



Finance Committee  
TOWN OF HALIFAX  
499 Plymouth Street  
Halifax, MA 02338

## Meeting Minutes

**Monday, February 27, 2023**

**Committee Members Present (Remotely):** Todd Dargie, Cheryll Zarella Burke, Jonathan Schmaling, Frank Johnston, Jim Walters & Michael Bennett,

**Committee members absent:** Tom Connolly

**Audience (Remotely):** Katie Esposito, Cody Haddad, Sandy Nolan, Antoinett Tripolone, Jean Gallant, Cesar Calouro, Chief Joao Chaves & Susan Lawless

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

**Todd entertained a motion to accept the minutes of February 13, 2023**

Motion: Jim Walters

Second: Michael Bennett

**AIF**

**Finance Committee Secretary Update** - Todd welcomed the new Finance Committee Secretary Katie Esposito to the meeting. Todd also thanked Sandy Nolan for her assistance as the interim secretary while the position was vacant.

**Library Wage Adjustment** – Todd Introduced Jean Gallant from Holmes Library to the meeting to discuss with the committee an error with the FY 23 budget. In June 2022 all library staff were issued retroactive wages. Jen explained the Director MRI was short this year in the amount of \$244.00 due to not being approved until June 2022. Sandy Nolan recommended a reserve fund transfer request. Jean agreed and will resubmit for review for the upcoming finance committee meeting.

### **FY24 Budget Review:**

**Town Clerk's Office Hour Adjustment** – Todd Introduced Susan Lawless, Town Clerk to review the proposed new hours of operation for department. Susan is requesting the town clerk's hours be changed from 32 hours a week to 40 hours a week. The office would be open from 7:00 AM – 4:00 PM. The pay rate would remain the same, however, due to the increase in hours the salary would be raised from \$57,190 to \$70,720. Susan also proposed increasing the hours for the Assistant Town Clerk from 30 hours a week to 36 hours a week. This would decrease the budget for this position from \$42,133 to \$40,082 due to a new employee in the department. Frank asked if the assistant position should be 40 hours as well. However, Susan explained due to the Town Hall being closed

on Fridays there is no need for expense. Cody explained to the committee this is a needed change due to the daily demands put onto Town Clerks. He recommended the committee to support the proposed schedule.

**Police Operations Budget** - Todd introduces Joao Chaves, Chief of Police to review and discuss the proposed FY24 operating budget. Chief Chaves asked the committee to remove the line item for the Animal control officer as this position will now be contracted out. Chief Chaves wished to add a Lieutenant/ Deputy Chief position with a proposed salary of \$118,228.00. He explained he needs a next in command if he is out of town or unable to fulfil his duties as Chief. A proposal for a Sergeant position was also requested in the amount of \$105,200. Cody recommended the committee to approve these requests if the budget allows.

Chief Chaves proposes a new position be created under wage and personnel for a Records Clerk. This would be a 10-hour-a-week position within the police department. Sandy Nolan mentions she believes this is already a position labeled Secretary. She will review the bylaws and update the Chief on her findings.

Chief Chaves address committee on Capital request for the Bullet Proof Vest Program. The department is mandated to provide all officers with Bullet Proof Vests every five years. These are purchased through The Town of Halifax for \$5,000 then later reimbursed through state and federal funding. Chief Chaves explained the department will be requesting two new police vehicles this year. The proposed cost would be \$110,00. This would include vehicles and all needed adjustments such as lights, lettering and sirens. The chief explained allowing for two new vehicles every year helps with the cost of maintenance. Lastly Chief Chaves reviewed the request made for portable radios. They are requesting five new radios to allow for the transition to digital. The Halifax Police Department is next in line to go digital with the regional dispatch center. Once these five radios are purchased the department will still need four additional radios. This would then allow all officers access to the digital radios during their shift. Chief Chaves is going to work with Cody to access funds through the EMR due to being related to public safety.

**Town Administrator budget and projections**— Todd invites Cody Haddad, Town Administrator, to share the projections for revenue and expenses. Cody starts by reviewing the IT Data Processing budget. The department is requesting a step increase for employee's salary to \$52,354. The department has an expense increase from \$110,191 to \$139,955. This increase is mostly due to software licenses as the town begins upgrading programs, in particular the financial software. Cody also explains that using multiple factor authentication programs is now a requirement with towns insurance company. Cesar explains duo is widely used company among other local towns and being considered for Halifax as well.

Cody also presented the proposed a line item for additional equipment such as computer for staff in the amount of \$7,500.00. The comcast internet bill was also discussed. They believe there may be a discrepancy and comcast is investigating. Frank asked about cameras being installed in the great room. Cody stating, he will be using ARPA funds for this project which will only require a vote from the Board of Selectmen and not a town meeting.

Cesar explained to the committee that licensing expenses is now a taking over for in house maintenance cost which explains the large increase.



Cody presents the committee with his projections for the year's insurance expenses estimated at \$331,528.00. This total includes all insurances costs. Cody stated he should know more next week when the rates come out and will be able to give a confirmed total then.

Cody reviews the recruitment and employment training budget. Asking to increase from \$7,500 to \$10, 000 to assist with more training for all departments and job postings.

Cody then reviews the Selectmen expenses budget which is level funded. Increasing the salary for the town administrator from \$125,000 to \$136,475. Then he reviews increase to clerical staff wages from \$86,619 to \$88,289. Cody is also requesting an increase in legal fees from \$124,000 to \$139,500. Spending more on legal than budgeted for in the past.

Cody explains the Town Halls Electricity expense. He is requesting a \$1,000 increase for this line item. Looking to lock into a new program soon for a discounted rate. Town reports line item is increasing by \$400. Telephones are level funded and will remain the same at \$40,000. Website committee will be increased from \$3,050 to \$3,308. Looking to move this to the IT budget in the future and not have as a separate line item.

Cody reviews the dispatch service which is remaining the same at \$200,000 but still waiting for a confirmation on this number. Area 58 is also remaining level funded at \$198,000. Copyrighted Music License is increasing from \$366 to \$400. This is a fee to use music at public events hosted by the town.

**Town Revenue & Expense Projections** - Cody then reviews the revenue and expenses projections. The estimated Levy for the year would be \$19,154,352.30. He then reviews the debt exclusions which would raise the levy capacity to \$19,912,636.30.

The total estimated revenue receipts are \$2,488,300. The estimate from the state aided revenue is \$4638,814, Cody does believe the amount will come in a little higher than the projection. The total forecasted revenues general fund is \$27,039,750.30. Special revenue fund is \$37,425 and Enterprise fund would be \$1624,112. Cody provides the committee with two grand totals for revenue. The first is \$28,701,287.30 and the second is \$28,401,287.30 which would include the \$300,000 in unused levy historically left by the town. Cody does not believe this is substantiable going forward.

Moving onto the projected expenses and wages. Cody explains the need for an increased pay grade for clerical positions. The total general operating cost would be \$28,411,382.18, Cody explains this does not include an across-the-board salary increase for personnel. This would leave \$289,904.92 in unused levy which would not be sustainable to leave the \$300,000 as it would bring the town into a deficit of -\$10,095.08.

Todd asked about additional state funding available and if it is possible to request more. Cody explained that there is a formula used to calculate and that is all allotted to the town. Todd also asked about increasing personnel wages. For example purposes only Cody set a 1% increase for all employees which would create a deficit of -\$69,313.06 if \$300,000 was left in reserves.

Frank asked about Solar farms in town. Cody said they are negotiating a pilot program which will come before town hall. They are a great program however you lose your ability to tax. Sandy stated the town comes to an agreement with the company not based upon revenue. Todd thanks Cody for his overview and time.

**New Town Revenue Folder** - Todd advised no new revenue ideas had been submitted since the last meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup>. Cody informed the committee that he sent a request to all department heads regarding this. Cody is working on compiling a master list. He hopes to have this list for the committee in the next few weeks. Once confirmed Todd will add to the agenda.

**As may arise**- Sandy Nolan mentioned the committee has received two Open meeting Law complaints. The complaint was due to the committee not announcing the meeting was being recorded. The Chairman should state at the beginning of every meeting that a recording is in progress. Todd agreed to implement this going forward. The second complaint was due to documents not being shared in the meeting minutes. Going forward there will be an exhibit list of all materials mentioned during the meeting.

Cody stated he will respond to Mr. Higgins' complaint in writing. Cody also mentioned he is working on scheduling Open Meeting Law training specifically for The Town of Halifax through the Attorney General's Office. Todd made a correction to the complaint stating the joint meeting with the selectmen was on February 13, 2023 as it was February 22, 2023.

Next meeting – Todd explained he plans to continue with the budget and capital requests. The departments planned on this weeks agenda are the highway department, Fire Department and Schools. Todd asked Jim for an update on the school budget. Jim will follow up with them

Possibly building department scheduled for March 13, 2023. Sandy explained they need to be ADA compliant within the next five years. Sandy asked Frank to follow up with the Parks department regarding their budget.

**Exhibit List:**

- FY24 Budgets : Town Clerk, Police and Data Processing
- 5-yr Town Revenue & Expense Projections

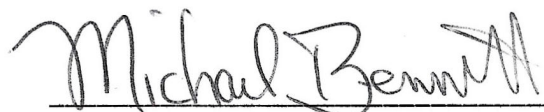
**Todd entertained a motion to adjourn at 7:43 PM**

Motion: Michael

Second: Cheryl

**AIF**

**Respectfully submitted,**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Bennett". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Michael Bennett, Clerk