

Holland Finance Board

27 Sturbridge Road, Holland, MA 01521

Holland Town Hall – Community Room

Meeting Minutes for Thursday, March 9, 2023

Virtual and Physical Meeting of the Board and Guests

Meeting Attendance –

Members in attendance: Karen Peret, Cara Bogacz, Paul Tortolani, Clelland Johnson, Select Board,

Remote: Andrew Harhay, Robbin Lauzon

Guests in Person: Sharon Ashleigh

Open Meeting – Vice-Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

1. Approval of 3/2/23 meeting minutes.

The minutes were moved for approval (Andy Harhay) and seconded (Cara Bogacz) and approved unanimously by roll call.

2. Budget Development Activities

The Collins Center Salary and Wage Review being performed for Brimfield has been partially completed, with Holland being one of the towns surveyed. The Review will be further refined for consolidation and comparison purposes.

Stacy and Sharon are developing a set of recommendations for appropriate salaries for Holland Town personnel.

The Highway Department provided a list of projects, times and costs, and will provide the hours related to catch basin clean out work being performed.

The Principal Assessor and the Chair of the Board of Assessors are preparing to present a proposal for stabilizations transfers.

3. Review of Draft Budget prepared by A. Harhay

Initial discussion focused on the use of 7% as the calculation for COLA and apply it to the wages and salaries of town employees for the budget. The 7% represents an amount above the current CPI (6.4%) and below the Social Security Adjustment (8.7%) and will be the working number for the Finance Board to use for its budget calculations until such time as other indicators suggest an adjustment. This was moved by Andy Harhay and seconded by Karen Peret and approved unanimously

by roll call vote. It was recognized during the discussions that there were two questions regarding wage and salary decisions: the percentage increase across all positions, and the appropriate adjustments for specific positions.

Clelland Johnson indicated that the Select Board was using 6% as the placeholder estimate for the increase in Ambulance Services for '24.

Andy Harhay reported that the Tantasqua Regional School Board request was a 5.5% increase but there was some question about whether or not this was an apportionment by town or population. There was no specific amount requested for transportation either.

A question about whether expenses related to the Town Hall's computer system had been addressed in an article from a prior year, allocating sufficient funds for system expenses. This would be researched and reported on.

A wage for limited clerical support for recordkeeping for the Finance Board has been proposed and may be considered as part of the larger personnel analysis.

The movement of the wages and chipping fees for wood recycling from the BOH budget to the BOH revolving fund was noted and supported.

Highway wages came under discussion focusing on the request for an additional position due to an anticipated need to support future grant-supported work. No specific future grant work was identified, and no additional projects were outlined for Finance Board consideration. For the Highway Road Improvement account, no specific amount had been requested, however a list of projects and priorities was offered. It is also recommended that the Tree Warden line item be level funded with the responsibilities remaining a routine part the Highway-Surveyor's responsibilities.

Further discussion about how to proceed with budget considerations without the needed compensation study in hand reflected that prior decisions relative to some salaried positions likely need to be reevaluated. With the completion of the study, we can reset the steps and grades of employment by position.

Andy Harhay reviewed the number of potential articles that might be up for consideration and the group recognized the need to differentiate requests based on a need to have versus a nice to have comparison. Much of the data at this point is tentative until the data that we are relying on becomes firm.

The meeting was moved to be closed by Cara Bogacz and seconded by Karen Peret and unanimously approved by roll call vote. The Vice-Chair closed the meeting at 6:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Paul Tortolani