


Holland Finance Board
27 Sturbridge Road, Holland, MA 01521
Holland Town Hall – Community Room
Meeting Minutes for Thursday, March 16, 2023
Virtual and Physical Meeting of the Board and Guests

Meeting Attendance –

Members in person: Karen Peret, Cara Bogacz, Robbin Lauzon

Members attending remotely: Andrew Harhay

Member Absent: Paul Tortoloni

Guests in person: Clelland Johnson – Select Board; Stacy Stout-- Town Administrator; Sharon Ashleigh  Town Treasurer.

Open Meeting –

The Vice Chair called to order at 6:00 pm.

1. Approval of 3/9/23 meeting minutes.

Robbin made the motion to approve the minutes and Andy seconded; voice call vote approval was unanimous.

2. Expenditure Report

Cara asked if the FinBd could get the Expenditure Report in Excel. Stacy commented that Vadar does not print out in Excel. Robbin noted that she has access to a PDF converter and will look into it.

3. Budget Development Activities

Karen reported on a meeting she had with Cindy Poirier and Pricilla Clowes regarding the Assessor's budget requests. The Assessors had re-bid the contracts for Assessor Software, mapping services, interim value adjustments and utilities which reduced the overall contracted costs of these services. They noted that they will need \$9,898 in FY '24 and \$16,500 in FY '25 for the 5-year revaluation. The Assessor Board will meet soon to vote on the final budget request and final wording for the warrant article to transfer from cyclic stabilization to the 5-year Re-evaluation Maintenance account.

Karen distributed the list of Highway department road repair priorities and approximate costs. She stated that she would try to have a meeting with Brian Johnson in the next week to discuss final budget requests. She will ask again for the number of hours devoted to the catch basin cleaning and he wants to add another position for that purpose and to serve in any contracts that may occur. Andy and Stacy indicated that they would like to participate in this meeting also.

Debra Boyd, Superintendent of Tantasqua and Region 61 School District, sent an email to Andy regarding a reduction of \$7,000 to the Holland Elementary School budget request due to the oil bid being lower than anticipated. The new amount is \$3,130,162.

Sharon Ashleigh, Holland Town Treasurer sent the data to Karen from the partially completed Collins Center Salary and Wage Review being performed for Brimfield. It contained data from four MA towns: Brimfield, Belchertown, East Longmeadow and Spencer. She analyzed the data for four positions, Town Clerk, Treasurer, Treasurer/Collector and Principal Assessor. She found that many of the data fields were empty. She had a brief discussion with Stacy who said that the towns that were included in the study were not comparable to Holland but thought that Brookfield and Warren were comparable towns. Sharon Ashleigh volunteered to call West Brookfield and Warren as well as Wales and Hardwick, to collect comparable salary data on the four positions and provide it to the Finance Board.

Karen queried the members regarding Andy's recommendation to that the Finance Board budget request include a line item for a person to perform clerical functions for the Finance Board. Stacy mentioned that there is a position in the budget for an All-Boards Clerk, but that position was currently vacant. She will send out a survey to all boards to see if this position, once filled, could perform clerical work for the FinBd without exceeding the number of hours scheduled.

A comment was made that the FinBd needs to consider finding another member who is retired and has the time to take on some of the time-consuming work of the Board. Andy suggested that topic, and an item regarding how to increase the efficiency of the FinBd, be included in an upcoming meeting agenda.

4. Select Board Updates

Clelland suggested that the following question be asked of Brian Johnson in regard to the budget request of two new 350 plows: Are we using the wrong tool to do the job? Do we have to buy a new truck just because of a bent or broken frame? If we got a bigger truck, would it have less chance to ~~break~~ damage its frame?

5. Roundtable comments

Cara asked if we really needed to meet next week as scheduled, since we do not have final budget requests from Highway Department, Select Board and Assessors. Andy indicated he would send all Boards/departments a request for final budget figures to be available for the March 30 FinBd meeting. Karen will cancel the meeting planned for 3/23/23.

Robbin asked if it is possible to reduce salaries downwards. Stacy said that Holland has only done that when there is a change of staff. She further stated that there is no formal Human Relations department. The Treasurer and Town Administrator are currently sharing-the responsibilities of that function.

6. Next meeting: March 30 2023

Adjournment – Robbin made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Cara seconded; roll call vote approval was unanimous. The Vice Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:01pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Peret