

Holland Finance Board

27 Sturbridge Road, Holland, MA 01521

Holland Town Hall - Community Room

Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, March 31, 2021

Virtual and Physical Meeting of the Board and Guests

Meeting Attendance:

- In person: Members Sharon Ashleigh, Ernie Fancy, Andy Harhay and Town Administrator (TA) Stacy Stout.
- Remote: Member Kelli Robbins and Selectman Clelland Johnson.

Open Meeting –

The Chair opened the meeting at 6:44 pm.

Minutes for Review –

Minutes for 3/10/21 and 3/17/21 are not available at this time. Ms. Robbins is currently developing the draft minutes for 3/10/21.

Review of the Planning Board Budget Request –

Ms. Ashleigh recognized that the Town currently does not have a functioning Planning Board at this time, so there is no request to review. The amounts approved for the FY21 budget were \$2,500 for stipends and \$2,700 for expenses, a total of \$5,200.

Correspondence –

Mr. Harhay noted that the Town Accountant revisited the possibility of transferring \$100K from the Assessor Overlay account for use in the operating budget and determined that these funds would be not be available for FY22.

Review of the Expenditure Report -

Ms. Stout informed the Finance Board that the funds in the Street Lighting line have been fully expended.

Review of Special Revenue Funds Ledger –

- Mr. Harhay noted these special accounts do not seem to have been on the Finance Board's radar in the past, although many contain significant dollars that could possibly be used to support Town initiatives. For example, the *Cash Waterways Improvement Fund 40* contains ~ \$26,000 received in government grants received in

past years for the purpose of maintaining waterways. He suggested that the Board take the time to review these special accounts in detail. Ms. Stout said that she would be very interested in participating in the review process.

- Mr. Fancy was concerned that the *Cash Off-Duty Police Detail C44S53G* account shows a deficit of ~ \$9,076. Mr. Johnson said that he talked to the Town Accountant about his apparent deficit and learned that this Ledger can be two months behind in being updated. The accountant said that she keeps an active spreadsheet and verified that it is balanced.

Budget Review –

- Ms. Ashleigh asked the members to bring up and of the budget lines that they felt should be discussed at this meeting.
- Mr. Harhay indicated that he and Mr. Fancy had individually worked to develop draft budgets that were balanced, but employing different approaches. The two draft budgets had been distributed to the Finance Board members, as well as to Ms. Stout and Mr. Johnson.
- Prior to reviewing the budget lines, Mr. Fancy asked that we first have a vote on the COLA percentage to be used for FY22 and made a motion to set the COLA at 2.0% for FY22; 2nd by Mr. Harhay. After discussion of differing points of view, the Board voted unanimously in favor, by roll call vote, of the motion.
- Mr. Harhay suggested that determinations made in budget line amounts be voted at the completion of the entire budget, so that members are aware of overall ramifications; members thought the approach very reasonable.
- Grant Writer line: Although \$40,000 was originally requested by the Select Board for the services of a grant writer, Ms. Stout and Mr. Johnson indicated that funding a line for \$30,000 would be reasonable to them for FY22. the \$30,000 was tentatively put in that line.
- Assessors: Ms. Ashleigh indicated that the Accountant advised against putting a line for transition/overlap wages into the operating budget; after discussion, that line – funded at \$5,000 in Mr. Fancy’s draft and \$3,387 in Mr. Harhay’s draft - was eliminated. In determining a fair salary for the position, Mr. Harhay noted that the hourly rate is not as financially significant as the number of work hours judged appropriate for an experienced individual. Ms. Stout felt that, in a salaried position, an individual is paid to do ‘the job’, whatever that reasonably requires. After further discussion it was agreed to remove the overlap, tentatively set the salary for the Principal Assessor at \$47,683 (current salary + 2.0%). Clerk wage left at \$3,388 and expenses at the requested \$15K.
- Board of Health: Question was asked as to why the wage line for the clerk was double that of the \$1,530 approved for FY21. Ms. Stout indicated that she had

posted the position based on the \$3K requested and suggested that it be left at that level for now; the line was left at \$3K.

- Board of Selectmen: Mr. Fancy felt that the salary for the TA should be increased, based on what is expected of the position. Mr. Harhay suggested that the position of administrative assistant to the TA, which was deferred at the FY21 ATM, be again submitted for approval in order to allow the TA more time to focus on key aspects of her administrative functions. After discussion, it was tentatively agreed to compensate the TA at the same level as the Principal Assessor, i.e., \$47,683, and to use \$7,000 as the annual wage for the proposed administrative assistant position. There was discussion about possibly using money in a Special Reserve Fund to somewhat off-set treatment of the lake but, Ms. Robbins that the use of non-recurring funds in balancing the budget would be a mistake. Mr. Harhay thought that repairs to the dam would be an appropriate use of that special fund in the future.
- Treasurer – In reviewing the current salaries of key position in the Town, it was felt by all that the \$39,592 salary of the Treasurer was less than deserved for the broad responsibilities of that position. The discussion concluded that the salary for the Treasurer should be in the same neighborhood as that of the Principal Assessor and the Town Administrator, so all will be tentatively funded at the same amount in the draft budget, i.e., \$47,683. Although the salaries for the three positions are within the appropriate range identified in the compensation study performed by the Collins Center for Brookfield, the consensus was that Holland needs to formally pursue developing a compensation schedule specific to Holland.
- Building Inspector – At the present time, the wage for the Building Inspector clerk is a line item in the operating budget. Mr. Harhay suggested that it could be funded by that department's revolving fund. He also noted that there has not been a draw on the Zoning Enforcement Officer stipend line, perhaps indicating that the funds could be deleted from the budget. Ms. Stout was asked to discuss the two questions with the Town's new Building inspector.
- Community Center – Mr. Fancy and Mr. Harhay had proposed different amounts for the Community Center Expenses line; it was agreed to tentatively fund the line at \$25,000.
- Finance Board – It was felt that the current environment made it appropriate to increase the amount budgeted for the Reserve Fund; it was decided tentatively fund the line at \$40,000.
- Fire Department – After reviewing the historical call-out information and recognizing the increase in the minimum wage, it was decided to tentatively increase the line from the current \$18,949 to \$23,000. The Expenses line was tentatively set at \$56,500.

- Highway Department – The Surveyor had requested \$250,000 for the Road Improvement line and members thought it a priority to try to fund to that level. The line was tentatively set at that level, recognizing the likely need to draw from the Roadway Stabilization Fund.
- Mr. Fancy made a motion to accept all of the budget line changes tentatively made during these discussions; Ms. Robbins 2nd and the motion was unanimously approved by roll-call vote.

Roundtable –

- Mr. Harhay mentioned that there had been past discussions of on structuring a Capital Planning Committee that would focus on protentional large projects in Holland. His review of the current bylaw describing the Committee could easily be modified to make the focus be large scale projects.
- Mr. Fancy questioned why the Planning Board bylaws required four of five votes for approval of certain motions. Ms. Robbins indicated that the decisions of that particular board required a super majority.
- Ms. Robbins asked about progress on updating the Holland bylaws. Ms. Stout indicted that getting information from the Bylaw Committee to the contractor has been slow due to membership changes on the Committee, but that she is working to speed up the process.
- Ms. Stout noted that work on a land auction is now actively moving forward and would help to benefit the Town's financial picture.
- Ms. Ashleigh indicated that the next meeting would be on April 7, 2021, with part of the meeting being joint with the Select Board, to review tentative warrant articles.

Adjournment –

Mr. Fancy made the motion to adjourn, Mr. Harhay 2nd; approved unanimously by roll- call vote at 9:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted: Andrew Harhay, Acting Secretary