

**TOWN OF HOLDERNESS
SELECT BOARD/BUDGET COMMITTEE
WORK SESSION MINUTES
December 11, 2023**

Select Board Members Present: Chair, Jill White, Vice Chair, Woodie Laverack, Sam Brickley and Kelly Schwaner.

Budget Committee Members Present: Chair, Dayna Titus, Kristen Fuller, Kim Beardwood Smith, Bennett Evans and Morgan Stepp

Others Present: Town Administrator, Michael Capone

Call to Order: Ms. Titus called the meeting to order at 5:30PM.

Draft Minutes of December 6, 2023 – Mr. Evans made a motion to approve the draft minutes of the December 6, 2023 meeting as written. Ms. Fuller provided a second. There being no further discussion, those present voted 9-0 in favor of the motion.

Other Business: Prior to taking up new business, Ms. White asked if Committee or Board members had any additional questions regarding the material supplied by the Library Trustees at the December 6th Meeting. Mr. Evans noted there was no discussion of revenue offsets. Ms. Schwaner mentioned that the hours of operation of the libraries used in the wage comparison differed. Ms. Fuller thought that libraries of towns with similar populations and patronage should be considered in the wage comparison as well. Ms. White mentioned she had some questions regarding wage structure.

New Business: Town of Holderness operating budget review continued, capital purchases review, revenue review and draft warrant review. The Town Administrator offered to send an email to present these comments to the Library Trustees and afford them an opportunity to attend a future meeting to respond. There was some brief discussion regarding the timing of the meeting and the general sense of those present was to invite the Trustees to attend the January 8 meeting of the Committee and the Board.

The Town Administrator continued the Budget review of those sections not covered at the December 6th meeting. He went through the Executive, Town Clerk, Finance and General Government sections making note of any increases and reviewing any supporting documentation supplied in the budget packets.

He also reviewed the Benefits provided to Town employees noting that the coverage provided was competitive with that offered by surrounding communities. He did mention that a health insurance buyout program put in place by the Board two years ago was providing some relief to the overall increase in premium expense.

He also went through the General Government, Revaluation of Property and Planning and Zoning sections of the budget and discussed any changes to those sections as well. A reduction in the amount budgeted to legal services was discussed, noting that updates to the personnel handbook and other legal projects had been completed. It was also noted that efforts were being made to retain past legal opinions as a reference for future use thereby eliminating any duplication.

Public Assistance (Welfare) and Public Service (area agencies) were reviewed and discussed. The Town Administrator mentioned that, after a number of years of reduced activity, an uptick in public assistance requests in the current budget is indicative of a trend expected to continue through the next budget cycle and, as such, he is suggesting an increase in that budget line. He also noted that the Town had received two new Public Agency requests for consideration by the Board and Committee. He will forward the information to be added to their budget packets.

One item to watch would be funding for the after-school program at the Holderness Central School. Funding had been earmarked in the current budget to pay a portion of this program that, until recently, had been provided by the Boys and Girls Club. It was confirmed in a recent conversation with Principal Sampson that the program is no longer operating, but a new program is under consideration. It was suggested that the funds be left in the budget for now until we see if a new program does start up. Both Mr. Evans and Mr. Stepp had comments regarding program offerings and staffing for the program.

The Town Administrator then reviewed the revenue worksheets and explained how he used the 12 years' worth of data to estimate revenues for the 24-25 budget. The final calculation was a combination of the twelve-year average revenue and the last three years trend. He also noted that some revenue lines, such as land use change tax revenues, were too inconsistent to model and a best guesstimate was used.

The Town Administrator also reviewed the current Capital Equipment spreadsheet and limited his discussion to the 24-25 section of the worksheet. He explained that the spreadsheet was a dynamic document in that requirements could shift from year to year given changing circumstances. In noting that he mentioned that Kevin had mentioned during the Highway department presentation that he would need to replace the grader soon. He was looking at the possibility of purchasing a used machine if practicable. This machine had been previously on the capital worksheet, but was removed due to shifting priorities.

The Town Administrator also mentioned that the Fire Department needs would be reevaluated once the new fire engine was in service. The department had discussed delaying some purchases and possibly combining some functions to minimize the purchase of equipment. This would not be determined until later next year.

Finally, the Town Administrator reviewed a draft warrant based on the information available at this time. It included the operating budget, an article for funding capital reserves, an article for identifying capital purchases, a grant obtained by the Police Department, funding the Abatement

Capital Reserve and modifying the criteria for elderly exemptions. He noted there may be other items to come before the Town as there is still time to add items to the warrant.

Ms. Fuller asked a question regarding fund balance and the Town Administrator provided some background on how the number is determined and the strategy employed by the Select Board in administering it.

The Town Administrator mentioned that the next meeting would be on Monday, January 8th beginning at 5:30 here in the Town Office meeting room. Holderness Central School Board Chair, Joanne Pearce and SAU business administrator, Dan Rossner, will be in attendance to present the Holderness Central School Operating budget and Warrant Articles. We also hope to have a further conversation with the library regarding their budget.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Committee and the Board, Ms. Titus made a motion to adjourn at 7:20PM. Mr. Stepp provided a second. There being no further discussion those present voted 9-0 in favor of the motion.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael R. Capone
Town Administrator