

TOWN OF HOLLISTON
SELECT BOARD

November 13, 2023
7:00PM

Town Hall
703 Washington Street

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

Also Present: Travis Ahern, Town Administrator; Kevin Rudden, Principal Assessor; Sherri Bates Assistant Assessor; Jeffrey Marshall, Board of Assessors Chair; Hamed Chalak, owner of Holliston Gas LLC; Bobby Blair, 57 School Street and Martin Spellacy, 35 Hill Street.

At 7:00pm J. Cronin called the meeting to order.

CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR HOLLISTON GAS LLC:

B. Sparrell made a motion to continue the Public Hearing from October 30, 2023 for Holliston Gas, LLC located at 585 Norfolk Street for a Wine and Malt License Application. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

J. Cronin stated that the Select Board had continued the Public Hearing from October 30, 2023 to allow for additional feedback. T. Hein did note that a neighboring resident had no concerns regarding the license and recognizes that laws requiring ID's for purchasing alcoholic beverages are in place. No other Public Comment was received.

B. Sparrell made a motion to close the Public Hearing with a vote to be taken immediately after regarding the Wine and Malt License Application for Holliston Gas, LLC. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve the Wine and Malt License Application for Holliston Gas, LLC located at 585 Norfolk Street and authorize the Town Administrator to take the steps necessary to obtain said license from the ABCC. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

CLASSIFICATION HEARING – TAX RATE:

B. Sparrell made a motion per Massachusetts General Law for the Holliston Select Board to hold the Public Tax Classification Hearing on November 13, 2023 at 7:00pm in Room 105, Town Hall Holliston Massachusetts. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

Jeffrey Marshall, Chair of the Board of Assessors stated that the Board based the Fiscal Year 2024 assessments based on the ownership status as of January 1, 2023 and analyzing sales data for a full calendar year, 2022, and calendar 2021-2022 for commercial/multifamily/industrial. Kevin Rudden, Principal Assessor explained that based on the 2023 Town Meeting approved Operating Budget, minus the State Aid and "local receipts" the Tax Levy (money raised through property taxes) is \$56,238,344, which is then divided by the total FY24 valuation of \$3,732,307,930 calculates the new tax rate of \$15.07 (per \$1,000 value). K. Rudden also stated that the Town has two options to consider, a single tax rate or a dual tax rate, which splits

the residential and commercial rates. The Board of Assessors voted for a single tax rate at their last meeting. K. Rudden also explained the Board of Assessors reviewed three exemptions available. The Residential Exemption, Open Space Exemption and the Small Commercial Exemption, all of which the Board of Assessors does not recommend the Town adopt. K. Rudden discussed several changes from FY23 to FY24 as well as New Growth for FY24. B. Sparrell read an email from a resident which K. Rudden has responded to. Ed Morini, 127 Hanlon Road stated that he favors the retention of an equalized Tax Rate and proceeded to give the reasons as to why.

Each Select Board member was given the opportunity to ask questions. Which then lead to a brief discussion regarding the future of New Growth in the Town. J. Cronin pointed out that it would appear that the future may lie in re-developable acreage as developable acreage is down to approximately 998 acres. K. Rudden stated that Holliston is becoming a "Mature Town". K. Rudden added that the Senior Exemption that was approved at the 2022 May Town Meeting is going through legislation currently.

B. Sparrell made a motion to close the Public Tax Classification Hearing at 7:45pm. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

B. Sparrell made a motion for the Town of Holliston not to adopt a dual tax rate for FY24. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

B. Sparrell made a motion for the Town of Holliston to adopt a residential factor of 1.0, thereby establishing a single tax rate of \$15.07 for Fiscal 2024, pending DOR approval. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

B. Sparrell made a motion that the Town of Holliston not adopt a Residential Exemption for FY24. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

B. Sparrell made a motion that the Town of Holliston not adopt an Open Space Exemption for FY24. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

B. Sparrell made a motion for the Town of Holliston not to adopt a Small Commercial Exemption for FY24. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

J. Cronin thanked K. Rudden and the Board of Assessors for their presentation.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

B. Sparrell read the memo for the curbside Fall Leaf Pickup which will take place the week of November 27, 2023. He also stated that the Marshall Street Recycling Center will be open on Saturdays and Sundays during the months of November and December 2023 and January 2024.

B. Sparrell read the "No on-street Winter Parking Ban".

T. Hein stated that it was pleasure to join the Veterans Day Events this past Saturday November 11, 2023. Much thanks to all those who organized the parade and luncheon.

J. Cronin also expressed his gratitude to all involved in the Veterans Day Events, including Steve Bradford, Holliston Lions and Leos and all the Veterans.

T. Ahern addressed comments recently made by a resident regarding the 9 Green Street Project. Questions regarding the Environmental components which were in the original plan but not yet reflected in the actual space itself. Due to several factors out of the Towns control

there are items which need to be addressed, specifically around the Green Space. The headwall at the culvert has been rebuilt and the invasive species vegetation has been removed. The ADA ramp and parking lot area, including the Veterans parking spot have been completed, however the rain garden and tree planting has been delayed due to the fact that Eversource has not yet completed their work. The picnic tables have yet to be installed, although the pad is in place.

WARRANT:

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve the Weekly Warrant in the amount of \$805,175.59. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

DISCUSSION OF DRAFT 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:

T. Ahern presented the latest draft of the 5-Year Strategic Plan which consists of a Mission Statement, Vision Statement and Guiding Principles. The Plan includes seven objectives. One; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Two; Education and Enrichment. Three; Environmental Sustainability and Natural Resources. Four; Financial Stability. Five; Flourishing Economy. Six; Thriving and Engaged Community. Seven; Robust Infrastructure.

B. Sparrell noted his involvement with the Envisioning Future Holliston Committee and stated that this is a great step forward in an ongoing process.

T. Hein shared several comments regarding the objectives. Under Environmental Sustainability and Natural Resources can the Town incorporate the Mass Audubon Broad Hill Wildlife Sanctuary. Under Financial Stability use the language “adopt and implement” rather than “impose” in the context of “optional local meals excise tax”. Under Robust Infrastructure can the Town work through the Federal Grant Program Safe Streets for all Action Plan to create a long range Traffic Safety Plan, and possibly hire an Engineer to handle the ongoing traffic issues throughout Town. Also to include the proposed YMCA Facility in Ashland and lastly highlight completing the Upper Charles River Rail Trail from Milford into Framingham.

J. Cronin asked with respect to the Plan what the next steps to be taken are. T. Ahern stated that the finalized document will be incorporated into the FY25 packet for Boards and Committees to tie into their plans. J. Cronin clarified that this is not to be confused with the Towns Master Plan which was drafted by the Planning Board in 1999 and recommended it be updated.

COMMENTS FROM THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:

T. Ahern stated that the next weeks Select Board Meeting Agenda, November 20, 2023 there will be an update on the Marshall Street Solar Project from Beth Greenblatt, as well as a discussion of the Financial Policy update from the Finance Committee with the Town Accountant, Treasurer/Collector and Principal Assessor.

The FY25 Budget Process will begin shortly, of which evaluations of the Department Heads will be incorporated.

A request has been made by several residents to change the name of a section of Lowland Street. Town Council will review the request and it will be discussed as part of the Select Boards December 11, 2023 agenda.

BOARD BUSINESS:

Bobby Blair, 57 School Street and Martin Spellacy, 35 Hill Street joined the meeting request approval for funding for three events in 2024, as part of the Towns 300th Celebration. The events have been endorsed by the 300th Celebrate Holliston Committee.

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve the use of funding in the amount of \$2,500 from Article 34 of the May 2022 Town Meeting for a Saint Patrick’s Day Roast to be held in the Upper Town on March 17, 2024. T. Hein second with the understanding that the Town Administrator will work with Celebrate Holliston to set up a mechanism to refund the \$2,500 to the Town. Vote 3-0.

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve the funding as part of Article 34 of May 2022 Town Meeting for a Laser Light Show on July 4, 2024 at the Holliston High School in the amount of \$4,500, which is half of the cost, other half to be funded by the American Legion and Holliston VFW. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve the request for funding as part of Article 34 of the May 2022 Town Meeting for the Clafin Hill Orchestra Concert in the amount of \$3,500 to be held at Blair Square in August 2024 with a date to be determined. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

OTHER BUSINESS:

T. Hein asked for an update on the previously discussed speed limit changes in various areas of Town.

T. Ahern stated that the Holliston Lions have submitted their request for “Light up Holliston” which actually began on November 12, 2023. The Lions have also requested that the Tree Lighting Ceremony be held on November 25, 2023, either at Blair Square or Town Hall, to be determined. Lastly there may be an abbreviated “Stroll” scheduled for the day as well, November 25, 2023, still to be confirmed.

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve the Holliston Lions “Light up Holliston Campaign” to be sponsored by Middlesex Bank, Holliston Superette, Griffin Electric and Affordable Duct and Cleaning Services. Pro bono work is being provided by Chipman Electric, Holliston Lions and the High School Leos Club. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

J. Cronin stated that the 2023 Humanitarian Awards were presented earlier this evening at 6:00pm in the Upper Town Hall. This years awards were presented to Jonathan and Leslie Gerber, Barbara Ryan and Steve Bradford. Congratulations to all.

At 8:25pm B. Sparrell made a motion to adjourn. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Driscoll

Approved_01-03-24

