Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday , March 7, 2022**

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

Also, in attendance in the audience were: Cesar Calouro, Sandy Nolan, Chief Chaves, Bob Valery, Jean Gallant, Bill Lindsay, Sue Lawless, Scott Materna, Holly Merry and Ashley Disesa

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

Cheryll asked if there were minutes to be accepted and Linda said there were not

Cheryll asked Bob Valery to speak about the Board of Health budget He said is level funded. He feels it is appropriate given circumstances and how COVID has affected everything. Cheryll asked I anyone had any questions. Bos said the BOH tried to do what they could to do their part to help the budget. Sandy said the BOH is in its third year of the landfill monitoring contract so Fin Com should keep that in mind for the next FY. Sandy said the wage line increased slightly but that was just due to steps.

Cheryll asked Scott to speak about the building Maintenance budget. Scott said they are level funded there are 2 different budgets. One added an ew position that he believes is important to have and he put it in there just so Fin Com would consider it again. Sandy said she had only entered the version without the extra position into the One Drive folder because we asked for level funding. Scott said he would speak about the capital article requests from his department. Scott asked about fixing up the shop at the Recycling Center but we want to ask for $15,000 now instead of $10,000 because the cost of building materials is so high now. Scott said he would be asking for less money in another article though. He said the second request was for the repairs to the Town barn roof and partial side walls. Scott said the gable at the end of the building would be repair a portion of the side walls, and some masonry repair where the columns in the bays had been hit by trucks. Sandy said the roof has come up several times in the last few years and she thought it is an important project. The third capital request was for the lower section of the walls at the Recycling Center and was for $80,000. Sandy said it was the lower edge of he metal building that is the problem. Scott said it would just be repairs in the bay area and not in the offices. Cheryll asked if COVID money could be used to capital outlays. Sandy said they would not qualify, but that the Free Cash available would cover the articles. Linda clarified that it is Free Cash that is spent on the articles and not Raise and Appropriate that would raise taxes.

Jean Gallant asked the difference between Free Cash expenditures and capital articles and the regular budget. Sand y said the operating budget is paid from Raise and Appropriate which is the taxes we raise during the year. Free cash is the money left over from the previous year which the State certifies as being left over (it maybe from more revenue than expected or less expenses then expected) and the Free Cash is used for capital items because it may not be available in the next year, so you can’t use it for the operating budget. Scott said he had been working with Jean about sound panels for the library and he wasn’t sure if she or he would speak about them as a capital request. Sandy suggested Scott speak about them. Scott said the sound reduction planes are for the library and are expensive. He said he purchased a kit so that they could build their own sound panels because the custom sizes needed were too expensive. He said the $5,000 request would cover all the materials for the library, the town hall entrance and maybe one other place.

Cheryll asked Bill Lindsay to speak on the Water budget. He said the water mostly level funded. He said this year the Water department has to test for Pfast, so he allowed for that. He said under his capital requests, he was asking for a new truck with compartments on one side for tools for regular repairs and on the other side a compartment for tools for repairs at the Water Treatment plants. He said that because there is so much chlorine in the water treatment plants, tools left there corrode quickly. Sandy said there was also a capital request for $520,000 for Phase 2 of the Water upgrade. Bill said he believes they no longer need to keep that request in because they had asked the BOS to use ARPA money for Phase 2. Sandy said she could remove that request from the capital items if that was the case.

Sandy spoke on behalf of the Capital Planning Committee. Todd and Ashely were also present from that committee. She said they had put the articles in the order of importance as far as the Capital Planning committee believed.

1. Repairing the Town barn roof was the top priority
2. They want to put $300,000 in the road maintenance fund
3. Repairs to the walls of the recycling center (Scott just lowered that by $70,000)
4. Security cameras for all buildings including the Police
5. Fire ambulance- Sandy said the supply chain is so bad right now that we need to order the ambulance now even though we may not get it until FY24
6. Police Station cell cameras need to be updated
7. 2 new police cruisers at $110,000 keeping in line with usual inventory update (1 unmarked for the Chief)
8. Bullet proof vests for $5,000 per usual budget request
9. Repair work to the maintenance shop so there is a central place to store all tools
10. HES control panel for he elevator-it is currently so old that they can’t get parts for it anymore ($64, 919)
11. Highway requesting a medium duty dump truck with a plow and sander attachment
12. Voting tabulator for the Clerk’s office due to new divide of precinct 2
13. Assessor Recertification- we pay 1.3 every year toward the 3 year cycle payment
14. Highway requests a 500-gallon double walled waste oil tank
15. Highway requests a water recycling until for wthe wash bay (currently there is a tight tank and the State would like a water recycling unit) there must also be a shed over it that keeps out rainwater. $75,000
16. New time clock for the Town Clerk for time stamped materials for $846
17. Library sound panels for $5,000
18. Library requests a new computer but Jean said this could be removed

Sandy said the Capital Plan Committee was not recommending the following articles:

A new intercom system for HES for $38,323.00

Body worn cameras for the Police because the Chief was trying to get a grant.

Request for an additional copier for the Town Hall

A network refresh for the library and water departments

Sandy said we could afford all the recommended articles out of Free Cash.

On a different note, Sandy said the Capital Planning Committee was recommending that the Silver Lake Tennis Courts be paid out of the Stabilization account that was specifically set aside when Silver Lake separated from Pembroke. They feel this is a good use of the funds.

Sandy said that the SRO article was going to come up again and may need to come out as a Capital article (as usual) because we can’t afford it through the operating budget.

Sandys said the Capital Planning was recommending that the 1.5 million which is left over in the bond from the school roof repairs be used to turn the current Halifax museum into a new COA building. The price for renovations was about 1.2 million but Sandy put it in as 1.5 million because the price is almost always higher by the end of the project. Sandy said it would have to be voted as debt exclusion because that is how the original request went, but we can move it from one project to another.

Sandy said she had asked the department heads to have narratives for each article ready for town meeting.

Todd asked when requests for capital come back lower (such as with the recycling center repairs) do we reconsider more articles again. Sandy said that Fin Com can override the recommendation of the Capital Plan committee whenever it wants and put in their own recommendation for Town meeting. Todd said that he thinks the body cameras are important for the Police. Sand believes if we buy the cameras with our own money that we won’t get the grant but it could certainly be done. The chief agreed, if we buy them, the grant won’t happen, but he also doesn’t know if there is even anymore grant money being released so it might be smarter to buy them. He said he didn’t want to force the article given the financial circumstances but if we find money available, he would be in favor of having us buy them directly. He said the cost would cover the cameras and the cloud storage of the videos.

Linda ran though correspondence and said there was an updated budget from the Assessors office for a contractual raise in the mapping fees and Cesar had also submitted updates in his budget and capital requests. Cesar said he could send more information by the end of the week for pricing. Linda said that Tom had asked for clarification on the Revenues folder as an agenda item and Cheryll asked Cesar where it stood. Cesar said he should be able to give access to the folder by the end of the week. Cesar said his budget updates were due to his requests for ARPA money for some of the articles. He said overall if the money is voted by the BOS to be ARPA money than everything goes down.

Linda said the Committee could make a blanket vote to recommend or not recommend all level funded budgets with the exception of the wage line. She said Sandy would have to update wage lines first to reflect possible retroactive 1% figured. Mike Bennet made a motion to recommend the Water level funded budget. Jon interjected to clarify that it could be one big blanket vote and Linda and Sandy agreed it could.

**Cheryll entertained a motion to recommend any level funded budgets with the exception of the wage line**

Motion: Jon

Second: Todd

**AIF**

Linda said they could start to discuss votes on capital articles, but all agreed they wanted to wait for Tom to be in attendance.

Sandy said she would update the Fin Com spreadsheet to reflect the recommendations voted

**Cheryll entertained a motion to adjourn at 7:47pm**

Motion: Michael Bennett

Second: Jon

**AIF**

**Respectfully submitted,**

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

Michael Bennett, Clerk