

Minutes Holden Finance Committee, September 22, 2021  
Holden Senior Center

Members Present: Al Berg, Paul Challenger, Joe Dolak, Don Graves, Jane Titcomb, Dave White  
Members Absent: Chris Lucchesi, Stephanie Adams, Marilynn Foley,  
Also Present: Peter Lukes, Town Manager; Joe Sullivan, Town Moderator

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

Town Moderator Joe Sullivan thanked the Committee for volunteering to be members of the Finance Committee and for their time and effort in their deliberations on the Fiscal Budget. New member Al Berg was welcomed to the Committee.

Joe Sullivan called for nominations for Committee Officers.

A motion by Dave 2<sup>nd</sup> by Don to elect Paul as Chairman was approved unanimously.

A motion by Jane 2<sup>nd</sup> by Joe to elect Chris as Vice Chairman was approved unanimously.

A motion by Dave 2<sup>nd</sup> by Don to elect Marilynn as Clerk was approved unanimously.

Joe turned the meeting over to Paul.

Peter provided an update on the status of Town finances and projects. There are no real issues with the budget so far, except that it has been very difficult to hire new employees so we have several open positions, particularly in Fire, Police and DPW. The Town Treasurer and Recreation Director have both retired. Peter feels fortunate to have found high quality replacements for them.

He estimates that the Town will receive \$52M in corona virus recovery funds (ARPA) from the county, state and federal governments. Each source has its own rules for use, which are still being finalized. As plans are developed, they will be presented to the FinCom for our input. Uses will need to be one-time projects and equipment, since you cannot increase the annual operating budget with one-time money without creating a problem when the money stops coming in.

Dave requested that the Manager develop a standard for documentation that supports capital requests. Last year we received several requests that had not been fully thought out and had to be withdrawn for further study.

Don requested stronger documentation when adding new employee positions (not replacing employees, but adding new jobs).

Peter is very pleased with the current set of Department Heads, who he feels are very strong and work well together. He does not want to lose any of them, so he is going to have a wage study done to determine if our pay levels are adequate. His recent efforts to hire at this level have given him concern that we are not paying at market level, and we are at risk of losing key employees. Study will be done and any changes will be enacted in the FY 24 budget.

Most of the businesses in town are doing well. Several new restaurants have opened or are opening soon. Tax collections are at normal levels of delinquencies, as are utility payments.

Peter left the meeting at 7:15.

The Committee discussed what activity and actions it wanted to undertake before the budget season begins in February, with no firm plans being made. Jane will be attending some of the Association of Town Finance Committee training sessions and perhaps WRSD Budget and Finance sub-committee meetings. Paul will meet with the Superintendent of Schools to discuss student head counts and the impact on next year's funding, how the schools budget cycle is going and the desirability having a training session on Town financial operations with the School Committee to educate them on what the towns do financially.

No future meetings were scheduled.

On a motion from Dave, second from Jane, the meeting unanimously adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul Challenger, Chairman