Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday, April 20, 2020**

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

Also, in attendance in the audience were: Sandy Nolan, Charlie Seelig, Jason Fraser, Christine Healey, Jason Vivieros, Jill Proulx, Sue Lawless, Scott Materna, Chief Chaves, Kim King, Jean Gallant, Holly Merry and Barbara Gaynor

The meeting was recorded by Zoom

**Melinda called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm**

**Melinda entertained a motion to table the discussion on budgets until later in the meeting.**

Motion: Bill

Second: Fred

**AIF**

Melinda said there were no final Wage and Personnel recommendations as of this point. She did however believe they would come with recommendations shortly.

There were no Reserve Fund Transfer requests

**Melinda entertained a motion to Accept the Meeting Minutes from the 04/06/20 meeting**

Motion:Bill

Second: Fred

**AIF** (Drew abstained since she was not at the meeting on 4/6/20)

There was no correspondence for the evening and the calendar had already been set for Monday nights.

Melinda discussed that the only thing the Finance Committee had done with the budget so far was to vote on FY21 budgets that were level funded or only had small increases or decreases. They had not voted on any wage lines yet. They had made these decisions before COVID-19 became an issue in the USA. Melinda said that it had become clear since then that there would be an economic impact because of COVID-19 and so the Finance Committee had been discussing changes to the proposed budgets based on the decrease in forecasted revenues since COVID-19 began. Melinda said the Fin Com had been holding off on asking the departments for new budgets because they didn’t want to have to send everyone back to the drawing board before they had more information. Melinda asked Charlie and Sandy if they had any information, they wanted to share about that. Sandy said that she and Charlie had worked together based on research from the last recession to determine how much they should reasonably lower the local receipts and state revenues. She said it totaled a decrease in revenues of $514,874.00. Melinda explained to the Fin Com members and the audience members that they could refer to the spreadsheet Sandy had sent with the new revenue expectations on it. She discussed with the other Fin Com members that they had previously agreed that they in principle would like to leave $300,000 “on the table” each year so that they are not taxing to the levy limit. The members agreed that they would like to keep the $300,000 on the table if they can. Melinda then clarified with Sandy that if we leave the $300,000 on the table, Halifax would be in the red. Sandy concurred. Melinda asked Charlie what the process would be if we had to go to a 1/12th budget. Charlie said a 1/12th budget has been discussed but DLS has no real guidelines for how to handle it yet. It is not truly a 1/12th budget because some things like Plymouth County Retirement or the Casualty insurance must be paid in full in July so you cannot split them into 1/12th. Charlie said they would also force you to prove how you came to the 1/12th figure, in other words you would still have to have a budget that you began working with and then divide it by the 1/12th. Charlie said that the Selectmen would still also ask for recommendations from Fin Com even before they approved a 1/12th budget. Charlie thinks that even if we are allowed to have an ATM on June 15th it might be hard to hold it because there may be a lack of quorum because people are still nervous or there still may be restrictions on social distancing. He thinks it is unlikely it will happen. He said however, if Fin Com does set a preliminary budget and give recommendations it can either be used viably at an ATM or used to start the 1/12th budget. Charlie recommended that the Fin Com use the FY20 budget as a starting point and then see what else they must do to fit the budgets within the decreased forecasted revenues.

Melinda said that Fin Com had already taken some votes on increased budget lines (small ones) and they should reassess those lines. She invited departments to give feedback if they wanted.

Melinda said lines 1 and are level funded anyways. She said line 3 the Town Admin salary was contractual and was a $10,000 increase. Charlie stopped Melinda and said even though it is contractual, he does not feel he should receive the increase right now. He said the Town can’t afford it and he realizes how bad it would look to ask other contractual employees (ie: the Chiefs) to freeze their contracts and not freeze his. He feels it is philosophically not right for him to take the increase when the Town is in tight financial restraints and others are also looking at pay freezes. Melinda asked. “aren’t we bound to give it contractually?” Charlie said if necessary he would be willing to put it in writing that he was willing to amend the contract not to take it this year, however that might not be necessary as he is willing to say he doesn’t want it this year. Melinda asked if steps were included in the wages in the budget. Sandy said she believed her alternative budget had the steps in ti. Sandy explained the layout of her alternative budget (see attached) She said it included the retirement increases and steps.

**Melinda entertained motions to approve the following line items**:

The following is the list of lines approved:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Line item | Description | ? or comments | Motion | Second | **Vote** |
| 1 | Moderator salary | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 2 | Selectmen salary | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 3 | Town Admin Salary | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 4 | Selectmen Clerical | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 5 | Selectmen Expense | Approve at FY20 budget | bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 6 | Law account | Approve at FY20 budget \*\*\*1 | Bill | Cheryll | **4-1 Fred opposed** |
| 7 | Town Hall Electricity | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 | bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 8 | Town reports | Approve at amended figure of $500 per Charlie\*\*\*2 | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 9 | audit | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 10 | Fin Com Clerical | HOLD may contain steps or not |  |  |  |
| 11 | Fin com expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 12 | Accountant Salary | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 13 | Accountant Clerical | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 Sandy Nolan spoke to this | Bill | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 14 | Accountant expense | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 15 | Data Processing | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 16 | Assessor salary | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 17 | Principal Assessor Salary | HOLD may contain steps or not |  |  |  |
| 18 | Assessor Clerical | HOLD may contain steps or not |  |  |  |
| 19 | Assessor expense | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 20 | Office machines | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 | bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 21 | Treasurer/Collector Salary | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 22 | Treasurer/Collector Clerical | HOLD may contain steps or not |  |  |  |
| 23 | Treasurer expense | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 24 | Collector expense | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 25 | Treas banking/payroll | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 26 | Treas tax title | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 27 | Town Clerk Salary | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 28 | Town Clerk Clerical | HOLD may contain steps or not |  |  |  |
| 29 | Clerk expense | Previously voted lower than FY20 |  |  |  |
| 30 | E&R | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 31 | Wage and Personnel Clerical | HOLD may contain steps or not |  |  |  |
| 32 | W&P expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 33 | Recruit & employ | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 34 | Con com expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 35 | Planning board exp | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 36 | Zoning board exp | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 37 | Regulatory Clerical | HOLD may contain steps or not |  |  |  |
| 38 | Building Comm Clerical | HOLD may contain steps or not |  |  |  |
| 39 | Bldng comm expense | Level fund previously voted | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 40 | Town building-custodial | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 41 | Town bldng expense | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 42 | Bldng preventative mntce | Level fund previously voted | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 43 | Bldng snow and ice costs | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 | bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 44 | Police Chief salary | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 45 | Police Wages | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 46 | Police training | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 47 | Police Clerical | HOLD may contain steps or not |  |  |  |
| 48 | Police Expense | HOLD | HOLD | HOLD | HOLD |
| 49 | Police station maintenance | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 | bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 50 | Police cruiser maintenance | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 51 | Fire Chief salary | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 52 | Fire clerical | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 53 | Fire wages | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 54 | Fire training | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 55 | Fire expense | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 56 | Fire station maintenance | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 \*\*\*3 | bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 57 | Fire vehicle equipment maint | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 58 | Fire medical supplies | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 59 | Ambulance building | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 60 | Emergency management | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 61 | Building Inspector Wages | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 62 | Asst Building insp wages | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 63 | Building inspect expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 64 | Sealer of W&M salary | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 65 | Sealer of W&M expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 66 | Animal Control Salary | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 67 | Animal control expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 69 | Dispatch Services | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 71 | Elementary School Costs | Approve at alternate budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 72 | Vocational Education | Approve at FY21 request | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 73 | Special Needs Tuition | Approve at FY21 request | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 74 | Special Needs Transportation | Approve at FY21 request | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 75 | Silver Lake Assessment | HOLD \*\*\*\*4 |  |  |  |
| 76 | Debt Exclusion Silver Lake | Approve at FY21 request | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 77 | Highway Surveyor Salary | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 78 | Highway Wages | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 79 | Highway Clerical | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 80 | Highway expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 81 | Highway barn maintenance | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 82 | Highway Equipment | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 83 | Highway Town Roads | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 83a | Stormwater Management | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 84 | Highway Snow and Ice | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 85 | Street lights | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 86 | Traffic lights | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 87 | Tree warden salary | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 88 | Tree maintenance | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 89 | Insect and pest control | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 90 | Cemetery Super Salary | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 91 | Cemetery wages | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 92 | Cemetery supplies and equipment | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 93 | Water Super Salary | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 94 | Water Wages | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 95 | Water Clerical | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 96 | Water supply | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 97 | Water insurance | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 | bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 98 | Water retirement | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 99 | Water legal fees | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 100 | Water meters | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 101 | Water gas and oil | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 102 | Water vehicle maintenance | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 103 | Water Wells Maintenance | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 104 | Recycling Clerical | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 105 | Recycling expense | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 106 | Recycling Wages | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 107 | Recycling Expense | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 108 | Hazardous Waste Collection | Bill | Fred | **AIF** | Bill |
| 109 | Trash collection/disposal | Previously voted reduction from FY20 |  |  |  |
| 110 | Health Clerical | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 111 | Health expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 112 | Health Inspections | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 113 | Health nursing services | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 114 | Landfill engineering and monitoring | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 115 | Inspector of Animals | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 116 | Council on Aging wages | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 117 | Coa expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 118 | Pope’s Tavern Electricity | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 119 | Vet agent salary | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 120 | Vet agent expense | Approve at FY20 budget | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 122 | Veteran’s benefits | Approved at FY previous vote |  |  |  |
| 123 | Housing Authority | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 124 | ADA expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 125 | Library Director Salary | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 126 | Library Wages | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 127 | Library Expense | Approve at FY20 budget\*\*\*5 | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 128 | Youth and Rec Wages | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 129 | Youth and Rec expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 130 | Youth and Rec Director salary | HOLD |  |  |  |
| 131 | Parks Wages | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 132 | Parks expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 133 | Cable Television | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 134 | Patriotic celebrations | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 135 | Historical Commission | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 136 | Historical District Commission | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 137 | Holidays in Halifax | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 138 | Halifax Fireworks Committee | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 139 | Beautification Committee Expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 140 | Agricultural Commission | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 141 | Website committee expense | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 142 | Music rights | Approve at FY20 budget\*\*\*6 | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 144 | Debt Water Extension |  |  |  |  |
| 145 | Debt Water Tower Paint |  |  |  |  |
| 146 | Debt Police Station |  |  |  |  |
| 147 | Debt WPAT | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 148 | Debt WPAT II | Level fund previously voted |  |  |  |
| 149 | Landfill capping | Previously voted reduction from FY20 |  |  |  |
| 149a | HES roof and repairs | Previously voted reduction from FY20 |  |  |  |
| 149b | HES Fire suppression | Previously voted FY21 |  |  |  |
| 150 | Interest on Temporary loans | Previously voted reduction from FY20 |  |  |  |
| 151 | Plymouth County Retirement | Previously voted FY21 |  |  |  |
| 152 | Group Insurance town share | Previously voted FY21 |  |  |  |
| 153 | Medicare town share | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 154 | Insurance | HOLd |  |  |  |
| 155 | OPEB trust | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 156 | Telephone | Approve at FY20 budget | Fred | Cheryll | **AIF** |
| 157 | Gas and Oil all departments | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 158 | Heating oil all buildings | Approve at alternate budget for lower figure then FY20 | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |

\*\*\* 1 Charlie said he had reservations about the Law account and suspects it will be higher then the FY20 budget but we should vote it at FY20 and consider if we have money left, putting Law as a priority. Fred felt strongly that it was a mistake to fund at only the FY20 amount since we expect it to be $50,000 higher. Fred said he is fundamentally opposed to having to keep taking large sums out of the Reserve Fund to pay for Law bills and that he was hoping we wouldn’t be doing that in FY21 when we can already anticipate the higher figure.

\*\*\*\*2 Charlie said that if the Finance Committee is looking to cut in places, the Town Reports would be where they should consider doing it. He said we print a limited number of Town Reports to go to the Clerk and the State and then all others are printed in house. He said the majority of the budget goes to mailing every household a warrant for Town Meeting. He said even though he likes to mail the warrant to everyone, we often rarely get above quorum and that is a lot of printing and mailing wasted. He suggested we cease distribution of the warrants. He would like the Finance Committee to make a recommendation on ceasing distribution.

**Melinda entertained a motion for a recommendation to cease distribution of the warrant for every household**

Motion: Bill

Second: Fred

**AIF**

\*\*\*\*\*\*3 Jason asked for clarification on the FY20 amount, he had concerns. Melinda asked if the $2100 difference was all electrical. Sandy said yes, it should be given her research. Melinda commented that departments can earmark budgets within their budgets that they would like to have looked at for adding money back if money became available.

\*\*\*\*4 Charlie said he wants to make sure there is equity between school and Town employees. He wants more detailed information

\*\*\*5 Jean Gallant mentioned she is turning back in $24,000 this year she expects

Sandy Nolan suggested not voting the library expense line for now because if wages goes up the expense line goes up also because it is part of a formula for library grant funds.

\*\*\*6 Charlie said this is a fee we have to pay in order to play any music at any celebrations, it is not negotiable, and we should come back to this if we can find the money

\*\*\*\*7 Sandy and Charlie pointed out this is a place we will have to fund with available money

Sandy stated that she believed that brought us to about $350,928 in savings.

Melinda asked Linda to send an email to departments stating that we were putting expense lines back to the FY20 budgets and any particular needs they want to addressed should be addressed with their liaisons so that it could be communicated back to the Fin Com. Then Fin Com would know where to focus their attention if money became available. She asked the memo include that we were currently still $165,000 short and the next look would be at the wage lines. She wanted to make sure they received this before the next Fin Com meeting. Sandy said she would run more figures on Tuesday. She said that would give us a better clue where we could cut budgets more.

**Melinda entertained a motion to adjourn at 7:58pm**

Motion: Bill

Second: Fred

**AIF**

Respectfully submitted,

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

Fred McGovern, Clerk