

Minutes Holden Finance Committee, March 24, 2021
Remote via Zoom

Members Present: Paul Challenger, Dave White, Joe Dolak, John Lambert, Chris Lucchesi, Don Graves, Jane Titcomb, Stephanie Adams, Marilynn Foley
Also Present: Peter Lukes, Town Manager, Stephanie King, Asst. Town Manager, Sharon Lowder Treasurer/Collector, Lori Rose, Accountant, Rosemary Scully Assessor, Doug Nelson IT, Pam Harding Planning/Development, Jeanne Hudson Town Clerk

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

The Committee reviewed the General Government Budget.

There were no comments on the Moderator and Finance Committee Budgets.

The Selectman's Budget increased the events line to include more events planned for the town. The line for meeting expense is for attendance at the MMA convention.

Peter reviewed the Town Manager and IT Budgets and answered questions. The IT Department is satisfied with the current service and so decided not to add more Cloud storage because of the expense.

Lori reviewed the Accounting Budget and answered questions. Lori has reorganized the duties in the department due to changes in the personnel. Both Assistants will be 35 hours weekly due to increasing demands on the department.

Sharon reviewed the Treasurer/Collector Budget and answered questions. Sharon reorganized the duties of the staff in the department to save money.

Rosemary reviewed the Assessors Budget and answered questions. The increase in line 5791 is due to the five-year reevaluation (recertification) to comply with requirements of the Department of Revenue. Line 5242 is a transfer of equipment maintenance expense from IT.

Peter reviewed the Legal Budget and answered questions. There are several employee union contracts yet to be settled. Peter plans to handle collective bargaining and use the labor counsel for consulting. Peter has also asked the Department Heads to call him before putting in a call to the legal counsel.

Jeanne reviewed the Town Clerk Budget and answered questions. Because of the COVID 19 pandemic, the Clerk's office processed many requests for mail in voting. There were also new election laws and early voting was introduced. Hopefully there will be funds recouped from the Secretary of state and the CARES Act.

Sharon reviewed the Insurance Budget and answered questions. General insurance has gone up 10%. Health insurance has gone up 8 and 1/2%. The Town Manager's office handles unemployment claims but has not received any bills to date (line item 5740 is still uncertain). There may be funds from the CARE Act available to fund some unemployment expense. All laid off employees (due to COVID 19) are back to work.

Sharon reviewed the Retirement Assessment. This budget is up 10%-12%. The past unfunded liability is not yet paid up. So, Holden's assessment, along with every other town's, is increasing more rapidly than might be thought otherwise.

Sharon reviewed the Debt Budget. The town borrowed \$9,000,000.00 so far for the construction of the DPW building. The Town Meeting voted \$18,500,000.00 for the project. Borrowing was refinanced at a lower interest rate, which will save about \$1,000,000.00 overall.

Pam reviewed the Planning and Development Budget and answered questions. A new item in the budget is a health agent. Currently the town belongs to a regionalized Board of Health. The town has become dissatisfied with the service being received from this Board. It would be a wash financially to leave this board and have our own health agent and not having to pay into the regional system (a 20% increase for F/Y22). At best Holden had about 15-16 hours a week of service in a town of 20,000. \$10,000.00 additional is needed to cover the cost of nursing service due to COVID19. The town will apply for funds before the CARE Act expires to help with this cost.

Pam reviewed the Sealers of Weights and Measures Budget and answered questions.

Pam reviewed the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund and answered questions. There is 1 year left in the contract with Casella. There has been more recycle tonnage this year, possibly due to more residents working from home due to COVID19. There was some discussion about trash containers overflowing. Casella is supposed to audit this as part of their contract.

Pam reviewed the Inspection Revolving Fund Budget and answered questions. A new capital item in this budget is for the purchase of a car for the inspector who has been using his own vehicle, and receiving mileage reimbursement.

The Committee discussed the percentage of time the DPW Director and his staff spends between the DPW and W/S. None of this time is charged to water/ sewer, which needs to be corrected. John will work on an estimate of the costs to be moved into W/S.

There has been no movement from the WRSD on that budget since our last meeting.

The Committee will receive an updated Resource Profile for the next meeting.

The Committee discussed a Finance Committee bylaw change. The Committee will seek assistance from town counsel.

There was discussion on the replacement of the library windows which are not typical windows.

A motion by Dave 2nd by Stephanie to approve the minutes of March 17, 2021 were voted unanimously, Adams aye, Challenger aye, Foley aye, Graves aye, Lambert aye, Lucchesi aye, Titcomb aye, White aye (abstained Dolak).

The meeting adjourned at 9:10.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marilynn Foley, Clerk