

**HOLDEN BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
January 4, 2021**

6:35PM

Memorial Hall

Present: Robert Lavigne, Anthony Renzoni, Tyler Gibbs

Not Present: Chiara Barnes and Geri Herlihy

Others Present: Peter Lukes, Town Manager
 Stephanie King, Assistant Town Manager
 Stephen Madaus, Town Counsel
 Liz Fotos, Town Recorder

Chairman Lavigne called the meeting to order at 6:30PM. The Board stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Lavigne stated that Sel. Barnes and Sel. Herlihy intended to dial in and participate remotely however there were some technical issues that prevented that from happening.

1. Citizens Address

Dr. Joe Sabato, 47 Boulder Hill Road, was present at the meeting. He stated that he wanted to bring up and offer his help with Safe Communities. He stated that he thought it was a tool in other communities with traffic safety and other issues. He suggested that perhaps the Board could appoint a group of people to see what they could do to exercise this option and offer to help the Town in this positive way.

2. Appointments, Licenses, and Permits

Motion by Sel. Renzoni, seconded by Sel. Gibbs, it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE GODA'S PIZZA FOR AN ANNUAL COMMON VICTUALER LICENSE AS PRESENTED.**

3. Water/Sewer Expense and Revenue Accounting Update

John Woodsmall Director DPW was present at the meeting along with Ryan Mouradian Water/ Sewer Superintendent.

Mr. Woodsmall stated that when they left off last, there were some questions on the YTD Finances. He provided two handouts to the Board. He stated that at the end of October revenue was above and expenses were a little below which is what they like to see. He stated that there was nothing to highlight except that expenditures were below and revenue was slightly ahead.

Chairman Lavigne asked if taking care of parks and fields was out of the DPW Budget or out of the Recreation Budget.

Mr. Woodsmall replied that within Buildings and Grounds there was a park line item that was primarily funded through the General Fund. He stated that there was also a line item for treatment, fertilizer, and weed application but he does not remember if it was a separate line item or not.

Chairman Lavigne stated that these reports were helpful and asked for them going forward.

4. Discolored Water Discussion

Mr. Woodsmall stated that speaking about discolored water, Ryan Mouradian, Water/Sewer Superintendent wrote a memo summarizing complaints that they receive and the history of water being discolored.

Mr. Mouradian stated that what they were talking about was naturally occurring iron. He stated that water comes out of grounds and wells and that iron will accumulate overtime. He stated any change; high or uncommon use can stir up some of the discolored water along with hydrant usage, fire training, and street sweeping. He stated most of these issues can be taken care of by flushing the system, which they do for areas that are known to be impacted.

Mr. Mouradian stated that looking at a two year timeline; the Jefferson water tank was taken off line in September 2019. He stated that with this offline, they were forcing water through the maze and down Quinapoxet. He stated that at the time they treated the issues with spot flushing. He stated with this impacting three homes, they did not want to cause problems for 60+ other houses.

Mr. Mouradian stated that February 4th it came up again and they flushed the system again. He stated that there was work in the spring of 2020 that got pushed to fall of 2020. He stated that knowing this was going on they did a whole system flush before it was taken off line and then once again when it was put back on line. He stated the system was flushed November 12.

Mr. Mouradian stated that they flush Jefferson two times a year, usually before Memorial Day when people run irrigation systems and then again in the fall before the ground freezes.

Mr. Mouradian stated that in the summer they received 9 reports of brown water but none of them past the initial report. He stated that he reviewed the list of Water Quality Calls from CY 14 all the way to October 27, 2020 and there were 225 logged reports that he narrowed down to 97 unique addresses.

Mr. Mouradian stated that there were 19 addresses that reported more than once and 29% reported more than three times. He stated that they were not throwing away those reports but that it was not a large scale issue. He stated that any minor change can cause the system to be temperamental and that to help those homes they offered an in home water filtration system. He stated that this system was reviewed by the Town Manager and Town Counsel and it would provide a filter and year supply of cartridges. He stated that they did offer this system to one resident and they received no response from them.

Mr. Mouradian stated that there were other options such as taking a system offline or using a treatment facility that would add chlorine but these would be contractual changes. He stated that right now they feel the best way to move forward with this was to alleviate the sporadic concerns that came up.

Chairman Lavigne asked what other towns were doing.

Mr. Mouradian replied they were doing the same or less. He stated he does not know of other towns that were offering to install filters. He stated most towns are flushing their areas.

Chairman Lavigne asked the cost of flushing.

Mr. Mouradian replied that it was 3-4 operators tied up and then about 250-300 gallons of water that goes to UAW.

Mr. Woodsmall stated that the flushing was meant as maintenance and that they were always looking to monitor the frequency of flushing needed. He stated that it is easy but it takes time to do and they need to do a Code Red and get operations in place. He stated that for ongoing problems they have the water filtration system in place and it may be the most effective and cost effective way of solving the issues without investing millions of dollars.

Chairman Lavigne asked the cause.

Mr. Mouradian replied that on Main Street there was a little valley that was low lying and that the pond on Muscuapog Road used to be the water source. He stated that it was oversized and not a lot of water running though. He stated a cause could be water filling back and forth and gravity pulling iron in. He stated that there were many other reasons it could happen as well.

Sel. Renzoni asked if they would make the pipe smaller when they replaced it.

Mr. Mouradian replied that they would more than likely down size but that it was not currently on the schedule because of other mains breaking.

Sel. Renzoni asked how long the run of 12" was.

Mr. Mouradian replied it was thousands of feet down Rt 68 and all the way up Muscuapog Road. He stated that it was a mill old and there has always been a tank online with water moving through.

Sel. Renzoni asked if we provided the people who were receiving brown water a discounted price.

Mr. Mouradian replied we were not.

Mr. Lukes stated that other towns were not offering their residents a filter system. He stated that the water meets standards federally. He stated that they suggested a filter as a reasonable approach to the 2%. He stated the town did not need to offer it but they were.

Mr. Mouradian replied that it was difficult to estimate how much water would be effected to determine any sort of discount.

Sel. Renzoni stated that he was not talking about discounting the brown water he was talking about discounting all their water for being inconvenienced. He stated that the filtration system if someone chose to take advantage of it would be at the meter. He stated that he appreciated the information from the Town but he did not know how he felt about it right now. He stated that he takes resident concerns seriously and he will let them know any further questions or concerns he may have.

Chairman Lavigne stated that he understands that this will not be perfect and that he thinks the Town needs to take a reasonable approach to correcting it. He stated it is good to know that there are options.

Mr. Mouradian stated that there will be a whole town flushing that will take place in the spring of 2021 and will take months to do. He stated they will advertise this.

Mr. Woodsmall stated that they do take these complaints seriously and they want people to call in and continue to call in when it is happening so that DPW can track the events and have a baseline for data. He stated real time data is the most helpful.

5. WRSD Roundtable

Chairman Lavigne stated that on January 7th, the Town Manager, himself and Paul Challenger would meet for a budget roundtable. He stated that any concerns that the Board had they should forward along so they can hopefully get some insight for next year.

Sel. Renzoni stated that things had changed from a year ago. He stated that with regards to the feasibility study, the town has learned that people can operate remotely and even thrive in that environment. He stated that there should possibly be some option for virtual school and the town could push back on the district's insistence that they needed an \$80 million new school.

Chairman Lavigne stated that they have reports from the Light Department about savings of tens of thousands in electricity alone. He asked for more insight in this. He stated that he was underwhelmed with the plan of getting district children back in school and he is not confident that the district will pull this off.

Sel. Renzoni stated that if the District was not planning on going back they needed to let parents know. He stated that the School Committee was not talking about this and needed to be.

Chairman Lavigne encouraged the Board to send questions to Mr. Lukes or himself so they could have those issues addressed.

Mr. Lukes stated that this will be a virtual meeting and that it would be broadcasted on Holden TV.

6. Town Manager Update

See Attached

7. 2021 Goal

Chairman Lavigne stated that the Plan for Eagle Lake non-water moved to a subsection of the recreation goal.

He stated that there was a new goal for the Funding Formula for 2021.

They eliminated C and D from Town Operations.

Motion by Sel. Renzoni, seconded by Sel. Gibbs, it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO ADOPT THE 3 GOALS WITH SUBSET GOALS AS PRESENTED IN THE DECEMBER 11th EMAIL.** (See email).

8. Response to Citizen Address

Sel. Lavigne stated that he thinks this conversation can happen when they look at a committee structure and get some input from the Chief of Police.

Mr. Lukes agreed and stated that he would speak to Chief Sherblom.

9. Selectmen Minutes

None

10. Selectmen Miscellaneous

Sel. Gibbs: none

Sel. Renzoni: none

Sel. Lavigne: none

11. Selectmen Subcommittee

None

12. Town Manager Review

Chairman Lavigne stated that he would reach out to Sel. Herlihy with regards to this. The Board agreed that the narrative formula worked for their purposes.

Motion by Sel. Renzoni, seconded by Sel. Gibbs, it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO ADJORN THE JANUARY 4, 2021 BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING AT 7:45PM.**

APPROVED: July 12, 2021



TOWN OF HOLDEN
MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

Peter M. Lukes
Town Manager

January 3, 2021

TO: Board of Selectmen

FROM: Peter M. Lukes,
Town Manager

SUBJECT: *Town Manager Update*

- 1. Help at Home** – I met with former Town Manager Brian Bullock and other members of the Help at Home board last week. We discussed ways in which Help at Home can further help members of the Holden community who are in need of financial or other assistance. Although Help at Home has traditionally been focused on helping residents pay utility bills, they believe that there are other pathways available to help more residents and we intend to team up with local clergy and our Veteran's Agent to assist with the outreach. Help at Home has an abundance of funds through generous donations of our residents and businesses, and they wish to put it to good use sooner rather than later. We will have more information in the coming weeks as the program takes shape.

Information [X]

Vote []

Signature []

- 2. Regional Town Administrators** - I also met last week and again this afternoon with town administrators from the Wachusett region. Two of the administrators have only begun in their role since the late fall and one other has served for about a year in their town, so they are eager to collaborate. We discussed several regional issues but most of the conversation centered on the WRSD and the upcoming budget roundtable. All the member towns are hard pressed in terms of budgetary preparation. We all share the same "big-ticket" budget busting concerns: rising costs of insurance, retirement funds, and the annual assessment from WRSD. All member towns have expressed the need to level fund their operating costs. All of the member towns are putting important capital projects on hold. All of the member towns are holding our collective breath to see what the increase in assessment will be from the WRSD. We are in agreement that we cannot support what has become "the usual" school assessment increase in FY 22. Every member town administration is prepared to speak against a level of increase that matches prior years. We are eagerly awaiting the numbers from the district and because, in Holden, we are expecting at least a million dollar increase over last year's school assessment, it is making it very hard to finalize our budget, which we normally have completed by this point in the process. Once we receive that final number, if it is over one million dollar increase over last year, we have a few options: we can either cut more than we

already have from the town's capital budget, we can determine how much of our reserves, stabilization or other funds we can use to buttress the increase, or we can start to calculate what the savings would be from actions such as a hiring freeze, salary freeze, etc. One other option would be to begin a campaign to reject the school assessment if it is entirely untenable by informing the electorate of all the town services that would have to be put on hold or cut as a result of paying the higher assessment in the hope that Town Meeting would reject the proposal.

Information ☒ [X]

Vote ☐ []

Signature ☐ []

- 3. School Capital Projects** – Several HVAC projects in the amount of nearly one million dollars were proposed by the town last year to bring our elementary schools into the 21st century in terms of HVAC and HVAC control systems. We are currently in the process of working out the scopes of work for those projects with the design/construction firms and although it remains to be seen when schools will reopen to in-person class, we will try to install the new equipment while schools are closed.

Information ☒ [X]

Vote ☐ []

Signature ☐ []

- 4. Trash/Recycling online complaint form-** The Town continues to make ourselves accessible 24/7 with a new link on our website for missed trash and recycling. It's probably happened to all of us at some point. The trash or recycling misses our street for whatever reason. Now we have a form available on the Town's website through the Planning and Development page where a resident can submit the form and it will be immediately entered and forwarded to the proper parties at Cassella. We are going to shorten the link soon so that it is easy to remember but for now we are directing people to the Planning and Development Trash and Recycle page of the Town's website www.Holdenma.gov

Information ☒ [X]

Vote ☐ []

Signature ☐ []

- 5. Library Display-** I would like to take a moment to thank the staff at the Gale Free Library for their participation in the festive atmosphere around the town campus this past holiday season. They have been going the extra mile to decorate through the fall and most recently adding to the Christmas Tree lighting in front of Town Hall. Special thanks to Kevin McDonough who not only worked on the holiday lighting but was also the person behind the Lego displays in the windows on the first floor. I took a walk over to the library with my personal ten year old Lego critic and he and I were both impressed.

Should you have any questions regarding these matters, please feel free to contact my office.

Peter M. Lukes
Town Manager

Cc: Department Heads