

TOWN OF HOLLISTON

SELECT BOARD

July 18, 2022
7:00PM

Town Hall
703 Washington Street

Present: Ben Sparrell, Chair; John Cronin, Vice Chair; T. Hein, Clerk.

Also Present: Travis Ahern, Town Administrator; Kevin Rudden, Principal Assessor; Elizabeth Lydon, Town Council; Arthur Redding, Stephen Moran, Lynn Tokarczyk and Brian Bowen, representing New England Appliance Group Inc. (NEAG); Michael Cassidy, Fire Chief; James Keast, Facilities Manager; Kathleen Buckley, Assistant Town Administrator/HR director; and Chris Pierce a Holliston resident.

At 7:00pm B. Sparrell called the meeting to order.

REVIEW INCENTIVES INTENT LETTER FROM NEAG:

Several representatives from New England Appliance Group Inc. (NEAG) joined the meeting for a presentation; Arthur Redding, Treasurer; Stephen Moran, President; Lynn Tokarczyk, Consultant; and Brian Bowen, Chief Operation Officer. NEAG would like to apply for a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreement with the Town of Holliston for the property at 555 Hopping Brook. The proposed warehouse would be 550,000 square foot warehouse which would also house the company's headquarters. Their current facility located in Franklin no longer meets their growing needs. B. Bowen gave a brief history and background of the company and noted that the company is looking to make a \$100 million investment. L. Tokarczyk noted the many benefits NEAG would bring to Holliston, not only in tax revenue as well as local revenue created by employees but also the companies sensitivity to traffic issues. The company intends to operate Monday – Fridays between the hours of 7:00am-8:00pm. B. Bowen stated that there are an estimated 50 trucks daily making deliveries to co-op members. The building would be designed to have 80-100 loading docks and if it was to expand over the years could increase the daily truck to an estimated 75 trucks daily. B. Bowen expressed the desire to move quickly on the process with the desire to have a vote at 2022 October Town Meeting for the TIF. T. Ahern, Holliston Principal Assessor K. Rudden and J. Cronin will be on the TIF team. The State has the final vote on approving a TIF. The Select Board will schedule a walkthrough of the NEAG facility in Franklin. T. Ahern noted that the updates on this proposed project will be listed on the website pertaining to 555 Hopping Brook.

FOLLOWUP DISCUSSION TO FIRE/EMS ORGANIZATIONAL EVALUATION (MRI):

T. Ahern presented slides outlining the 4 main themes/recommendations made by the MRI report dated May 31, 2022. The 4 themes are as follows: ALS vs. BLS; Assistant Chief Position;

Facilities; and Dispatch. There is currently a EMS compensation 90 day beta test ending on September 28, 2022, which will be reviewed once complete. There are 3 options available, 1. Status Quo, 2. Obtaining an Advanced Life Support (ALS) licensure, 3. Outsourcing to private ambulance. It is recommended that the Assistant Chief Position require paramedic certification. It was estimated that the cost of the position could be offset as much as 50% by ALS billing. The current 5 Year Capital Plan includes the location of the Fire Station on Central Street. T. Ahern stated that the DPW is looking at new locations for a new facility and there may be the possibility of housing a new Fire/EMS facility on the same site. In reviewing the current Dispatch model there are 3 options available; 1. Status quo; 2. Consolidated dispatch (with Police Dept). 3. Join an existing RECC (Regional Emergency Communication Center). Chief Cassidy stated that he was not in support of the addition of an Assistant Fire Chief and that the current model of the 2 Deputy Chiefs is very effective. Chief Cassidy also added that the dispatch is very good at triaging incoming calls from the public. The Chief disagreed with the recommendation to consolidate the substations. The Chief noted that since the 90 day compensation test which began on July 1, 2022 there has not been a need to obtain EMS assistance from other sources.

J. Keast, Facilities Manager presented a memo outlining proposed work at the Central Street Fire Station, which will include the purchase of two 20 foot long containers to be located behind the Station. Also the disposal of unused and or obsolete items. The second floor could be modified to accommodate bunk rooms, a day room and showers. All with an estimated cost of \$220,000.

Each Select Board member took the opportunity to ask questions and offer comments.

J. Cronin voiced his support of hiring an Assistant Fire Chief.

T. Hein wondered if removing various recommendations would alter the outcome of other recommendations or do they stand alone.

B. Sparrell stated that the path forward will include more conversation and more community feedback.

T. Ahern explained the next step will be to hold a meeting in August 2022 with B. Sparrell, himself and Fire/EMS Officers to get feedback. A Community Forum will be scheduled for after Labor Day 2022 with the intent for a possible 2022 Fall Town Meeting Article.

Chris Pierce, 117 Shaw Farm Road, a professional Firefighter/EMT joined the meeting and voiced his concern regarding the "single unit response". C. Pierce strongly recommends a Standard Operating Procedure that would dictate an engine with personnel be dispatched in conjunction with the duty officer for safety reason. He also expressed his strong support of hiring an Assistant Chief.

Liz Theiler, 17 Norland Street, joined the meeting via zoom. L. Theiler spoke to what she felt is "a culture of resistance within the Fire Department". L. Theiler spoke of a recent personal experience she had with a medical emergency and strongly believes the Town should have an ALS model in place. She noted that in Town with a \$65 million budget, only \$1.5 million is

allocated to the Fire/EMS budget. L. Theiler thanked the Select Board for initiating the Study and for giving it the attention needed.

J. Cronin thanked L. Theiler for her comments, but stated that he disagrees with the comment regarding the 'resistance to change'. J. Cronin feels strongly that Chief Cassidy is receptive to the process of change needed.

John Crean, 91 Richard Road, also a Firefighter phoned into the meeting to voice his support of a Full-Time Fire Department model. J. Crean also feels strongly that equipment should be sent along with a first responder to all calls.

T. Hein noted that there is an interest in moving the Fire/EMS Department in the direction of an ALS model, as well as adding an Assistant Fire Chief to the staff.

T. Hein made a motion to authorize T. Ahern, and Chief Cassidy to pursue changes to the EMS Service Model in Holliston in preparation for the 2022 Fall Town Meeting for which the Warrant will be open on August 1, 2022 and close before the end of September 2022. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator and the Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director and the Fire Chief to develop a job description to be funded at the October 2022 Town Meeting for which the Warrant will be open on August 1, 2022 and close before the end of September 2022. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

J. Cronin thanked all those responsible for making the 2022 Lions Carnival a success.

B. Sparrell stated that the Envisioning Future Holliston Survey #2 was still live. There have been 845 responses to date.

WARRANT:

T. Hein made a motion to approve the FY23 Weekly Warrant in the amount of \$319,827.23. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to approve the FY22 Warrant in the amount of \$992,196.73. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

COMMENTS FROM THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:

T. Ahern noted that the lowest bid for the Blair Square Project was above the appropriation. Itemized bid responses allow for removal of certain items if needed.

The Complete Streets Tier III award was announced and awarded in the amount of \$399,693.85. R. Walker and S. Reese of the DPW will work on a plan using some of the information provided by the Stantec Report.

The State budget once complete will have additional monies available. The Town will have the ability to fund several small items.

On Saturday July 16, 2022 the remote participation bill signed.

BOARD BUSINESS:

B. Sparrell asked that the Governance Committee be placed on a future Select Board agenda to present an update.

T. Hein made a motion to appointed Hayley Fetrow to the Governance Committee with a term to end June 30, 2024. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to approve the event permit for the Holliston Turkey Trot on Thursday November 24, 2022 from 7:30am-10:00am sponsored by Holliston Youth Lacrosse. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to approve a donation in the amount \$6,860. from the Friends of the Holliston Trails to the Trails gift account to be used towards the funding of a crossing beacon on the Rail Trail at Hopping Brook. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0. T. Ahern stated that the remaining funding for the crossing light will be donated by Griffin Electric.

T. Hein made a motion to sign and post the Warrant for the 2022 State Primary for Tuesday September 6, 2022 from 7:00am-8:00pm for all 4 precincts to be held at the Holliston High School at 370 Hollis Street. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

OTHER BUSINESS:

T. Hein would like to discuss 2 public events at a future Select Board meeting. 1. A walk around Pinecrest, on or around the grounds pertaining to the DPW Study. 2. A Bike and Listen tour, possibly 5 mile up Norfolk Street.

T. Ahern will schedule a joint meeting with the Finance Committee, Select Board and School Committee at the earliest convenience for all.

The draft of the Code of Conduct discussed at the previous meeting, July 11, 2022 has been circulated to Boards and Committees.

At 9:50pm J. Cronin made a motion to adjourn. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Driscoll

Approved__8-29-22

