Finance Committee

TOWN OF HALIFAX

499 Plymouth Street

Halifax, MA 02338

**Meeting Minutes**

**Friday September 11, 2020**

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

Also, in attendance in the audience were: Charlie Seelig, Sandy Nolan

The meeting was recorded by Zoom

**Melinda called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 4:02 pm**

**Melinda entertained a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from 08/31/20**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Charlie said that the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) would begin at 9am on 9/12/20. He said that if too many people attend (more then the 135 the rooms could accommodate socially distancing) then we would have to adjourn town meeting and move it to Thursday night 9/17/20 at the Kingston Collection. Charlie said he had spoken with the Town Moderator, Dennis Carman about a consent agenda and grouping non related articles for approval. This would allow for Town Meeting to move more quickly while still allowing voters the right to Hold on any articles or lines they had questions about. Charlie and Sandy had come up with a list of 16 articles that they knew would be Passed Over by the original proposers of the articles. This would allow Town Meeting to Pass Over all the articles in one group. Charlie hoped to do the Consent agenda and the Pass Over article out of order before Article 1.

Melinda said she would address Fin Com with the Wage and Personnel Amendments that needed to be voted for recommendations for or against by Fin Com.

**Melinda entertained a motion to not recommend the first 13 proposed regrades on the Wage and Personnel Amendments (article 2)**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF not to recommend**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend regrading the Animal Control officer from a grade 4 to a grade 8**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Melinda mentioned that Wage and Personnel felt comfortable with this regrade because of liability exposure to the Town if something was handled improperly and because of the levels of public health concerned with things like rabies.

Melinda asked Charlie if the Fin Com needed to vote a recommendation on the craftsman position amendment. Charlie said they could skip over it because it wasn’t on the warrant anyways and so Fin Com didn’t need an official vote anyways.

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend creating a lieutenant position in the police department at a Grade 14 step 1**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Fred

**3-0-1 (Drew abstained)**

Melinda said this just created the position for the future but there was no money funding it for FY21

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend regrading the Director of Building Maintenance from Grade 10 to** **Grade 14**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Melinda mentioned that the Wage and Personnel had reviewed the job description of the Director or Building Maintenance. She said this position would now be in charge of much more square footage and would also help oversee more staff

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend changes to the job posting procedures.**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend changes to the holiday pay wording**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Charlie mentioned this was for equity purposes so people like matrons who got called in on one of the three major holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years) would also receive the correct rate of pay

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend .7 under article 2 for changes to gender wording**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Charlie said this was being done to update language to non-gender specific 2020 standards (removing things like his/hers and replacing with “the employee”)

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Passing Over sections 8&9 under Article 2**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Fred

**AIF**

**Melinda made a motion to recommend the dissolution of the Wage and Personnel Board**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Melinda mentioned that the residents would lose no rights under this change. Everything would still go to Town Meeting for a vote, it would just spread the administrative duties through several departments or Boards versus one representative from Fin Com and one from the Selectmen. It has been almost impossible over the years to get a full Board of residents.

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Passing over the proposed Disciplinary Policy**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Melinda said the original proposer had not generated any new policy, so it was a moot point

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend a 1.6% across the Board wage increase**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**1-3 do not recommend (Melinda yes, all others no)**

Melinda said that some bargaining units, unions, had already agreed to a 1.6% increase and Wage and Personnel wants it to be equitable for all employees regardless of their status in a union. Also, they thought FY21 might be better then FY22 and if they were going to recommend a wage increase, this might be the better fiscal year to do it. Cheryll asked if we had the funds available to fund this increase. Sandy said yes, it would be $18,873 for the Wage and Personnel positions and that would still leave the $300,000 on the table under the levy limit. Melinda asked if we would still be able to stay under the $300,000 if we included the 1.6% increase for school employees also. Sandy said she had spoken to Christine Healey and Christine had said, the Administration at Silver Lake would need about $35,000 to fund a 1.6% increase in school wages. Sandy said we could do that and leave the $300,000 on the table. Cheryll questioned if this increase would raise taxes. Sandy said she couldn’t say for sure the exact impact on a tax bill at this time, but it would still keep us $300,000 under the levy limit, so we are not taxing residents to the full extent allowable. Charlie said it works because by postponing Town meeting until September we now know we have better numbers for local aide then had originally been guesstimated. He said that is the change that allowed us to be able to have more money available to work with. So where we couldn’t afford it in May, we could afford it now. Charlie said the impact on the tax bill for the average homeowner would be around $7.20 for the $18,000. Fred said he thinks this won’t fly at ATM because people who are unemployed don’t want to hear about workers getting a cost of living. He said residents will feel that Town workers are lucky they have jobs when others don’t. Melinda said that the SRO alone would cost twice the amount of this increase, so she would vote against both and be consistent. Fred said in normal times this wouldn’t be a problem for him but due to times being so uncertain and high unemployment right now, it is. Melinda agreed it is hard for Finance members because they are both sitting on the Committee and are also residents.

Sandy said that Finance voted to recommend the upgrade (Director) in the Building Maintenance workers wages but no the 1.6% increase, so the new number including the upgrade would be $199,010.

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend line 40 Custodial wages at $199,010**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**3-1 to recommend (Drew abstained)**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend $310,732 for Highway wages (Line 76)**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Sandy said this was to cover the $1,000 worth of certificates that one employee was now qualified to receive

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Stormwater Management line at $144,400**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Charlie said that Steve said the wages needed for Highway labor for Stormwater should already be covered in the Highway wages amount. Fred questioned that is the Highway wages included the Stormwater wages then shouldn’t Highway wages be decreased. He wanted to know if this was new additional hours or just shifting it from one budget line to another. Fred said he would like clarification. Steve contacted Charlie back saying the hours were in the Highway budget.

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend the library expense line to decrease to $94,357**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**3-0-1 (Drew abstained)**

Sandy said the expense line was being decreased to keep the formula the library uses for State funding purposes in line

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend $0 for Line 135 Holidays in Halifax**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Sandy said the Fire Chief had requested this because due to COVID there would be no Holidays in Halifax this year

Melinda asked if the Silver Lake Assessment was changing but Sandy said that Christine Healey had said it would not being changing.

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend $10,440 for Article 7, IAFF agreement**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**2-2 no recommendation on this article (Melinda and Drew yes, Fred and Cheryll no)**

Charlie said the $10,440 was the cost of the 1.6% increase that the Selectmen had agreed to in negotiations for the base rate for the firemen and the figure was added to their Paramedic stipend. Charlie said that the Finance Committee should consider being equitable in votes about the 1.6% increase but that the Selectmen would vote in favor of it because they had negotiated in good faith.

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Article 8 for $6,622 for Highway wages**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**2-2 no recommendation on this article (Melinda and Drew yes, Fred and Cheryll no)**

Charlie said this represented the 1.6% wage increase and the Board of Selectmen was in favor of it

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Passing Over Article 9 as this was the Sargent’s union contract** **which had not yet been settled**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Passing Over Article 10 as this was the Patrolman’s union contract** **which had not yet been settled**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Article 11 for $4,386 the Police Chief Contract**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**2-2 no recommendation on this article (Melinda and Drew yes, Fred and Cheryll no)**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Article 12 for $2,000 the Fire Chief Contract**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**2-2 no recommendation on this article (Melinda and Drew yes, Fred and Cheryll no)**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Passing Over Article 13**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Article 15, acceptance of Chapter 90 funds**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to not recommend Article 24, Housing Authority reimbursement**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Charlie said Housing Authority definitely got over charged by Plymouth County Retirement for one of our shared employees, however PCR still hasn’t answered him on what method they used to determine the number they believe the Housing Authority was overcharged and want us to reimburse them for. Charlie said we may pay it someday, but he was not comfortable at this point going to Town Meeting with that exact number.

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Article 29 at $30,000 for Crosswalks**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Passing Over the Stabilization article**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Melinda asked if the article should just be tabled in case at the end of ATM there was money left on the table and Sandy advised that it was better to Pass Over and the money would go towards Free Cash for FY22

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Passing Over Article 26**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Article 39 for $15,000 for the landfill repair work at Hemlock Lane**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Passing Over articles 40 through 45**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Article 46, Stormwater Management bylaws**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to Pass Over Article 47, flood plan map**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion recommend Article 48, Multifamily use**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Charlie said this article was just cleaning up the language on Multi family uses in consensus with land counsel, planning board and zoning board. Charlie said it was advisable to pass it. The Town has spent more than $100,000 so far defending cases under the old bylaw. He hoped this would clear up some of the confusion on interpretation between the two boards. Fred asked how this would affect developers from Amanda’s Estates and Charlie said they would have to try and refile under the new by-laws if they wanted the new bylaws to help them. Charlie said, 40B is totally separate from Multi family use and this would not apply to them.

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Article 49, marijuana establishment districts**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**3-1 (Fred voted no, all others yes)**

Charlie said Planning is not recommending this article. Fred questioned how intertwined is commercial and residential, could someone end up with a marijuana establishment near their house.

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Passing Over Article 50**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Article 51**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Charlie said the Assessors were asking for this so they would be able to tax solar farms and not just only be allowed to do a PILOT agreement with them

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Passing Over Article 52**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to Pass Over Article 1 of the Special Town Meeting (STM)**

Motion: Cheryll

Second: Fred

**3-0 (Drew did not respond to roll call vote, no quorum for this vote)**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend Passing Over Article 3, COA van of the STM**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

**Melinda entertained a motion to recommend article 37 of the ATM, for $90,000 for the Pope’s Tavern roof**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Sandy noted that we can now fit the repairs in within Free Cash. Sandy said the sidewalks for Cranberry Drive pass then it would be under Stabilization. Sandy also said everything in the capital articles would be funded under Free Cash with the exception of the Police Cruisers which would come from Meals Tax.

**Melinda entertained a motion to adjourn at 6:00pm**

Motion: Fred

Second: Cheryll

**AIF**

Respectfully submitted,

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

Fred McGovern, Clerk