



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

Meeting Minutes
 Monday, February 12, 2018

	Gordon Andrews	Mel Conroy	Linda Braga	Bill McAvoy	Diane Ruxton	Melinda Tarsi	Vacant
Present	✓			✓	✓	✓	

Also in attendance was Sandy Nolan, Town Accountant, Charlie Seelig, Town Administrator; Kim Roy, Selectman; Summer Schmaling, HES School Comm. Chair; Bob Johnson, HES School Comm. Member; Alex Meade, HES School Comm Member; Len Teceno, Resident.

Gordon Andrews called the meeting to order at 7:11pm

Meeting was recorded by Area 58.

Mail

No mail this week.

Meeting Minutes

No Meeting Minutes ready to approve this week.

Schools

The number from Silver Lake is \$4,554,350.00 which is an increase of \$273,674.00. That is a 6% increase on our assessment and an 8% increase on our total town's assessment. Gordon said he would not support any more. He will not recommend anything more than a \$150,000.00 assessment increase which is a 3% increase to Halifax. LY we did not spend \$601,000.00, so that is our excess capacity. Our Prop 2 ½ is \$390,000.00 and our new growth number is \$100,000.00 (need to keep our eye on it). Which means we can spend \$1,091,000.00 more in taxes this year than last year. We have the debt from the school roof project of \$414,000.00. That means an 8.5 – 9% increase on the tax bills if we spend everything. That is a \$475.00 - \$500.00 increase on the average tax bill. When you look at the overall status in the budget we have \$21,556.00 that would be in excess capacity at this time, that doesn't include an overall raise in the budget and it doesn't include any increases in the data processing line. Not sure what that one is going to be, but at this time we just have that level funded. When we increase the Vocational Student, decrease for the Circuit Breaker and increase for the sick buy back we are looking at a \$34,000.00 increase in spending and that puts us in a \$12,000.00 deficit. The tax bills will be taxed at the max unless we make substantial cuts

to the lines. It also means that we have no buffer of excess capacity for next year. Silver Lake did agree to ask their Administration to trim \$400,000.00 but that will not get us to the \$150,000.00 that we need to be at. We are going to have some tough decisions to make, depending on what Silver Lake can come up with. Gordon asked HES to cut at least \$40,000.00 of the sick buy back and the Vocational Student that they increased just to start. Kim Roy is hesitant to give an actual number yet. She would like all departments to adhere to the “level service” budgets that were asked for and to recognize savings that come up within their departments, not filling in with new programs etc.

Kim suggested to Charlie that the Selectman develop having a fundamental decision/philosophy on whether to keep a yearly excess capacity no matter what or to tax to the levy limit. We need to know what the feeling of the Town is. Charlie feels that taxing to the max is a bad idea. He is in favor of keeping some kind of excess capacity for several reasons but the main one is that it is a savings to the taxpayer. He would suggest somewhere around \$300,000.00.

We can't balance our whole budget just on Silver Lake, we just need them to be more reasonable so that going forward HES knows what to budget for their own school, in the sense of, if there is a new program will it be supported and what questions to ask.

When HES SC members were asked their opinions on excess capacity vs. taxing to the levy limit. Summer believes that there should be an excess capacity left. Live within your means. Alex agrees, having a savings is never a bad idea. How do you expect to tax to the max and not have some kind of surprise during the year? Taxing to the max would be irresponsible. Now that we have this Behaviorist on the SPED side, why are costs going up? Are we not able to develop programs yet? Are they working on it? These are all questions that we would like for SC members to ask Marie so that they can look forward at costs coming up. Also, are there kids receiving placements now for next year that we can not take care of in house? That would also help to forecast for next year. For an Out of District SPED student, it costs \$30,000.00 per year including transportation. For In District, it costs \$10,000.00. There was extensive discussion regarding the teachers getting raises and the Town Employees and other Union Employees not getting raises. Wage Openers were discussed.

Melinda and Diane both agree that spending to the max should never be an option. The entire board agreed that having some kind of excess capacity should be the goal. Charlie reminded that TM can make the final decision. If they decide to go high, then that is their choice. At this point, nothing can be done as far as the budget until everyone meets on February 26. We all should be a united front and the way to do that is to let everyone know what is going on and get the majority of the opinion out there.

Calendar

2/26 – Selectmen, All Dept. Heads, All School Committee Members

(Agenda for this meeting will include philosophy on the excess levy and a discussion on employee raises.)

Diane Ruxton made a motion to adjourn at 9:07pm. Seconded by Melinda Tarsi. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Braga
Clerk