tom said in his opinion the Police, Fire and School should be looking out for the community and we can’t inhibit that. He said the population of Halifax has increased and we have one of the lowest tax rates and we think we can only give 1% COLA and actually keep people and that is foolish. He said you need to retain employees and the 1% is an issue. Tom said he thinks we need to think about how to fund these positions and COLAs. Tom said he believed that continuing to level fund is a major problem. The Chief said that Line 45 of the budget is up because there would be no Special officers and so overtime would be up for the full time officers. He said the $80,000 requested would probably go lower. Sandy asked the Chief if he wanted to touch base on the capital articles he requested. The Chief said he was asking for 2 new cruisers as is the usual procedure. He noted that he believed we should be sending the cruisers out to auction because the Town would make more money that way. He recently heard that one cruiser we traded in for $5,000 was sold at auction for $17,000 and that is money the Town could have had. He is also asking for $51, 000 for body worn cameras and he is trying to get a federal grant for that if he can because he understands that the Town may not be able to afford it. He is trying to look ahead to what the State will mandate about body cameras. He said he also needs $5,000 to replace vests for the officers. Tom asked what the useful life of a vest is and the Chief said it is about 5 years and we require all of our officers to wear them at all times while on duty. The Chief said he was asking for $7,000 to replace the cameras inside the cells because one recently failed during a State inspection. Todd asked about cameras inside and outside of the building. The Chief said the exterior ones are pretty good and 1 had failed but he replaced it and he felt there was no problem with the ones on the outside of the building.

Tom asked Cesar to speak about the IT budget. Cesar put his budget presentation (attached) on the screen. Cesar said he deals with a lot of contracts and does what he can to get them lowered. He said the website hosting and maintenance is higher but he wants to close out the website committee budget and put it with his website hosting budget to make things more transparent. Cesar said in the wages portion of his budget he had proposed to level fund at 25 hours per week. He provided for consideration by the Fin Com a budget at 40 hours per week and also provided a change to Grade 10 and a change to Grade 12. He said that currently 15 of his 40 hours are funded using ARPA money but that will end on June 30, 2022 unless the Board of Selectmen decided to fund his 15 hours again. Cesar said that IT had a significant increase in demand especially due to COVID. He said he needs the hours in order to provide the necessary support to departments. He said his budget causes him problems because if he can’t work overtime, he has to put off one thing in order to handle another and that makes it harder for him to accomplish things. He said in the last fiscal year he has spent about $6,000 in overtime. He said because he is IT he sometimes has to work overnights to accomplish his work. He suggested the town seriously consider making his position a salaried position instead of hourly. Tom said that under the Wage and Personnel bylaw, Cesar’s position is labeled as a Technical Support Specialist and asked if the job was more complex now. Cesar said it is much more complex. Tom asked if he understood correctly that Cesar was a single point of failure. Tom explained that if something happened to Cesar would no one else be able to know how to handle the IT. Cesar said he was a single point of failure, but we do also use back up services. Tom said it was good to have managed service providers. Cesar said the Police use a Managed Service Provider but that the Police still have to rely on him a lot. Cesar said the Town also used to use a MSP but had gotten away from that because they needed someone more personable and it is nice to have him there. Cesar said the cellular budget line was up because it was to accommodate the cost to add a back up system for the Police, Fire and Highway in cases where the power goes down. He also wants to add a hot spot to be used for special times. Cesar said that the hotspot would be for just internet services. He said the Town used to have two, but he was lowering it to one. He said a good example of when it was needed was when the Town Clerk had to come get the hotspot so that she could still be able to post meetings. Tom asked about the email security line and what the increase was about there. Cesar said it is the cost of Mimecast and that it was to keep a level service as we have now. It is a contractual increase. He said it was to also add an internal email protection portion. He said that is not a required thing, but it is recommended. He said it doesn’t make it more secure, but it is in addition to stop emails from being sent out from our system. Currently Mimecast checks emails entering our system and blocks them if they are bad. If however, one happened to get through, this additional feature would block someone from sending that email back out to contacts through our system. Mike Bennett said the thinks the $5400 requested for email security would be money well spent. Tom asked about the increase in the Network security training line. Cesar said the level funding covers our firewalls that we did a contract for in 2020 and it will be up again in 2022., he said the price may go down, but that he put in for the increase just in case it goes up. He said the $15,482 would be firewall renewal and antivirus licensing and cyber training and it would lock the price in for 3 years if we added the training. He said while it is an up front increase, it will lock in the price for 3 years which should save money overall. He said an additional $4500 more is based on the network refresh those firewalls would also be built in for the FY24 budget but would be funded under capital for this coming year. He said the electronic data management was the for the software for the digitalization and this is the renewal for it. He said the PDF authoring and editing was because currently we use Foxit and have 6 license under it perpetually. He said we purchased it and we own it but the software doesn’t update so it is 3-4 versions old. This funding he is requesting would allow for 20 subscriptions and update the applications as the updates come out. It would still be Foxit but it would be updated regularly. Cesar said the Endpoint Mobile device Management accommodates the laptops, desktops and mobile devices. Cesar sad as we move to remote work on a case by case basis, it is harder to manage devices and this would help to protect town data. Tom asked if there was an offsetting savings for getting rid of the VPN then. Cesar said in theory yes and no. He said this wouldn’t replace the VPN, it is just a function of the VPN. He said the VPN would still be necessary but his would allow him to pass policy onto devices even if they weren’t connected to the VPN.

Tom asked Cesare to talk about the capital items he was requesting. Cesar said he wanted to upgrade the security cameras across the board for town building and add to some town buildings that don’t have cameras on them. Tom asked if this money was coming from Free Cash and Sandy said it would. Cesar said the $78,204 would cover 56 cameras and it would cost $7,400 each year thereafter for operations. Sandy clarified with Cesar if all 56 cameras were now covered in that price because originally, he said it was only for 32 cameras. Cesar said it covered all 56 cameras. Tom asked if 10 years was the useful life of the cameras. Cesar said that was correct. Cesar said that the cameras have internal storage for 30 days because they would be Cloud based cameras. Cesar said the Network Refresh request was because the Network Refresh done in 2018 for $39,000 only covered the Town Hall, Water, Highway and COA and this one would add upgrades to the library which is now under the same IT network. Cesar said the Police are in severe need of an upgrade and it is the most important. Plice nd Fire was not under Cesar’s jurisdiction. He said their wireless can not keep up with what it needs to. The request would cover the firewalls, switches and access points for the Police. He said the upgrade part is for the water department and to give coverage for the water pump buildings as well. He said the request for Printers and copiers was being lowered. He said initially he had asked for $25,000 because he was going to get something better for the library but he had reevaluated and decided not to over upgrade, so he was getting the library the same one as the Highway and the Water printer/copiers. He said the Highway printer is not conducive to what he Highway department needs. He said the laborers and mechanic are also using the printer. Highway has spent a lot on the last two years to replace printers and they need something more substantial, sometimes they are running 200 page reports. He said the library printer/copier is being used by the public but is a home persona printer and not a commercial grade printer. Cesar believes they have spent about $1400 in the last year on ink alone because the ink costs so much and they are going through so many items. Sandy questioned why the price was so much lower on this budget sheet tonight then it had been when he met with Capital Planning. . Cesar said that he had decided that leasing the machines for 3 years was better than buying them outright. Tom questioned if you could even do a lease as a capital article. Sandy said she thought you couldn’t. sandy said you can’t approve a lease and sign a lease because town meeting might not approve it from year to year. Linda agreed that leases are tricky in municipalities. Sandy said previously the $2,500 was er machine and we needed 3, but Fin Com should remember that it would be an additional $1,120 for maintenance costs in year one according to what Cesar was saying. Tom questioned why we are running 200 page reports if Cesar is trying to digitalize everything. Cesar said he is still working on the digitalization but right now he is only focused on the permitting end of it. He needs to get the building inspector’s permits up and running on it. He said that besides some things are still mandated to be printed. He mentioned things like some of the water department reports that are distributed to the public. Jean said her copy machine had broken and she had to replace it quickly during COVID. She said ti was inexpensive but that the ink kills them, and a new machine would be very helpful to her department. Jean asked Sandy if she could use her revolving funds for maintenance (money from copies). Sandy said 3 years maintenance was included in the purchase of the copy machines was her understanding. Cesare said the first year maintenance is included in the article but the FY24 would be the responsibility of the library. Jean clarified if the maintenance included ink and Cesar said yes it did. He said the cost per page would go way down for Jean. Cesar said the new machines will scan, copy and work with the electronic fax system integration.

Jon asked Cesar about his proposed hours per week from 25 to 40. He wondered if the Board of Selectmen might vote to use ARPA money to fund those additional 15 hours for FY23 given the budget issues. Cesar said he just put both in the budget because Fin Com could vote to recommend it at 25 hours or 40 hours. Jean said she thought it was important to have the IT position be 40 hours and thinks it should be part of the operating budget and not ARPA money. Tom said funding source is the only question and he is concerned that there is only 1 person working IT. Jon said he thought that maybe for FY23 the additional hours should still go under ARPA money. Cesar said it is better to put him on salary because he could do more hours without the Town worrying about paying him overtime. Mike Bennett said an employer pays one way or another, the overtime just comes “up front” in the salary request. He said if there is that much concern about overtime maybe it is better to have an assistant that can help out IT and be paid at a lesser rate. Darlene said she thinks that a salary would be better for the IT position. Tom said that is a job evaluation issue and wouldn’t be part of a budget discussion. Cesar said he can talk to the Board of Selectmen to find out how to move forward with it. Ashley said she would be taking the request for the additional hours being funded under ARPA before the Board of Selectmen on 3/8/22.

Tom asked if anyone had any further updates on the budget. There were none. Tom said he had reached out to the School committee to do an exercise in what would be cut if the school had to level fund its budget. They asked Tom to go to the school committee meeting next Monday. Tom asked Cheryll if she could handle the meeting on 3/7/22 so that he could attend the HES meeting. Sandy and Linda agreed they would help Cheryll figure it out.

Tom said he had reached out to Sue Lawless for clarification on the ethics training. Linda said she had spoken to Sue about it and clarified that the online State training is what is mandated by the State. The Board of Selectmen had requested that people attend the one in Halifax, but it was not mandated, only the State one is mandated. Jon said he was going to be going online to do his.

Tom asked Todd about the revenues idea folder. He clarified the intent was to drop ideas into the folder in one place for everyone to view and things would only be discussed in a public forum for Open Meeting Law purposes. Cesar said he was still waiting on clarification from town counsel on if this could be done. Tom asked that Cesar have a final answer on this issue at the 3/7 meeting.

Sandy said the Building Inspector had gone to the BOS and received approval to raise the fees on building permits so that would help a bit. Linda said she had also spoken to the Town clerk, and she was planning on raising fees as well.

There was no public participation

Tom asked Linda to add the Capital Planning committee to the next agenda

Darlene asked if she would need to get together with Tom and Cheryll. Linda confirmed that the COA is on the agenda for the 3/14 meeting.

There was no correspondence

**Tom entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:00pm**

Motion: Michael Bennett

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Respectfully submitted,**

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

Michael Bennett, Clerk