



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

Meeting Minutes
 Monday, March 25, 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; Lisa Gilbert, Halifax School Committee Chairperson; Pam Anderson, Halifax School Committee Secretary, Derek Bennett, Halifax School Committee Member; John Tuffy, Superintendent of Schools; Christine Healey, Silver Lake; Gerry Elliott, Director of Building Maintenance; John Campbell, Building Committee Chairperson; Dick Steele, Director of Youth and Recreation; Wil Corey, Veteran's Agent.

Meeting called to order by Karen Fava at 7:10pm

Mail

No mail was received.

Reserve Fund Transfers

A Reserve Fund Transfer was submitted by Dick Steele in the amount of \$2,380.00 to the Youth and Recreation Expense Account for 70' of galvanized chain link fence that has been damaged during one of the storms. The estimate includes \$125.00 additional for removal of the existing fence. Dick thinks that Bob Badore can take care of that and save the expense for removal. Right now the fence damage is a safety issue as the playground and sports programs will be started in a few weeks. Kim suggested contacting the Fire Chief and submitting the fence cost for Blizzard reimbursement from FEMA. The gym floor has been done already and the cost was \$3,200.00. The bill should be in tomorrow for that and there is currently \$3168.25 in the account. Peg Fitzgerald made a motion to transfer \$2,380.00 to Youth and Recreation Expense. Seconded by Nikki Newton. Motion passed unanimously.

Youth and Rec Budget Discussion

The schools aren't paying for as much as they used to so Youth and Rec is paying for a lot of things now. Dick has asked for a \$300.00 increase in the expense line to account for some of that. Basketball groups do contribute to some of the repairs for the upkeep of

the gym but a lot falls on Y&R. They pay approximately \$100.00 per month in cleaning supplies as well. Y&R takes care of a lot more than most people realize. Kim suggested that he put some of the larger repairs that will be needed on the Capital Plan. Dick will email Nikki with a list.

Veteran's Agent Discussion

Mr. Corey is looking for an increase in hours and an increase in the Veteran's benefits. He has already spent \$100,000.00 this year and will be looking for a RFT for FY13 for approximately \$10,000.00 to cover the May benefits. The May benefits have to be paid out at the end of April. They will need to be funded before Town Meeting so that is why the shortage will have to be addressed through a RFT. His average hours of work are about 20. Kim said that Charlie feels we can be around \$16,000.00 for an increase to his hours. Karen asked for clarification on the difference between the Agent position and the Service Officer. The Service Officer is in charge of burials, cemetery upkeep etc. Kim suggested we cut the Service Officer back to level funded and deal with the increase strictly in the Agent line. Peg feels that it is imperative that we service our Veterans. We do get reimbursed for 75%. We need to discuss further with Charlie for clarification on the actual increase that would be reasonable. Kim suggested that he come back on April 1 after Charlie has had a chance to look into the increase further. Mr. Corey stated that when he was hired he was promised an increase in hours and pay. Kim stated that we don't have the same ability to pay as towns like Duxbury so we need to make sure we are equal to comparable towns. Peg pointed out that the forms that the Agent is required to fill out are complicated and that there is a lot of responsibility in that office.

HES Discussion

There was an emergency meeting to examine the budget closer on Thursday evening. A new version of the budget was submitted with \$20,000.00 in cuts. Cuts were as follows: \$2,000.00 to line 114 Principal Supplies, \$12,685.00 to line 189 Librarian Salary (Position will be filled at a Step 3 at 90% without affecting the service to the students), \$500.00 to line 196 Library Books & Subs, \$315.00 to line 203 Media Tech, \$500.00 to Line 226 Nurse Supplies, \$3,000.00 to line 265 Custodial Supplies and \$1,000.00 to line 399 SPED supplies. Peg stated that the School has cut as we asked. Any other increases are contractual so she is pleased with the cuts. Karen feels that 4% increase is still not feasible and there need to be more cuts. Stu had no comment at this time. Nikki felt that she had trouble with the cuts as she has kids in the school; however she wants to be sure she reacts the same way as she would once her kids were no longer there.

John Tuffy handed out a graph showing the info on what is spent per student on In District students at HES as compared to other comparable schools. He feels that according to that data, we are not overfunding the school. Karen says it doesn't matter; we cannot afford this increase. John said that there is no doubt about it; we have some not pleasant choices ahead. We can't put the common core off. This budget is now scrubbed. Any cuts after this point would likely be staff related. There needs to be a comparable education provided in all 3 SL District Towns so that the students enter the Middle School on the same level. At some point they stop buying things and start eliminating positions. Class size and specialists are where they would look to cut next.

Stu asked if there is further projection for upcoming years. John replied that there will be some retirements that will help in the future. They will be replacing highly paid staff with newer, lower paid staff. Peg suggested accepting the submitted budget and waiting for the state numbers to come in. John stated that it has been easier in other years to make cuts but now there is much less to work with. Numbers from the DART data for the other SL towns for FY11 are:

Plympton – 232 students, \$10,644.00 per student.

Kingston – 1,185 students, \$8,092.00 per student. 26-29 students per class.

Karen stated that we should take the budget under advisement and vote at the April 1 meeting when Gordon is present to vote. HES School Committee Meeting is at the same time so Kendra will send a message to Cassandra Hanson and Lisa Gilbert as soon as the vote is complete to advise of the outcome so that HES can vote as well.

Municipal and School Building Committee

They would like to add 11 hours for a part time employee. That would bring that employee up to 30 hours per week. The employee currently works 19 hours so benefits would come into play. Right now they have 2 Full Time Employees, 2 Part Time and 2 Summer Employees to take care of 14 buildings. Stu said that given the discussion that we just had with the School Committee, could 1 hour per day instead of 2 still be helpful. This question was from a percent point of view only. Gerry said that only 1 hour per day would really not be helpful. Last year he withdrew his request for more hours as the town didn't have the money. He is expected to do a lot more than just maintenance daily and extra man hours would help him to do that. He doesn't replace an employee that is out sick or on vacation so that makes them even more short on hours when someone is out. John Campbell said that Gerry is actually saving the town more money by not having to bring in outside contractors to complete the work.

Concerning the possibility of a new Senior Center, John Campbell said that there is no support from the Town on purchasing the Armand's property. The price on the property was lowered to \$950,000.00 for purchase but there was still no support. He asked if the Finance Committee would be willing to recommend putting a few hundred thousand dollars into Pope's Tavern. There is the possibility of a mobile/portable addition and an addition to enlarge the kitchen. Karen said that there needs to be more detail put into the plans and cost before we can discuss it honestly. Please come back when more details are available.

Capital Plan Discussion.

A priority list was submitted for Capital items. This list does not include the School Maintenance Line. Safety concerns and absolute needs are first. Gerry Elliott has some old Articles that he can use to pay down some others. His Article for \$8,500.00 will be brought to \$5,000.00. The painting that he needed to take care of will be taken care of from the funds left over from the Great Hall painting. Painting and repairing the Fire Station floor can be done in two stages. The front can be done first and then the rest the following year for a \$7,000.00 savings this year. Peg asked if the issue with the flat roofs at the Police Station had been addressed. Kim said that they have been repaired and

Sandy thinks they were taken care of by insurance. The town share of the Chapter 90 money will be used to purchase a new loader this year and for the extra large dump truck for \$160,000.00 next year. That freed up a lot of money. Bob will continue to look for a used grader. Peg suggested a maintenance schedule for any new equipment. Peg would like a chance to review the list before making any recommendations on it.

In regards to HES, the roof over the classroom in the front of the building on the right leaks on occasion. It appears that the roof lines dump onto that roof. The drainage system is being overwhelmed. Tom Millias will provide resources for free advice. They are probably looking at repairs that are not ready for this Town Meeting. There is a school repair plan available. It is possible that they will investigate an Article to establish a line item for extraordinary maintenance. Peg said that they should go into the Stabilization Fund for those items. There is an Article for \$7,500.00 for roof repairs already submitted. They would like to use it for advice and guidance. If there is a surplus it is used to make the budget work. Out of District item surplus comes back to the town in the General Fund.

Library Discussion

Nikki Newton informed the Director of our discussion last week. The Director is ok with the agreement for this year. There is already an Article on the Warrant for the computers. It is the same \$18,000.00 amount. It sounds like that is the way she is going to go instead of a line item transfer as originally thought. Kim said it is still skipping the Capital Plan and it is bothersome on a principle level. Sandy would like the Director to understand that it is questionable to be supported for the full \$18,000.00 and maybe it would be more appropriate to request a partial replacement first. The Library should come back in the fall to discuss the strategy for FY15.

Article 5 Line Items

Line 42 – Peg Fitzgerald made a motion to approve \$156,982.00 for Town Building Custodial. Seconded by Nikki Newton. Stu Hall abstained. The remaining 3 members voted yes. Motion did not pass as there were not 4 yes votes.

Line 43 – Karen Fava made a motion to approve \$48,000.00 for Town Building Expense. Seconded by Peg Fitzgerald. Motion passed unanimously.

Line 133 – Peg Fitzgerald made a motion to approve \$10,000.00 for Youth and Rec Expense. Seconded by Nikki Newton. Motion passed unanimously.

Peg would like to check with Town Counsel or see some kind of documentation that we as a 7 person board, need to have 4 yes votes in order to pass a motion. Sandy will research the state bylaw instead of contacting an attorney and find the documentation.

Peg also cannot find anywhere in the Finance Committee minutes that we decided with the Selectmen to leave \$225,000.00 on the table. Karen said that it was the townspeople that gave us that direction at Town Meeting. Peg disagrees. Kim suggested that Peg look at the meetings from the Selectmen's meeting to verify.

Kim stated that the Contracts will not be negotiated before we go to print.

The Comm. Center did not get a 2% cost of living increase last year as they were still in negotiations. We need to make sure it is in the line item this year. More details will be available at the April 1 meeting.

4/1/13 Meeting – Council on Aging discussion, HES and SL Vote, Veteran’s Agent Discussion, Town Building Vote, Capital Planning Discussion, Comm. Center Discussion, Medical Marijuana recommendations for the 4/8/13 STM.

Peg Fitzgerald made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Stu Hall. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:35pm.

Nikki Newton
Corresponding Clerk