

TOWN OF HOLLISTON

SELECT BOARD

February 27, 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; Michael Cassidy, Fire Chief; Sam Tyler, Governance Committee Chair; Haley Fetrow, Len Engel, Governance Committee members; Sean Reese, DPW Director; Robert Walker, DPW Deputy Director/Highway Supervisor and John Drohan, Economic Development Committee Chair.

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

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE/REPORT:

Sam Tyler presented the Statement of Findings based on research done by the Governance Committee over the two and a half years, eight findings in all. S. Tyler stated that Holliston has not kept pace with other Towns within the Commonwealth. Several recommendations include creating a Town Charter, upgrading of the Town Administrators position and increasing the size of the Select Board. T. Hein read a prepared statement recognizing and appreciating the work which was done by the Governance Committee, however due to the fact that Governance Committee sponsored Articles did not receive passing votes at Town Meeting over the past two years she recommends absolving the Governance Committee. J. Cronin noted that outside interests seem to have undermined the efforts of the Governance Committee and have stalled any movement going forward, the public is not listening. J. Cronin stated "its time to retreat and reset the process". He added that this is not a reflection on any of the Committee members individually. B. Sparrell also agreed that despite all the hard work done by the Governance Committee it is time to take the information gathered and determine the best way forward. T. Ahern noted that the Mass Municipal Management Association (MMA) has the ability to assist the Town in determining the next steps towards some of the goals highlighted by the Governance Committee. S. Tyler questioned the logic of the Select Boards decision to disband the Committee and stated that there was still work to be done. Len Engel, Governance Committee member voiced his frustration at the lack of support from the community. Haley Fetrow, Governance Committee member noted her surprise at how controversial the articles became at Town Meeting.

T. Hein made a motion to accept the Governance Committee Report as presented and to dissolve the Governance Committee and to direct the Town Administrator to engage with the MMA to explore the process to evaluate the formation of a Charter per recommendation of the Governance Committee. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

The Select Board collectively thanked the Governance Committee for all their time and work done.

FY2024 WATER RATE HEARING:

At 7:35pm T. Hein read the memo to open the Public Hearing for the Water Rate Hearing.

T. Hein made a motion to Open the Public Hearing for the FY24 Water Rates. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

DPW Director Sean Reese explained the increase in costs and therefore the budget is a result of the escalating costs of chemicals, contracted services and the operating costs of running well #5. The Select Board was presented two options for consideration: 1. Increase the water rate by 2.5% across all tiers and leave the quarterly infrastructure fee at \$75, funding the \$450,000 gap with the retained water earnings. 2. Increase the water rate by 8% across all tiers and reduce the quarterly infrastructure fee to \$65.

T. Hein made a motion to approve the FY24 Water Division Budget in the amount of \$3,399,681. with the following changes to the water rate structure, 2.5% increase in water rates to all 4 tiers for water usage with no change made to the infrastructure fee and water meters, funding \$450,000 from retained water earnings to stabilize the budget. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

S. Reese stated that within the next several weeks there will be an RFP, Requests for Proposal, for the water meters.

At 8:10pm T. Hein made a motion to close the Water Rate Hearing. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

FY2024 BUDGET REVIEW:

Highway & Grounds: DPW Deputy Direct/Highway Supervisor Robert Walker presented the Highway and Grounds Budget. Increases reflect the increase in utilities, equipment and building maintenance. The department will also be looking to purchase new equipment. The budget also reflects an increase in Police Detail as opposed to using “flaggers”. The FY24 proposed Budget is \$1,746,281.

Snow & Ice: This budget is updated throughout the season. The FY24 proposed Budget is \$250,000.

Motor Vehicle Fuels: The FY24 proposed Budget is \$185,000.

Economic Development Committee: John Drohan, Chair of the EDC noted that the next step for the Committee is to determine the best course of action to take in an effort to hire an individual/consultant to guide and support the Committee. The proposed FY24 Budget is \$51,000.

T. Hein made a motion to approve the FY24 Budgets as follows, the Economic Development for a current estimate of \$51,000, to be reviewed again in March 2023, Snow and Ice Budget in the amount of \$250,000, Motor Vehicles Fuel Budget in the amount of \$185,000 and DPW Grounds

and Highway in the amount of \$1,746,281. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

Review Summary: T. Ahern presented a graphic of the FY24 Revenue vs. Expenditures in detail. Keefe Tech may be asking to submit an Article for the May 2023 Town Meeting in an effort to support an Infrastructure Fund for renovations to the School.

T. Ahern will send a letter to the State Senator and Congressman McGovern, signed by the Select Board regarding Earmarks and potential ARPA funding. J. Cronin asked that a copy be forwarded to the Finance Committee as well.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

T. Hein asked that a meeting be coordinated with the Schools to discuss capital budget items.

T. Hein read the “No On Street Parking Ban” which is in effect till March 31, 2023.

J. Cronin and J. Drohan interviewed the owner of a local cannabis business recently.

J. Cronin noted the passing of former resident Sylvia Stickney and gave his condolences.

J. Cronin continues to work within the Working Group towards a model for large projects including sidewalks and a new DPW Facility.

B. Sparrell will be hosting his monthly Select Chat at the Senior Center at 9:30am. All are welcome.

WARRANTS:

T. Hein made a motion to approve the weekly warrant in the amount of \$1,774,162.40. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

COMMENTS FROM THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:

T. Ahern sent a memo to all stakeholders regarding the closure of Woodland Street at the section of the failed bridge. The Department of Transportation ordered the section of the road closed on February 14, 2023. Signage has been placed to detour motor vehicles. PARE Corp will present short term possibilities with the intention to install a prefabricated bridge in August 2023.

Both projects at Blair Square and 9 Green Street are moving forward and should be completed in time for the summer, 2023.

T. Hein stated that the Holliston Garden Club has withdrawn their request to have a tree planted at 9 Green Street.

The deadline for May 2023 Town Meeting Articles is Monday March 20, 2023. Citizens Petitions must be submitted to the Town Administrators Office or the Town Clerk.

At the March 6, 2023 Select Board meeting letters of interest for seats on the Agricultural Commission will be discussed. Once the Commission is fully seated the Board of Health will consult them on the development of an Animal Registration Form.

QUARTERLY UPDATE MRI RECOMMENDATIONS FIRE/EMS:

Fire Chief Michael Cassidy stated that per the recommendation of MRI Study a Benefit Eligibility

Requirements Policy was developed with the collaboration of the Town Administrator, Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director and the Treasurer/Collector. A draft of the proposed policy and requirements were presented to the Select Board. Chief Cassidy introduced the possibility of adding four Auxiliary Positions in an effort to retain institutional knowledge. They are as follows: Fire & Life Safety, Accountability, Safety and Training Officer. It was noted that these positions would be classified as positions that “do not pick up a hose”.

Currently there is a mandatory retirement policy in effect, once an individual reaches the age of 65 they must retire from the department. Deputy Mark Dellicker would like to continue with his service within the department. The Select Board discussed the possibly of presenting an article at May Town Meeting containing a Special Act to allow an individual to reach retirement at the age of 70 based on a case by case basis and include an annual physical examination.

Chief Cassidy also presented a draft of the approved Assistant Fire Chief Position. One of the requirements will be that the candidate has significant EMS qualification.

T. Hein made a motion to approve the Benefit Eligibility Policy Guidelines as presented for Stipend receiving Fire Fighters and EMT’s and First Responders for development into a Town wide policy to be shared with stakeholders such as OPEB Accuracy Advisers and Town Counsel. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to put an article on the May 2023 Town Meeting Warrant specific to the age limit for On Call Fire Fighters to increase that limit from 65 to 70 for Deputy Mark Dellicker. With the ask that M. Dellicker make a request in writing and that approval be based on completion of an annual physical. J. Cronin second.

BOARD BUSINESS:

T. Ahern stated that an irrigation system will be installed at Blair Square as part of the ongoing renovations, funded by donations.

T. Hein made a motion to authorize and execute a contract between the Town and P.J. Albert Jr. Incorporated as the lowest responsible bidder in the amount of \$279,410.50 for sidewalks on both sides of Washington Street adjacent to the Downton area, specifically total sidewalk length both East and Westbound is 2,866 linear feet of 5 feet wide sidewalks and 2,480 linear feet of granite curbing to be installed along the street side of the sidewalk, further to include concrete ADA ramps with warning panels for Washington Street at Quincy, Austin and School Streets with a performance schedule to be completed between June and August 2023. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to approve a donation from the Holliston Superette in the amount of \$400 to the Senior Center Nutrition Fund. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to approve a permit for the use of Blair Square for the Walker wedding on Saturday May 4, 2024. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of January 17, 2023 as written. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

OTHER BUSINESS: NONE

At 9:49pm J. Cronin made a motion to adjourn. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Driscoll

Approved__04-10-23