

**Town of Holliston
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 28, 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.

The Select Board sent a memo to department heads to address the Finance Committee's FY21 fiscal concerns. The Select Board is accelerating their review of the Departmental budgets and should be complete by 5/12/20. Departments that do not fall under the Select Board will be complete by 5/8/20. The Select Board reiterated they are working to save jobs; however, the stabilization fund is for emergency use only. It is not a long-term solution. It should be used as a bridge until other revenue streams return to normal and should not be utilized year over year. Local aid can take a few years to go back up because the state needs to rebuild their resources.

Mr. Sparrell suggested there should be some guidance about using funds we currently have for strategic items. For the purposes of the budget review, departments should use the FY20 pay table for the FY21 budget. The department head adjustments should be part of the FY21 budgets at the annual rate. If the situation continues to deteriorate, this may have to be reevaluated.

Mr. John Cronin, a member of the Select Board, informed the committee that the Select Board is planning on doing a line item transfer for the Department Head salary adjustments that were omitted from the Warrant of the October 2020 Town Meeting. The Finance Committee wants it to go through Town Meeting in June.

The Finance Committee does need to review all line items transfers. There was discussion regarding potential options for Town Meeting will occur. There was concern that the crisis should not be used to remove the residents' authority to approve spending. Town Meeting laws may have to be modified to allow a town meeting with social distancing guidelines. There should be discussions with other towns to determine the best method to hold Town Meeting, including considering the senior residents in town and potential availability of technology and also we need to remember seniors in town and availability of technology when and where the Town Meeting will be held.

Mr. Szajda stated he attended a Department of Revenue virtual summit. There were a lot of individual town financial leaders asking the DOR what can be done during the crisis. A key takeaway was that pandemic expenses cannot be budgeted as normal operations in FY21 since those expenses would not be reimbursable under the CARES act. The reserve fund should be the source of funding and the Committee should take this into consideration.

There were two volunteers to assist with the Finance Committee minutes backlog while town hall is closed. March and April minutes are prioritized due to the records request. Also, if there is a flare up of the virus in the Fall, the Town may want to think about giving all town employees the ability to work from home since it may be required until the pandemic subsides.

The FY21 budget reductions were discussed. The warrant will be reduced to essential items only. The bid for the Woodland St work came in lower by \$50k and there may be potential savings in snow and ice coverage. It is highly unlikely that the town will see an approved state budget before July, but there should be a blueprint for the budget out soon. The Finance committee also needs to consider interim budgets in the event Town Meeting is postponed beyond June 30. A recommendation on interim budgets should be made to the Select Board from the Finance Committee. The current ruling is that you can't budget less than 1/12 of FY20 per month per department for an interim budget. The Finance Committee is going to follow up with the Town Accountant on historical spend plans for July and August. The state data is critical to complete the budget analysis. The Schools are reviewing their FY21 budgets and capital as well.

Linda Marshall, Senior Center Director came in to discuss FY20 and FY21 spending. They have seen a drop in Van riders and Linda is able to fund the drivers for the rest of FY20 but it will likely be an issue in FY21. The MWRTA funds the vans based on the number of riders and ridership has been down. Drivers are delivering meals and picking up medications as well as transporting seniors for essential doctor appointments. Their full time driver has also been helping with administrative tasks. Meal containers to deliver meals had to be purchased for approximately \$500. Elder affairs will be reducing their FY21 funding per senior by \$1 or \$2. Linda noted that it is critical that transportation and meals continue for the seniors. The Finance Committee asked Linda to coordinate with the schools on meal preparation and delivery; there may be some synergies to be found. The Finance Committee requested that Linda send an email summarizing the expenses for the Senior Center associated with the pandemic. It was also suggested that she speak with the MWRTA about reimbursing for the van ride even if senior was not in the van but an errand is being done for the senior.

The power supply program for the town was discussed. There was a posting on the town website. The town contract is coming up for renewal and they are going through the process of public comment. Mr. Szajda will follow up to see what the impact of the new solar farm will be. The town and the schools are looking into locking in fuel prices while they are low.

Chief Cassidy provided a COVID-19 update. There have been 32 cases total in Holliston, 16 cleared, 1 fatality, and 15 active cases. The PPE inventory is good. The Board of Health made face covering mandatory in any buildings and when social distancing cannot be maintained outside. It is in effect immediately, and currently there are no fines associated with violations. It is enforceable by both the Board of Health and local and state police. This week more N95 masks arrived for a cost of \$600. There are no other major expenses anticipated. First responders have been impacted by the virus and there are contingency plans to continue town services. All invoices that are COVID-19 related are coded. The departments are consulting with the Chief about reimbursable expenses.

Mr. Alfred made a motion at 8:29pm to adjourn. Ms. Nersessian seconded and the motion was carried 7 to 0.