

Holland Finance Board
Meeting Minutes for Wed, February 17, 2021
6:30 PM

MINUTES

FB Members present:

- **In attendance:** Sharon Ashleigh, Kelli Robbins, Ernie Fancy
- **Call In:** Andrew Harhay

Others present: Stacy Stout, Call in: Larry Mandell, Cynthia Poirier (Assessor Board Member), JoAnne Higgins (Principal Assessor) James Whalen, Brenda Palmer (Community Center Director, Linda Racine (Council on Aging Chair)

Meeting called to order at: 6:35 PM

- Minutes of 2/3/21 approved with amendments for names

First budget discussion with the Assessors, Cynthia Poirier, JoAnne Higgins

Ms. Poirier began with an amendment to the documents provided. \$64,810 should be the salary for the principal assessor. Reasons for increase are: proposed forecasting to carry out duties and to be competitive to replace Ms. Higgins. She currently works 26 hours a week @ \$35.61 an hour. The Assessors feel this is a very competitive salary. Need to work on the hours. Ms. Higgins has all the skills but someone else will need more hours. Proposing to have the ability to for a 35 hour position at the same wage. That gives the flexibility to match a qualified candidate with the salary to move forward. This would also allow cross over for training. Ms. Higgins would stay at the same hours while allowing a new person to come on board and get some crossover with Ms. Higgins for becoming up to date. Extra hours are needed for writing RFP for upcoming Revaluation, title work for land of low value, ATB cases, etc. The Board needs a new assessor due to loss of Christian Petersen. There are increases on software maintenance. The Department of Revenue has determined that all public utilities, classified as 504, need to be reassessed, a bid of \$1,000.00 has been received to reassess the 504's, as well as office supplies are included in the expenses. The Assessor's Clerk current clerk is retiring, so the funds for that position can be folded into the upcoming salary for the next fiscal year.

Ms. Robbins asked what training. MAAO trainings, clerk meetings, USPAA (covers ethical requirements of being fair and equitable, goes into great detail about responsibility of being an Assessor) Spoke very highly of JoAnne for keeping values stable and up to date with few abatements.

Mr. Harhay asked if there were any comparisons with the area? Ms. Poirier, yes extensive comparison with similar towns Holland is very competitive. Ms. Higgins forwarded those to the Finance Board. Ms. Poirier explained some of the comparisons.

Mr. Fancy asked how many parcels are in Holland total? Ms. Higgins stated there are approximately, 2400 total parcels of land in Holland. Ms. Ashleigh thanked the Assessors for their hard work especially JoAnne.

Brenda Palmer – Community Center Budget

This year everything has gone crazy. Budget was provide late because of the increase in time needed to assist with COVID shots for seniors:

3% increase on wages for director and staff

\$29,936.00 director salary

\$27,845.00 staff wages

\$24,765.00 which includes a new freezer. Expenses could be level funded but would like to add \$2,000.00 for a new freezer.

\$1,200.00 My Senior Center software

Discussion of van to be used for transportation of Town senior citizens.

Seeking \$10,000.00

A van from Worcester Regional Transport authority is due to be donated to Holland. Costs are estimates except for insurance which Ms. Stout has a quote for \$800.00.

There will be mandatory trainings required of drivers. Lift training would be one.

Estimated 10 hours a week – at 13.50 an hour. (note: minimum wage increases in January 2022 to \$14.25) = \$7,020 plus \$800 for insurance, the remainder to be used for gas.

The van the town will receive will have 150,000 miles on it or be 5 yrs old. It will come prepared and ready for COVID-19 precautions with plexiglass for driver and passengers. Ms. Palmer explained the process for other towns' supporting their vans, the possibility for grants to continue funding the van and the circular impact of the funding requirements for qualifying for the van and any future grants. She stated they would prioritize getting people to the Center and medical appointments.

Mr. Harhay asked if Ms. Palmer looked at cost as a new purchase? No, because the van is donated. This is to get the town a van asap. Wrote to MCOA to help get a new van at some point in the future.

Mr. Fancy asked if there have been any discussions with Quaboag Valley Connector to possibly add Holland to their schedule. Yes, she has spoken with the director, Gayle. Had some seniors fill out questionnaires. Have done several surveys and people wanted the van but the same people would not use the drivers who would volunteer. Not sure why they would not utilize the service.

Mr. Fancy noted it seems like there is not much utilization. Brenda explained a meeting that demonstrated how people get where they need to be shows they adapt. She state the meeting showed if a van is available they will use it.

Linda Racine COA

The only thing that is needed is an increase for the newsletter of \$1,500.00 to cover increase in costs. Mailing is being done because people are unable to come to the Center. Advertising is done to defray the cost but not all renewed their advertisements.

Mr. Fancy asked if the newsletter could be emailed. Ms. Palmer stated there are over 700 emails.

Ms. Robbins inquired how the senior companion mileage and volunteer driver mileage, parking, stipend will be impacted by the van? Right now the person who drives is not allowed to drive. Ms. Racine stated the senior companion expense can be reduced back to FY 21 budget of \$2700.

Motion 021721-1 to approve with corrections minutes of 2/3/20 Mr. Harhay, 2nd Ms. Ashleigh so voted. Mr. Fancy abstained.

Follow up

Follow-up on previous meeting tasks:

Outstanding meetings to still be completed, Ms. Robbins will do 1/6/21, Ms. Ashleigh 11/11/20, Mr. Harhay 2/10/21, Mr. Fancy 1/20/21.

Ms. Ashleigh reached out to Moderator, William Hardy to inform him that Joe Yiznitsky has resigned. Mr. Hardy stated that he would allow posting of the position once a formal written resignation has been received.

Ms. Robbins did a quick spreadsheet for Town Clerk salary.

Mr. Harhay asked if the Board had an opportunity to look at the email he had sent out today. He attempted to calculate the hourly rate for people based on posted hours to see what an hourly wage is for a given position. Is there a method to see how many hours a position needs? How do we get to a fair and consistent way to determine wages? Ms. Sprout would encourage joint meetings to discuss jointly with the Board of Selectmen.

Review of expenditure report – No questions or comments from the Finance Board. Ms. Sprout asked about the COA expense to find out if senior companion money is being spent? Had to drill down into expenses but have not spent much due to being shut down. Cannot do senior companion driving at this time.

Roundtable/correspondence:

Mr. Harhay provided the school budget via email. The members have not had a chance to review. Also spoke with veteran agent. He will be level funding. Mr. Fancy stated the veteran agent should give a type of projection. Mr. Harhay explained that there is no current projection for change but there is no way to know if someone from will need benefits in the future.

Mr. Fancy sent out high school data but only a bottom line. No idea what Holland's cost will be. Mr. Fancy sent out a request for the breakdown of Holland's cost and for the student count but no one has received an answer to date.

Mr. Whalen stated he is aware that Connecticut schools received grant money to cover COVID related expenses. Is there similar funding in Massachusetts to that in Connecticut.

Mr. Harhay asked about the comment regarding the cost of the freezer. Ms. Robbins stated the current bylaw raised the amount to consider capital to \$50,000.00. Mr. Harhay stated the Accountant considers lower cost items to be capital.

Mr. Fancy is looking for the COA and Community Center spreadsheets. Ms. Ashleigh will send COA budget to Mr. Fancy. Ms. Palmer emailed Community Center numbers to Finance Board members.

Motion to adjourn Ms. Robbins, Mr. Fancy 2nd. All in favor 8:02 PM

Respectfully submitted by
Kelli A. Robbins