

**Town of Holliston
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 12, 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 was Chairperson Ken Szajda, Vice Chair Benjamin Sparrell, Clerk Vincent Murphy, Daniel Alfred, Tim Maxwell, and Sue Nersessian. Michelle Zeamer was absent.

Mr. Alfred mentioned his attendance at the Select Board meeting the prior evening and the discussion he had with Mr. Cronin.

Mr. Szajda introduced Mr. James Keast, the Town Facilities Director.

Mr. Szajda, stated that Mr. Keast was requesting approval of a line item transfer to move a surplus in salary to cover the Dude Solutions software, a software to assist in managing the maintenance and operations of equipment and other property.

Facilities Manager Line Item transfer for Software

There was discussion concerning the purchase of the facilities software. The Finance Committee wanted more information on future cash flow before the additional spending was approved. Also it was discussed if there were more activities that town employees could do to save cost. After reviewing the quote, the Finance Committee was looking for additional detail to be provided in the quote to make sure there is a clear understanding of what Dude Solutions will be providing. Dude Solutions is a reputable provider. The Finance Committee also requested that more money be left on the table until the work is completed by Dude Solutions. A negotiated timeline is required as well. The Finance Committee understands the importance of the software and the need to proceed in a timely manner but needs to make sure that the contract is well written since the Town has gotten “burned” by ambiguous language in the past.

Assessment of Utilities Line Item transfer

The Finance Committee discussed the reserve fund transfer to do a tax assessment of the electrical lines and similar assets within the town. Due to changes in the law, the Department of Utilities wants a more up to date assessment. The Finance Committee requested additional information on what needs to be done, including if there is a certification the town should pursue, and a more detailed timeline. The Select Board has approved the request.

Current Budget Situation

The state is still waiting on information. Nothing has moved on the state level budget. There is a potential stimulus package at the federal level. Mr. Sparrell put together a scenario generator. He took various assumptions on revenue pertaining to three levers, assessments, local receipts, and state funding. The thought was to work backwards from a worst case scenario. The Finance Committee also needs to decide how much reserve is required. With the tax date extended to June, the town is already at a 95% rate of collection. The Finance Committee has a twofold responsibility to keep town employees working and to minimize increases to taxes. If any federal aid is coming, there is usually money specifically earmarked for schools. Chapter 70 funds are also directed to the schools but it is a small percentage of the funds the schools receive. Town Meeting has been moved to July 20th by the Select Board. Budget ambiguity should have cleared up by then and outdoor town meetings are being considered. This will require an interim budget for July; interim budgets can only be done for one month at a time. The scenario planner will be sent out for everyone's review. The departments zero percent based budgets have started to come in. If you have questions, you should go through the department liaison first, rather than bringing in Department Heads again. Stabilization is a last resort to close the budget gap. There is a potential to divert some of the capital set-aside as well. Need to be careful not to take too much out of the set-aside side that would cause a delay to significant capital purchases. Capital should be used to get the best value for the town; if the pandemic creates good purchase opportunities for the town the Finance Committee will consider them.

Warrant Article

The Town Administrator sent the most recent version of the warrant out. The Select Board has not taken any action on it. The Finance Committee will wait for the Select Board to take action. The Finance Committee will ask the Town Administrator to distinguish his changes from changes the Select Board has made on the warrant. The Division of Local Services email from the Town Administrator was mentioned but it was determined that the contents should not have an impact on Holliston.

Pandemic Update

Chief Cassidy discussed the current state of the pandemic in Holliston. There are 45 cases, 23 have recovered, 1 fatality, and 21 active cases. The Chief believes we are entering post surge due to the frequency and location of cases. PPE for town employees is on hold until further guidance from the Governor. The Facilities Manager is looking at spacing and barriers. The Chief is focusing on changes to allow for possible safe re-opening. The accuracy of the COVID-19 data during the pandemic has been an issue. The town also needs to be thinking about COVID funding for FY21 and to engage Department Heads, Board of Health, and the Facilities Manager. The COVID-19 supplies need to funnel through the Chief. For FY21, the reserve will need to be larger to cover some of the unanticipated expenses that will come up as we deal with the pandemic. The Governor is appropriating some funds for PPE in municipalities. The current pandemic expenses are stable according to the Chief.

Mr. Alfred made a motion at 8:39 pm to adjourn. Ms. Sparrell seconded and the motion was carried 6 to 0.