

**TOWN OF HOLLISTON  
D.P.W. STUDY COMMITTEE**

February 25, 2010  
6:30 P.M.

Selectmen's Meeting Room  
Town Hall

Present: Charlie Roberts; Chairman: Kevin Conley; Carl Damigella; Dennis Ferreira and Tom Dumas.

Mr. Roberts said that the Town of Medway has completed the process of merging the Highway and the Water Department. Mr. Roberts said that the Holliston Highway Department and the Water Department will get a chance to talk about the potential merge.

**MR. DAMIGELLA MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 4, 2010, AS WRITTEN. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY MR. FERREIRA. ALL IN FAVOR.**

Tom Holder, Holliston resident, has been named the DPW Director in the Town of Medway. He said that he was appointed 5 months ago. Mr. Holder said that it takes time to put this together. He said that from the beginning the town wanted a consolidated department. He said that the Water and Sewer and the Highway were each doing their separate thing. He said that Medway had some problems with revenue. In order to run each department, they chose to merge them and set up a DPW. He said that it went to Town Meeting. He said that many were for this and some were not. He said that each department did things differently. He said that all employees are in the Union. He and his Assistant are the only two that are not in the Union. He said now they are in the process of cross-training the employees. Mr. Conley asked why the Town of Medway wanted to form a DPW? Mr. Holder said that they wanted just one leader for the departments. He said that each department wanted it to remain the same, but it was not in the best interest of the town to keep it like that. He said that each department would fall under the direction of the Town Administrator. Mr. Conley asked what Medway will look like in 5 years. Mr. Holder said that he presented the Medway Selectmen with a breakdown of the groups. Mr. Holder said that the Town of Medway does not have an Engineer, but they are looking into one. Mr. Conley said that if the road is dug up or something were to happen, everything will fall on his lap. Mr. Holder said yes he is the Director. Mr. Damigella asked about the departments that were merged and how has it changed since they were merged? Mr. Holder said that they are understaffed. He is trying to convince the powers that be, to have more staffing. Mr. Holder said that most DPW workers feel that they do way too much for the Town and that they are not appreciated. He said that some of the vehicles are old and it does not look good. He is trying to change that impression. He said that they have some real assets in the staff in Medway. It takes skills and different kinds of licenses to operate some of the equipment. Mr. Damigella asked about cross-training on all equipment and staff. Mr. Holder said that everyone should be cross trained on every piece of equipment. He said that New England Water

Works offers classes for this kind of training. He said that Highway should know about water, and water should know about highway. He said that when New England Water Works have their classes, he will be sending Water and Highway personnel. He said that this was the first year that the Water Department plowed snow. Mr. Damigella said that is a benefit to all involved. Mr. Holder said that Medway now has a Water Enterprise Fund, a Sewer Enterprise Fund and a Solid Waste Enterprise Fund. Mr. Damigella asked if that is a book-keeping thing. Mr. Holder said yes. He said that if they buy a piece of equipment, he splits the cost with several departments, because they are all going to use it. This is the same with office supplies. He said that in the FY 2011 budget, he is removing eight part time positions and adding 1.45 full-time positions. Mr. Damigella asked if the Solid Waste program is a curb-side pick-up. Mr. Holder said yes. He said that recycling is done at the curb and they also have a transfer center, similar to Marshall Street. No trash is allowed. Mr. Holder said that he started his position in October. He said that they have made some headway. He said that once employees see the benefits of cross-training, it will be good. He said that he is removing some positions and adding some union positions. Mr. Damigella said that it is to the Town's advantage not to have unions. Mr. Smith, the Highway Superintendent, said that about three years ago there was some talk about joining the union, but when they heard that you have to pay to be involved, they declined. Mr. Holder said that there would be some operational and practical savings. Mr. Damigella asked if there were a minimum number of hours worked to be involved with the union. Mr. Holder said no minimum hours. Mr. Conley asked Mr. Smith, the Highway Superintendent, what he thought of forming a DPW. Mr. Smith said that it would help with road projects by having the whole utility in the same house. He said that it is tough when you have completed a project with sidewalks and curbing and then you get a water leak. Everything has to be torn up to be fixed. He said that it does not look good for his department. He said that combining the work-force will help. The Water Department has equipment that the Highway Department does not have and the Highway Department has equipment that the Water Department does not have. Mr. Smith said that he has a backhoe in the highway lot and the Water Department contracts out their digging work. Look at the money that can be saved. Mr. Sharpin, Water Superintendent, said that the Town should have an Engineer to spread the work out across several departments, including surveying. Something like a GIS Coordinator. Mr. Sharpin said that the Water Department is understaffed as well. He said that all field workers are certified. He said that they do need continuing education to keep their credits up. He said that you just can't replace one with another. He said that the Water Department has someone on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He said that it can't be just anybody. Mr. Sharpin said that last year the Water Department put out a request for backhoe bids. He said that the Highway Department did place a bid for services at \$75.00 per hour and they had a private contractor place a bid for the same \$75.00 per hour. He said that the Highway Department said that they would not guarantee that the Water Department would get the backhoe when-ever the Water Department wanted it. Mr. Sharpin said that if they had a water main break, they would need the equipment. So they went with the private contractor. He brings his dump truck as well as the backhoe. Mr. Sharpin said that they have to have that reliability 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Mr.

Damigella said that the licenses that the Water Department employees have the Highway Department could get just as easily. Mr. Sharpin said that it takes awhile to go through the training. Mr. Sharpin said that this is something that can be done, but it will take some time. Mr. Sharpin said that the Water Department does not have the Class II licenses to drive the Highway trucks. Mr. Damigella said that they could be trained. Mr. Conley asked if the Water Department could function under a DPW. Mr. Sharpin said yes they could. Mr. Sharpin said it is not apples and apples. He said that each person on the Water Department has their own truck and tools with testing equipment. He did say that when the Water Department has a project, they do call the Highway Department to borrow a truck. He said that the Water trucks have specialized testing equipment. He said that they do raise gates on paving projects. Mr. Ferreira said that if the Water Department has someone on vacation, someone from the Highway Department could cover. They can trade hours not to incur overtime for time off. Mr. Holder said that you are limited in the cross training. Mr. Holder said that although they are under one umbrella, there is familiarity with efficiency. He said that a Highway worker can go get a grade 2 distribution license. He did say that there are several divisions. Mr. Smith said that he would not cross train to the level that a Highway worker would monitor a well. Mr. Roberts said that you do not want to merge this too well, because of the skills. Mr. Roberts said that if this were to happen, the Town should make each a division. Mr. Holder said that he has not had any trouble placing staff for projects. Mr. Dumas asked about the backhoe. Mr. Smith said that if there were a water break the backhoe would be pulled off the project that they were working on and go to the water main break. Mr. Smith spoke about the maintenance of vehicles and the recycling program we are in with four other towns for metals. Mr. Sharpin said that they do some small vehicle maintenance in house like have the oil changed on the water trucks. But if they were going to do a front end alignment or change tires, they send it out. Mr. Smith said that they have a full-time mechanic in-house. They try and fix everything in the garage. Very little has to go out. Mr. Smith said that they do diesel inspections as well as all Town vehicles. He said that they do a lot of the local diesel inspections for surrounding Towns. Mr. Conley said that he would like to have a DPW with one person accountable for everything. He said that there is a lot of work to be done. Mr. Ferreira said that each department was asked to make their budget with a 3% cut. He said that is hard when you are servicing the residents to make cuts. Mr. Holder said that you have to invest in the future. It will pay off within a few years. Mr. Damigella said that if this does go forward, they will re-look at how they have the structure. Mr. Roberts asked if they thought that it is a good investment to merge or should things stay as they are. Mr. Leary, Finance Committee Member, said that with a new hire for the Water Department, that person will work Wednesday through Sunday schedule so no over-time will be paid. Mr. Ferreira said that his office has 2 ½ persons for the clerical and the Highway Department has 1. Mr. Sharpin said that billing can be done in 1 week and bills can go out two weeks later. He also said that they do not have any more meter readers, it is all done through the new system. He said that they can bring up a chart to show how much water is used on a daily basis. Mr. Ferreira said that the Town of Norfolk merged the

Water and Highway and they made cuts. Then they added a director. Mr. Holder said that Norfolk out-sources the entire water plan. Mr. Holder said that Wayland just formed a DPW and they might be good for information. Mr. Roberts said that they are looking into this with caution. He said that most towns have DPW. Mr. Conley said that he was on the original Committee and they said that you can't put a dollar amount on the savings. Mr. Leary said that a few years ago the town hired Silvio Baruzzi to run the Highway Department and start the merge with the Water Department. He was called to active duty, so that plan was put on hold. Mr. Holder said that they have two street sweepers, and they do not share the sweeping with Millis any more. Mr. Ferreira asked if the casino were to appear in Milford, what would happen to the roads and water? Mr. Roberts said let's wait and see what happens. Mr. Roberts said that tonight's meeting was full of information. Mr. Weise, Chairman of the Water Commissioner's asked if Medway had merged the Water and Highway in the same building? Mr. Holder said no, not yet. Mr. Holder said that the Water Department is located at a well and was built in the 1930's and the Highway Building was built in the 1960's. Both buildings are very old and in need of replacing. Mr. Smith asked Mr. Holder if there were any grants available. Mr. Holder said that he was involved in many grants. He said that they have a consultant through the Planning Board to help with the grant writing. Mr. Leary said that grants are difficult to write. Mr. Holder said that you need someone who is always looking for grants to seek them out. Mr. Holder said that Medway would like to become a Green Community, and there is a grant out there for that. Mr. Ferreira asked if they spend more for the grant writer than they do for the grant money that comes in. Mr. Holder said that it needs to be balanced out and it is risky.

The Study Committee thanked Mr. Holder for his time and information.

Mr. Damigella said that the Committee will have to sell this at Town Meeting. Mr. Conley asked if this is brought to Town Meeting and it is approved, is it in effect at that very minute? Mr. Le Beau said that there would have to be a Board, because you would have to abolish the Water Commissioners and the Selectmen's responsibility over the Highway Department. Mr. Le Beau said that we may have to go through a special legislative process. He said that depending on how we want to form the DPW. Mr. Le Beau said that if he was unable to help, Town Counsel would always be available to help. Mr. Damigella asked if they were to bring the Park Commission in, would they have to change their name? Mr. Le Beau said that in some communities they retain that group to over-see the programs, but the DPW would over-see the fields with scheduling. Mr. Damigella said that the day-to-day activities of the Water Department, the Water Commissioners should not be involved. Mr. Damigella said that the Selectmen try not to micromanage the Highway Department.

**AT 8:05 P.M., MR. ROBERTS MOVED TO ADJOURN. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY MR. DAMIGELLA. ALL IN FAVOR.**

Donna A. Muzzy

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