Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday, May 11, 2020**

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

Also, in attendance in the audience were: Charlie Seelig, Chief Chaves, Jean Gallant, Jason Vivieros, Barbara Gaynor and Sue Lawless

The meeting was recorded by Zoom

**Melinda called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm**

Melinda discussed that the Fin Com would go out of order of the agenda and handle Line Item Transfers first.

**Melinda entertained a motion to approve the Line Item Transfer of $13,146.98 from the Group Insurance account to the Health Inspections account to cover the vacation time payout for the retirement of the Health Agent. The Health agent was not expected to retire in FY20, so this was unforeseen.**

Motion: Bill

Second: Fred

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to approve the Line Item Transfer of $89.26 from the Part Time Fire Wages account to the Fire Clerical account to cover the cost of the Administrative Assistant working during Holidays in Halifax.**

Motion: Bill

Second: Cheryll

Chief Vivieros said he usually likes to up the staffing during Holidays in Halifax just in case a call comes in during it. He said he asked the Admin Asst to work to make sure there was someone in the station in case a call came in during the event and no one else was able to cover the station. He said he discussed with Charlie that in the future he should ask for volunteers to cover such as other buildings do but for this one time he had already paid out the payroll.

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from 5/4/20**

Motion: Bill

Second: Cheryll

**AIF (Fred abstained since he was not at the meeting)**

**Melinda entertained a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from 4/27/20**

Motion: Bill

Second: Fred

**AIF**

Melinda noted that all correspondence received by the Secretary through email, was budget related and so it would be discussed during the budget part of the agenda.

Melinda said she would act as the Wage and Personnel Board member of Fin Com to deliver to Fin Com the recommendations the Wage and Personnel Board had made so far.

Melinda said in Group 1 of the Wage and Personnel Proposed Amendments (see attached) were the reclassifications that were being sought. Melinda said that the W&P Board had voted to table the reclassifications for this year.

Melinda stated that Items 13, 14, and 15 were for new positions, or review of existing positions and Wage and Personnel had not made any recommendations yet.

Melinda said Item 16 was the request from the library director for an education incentive amendment. Melinda stated that Wage and Personnel did not recommend this amendment

Item 17 was the amendment for the disciplinary policy. Wage and Personnel had made no recommendation as of yet.

Item 18 was the Posting changes for a new job. Wage and Personnel voted to recommend this.

Charlie said the purpose of this amendment was to make sure a full calendar week, at least, was happening during a job posting, as opposed to the current bylaw which was for 5 business days, and therefore did not even give people a full week. He said that usually he talks most department heads into doing at least two calendar weeks, but he wanted to update the bylaw.

Item 19 was the wording on holiday pay. Wage and Personnel voted to recommend only the second paragraph

Item 20 was the amendment to gender pronouns. Wage and Personnel recommended

Item 21 was for pay rate reviews to be done every 3 years. Wage and Personnel had no recommendation yet

Item 22 Disbanding on the Wage and Personnel Board. Wage and Personnel Recommended

**Melinda said she would now ask the Fin Com to vote their recommendations on these amendments.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| W&P ammendment | Description | ? or comments | Motion | Second | **Vote** |
| 16 | Education incentive | \*\*\*1 | Bill | Fred | **1-3 Bill for all others against** |
| 18 | Advertisement posting change | Bill asked for clarification on when 10 days started. Charlie said once the last step prior to advertising started. First day of advertising starts day 1 of the 10 calendar days | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 19 | Holiday Pay | \*\*\*\*2 | Bill | Fred | **HOLD** |
| 20 | Gender pronouns | Charlie said he is using a noun versus a pronoun to eliminate the gender discussion altogether (ie: position held vs he or she) | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| 22 | Disband Wage and Personnel | \*\*\*\*\*3 | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
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\*\*\*1 Jean asked why Wage and Personnel had voted against this. Melinda said ultimately as it is written, the education doesn’t necessarily have to apply to the specific job the employee holds. They felt education incentives should be relative to the job. Jean said she had wanted to create some separation within the grades. Jean said the Town puts focus on experience and not necessarily education. She pointed out sometimes people are brought in at a higher step because of experience but education is not given the same consideration. Jean asked if W&P fundamentally disagreed with the education incentive or if she just needed to change the wording. Melinda said if the wage scale were corrected it would handle a lot of the issues with adding new amendments like education incentives to make separation. She said she thought the first priority was to correct the Wage scale.

\*\*\*\*2 Charlie said this is just to eliminate discrepancies in who gets the extra pay on a holiday and who doesn’t. It must be REQUIRED that the person work (not by choice). Bill asked about 2nd paragraph do the Big 3 holidays get triple time and any other holiday gets double time. Charlie said it only effects all non-regular part time employees and so it wouldn’t be overtime. Bill asked if Call Firefighters were already covered under this as being required to work and Charlie said they were. They had been included in a prior amendment. Bill rescinded his original motion to recommend this amendment and moved to table the discussion until Charlie had more clarification.

\*\*\*\*3Charlie said that there haven’t been any W&P members other then the reps from the Selectmen and Fin Com in quite a long time. He said he is trying to make sure everyone’s rights are respected in the process. The administrative functions are all still be done at Town Hall. Bill asked how can fin Com get questions answered if they have questions during their annual recommendations. Charlie said Fin Com would do a joint meeting with the Selectmen to discuss questions about recommendations. Charlie said due to a lack of participation from residents, reps from Fin Com and the Board of Selectmen get drafted and these reps are already serving on at least one, if not many other boards. Charlie said this would allow for the load of the administrative work to be spread around and the Fin Com and Selectmen would do the work they are already doing, which is listening to the amendments and making recommendations. Melinda said she thinks this makes it a cleaner process. She said it is hard to have someone sit on the Fin Com and the W&P because Fin Com should only think in terms of if the budget can handle it. Barbara Gaynor asked about the annual January Public meeting for Wage and Personnel and if they disband the board, how would people know what was going on. Charlie said that the requests would still go to the Clerk as usual and then to the Board of Selectmen, and then he Selectmen and the Fin Com could hold a meeting to hear the amendments and then finish the process as usual.

Melinda said that all other recommendations for FY21 W&P articles would have to be made on the floor because the warrant was going to print, and W&P hadn’t finished their recommendations. Jean asked since both Fin Com and W&P did not recommend amendment 16, would It have to go on the warrant. She did not want to have to speak to it. Charlie said if the W&P board does not recommend and the Fin Com does not recommend, it does not go in the warrant, but he usually posts it on the website unless someone asks him not to. Jean said she was fine with it on the website but just didn’t want it in the warrant anymore.

Melinda asked Fin Com members about the correspondence from Charlie asking them if they still wanted to support the article for $65,000 to do a full zoning by law revision of state 1. Charlie said they could keep it, pull it, or lower it. He said if they wanted to break it into certain parts for Fy21 they could. For example, they could recommend spending less money and only fixing parts like the in-law apartments. Bill asked if we did the $65,000 would it cut down how much we need to put in the law account for FY21. Charlie said it would not because the current lawsuits aren’t going anywhere, and they are based on the current version of bylaws. The money towards redoing the zoning bylaw could protect us against possible new lawsuits or make it cleaner for new litigation but the current lawsuits and the upcoming year’s negotiations are what are driving the requested funding for the Law account for FY21. Charlie said the bylaws had not been updated in years and they needed to just be brought up to date. Melinda asked Charlie if there was any possible argument to use Stabilization money for this. Charlie said it could be moved from available funds, but he is against using Stabilization for this because COVID has caused problems where we would want to put money into Stabilization not take it out. He suggested using Free Cash might be a better idea.

The Fin Com decided to make recommendations on outstanding articles, see below:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Article | Description | ? or comments | Motion | Second | **Vote** |
| A25 | Zoning updates for $65K | See above. Bill said he was concerned if we have funding in Free Cash. Melinda crunched numbers and said she believes we do | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| A37 | Repairs to landfill capping | \*\*\*\*1 | Bill | Fred | **HOLD** |
| A14 | Reimburse housing authority | Charlie said he still needs to figure the figures to make sure we are only paying what Halifax owes | Bill | Fred | **HOLD** |
| A17 | Truck Inspection station | Fin Com discussed that the petitioner may pull this on Town meeting floor and ask for the $20,000 to go into traffic enforcement | Bill | Fred | **0-4 not recommend** |
| A18 | Pave unpaved roads | Article was for grading and/or second grading. Charlie said highway did the work in the spring. If the petitioner wants a second grading it would be around $11K | Bill | Red | **3-1 Fred against** |
| A19 | Pasture Lane | No amount yet |  |  | **HOLD** |
| A20 | Street Lights | No amount yet |  |  | **HOLD** |
| A21 | Pope’s Tavern Rood | \*\*\*\*2 | Bill | Fred | **AIF** |
| A30 | Folding chairs | Scott said this can wait a year. Bill asked if it was a safety concern or if floors are being ruined. | Bill | Fred | **0-4 not recommend** |
| A31 | Vapor barrier in town barn | Melinda thought this was Scott’s second priority (later in the meeting Scott clarified this is first after roof) \*\*\*3 | Bill | Fred | **HOLD** |
| A32 | Sound panels for library | \*\*\*\*\*4 | Bill | Fred | **AIF to pull article** |
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\*\*\*\*\*1 Melinda asked Charlie about the immediacy of this project and Charlie said there was no choice it must be handled right away per state regulations. Charlie said the money has to come from Free Cash. Bill questioned why the erosion report was dated 2008 and the cover letter all seemed to be dated with 2008. Charlie said he believed the landfill was originally capped in 2008 but the problem we are addressing only happened in the last couple of months. He said he would look into why everything was dated 2008. Bill withdrew his motion to make a recommendation in favor of the article and instead voted to table the discussion until further answers could be provided.

\*\*\*\*\*2 Charlie said we are still waiting on the estimate from Building committee but they are working diligently and hope to have the figure before ATM. This is the number one priority for the Building Committee articles. Selectmen don’t want to go to print with a figure and then have it come in higher. Bill clarified that the vote will be on Town Meeting floor with an amount. Charlie agreed and Melinda said it was just a philosophical vote for now to show they support the roof project.

\*\*\*\*3 Charlie texted Scott for clarification on wanting to pull this article in order to get Pope’s roof. Charlie said repairs should still try to be done and get roof. Scott texted later in the meeting saying that The building committee agreed to pull all articles so they could get the roof. Charlie said he didn’t know if that was necessary. Bill said we have $327K minus the landfill and $250,000 for the roof and that would leave a cushion of about $5,000 with everything else they had approved. Bill said he felt that was a small cushion and if the Building Committee was willing to pull something he would feel better about it. Fred said he agreed that sounded like a good idea. Melinda asked Charlie to reach back out to Scott with this information. Bill rescinded his motion to approve and made a motion to table until more information came forward.

\*\*\*\*4 Jean said she thought $6,000 was reasonable for Scott to do the work since the bid from an outside source was about $40,000. Melinda asked if this amount could be used as part of the budget for certification formula for next year. Jean said it could. Melinda suggested they put the $6,000 in the expense line. Charlie said yes, they could revote the expense line and put a footnote that the increase of $6,000 was for a one time project of the sounds panels.

**Melinda made a motion to recommend changing Line 127 Library Expense to $95,349**

Motion: Bill

Second: Fred

**AIF to rescind original vote on Line 127 and raise to $95,349**

Melinda asked is Charlie knew anything further about the school budget. Charlie said he thinks we need to level fund and put a footnote in the warrant that all his subject to change on Town Meeting floor given the uncertainties of this time. He has already adding some wording to that effect. Charlie said everyone might end up in a step freeze in order to balance the budget. He feels that the school might be trying to give steps anyways even though the Towns have addressed this issue. He said the best idea right now might be to leave them voted at the FY20 budget so they realize the seriousness of the position we are all in for budgets and we can always change it if the Assessments change and more money is available.

There was no public participation.

**Melinda entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:10pm**

Motion: Bill

Second: Fred

**AIF**

Respectfully submitted,

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

Fred McGovern, Clerk