



Finance Committee
 Town of Halifax
 499 Plymouth St.
 Halifax, MA 02338

Meeting Minutes
 Wednesday, March 6, 2019

	Frederick McGovern	Leonard Teceno	Bill McAvoy	Melinda Tarsi	Brad Graham	Vacant
Present	X			X	X	

Also in attendance was Sandy Nolan, Town Accountant, Charlie Seelig, Town Administrator; Kim Roy, Selectman

Melinda started the meeting at 7:05.

Meeting was recorded by Area 58.

Melinda opened the meeting by reading the agenda and stating that since there is no quorum, we will not be voting on anything.

Mail: Brad Graham has officially been appointed to the Finance Committee.
 Cathy Drinan from the Board of Health has withdrawn her request for a salary increase for the Animal Inspector.

Melinda introduced Police Chief Chavez to the committee. She informed the Chief that the committee has been voting on the level funded and decreased line items and has not done anything with wage lines as of yet. Therefore, line #44, which is a wage line, will be set aside for now. The Chief stated the department should be better off this year because the town will no longer be paying for reserve officers to attend the academy. They attend the academy nights and weekends on their own time. Therefore, there is no need to pay them while they attend. Melinda asked if he sees any future problems with recruitment or retention with this. The Chief stated no. He explained that candidates take the Civil Service exam and then police departments sponsor them to the academy. We should not pay a salary to candidates with no guarantee of retaining them as an employee.

Line #48 – Police Expense – Level funded at \$62,485.00

Line #49 – Police – Station Maintenance – Level funded at \$24,100.00

Line # 50 – Police Cruiser Maintenance - is an increase of \$4,000.00 over last year. In the past, the Police Department was budgeted for two new cruisers. This year, the Chief's car is up for replacement. He wants to stick with two cruisers instead of three. One cruiser is in the shop because the engine failed, and Ford will not honor the

warranty. This issue may have to go to legal. This vehicle along with another will be replaced. Melinda asked what the \$4,000.00 is based on. The Chief stated maintenance, labor and repairs. Brad questioned the Chief regarding how many new vehicles we would be receiving and how many are in the fleet. The Chief answered two new vehicles and six in the fleet. All are currently on the road except for one.

Line #46 – Police Training - Chief stated one of the capital requests is for five new tasers. There is training involved in that. The officers are signed up for an online academy for training as well, which allows the Chief to monitor the training. The rate per officer is \$39.00-\$45.00 per officer. There are other mandated classes they have to take. Melinda asked if the increase is sufficient to cover the needs of the department. The Chief answered yes.

Line #45 –Police Wages – Melinda asked why there is a \$31,120.00 increase. The Chief stated there are step increases for the full time officers as well as the part time officers, which are part of the collective bargaining agreement. It is also for overtime needs. The other issue is if officers retire, we have to have money available for sick buy back, which is 25% of their unused sick days. They can accrue up to 180 sick days. This is currently out of the contract, but some officers are grandfathered in. Sandy asked about the vests – we get \$5,000.00 from the state which is for half the cost of the vests. The Chief stated we need new vests for four or five officers and those graduating from the academy. Charlie clarified the buy back. The Chief stated there is only one officer eligible. The employee would have to state on or before November 11th of the previous year that they are retiring or they're not eligible for the buy back. Melinda clarified that the amount requested for this line should be \$1,098,688.00, which is an increase of \$17,737.00. Chief Viveiros was introduced to the Committee and Melinda reminded him that there was no quorum, so there will be no voting tonight. She also informed him that the committee had previously voted on everything that was level funded and a decrease from last year, and that no wage or personnel line items have been discussed. Therefore, Line #51, #52, and #53 will not be discussed.

Line #54 - Fire Training – Chief Viveiros stated that this line has an increase of \$4,450.00 over FY19 because the account was previously reduced by \$5,000.00. Since then the amount of training has increased. As of February 1, 2019, we became an OSHA state and there are new requirements and training every year. The increase restores what we had previously. The Chief made note that if there's a change in the CBA or wage and personnel that we will need to reflect that in the line item. Sandy states she makes adjustments accordingly.

Line #55 – Fire Expense – The Chief stated that the price of everything has gone up. There used to be separate articles, but now everything is included in this line.

Line #56 – Fire Station Maintenance - Budgeted the same amount for electricity and increased service and supplies.

Line #57 – Fire Vehicle/Equipment Maintenance – This account has run short in previous years. Almost all maintenance is done outside and those costs have increased.

Line #58 – Fire – Medical Supplies – Medical supply pricing has increased. This year we will run a deficit but there are other lines the department can transfer from. Melinda asked about the article for pumps on ambulances. There is money left in that article. Brockton Hospital still provides us with medications but nobody knows how long that will last. The Chief states IV catheters cost \$6.00. Now the type of catheters that are used are needles drilled into the bone. These cost \$110.00. Some of the devices are mandatory and they are expensive. Melinda asked if the amount is sufficient because of OSHA requirements. The Chief said it doesn't increase any EMS requirements and medical supplies. Brad asked if we bill patients regarding ambulance calls. The Chief stated yes, and that money goes into the general fund. The Chief states the request should be reasonable to cover all costs. There was \$21,500.00 in the fund last year and there is only \$1,700.00 left. Melinda asked if he is building enough of a cushion. The Chief stated no. He would like to bring request up to \$25,000.00 which is an increase of \$3,500.00, with an overall department increase to \$37,054.00.

Line #59 – Ambulance Billing – The Chief explained we used to bill in house. The person who performed this function has retired. It is a monumental task for a new person to take on, so the department is looking to outsource. The cost was estimated to be 4% of what we take in. When the contracts came in, the number was 2.75%. Ambulance revenue has been good. This year it is \$500,000.00, last year it was just over \$400,000.00. The Chief is still sorting out how the money is coming in. The hours of the administrative assistant position were reduced as well since this function will not be performed. Melinda states that explains the reduction in clerical.

Line #60 – Emergency Management – The Chief still has jurisdiction over this line item. He added \$5,000.00. We have no volunteers for emergency management. When we do open a shelter, we have a hard time finding staffing. MEMA says we can pay a wage to a town employee to staff the shelter. The Chief put \$5,000.00 just to have some money available if needed. This money will not be spent if not needed. Kim clarified that this money is also used for an EMT at the shelter. The Chief stated we do have some people still interested in volunteering which he will explore. Melinda asked if we were regionalizing the shelters. The Chief stated yes. Plympton, Kingston, and Halifax are teamed up. The town of Halifax has a “warming center”. The Red Cross supports regional shelters so they will send staff. Melinda clarified that the Red Cross will take over staffing for a regional shelter. Sandy added the additional \$5,000.00 will only be used for shelter purposes and \$1,550.00 is for supplies. Melinda asked if the Chief had any questions. The Chief stated Holidays in Halifax falls under his budget as well. Melinda stated that is a level funded line item and has been addressed.

Melinda suggested we go over the calendar and asked Sandy and Charlie for “drop dead” deadline dates. Charlie stated the first week of April, we are going to press. Melinda wants to keep the last Monday and Wednesday in March open to tie up loose ends. Charlie stated April 5th, we go to press and we need a few days before to finalize. Kim

suggested the committee get a final update from Sandy on where we stand and make adjustments at that time.

Calendar: 03/11 Schools

03/13 – Highway, Library, Council on Aging

03/18 – Water Department

Kim thinks Capital Planning should have their recommendations ready by the 18th and will present to Finance.

03/25 and 03/27 – We will cover the articles and make changes to the letter that will go out to the town. The 20th we will not have quorum.

Sandy stated Line #7 on the Fiscal 2019 Budget Balance Sheet – Town Hall Electricity – could go up. The Meals Tax is estimated at \$90,000.00. We promised the taxpayers we would use this money towards the capital items. Charlie stated our Chapter 70 should not change. The state figures are not finalized yet. Sandy also stated we are getting a little more from the state but not much. We would like to bring expenditures down, but the numbers are not finalized yet. Melinda asked if these numbers take the debt payment into account. Sandy stated yes. Sandy also stated that page one numbers are before looking at wages. She suggested the School Committee and Fire Chief sharpen their pencils and cut back on their budgets. Brad asked if we are currently in the hole for \$70,000.00 and yet saying that we want a \$300,000.00 cushion. Sandy stated yes. She said the Building Custodian and the Highway Department are asking for an extra person. Water and Recycling's budgets are paid for by their retained earnings – they are both enterprises. Sandy suggested that even level funded items should be looked at for cuts. She also stated that the Recycling Department will be looking for a reserve fund transfer. Melinda stated that town meeting will decide, but the committee can make recommendations on the budgets. She suggested the committee liaisons let their departments know after the meeting with the schools, to look at their budgets and make cuts where possible. Kim recommended that the Resource Officer article for the Middle School should be removed. Melinda asked Charlie if we have a sense of how many articles there will be. Charlie was unsure at this point. Melinda told the committee to plan on getting all appointments done by the 18th.

Melinda could not entertain a motion to adjourn since there is no quorum.

The meeting ended at 8:17p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Clark, Secretary

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Len Teceno, Clerk

