



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

## Meeting Minutes

**Monday April 1, 2024**

**Committee Members Present (Remotely):** Todd Dargie, Frank Johnston, William Smith, Edward Bryan, Michael Bennett & Jim Walters

**Absent:** Cheryll Zarrella Burke (Joined at 6:15PM)

**Audience:** Chief Chaves, Sandy Nolan, & Katie Esposito

**Todd Dargie called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm**

*This meeting is being conducted remotely and being recorded by Area 58.*

**ACCEPTANCE OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES FROM MARCH 18, 2024:** The meeting minutes from March 18, 2024, have been deferred until the April 8, 2024, meeting.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REVIEW AND OPEN DISCUSSION ON BUDGET STATUS:** Todd opened the discussion by stating Cody is absent from tonight's meeting because he is currently at the school committee meeting. Tomorrow there will also be a meeting between Cody, Jim, and the school department to discuss the finalized the proposed budget. The school Department plans to present their budget to the board of selectmen and the finance committee in a joint session on Wednesday April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 PM.

Sandy mentions that she has made a change to the spreadsheet in the One Drive regarding line items requesting postage. She has removed the postage expenses out of each department's individual budgets and added them into the office machines expense account. The total amount of money moved was \$23,500. The committee agreed this was a logical adjustment.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REVIEW AND OPEN DISCUSSION ON POTENTIAL BUDGET CUTS AND ACTUAL REVENUE FIGURES FROM THE LAST 5 FISCAL YEARS:** Jim opens the discussion voicing his concerns about the school departments budget and them doing their due diligence on various items. The first concern discussed was special education transportation. This is something that was not going out to bid (to his knowledge) and is a large portion of their budget. Sandy states she believes they do go out to bid but encourages the committee to ask the schools for their standard operating procedures for contractors and vendors. Michael stated last year they were having an issue with vendor availability plus a fluctuation in students. The committee mentioned they would like to see the school review their contracts and utilize good business practices to find the best vendors and rates available.

Todd then shares his screen to show the new growth estimates for the town. The projected revenue growth is 2.86%. There is a projected increase in state-aid of only 1%. Over the last 5 years there has been around a 2% increase.

Frank asks about the large increase in the solar field costs. Sandy responds letting him know this is not finalized yet, but the town is signing a new P101 contract soon. The major difference would be this will be going in payment in lieu of taxes. This is an item the committee will discuss further when reviewing this specific article.

#### **FINANCE COMMITTEE REVIEW AND VOTE ON FY25 CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Todd shares his screen to review the Town of Halifax FY25 recommendations from the Capital Improvement Planning Committee.

The Water Department retained earnings was \$525K. This figure allowed for \$500k to be allotted to water treatment plant upgrades. The remaining \$25K will be utilized to purchase the mini excavator from the Highway Department.

The Free Cash was \$594,400 this year. The Capital Improvement Committee discussed and recommended the following capital items be completed for FY25.

- Road Maintenance \$300K - This is something they do every year to maintain the town roads. Bill asked what the town gets for Chapter 90 funds. Sandy stated \$268K however they got a little extra this year (\$135K) but that is not guaranteed every year.
- Two new Police vehicles \$120K - The CPC looked at scaling this back but after further review they did not find it to be cost effective. They believe it's in the town's best interests to move forward with this capital item as requested.
- Fire Department Mold Remediation \$100K. – It was stated that the firehouse is sitting on standing water which may be causing this issue. They do have an estimate in hand which the fire department believes is an accurate figure. Todd is unsure if the project has already gone out to bid. Frank asked if the town had filed a claim with insurance. Sandy and Todd were unsure but would follow up with Cody to see if this option had been explored.
- Fire Department Structural Gear \$74,400 – The department has requested two new sets of gear for all firefighters both full and part time (28 firefighters x 2 sets = 56 sets). These cost \$6,200 per suit, which was not possible for this FY. The CPC did recommend the purchase of 12 suits with free cash. They will also be getting 2 sets from the public safety earmark. They plan on adding this as a rotating capital item. The committee asks why they would need 2 sets of gear. This is something they would like to discuss in more detail at a further date. This year they only approved 1 set of gear for all full-time firefighters and 3 part time firefighters. It was mentioned that this capital item was prioritized due to some of the gear being past expiration and needed to be replaced as soon as possible.

Frank asks why the highway woodchipper is being funded by ARPA funding for \$84K. Sandy states the ARPA funding is approved by the Board of Selectmen. This is something the committee wishes to review with the BOS in the upcoming meeting scheduled for April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Todd asked the committee if they were prepared to vote on this or if they would like to postpone it until Wednesday. The committee requested the item was deferred until further information was provided.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REVIEW AND VOTE ON TOWN ARTICLES:** Todd shared his screen to show the current warrant with the committee which will be printed next week following the FC and BOS recommendations.

- Article 1: To hear and act on the reports of the Town Officers and Committees.
  - **Todd entertained a motion to recommend Article 1**
    - Motion: Michael Bennett



- Second: Cheryll Zarrella Burke
  - Roll Call: Todd Dargie, Frank Johnston, William Smith, Edward Bryan, Michael Bennett, Jim Walters & Cheryll Zarrella Burke (Motion Passes 7/0)
- **Article 2:** Deferred
- **Article 3:** To see if the Town will vote to determine the salaries of several elective Town Officers, July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025 (2% *cola and step increase*)
  - **Todd entertained a motion to recommend Article 3**
    - Motion: Michael Bennett
    - Second: William Smith
    - Roll Call: Todd Dargie, Frank Johnston, William Smith, Edward Bryan, Michael Bennett, Jim Walters & Cheryll Zarrella Burke (Motion Passes 7/0)
- **Article 4:** Deferred
- **Article 5:** To see if the Town will vote to fix the maximum amount that may be spent during Fiscal Year 2025 beginning on July 1, 2024, for the revolving funds established in town by-laws Section 23-3, for certain departments, boards, committees, agencies, or officers in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53E1 (*Revolving Accounts Spending Limit - same as last year*)
  - **Todd entertained a motion to recommend Article 5**
    - Motion: Cheryll Zarrella Burke
    - Second: Michael Bennett
    - Roll Call: Todd Dargie, Frank Johnston, William Smith, Edward Bryan, Michael Bennett, Jim Walters & Cheryll Zarrella Burke (Motion Passes 7/0)
- **Article 6:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$75,000 to the Reserve Fund to cover extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures during Fiscal Year 2025 in accordance with Chapter 40, Section 6 of the Massachusetts General Laws, and to transfer from available funds the sum of \$50,000 to the Water Department Reserve Fund.
  - **Todd entertained a motion to recommend Article 6**
    - Motion: Michael Bennett
    - Second: Cheryll Zarrella Burke
    - Roll Call: Todd Dargie, Frank Johnston, William Smith, Edward Bryan, Michael Bennett, Jim Walters & Cheryll Zarrella Burke (Motion Passes 7/0)
- **Article 7:** Deferred
- **Article 8:** Deferred
- **Article 9:** Deferred
- **Article 10:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$3,500 to be spent by the Board of Selectmen to support South Coastal Counties Legal Services, Inc.'s continued free legal services in civil matters to elders, low-income families and their children.
- **Article 11:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$3,500 to be spent by the Board of Selectmen to support South Shore Resource and Advocacy Center for domestic violence intervention and prevention services for its residents.
- **Article 12:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$150 for the use of the Trustees for County Cooperative Extension Service and authorize the

Selectmen to appoint a Town Director within fifteen days as provided in revised Chapter 128, Section 41 of the Massachusetts General Laws

- **Todd entertained a motion to recommend Article 10, 11 & 12**
  - Motion: Michael Bennett
  - Second: William Smith
  - Roll Call: Todd Dargie, Frank Johnston, William Smith, Edward Bryan, Michael Bennett, Jim Walters & Cheryll Zarrella Burke (Motion Passes 7/0)
- **Article 13:** To see if the Town will vote to charge for each written demand issued by the collector a fee of \$15.00 to be added to and collected as part of the tax, as authorized by M.G.L. c. 60, sec. 15, effective as of July 1, 2024 (*Demand issued by Tax Collector to be increased from \$5 to \$15*)
  - **Todd entertained a motion to recommend Article 13**
    - Motion: Cheryll Zarrella Burke
    - Second: Michael Bennett
    - Roll Call: Todd Dargie, Frank Johnston, William Smith, Edward Bryan, Michael Bennett, Jim Walters & Cheryll Zarrella Burke (Motion Passes 7/0)
  -
- **Article 14:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$39,140 to support a part-time school resource officer for the Silver Lake Middle School (*Part time School Resource Officer for the middle school. Halifax's share (2/3) is \$39,140. The chief has asked for an activity report of what this officer will be tasked to do during his time on campus but has not received this information. The middle school is also around 100 ft from the high school so it was thought they could share a resource officer between schools. Halifax is being billed at the detail rate for this officer.*)
  - **Todd entertained a motion to recommend Article 14 (silence)**
  - **Todd entertained a motion to NOT recommend Article 14**
    - Motion: Frank Johnston
    - Second: Cheryll Zarrella Burke
    - Roll Call: Todd Dargie, Frank Johnston, William Smith, Edward Bryan, Michael Bennett, Jim Walters & Cheryll Zarrella Burke (Motion Passes 7/0)
- **Article 15:** *Deferred*

**RESERVE FUND TRANSFER REQUESTS:** None

**COMMITTEE LIAISON UPDATES:** The only update was from Frank regarding the Zoning Board. He informs the committee they will be meeting on Tuesday night regarding zoning bylaws.

**CORRESPONDENCE & AS MAY ARISE:** None

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None

**NEXT MEETING PLANNING:** The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 PM. This will be a joint session with the Board of Selectmen. Following that will be Monday April 8, 2024, at 6:00 PM

**Todd Dargie entertained a motion to adjourn at 7:33 PM**

Motion: Michael Bennett

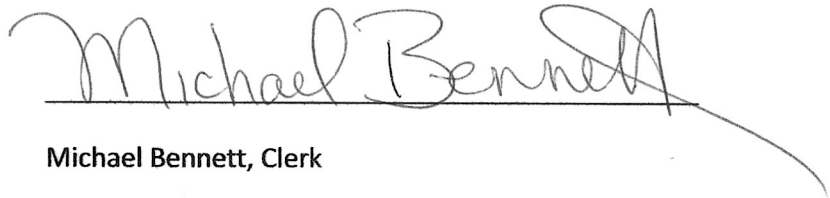
Second: William Smith

Roll Call: Todd Dargie, Frank Johnston, William Smith, Edward Bryan, Michael Bennett, Jim Walters & Cheryl Zarrella Burke

*(Motion Passes 7/0)*

**EXHIBITS:** Town of Halifax FY25 recommendations from the Capital Improvement Planning Committee, Local Revenues FY23 & FY24 & May 31<sup>st</sup> Draft Warrant.

**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. A long, thin, curved line extends from the bottom right of the signature, sweeping downwards and to the right.

Michael Bennett, Clerk