



**TOWN OF HOLLISTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**703 Washington Street
Holliston, MA 01746**

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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
HOLLISTON TOWN HALL
JANUARY 28, 2019**

Present: Jay Marsden, Chairman; Mark Ahronian, Vice Chairman; John Cronin, Clerk

Also present: Jeff Ritter, Town Administrator

At 7:00p.m. Chairman J. Marsden called the meeting to order.

1.) Warrant: J. Cronin read the Warrant and made a motion to approve the weekly vendor (expense) and payroll Warrant (19-31) in the amount of \$1,432,329.65. Second, M. Ahronian. Voted 3-0

2.) Public Comment: J. Cronin said he recently met with the Police Chief and the Chairman of the Finance Committee for the purposes of reviewing the Department's FY20 budget.

He said he was impressed with the Chief's budget preparation and his explanations for the Departmental needs.

J. Cronin said William and Sylvia Stickney are extraordinary citizens of Holliston and frequent viewers of the Board of Selectmen's meeting. He extended his greetings.

M. Ahronian reminded the public about the upcoming "Souper Bowl" this Saturday from 5p.m, until 7:30p.m. This event benefits the Holliston Food Pantry and is a good cause everyone should attend.

3.) Report of the Town Administrator: J. Ritter reported he was planning to participate in the "Community Read" program again this year by reading to a 3rd grade class on February 14th.

Page Two
Meeting Minutes 1-28-19

Regarding the trash and recycling proposals received last Thursday. The Town received proposals from Harvey, Waste Management, Casella, and Republic Services. The responses are being reviewed and the Board will hear a presentation shortly.

4.) Department of Conservation and Recreation Grant Application for the Upper Charles River Rail Trail Parking: Members of the Blair Square Committee were present.

J. Ritter provided a summary of the \$92,121.98 Grant Application. To be completed under the Grant design and drainage, a property survey, an asphalt binder would be put into place, a chain link fence installed along the "Askin" property and a decorative split rail type fence along "Casey's" property line, lighting would be installed, and about twenty (20) new parking spaces created.

J. Cronin asked the proposed \$33,695.00 local match. J. Ritter said this would be mostly in-kind donations from engineering firms and others.

J. Cronin asked if this would include the Town being granted an easement on Casey's property and crossing lights. J. Ritter responded that it would.

Members of the Committee thanked Karen Sherman Town Planner and Tom Smith Highway Superintendent with their assistance in preparing the application.

M. Ahronian made a motion to approve and sign the application. Second, J. Cronin. Voted 3-0

5.) FY20 Budget Review, Treasurer/Collector; Town Accountant; Auxiliary Police Debt:

Auxiliary Police: Sergeant George Leurini, Director, was present and briefed the Board on the proposed FY20 Auxiliary Police budget.

G. Leurini said the Auxiliary Police are down one (1) officer due to a retirement in FY19. Overall 1,290 hours were donated to the Town representing \$87,462 in savings.

He is requesting a FY20 budget in the amount of \$13,764.42. He reviewed the Auxiliary Police Training, Police Events.

J. Cronin asked if the approximately \$4,000 in donations would be available for future years. G. Leurini said yes. They have five (5) new applicants to fill the open position. Interview should start next week.

Page Three
Meeting Minutes 1-28-19

M. Ahronian thanks the Auxiliary Police for all that they do for the community and all the many extra hours they put into the job. This is a very valuable service to Holliston. He asked which events take the most time.

G. Leurini said that would be Celebrate Holliston and the various cycling events.

J. Marsden added the Auxiliary Police provide great value to Holliston and the Officers donate a lot of time to the Community. He thanked them for all their efforts.

M. Ahronian made a motion to approve and refer to the Finance Committee the FY20 Auxiliary Police Budget in the amount of \$13,764.42. Second, J. Cronin. Voted 3-0

Treasurer/Collector & Town Accountant: Mary Bousquet, Treasurer/ Collector and Sharon Emerick, Town Accountant were present.

FY20 Debt Service Budget: M. Bousquet reviewed the FY20 Debt Service Budget and noted the budget consists of two (2) primary areas, long-term and short term debt.

J. Cronin asked about the long term debt line item in the amount of \$4,825,314 and if that number covers all the expenses for all outstanding projects including overrides and if that number will increase or decrease in the coming years.

M. Bousquet said the number would increase until 2021 at which time it would decrease.

M. Ahronian asked about the High School debt and when that would be paid for. M. Bousquet said between 2021 and 2023 the elementary school would come off the debt schedule first.'

M. Ahronian made a motion to approve and refer to the Finance Committee the FY20 Debt Service Budget in the amount of \$5,298,869. Second, J. Cronin. Voted 3-0

Treasurer/Collector Budget: M. Bousquet reviewed her proposed FY20 Budget which include the addition of on Assistant Treasurer position due to the increase in volume and the need to complete monthly reconciliations.

The Department has seen significant turnover from a seasoned and experienced workforce to a staff that is in training. There needs to be a plan in place for additional Departmental turnover including her position. There has also been one (1) demotion in her Department which has to be accounted for.

S. Emerick said there is an additional ten (10) hours in her budget to handle retirement benefits.

Page Four
Meeting Minutes 1-28-19

J. Cronin asked in the FY19 budget were one (1) or two (2) employees demoted. M. Bousquet said we are talking about two (2) full-time positions.

J. Cronin asked about the market and their approach toward filling the position(s). M. Bousquet said it is difficult to know until we advertise.

J. Cronin asked about the qualifications. M. Bousquet said a working knowledge of Excel and a very detailed oriented person will be needed.

J. Cronin agreed that it is important to have a plan in place in the event M. Bousquet were to win the lottery that there would be a seamless transition.

J. Cronin asked about the demoted person and the responsibilities that person does on a daily basis. M. Bousquet said that person does an extraordinary job working on benefits and works well with retirees.

J. Cronin said so the proposal is to add ten (10) hours to assist the Town Accountant and the proposal is to create a new full-time position in the Treasurer/Collector's Office. . S. Emerick said a lot of the work load falls on M. Bousquet's desk and the Town Accountant's Office is taking on more of that workload. There would be five (5) full-time clerks.

M. Ahronian asked for the opinion of J. Ritter. J. Ritter said there is clearly a need the workload continues to increase and the staffing levels remain at what they were ten (10) years ago.

M. Bousquet pointed out regarding payroll we are working to establish hard deadlines for department to submit their payroll information including the School Department.

M. Ahronian said regarding the Assistant Treasurer position if we were able to hire a superstar perhaps the demoted position will not be needed. M. Bousquet said we might run into job classification issues which might limit our options. But operations of the Department must carry-on.

J. Marsden said he met last week with M. Bousquet for the purposes of reviewing the proposal and discussed it with the Chairman of the Finance Committee and they are aware of the situation.

J. Cronin asked if the ten (10) hours per week could come from the demoted person. M. Bousquet said no the volume is too great.

Page Five
Meeting Minutes 1-28-19

M. Ahronian made a motion to approve and refer to the Finance Committee the original budget without the additional hours. There was no second.

M. Ahronian made a motion to approve and refer to the Finance Committee the budget with the additional hours for a total of \$383,379. Second, J. Cronin. Voted 3-0

Town Accountant Budget: S. Emerick reviewed her budget in detail including the need to increase her assistant's position by ten (10) hours.

J. Cronin asked by adding an additional ten (10) hours per week what would that bring the position to in total. S. Emerick said that would bring the position to thirty-five (35) hours. Although benefit eligible the current person is not taking benefits.

J. Cronin asked about the Annual Audit. S. Emerick said they just signed a three (3) year Contract at a level funded amount at \$32,000 per year.

J. Cronin asked about seeking competitive proposals for the Annual Audit. He is a fan of doing this and would like to see as much of it as possible. J. Ritter said the Annual Audit is an exempt activity under the Procurement Act but we can look into that option going forward.

S. Emerick said so far we have been very pleased with their services and look forward to continuing to use them.

M. Ahronian made a motion to approve and refer to the Finance Committee the budget with the additional hours for a total of \$173,586. Second, J. Cronin. Discussion: M. Ahronian said the Finance Committee might push back on the additional hours. Voted 3-0

7.) Board Business

Reimbursement Policy: The decided to hold this item until M. Bousquet returned with her "Benefits Budget." This will provide the opportunity to consider comments from J. Cronin.

6.) Board of Library Trustees: The following Trustees were present. Bob Ostrow, Jim Pond, Karla Alfred, Nancy Baron and Librarian Leslie McDonnell.

L. McDonnell provided a summary about the existing Library. The Trustees are trying to create a vision for the future. To build a new public library, to renovate the existing building, or to renovate and expand the existing facility.

Page Six
Meeting Minutes 1-28-19

They are considering a long term plan and to hire a consultant to assist with that plan. We think the cost would be around \$10,000. We need a twenty (20) year vision the Strategic Plan is scheduled to be updated during 2020 so perhaps the two (2) activities could be connected.

Several years ago a community survey was completed and at that time only 23% responding said they thought the Library should be moved.

M. Ahronian said once the repairs are completed we should have a better idea of what remaining work needs to be completed. L. McDonnell said a lot of work needs to be completed such as masonry, stairs, painting the carpet is 17 to 18 years old. We understand the Children's Room is too small and is always booked.

K. Alfred said we understand that many young parents are going to other communities to get services for their children. A consultant who specializes in library work would provide all the options to consider.

L. McDonnell agreed a consultant would view the bigger picture and understand the formulas for possible funding. Perhaps through the consultants eyes we can better utilize the existing space.

M. Ahronian asked J. Ritter about the current restrictions on the building land. J. Ritter responded that there does not appear to be any restrictions on the building however when Mrs. Burnap donated the land there was a clear restriction that the land is to be used as a public library.

J. Cronin said he asked the Town Accountant and the Building Inspector to provide details on expenses and the condition of the building. The Town Accountant reported about \$295,000 has been spent over the last eight (8) years and he is waiting for that report. But he has completed an initial review and reported that building is in good shape for the next several years. So what is the problem?

B. Ostrow said when the ceiling began to let go that's when it the Trustees began thinking about this again and now the building is unsuitable as a fully functioning library and further noted over the years nothing has really be invested in the Library.

K. Alfred said the building is valued but we are outgoing the Children's Room and there is a need for more meeting space. Also, there seems to be a growing trend for more quite space.

J. Marsden said it appears that the Town has expended a small amount of money on the building over the years.

Page Seven
Meeting Minutes 1-28-19

K. Alfred said there are surprises after surprises.

J. Marsden said we need a better understand of what a 21st Century public library should look like and the services offered.

K. Alfred said we need funding to hire a consultant.

L. McDonnell said she interviewed a couple but will interview a third. J. Marsden said channel all information through J. Ritter who will then share it with the Board of Selectmen.

7.) Board Business

Meeting Minutes from January 22, 2019: M. Ahronian made a motion to approve and release the Meeting Minutes from January 22, 2019. Second, J. Cronin. Voted 3-0

Performance Evaluation Process: J. Cronin said he provided his comments to the Town Clerk. M. Ahronian will provide his comments as well. J. Marsden will provide a summary to J. Ritter.

Vote to Close the Annual Town Meeting Warrant: M. Ahronian made a motion to close the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Second, J. Cronin. Discussion: J. Cronin asked if this was the usual time to close the Warrant. J. Ritter said it is the custom to do so at the end of January.

J. Marsden said if the Board decides the Warrant could be reopened. Vote 3-0

Request from the School Committee: J. Marsden said as a follow-up to the recent correspondence and a conversation with the Chairman of the School Committee. The question for the Board is do we want to hear another presentation from Dr. Jackson regarding the submittal of a Statement of Interest (SoI). But not much has changed since we last heard the presentation.

J. Cronin said he was involved with the previous school building process. He thank B. Jackson for providing a tour of the exterior of the High School last summer. He did not notice any evidence of deferred maintenance. If we were to proceed it would be about ten (10) years before a shovel is put into the ground.

Taxpayers need to understand what the School Committee is going to do now up to if and when any construction were to start. The High School is an asset that must be maintained. How does the School Committee plan to maintain the building for the next ten (10) years?

Page Eight
Meeting Minutes 1-28-19

M. Ahronian suggested there are other programs under the SBAB and remodeling the High School might be a viable option given the debt will be paid off shortly.

J. Cronin said the SBA does support renovation projects and it is his understanding that it is allowed. He also supports a feasibility study.

M. Ahronian said he would like to see how much a renovation program would cost and what could be done for example \$10 million. The building is currently in a great location. It could be done if you look at the Agricultural High School it was done there. Also, private citizens just donated \$100,000 to replace the gym floor.

Why spend \$26 million just to remove an existing asset.

Also, we have other issues such as waterline replacements. We have a new water treatment plant but that is not enough. We are currently spending \$1 million per year. We need to be spending like \$3 million per year on water infrastructure alone.

J. Cronin agreed this is a top capital need. He would like to better understand about the High School building alternatives.

J. Ritter will invite the School Committee and Dr. Jackson to attend the meeting of February 12, 2019 (Tuesday) Monday is a holiday.

Adjourn: At 8:37p.m. M. Ahronian made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Second, J. Cronin.
Voted 3-0

Respectfully submitted,



J. Jeffrey Ritter
Town Administrator