Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday, January 13, 2020**

**Committee Members Present**: Bill McAvoy, Fred McGovern, Cheryll Zarella Burke, Drew McGlincy, Melinda Tarsi

Also, in attendance in the audience were: Town Accountant Sandra Nolan, Town Admin Charlie Seelig, Jean Gallant

The meeting was recorded by Area 58

**Melinda called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm**

Melinda asked if Sandy Nolan had further input about budget items, aside from the emails she had already sent the members. Sandy said she did not as of now have further information, as she was still waiting for some people to turn in budgets. She said she would continue to update the information and send it to the members as it changed.

Melinda reminded new members that when they meet with their departments to whom they are liaisons, they are not advocates for those departments, they are just gathering information that the Finance Committee might need to know prior to meeting with the department. Cheryll asked if it is better to email or call departments as far as meeting with them. Melinda said either is fine, but she prefers email because it is written proof of when she contacted someone.

Melinda discussed with the members their thoughts on the Finance Committee Expense budget. She said they are trying to level fund the budget and since they usually turn money back in at the end of the year, she thought that the current amount would be enough even if they wanted to send new members to some trainings. The rest of the Committee seemed in agreement.

**Melinda entertained a motion to approve the Fin Com Expense budget for $359 for FY21**

**Motion: Cheryll**

**Second: Bill**

Bill questioned why the difference from FY19 to FY20 and Sandy pointed out that FY19 was “Actually expended vs FY20 was approved (but not as of yet all spent).

**AIF**

Melinda discussed with the members the Finance committee Clerical budget. Melinda asked Sandy if the figures listed included an “Across the Board” increase. Sandy advised that it did not, as they ask departments to figure the budget based on FY20 figures available and then if there is an “Across the Board” increase they figure that just prior to Town Meeting.

**Melinda entertained a motion to approve the Finance Committee Clerical budget for $4519.25**

**Motion: Bill**

**Second: Cheryll**

Sandy Nolan asked that they amend the figure to $4520.00

**Melinda entertained a motion to approve the amended figure of $4520.00**

**Motion: Bill**

**Second: Cheryll**

**AIF**

Melinda asked Charlie if he had things to highlight regarding the upcoming budget meetings. Charlie said he just wanted to reiterate that the School’s request was the biggest issue. He said based on the Silver Lake budget requests for the Assessment, the Town would need to come up with $300,000. Charlie said if the Town Finance Committee was to say “yes” to this proposal the Town would not be able to level fund either the Town budget or the Halifax Elementary School budget. Charlie suggested that the Finance Committee plan on working with the other two Silver Lake Regional Towns Finance Committees as his belief is that Kingston and Plympton would also likely find this proposed budget from Silver Lake to be unachievable. Charlie said that he believed that Halifax would be least impacted by this proposed budget and it is still not achievable by us, so he felt there was no way the other two Towns would agree to the proposed Silver Lake budget. He said the three Towns need to let Silver Lake know once again that they can not sustain this kind of increase. Melinda asked Charlie if he thought it was important to set another Tri-Town budget meeting. Charlie said that he felt it was very important for the Tri-Towns to keep in contact and communicate clearly with each other on where their Towns stand regarding the proposed budget. Fred McGovern said that after attending the last Silver Lake School Committee meeting and seeing the reaction of Carl Pike (chair for Kingston Fin Com) he was sure that Carl did not find the Silver Lake proposed budget reasonable for the Town of Kingston.

Melinda asked if Linda could reach out to the other two Towns to see if we could set another Tri-Town meeting for the end of February after the next round of budget information comes out from Silver Lake. Fred also told the Committee that at the last SL meeting, he was sure that Silver Lake will once again put in an article to have a School Resource Officer at the Middle School. Charlie stressed that the Finance Committee should also communicate to the other two Towns their concerns with having this position funded through an article versus through a line in a budget. Melinda discussed the concerns that the Finance Committee had last year with the funding of this position. The Finance Committee feels it needs to be done through a budget line. They also feel there are some complications with having to pay another Town’s officer over time to be a Student Resource Officer through the Halifax budget. Fred also stated that the new Allied Health position should be added into the proposed budget. He said he would rather see it added into the budget as an expense and then see the funding for the position from the State added in as revenue as he believes the position will not only pay for itself, but may also bring added revenue to the school. He believes that currently neither the expense or the revenue are in the proposed Silver Lake Budget. Fred said that as far as he understood there is also interest from students in other Towns (ie: Whitman) looking to attend the Allied Health Program at Silver Lake. Fred told Charlie that Silver Lake said the budget (that was given to Charlie earlier) was based on 90% fixed costs. Fred pointed out that the fixed costs included $456,000 worth of salary increases alone. He also said that there was a 15% increase in the Plymouth county pension line that Silver Lake had not expected. Fred stated that Silver Lake was still waiting on budget numbers from the transportation company. Silver Lake had gone out to bid on busing costs but had only heard from one company. Melinda questioned if anyone had received the 5-year capital plan from Silver Lake for either of the schools yet. No one had. Bill questioned the amount verified for Excess and Deficiencies. E&D will definitely not cover all capital projects but could maybe cover this year’s projects. Jean Gallant questioned Charlie on why he said Halifax would have the small increase in Assessment for Silver Lake. Charlie explained that Halifax’s student population has decreased. Fred said that looking at the trend based on Seniors graduating and incoming 7th grade students, Halifax would only benefit from that downward trend for about two more years. After that, Halifax will likely start to see its student population at Silver Lake increase again.

Melinda reminded Committee Members that we will often be referencing the overall budget sheet that Sandy provides showing the plusses and minuses in each line of the budget. They will use that in conjunction with the individual budget sheets as they begin to meet with departments and vote on the budgets. Sandy says she will continually be providing updated budget sheets and emailing them to the Members. Melinda stated she liked to always bring the newest sheet to the meetings, but others may have a different strategy and just want to keep changing the original one by hand and bring the same one every time.

**Cheryll made a motion to accept the minutes for the 12/9/19 meeting.**

**Second**: Bill

**AIF**

There was no further public participation.

The Committee set the calendar to begin meeting every Monday night starting with January 27, 2020 (with the exception of 2/17 as it is a holiday).

Melinda stated that in the meeting on 1/27/20 we should begin scheduling when departments can come in and meet with the Committee. Bill asked Sandy if Capital Planning was hoping to meet with the Finance Committee on January 27th. Sandy stated that she believed that would be too soon for them to meet with Finance based on when they got their final information from departments. Sandy said Capital Planning could maybe go on the calendar to meet with Finance Committee on 2/24/20.

**Melinda entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:35pm**.

**Motion**: Bill

**Second:** Cheryll

**AIF**

**Bill entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:26pm**

**Motion:** Cheryll

**Second:** Fred

**AIF**

Respectfully submitted,

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

Fred McGovern, Clerk