

HALIFAX BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SELECTMEN MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2016 - 3:00 P.M.
SELECTMEN MEETING ROOM

Meeting came to order at 3:00 p.m. with Selectmen Kim R. Roy and Troy E. Garron present.

The following business was discussed:

SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS

Meal Tax Forum

Present in the audience was Grille 58 and Lyonville Tavern owners Debra Trotta and Dave Hatch. Ms. Trotta began by saying that seventy percent of the patrons who come into her restaurants are the elderly who are on a limited income hence this new meal tax will not so much affect her but it will affect her customers. Mr. Hatch asked where did this come from and Seelig said the Department of Revenue. Mr. Hatch then said from their business this meal tax will generate \$32,000 of the \$70,000 the town will be getting. Ms. Trotta's feeling is that as business owners they are doing their part in bring in revenue for the town but the burden will be on her business if this was to go through. She also stated that we have one of the highest tax rates.

Seelig understood what she was saying and said instead of the meat tax the State could do a one percent increase to the sale tax but this is not an option. He continued to say that there are eight towns that have not accepted this and suggested that she could contact businesses in the towns that have and ask if they have seen a decline in business. Ms. Trotta asked if there was anything else the town could do and Seelig said yes we could vote an override and she then asked if the town was in the "red" and Seelig said not at this time and said that the revenue from the meal tax will help with capital items. Ms. Trotta asked about the town issuing more building permits seeing as they only issue so many and Seelig corrected her saying that the town has not permitted people from building houses it is just no one has come in to do so. He also explained that building one house only brings in \$5,000 in taxes. Ms. Trotta asked who is included in this meal tax and Seelig said anybody who pays the State meal tax.

Roy wanted to get back to Halifax's tax rate and explained that we do not have a lot of commercial based businesses because of the fact that we are not in an attractive location. Also we have a lot of debt exclusion on the tax bill that was voted on. We do not have much to trim for services we offer. We only have two firemen on, school costs have increased, health insurance has gone up. In the past money that was not used by departments was put back into the general fund and used for capital items but over the years expenses have increased and the "free cash" has decreased. Roy is hurt that customers would not come to their place and hopes they are just saying that and said that they would be spending money in gas what they would in the meal tax here in Halifax to go to a town that did not have the meal tax. Mr. Hatch said it is more the principal of it.

Melvin Conroy, member of the Finance Committee, was also present and explained that when they presented this to the selectmen Garron voiced that he thought it was going to be a burden. Mr. Conroy said that he supported it because our surrounding towns are already doing this.

Ms. Trotta asked what does the town pay in health insurance and Roy said 50/50 but there are town that pay eighty percent. Ms. Trotta said that they are trying to provide a great service and they are the ones getting hit. Garron explained that the only way the town can function is to raise the taxes and it is up to the voters to make that decision. Roy said that it will go to Town Meeting and the people can speak on it. Mr. Hatch asked where will the town get the money if this does not pass and Seelig said that if the townspeople do not want to pay then we'll have to lower the services. Roy added that this source of revenue will help replace a roof or a truck. Seelig said that he has not heard business dropping in the communities that already have the meal tax in place. Ms. Trotta said that her business is based on the patrons and is concerned about her two businesses and Seelig said if patrons are going to communities that don't have the tax we are not seeing the numbers and said that no one has placed an article on the warrant regarding this. Ms. Trotta said that if you were to add five dollars to everyone's tax bill they would be in here but where it is not their business being affected they're not and continued to say that it is her business that is on the line and she will be the one hearing about it from my customers. Seelig said that she can refer them to the selectmen's office if that is the case. Garron said that he has been approached by residents about this and told them to come to Town Meeting and speak about it.

Ms. Trotta asked when is Town Meeting and Roy said May 9th but the article could come up either the first night or second night as we draw the articles on a lottery. Garron wanted to say that he has always been fair, firm and consistent and he too is on a fixed income. Roy added we do have a lot people on a fixed income but there are people who don't have a problem fixing that roof that needs repairing. She asked if there were any more questions and Ms. Trotta said she did not have any more and that she just wanted to voice her concerns.

APPROVED WARRANTS

Moved by Roy and seconded by Garron, the Board unanimously approved payment of the following warrants and commitments:

Payroll Warrant	# 93	\$ 341,593.89
Vendor Warrant	# 94	\$ 164,455.47

MEETING ADJOURNED

There being no further business, the Board adjourn the meeting at 3:30 p.m.

Thomas Millias
Clerk

/pjm