Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday January 11, 2021**

**Committee Members Present**: Cheryll Zarella Burke, Fred McGovern, Melinda Tarsi, Tom Connolly, Lauren Carmichael, Drew McGlincy

Also, in attendance in the audience were: Charlie Seelig, Sandy Nolan, Gordon Andrews and Chief Chaves

The meeting was recorded by Zoom

**Melinda called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:01 pm**

Charlie reminded the Committee that he would need the meeting to end a few minutes before 7pm so that he could then host the Planning Board meeting.

Sandy asked the Committee members if they had seen the One Drive file that she put in their joint email so that they could all access the Budget sheets electronically. She added that she would have the Finance Committee spreadsheet (overview of the budget) in the file by the end of the upcoming week so that it would be easier for them to look at the overview.

Charlie said that Gordon Andrews had let him know that currently the HES budget was looking at $175,000 for the general budget and $250,000 for the special ed budget. So that would be higher than expected and leave a little less money to work with in general. Sandy reminded the Committee that this was the first draft of the budget. She said that often the School Committee offers a first draft which is somewhat of a “wish list” of what ideally would work but then as the Finance Committee comes back with what the Town can truly afford, they adjust some of the items to get the budget more in line with what can be afforded. Sandy said her understanding was that about $70,000 would be increased wages. Charlie also mentioned that the Regional Dispatch agreement had also increased by about $50,000. He said he was investigating what caused the increase but there is not much room for negotiation. It is a price that we must pay for regionalization but it is his belief it is still much cheaper than being on our own for dispatch. Charlie said all of these items combined are making service improvements look less likely to be accomplished.

Melinda suggested members reach out to liaisons and look at their budgets for inconsistencies and then ask the department head what the reason for the change is. Why did the budget go up or down? She reminded members it is not the job of the liaison to advocate for the department but rather to just explain the changes so that members can ask educated questions when the department head meets with the Finance Committee. Lauren asked for her list of departments again and Linda emailed it to her during the meeting.

**Melinda entertained a motion to accept the meeting minutes from 12/21/2020**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Tom

**AIF**

There were no Reserve Fund Transfers

Melinda asked Drew what questions he had about vehicle inventory as they had carried it from the last agenda because he was not present to discuss his questions at the last meetng. Drew said he no longer had any questions.

Melinda said there had been correspondence via the email and in the mailbox about Wage and Personnel changes. She said there was also correspondence about capital items. Tom asked if capital items are voted separately at Town meeting or as part of the general budget. Melinda said that generally capital items are handled as separate artlicles to be voted at town meeting. She said that in general, the Finance Committee does not like to have capital items included in the operating budget. They prefer to use “Raise and Appropriate” for the general budget and Free Cash for capital items. That way one time expenditures are not figured in with a regular operating budget.

There was no public participation

The next meetings were set for 1/25/21 Melinda said to schedule meetings for every Monday after that. She asked Linda to reach out to department heads and see if they had certain dates they would like to meet with the Finance Committee.

Drew asked Charlie if he needed any help with cooreindation between solar farms and the electric company? Charlie said that if Halifax does a solar farm he will have to go out to bid on the project and get the best deal for the Town whether it is selling off electricity or just getting our own for free.

Tom what data is used to determine things during the joint meeting of the Selectmen and the Finance Committee for Wage and Personnel requests. For example, he noticed that the letters from the Police and Fire Chief noted their administrative assistants were grade 6 while all others were at Grade 8 and he wondered why. Sandy interjected to say that actually all adminstative assistant are currently at Grade 6 and only statutory assistants are currently at Grade 7, and no assistants are at Grade 8 currently. Melinda said the meeting on 1/25/21 would just be to read the requests and then at a later meeting with both boards, they would discuss more in depth the requests. Charlie said part of when those meetings are will depend on the Selectmen’s schedules.

Gordon mentioned that Silver Lake would be presenting their upcoming budget requests on 1/14/21. Melinda asked Fred if he would be attending and he said he would be at that meeting.

**Melinda entertained a motion to adjourn at 6:32pm**

Motion: Cherll

Second: Tom

**AIF**

Respectfully submitted,

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

Fred McGovern, Clerk