

**Town of Holliston
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2020 (Thursday)**

The meeting convened at 7:00pm in Room 105 at Holliston Town Hall. In attendance: Chairperson Ken Szajda, Vice Chairperson Michelle Zeamer, Clerk Ben Sparrell, and Vincent Murphy. Absent: Tim Maxwell, Dan Alfred, and Sue Nersessian.

The meeting dealt with the Keefe Tech, Police, and Veterans FY21 budgets. There was also an update from Chief Cassidy on the developing COVID 19 issue.

Dr. Jon Evans (Superintendent) and Dolly Sharek (Business Manager) came in to discuss the Keefe Tech FY21 budget. Keefe Tech is requesting a 6.95% increase in their overall budget for FY21. This is driven by a substantial increase in student population, primarily in English learner students, as well as a significant increase in health insurance.

The cost drivers are Health Insurance, Transportation, and Custodial contract services (snow removal is now contracted out). Keefe Tech has 3 new staff positions, 2 new English teachers for English language learners, and a new Guidance Counselor for a total of 3 Guidance Counselors for 800 students.

There is an overall budget increase of \$1.3M. Chapter 70 aide had a \$1.2M increase, which offsets the operational increase. For the 5 participating municipalities there is a net increase of .46%. There is an overall increase in students of 6.6%, but Holliston has seen a 3.2% decrease in students. The Holliston portion of the budget is \$1,214,357 a decrease of 3.08% in FY21.

There was discussion about what was driving health care increase of 12.8%. There was a high utilization for the year driving the increase. Keefe Tech did switch to a high deductible plan with Harvard Pilgrim in 2016, currently 100 employees are enrolled. Retirement is up \$41k due to Middlesex retirement being under funded. Siemens energy lease (upgraded heating, electricity, fire, etc) is up by \$28k based on the contracted payment schedule. There are no significant capital projects planned for FY21. Staff salary increase budgeted for a 2.25% increase and it is the second year of the contract. Finance Committee requested that Keefe Tech send their graph on health insurance savings.

Chief Matt Stone presented the Holliston Police Department FY21 budget, he was accompanied by Lt. Chad Thompson and Lt. George Leurini. There was no contract discussion as negotiations are ongoing with the Select Board. This is the 3rd year of the Strategic Plan. The 5 areas of focus as part of Strategic plan are Crime prevention, Community relations, Traffic, Juvenile issues, and Domestic Violence/Mental Health. FY21 goals include a police motorcycle program, expansion of the Detective program with a night Detective, exceeding state accreditation standards, training, and pursuing grants. Overall budget submittal reflected a 2.89% increase from last year. Building and ground maintenance was up 31.8% because line items have moved from professional services to the building line. The HVAC system has been requiring more maintenance. Professional services are up 14.2% due to an increase in software

programs. The software programs are expediting the accreditation process because there are less administrative errors. K9 training is up 11.09% because the K9 officer was promoted from an Officer to a Patrolman. There was discussion concerning overtime. If it is planned overtime is there a way to include it in the officer's regular day. Expansion of staff could help reduce the overtime. If the Police department were required to hold to 1% growth, overtime would be reduced, the Building/Grounds would be level funded, office supplies would be level funded, professional development would be reduced, and community outreach would be eliminated. Cruiser supplies are a potential area to reduce. Also weekend prisoners are now being brought to the County Sherriff in Woburn, reducing needed weekend support from the Holliston Police department.

The Veterans FY21 budget was presented by Jeff Ritter, the Town Manager. The Veterans budget is basically driven by our membership in the Metro West Veterans District (this covers Medway, Hopkinton, Holliston, and Ashland). Chapter 115 benefit claims are up from 4 to 8 in FY21. This is a direct reimbursement from the state, generally with a 1-year lag. The FY21 budget covers the Veterans Agent and her Admin. There was also discussion of the donation of a van from Herb Chambers to provide transportation for both the elderly as well as veterans. The Council on Aging covers the operational budget for the van. There was also discussion concerning the repairs required at 1750 Washington St; the Veteran's department leases the space so only way to address additional cost associated with using the agency using more space would be to increase lease cost.

Chief Cassidy (Emergency Management Director) came in to discuss the status of the state of emergency due to the COVID 19 virus. The town is increasing their cleaning regimen and there is an associated cost increase with this. Vendors have been increasing both quality and frequency of cleaning. There is currently no guarantee of federal or state funding to cover these expenses. The Finance Committee asked the Chief to keep them updated of costs as they grow. The Town accountant will also set up a project code to segregate costs. This code can be used for both the Town and the Schools. Mr. Cronin (Select Board) also mentioned that if the town goes to a state of emergency the fiscal controls could change. Mr. Cronin also updated the Finance Committee on the Select Board's recent activities. He mentioned that future projects will be brought forward to the Fin Comm individually. The Finance Committee asked that the Board of Selectman provide a prioritization of capital expenditures. Finance Committee and the Select Board need to review the warrant--the Finance Committee asked that a draft be sent to them. There was also discussion concerning nominations, elections and town meetings with the current state of emergency. There is a possibility that the omnibus budget and other warrant issues could be addressed separately due to state of emergency.

Mr. Sparrell made a motion to adjourn the meeting, with Ms. Zeamer seconding. The motion was approved 4-0 and the meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.