



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

Meeting Minutes
 Monday, March 18, 2013

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

Others in Attendance: Kendra Kelly, Finance Committee Secretary; Kim Roy, Selectmen; Cassandra Hanson, Silver Lake School Committee Chairperson & Halifax School Committee Vice Chairperson; Mike Schleiff, Selectmen; Lisa Gilbert, Halifax School Committee Chairperson; Pam Anderson, Halifax School Committee Secretary, Derek Bennett, Halifax School Committee Member.

Meeting called to order by Gordon Andrews at 7:08pm

Mail

Updated hand-outs from Sandy were reviewed by the members of the Committee.

Reserve Fund Transfers

A Reserve Fund Transfer was submitted by Gerry Elliott in the amount of \$1,800.00 to the Town Building Expense 197 Account for Emergency Shelter Electrical Plugs Repair at HES. When the shelter was opened for the Blizzard it became apparent that the electrical plugs in the APR/Shelter were not on Generator power. Although the lights were done some years ago, no one anticipated that the plugs were not part of the same circuit. Karen said that the estimate and invoice should be attached for review. Kendra will send a memo to all Department Heads, when submitting RFT's all supporting documentation needs to be attached for review (i.e., list of expenses, estimates, quotes, breakdowns, list of hours, units and price etc.) Kim said that in the future there will be a need for medical cots for the Shelter as well. They will be presented as an Article on the Warrant. This expense will be to add a separate bank onto the generator.

Peg Fitzgerald made a motion to transfer \$1,800.00 to Building Maintenance. Seconded by Nikki Newton. Motion passed unanimously.

Silver Lake Discussion

Gordon attended the meeting on Thursday. \$108,747.00 is the Assessment increase for this year. \$4,047,897.00 is the total Assessment for Halifax for FY14. \$182,000.00 is from E&D. Peg said that they have cut their expected State Aid in half. If the basic budget is up 3.43% and our population is up, how is our assessment not up that much?

Cassandra said that when they divide up the State Aid it is individually separated and that is how it sometimes averages out. Silver Lake has voted this budget. The Assessments are not set by Silver Lake. If State Aid does not come in, they will have to fund the remainder from their budget. If it is higher they may possibly replace the E&D money that was taken out. Peg feels that the \$108,000.00 increase is acceptable.

Budget Discussion

Peg stated that we have a balanced budget and we are choosing not to spend it all. Kim said that we are going up to 2.5% and are leaving \$225,000.00 on the table. It was left on the table last year because the Fin Comm. felt the tax rate was too high. The tax rate went up to \$17.99 last year. That increase was \$400,000.00. We are leaving the \$225,000.00 from last year because it would be over a 4% increase if it was used instead of a 2.5% increase. Peg said it doesn't matter. We are more conservative than the townspeople's wishes that are being expressed at Town Meeting. Gordon felt that the people went with the Fin Comm. recommendations on most things. Peg felt that any vote where there was a difference between Fin Comm. and the Dept request, the voters always went with the Dept Head's recommendation. Kim said that FY 14 discussions between the Board of Selectmen and the Fin Comm. decided 2.5%. We have a \$116,000.00 deficit as of right now. If we take the loader from Chapter 90 and put the Reserve Fund into Capital (not ideal) we would be at a \$45,000.00 deficit. Also we would need to change the overlay account from 177,000.00 to 150,000.00. The Assessors felt it could be changed. Also, the Historical Society did not like the proposal to make the LED sign holder out of stone so it will be done in a heavy duty vinyl. This will take an additional \$5,000.00 off of the deficit bringing it to \$40,000.00. Gordon asked if the Selectmen had a priority list to cover the \$40,000.00. As of right now they do not.

HES Discussion

The current budget number is \$4,854,222.00 which is from version 3 of the budget. Sped total for tuition is \$1,179,121.00 and transportation is \$381,931.00. The SL Debt Exclusion is \$535,771.00. This budget does include textbooks and a shared cost position. It does not include the possible repairs as they will hopefully go into the Capital Plan. They will know better next week. All of these numbers represent a 4.7% increase in the HES Budget. Peg asked what can be done about Sped. Public schools are the responsibility of the legislature. When the school budget goes up 3% and they level fund Chapter 70 our increase is actually doubled to 6%. We can't pay it without stripping down other departments. Everyone supports the same community and Sped and Regular Day are way up. Peg would like the school to fight with the state to do something about Sped costs and the day budget. Peg asked if there is any way to bring the day budget to 3%. Lisa has presented a budget with step increases, Curriculum Coordinator addition and textbooks. Maybe it is too late in the process for this year. Cassandra said that Sped is a factor for every town.

There is an increase in the principal's office line. It is for 2 years of salary increase for FY13 and FY14. The increase is \$9,000.00 for 2 people and there are no steps involved. Also there are increases in supplies for that line item as well. Gordon commented that it

seems like a big jump in supplies from \$4,700.00 to \$8,000.00. Cassandra replied that it could be changes in reporting requirements. Lisa will research it. There is a large decrease in line 2300, Substitutes. Cassandra said that they are actuals of what was spent. This is one of the most difficult line items to plan for as you never know when you are going to need Substitutes. One reason is due to the Librarian being a long term sub for this year. The Health line has jumped by 9%. This is also due to contract negotiations for the school Nurse and includes 2 years worth of increases. Last Year's budget showed a 8% increase. All increases budgeted for FY13 were in the teacher's line item. All of the money went in the teacher line item so as not to "show their hand" during negotiations. It is being funded now instead. 2012 was 0%, 2013 was 2.5% and 2014 is 2.5%, plus steps, in raises. It was a 5 over 3. Karen asked if they already have the money why it is being funded again. Line 4110 Custodial has a 5,000.00 increase in supplies. They had left over supplies that they could pull from in order to be able to cut the line in previous years. The contract was inherited and we are stuck with it. Unfortunately because of it the Town is suffering as well and everyone has to give a little. It takes 3 homes in town to pay for one child in school.

Cassandra reminded the committee that cutting a teacher is never good. Gordon said that the rest of the town is at needs not wants. Cassandra replied that there are not wants in the HES budget. Gordon said this is not a minimum budget. Nikki Newton said you cannot change class sizes. We are lucky to have smaller sizes at HES. K-6 has 4 teachers per grade level and approx 20 students per class. If you cut a teacher you will jump into the 30's for class size. We only have 100 students per grade so it will make a bigger difference for one cut than it would in a school with more students per grade.

Peg feels the school committee should be the ones to cut not Fin Comm. They need to cut the day budget to 145 – 150K. Is that possible. Peg is also looking for the Day budget to be at 3%. They need to cut \$57,844.00. Gordon and Nikki are looking for a \$20,000.00 cut in the Day budget. Stu feel that there is lots of passion but no one is moving. Somewhere we have to meet. Karen would like to see 1% cut off of the Day Budget so it is no higher than 3.48% and that would mean \$39,000.00 in cuts. Mike said that it is nice to hear that there were give backs from the school. Everyone is doing their best. Gordon said that the real issue is what can the tax payer afford?

Mike said that Wage and Personnel is not looking at any raises for Town or Union employees. Kim said that even if the deficit gap is closed the teachers will be the only town employees to get a 2.5% raise and that is going to equal unhappy employees and unions. At the end of the day we are asking taxpayers to support their raises.

Stu asked if the textbooks are an all or nothing thing. Textbooks now do not correlate with the curriculum. Lisa said it is only a partial replacement. It will be a long term commitment over the next few years to complete. Textbooks have been put off due to the common core updates that were coming. Textbooks used to be part of the budget but were not purchased. It is more of a capital item. According to Joy Blackwood, next year they will be looking for \$100,000.00 for textbooks for the common core.

Peg moved to see if there are reasonable cuts that can be made by the school committee while still providing a reasonable education. Seconded by Stu Hall. Motion passed unanimously.

Lisa Gilbert will schedule a special meeting for a further budget discussion and will let us know when that will be held.

Library Discussion

The Library did not believe that this was a long standing agreement. If there is an across the board wage increase they will not be on the hook for going below level funding. They will stick with it for this year only. Next year they want to come in early to discuss it. We would keep them whole. Peg suggested that maybe next year we will treat them like everyone else. They would like to transfer from Wages to Expenses of \$18,000.00 to replace the public computers as the Director position was empty for a while. They are totally skipping the Capital plan and that is not the way it should be done. Stu said that computers are no longer considered a capital item as they are generally less than \$1,000.00. Kim said that anything over \$5,000.00 is a capital plan purchase and the whole purchase would be over that amount. Karen asked if they have broken computers or is this an upgrade. It appears that it is an upgrade. Peg said that they should be buying them from their trustee/gift account. It should be used to improve the library and there is money just sitting in the account. Charlie said that account has \$1,900.00 in it currently and the Trust Fund has \$4,700.00 in it. Nikki will relay the information.

Council on Aging Discussion

Barbara has agreed to reduce the driver's hours by 2 hours per week. The bottom line for the driver's wages is \$33,021.00. Also, the electric account can decrease by \$400.00 for a new total of \$2,200.00. The copier will be staying on the capital plan however there is \$350.00 in the expense line that was not taken out. Nikki will follow up with Barbara.

Article 5 Line Items

Line 120 – Nikki Newton made a motion to approve \$147,934.00 for Council on Aging Wages. Seconded by Gordon Andrews. Motion passed unanimously.

Line 122 – Nikki Newton made a motion to approve \$2,200.00 for Popes Tavern Electricity. Seconded by Peg Fitzgerald. Motion passed unanimously.

3/25 Meeting – COA, Library and Veterans.

Karen Fava made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from February 4, 2013. Seconded by Gordon Andrews. Motion passed unanimously.

3/25/13 Meeting – Kendra to schedule appointments for Capital Plan, Municipal and School Building Committee, Veteran's Agent and Youth & Rec for a Reserve Fund Transfer.

Gordon Andrews made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Karen Fava. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:35pm.

Nikki Newton
Corresponding Clerk