

Holland Finance Board
27 Sturbridge Road, Holland, MA 01521
Holland Town Hall – Community Room
Meeting Minutes for Thursday, April 6, 2023
Virtual and Physical Meeting of the Board and Guests

Meeting Attendance –

Members in person: Andrew Harhay, Karen Peret, Robbin Lauzon*, Cara Bogacz, Paul Tortolani

Members attending remotely: None

Members absent: None

Guests in person: Clelland Johnson – Selectman

Guests attending remotely: Stacy Stout – Town Administrator, Valerie Lundin, Town Clerk.

* Due to having another commitment, Robbin had to leave the FinBd meeting at 8:20 pm.

Open Meeting –

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

1. Approval of 3/16/23 meeting minutes

Cara made the motion to approve the minutes and Karen seconded; approval was unanimous.

2. Continued Budget Development Activities.

Andy commented on emails recently sent to the Board that were related to budget development. The Treasurer conveyed that the \$20K interest initially estimated for the Fire Truck loan could be deleted, as she found that payment would not be needed until FY25. In the Accountant's review of the current draft budget, she advised that 'Best Practice' was not to use Free Cash for any loan payments, unless it is to completely pay off a loan. That means that the FinBd will need to move some loan items out of articles using Free Cash and into the Operating Budget.

The Chair indicated that the primary focus tonight would be reviewing salary/wage lines, as the hearing is fast approaching. Prior to starting through the spreadsheet, comments were offered on the current process of getting to a prioritized, balanced budget. Robbin thought that a methodology should be developed that outline the factors to be considered in making decisions. Cara felt that we could reduce the need for in-person meetings with each department/board/committee by developing a form that could be used to acquire the information needed by the FinBd in making budget decisions. Clelland commented that when he served on the finance committee in Hopkinton, they utilized a liaison approach, where each committee member was responsible for acquiring budget request information from multiple groups, often through teleconferences. Andy indicated that these were all good ideas and that the members could consider working on these ideas over the course of Summer and Fall, prior to initiating development work on the FY25 budget. He asked Robbin and Cara to start formulating their ideas for discussion at a post-ATM meeting.

The members reviewed and discussed the salary and wage lines in the current draft of the budget. It was felt that the Board of Assessor Chair should be asked to attend a meeting, so members could better

understand the rationale for their budget requests, with Andy to follow up. There was consensus that the TA's suggested increase in some administrative assistant/clerical positions was appropriate for increasing these positions to approximately \$19/hour and establishing a more uniform structure. The TA also expressed that she felt that the Conservation Commission agent was performing some activities that could be assumed by a trained clerk. Karen and Stacy had met with the Highway Surveyor last week and thought that the need for an additional full-time employee was justified. It was proposed that the salaries for the Town Clerk, Fire Chief and Treasurer positions be further reviewed, as some level of increases appeared appropriate. There was discussion as to whether the current matrix could be helpful in these reviews.

On a different issue, Clelland asked that the Town Hall Computer Expense line be increased from the current \$32K to \$50K. After he and our IT consultant attended a State-wide conference on computer system security, they concluded that updated security software was much needed to protect Town computer systems. The software being reviewed is subscription-based, so it is an annually recurring charge that will need to be accommodated in the operating budget, rather than through Free Cash. Clelland also indicated that the town has been mandated to make near-term upgrades to our underground fuel storage system, which will require \$11,376 in funding from some source, which potentially could come from ARPA, Free Cash or the Reserve Fund. Stacy indicated that there were two Highway accounts that were overspent and the deficits would have to be covered. The first is for \$9,068.71 owed to Palmer Paving and the second relates to overspending Chapter 90 Grant funds by \$3,840.27.

Karen said that JoAnne Higgins responded to two questions she asked of the Highway Department relative to budget requests. Relative to their request to purchase a used skidsteer for \$75,000, JoAnne indicated that ~ \$6,000/year had been spent for renting the equipment in FY21 and FY22. The estimate for running a water line from the Community Center to a location in the cemetery was estimated to be in the area of \$50,000.

4. Select Board Updates

There were no additional updates.

5. Roundtable comments

There were no additional comments.

6. Next meeting: April 13, 2023

Adjournment – Cara made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Paul seconded; approval was unanimous. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Harhay