

**HOLLISTON FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
March 25, 2014**

The Committee convened in Room 105 at the Town Hall at 7:30 pm. Present from the Committee were Chairman Ken Szajda, Vice-Chair Michelle Zeamer, Daniel Alfred and Beth Liberty. Clerk Charles Kaslow, Bill Dowd and Brendan Shea were absent.

Administrative

Ms. Liberty announced that her husband had started to do some substitute teaching for the Holliston School system. The Massachusetts State Ethics Commission Attorney of the Day provided binding advice that she would need to abstain on any line-item vote/discussions on substitute teacher salaries (if we did that), but could otherwise vote/discuss the school budget

FY2015 Departmental Presentations

Schools. Superintendent Brad Jackson presented a budget book to provide context to the budget presentation. Dr. Jackson's contextual and interpretive highlights included:

- Holliston school performance metrics relative to Massachusetts, US and International schools indicating that Holliston consistently performs above state, national and international averages and often excels on various standardized tests
- Various "cost per" metrics indicative of a school system that is achieving a high performing "return on investment" and taking advantage of cost efficiencies. Holliston cost-per-pupil in FY13 was reported by MA DOR is \$12,543 (fully loaded) vs the state average cost per pupil is \$14,000 and vs TEC community average of 14,851. Cost per pupil and MCAS (10th graders) put Holliston as 16th in state in terms of Cost vs Value. Dr. Jackson referred those interested in further comparative spend/performance info and metrics to www.doe.mass.edu.
- Statistical data demonstrating that the school budget (appropriation) since FY03 has seen an average annual growth rate of 2.2% - while inflation and social security has grown 2.38% and 2.43% respectively.
- Commentary that state funding has struggled to maintain its commitment to local education; with Chapter 70 funding at \$100,000 less than it was 12 years ago – essentially shifting the burden for paying for Holliston schools more to the local taxpayer.

Lisa Galeaz-Weber, budget sub-committee chair, presented the School Committee's FY15 voted budget of \$30,384,961. The FY15 budget is 2.8% or \$828,565 higher than the FY14 Budget of \$29,556,396. Committee Guideline is \$29,999,741 (1.5%) increase, providing for a gap of \$385,220.

Mr. Alfred provided modeling/projections involving several levels of school budget appropriation and funding scenarios indicating a service sustainability problem facing the town. Dr. Szajda pointed at our town challenge to balance increased costs; limitations on revenue growth; unfunded mandates, and local aid allocations that don't reflect these realities.

Discussion ensued on several points of financial interest including enrollment projections; special education costs; the out-of-district special education circuit breaker fund; collective bargaining agreements, the town's obligations with regard to multi-year contracts, school choice, utility costs,

Dr. Jackson summarized list of additional information requests by the Finance Committee:

- All data around slide 15 for all areas reported by DOR
- Detail out of district tuition costs and history
- Circuit breaker projections
- Clarification of town's obligation on funding multi-year school contract
- 2013 enrollment information
- Reconcile gross expense/income spreadsheets.

Ms. Zeamer made a motion to enter into executive session with the School Committee to discuss strategy in preparation for the negotiation of union and non-union compensation issues at 8:45pm; Mr. Alfred seconded; followed by roll call vote: Zeamer – yes, Alfred- yes, Liberty-yes, Szajda – yes. The board then entered into Executive Session. The Chairman announced that a public discussion could have a detrimental effect on the Town's bargaining position and stated that the executive session would last approximately 30 minutes, at which time the Committee would return to open session. **(see Executive Session March 25, 2014 minutes)**

Following the executive session with the School Committee at 9:30pm and the return to open session, Mr. Alfred made a motion to enter into executive session with the Board of Selectmen to discuss strategy in preparation for the negotiation of non-union compensation issues. Ms. Zeamer seconded and a roll call vote followed: Zeamer – yes, Alfred- yes, Liberty-yes, Szajda – yes. The Chairman announced that the executive session would last approximately 30 minutes, at which time the Committee would return to open session. **(see Executive Session BOS Mar 25, 2014 minutes)**

Following the executive session with the Board of Selectmen at 10:08pm and the return to open session, Ms. Zeamer made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Alfred. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote and the meeting was concluded.

Approved _____ 9/9/14 _____