Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday , July 11, 2022**

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

Audience: Sandy Nolan, Alex Meade, Jonathan Selig, Ashley Disesa, Susan Lawless, Cesar Calouro and the Board of Water Commissioners

**Tom called the meeting to order at 6:34pm**

**Tom entertained a motion to accept the minutes of 6/27/22**

Motion: Todd

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Tom said the Committee would be handling the following Line-Item Transfers:

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item Transfer in the amount of $3,000 from the Custodial wages account to the Town building PM expense**

Motion: Todd

Second: Mike

**AIF**

Motion: Ashley

Second: Jonathan

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item Transfer in the amount of $30,000 from Elementary School Expense to the Special Needs Transportation**

Motion: Michael

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Motion: Alex

Second: Jonathan

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item transfer in the amount of $151 from Special Needs Tuition to Special Needs Transportation**

Motion: Mike

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Motion: Alex

Second: Jonathan

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item Transfer in the amount of $69,225 from Vocational Transportation to Special Needs transportation**

Motion: Michael

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Motion: Alex

Second: Jonathan

**AIF**

Tom asked if anyone had heard from the School committee on any resolutions that were being sought in order to mitigate this problem for the upcoming year. He said he was aware that the main problem was that there was only one vendor, but he had not heard from the school on if they had investigated other ideas, specifically the combination of sharing vans with the Council on Aging. He said he didn’t like the idea of having to take money from the Vocational line to give to the Special needs line. Tom said Finance should vote it for now because they had to, but he would like the School Committee to come in and discuss this again to make sure they are doing everything they can to find alternative vendors. Alex questioned that the cost had gone up 67% and he wanted to make sure he was reading that correctly.

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item transfer in the amount of $2,200 from The Town Administrator salary line the law account**

Motion: Michael

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Motion: Alex

Second: Jonathan

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item transfer in the amount of $71.90 from Selectmen Expense to the Town Report line**

Motion: Michael

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Motion: Jonathan

Second: Alex

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item transfer in the amount of $1315 from the Highway Wages full time to the Gas and Oil account**

Motion: Michael

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Motion: Jonathan

Second: Alex

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item transfer in the amount of $1500 from the Highway Wages full time to the Highway Equipment and Supply**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Michael

**AIF**

Motion: Jonathan

Second: Alex

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item transfer in the amount of $2656 from Highway Wages full time to Highway Wages clerical**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Michael

**AIF**

Motion: Jonathan

Secod:Alex

**AIF**

Sandy said this was for covering the vacation payout to the administrative assistant who had left

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item Transfer in the amount of $3774.30 from the Highway Barn Maintenance to the Street Light Electricity**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Michael

**AIF**

Motion: Alex

Second: Jonathan

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item Transfer in the amount of $437 from the Group Insurance** **Town Share to the Medicare Town Share**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Michael

**AIF**

Moton Jonathan

Second: Alex

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item transfer in the amount of $1350.60 from the Fire Wages Part time to the Fire Chief Salary**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Michael

**AIF**

Motion: Alex

Second: Jonathan

**AIF**

Sandy said that this was because the Acting Chief had taken over 2 days prior to when they expected and so the town had to cover those costs

**Tom entertained a motion to approve a Line-Item transfer in the amount of $1710 from the Town Administrator’s Salary to Data Processing**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Michael

**AIF**

Motion: Jonathan

Second: Alex

**AIF**

Tom said he would like to have an unstructured discussion between the Fin Com and Board of Selectmen regarding the Wage and Personnel mandate. He said now that the two committees are acting on behalf of the Wage and Personnel employees, he wanted to make sure everyone was in agreement on what the mandate was. He said it is not very clear where the decisions are supposed to be made. He said it is very obvious that we are losing people because the Town keeps voting only a 1% increase and we can’t keep up with surrounding towns. He said we should be doing 3-4% for an increase. He asked the BOS their thoughts on what we need to do. Ashley said she was against dismantling the Wage and Personnel board and had voted against it. She thinks it needs to come back and have people focusing solely on Wage and Personnel issues because the BOS and Fin Com are already busy enough. She said there has been a lot of turnover in employees. Tom said he has some information, but that new market ranges and job evaluations have to be done. Tom said maybe there needs to be a subcommittee of the two boards that focuses on such things. Ashely said what if the subcommittee only gathers information but has no voting responsibilities. The two committees agreed that you could do 2 Finance members, 1 BOS, the New Town Administrator, and 2 citizens at large to gather information. The BOS said that between the 3 of them, they sit on a total of 32 subcommittees. Ashley said she wants to make sure this new subcommittee would be very focused on just gathering information on wages. Alex said there is no question that the town employees are being underfunded in pay across the board. He said that was an overlying theme in the interview process for Town Administrators. Tom said the Town needs to look at market pricing. Sandy said that other HR issues would not go to this subcommittee. That the Wage and Personnel board was originally designed to just handle wage issues. It should just do wages and general personnel policies. Ashley said she wants to keep some flexibility in what they do. Jonathan Selig asked if there were job descriptions for each position. Linda and Sandy said there were. Tom said the wage scale needs to be adjusted and looked at closely. Ashley asked Cesar to post on the website that the Town was looking for 2 citizens at large to be on the Personnel Advisory Board. The Fin Com and BOS wanted to stress that this a non-voting committee, that they would just report findings to the Fin Com and BOS.

**Tom entertained a motion to approve the assembly of a subcommittee named the Wage and Personnel Advisory Board and that this board would have no voting powers.**

Motion: Michael

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Motion Alex

Second: Jonathan

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to approve the appointment of Michael Bennet and Cheryll Zarella Burke as the Fin Com members on the Wage and Personnel Advisory Board**

Motion: Jon Schmaling

Second: Todd

**AIF**

**Ashley entertained a motion to approve the appointment of Alex Meade as the BOS member on the Wage and Personnel Advisory Board**

Motion: Jonathan

Second: Ashely

**AIF**

Tom said the Board of Water Commissioners had come to discuss allowing their Superintendent to skip from a Step 3 (which is what he was supposed to move to at the end of his first year) up to a Step 4 at the end of his first year. Water Commissioner Dick Clark said it is hard for them to find qualified people at the rates that Halifax offers. He said that the last time they went out for a Water Super they only got about 4-5 applicants and they heard lots of complaints about the pay rate. Dick said the Commissioners feel the current Super is doing a good job and they want to keep him. He said the senior operator is pushing $80,000 himself and he has no responsibility and that we only pay our Super that much and he is the one with all the responsibilities. Alex said that the current senior operator appears to be making about $83,000 based on the prior year budget but that FY23 budget is down to $82,000. Sandy said that was because of changes in the contract. She said this brings up the whole point of how skewed the overall pay scale is, that some grades are too close together. Alex said that people not applying to jobs in Halifax is an across-the-board problem and not specific to the Water department. The Water Commissioners said this would only be an $1800 impact to let him skip a step. Jonathan Seelig said that allowing him to skip a step is only going to cause him to hit the top step of his pay scale sooner and max out sooner. He said the larger issue is that there are a lot of people in the Town who are underpaid. Jon Schmaling said he echoed the concerns of Jonathan Selig. That paying the $1800 is a good decision but it leads to other employees following suit and asking to skip steps because they are also underpaid. Tom said maybe for this one you just have to put your finger in the dyke to stop the bleeding while you can. Ashely said that because water involves public safety issues it has to take precedent. Tom said there are certain positions you can’t do without. Jon Schmaling questioned if you can just skip a step or do you have to change the bylaw to do that. Linda Cole said that she believed there was no avenue in the bylaw that allowed for skipping steps once someone had already been in a position. Todd wanted to know why $1800 would be the magic number that would make the Superintendent stay. Tom said that maybe the $26 million dollar budget is not being split the way it needs to be. Jonathan Selig said that he wants this to be very clear that this is being reviewed by counsel first because he doesn’t want other town employees to feel disgruntled that one person got something while no one else ever has. All agreed that the bylaw would be reviewed by Town Counsel.

**Ashley entertained a motion to allow the Water Superintendent to skip step 3 and go directly to Step 4 at his first year anniversary pending a review of if the bylaw allowed it from town counsel**

Motion: Alex

Second: Jonathan

**AIF**

**Tom entertained a motion to allow the Water Superintendent to skip step 3 and go directly to Step 4 at his first year anniversary pending a review of the bylaw from counsel**

Motion: Michael

Second: Cheryll

**3-2 Todd Dargie and Jonathan Schmaling voted against this motion**

Tom asked about general budget discussions. Sandy said that we should be all set with the FY22 budget now and that it would be closing out that week. She said after the 15th she would have a better idea of what the Town was looking at for Free Cash for the next budget cycle.

Linda Cole updated the Committee that no applications had been received yet for the Fin Com secretary. Cesar said he was unaware of this position being open and no one had asked him to put it on the website. Linda said she had provided all the information to Ed Thorne and Pam Mcsherry and they had advertised it in the paper and perhaps just forgot to ask Cesar to put it on the website. Ashely asked Cesar to add it to the website the next day.

Linda said they also have received no Talent Bank forms for the Finance Committee.

Sandy asked how often the Wage and Personnel Advisory board will meet. She said it is important to get this going. They said they would meet the following Monday. Ashely said she thinks it should not meet until they get the 2 Citizens at large. The members present said they would meet the upcoming Monday and then bring the members at large up to date when they come on. Alex, Cheryll and Michael agreed on 5pm the following Monday night.

**Tom entertained a motion to adjourn at 7:35pm**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Michael

**AIF**

**Ashely entertained a motion to adjourn at 7:35pm**

Motion: Alex

Second: Jonathan

**AIF**

**Respectfully submitted,**

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

Michael Bennett, Clerk