

# TOWN OF HOLLISTON

## SELECT BOARD

March 6, 2023  
7:00PM

Town Hall  
703 Washington Street

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

**Also Present:** Travis Ahern, Town Administrator; Mathew Stone, Holliston Police Chief; Lieutenant Chad Thompson, Lieutenant James Barrett, Holliston Police Department; Michael Cassidy, Holliston Fire Chief; and Chris Pierce, Holliston resident.

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

### **AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION APPOINTMENT DISCUSSION:**

T. Ahern stated letters were sent out last Fall 2022 to the various farm owners in town seeking input on the effectiveness of the Agricultural Commission. The response from those owners that replied indicated that there was still a need within the community, therefore a second letter soliciting interested parties to reorganize the Agricultural Commission was sent out. Two of the existing members, Cherie Hafford and Diana Phillips have committed to remain, two members who did not respond will be removed and two new individuals have come forward interested in joining the Commission. The reorganization will allow the Agricultural Commission to place its focus back on the bylaws. The responsibility of Farm Day will most likely be managed through the Town Administrators Office.

T. Hein made a motion not to appoint two previous members of the Agricultural Commission, with sincere thanks to Evan Reseka and Claire Toohey, appoint two new members based on letters of interest as presented, Sean Mayer of Twisted Carrot Farm located at 665 Adams Street, appointed through June 30, 2025 and Nancy Dubin of Willow Brook Farm, located at 1070 Washington Street, appointed through June 30, 2024. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

### **BUDGET REVIEW:**

T. Ahern presented the Town Administrator's Recommended Budget Document. B. Sparrell commented on the extensive work that went into its preparation.

T. Ahern stated that the MACP, Metropolitan Area Planning Council presented its economic vision to the EDC, Economic Development Committee and the next step is to put together a "work plan" which will included an approach to staffing.

The West Suburban Health Group published their FY24 rates, which have increased by 10%. The Town will do its due diligence and research any available options.

On March 14, 2023 members of the Holbrook Regional Emergency Call Center will meet with dispatchers currently employed here in Holliston to discuss employment opportunities at the

new call center. Members of the Call Center will plan a meeting in which they will drive throughout the community in an effort to familiarize themselves with the streets etc.

*Police Budget:* Chief Stone began the Police Budget presentation by stating that the department has made excellent progress in Certification as well as Training and Professional Development. The FY24 budget includes three additional patrol officers. The Chief explained that with the restructuring of the department in December 2023 he would like to maintain staffing to ensure the Police Department is open to the public 24/7. The proposed FY24 Police Department Budget is \$3,582,914.

*Auxiliary Police:* Chief Stone presented the proposed FY24 Auxiliary Police Budget, which is level funded. There are currently six Auxiliary Officers which assist during special events throughout Town. The Chief anticipates that number eventually zeroing out over the next several years. The FY24 proposed Auxiliary Budget is \$16,200.

*Animal Control Budget:* T. Ahern presented the proposed FY24 Animal Control Budget. There are no changes to the budget this fiscal year. The proposed FY24 Animal Control Budget is \$38,000.

*Fire Department Budget:* Chief Cassidy stated the 88% of the Fire Budget is personnel costs, which include weekly and monthly compensation. As a result of the MRI Study report the department has made changes to the service levels. Other cost factors include repairs to the fleet and continued Professional Development and Training.

Recognition and appreciation was given to six individuals who have retired from the Fire Department; Fred Carnes, Gregg Lewis, Phil Robshaw, Jim Rossini, Bob Christensen and Jim Moore.

*Ambulance:* Chief Cassidy stated that 79% of the Ambulance Budget is personnel costs, and include a newly created Assistant position. There has also been a significant increase in the cost of supplies as well as issues with existing supply chains. The Chief noted that staffing on the weekends is still a challenge for the department. Discussion regarding the newly created Assistant Fire Chief position revolved around the proper title, and did it match the job description. One goal, responsibility of the new position would be to oversee the Ambulance side of the Fire Department with the intention of completing requirements to achieve ALS status in 3-5 years. Chief Cassidy is not comfortable with the proposed title Deputy Chief Assistant. The discussion will continue on the title prior to posting the position. The proposed FY24 Ambulance Budget is \$957,502.

*Emergency Management:* Chief Cassidy stated that the Communication Line funds Blackboard Connect. The Chief receives a \$5,000 stipend for his role in Emergency Management. The Town will engage a third party to update its Hazard Mitigation Plan, which will be funded through a federal grant.

J. Cronin recommended increasing the stipend to \$10,000 in recognition for all the commitment and efforts by Chief Cassidy for navigating the Town and Residents through the Covid-19 Pandemic. This would increase the proposed FY24 Emergency Management Budget by \$5,000.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

J. Cronin suggested reviewing the agreement the Town currently has with the Town of Ashland regarding Animal Control. T. Ahern stated that a review will take place as part of preparation for the FY2025 budget.

T. Hein read an email from Max Emery, 100 Exchange Street, regarding his concerns for safety in the Mudville, Central Street area. The Town will address the pedestrian traffic safety as part of the renovation to Blair Square, however T. Ahern noted that the Central Street crosswalk, across from the Fire Station is tied into the Central Street improvements.

T. Hein noted several concerns from an abutter of Hopping Brook Road. Ongoing work on Saturday in the area and noise created by trucks on the roadway due to poor condition.

B. Sparrell stated that at the Select Chat on Friday March 3, 2023 he met the new Senior Center Assistant Director.

B. Sparrell stated that the Envisioning Future Holliston meeting with Barry Dunn was held last Wednesday March 1, 2023.

B. Sparrell stated that the Yvette and Chris Cain announced they will be stepping aside from the Holliston Reporter. Many thanks for all their work.

Chris Pierce, 117 Shaw Farm Road expressed his support for the request for additional Police Officers. C. Pierce noted that he was not particularly concerned with the title of the Assistant Fire Chief position, his main concern is to create a unified Fire/EMS department.

Elizabeth Theiler, 17 Norland Street, expressed her concerns over what appears to be a split in the Fire/EMS Department. She feels it is important to have a Deputy that can take full responsibility for the Fire and EMS when the Fire Chief is not available, ie out of Town. Again E. Theiler noted that the residents of Holliston should be offered the best response possible when in need. T. Ahern stated that the Town is moving in the direction of bringing an ALS model to the Department and he appreciates all that attend Town Meeting and for the contributions to the ongoing discussions.

T. Hein made a motion to approve the proposed FY24 budgets as presented this evening, specifically the Fire Department Budget in the amount of \$972,535., Ambulance Budget for \$957,502., the Emergency Management Budget in the amount of \$22,061., (which includes increasing the stipend by \$5,000), Police Department Budget in the amount of \$3,582,914., Police Auxiliary Budget in the amount of \$16,002., and Animal Control Budget in the amount of \$38,000. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

## **REVIEW DRAFT SELECT BOARD MEMO ON CAPITAL PROJECTS FOR WORKING GROUP:**

J. Cronin explained that the Working Group which consists of members from the Select Board, Finance Committee and Schools have the opportunity to look holistically at future debt of large capital projects and ways in which to fund them. This includes a summarized borrowing model and strategies on how to best use existing funds. One of the largest proposed capital projects currently is a new DPW Facility. There is also the ongoing needs of the Schools, with the

possibility of a new High School in the future. Other projects include recommendations resulting from the Stantec Water Report (Norfolk, Central and Goulding Streets). The Town will continue to look at Federal and State Funding for “Shovel Ready” projects. After some discussion the Select Board asked that the memo incorporate the summary prepared by T. Ahern as an introduction and that the Water Study be placed as an appendix along with the use of the CapEx calculations, also add the request for State and Federal Funds when applicable. T. Hein made a motion to approve the Memo on Capital Projects, as presented with the suggested edits. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

#### **WARRANTS:**

T. Hein made a motion to approve the Weekly Warrant in the amount of \$799,703.83. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

#### **COMMENTS FROM THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:**

T. Ahern stated that the process of posting for the Town Accountant position is underway and interviews will be scheduled shortly.

PARE Corp has a preliminary report on the status of the Woodland Street Bridge and will put together a plan of action, which will need approval from the DOT. The road remains closed to through traffic at the bridge.

The Chapter 90 Funding was published and is level funded with a slight reduction.

On March 1, 2023 Barry Dunn presented to Envisioning Future Holliston. Comments and feedback can be posted on the Envisioning Future Holliston link on the website.

A group would like to organize a tribute to Spenser “the marathon dog”.

#### **BOARD BUSINESS:**

T. Hein made a motion to accept Chapter 269 of the Acts of 2022 providing Middlesex County Retirement Systems with the ability to increase the Cost of Living Adjustment for Fiscal Year 2023 to 5% on the COLA base of \$16,000 pursuant to Mass General Law Chapter 32, Section 103. J. Cronin second with further amendment, through the acceptance provided under Chapter 269 of the Acts of 2022. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to approve a One-Day All Alcoholic Beverage License for the Upper Town Hall on March 18, 2023. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of January 23, 2023 as written. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

J. Cronin stated that the State House last week passed a supplemental budget which will extend the remote meeting option until 2025, this however needs a State Senate vote.

T. Hein stated that the MAPC has approved a new budget which resulted in an increase of

2.5%. A membership cost is now \$8,600. T. Hein also noted that there is an open set currently on the committee.

At 9:54pm J. Cronin made a motion to adjourn. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Driscoll

Approved\_\_03-27-23