

DRAFT

**Town of Holliston
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 27th, 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.

Mr. Szajda called the Finance Committee to order at 7:00PM. In attendance were Chairperson Ken Szajda, Vice Chair Dan Alfred, Vincent Murphy, Michelle Zeamer, Sue Nersessian, Tim Maxwell and Clerk Mark Whittaker.

Other Notable attendees included Town Administrator Travis Ahern and Facilities Manager James Keast, Fire Chief Cassidy, and Tina Hein of the Select Board.

No administrative items were brought forth during this meeting.

Updates from the Town Administrator:

Travis Ahern stated that the contract for the police chief has been settled. Mr. Ahern also stated that he had other items that would be covered under other parts of the meeting.

Liaison Updates:

The school liaisons did not meet with the school department this past week so no update was provided. Tim Maxwell gave a capital subcommittee update to the larger Fincom.

No other Liaison updates were made.

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

Chief Cassidy stated that the town of Holliston will most likely be keeping its red designation from the state on the DPH website. He further stated that there are currently 23 active cases in the town, all at single family homes, which indicates community spread. Chief Cassidy, and Chairman Szajda asked that the town remember to wear masks, keep socially distant, limit our group gatherings, wash our hands, and otherwise follow CDC guidelines. Chief Cassidy also stated that the CARES Act funds are in good shape, and that the town is in good shape as it pertains to PPE.

Discussion of matters concerning the FY21 Budget:

Travis Ahern stated that the FY 21 budget for the Holliston Police Department is looking okay right now but may change. He also stated he had two budgets of concern: First is the unemployment budget, which is okay for now but is trending above its expected run rate. Second was the legal line in the Select Board budget which may be in trouble due to expenses associated with the 555 Hopping Brook Park development.

Prep for the Special Town Meeting now scheduled for December 5:

The warrant was discussed in detail.

Travis Ahern stated that DLS messaging was going to require page 2 of our cherry sheets to reflect what the state budget is telling us, despite the fact that the state budget is not final. Dr. Szajda clarified that this means normally, we construct our budget in May, and finalize in October once the state has passed a budget. At that time we reconcile our aid estimates with the final state numbers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the state has not finalized a budget, and the state is asking us to use the state budget estimates for local aid. This will directly impact our tax rate calculation which must be certified by the state. Dr. Szajda stated that any articles we need to deal with this must be on the warrant for the December Special Town Meeting so that the town can weigh in prior to setting the tax rate. Travis Ahern then stated that our tax rate hearing is opening on November 30th, Town Meeting will take place on the 5th of December, and then the tax rate hearing would be closed on the 7th of December. That would allow the town to set and certify the tax rate in time to get bills out on schedule at the end of the December. This is a very tight timeline.

Michelle Zeamer asked what would happen if we couldn't have a town meeting in December. Travis Ahern responded that this would complicate the tax rate setting process. Holding Town Meeting with a reduced quorum was discussed, along with a potential streamlined warrant to reflect only what is absolutely needed to reduce time in session during Town Meeting.

A motion to adjourn to executive session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations for union and non-union personnel from which the committee would not return to open session. The motion passed 7-0 and the meeting was adjourned to executive session at 8 PM.