

Town of Holliston
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 9th, 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, Chief Cassidy, Linda Marshall of the Council on Aging, Building Inspector Mark Kaferlein, Town Treasurer Mary Bosquet, and Town Accountant Sharon Emerick

Administrative tasks:

Dan Alfred made a motion to accept the minutes from 1-26 and 2-2. The motion was seconded by Tim Maxwell. The motion carried 7-0.

Budget Reviews:

Linda Marshall presented the Council on Aging budget request in the amount of \$233,226, along with a request to increase the budget to \$254,350 for additional clerical support. The lower amount is a reduction from FY21, but that is due to the removal of \$12,000 that was added (one-time only) to supplement the budget to help with COVID expenses in FY21. The CoA moved funds around to meet the lower number (there are additional funds available to the CoA through things like the Senior Support Foundation). In addition, funding within the budget was shifted to meet the new operating model necessitated by COVID. The Senior Center got a communications system upgrade (more lines) to support the new model of outreach to seniors at their homes. The higher amount included a new request for a part time administrative assistant for 19 hours weekly, which was under consideration from the Finance Committee for FY21 but was dropped when COVID caused budget reductions. Ken Szajda pointed out that of the 3 revolving funds the CoA controls, only one appears to be solvent. Ken asked what the plan was to address that going forward. Linda Marshall pointed out that as of this moment, the expenses are outweighing the costs due to elimination bus fares. Linda stated that the historical trend is because the need for the COA has grown, but the money has not followed. Vincent Murphy asked about the full-time position that was basically eliminated in 2018, and what isn't going to be done by having a part time position hired now. Linda stated that the full-time position was eliminated by the clerical and the AD positions being combined into one, and this additional position represents a net increase. Travis Ahern reported the progress on the hiring of Linda's replacement. Travis stated that the budget is based on the expectation that Linda's replacement would be hired at the same salary as Linda.

Mark Kaferlein presented the \$155,010 budget request for the Building Inspector, a .36% increase from FY21. The budget request included additional funds for communications (\$600) and for software licenses (\$500), offset by personnel cost reductions due to turnover. Vincent Murphy asked about Office Supplies and Vehicle Maintenance lines because they seemed out of alignment with historic spending. Sue Nersessian asked for clarification on the revolving account; revenues are from permit fees and expenses are the payments to the subcontracted inspectors. Vincent Murphy asked about the recently approved increase in permitting fees. Travis and the Building Inspector said they would send the information along after the meeting.

Mary Bosquet presented the Treasurer/Collector's Budget request of \$420,080, which represents a reduction of .19% from FY21. Michelle Zeamer asked about fees from Unibank since that was the reason for the increase to the Building Inspector budget request. Mary said that Mark Kaferlein pays for the software to connect Unibank with PeopleGIS, and Mary's office pays for fees associated with building permit online payment fees (per use). Vincent Murphy asked if foreclosure legal was part of our new town-wide litigation contract. Mary stated that foreclosures are not included, but are usually paid for from a revolving fund. Since land court is currently not open we should be in good shape. Ken Szajda asked about the communications budget, which appeared to be mostly spent already halfway through the year. Mary stated that her budget pays the costs associated with the town hall postage meter then bills back to the departments based on usage. Since that bill-back has not yet occurred the budget appears to be running low when it is not.

Mary Bosquet also presented the Debt Budget request of \$2,405,138, which represents a 20.28% reduction due to the recent retirement of some long-term debt.

Sharon Emerick presented the Town Accountant budget request of \$177,280, which represents a 1.24% increase due to a step increase in clerical salaries, and a \$53 increase in the communications budget.

Town administrator updates:

Travis Ahearn gave updates on several items. Notable updates included:

1. OPEB Trust Board meeting: The OPEB trust board voted to recommend that the town maintain its \$1.5 million annual contribution into the OPEB Trust. According to the actuaries this keeps us on our plan to be fully funded in 2033.
2. Town Hall doors due to be installed on Feb. 22.
3. Bid has been accepted for refinishing of floor in upper Town Hall.
4. Stipend Committee report was accepted without comment by the Select Board.
5. Blair Square Committee is going to be making a request for funding at the Annual Town Meeting, expected to be around \$54,000.
6. There is a proposal to have a farmer's market in Blair Square during the summer.

Dan Alfred asked to have the Stipend Committee attend a meeting with the Finance Committee to discuss their report. Sue Nersessian asked about the impact of a potential farmers market on trail users, and whether the full scope of costs have been considered (possible police detail for traffic, clean-up costs, etc.). Travis stated that those issues are being investigated. Ken asked about the \$54,000 for the Blair square study. Travis Ahearn stated that this is for design plans. Ken also asked about whether there has been consideration to what the total construction cost might be. Travis Ahearn stated that \$400,000

has been the target, however with permanent bathrooms no longer included this number will likely go down. Travis Ahern will investigate any ongoing costs that the town might have to absorb.

Liaison updates:

Dan Alfred stated that the School Committee budget subcommittee met last week, and that a timeline for regular weekly meetings with the Fincom liaisons has been established.

Covid Financial Report:

Chief Cassidy stated Holliston is in the “yellow” risk designation, and we will likely be in the yellow again next week. Michelle Zeamer asked if we are expecting more CARES more money, to which Chief Cassidy has stated there are no expectations to get additional funding. Schools will likely receive additional money directly from the federal government.

General announcements and FY22:

Ken Szajda stated that he is working with the Governance Committee on a joint meeting and that it will likely be February 23 as part of the regular Fincom meeting. This meeting will be to review the Governance Committee’s proposed bylaw changes. He also noted that so far he has received no new information from the state regarding the FY22 state budget. The finance committee’s next meeting will be on the 23rd of February.

Dan Alfred made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Sue Nersessian. The motion passed 7-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:34 PM.