

TOWN OF HOLLISTON

SELECT BOARD

March 14, 2022
7:00PM

Town Hall
703 Washington Street

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

Also Present: Travis Ahern, Town Administrator; Senate President Karen Spilka; Dennis Giambetti, State Senate Representative; Bobby Blair, representative for Farmers Market; Kris Westland, Community Farm Advisory Committee; Cynthia Listewnik, School Committee Chair; Dr. Susan Kustka, School Superintendent; Dr. Ken Szajda, Finance Committee Chair; Jay Robinson, Finance Committee member; Matthew Zettek, Sustainability Coordinator; Joan Levinsohn and Rich Rosenberry, residents, 66 Jarr Brook Road.

At 7:00pm T. Hein called the meeting to order.

FARMERS MARKET UPDATE:

Bobby Blair began his update by stating that the weather during the 2021 Farmers Market season was often rainy. The overall market made \$3,000, of which \$2,000 was donated to the Community Farm. The remaining \$1,000 has been held to cover the cost of insurance for this year, 2022. There will be several changes made to this years Farmers Market. The market will be held on Sundays from 9:30am-1:00pm. The first market will be held on June 5, 2022, which is 2 weeks earlier than last year and the last market will be on the first Sunday in October, 1 week earlier. B. Blair stated that the intent is to have entertainment, live music, starting at 10:00am. He encouraged anyone interested in preforming to please contact him.

Each Board member took the opportunity to voice their support for the return of the Farmers Market. T. Hein asked that B. Blair revisit the use of the assistance of the Auxiliary Police during the Farmers Market for this upcoming season.

COMMUNITY FARM UPDATE:

Kris Westland, Chair of the Community Farm Advisory Committee presented an update in the form of a progress report. Some of the ongoing projects include heating units in the Greenhouse, thanks to the Downtown Marigold Project and the new parking lot, funded by the CPC. Upcoming projects include the completion of the work needed on the Greenhouse, construction of a pavilion, and establishing a Nature Trail. The Holliston Park & Rec Department is running an after school gardening program to be held at the Community Farm this spring. K. Westland stated that they are facing a challenge with the proposed restroom facilities on site. The original composting system is not economically feasible and the Committee will be looking for alternatives as well as additional funding.

J. Cronin informed K. Westland that the Select Board has received a letter from a member of the Agricultural Commission regarding concerns regarding what may be discrepancies between the for profit and non-profit farms. The Board suggests that the Community Farm and the Agricultural Commission meet to discuss each mission.

ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: SENATE PRESIDENT SPILKA:

Senate President Karen Spilka joined the meeting and began her legislative update by thanking all for taking the time day in and out for all their hard work they do within the community. Senator Spilka also took the opportunity to thank former Representative Carolyn Dykema for her service and wish her the best of luck going forward. Senator Spilka presented the Legislative Update going over legislation that was passed in 2021 and various items yet to be voted as well as possible upcoming federal funding. Some of the ground covered includes the following: Mental Health legislation is working to make advances to eliminate the stigma around mental health illness. The hope is to use \$400 million of ARPA funding to transform Mental Health in the State.

There is currently a prescription drug reform bill to lower cost and increase access which needs to go to the House.

In October 2021 the Senate passed the Votes Act which pertains to mail in voting and same day registration is now in conference committee.

A roadmap to get the State to a net zero by 2050 was passed in the spring of 2021. The Senate will work on additional tools to achieve that goal and other green initiatives.

Holliston Schools will have access to close to \$700,000 in grant funding.

Several earmarks which were provided to Holliston with the assistance of Representative Dykema are \$650,000 for water/sewer infrastructure, \$100,000 for Goodwill Park, \$25,000 for Holliston Drug Alcohol Awareness coalition and \$30,000 for the Veterans Memorial at Blair Square

Chapter 90 Funding for FY23 will be approximately \$500,000.

The State of Massachusetts will receive \$9 Billion over the next 5 years for infrastructure funding.

Senator Spilka noted that the States revenues are coming in strong. The Rainy Day Fund is currently in excess of \$4 Billion.

The Senator concluded her update by thanking the Town of Holliston for being proactive and being direct and specific with requests to her office.

Each Select Board member thanked the Senator for her very thorough legislative update. J. Cronin stated that he is grateful for any help that can be given via the Senators Office in regards to shovel ready projects throughout Town. T. Hein invited the Senator to Hollistons 300th Anniversary which will be coming up in 2024.

Cynthia Listewnik, School Committee Chair thanked the Senator for her commitment to the students and the schools. She also stated that with the aid of ARPA funding Holliston will

institute full day kindergarten this upcoming 2022/2023 school year.

Dr. Susan Kustka, Superintendent of Schools voiced her appreciation for Senator Spilkas commitment to the mental wellness of students and stated the Holliston is focused on Social Emotional Learning in an effort to deal with the effects of the pandemic.

Dr. Ken Szajda, Finance Committee Chair asked the Senator to weigh in on any possible changes to the Open Meeting Laws. He stated that remote participation makes it easier for people to attend meetings and also the recorded meetings provides more transparency.

Jay Robinson, Finance Committee member echoed Dr. Szajdas comments regarding the Open Meeting Law. He pointed out that Holliston relies on volunteers to sit on various boards and committees and if residents are able to attend meetings remotely volunteering may become more accessible. J. Robinson also stated the during the pandemic many insurance companies allowed tele-health for many types of health care some of which have ended. He expressed his support to make such changes permanent.

The Senator took time to thank Dennis Giambetti and Momina Haidra a staff member for their assistance in supporting the Town.

WARRANTS:

J. Cronin made a motion to approve the Weekly Warrant in the amount of \$2,311,764.67. B. Sparrell second. Vote 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

J. Cronin congratulated Anna Hein, T. Hein's daughter on her recent swim meet victory.

B. Sparrell stated the Community Preservation Commission will meet on Wednesday March 16, 2022 to discuss the Blair Square renovations and various Town cemeteries improvements.

B. Sparrell added that Envisioning Future Holliston will also meet at the same time on Wednesday March 16, 2022.

T. Hein stated that there will be a meeting on Tuesday March 22, 2022 in which the topic of discussion will be Social Emotional Learning and Equity. She then provided the link.

FY2023 BUDGET REVIEW & DELIBERATION-OPERATING & CAPITAL:

T. Ahern presented the current draft of the FY23 Operating Budget. The Town Administrator recommended FY23 Budget was posted on March 4, 2022. The recommended budget was not able to accommodate the HPD request for the 26th Officer and the creation of a Grounds Division. T. Ahern stated that the proposed FY23 School Budget has not been presented yet. Once the recommended School Budget is presented the discussion regarding the possibility of the 2 above mentioned requests can be discussed. Each Select Board member expressed some frustration and agreed to hold a vote until further discussion at next weeks meeting.

T. Ahern then presented the draft FY23 Capital Requests. T. Ahern went through the list and stated that the some of the requests will be made at the October 2022 Town Meeting.

J. Cronin asked that the Schools present an itemized list regarding their capital requests, which include technology infrastructure and indoor cameras.

Dan Alfred, Finance Committee member stated that he acknowledges the Select Boards frustration, however he pointed out circling back to the Operating Budget, the Schools are looking to Level Fund as well.

All agreed that continued dialogue between the Finance Committee, Select Board and the Schools is needed to bring clarity.

COMMENTS FROM TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:

T. Ahern will submit the grant application for the States One Stop for Growth program by the deadline which is Friday March 18, 2022. T. Ahern noted that the Axton Cross property, which is currently in “land court” could be of possible interest.

T. Ahern stated that there are a number of vacancies on elected Boards, (elections to be held May 2022) as well as vacancies on committees. Any resident interested in running will need to pull papers by April 5, 2022 through the Town Clerk.

Warrant May 9, 2022: T. Ahern presented the preliminary Warrant line by line. Several articles relating to cannabis delivery, general and zoning by-laws will be on the warrant sponsored by the Planning Board.

J. Cronin made a motion to send 4 zoning by-laws amendments as presented and initiated by the Planning Board, voted at their meeting on March 10, 2022, back to the Planning Board for review with a Public Hearing scheduled for April 14, 2022 in accordance with Chapter 40A section 5 and required under the stature. B. Sparrell second. Vote 3-0.

T. Ahern noted there are no citizens petitions currently on the Warrant.

The Warrant for the May 9, 2022 Town Meeting will close on Friday March 21, 2022 at 4:00pm.

BOARD BUSINESS:

Matt Zettek, Sustainability Coordinator presented a letter pertaining to the DOER Stretch Code and endorsed by several municipalities. He asked the Select Board if they would like to add their endorsement by signing the letter. J. Cronin voiced his concerns as to the impact of the new Stretch Code and what the actual costs to the residents will be. J. Cronin noted that he would like to see the Town advocate for the residents and in the future look for possible funding to offset any increases to the consumers.

Joan Levinsohn and Rich Rosenberry, 66 Jarr Brook Road both voiced their support of the letter and the changes proposed by the Stretch Code to meet the goal of net zero by 2050. They noted their appreciation regarding the Towns interest in the ongoing effort to combat the climate crisis.

J. Cronin made a motion to endorse the Stretch Code letter as drafted contingent on drafting a follow up letter or correspondence that substantiates the need for State funding for “cutover” for certain types of utilities and or heating programs for consumers. B. Sparrell second. Vote 3-0

J. Cronin made a motion to accept a donation from the Middlesex Saving Bank in the amount of \$500 to the Park & Recreation Department for Summer concerts B. Sparrell second. Vote 3-0.

J. Cronin made a motion to appoint Ronald Turcott, Stanley Feinberg and Charles Jacobs to the VFW Memorial Day Committee with terms to expire on June 30, 2022. B. Sparrell second. Vote 3-0.

J. Cronin made a motion to approve the transfer of \$2,610 from the Agricultural Commission revolving fund to the Pinecrest Golf Course revolving fund for community garden plots at Pinecrest. B. Sparrell second with a comment that the funds will go into a separate line to be tracked. Vote 3-0.

J. Cronin made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of February 14, 2022 as written. B. Sparrell second. Vote 3-0.

T. Hein made a motion to approve the appointment of Georgia Papavasiliou from an associate member to a full member on the Council on Aging with a term to expire on June 30, 2023. B. Sparrell second. Vote 3-0.

OTHER BUSINESS:

J. Cronin asked that T. Ahern look to develop a facilitator role within the Town Hall to work with local businesses, perhaps the Assistant Town Administrator. B. Sparrell would like to have a broader conversation regarding the matter. T. Hein suggested the Board review the draft once presented.

T. Hein stated that with the Spring approaching the Town will want to review the mosquito spraying and review the “opt-out” policy again this year.

At 10:02pm T. Hein made a motion to enter into Executive Session for reason 2, with respect to strategy for negotiations with non-union personnel, not to return to Open Session. B. Sparrell second. Roll Call J. Cronin: AYE B. Sparrell: AYE T. Hein: AYE

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Driscoll

Approved_ 4-11-22