

TOWN OF HOLLISTON
SELECT BOARD

November 16, 2020

Town Hall

6:31 P.M.

703 Washington Street

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

Also Present: T. Ahern, Town Administrator; Michael Cassidy, Fire Chief.

J. Cronin stated that the Board had just completed an award ceremony for the recipients of the Humanitarian Awards. He congratulated Debbie Dupuis, John Drohan and Keely Krantz.

At 6:31pm J. Cronin called the meeting to order.

COVID-19 UPDATE:

Holliston currently has 176 cases, 34 of which are active. The weekly positivity rate is now 2.42, and Holliston remains in the Yellow. Chief Cassidy quoted an expert in Public Health who said “it will take approximately 12 months until the U.S. has Herd Immunity”. The Chief went on to give an overview of the messaging blitz he has prepared to keep communication regarding the pandemic in the public forefront. The Chief suggested adding more electronic message boards in various locations around Town. Due to the fact that these need to be trailered and housed when not in use the Chief recommends renting the units as opposed to purchasing them. He will obtain more details and present back to the Board at next weeks meeting. He asked that people make some sacrifices during this upcoming Holiday Season, “Empty seats around the dinner table keep seats in school filled”. In conclusion, continue to wash hands, wear masks and keep social distance.

CARES ACT PROGRAMMATIC UPDATE:

Chief Cassidy reported that the project to work on the Town Hall windows is currently underway and due to some hidden costs the Facilities Manager is requesting an additional \$605 to be funded by the CARES Act. This work has made the windows easier to open/close for ventilation needed in Town Hall Offices. The original cost was \$4,000.

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve an additional \$605 to supplement the \$4,000 for the Town Hall window project. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

WARRANTS:

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve the weekly warrant in the amount of \$1,270,012.26. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

T. Hein congratulated the Hometown Hero's which were this years recipients for Celebrate Holliston. Due to the fact that this years celebration was canceled they will be honored next year along with those chosen in 2021.

Ed Daniels a member of the Holliston Trails Committee asked the Board for assistance in finding a solution to the trash issue at Blair Square. There is a Pet Station at that location which is being serviced by Jimmy Read of R&R Landscaping voluntarily. The Friends of the Trails Committee is willing to fund a receptacle, however they need to establish how it will be maintained. T. Hein stated that she and T. Ahern have discussed the issue and T. Ahern has been researching a solution and will share his findings with the Board soon.

COMMENTS FROM TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:

Construction to repair the culvert on Route 16 began Monday November 16, 2020 and a detour is in place for the next several days.

The Economic Development Fund now has a bill number and is moving forward through the legislature.

The Economic Development Committee is looking to pursue the EDA (Economically Disadvantaged Area) status which can open up access to funding for public and private projects within the Town. T. Ahern will put this item on next weeks agenda for further discussion.

A grant in the amount of \$16,650 from the MetroWest Health Foundation was given to Counsel on Aging to utilize technology which will enable seniors to stay connected. Linda Marshall, Senior Center Director joined the conversation and stated that this grant enables them to hire a Tech Assistant who can offer one on one support to seniors.

L. Marshall went on to state that on Monday November 23, 2020 the Senior Center will be providing 150 meals to seniors. Some will be delivered and others will be picked up at the center. This is to date the largest event they have done.

TOWN MEETING QUORUM:

The Board opened discussion around reducing the quorum for the upcoming Special Town Meeting scheduled for December 5, 2020. The current quorum is 100. The guidelines to reduce the quorum state that it can be reduced to 10%, however that is not the goal. The High School Auditorium can hold 142 seats safely with social distancing in place. B. Sparrell noted that by lowering the quorum it will not lower or limit the attendance. When asked, Chief Cassidy stated that he and the Town Moderator suggested lowering the quorum to 50.

Staci Raffi, School Committee Chair asked if an outside venue was considered. J. Cronin stated that weather was a large factor in deciding not to consider an outside option.

Louise Anne Hanstad, School Committee member asked if the High School Field House had been considered. Chief Cassidy responded that there is an issue with set up and the fact that chairs are not readily available for that space.

When asked if a Town Meeting could be held remotely the Chief responded that Holliston has an Open Forum Government and therefore cannot hold remote Town Meetings.

T. Hein requested that the decision be made after the public has had a chance to look at the final Warrant, which will be posted/published this week. The Board will take a vote at next weeks meeting.

TOWN MEETING WARRANT:

The Board began the final review of the Fall Special Town Meeting Warrant. T. Ahern stated that the Facilities Manager found a vehicle that better suits his needs, which is slightly less expensive then the vehicle currently listed under Article #5, Capital Budget. Anne Louise Hanstad, a member of the School Committee stated that the request for the Chromebooks under Article #5 is to cover replacements for grades 6 and 9. This request would normally have been on the May 2021 Town Meeting Warrant, however due to the pandemic the School Committee feels it is better suited for Special Town Meeting this December 2020. Keith Buday the School Manager joined the conversation to give a brief background regarding the High School Field House Insulation Project which is now an item under Article #5.

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve Article #5 Capital Budget totaling \$1,255,316.00 including the 2 line items from the schools. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

J. Cronin read Articles #1, #2, #3, #4, and #6 as written.

Discussion regarding Article #7, DPW Roadway/Drainage/Sidewalk Improvements resulted in increasing the total currently listed at \$353,000 by \$65,000 bringing the new total to \$418,000.

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve Article #7, Roadway/Drainage/Sidewalk Improvements with the adjustment of an additional \$65,000 bringing the new total to \$418,000. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

Discussion regarding Article #8, DPW Sidewalk Prioritization Plan/Study resulted in changing the language to add “look to identify other grants and opportunities for the implementation of sidewalks” B. Sparrell made a motion to approve Article #8 Sidewalk Prioritization Plan including language look to identify other grants and opportunities for the implementation of sidewalks”. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

J. Cronin continued to read Articles #9, #10, #11, #12, #13, #14, #15 and #16 as written.

T. Hein made a motion to open the Special Town Meeting Warrant to be able to remove Articles #17, #18, #19, and #20. B. Sparrell second. Vote 3-0.

B. Sparrell made a motion to remove Articles #17, #18, #19 and # 20 from the Special Town Meeting Warrant. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to close the Special Town Meeting Warrant. B. Sparrell second. Vote 3-0.

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve the Special Town Meeting Warrant with all discussed and approved changes/edits. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

BOARD BUSINESS:

B. Sparrell made a motion to approved James Cassidy as an on-call firefighter. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

James Keast, Facilities Manager joined the meeting with a presentation that he and Matt Zettek, Sustainability Consultant worked on regarding electric rate options in an effort to cut cost for the Town. They presented a list of various electrical vendors and their supplier rates. After some discussion the Board agreed to enter a 12 month contract with Patriot as the Towns electrical supplier. This will be a savings of \$74,445.

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve a 12 month contract, 100% renewable energy with Patriot. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

Carol Khori, 40 Bullard Street asked about the reliability record of Patriot. T. Ahern stated that Patriot is an energy supplier company and not responsible for maintenance. J. Keast added that Eversource will remain as the distributor.

B. Sparrell presented the final draft of the Select Board Q1 Update to be approved and posted on line.

T. Hein made a motion to approve the Select Board Q1 Update as written. J. Cronin second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to approve the Holiday Decorations for downtown to be installed by the Lions Club November 21, 2020, for a November 28, 2020 lighting. B. Sparrell second. Vote 3-0.

B. Sparrell made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of November 2, 2020 as written. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

OTHER BUSINESS:

T. Hein recently spoke with Chief Stone regarding the concern over the speed of traffic in the downtown area. The 3 traffic lights that were installed have definitely improved the traffic issues, however speed remains a concern. The Traffic Advisory Committee will be discussing ways to address this issue at their meeting on December 9, 2020, after which time T. Hein will report back to the Board.

At 8:53pm B. Sparrell made a motion to adjourn. T. Hein second. Vote 3-0.

Respectfully submitted

Margaret Driscoll

Approved_____

