

Finance Committee
Town of Halifax
499 Plymouth Street
Halifax, MA 02338

Meeting Minutes

October 17, 2022

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

Audience: Sandy Nolan, Frank Johnston, Jim Walters

Tom called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Tom asked Sandy if there was any Reserve Fund Transfers, Sandy answered there were none.

Referring to the Talent Bank the first candidate was interviewed by the Committee.

Frank Johnston, a resident of Halifax since 2014. Frank explained reasons why, after retirement of 31 years working, that he would be interested in the position on the Finance Committee. His experience with a large company, day to day operations, reviewing and hiring employees, budgets, and client interactions, could be useful to the committee. He asked the committee what the understanding of them was. Tom explained that they are the representatives of the community, liaisons to departments to manage the budgets of the town. There are some challenges, and more involved budgets such as the Schools, Police, Fire and Water. During Town meetings, the Finance Committee presents their point of view and are often asked questions. Cheryll agreed and added that from January to May is very busy prepping for Town Meeting and that budgets are submitted late December, early January for review. Tom also added that the committee relies heavily on the Town Accountant, Sandy Nolan, who is now acting Town Administrator. He also added that the Special Education Transportation is one of the biggest challenges the town faces. Among their duties, Cheryll also signs payroll, reserve fund transfers, legal transfers, general ledger funds and they work as wage and personnel along with the Board of Selectmen. Jon Schmaling asked Frank if there was anything particular that motivated him to be on the Fin Com. Frank said he is now decompressed and now ready to volunteer. He also attends other Board meetings. He is now on the Town Administrator search committee. Tom told the group that they would need to make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen for appointment.

Jim Walters, a 1 ½ year resident of Halifax, currently employed as a Director of Programs, said he is interested to be on the Finance Committee, and wants to help the town get better. With his experience in managing businesses, and writing grants, he wants to lend a hand. Tom explained that the Fin Com are unbiased arbiters. Tom told the group that he served in past organizations, was a volunteer Fire Fighter, and worked on the Police Department in another state. His time commitments fit nicely with

the Monday evening meetings. Tom explained there are two slots open and wants to fill them. He thanks Jim for his interest.

Tom asked if there were any comments, Jon asked if there would be a hold on appointing new members, Sandy said that the election is November 8th, and the Board of Selectmen will be a full board.

Tom went over the assignments for each committee member and asked if any had a particular department they would like to work with, or any changes? Each committee member replied that they were happy with their assigned departments, and that they would be fine keeping them for the FY24 budgets. Tom said he will reissue lists with assignments and minor revisions such as contact information, and when the two new members are appointed, he will revise again.

Tom discussed the last meetings where they were approached by the Water and COA and two very different outcomes occurred. The regrading of the Water Superintendent was approved and they did not approve the hiring of a new Social Worker for the COA. Sandy explained the regrading, and that creating of different position would have to go to town meeting. The Water Superintendent was moved to a higher step, not grade. Tom hopes that when all Boards are filled a complete regrade will be done. He also stated that after two years of no increases, a 1% increase is not enough, and we are losing good people. Jon questioned what are we paying them with? In order to increase pay, our revenue will need to be increased. Tom said he would like to get close to paying competitively. Chief Chaves agreed that regrading was needed because of positions having more responsibilities, doing 2 or 3 jobs within their job. Tom hopes that we can find new revenue sources as Todd has created the idea folder, and that it is a disservice to employees to not pay them competitively.

Jean Gallant asked how we came to be compared to the "10" towns. Sandy explained that Charlie would comprise this list from towns that matched demographics, industrial base, similar populations, similar budgets, median home income. Cheryll asked if senior population was considered, and it was not. Sandy stated that finding competitive towns in this area is difficult and we may need to look at places to cut.

As may arise, Tom informed the committee that a virtual meeting between Silver Lake and the school committee regarding union negotiations will be held on October 18, 2022, Todd will attend.

Motion to adjourn – Michael Bennett
Second – Cheryll Zarella Burke
AIF with Roll call vote.

Next meeting Monday, November 7, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Bennett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Michael Bennett, Clerk