Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday, November 4, 2019**

**Committee Members Present**: Melinda Tarsi, Bill McAvoy, Fred McGovern, Len Teceno

Also, in attendance in the audience was Town Accountant Sandra Nolan

The meeting was recorded by Area 58

Melinda called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

Linda Cole, Assistant Treasurer gave the Committee a brief description of the topics that Charlie Seelig had wanted discussed regarding the funding of OPEB. Charlie would like the Committee to add wording to the Financial policies that would say that when the Plymouth County Retirement becomes fully funded (currently scheduled to be between 2030-2033) the Town would then use funds previously slotted for that assessment to begin trying to fully fund OPEB. Mr. Seelig estimated earlier in the evening (simply as a future example, not an exact figure) that if we had been putting 1.2 million per year towards PCR, then after being fully funded we would be putting about $200,000 per year to PCR, that would free up the remainder to go to OPEB each year. The Actuaries who perform our OPEB audit had suggested that even having wording that shows the intent to do that, would have a positive effect on our discount rate going forward. Melinda stated that she thought this would be a good idea to at least show the intention to do this for the future. She also stated at that time that she would like a meeting where the Committee as a whole could look over the financial policies of the Town as the current Committee members are still “fairly” new on this Committee.

**Melinda entertained a motion to add the wording “once the PCR assessment becomes fully funded by the Town, the Town will use the excess funds normally slotted for that assessment to begin trying to fully fund the OPEB liability of the Town.”**

Motion: Bill McAvoy

Second: Len Teceno

**AIF**

Linda Cole then explained that Charlie had also hoped the Committee would be willing to add wording in the policies that said that each fiscal year the Committee would try to increase the previous year’s OPEB funding by $5,000. There was some discussion about the best wording for the $5,000 increase. The Committee wanted to make sure to make clear that even though they hope to increase OPEB each year, the wording wouldn’t make it mandatory in a year the Town couldn’t afford to do it.

**Melinda entertained a motion to have the wording say that “the Finance Committee intends to have a “target contribution” of $5,000 each fiscal year over the previous fiscal year’s OPEB contribution.”**

Motion: Len Teceno

Second: Bill McAvoy

**AIF**

Melinda discussed Charlie’s question about how the Finance Committee felt about the possibility of funding a total revision / new codification of Chapter 167 of the Town of Halifax Zoning Bylaws. This was a topic that had been brought up during Special Town Meeting discussions since the Finance Committee felt that meetings prior to STM had not provided clarity on many parts of Chapter 167, so the Finance Committee voted to Pass Over those articles recommendations at STM. Bill McAvoy questioned if the job of the Zoning Board or Planning Board would be to handle revising Chapter 167 and if so, why would we need to provide funding? Sandy Nolan stated that she had previously worked for the Planning and Zoning Boards and that it was her opinion and she believed Charlie’s also, that a land lawyer would be needed to look over and redo any revisions to Chapter 167. She said she believed professional help would be needed for sure because of the legalities associated with land use. She mentioned that just like most Boards and Committees, the Zoning and Planning Boards are volunteers and that legalese related to land topics are not necessarily the expertise of the volunteer Board members. Sandy also questioned if the Finance Committee felt the whole of Chapter 167 should be rewritten or if Charlie just wanted to start by funding the section referring to Multifamily dwellings as that is currently the “hot topic.” Melinda said that for the number of times the Finance Committee finds itself talking about the subject of Chapter 167 it would probably be a good idea to make the entirety of Chapter 167 consistent. Bill McAvoy asked how long it would take to have someone review and possibly revise the entire Chapter 167. Sandy said she had not heard any estimation of time frames but suspected it might take a while since she suspected that a lawyer might want to do Town Wide surveys of residents to start, to see what the “appetite” of the residents is for things such as multifamily developments (since the Town / residents have in the past been relatively closed to the idea). Sandy said that things such as surveys would likely draw out the amount of time spent by a lawyer. However, if we are going to revise Chapter 167, we want to make sure we are keeping consistent with what the residents of Halifax would like. Bill McAvoy asked what is the total of legal fees we have spent trying to defend lawsuits related to Chapter 167? Sandy Nolan said she could pull figures on how much we have spent in the last five years on the land lawyer. Melinda stated that information would be helpful to see what we are spending on lawsuits vs what we would spend to revise all of Chapter 167. Melinda stated that the Finance Committee would be interested in getting more information about costs and clarity on funding certain section vs funding all sections, before the Committee takes a vote.

Melinda suggested we wait for member Cheryll Zarella Burke before we split liaison responsibilities. Melinda did say however that she had informally spoken to Cheryll at the ATFC meeting about how the newest member is usually given the “easier” departments. It is decided to wait until the next meeting to assign liaisons.

Melinda asked Vice Chair Bill McAvoy to handle the next topic because it was the reimbursement to her for her fee to attend the ATFC meeting.

**Bill entertained a motion to refund the prepaid $50 fee for the ATFC meeting to Melinda Tarsi from the Finance Committee Expense account.**

Motion: Len Teceno

Second: Fred McGovern

**AIF (Melinda abstains)**

There was no further public participation

Melinda confirms that the Committee will meet next on 11/18/19 and asks for the “Budget discussion” with the Selectmen to be put on the agenda. She also asks for the Finance Committee rep to the Wage and Personnel Board be added to the agenda. Also, discussion on the Recodification should be added as the Committee hopes to have further information. Melinda also wants to add to the agenda the details of the agenda for the Tri-town Finance Committee meeting which will take place on 12/9/19. Fred McGovern states that at the next meeting on 11/18 they may also have topics related to the Waste Management meeting that will be taking place between now and then. The new Waste Management Ad Hoc Committee is meeting on 11/6 at 1pm and they also hope to attend a Solid Waste group public hearing in Lakeville. Sandy mentions that the latest state report says that they expect all Massachusetts landfills will be at full capacity within the next 10 years.

Bill McAvoy asks if there is something that can be done for outreach to get volunteers on more Boards and Committees including, but not limited to, the Finance Committee. Maybe things such as putting banners on the website or other outreach ideas. Linda will discuss them with Charlie.

**7:30pm Melinda entertains a motion to adjourn the meeting**

Motion: Len Teceno

Second: Bill McAvoy

**AIF**

Respectfully submitted,

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

Fred McGovern, Clerk