

Town of Holliston
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
June 9, 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.

Dr. Szajda called the Finance Committee to order at 7:02 pm. In attendance were Ken Szajda, Michelle Zeamer, Ben Sparrell, Daniel Alfred, Tim Maxwell and Vincent Murphy.

Mr. Murphy had sent the minutes for review for 4/14, motion by Mr. Alfred to approve and seconded by Mr. Maxwell. Voted to approve 6-0. Approve minutes of 3/24, motion made by Mr. Alfred and seconded by Mr. Maxwell. Voted to approve 6-0. Approve minutes of 4/21, motion made by Mr. Alfred and seconded by Mr. Maxwell. Voted to approve 6-0. Approve minutes of 4/7, motion made by Mr. Alfred and seconded by Mr. Maxwell. Voted to approve 6-0. Approve Executive Session minutes of 4/7, matter under discussion at that meeting is still open, therefore recommend vote to approve but not release those minutes, so moved by Mr. Alfred and seconded by Mr. Maxwell. Voted to approve but not release 6-0.

Chief Cassidy gave an update on COVID-19 cases, new, active and new deaths in town. Financial side re: PPE – first responders have good supply of PPE supplies. Comfortable going into summer with what have for PPE with what they received and what had in stock already and going into fall. CARES money as of last Monday was \$150K. Ms. Emerick recommended we move to \$175K in case any unexpected expenses come up. Some communities were asking for all the funds that were eligible for. Chief asked Select Board to put that request thru to state. Chief said they would be getting guidance from states as to where money would sit (account wise) so that it could be tracked based on use by various departments. This was in response to Mr. Alfred question as to where funds would be held when received. Once guidance received from state the appropriate accounts would be set up on the accounting software system and then they would be tracked as used and reported on that way. Track category & department that funds were given too to be used.

Dr. Szajda stated that even though full amount requested we have to justify spending and anything not used has to be returned. Estimated expenses last Thursday were \$550K and now have additional \$600K sitting around for various departments to request.

Mr. Murphy made recommendation that if we want to have that extra reserve fund we make it so that unforeseen revenue reductions and then we will have flexibility to use the money and we are

not calling it out specifically regarding COVID uses. It's just because we don't know the unknown unknown. Mr. Alfred stated an unexpected cost in an uncertain time not necessarily COVID related. Dr. Szajda interjected and wanted to clarify that he was not saying we were raising our reserve fund strictly to fund COVID expenses. Our reserve fund, the reserve fund we have is for unforeseen things and we are looking at an environment where there might be a lot of unforeseen things. Right, with the uncertainty, looking at raising only if we have to spend for something we don't anticipate. Other part of this which is the \$1.3 million, the CARES Act money, that money is dedicated to COVID-19 response. So there is some confluence in the sense that is the uncertainty in our reserve fund was a result of the uncertainty created by the pandemic. But those uncertainties are things we don't know and that may not be directly COVID related. They may be economic related or other shortfalls in other areas.

Ms. Zeamer spoke with Building Inspector regarding the fact that there is a lot of construction outside of homes, roofing, siding, decks etc. Inside could not be done unless emergency due to social distancing. Building permits still be issued.

Dr. Szajda spoke about other towns having their Town Meetings and that Medway had theirs yesterday and that Medfield's is scheduled for June 27th and they are actually doing it outside. He looked to see what they were doing as he was curious about what some of the towns are doing. It's certainly the case that other towns are figuring out a way to make them happen. He said he believed that Select Board was on board with it happening and just hopes that they can get everything finalized and make it happen.

The last item up is the warrant. Don't want to have lengthy discussion as the Select Board made changes last night so any lengthy discussion on the information received last Friday would not be warranted because some had changed by Select Board last evening. Mr. Sparrell agreed but said two things, 1 may and 1 may not. Town Clerk retroactive pay. He does not know all specifics but had conversation with Mr. Cronin about it and he told him there is a MA law, Chapter 41 Section 108 and it says that you can't do a pay change once the tax rate has been set, Mr. Alfred stated. Mr. Sparrell read what it said "Such salary revision occurs prior to the establishment of the tax rate of the town in said fiscal year". So he thought part of challenge is 2 things, the first is that any retroactive pay will have to be careful about how it was phrased in the Warrant because if it's related to FY20 might be a bit tricky because technically would be paying someone, an elected official after the tax rate was set. The second piece of it was should it be 1 article or 2 articles. That's something else entirely but he just wanted to bring that to people's attention that we have to be careful how the language is written based on the timing of the pay and what is actually for. So think that is part of the genesis for putting it into FY21 is that it can't be FY20 anymore because we already said that.

Dr. Szajda stated that they could present to Select Board as 2 items one to approve the salary and then the other to approve the supplement, but under 1 article. Mr. Alfred stated we can request whatever we want one question is will they agree to it. Dr. Szajda agreed but stated their intent was to be clear about what salary was and what the extra makeup piece was.

Mr. Sparrell stated that the second item brought up last night was a discussion about using the money from the host agreement or a portion of that money to create a stabilization fund. There were a couple of questions there. The first question is that the money from the host agreements as he understood it goes into free cash and it's not going anywhere in particular and being allocated, it's going into the general fund. Dr. Szajda stated it goes into general fund because that is what the law currently requires. Mr. Sparrell agreed but said it is the timing of it. Is it coming in at the end of the year and coming into the general fund as free cash or is it going in as local receipts. He thought it was going in later on and goes in as part of the free cash. Dr. Szajda said it can't come in directly to free cash it has to go someplace first. If paid into general fund last day of fiscal year then it flows into free cash. Dr. Szajda will check that with Ms. Emerick.

Ms. Zeamer stating not sure if she misunderstood, re: discussion last night about surcharge on electric bill. Did Tina say that the Select Board voted in March to put that surcharge on the bill and that they did not need a warrant article to do that. Mr. Sparrell said he would have to check stating to her point that he heard her say yes to approve something like that in March and that they were going to put it on Town Meeting to make sure that there were additional opportunities for people to approve it. Discussion went on further regarding the per kilowatt hour charge that was going to be on the bill and that there was the opportunity for the residents to opt in or out of it.

Discussion was held re: new possible members of the Finance Committee after the upcoming election and reorganization of the Committee. A meeting of the Finance Committee is scheduled for the night of the election, and with the election being over at 4 p.m. if a new member is elected to the Committee, how would that person be sworn in and able to sit in at the meeting that night.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Alfred and seconded unanimously by Mr. Murphy, Mr. Sparrell and Mr. Maxwell. Vote passed 6-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.