



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

Meeting Minutes
Monday, May 21, 2012

	Gordon Andrews	Peter Beals	Karen Fava	Margaret (Peg) Fitzgerald	Paul Weckbacher	Richard (Dick) Wright	Nikki Newton
Present	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Others in Attendance: Sandy Nolan, Town Accountant; Charlie Seelig, Town Administrator; Kim Roy, Selectmen; Mike Schleiff, Selectmen.

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm
Meeting Adjourned at 8:45pm

Mail

A Reserve Fund Transfer Request was received from Chief Carrico for \$1893.00 additional to repair A1. There is enough in the fund to currently pay the invoice. Peter Beals made a motion to have it paid out of the fund and wait for further discussion with the Fire Chief at the next Fin Comm Meeting. Seconded by Peg Fitzgerald. Karen Fava abstained. Motion passed.

Process in Review

Peg said Gordon, Nikki and Dick did a great job “winging it” on the third night of Town Meeting and answering questions. She also said that we have to start budgets and articles earlier. We spent too long trying to reduce the tax rate when obviously the taxpayers weren’t as concerned with it. Peter agrees that the articles should be done earlier so we can discuss them thoroughly and have a recommendation ready. Gordon asked if we can set a date on contracts so we can have time to review them. Suggestion of two weeks before Town Meeting was mentioned. Mike felt like Article 4 was a major slow down. We can amend the bargaining unit with a deadline. We need a deadline of April 22, 2013 for contracts. All recommendations should be made by April 1 by the Fin Comm in order to be printed in the Warrant. Sandy mentioned that Articles not being submitted complete with totals should not be on the Warrant. Karen has looked at other town’s Warrants and ours is so much larger and broader. Perhaps there should be some kind of control. Gordon wanted to know if there is any way to change the vote process to hands instead of yes/no or Australian ballot. He also asked if maybe we could have a handout for the taxpayers at the vote explaining Overly Surplus, Free Cash, etc. as it may reduce confusion.

Sandy said that departments didn't know if their budget was being supported and perhaps next year the committee could advise each department via memo once it has been approved. It would create a universal procedure if the memo comes from the Secretary of Fin Comm instead of the Liaison. Peter has felt that we can spend too much time on too many details for too many departments. If we have questions they should go directly to the liaison. This would decrease meeting times and discussions. Kim suggested that a school liaison go to the monthly School Committee Meetings so they can understand what is going on and questions can be answered. Nikki said that when discussing the tax rate we had the same conversation for 3 weeks straight. Perhaps that can be controlled a bit better. Karen felt we brought in a new info page each week which brought on another discussion with the same views. Peter feels that the problem is the procedure. He deliberately did summary pages before looking at the budget so we looked at the big picture instead of the details in order to get to the end result desired. For example, if you take your paychecks and spend for needed and look for savings at the end you are not going to find the savings. Peg does not agree with that theory. Spending so much time talking about cuts so early in the process is pointless. If you are frugal to begin with it will work out in the end. We have to have confidence in our department heads to tell us the truth about what they really need.

Nikki said that when asking for detail we should let the departments know now what we are going to expect them to keep track of effective FY13. Peter feels we can't mandate what departments keep track of. Gordon said the he feels it is not unreasonable to say that they should expect to be asked about mileage, gas, hours etc on any vehicle related requests. That way they won't be here unprepared and they won't feel sandbagged. Sandy mentioned that Articles not being submitted complete with totals should not be on the Warrant.

Summary

For next year's process, the Committee should get its act together on the Articles, institute a deadline on Contracts and have the Warrant printed with the Finance Committee recommendations in it.

Information to advise department heads to expect to be asked to provide on any vehicle request would be mileage/hours, maintenance schedule, major issues pertaining to the vehicle. Gordon would like to look into finding a State vehicle maintenance standard form.

Town Meeting for FY14 is Monday May 13, 2013.

Kendra will schedule Chief Carrico to come to the next meeting on June 11.

Reorganization is usually somewhere around the July 1 meeting. Dick Wright is not returning after a 12 year term. Karen Fava is 95% sure she is returning and Peg Fitzgerald is certain she will be returning.

Next Fin Comm Meetings are June 11 and June 25.

Karen Fava made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Nikki Newton. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm

Richard Wright
Corresponding Clerk