

Town of Holliston
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 26th, 2021

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 7:01PM. In attendance were Chairperson Ken Szajda, Vice Chair Dan Alfred, Sue Nersessian, Vincent Murphy, Michelle Zeamer, Tim Maxwell and Clerk Mark Whittaker.

Other Notable attendees included Town Administrator Travis Ahern, Town Facilities Manager James Keast, Select Board Vice-Chair Tina Hein, Fire Chief Cassidy, Chair of the Economic Development Committee Peter Barbieri, Chairman of the Holliston Trails Committee Robert Weidknecht, and Ken Henderson also of the Holliston Trails Committee.

Administrative Tasks:

It was moved to approve the meeting minutes for posting minutes from 10-20-2020, 10-27-2020, 11-17-2020, 12-1-2020, 12-5-2020, 12-15-2020, and 1-12-2021, as well as approve but not release minutes from executive sessions on 10-27-2020, and 12-15-2020. This was moved by Dan Alfred and seconded by Mark Whittaker. The motion carried 7-0 on all but 11-17-2020, which was Voted as 6-0-1 with Sue Nersessian abstaining.

Budget Reviews:

Finance committee requested a budget at \$1,525, which is flat from FY '21.

Finance committee requested a budget of \$325,000 for the Reserve Fund.

Celebrations budget was discussed, and the request was to remain at \$2,000.

Liability insurance budget was discussed and \$289,798 was requested; this is an increase of 5.16%. This rate does not include the "pay in full up front" discount offered. The Town Administrator noted that the increase was due to changes in the town's policy (it gets modified as new vehicles are added, etc.).

Peter Barbieri presented the budget request for the Economic Development Committee. The budget request was \$14,607 for FY2022, which is level funded from FY21.

The Street lighting budget request was \$67,470, which is a reduction of 3.6% due to a reduction in costs for electrical services. The Finance Committee requested a breakdown of the costs in the budget to clarify traffic light costs vs streetlight costs. Converting the streetlights to LED and requiring streetlights in new developments to be LED was discussed in detail. There was some discussion about bringing the LED conversion issue to the attention of our state legislators since there is currently a disincentive for

Eversource to convert the streetlights to LED due to the higher usage (and therefore higher revenue) from inefficient lights.

Robert Weidknecht, and Ken Henderson presented the Rail Trail budget request of \$1,000 (level funded from FY21). The \$1000 budget was added in FY21 to avoid the need for a separate warrant article every year. Finance committee members also expressed thanks to the hard workers and volunteers who maintain the trail.

Town administrator updates:

Travis Ahearn gave a schedule update on the Select Board's reviews of budgets they own. None of the changes impact the current Finance Committee review schedule. Travis Ahearn also distributed his mid-year update report he had made to the Select Board. Tina Hein suggested that the Finance Committee read the minutes of the Select Board meeting to see the mid-year performance review of Travis Ahearn.

Liaison updates:

Ken Szajda stated that the School Committee Budget Subcommittee will be meeting with the Finance Committee soon, and that the liaisons had sent multiple requests to the School Committee to meet. Chief Stone of the Police department is also meeting with his Finance Committee liaisons soon. Tim Maxwell stated that the Capital Subcommittee that had been on hiatus during the holidays but will be resuming regular meetings soon. Vincent Murphy was assigned as the liaison to the governance committee.

Covid Financial Report:

Chief Cassidy discussed the current financial impact of COVID. Chief Cassidy stated that we have good reserves and we are in good shape with regards to PPE and supplies. Vaccination administration costs will be changing soon since the federal government has directed that (as of January 21) 100% of costs be reimbursed by FEMA (instead of the usual 75%). Dan Alfred asked about the remaining CARES Act funds; Travis explained that the town had not yet expended the full amount and that the Select Board was still considering requests. One thing that stood out on the review was that the town is considering using some of the funds to purchase a PCR COVID testing machine for use primarily by the schools. The Committee noted that the request seems incomplete since there will be ongoing costs—not covered by the CARES Act—that would likely be much higher than the cost of the machine.

Dan Alfred made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Sue Nersessian. The motion passed 7-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:39 PM.