

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting on January 19, 2016

In attendance: Ken Szajda, Michelle Zeamer, Suzanne Nersessian, Beth Liberty, Bill Dowd and Tim Maxwell.

Absent: Dan Alfred

Call to Order: Mr. Szajda called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

Ken Szajda said that this meeting was the beginning of the spring FY17 budget reviews in preparation for Town Meeting on May 9, 2016.

Town Clerk's Office Budget Review

Ms. Elizabeth Greendale first presented the budget for the Town Clerk's office. The budget requested was within the established guidelines. Ms. Greendale noted this was achieved because the salaries that were increased are the allotment and by a reduction in the Professional Development budget due to anticipated scholarships for conferences.

Ms. Greendale also commented that since this is a presidential election year and there are a lot of changes, she felt that should not forego educational training.

Ms. Greendale took questions from the Committee and a discussion followed.

Ms. Liberty requested further details regarding revenue. Ms. Greendale noted that revenue is increasing and records, business certificates and dog licensing are the main sources of revenue, which flow to the general fund.

Mr. Szajda also noted that one of the reasons for purchasing the dog program was that it would free up time for other tasks and questioned whether those had been realized at this time. Ms. Greendale noted that they were still implementing the dog program, which should be completed

by the end of FY 16. Any realization of time shifts would likely be realized in FY 17.

Elections Budget Review:

Ms. Greendale then presented the budget request for FY17. Ms. Greendale noted the three upcoming elections and that Early Voting was implemented, adding to the number of poll workers needed. The presidential election is a very big election, so the budget was increased for two additional election workers.

Commonly every effort is made to use volunteer resources or seniors as poll workers, to the extent possible. Ms. Greendale also noted that the new online systems will be used for the Town Elections in May.

Discussions ensued regarding the budget request vs prior year appropriations and expended amounts.

Mr. Szajda commented that the budget was not within the guideline and Mr. Dowd suggested that the guideline reference should be N/A for the Elections budget due to the nature of the expenditures within this area.

Board of Assessors Budget Review:

Kathryn Peirce and Brian Loughlin presented the budget for the Board of Assessors, which had been previously approved by the BOS. Ms. Peirce said that the budget request was a little bit over the guideline because of employee salaries.

Ms. Peirce and Mr. Loughlin took questions from the Committee and a discussion followed regarding several items within the budget. .

Ms. Zeamer raised a question regarding whether new growth amounts were from new houses and/or new additions. Ms. Peirce said that there

have been changes due to Pulte and Toll Brothers building, but also there had been a change due to the valuations for five solar plants, which are included in the total value. However, these had recently received tax exemptions and will no longer have to pay taxes to Holliston.

Ms. Liberty requested information on a go-forward basis regarding growth estimates. Mr. Szajda asked Mr. Loughlin as a member of the board to look into how the Finance Committee could get an estimated amount for new growth prior to the beginning of budget review process, perhaps in January.

Board of Selectmen's Budget Review:

Jeff Ritter presented the budget request for the Selectmen. Mr. Ritter presented the solid waste budget, which includes four categories: the contract with Allied Republic for curbside pick-up for trash and recyclables, tipping fees for the transfer to Millbury where the incinerator is, hazardous waste collection, and the green recycling containers.

Mr. Ritter also noted that Holliston is currently negotiating a new contract with Allied Republic. They are exploring what they can do to reduce the trash flow and reduce the overall budget. There is also a possibility that they will go out to bid for the trash budget.

Mr. Ritter took questions from the Finance Committee and a discussion followed regarding the budgeted amounts.

Street Lighting:

Mr. Ritter noted that there are 919 fixtures with street lights in Holliston and these were level funded budget at \$60,000. He also noted that the Town is actively exploring the feasibility of LEDs, but likely this would not happen until FY18. Mr. Szajda said that the Town is in active discussion

with the utility company to get the fixtures converted.

Ms. Zeamer suggested discussing with the Planning Board the possibility of making a requirement for new technology lighting to be used in the new subdivisions. Mr. Ritter cautioned that if the Town takes on the responsibility for the poles and fixtures there will be costs associated with maintenance and replacement.

Weights and Measures Sealer Budget Review:

Mr. Ritter presented the budget for Weights and Measures Sealer, which was \$0. Mr. Szajda said that there may be a small positive balance in the revolving fund for the on-demand sealer. Mr. Dowd suggested that the budget be left off the list of budgets because of the procedural complications of voting for a \$0 budget.

Animal Control Budget Review:

Mr. Ritter then presented the Animal Control budget. The Town of Holliston has a contract with Ashland for shared Animal Control services. The individual is on a contract and works for the Town of Ashland. Mr. Ritter said that the Town of Ashland had indicated that there would be no changes to the fee for FY17.

Motor Vehicle Fuels Budget Review:

Mr. Ritter then presented the motor vehicle fuels budget. Holliston purchases fuel through a consortium of communities. There are two ways to bid for the fuel – one for unleaded and one for diesel. Mr. Ritter said that he had used federal and state level sources to estimate the cost per gallon and that the prices are set in June.

Mr. Ritter took some questions from the Finance Committee and a discussion followed. Ms. Liberty noted the dramatic difference in usage

from FY2014. Mr. Szajda requested that all the numbers should be re-confirmed.

Snow and Ice Budget Review:

Mr. Ritter presented the Snow and Ice budget. Mr. Szajda explained that the Snow and Ice budget is allowed by law to run a deficit. The Snow and Ice budget usually is set at the low watermark to give financial flexibility. The Town generally appropriates an amount that reflects a balance between the rising costs and this low watermark.

Finance Committee Budget Review:

Mr. Szajda presented the budget amount of \$50 for mailing and the rest of the budget is for Professional Services for the preparation of the minutes.

Reserve Fund:

The Finance Committee discussed the reserve fund and the proposed amount of \$212,675. Mr. Dowd suggested that the number be rounded off to \$215,000. Ms. Liberty commented on the Reserve Fund policy which states that the Fund be minimum of \$200,000 and not less than .5% of the Omnibus budget.

Flagg School:

Mr. Szajda passed out sheets from the School Committee regarding the potential demolition of the Flagg School. In order to demolish the building, they need certification regarding the hazards in the building. The information provided by the School Committee reported that it would likely cost around \$6,000 to do the assessments and estimates to get the certification to demolish the building.

Mr. Dowd asked whether the School Committee has voted to demolish the

building. Mr. Szajda said that there has not been a formal vote and that the Finance Committee would discuss this further once the School Committee had voted to demolish the building.

Adjournment:

Ms. Zeamer made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Ms. Nersessian and approved by a vote of 6-0. The meeting ended at 9:38.