



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

Meeting Minutes
 Monday, January 13, 2014

	Gordon Andrews	Karen Fava	Margaret (Peg) Fitzgerald	Nikki Newton	Stu Hall	Summer Schmaling	Vacant
Present	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	

Others in Attendance: Kendra Kelly, Finance Committee Secretary; Charlie Seelig, Town Administrator; Sandy Nolan, Town Accountant; Kim Roy, Selectmen, Mike Schleiff, Selectmen; John Creed, Silver Lake School Committee; James Lormer, Silver Lake School Committee; Mary MacKinnon, Kingston Finance Committee; Susan Ossoff, Plympton Finance Committee; Max West, Plympton Finance Committee; Marilyn Browne, Plympton Finance Committee; Lisa Hart, Plympton Finance Committee; Cassandra Hanson, Silver Lake School Committee; Maureen Springer, Silver Lake School Committee; Rep. Tom Calter, State Representative; David Kennedy, Kingston Finance Committee; David Lofstrom, Kingston Finance Committee.

Meeting called to order by Gordon Andrews at 7:03pm

Discussion with Rep. Calter

The Committees would like to know what the options are to fix the Plympton/ Kingston assessment issues from FY14. Mary MacKinnon said the state advised her to handle it locally; the state will not get involved. Susan Ossoff stated that it is not likely that Plympton will put it on Town Meeting as an Article so if Kingston would like it put on, they should make a request. Only one projected tax actually happened which is where the change in numbers came in. The only thing the legislature can help with is following the procedure if the budgets don't coincide. They will need to use the conference budget not just make up their own. Most of the Districts did not recalculate in July, many actually waited until October. We were lucky that Mr. Tuffy did recalculate early. For FY14 Plympton would have to agree to put on a special Article to correct the overpayment if it cannot be made up in FY15. Charlie can call John Tuffy to find out what Halifax's minimum contribution is now. Kim Roy feels that the minimum contribution was delayed. That number drives our individual assessments and therefore caused a problem. The Governor's budget comes out on January 22, 2014. Rep Calter would suggest level budgeting from 2014 as a safe place to start from but certainly budgeting 3% and no higher is an option as well.

Rep. Calter would like to know from all of the Committees, how they would like him to handle OPEB. Kim Roy asked if the reform study is out or is that the big fix. The Supreme Court ruled that changing existing contracts is unconstitutional. Peg Fitzgerald wonders if putting it out to bond is feasible. Rep. Calter suspects that next January this will be one of the hottest debates.

Discussion with Silver Lake

This year they are looking to put a School Resource Officer on. The biggest killer in the state is now drugs and they feel an Officer in the schools is what is really needed. One officer in each school from Middle School up is what is proposed. It would not be a permanent tax and would come up for renewal every year. It is figured using the same formula as the County Preservation Act in order to use the money from 2 ½.

The fingerprint bill is still in process but hasn't gone any further. It is a great idea, just not enough money for it currently.

The first version of the budget that has been presented is a 6% increase in the everyday budget with a grand total of 5.8% increase overall. That means an approximate increase of \$400,000.00 for Halifax. Plympton and Kingston agree that the number is not acceptable. This is not the final budget. Kingston asked for a level service budget. This budget has added positions and the upgrading of two positions which is certainly not a level service budget.

Computers are always a big issue. Is there a capital plan for replacing the teacher's computers? Last year they used E&D money and spent \$140,000.00 on computers. The network can't keep up with technology. Chrome books are on the budget for next year's freshman class. There is a suggestion of parents partnering up and paying 1/3 of the cost, keep it for 4 years of school and then take it with them when they leave. John Creed was careful to say that you can't require payment from the parents. The Finance Committees would like to know what the plan is to assist the IT department if this initiative actually gets put into place. The School Committee will bring that up at their next meeting. There are many implications that come with this. There are technology plans in place with costs available if needed.

Chapter 70 is also going to be an issue if it is reduced. We will be scrambling at the Elementary level as well as Silver Lake if this happens and both sides will have to sharpen their pencils to help each other out. We are only good as a town; if we are separate we will kill each other. Kim Roy said that she understands what is needed to keep up with technology but we are all at bare bones right now. A \$400,000.00 increase would eat up the entire levy and HES is still looking for a 6% increase. Next Wednesday the House 1 numbers will be out.

Finance Committee Discussion

Peg Fitzgerald would like to see a 2 ½% increase from the schools. Kingston and Plympton both feel that is still too high. All towns agree that the budget should be all

step increases and that is it. That is what all other departments are being asked for. It was suggested for each town to contact their School Committee Rep to discuss.

Each town is going to ask for a copy of the existing contracts for the teachers, administration, custodians and aides. Kendra will email John Tuffy to request those contracts in addition to the minimum increase of funding steps, lanes, retirements and health. Monthly status reports are available and should be submitted to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee heads will also get a list together of their members and email it to Kendra to compile.

Kingston will host the next joint meeting on Monday, February 3, 2014.

9:38 pm Stu Hall made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Nikki Newton. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nikki Newton
Corresponding Clerk