Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday , March 28, 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, Ashley Disesa, Mike Schleiff, and Pam Adduci

**Tom called the meeting to order at 6:02pm**

Tom said the Committee would move into Executive Session immediately to meet with Ashley Disesa to discuss contract negotiation strategy that if done in public might detrimentally affect the Town’s bargaining position. Tom said they were taking the Executive Session out of order because Selectmen Disesa had another meeting she had to attend after the Fin Com meeting. Tom took a roll call vote to enter Executive Session

**Tom entertained a motion to enter executive session.**

Motion: Michael Bennett

Second: Todd

**AIF**

Tom took a roll call vote to enter back into Public Session at 6:07pm

**Tom entertained a motion to accept the minutes of 3/14**

Motion: Michael

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to accept the minutes of 3/21**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Mike

**AIF**

Tom asked Michael Schleiff what the Fin Com should know about the Park Commission budget. Mike thanked the members for all of their hard work on the budget. He said that the budget had originally been entered for $100 on the wage line and $450 for the expense line. He said however, that the Board of Health had asked the commission to provide Port a Potties at the beaches this year. The Park Commission had discussed it and they felt it was important to provide them at the Lingan Street beach this year as they have seen an uptick in the number of people using that beach. He said the company, CPR, could provide a handicap porta potty for 28-day cycles for $275. The Commission wanted to do a week before Memorial Day to a week after Labor Day and that would cost them $1100 for that period. Mike read the letter from the Board of Health requesting them to do this and the reasons why (attached). Jon asked about making sure that it is town residents only that are using the beaches and if the Park Commission had a way to better control that as last year there were quite a few nonresidents using the beach. Mike said they were working with the Police department to find a way to monitor it better this summer. He said the officers are trying to look up license plates and the Park Commission is thinking about starting to charge fees for people from out of town to use the beaches. Tom asked if there was signage at the beaches about it being residents only. Mike said he would have to look as he hadn’t been by in a while. Mike pointed out that the State Boat ramp on route 58 is accessible by anyone and sometimes people come over from there and hang out on the beach. Mike said that for many years there had only been one person on the Park Commission and so it was hard to maintain everything but now that they have a full board, they are trying to make their properties more attractive. Tom said maybe charging a nominal fee could help cover the cost of things like porta potties. Tom said he thinks it is important to at least have the porta potties for now. Tom asked Sandy if the numbers for Park in the One Drive folder reflected the amount for porta potties. Sandy said she could adjust it right then and make the number $1562, she said that would be the first requested change from the Park Commission in quite a long time. Mike said for now they are not going to do a porta potty on Holmes Street as they first want to access how much it is getting used in the next year. Jon asked if one porta potty for Lingan was enough, and Mike said it should be. Mike said Parks is also looking for beach nourishment by adding new sand to the beach because they have lost a lot. He said that he had spoken to Highway and they said they could probably help spread the sand. He said he had also spoken with the Conservation Commission on what kind of sand they needed to use. He said they had gotten bids from some different places. Mike said they wanted to do an article for the sand and also an article to replace the boat ramp on Holmes Street. He said that the Park Commission is working on drawing up those articles now. He said a previous article had given them $5,000 to redo the ramp but it was not nearly enough and so they want another article to add money to that $5,000 so that they can completely redo the boat ramp. Tom said he believed the porta potty question would be an operating budget expense, but the other two items would be capital articles and they had missed the deadline and would have to do those two for FY24. Sandy agreed the deadline for articles had passed and they would need to put it on a special town meeting warrant or wait for the FY24 ATM. Mike asked if there would be a special town meeting this year. He wanted to know if they could get it on the special town meeting inside of the annual town meeting. Sandy said that deadline had also passed and the only way to do that would be to get the Selectmen to agree to allow it even though the deadline had passed. Tom asked if there was any recourse, but Sandy said unless the Selectmen agreed to it, the Park Commission would just have to gather the information for the special town meeting in fall and put it on that one. Mike Schleiff questioned if it had to be that way. Ashley said the deadline had passed and yes it would have to go to a fall town meeting. Tom said the Park Commission should get it together for the fall or next spring. He said they could vote the operating expense for the FY23 budget and the other two would have to wait.

Tom asked Pam Adduci to speak about the Treasurer Collector wage lines for FY23. She would like the Assistant Treasurer to be put to 40 hours as she would be leaving soon. She said it will be more important than ever to put the assistant up to 40 hours. Pam said the assistant treasurer is appointed but can not be elected unless they are from the town. Sandy said the Assistant Treasurer has been hard pressed to keep up with the workload at 32 hours for many years. Sandy said no matter what happens with a new Treasurer/Collector, you are going to need the Assistant Treasurer to help that person a lot. She said in her opinion with the work she does with the office, the Assistant Treasurer should have already been at 40 hours but it will be more important then ever now. Tom asked if the Fin Com would just adjust the budget line and Sandy said they would. Tom said if in fact new revenue sources could be found, such as the committee was hoping to do/find, then it would probably only increase the workload in the Treasurer’s office. Pam said as far as new revenue, she had notified Selectmen Andrews that the Town should consider raising the demand fee on bills. She said that Halifax charges $5 but she had surveyed most towns around, and they charge more, she thought $15 would be a good compromise. Pam said it takes a vote of town meeting to change a demand fee. Tom asked the amount be added to the budget and they could hear opinions on it when they took a vote.

Tom said in the HES budget we are still faced with a $360,000 increase in special education transportation. He said he had spoken to the school committee about exploring different ways to gap this issue. He said he had suggested they work with the COA to use the buses to help transport students. The COA had suggested it and said they were happy to work with the school. Tom said there may be insurance issues, but it was worth looking into.

Tom asked if the committee voted the Town Administrator salary and more was needed, if they found a candidate, could the amount be changed. Sandy said it would have to go to a Special Town Meeting to get more money.

**Tom entertained a motion to recommend the following lines as printed:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Town Admin salary ($125K) | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| IT expense ($110,191)\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Building Inspector Wages | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Building Inspector \*\*Expense ($6988) | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Animal Control Wages \*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Recycling center wages\*\*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Hazardous Waste ($5950)\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Trash Collection\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Cheryll | Michael | **AIF** |
| COA expense | Michael | Cheryll | AIF |
| COA electricity | Michael | Cheryll | AIF |
| Parks Expense ($1562)\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Fireworks\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Debt | Michael | Cheryll | AIF |
| Plymouth County Retirement | Michael | Jon | **AIF** |
| Group Insurance ($1,054,560)\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| OPEB trust | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Treasurer/Collector Clerical\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Reserve Fund | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Plymouth County Extension | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Road Maintenance | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Assessor Recertification | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Police Cruisers | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Bullet Proof Vest | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Police Cell cameras | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| HES elevator control panel \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Dump truck | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Highway Waste Oil Tank | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Gas and Oil all \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*buildings($110,000) | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Heating Oil($60,000)\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIf** |
| Water Recycle/Wash Bay | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| South Coastal Legal and South Shore Resources | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Town Clerk Time Stamp | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Library new computer | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Copy Machine/ Printer $4,000 (2) | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Fire Ambulance\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| Security cameras for town buildings ($36,800)\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| School Resource Officer\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Todd | **AIF** |
| COA building\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| HES intercom\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | HOLD |  |  |
| Police Body worn cameras\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Cheryll | Michael | **AIF** |
| Library/Water network refresh\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Cheryll | Michael | **AIF** |
| Silver Lake Tennis Court Repair\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Michael | Todd | **4-1 (Cheryll no)** |

\*Cesar asked if his wages line had been discussed to include the 40 hours. He said he wasn’t sure the BOS had voted to give him the 40 hours from ARPA. Sandy said it was her understanding that the other 15 hours had been voted from ARPA for the FY23 budget. Tom asked Sandy to check with Gordon on that. Sandy said that the amount included the $1500 to lease the printer/copiers and even though they have that on as an article to buy them, she thought it was important to leave the $1500 in the budget because Cesar had only allowed $1000 for outside help and she thought it was important to put a little more money in that part so he could get help when he needed it.

\*\* Sandy said she had checked with the BOS and they were fine with the building inspector moving the Assistant building inpector wages to his expense line so that he could use it to pay the gentlemen that was currently doing the occupancy permits.

\*\*\* Sandy had checked the figure and it reflected only the 1% and the step increase

Tom said they should skip Line 74 and 75 for now which were the school lines. He said they really only went up about $600 outside of the special education transportation issue and so we needed to continue to press for them to find solutions. Cheryll asked if bids had been taken. Tom said the problem was that no one was willing to bid it, they are down to only 1 vendor, that is why he had suggested the COA solution. Cheryll asked how many special education children are being transported. Tom said it wasn’t an increase in the number of students, just an increase in price from the vendor because they have a monopoly.

\*\*\*\* Cheryll asked how many employees this amount represented. Sandy said 3

\*\*\*\*\* Sandy said she had spoken to Sue Johnston and Steve Hayward and they had agreed to pull the $12,000 for this year because they would not be doing a hazardous waste day. Tom asked if they would go to every other year as they had mntioned. Sandy said that was her understanding or they would do it regionally with other towns to split the cost.

\*\*\*\*\*\*Sandy said that Sue and Steve had put the services out to bid but were still awaiting information. She suggested voting the line as it is for now and then if it comes in lower they can lower the figure before town meeting because this was definitely the high end figure.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* This was the higher figure that reflected the porta potty amount

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* The figure voted was for June 2023. Sandy said they were doing a special town meeting article for June 2022 because they were doing fireworks before the FY end. Tom asked if this was consistent with what they usually asked for and Sandy said yes.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* This is an adjusted figure to reflect current expected savings

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* Cheryll asked how many people this amount represented. Sandy said it reflected 3 people

Jean Gallant asked if the library lines had been voted and Sandy said they had in an earlier meeting. Linda looked it up and agreed.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* Cheryll asked if ARPA infrastructure funds could pay for this. Sandy said the school didn’t request to go through ARPA. She said this is a legitimate request for using through Free Cash.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* sandy said she had talked with Steve and Scott about the higher figures given the current prices on fuel. Todd asked if the full amount is not needed where does the money go. Sandy said it returns to the General Fund. Cheryll asked if we do bids on Gas and Oil and Sandy said yes, but there is a rack price and it can go up from there if the cost of fuel goes up. Tom said that is how fuel bids always are, to cover for the fact that prices can increase. Cheryll said it should be a locked in price and Tom said there is no way anyone would ever bid that way.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* Michael said we need to vote this now and lock in the price. Cheryll said why would we pay now and not get the ambulance for two years. Sandy said we are just committing to buy at the price now, there would be some kind of payment plan where we put a deposit down, lock in the price, and then when the ambulance is completed pay the balance due.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* sandy asked Cesar for pricing on the new cameras only. Cesar recommends that we only replace the new ones and that would be $36,800 for 15 new cameras. He there are already cameras at the police, fire, and Recycling. This would add cameras to Town hall, COA, highway and the library. Todd thinks it makes sense to only add new cameras and everyone agrees. Sandy said she would tell the BOS.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Sandy said this vote would come from Raise and Appropriate not Free Cash. That would set it up to move to the Operating budget for next year. Sandy said it would appear as a sub line in the school budget for next year in operating expense at $36,000. Michael asked is this for the whole year or partial. Sandy said it reflects the cost of 2/3 of the SRO for the middle school. We pay 2/3 and Plympton pays 1/3 and Kingston pays the full cost to have one at the high school.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Sandy said they are trying to use the Halifax museum to change it to a new COA building. The architect has proposed plans to rehab and do an addition. The museum would move to Pope’s tavern. It would be a better option for the seniors on one floor and would provide more parking. The architect said it would be about 1.2 million but they are requesting 1.5 million to cover expected increases. Sandy said the money would come from the school roof project that had previously been voted. The roof projected came in for less than originally expected and we got more reimbursed than expected. The money is sitting in an account and must be used for a project of a similar size and scope. The school roof project was debt excluded so using this money requires a vote also, so it stays debt excluded. We already have the money and have to use it but we can’t use it to pay down the debt, so this is a good use. This will not increase the taxes.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*This was not recommended by the Capital Plan Committee. Sandy said the school should discuss it as the money may now be available.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*The Chief said this amount reflects 5-year camera program with replacement cameras in 3 years and cloud storage for 5 years. He said he thinks it is prudent to order these while we have the Free Cash to do it because eventually, they will be mandatory.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Cheryll asked why this can’t come out of ARPA. Sandy said it is the choice of the Board of Selectmen how to spend the ARPA money, they have sole control, and they haven’t decided to do that. Tom asked if we have the money in Free Cash to fund it. Sandy said we did and we would still have about $109,000 under the levy limit. Tom asked for what are the cons if we don’t do it. Cesar said the water is only an upgrade but the library is way behind and they need it. Tom asked if Cesar had the bandwidth to do all this. Cesar said he did. Jon asked why it wasn’t recommended earlier. Sandy said they weren’t sure they had enough Free Cash but some articles have dropped in price and now they do. Tom asked if it was necessary. Cesar said it was and if we do it, 5G would have no negative effect.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* This money would come from the Silver Lake Stabilization account that was established during the split from Pembroke. There is currently $312,000 in that account and they need to use $110,000 for our portion to repair the tennis courts. The ATM didn’t approve last year but this year they want it to come from that money.

**Tom entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:04pm**

Motion: Michael Bennett

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Respectfully submitted,**

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

Michael Bennett, Clerk