

**TOWN OF HOLDERNESS
SELECT BOARD/BUDGET COMMITTEE
WORK SESSION MINUTES
January 8, 2024**

Select Board Members Present: Chair, Jill White, Vice Chair, Woodie Laverack 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, Holderness Central School Board Chair, Joanne Pierce, SAU 48 Business Administrator, Dan Rossner, Holderness Free Library Trustees Chair, Alexis Desloge and Holderness Free Library Director, Adam Difilippe.

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

Draft Minutes of December 11, 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.

New Business: Holderness Central School Draft Operating Budget presentation - Holderness Central School Board Chair, Joanne Pierce and SAU 48 Business Administrator, Dan Rossner, were present to review and discuss the proposed operating budget for the Holderness Central School. Ms. Pearce suggested that rather than go line by line through the budget, comments be limited to those budget items exceeding a two percent or more increase or decrease.

Ms. Pearce noted the following reductions and increases:

Account 1100 – small increase in staffing for summer IT work offset by reductions in printed media and classroom technology resulting in an overall reduction of \$30,136

Account 1200 – overall reductions in staffing and partial IDEA of \$33,167

Account 2150 – overall increase in the amount of purchased professional and technical services of \$4,889.

Account 2220 – increases in books cost and circulation in the amount of \$1,000.

Account 2320 – increases in other professional services and professional development in the amount of \$8,475.

Account 2620 - increases in building repair and fuel costs in the amount of \$10,926.

Account 2700 – decreases in special education transportation and field trip expenses in the amount of \$23,971.

Mr. Evans had a question regarding food service and options for food choices. Mr. Rossner reviewed some of the history of food services over the past few years and mentioned that he and Principal Sampson were working with the current food vendor to implement healthier alternatives to those currently offered. The expense would be detailed and put forth for consideration by the School Board.

Mr. Evans also inquired about professional development and Mr. Rossner reviewed the plan with those present.

Ms. Schwaner inquired about the Artist in residency program. Mr. Rossner replied that funding is based on a three-year cycle.

Mr. Rossner continued the budget review and circulated additional spreadsheets outlining overall capital planning and the schedule of capital improvements at the school including HVAC, generator and septic improvements. Mr. Rossner indicated that implementation of some projects could be pushed out and funding amounts adjusted to better align needs with availability of capital reserves. This was discussed with the Budget Committee and the Board who both had a sense that this option should be pursued further. These sentiments would be reflected in the warrant article put forth by the School Board.

Mr. Rossner also indicated that there were ongoing negotiations regarding a collective bargaining agreement that will need to be finalized by February 6th. He mentioned that if an agreement was reached prior to that time, he would forward the details to the Board and Budget Committee. Those ongoing negotiations might have an impact on scheduling of the public hearing on the Town and School Budgets.

Miss White inquired as to what would happen if no agreement was reached. Mr. Rossner replied that the existing contracts would remain in place.

The Board and Committee thanked both Ms. Pearce and Mr. Rossner for their presentation.

Old Business: Follow up discussion on the Library Budget: Library Trustees Chair, Alexis Desloge and Library Director, Adam Difilippe were present to continue their discussion with the Board and Committee regarding the library budget and the increases in wages proposed by the Trustees.

Ms. White advised the Board and Committee that she and the Town Administrator had met with Ms. Desloge and Director Difilippe on January 3, 2024 to review some of the concerns expressed by the Committee members at the December 6, 2023 meeting and provide some further background on the history of past discussions. Ms. White also noted that, in reviewing the wage requests, they were not out of line with those submitted by other departments.

Ms. Desloge provided some additional detail on the Trustees research noting one of the main concerns in establishing compensation was competition for employees from surrounding communities. She also noted that the closure of the Center Harbor library for a period of time due to lack of employees was a major concern. There was also a sense the wage issue needed to be addressed sooner than later to attract and keep good employees.

Ms. White inquired as to whether this would be an ongoing issue each year.

Ms. Desloge replied that she did not anticipate a review of this type for some time, possibly every three to five years.

Ms. Titus asked if the employees had asked about these increases. Director, Difilippe replied that he would not share this information without Board approval.

Ms. Desloge commented that they were also going to work on maintaining some continuity on the Board and work to better educate incoming Trustees as to the budget process.

Mr. Evans asked if this would help with employee retention. Both Ms. Desloge and Director Difilippe agreed that it would.

Mr. Evans also asked about library revenues. Ms. Desloge and Director Difilippe both commented that while some fees had been eliminated in the past to create more access to the library, they would be open to more fees, but would want to obtain more data and discuss it with the Trustees prior to implementation.

The Board and Committee thanked Ms. Desloge and Director Difilippe for attending the meeting.

Other Business: The Board and Committee discussed the most efficient path forward for the balance of the budget process. The Town Administrator mentioned that, with the library presentation concluded, the Select Board would discuss the operating budget and warrant articles proposed for Town Meeting at their January 16, 2024 session. Given the uncertainty around a date when the school might be able to provide their warrant articles for consideration, it was agreed that the next joint meeting would be held on Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 5:30PM here at the Town Office and the Budget hearing for both budgets would be held on February 14, 2024 beginning at 6:30 in the Holderness Central School cafeteria.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Board and Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 7:12 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael R. Capone
Town Administrator