

**Town of Holliston
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 31, 2020**

The meeting was held under the guidelines that were issued because of the emergency caused by the COVID-19 virus. All participation for this meeting was through remote attendance because of the COVID-19 virus. In addition, all votes taken during this meeting were done as a roll call vote.

Mr. Szajda called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. In attendance were Chairperson Ken Szajda, Vice – Chair Benjamin Sparrell, Clerk Vincent Murphy, Daniel Alfred, Tim Maxwell, Sue Nersessian, and Michelle Zeamer.

Select Board FY21 Budget request was presented by J. Ritter. The professional services account is in flux due to the Town Administrator's retirement. There is not a clear understanding of what his successor's salary will be, but most likely will be at least higher. Purchased services include town counsel. There are several items of litigation underway and two union contracts (Police and DPW) under negotiation and there are various tax titles and street acceptances that need to get through to the registry. The Sun Edison settlement is still open. Professional development is level funded. Professional development includes the May annual meeting and an ICMA meeting. There currently is not a plan to have the new Town Administrator overlap with the current Town Administrator. The expenditure YTD in professional development is for the membership to the Massachusetts Municipal Association Metro West Regional Collaborative. The revenue numbers in the Select Board spreadsheet is from the rental of Town Hall which has been discontinued until the septic system issue is resolved.

The Select Board endorsed the Finance Committee's recommendation to suspend all discretionary spending. Budgets will need to be reviewed again in light of current circumstances.

Select Board members Mr. John Cronin and Ms. Tina Hein discussed the current warrant articles. The Select Board endorsed a recommendation from Plan Tech that included four (4) recommendations for improvements to our infrastructure. The Town Administrator, Jeff Ritter, stated he took a serious look at the warrant and he was planning to make some recommendations to the Select Board as to how to reduce spending, including reductions to the capital articles. The Town Administrator has sent his recommendations to the Select Board.

Mr. Szajda did have a call with the state concerning insight into any financial implications to the budget. Both the House and the Senate are all in agreement to try and hold FY20 harmless. The state will most likely make FY20 whole, however, there will probably be significant reductions in FY21. The state normally does revenue projections in December and are trying to reconvene that group in the next few weeks to update the revenue estimate given the current situation. That will kick off the budget process again from scratch. There is currently no timeline in place for this.

Mr. Cronin discussed Article 5 of the draft Town Meeting Warrant. Article 5 is the Town Clerk's base salary as would have been provided to the Town Clerk in FY20 under the salary increases the Select Board implemented in September of 2019. This will set her base salary according to the Select Board's wishes. Article 6 would show a retroactive amount that she would have received in FY20. The Town

Clerk was not part of the FY20 exercise because of the withdrawal of what was Article 1 last October. The amount in Article 6 is the amount she would have received had the Select Board been able to implement the change at the same time as the other salary adjustments. It is the partial year adjustment that everyone received, not the full year.

Mr. Cronin then presented the Select Board Capital requests. The first request was for 1750 Washington St. Improvements including the handicap ramp. The next request was for a MT7 tractor replacement item. The third request was for a video detection system as a result of a traffic study. This will provide the Police department with live video of the intersection at Washington St.

The fourth request was for Senior Center improvements, of which the Select Board did not have any clarity on the improvements needed or whether some of the improvements had previously been completed. It was noted by members of the Committee that some of these items may already have been addressed in FY20. It was also noted that some funds were set aside for the Senior Center repairs and Mr. Sparrell stated he would discuss this with the Town Facilities Manager. Some of the items included were expense items not capital items. Mr. Ritter has requested that this be removed from the warrant and state funds have been requested. Additional clarification is needed as to what is a safety issue, what is non-capital expense, and what is capital. Ms. Zeamer and Ms. Nersessian will follow up with the Council on Aging to obtain further clarification on the capital expenditure request.

There were requests for a pump replacement at the waste water treatment plant and an SUV for the new Facilities Manager. There was also a request for the removal of the structure at 260 Woodland St. (\$25k was already approved at Town Meeting). It was discovered after the fact that there were environmental issues with the project. The DEP and the Facilities Manager are working to get this resolved. The amount required is \$110k and is based on quotes from 4 vendors. The town is currently out to bid and will have a hard number for town meeting. The town is under orders to have the structure removed by the DEP. The contamination is asbestos. It is all surface related and the site is secure as well as monitored daily. This needs to remain on the warrant as it is an emergency and was an unforeseen expense.

Article 19 includes four (4) studies. The first study is to review all completed road projects as well as an analysis of water main breaks and leakage. They will review the water main replacement in two (2) chunks, a 10-year plan and a 20-year plan. A 10-year modified plan may be workable. The cost for this study is \$40k. The second is the Water supply planning. The town needs to be focusing on future wells. It has been 10 years since a new well has been brought on line. This will require a geotech review and it takes 5-10 years to get a new well on line, cost for this study is \$15k. The third study is the sidewalk prioritization plan for \$20k, grant funding will not be available without a plan. The final study is the DPW study for \$50k. This is a review of the existing structures at Arch St and Central St. A deep dive is required on repairs and investments to date. There was discussion concerning prioritization of these studies. Mr. Cronin suggested the water main plan and the sidewalk plan be done together; the DPW is a standalone effort. There was also discussion about the criticality of these studies due to current economic situation. The infrastructure is 75 years old and the town does not want water issues going forward. The town is currently replacing the water main pipes at the rate of one (1) mile of pipe per

year. The expectation of this study will allow the Town to accelerate that replacement schedule. All of the studies can be reviewed as the economic situation evolves.

Article 22 the Charles River rail trail was mentioned. The Rail Trail Committee will need to provide additional conformation on why \$1,000 is required.

Article 23, the Easement for Solar Power was discussed. This is an agreement the Fire Chief entered into with Sun Systems. It is a lease agreement to allow solar panels to go on the top of the fire station on Central St. Mr. Ritter will follow up with the Chief.

Article 27, the LED upgrade at High and Woodland St was discussed. This is failure of the signal cycling at the intersection. This is a repair cost and it is a hardware and structural issue.

Article 30, the Radio improvement project was discussed. The Town Administrator recommended removing this from the warrant. There is a request into the state legislature for additional funding. The \$100k cost was based on a firm quote. This will include adding equipment and new equipment to be installed will be compatible with existing radios. This is an emergency request.

Article 31, Traffic Advisory Enforcement Committee, will be held until October. The Police Department received a \$16.5k grant and once work on grant begins, the requirements will be better understood.

The Select Board did review Mr. Ritter's recommendations. The Finance Committee and the Select Board will take the time to go back and review the Warrant/Budget and adjust based on the current economic situation. The Finance Committee will delay their recommendation to get as much information as possible on the current economic situation. The Select Board is reviewing the warrant weekly. There will also be a discussion concerning the town's collective bargaining agreements. The Sustainability Coordinator has a contract that defines his role as self-sustaining. He will need a revolving account to support this. Mr. Ritter is discussing this with the Town Accountant.

Chief Cassidy provided an update on the pandemic. Currently he has spent \$2,500 on PPE, the Technology Department has spent \$600 on remote working, the Schools have spent \$22,000 on Chromebooks and software, and finally the schools have spent \$17,000 on food services for those in need.

Mr. Szajda sent an email with a revised version of the FY21 budget. The current estimate is that we will receive a net 5% reduction in local aide. There is also a 10% reduction in local revenue, need to speak with Town Accountant about revising the local revenue estimate. Next week's Finance Committee discussion will be to come to a consensus as to how to deal with potential reductions. Also there is a need to review any open capital projects (both School and Town) and close out/return funds to the general fund for any projects that are complete. A new timeline for budgets needs to be laid out.

Mr. Alfred made a motion to adjourn at 9:07pm. Mr. Murphy seconded and the motion was carried 7 to 0.