Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday March 31, 2021**

**Committee Members Present**: Fred McGovern, Joe Vetrano, Drew McGlincy, Cheryll Zarella Burke

Also, in attendance in the audience were: Charlie Seelig, Chief Chaves, Sandra Nolan, Jean Gallant, Toni Ross, Danielle, David Warren, Lisa

The meeting was recorded by Zoom

**Fred called the meeting to order at 6:00pm**

**Fred entertained a motion to accept the meeting minutes from 3/24/21**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Joe

**AIF**

Linda ran through the list of correspondence including 2 pieces from the Water department, one from the Treasurer/Collector and a resignation from Lauren Carmichael as well as information from Christine Healey with some answers to questions about some budget figures.

Fred asked if anyone had questions on the correspondence from Christine which explained the increase in the Guidance lines in the schools and the increased ask for athletics. No one had any questions on the correspondence.

Charlie said he had nothing new to add to the discussions about wage and personnel amendments. He said he is still starting to gather information on the Grade 6 and Grade 7 positions. He said he might put something in the warrant saying that work continues on those amendments and hopefully he would have more by ATM.

Cheryll said she felt the discussions on the Zoning RFPs should wait until after the Fin Com had finished with recommendations on the budget. Charlie said he thought that was a good idea because the changes at best, would not take effect until the May 2022 town meeting.

Fred asked Charlie about moving into Executive Session, but Charlie said there was no need because he had no new information on contract negotiations.

Fred said based on the correspondence from Sandy, that Article 4 would use the Raise and Appropriate as usual and that the $36,000 for the SRO was coming out of that. Sandy agreed she had put the SRO under the funding from Raise and Appropriate along with the bargaining agreements and the Reserve Fund which also usually come out of that. Fred said he didn’t think it should be there because the Fin Com was not recommending it. Sandy agreed and said she would remove it from those figures.

Sandy confirmed the amount for data processing would be $135,075 while only including current steps.

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend Line 15-Data Processing at $135,075**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Joe

**AIF**

Fred said as far as the Vocational and Special Ed costs, there is nothing that can really be done about those. Joe said he noticed the vocational and transportation lines are level funded anyways.

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend Line 72 at $156,500 and Line 74 Special Needs transportation at $473,800**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Joe

**AIF**

Fred said the HES budget, and the Silver Lake Assessment are not doable at the percentages that the schools are asking for. Fred suggested maybe we should be aiming for a certain number or percentage that could be affordable. Sandy said the blue column on the spreadsheet was the adjusted ask. She said she had already built in for steps and lanes and the transportation costs. Sandy said the HES school committee was waiting for guidance from the Fin Com before they voted the budget. Sandy said if we could hold the HES budget to 2% that would be good because if we are going to get stuck with the Silver Lake budget (based on the other two towns voting for it) then it would be very hard to also cover the HES budget. Cheryll, Joe, Drew and Fred all agreed they would want to vote it at a 2% increase.

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend the HES budget at $5,910,466**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Joe

**AIF**

Sandy said that Christine Healey said the Special Needs for the HES school is very tough this year.

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend Line 73-Special Needs tuition at $2,099,345**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Joe

**AIF**

Fred asked if Charlie had heard anything about how Kingston or Plympton might feel about the SL budget. Fred also asked if the increased assessment also included the minimum contribution increase. Charlie said that Plympton will vote for the budget and that after speaking to a representative from Kingston they will probably also vote the budget. Joe said the Fin Com only really has two choices: a) vote the budget as requested because Halifax is likely going to get stuck with it either way or b) vote it at the level you want and risk that it may get voted at the higher level. Joe wondered if we could negotiate something in between. Charlie said it doesn’t really go that way. Fred said in his opinion the Fin Com should only vote the budget with a 2% increase, so it is consistent with voting in the HES budget. Fred said he could explain at town meeting how they were trying to be equitable and if voters want to vote for the higher budget then they are choosing to go into the $300,000 buffer.

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend Line 75 Silver Lake Assessment at $4,725,192**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Joe

**AIF**

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend Line 109 Trash Collection/Disposal at $242,743 because that is a contractual figure.**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Joe

**AIF**

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend Article A117-HES hallway flooring at $12,000**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Joe

**AIF**

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend Article A19-HES air conditioning at $18,600**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Joe

**AIF**

**Fred entertained a motion to recommend Article A20-Silver Lake tennis courts at $105,000**

Motion: Joe

Second: Cheryll

**2-2 (Cheryll and Fred oppose) No recommendation.**

Quorum was lost at 6:40pm as Joe had to leave the meeting.

The three remaining members had an informal discussion of further articles.

Sandy said that Article A4-the Road Bond had been withdrawn.

Article A15-HES exterior lighting had been withdrawn.

Article A25-Uber money had been withdrawn.

Article A35 Town Hall parking lot repairs had been withdrawn.

Article A43 streetlights had been withdrawn.

Sandy said Article A47, Garage doors for Town Barn included 5 doors and Scott had received a price of $21,250 and had brought that up during the Facilities and Maintenance Committee discussions.

Sandy confirmed to Fred that Article A24 does not happen until the end of Town Meeting and if there is any money left, that remaining figure would go into Stabilization.

Fred asked if there would be a figure available for Article 34, Town Hall handicap ramp by the time of Town Meeting. Charlie said he hoped so.

Charlie said they would hopefully have a figure for Article 48 Fraud Risk Assessment by ATM as well.

Charlie said the Board of Selectmen would make a proposal for article A22 and A23 for legal services and advocacy and the Fin Com could likely vote recommendations on Monday.

Charlie said he has no new information on Article for the Housing Authority and Plymouth County Retirement. He said we know the figure, but Charlie still has not had time to do the research to determine if the figure is correct.

Jean Gallant asked Fred about the SL budget being voted at 2% instead of the requested almost 4%. She wanted to confirm that if in fact the budget is voted at 4% then it will cut into the $300,000 buffer. Fred said that was correct. Jean said so then if anything else is voted at a higher figure, such as requests from departments for more hours than that would cut even further into the $300,000 and Fred said that was correct also. Fred said he would make all that clear at the ATM and if residents choose to still vote it will be their decision to increase their taxes.

Fred said it doesn’t make sense that the enrollment for SL has been going down, but that personnel staffing has been going up over the last few years.

Jean asked if the HES budget at 2% cut into the amount that Sandy had as left on the budget sheets. Fred said yes, both schools at a 2% increase would use up at least $180,000 of the $246,000 that Sandy was saying was available. Sandy said, however the Water department requests for increases in things such as their meter account or vehicle maintenance could be increased without affecting the money because theirs does not come from Raise and Appropriate because they are an enterprise account.

Fred asked about the flood plan. Charlie said that Thursday the Planning Board was having an open meeting on the Flood plan. Charlie said the Fin Com can give a recommendation at Town meeting for that if they want.

Charlie said the Board of Selectmen have not given any opinions yet on article B2 and B3. He said they are generally not in favor of Article B4-Silver Lake Stabilization because it takes too much power away from the Town on deciding how that Stabilization account would be spent. He said Article B5 is just a technical change from the AG’s office on the Stormwater bylaw. He said that Article C1-Pine Street Bridge- was just necessary to request from abutters easements to their property so that the work could be completed.

Fred asked about if he should be doing the Fin Com letter in the front of the warrant. Charlie said it typically comes from the Fin Com chair but anyone could do it if Fred designated that. Charlie suggested that Fred could look at older copies if he wanted to do that.

Charlie said that the Board of Selectmen definitely need a new PA system up in the Great hall because there aren’t enough microphones for all the participants during social distancing. He said they need a system that can handle at least 5 microphones and the current one only has 4. He said he would likely not have any figures for Monday night’s meeting.

Fred asked if we had heard anything new on State Aid. Charlie said the house budget would likely be set by the third of fourth week of April and that will be the best glimpse into what to expect. Charlie said we will also get some money from the America Rescue plan. He said we may be able to use this for lost revenue or things like bonuses or one time payments to employees who continued to work during the pandemic. Fred asked if this money could also be used to cover things like the lost revenue from football games. Charlie said that school systems would be getting their own portions of money from the American Recovery Act and they would have to decide how to spend that money. So they could use the money they get for something like covering lost revenue from games.

The information discussions ended at 7:08pm.

The informational meeting ended at 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Tom Connolly, Clerk