

Town of Holliston  
Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
January 31, 2023

Link to Video Recording of Meeting:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SVQxpEr82ifvP4luiM1cADDsLN5c87cn/view>

The meeting was held remotely under the guidelines that were issued because of the emergency caused by 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 7:00 p.m. Attendees included: Chairperson Ken Szajda, Vice Chairman Daniel Alfred, Michelle Zeamer, Vincent Murphy, Julie Winston, James Robinson and Mark Whittaker.

Dr. Szajda mentioned that he had been receiving minutes. Mr. Robinson suggested keeping a spreadsheet of what is in draft, what is done and what is not so they know where they are at. Dr. Szajda suggested they get together at the end of the call tonight to get a date so they can go over the minutes they have already received.

Next up on the agenda was a Reserve Fund transfer that Dr. Szajda had heard about today from Mr. Keast. He instructed him to fill out a request for the transfer. There was an issue in Chris Meo's office, which also doubles as the room for the mini split unit. This unit is located at the front of Town Hall under steps where they throw a lot of salt and it has gotten into the unit and rusted it out so it has not been working and needs to be replaced. Mr. Keast is in process of getting quotes to replace and relocate the unit which costs in the \$10K-\$12K range. It will be installed where all the other units are, out back of Town Hall and get it all piped in. Mr. Alfred asked us to wait until we have the actual quote before we do the transfer. Further discussion went on about the length of piping and how it was all going to be done. The room had to be kept cool because of all the equipment in there so that when the door is closed the temp isn't at 100 degrees. Mr. Robinson said that if there was no security risk and the area could be locked off then he would be leaning toward what Mr. Alfred said about waiting on the transfer until they had the actual cost quote. Ms. Zeamer added that they did have the funds for the purchase, but that they would be draining the account. She said that there was \$52,903 left in the account, but Mr. Keast stated that was for all the other municipal buildings not just specifically for Town Hall for HVAC. Mr. Keast stated he would move ahead with purchase whether he got the approval tonight or not. Dr. Szajda requested that when Mr. Keast obtained the actual cost to please send it over to him so that it could be put in just in case it came in higher or lower. That way he would have the actual amount and modify the request. Mr. Ahern will put on the Select Board agenda next week for them.

Next up is the Q2 expenditure update from Ms. Emerick. Mr. Ahern stated there was nothing that they knew of at this time and would just do projections and check in after Quarter3 and go from there.

Mr. Ahern stated that at the Select Board meeting last night there was a discussion about the Solar Pilot on the private project on Marshall Street, the Bird property. The agreement arrived today and will be in front of the Select Board next week to execute. That will be \$147K per year in the payment in lieu of taxes that was negotiated by the Assessors. They have assumed part in the FY23 tax rate setting process because he knew it was going live on January 1<sup>st</sup>. So half is in the FY23 tax rate setting and FY24 in local receipts which means an increase in the model of just under \$200K total. That's what all payment in lieu of taxes used to be plus the \$147K. Don't have the town's solar project built into revenue yet but do have movement in that which he covered with the Select Board last night. Further discussions went on about the interconnections agreement with Eversource.

Regarding FY24 revenue model, the Governor's budget is due on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

ARPA Steering Group updates through 1/31/23, full day kindergarten changes noted. This was sent to all who requested.

Discussion that Town of Hopkinton put together since ARPA was conceptualized as a small business grant system. Mr. Ahern had a conversation with that person in Hopkinton and was going to present that to the EDC prior to the April meeting and see if it's something we want to put in front of the group to discuss.

Mr. Ahern gave an update on the Strategic Plan.

Dr. Szajda discussed briefly about the upcoming state revenue modeling meeting (that is the first step in the state budget process) and how the process was delayed this year because of the newly elected Governor. This is why the Governor's budget would not be out until March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Dr. Szajda stated that the Town Meeting had been officially moved to May 15 and he worked with Mr. Ahern to move our schedule around and had adjusted it to accommodate a few last minute requests from some of the departments. One was from Ms. Greendale on the Town Clerk's election side, so because of that she will be in on Valentine's Day. There will be a full schedule on Valentine's Day so be prepared. He will send out a new schedule to all members. Mr. Ahern will add to the Town's website.

The Technology Budget was reviewed. Personal Services purchased services had the largest increase this year. Mr. Meo went into detail on what this was about. He presented a level service budget with an increase of \$9,479 over FY23. Mr. Meo went into a detailed discussion of the Cyber Insurance Policy and the backup system. He stated that in order to qualify for FY25 they will require a different back-up system. So next year will probably be looking at an increase of \$3,600, not needed for this year but will be coming for FY25. Mr. Alfred asked about the backup system and what it was. Mr. Meo stated that we have updated the computers and updated the laptops in Police Cruisers as well. Additional questions were asked about doing backups.

Veteran's budget – money still requires a re-vote. Discussed in great detail about the benefits and it's a 4 member community thing.

Facilities/WasteWater budget – Mr. Keast presented. The biggest impact re: Utilities, is the fact that the Town is locked into electric supply with Eversource. They discussed that in December the rate will be going up. This rate increase will be a huge hit on the electric side of Utilities, gas has a rate lock until 2024. There will be an increase in electricity of \$14K Town Hall \$1,400 @ 1750 Washington and \$7,500 Golf Course.

Ms. Zeamer asked about the lease agreement with the golf course as to whether they pay utilities at all. M. Keast stated that they pay a portion of it. Irrigation pumps are paid by outside sources and some fall within the Town. Further discussion was held regarding the electric and gas rates, residential vs businesses. Change in vehicle maintenance of \$400 from \$2,700 to \$3,100.

Custodial is flat. FY22 was high because of extra COVID cleanings being done. Office Supplies change of \$50 increase. FY24 budget will be at \$103,540. Discussion went on about the 3 vehicles the Town owns, 2 electric cars and the one Mr. Keast drive

Waste Water – changes – Utilities line \$7,100 additional in that line FY24 Professional Line – our contract with Clearwater ends in May 2023. To extend this it would cost additional \$3,325. Mr. Keast recommends signing the contract for additional 1 or 2 years with Clearwater for the monitoring of the Plant. Mr. Keast recommended sticking with the current provider at least another year and going with a price increase he feels is acceptable of \$3,325, remaining lines are flat. Dr. Szajda asked from a facilities standpoint whether the town will be stable as far as pumps and plant condition and not expect any surprises. He said they have funds in place to cover that in the current budget, (i.e. pumps, which were approved by Town Meeting, are being bought and put into the inventory in case of any surprises).

There was a liaison update regarding some conversations they had with the school with regard to some Capital projects that need to be done within the schools. Preventative maintenance schedules for the schools will be discussed at next week's meeting. The schools will be having Strategic Initiatives meeting next week.

Mr. Alfred made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Ms. Zeamer. It was Voted 7-0 to adjourn at 8:09 p.m.