

Town of Holliston
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 29th, 2020

The meeting was held remotely under the guidelines that were issued because of the emergency caused by the COVID-19 virus. All votes taken during this meeting were done as a roll call vote.

This meeting was called to order in conjunction with the Holliston Select Board.

Mr. Szajda called the Finance Committee to order at 7:02PM. In attendance were Chairperson Ken Szajda, Vice Chair Dan Alfred, Vincent Murphy, Michelle Zeamer, and Clerk Mark Whittaker. Sue Nersessian and Tim Maxwell were absent.

During the Select Board part of the meeting, other attendees included Select Board Chair John Cronin, Select Board vice Chair Tina Hein, and Select Board Clerk Ben Sparrell. Also in attendance to report on the state budget were State Senator Karen Spilka, and State Representative Carolyn Dykema

During the joint meeting, the State Senator and the State Representative spoke about the state budget process and its effect on the finances of Holliston. It was stated by Karen Spilka that the town should expect level funding in the Chapter 70 and UGGA accounts (same as FY20). This includes \$7,926,216 from Chapter 70 funds, and \$1,644,407 from UGGA funds. It was further stated that these funds are separate from the CARES Act funding. Holliston was congratulated for being ahead of the curve for submitting funding requests from the CARES Act funding. In addition to this funding, it was stated that Holliston was eligible for a grant for \$604,575 thru the department of Early and Secondary Education School Reopening Grant Program (this is the \$225 per pupil distribution). In addition, Holliston Public schools was allocated \$54,847 thru the Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Fund distributed based on the federal Title 1 Formula. Senator Spilka stated that the state is hoping for additional federal relief funds. About \$10 billion for MA is included in the HEROES Act passed by the House of Representatives, which would potentially fund shortfalls in state revenue for 2 years.

Representative Dykema stated that a short term budget, or a budget for the remainder of the year is hopefully forthcoming, and that the state level will stay in touch as frequently as possible.

Questions were asked raising the concern of timing of budgets, and how the state can expect to level fund the towns when there is a potential \$6 Billion dollar shortfall at the state level with only \$3.4 Billion in the Rainy Day Fund. No direct answers were given, however it was stated that the state could raise funds in one of 3 ways; cuts, raising revenue, or dipping into the State Rainy Day Fund. Further concern was raised by Ken Szajda about not just shortcomings of FY21, but also the potential impact of FY22. Ken stated that if the Federal Government doesn't come thru with aid, the problem will just be pushed off to FY22.

Post discussion with the State Senator and the State Representative, the Finance Committee continued its meeting but broke off to a separate videoconference at 8pm.

Approval of Minutes:

It was moved that minutes from the meeting from 9-22-2020 be approved with the amendments noted by Vincent Murphy. The motion was made by Dan Alfred, as amended by Vincent Murphy be approved by Dan Alfred, and seconded by Vincent Murphy. The motion passed 5-0.

Updates from the Town Administrator:

The Town Administrator was not in attendance – the Cares Act funds approvals haven't been updated from last week due to the Select Board not meeting Monday 9-28-2020. The Town hall septic update is going up in price due to contingencies built into it.

Liaison Updates:

The school liaisons did not meet with the school department this past week so no update was provided. The fieldhouse wall was discussed briefly about how a Green Communities Grant would need additional funding to complete the work. This will be on the town meeting warrant if needed.

No other Liaison updates were made.

Discussion of Financial Matters related to the current COVID-19 Pandemic:

Chief Cassidy was not in attendance for a COVID-19 Financial impact update.

Discussion of matters concerning the FY21 Budget:

Holliston's free cash has been certified as \$2,654,475. The committee will take up discussion of possible allocation of the funds at a future meeting.

The committee discussed the information passed down by our state legislators in the joint meeting. Concerns were expressed that true level funding of local aid won't happen in FY21, or that if level funding happens in FY21 that the problem will be pushed off to a bigger problem in FY22. Despite promises being made, it seems clear that cuts to state aid will happen if the federal government doesn't provide aid to the state.

Vincent Murphy made a motion to pay ATFC dues of \$210. This motion was seconded by Dan Alfred. This motion passed 5-0.

Prep for the special town meeting scheduled for 10-26-2020:

The warrant for the town meeting is currently slated to be closed on October 1st. During the meeting the committee was informed that the Select Board had moved Special Town Meeting to December 5th at 1:00 PM. Ken will check with the Town Administrator to see if the warrant closing date has changed.

A motion to adjourn was made by Dan Alfred, seconded by Vincent Murphy. The motion to adjourn was passed 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:32 PM.