**MINUTES**

**TOWN OF HAWICH**

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2023 - 6PM**

**THE HARWICH CHANNEL 8 STUDIO AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER**

**MEMBERS PARTICIPATING:** Peter Hughes, Chairman, Bob MacCready, Vice Chair, Dana DeCosta, Michele Gallucci, Dan Tworek, Mark Kelleher and Mark Ameres

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Hughes called the meeting of the Harwich Finance Committee to order on October 18, 2023 at 6:00PM and read the Open Meeting Notice. The Chair declared a quorum.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 14, 2023**

Mr. DeCosta moved to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2023 meeting, seconded by Mr. Kelleher.

Vote 6:0 in favor. Motion carried.

**DISCUSSION WITH SELECT BOARD LIAISON, JEFF HANDLER**

 **Wastewater planning based in 20 years horizon**

 **New Capital Items on the horizon**

 **Update on pre-school subsidy program and plans for funding next year**

 **Status on 204 Bisson improvements funded at May 2023 ATM**

 **Other**

Mr. Hughes commented that this is meant to be an open discussion. He welcomed Mr. Handler and invited him to sit with the Committee.

Mr. Hughes’ first comments were regarding the Wastewater Planning, recognizing what has already been done and/or planned. He asked Mr. Handler to explain what is presently going on and what the available grant money means to the taxpayer for the next several years.

Mr. Handler responded, emphasizing that it is important to him to provide information in real time. As the Select Board has more information, he will pass that on to the FinCom. Specifically regarding Wastewater, Mr. Handler commented on a previous joint meeting and working session with the Wastewater Commission, Dan Pelletier, Wastewater Superintendent and several others. The result was the need for collaboration and cooperation between all Committees and Departments involved with Wastewater as well as the Select Board. The latest update is that there was conversation at the last Select Board meeting regarding the need to file for Watershed permits. Dan Pelletier will be filing for those Watershed permits and Mr. Handler explained what the permits will accomplish and allow the Town to do moving forward. He also noted that the 40 year plan change to a 20 year plan is not as serious as initially thought and he will give information as it evolves. He did note that they had been told that work will begin on Route 28 within 24 to 36 months. In the coming year 600 more people will be connected to the East Harwich System. There are currently no conversations with neighboring towns regarding doing anything jointly. In response to Mr. DeCosta’s questions, Mr. Handler noted that things are constantly changing with the Wastewater Plan but in general, the Town of Harwich is in good shape and continues to make progress.

Mr. Hughes commented on the Capital Plan and the Capital Outlay Committee.

Mr. Kelleher gave an update on the COC meeting earlier that day. He noted their schedule going forward, how they will be dealing with applications and what applications they have before them at this time.

Mr. Handler commented on the pre-school program. He has reached out to find out how many people have taken advantage of the funds but has not yet received an answer. The applications have been accepted for this fall. The Finance Committee expressed interest in the source of funds for this program moving forward.

Mr. Handler gave an update on the auditorium at 204 Sisson Road. He has requested that 204 Sisson be an agenda item at the next Select Board meeting because he also has questions on the status. He did not know the percentage of leases that are Harwich occupied but he will get that information also.

(Mr. Ameres joined the meeting)

Mr. DeCosta commented on the “template idea” for the Charter which is currently before the Select Board and asked what the Charge template meant to the Finance Committee. He also asked about conflicting language and if the Charter will be changed.

Mr. Handler responded that there has not yet been a vote on the template but the discussion and possible vote will be at the next SB meeting. He also noted that it is counsel’s opinion that there is no language conflict with the Charter. Also noted were the specifics of the situation with the Golf Committee, why and how the template evolved. The Charge does not supersede the Charter.

Mr. DeCosta commented that he thinks the Finance Committee should discuss whether or not they want to make any changes in their section of the Charter noting that the Finance Committee has State Law supporting what they do.

Mr. Hughes asked for an update on the funds that had been appropriated to get help with the Charter.

Mr. Handler responded that he had also asked for the information and expects to get that information soon.

Sandra Hall of the By-Law/Charter Review Committee was present in the audience and commented that they (the Committee) have been told that they will not be getting any of the funding from the Article noted to get help with the Charter. She noted that they are continuing to review the Charter and will at some point make a report with recommendations to the Select Board.

Mr. Kelleher commented that Mr. Hughes had changed the wording in the Article by deleting “Zoning” and it was clear that the $75,000 was designated for help with the Charter and By-Laws.

(out of order)

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**FinCom Charter consideration - Dana**

Mr. DeCosta referred to the documents he created for the Finance Committee’s Charge within the Charter, describing each in detail. He will send, to each member, the actual laws that are specific to Finance Committees.

Mr. Hughes noted that the intent is not to take action on anything in the documents at this meeting. This topic will be on next month’s agenda.

Ms. Hall explained the process to change the language in the Charter which takes two years to complete.

There was discussion regarding the Charter, By-Laws and State Law. Also mentioned was returning to the practice of fall Town Meeting to focus on Zoning/By-Law topics.

**FINCOM WEBSITE IMPROVEMENTS - MICHELE**

Ms. Gallucci reported that she and Jamie Goodwin, Director of Harwich Channel 8, updated the website with the changes that the FinCom had previously discussed. She described the changes in detail. She also noted what is left to do which she is working on. Ms. Gallucci noted an Internal Control letter, questioning if it should remain on the website. Discussion followed regarding that and also removing acronyms from the website.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**FINAL VERSION OF “YOUR FINANCE COMMITTEE”**

Mr. Hughes noted that the FinCom had agreed to replace the Strategic Plan on the website with “Your Finance Committee”. Mr. Tworek had a document which he created based on their prior conversations and presented it to Mr. Hughes. He noted some the changes that he had made in the document.

Mr. Tworek read the document out loud as the other members had not yet seen a copy. Suggestions were made to change certain wording. He will edit the wording and send it to Mr. Hughes who will forward the finalized document to Ms. Gallucci. She will have it added to the website.

**CAPITAL OUTLAY COMMITTEE UPDATE - Mark K.**

(previously noted)

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Mr. Kelleher noted an Association of Towns’ Finance Committee Members meeting on November 4th and shared registration information. He asked Mr. Hughes about the possibility of getting a PO number from the Town for reimbursement of the registration fee.

Mr. Kelleher commented that Harwich has one fee for moorings. Other towns have resident and non-resident fees. He suggested that it is an issue to consider. Selectman Handler took note of this comment.

Ms. Gallucci started a conversation about Free Cash and possibly putting money towards reducing fees for the Landfill. Mr Hughes commented that he’d like to focus on giving some of the Free Cash back to the taxpayers. Mr. DeCosta noted that, in the past, those fees were included in By-Laws. Discussion followed regarding fees for the Transfer Station and the cost of operation.

Mr. Hughes asked Mr. Handler if they are on the path to getting Free Cash certified.

Mr. Handler will get that information.

The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be November 9, 2023 at 6:00 PM in the Small Meeting Room.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

 The meeting was adjourned at 7:17PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judi Moldstad

Board Secretary