

## Heather Finnell

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**From:** Mary Vail Ware <maryvailw@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 14, 2024 11:28 AM  
**To:** Heather Finnell  
**Subject:** Fwd: Comments for June 7th meeting

Good morning Ms. Finnell and Happy Friday.

Mr. Myers very kindly responded to my e-mail concern about the detective position and I appreciated hearing his thoughts.

Transparency in government is very important to me, so please include his e-mail and my response in the next meeting record.

Take care,

Mary Vail

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Mary Vail Ware** <maryvailw@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Fri, Jun 14, 2024 at 11:24 AM  
**Subject:** Re: Comments for June 7th meeting  
**To:** <tmmyers56@gmail.com>

Thank you for your email, I very much appreciate your response, though it certainly wasn't required. As a voter in the community, I am OK sharing what I am concerned about and you as an elected official get to vote how you like irrespective of my concerns.

I lead contracts for the US Department of Justice providing training and technical assistance around crime prevention, intervention, and recovery for communities across the nation, and respectfully disagree with your assessment around the role of a detective in a community. The assessment is solely based on reported numbers and not on the evidence based processes necessary in ensuring safer communities.

In its most recent published annual survey the US Bureau of Justice Statistics asks crime victims whether they reported their crime to police. It found that in 2022, only 41.5% of violent crimes and 31.8% of household property crimes were reported to authorities.

We frankly almost didn't report the theft of our fishing cart, because it was evident to us that the Holden Beach Police Department did not have the resources to find it. No doubt there were other thefts from public accesses that day and some probably went unreported. There are no cameras on the public accesses, and even if the town had them, there are no resources to review the tape. If an arrest was made, it doesn't seem the town has officers with the time to dedicate to testifying in court, especially during the busy summer season.

Detectives have dedicated time to delve into patterns of crime and learn about emerging trends in crime that are heading to our communities. Their job is not simply responsive. Since most crimes

are committed by a few people, identifying them quickly and with solid evidence that ensures conviction, prevents further crime. Tasks needed to do this include crime mapping, the ability to review camera footage, the ability to work with neighboring jurisdictions on task forces and multi-jurisdictional cases, witness location and interviewing, mutual aid, etc. Crime doesn't stop or start at the bridge, so working alongside other LE from other jurisdictions is critical to promoting community safety. The time to do these tasks is not generally available to patrol officers with any consistency in any community.

Hiring for law enforcement is extremely competitive in the current environment. More people are leaving law enforcement than are entering it across the country. The failure to hire a detective who can participate in multi-jurisdictional responses and task forces sends a message that the Town of Holden Beach does not support law enforcement resources. It messages that there is no appreciation for their work or opportunity for advancement to those that might apply for law enforcement or any position within the town.

I am sure this is not the intention. However, in spite of good intentions, this is how it presents to those inside and outside the community who may have considered joining the police force or those residents, property owners, and visitors who value community safety.

On a macro level, the Town of Holden Beach has very little to offer our neighboring jurisdictions in the way of mutual aid, which might impact how they choose to assist us in the future.

The very few dollars saved by your decision are far less than the benefit to the entire community. Crime is expensive. Not only is there the direct cost (bodily injury or property) the indirect costs of a diminished perception of safety and security, fractured cooperation with surrounding jurisdictions, decreased property values due to perceptions, loss of renters that help our tax base, a dry pipeline of town staffing, etc. far outweigh the expense of a staff position.

I completely understand the desire to base decision making on a discrete data set. Using discrete instead of comprehensive information to make decisions ignores the outward and forward ripple effect of governmental policy and practice in communities for years to come.

This decision is yours to make, though it is unfortunate.

Take good care and see you soon,

Mary Vail

On Fri, Jun 14, 2024 at 9:38 AM <[tmmyers56@gmail.com](mailto:tmmyers56@gmail.com)> wrote:

Thanks for your message and your concerns about Holden Beach.

Unfortunately (or fortunately) I don't believe our crime numbers over the past two years justify the need for a new fulltime detective position, and I don't feel it is prudent to hire a new resource when we don't have enough work to keep them busy. My opinion is based on the data in the chart below along with the understanding that fulltime detectives typically work around 100 serious cases a year (i.e., not including misdemeanors).

Crime	2022			
	Reported	\$	Solved	\$
Misdemeanor Larceny	14	\$7,904	1	\$415
Felony Larceny	7	\$69,744	2	\$68,500
Breaking & Entering / Damage	13	\$2,800	1	\$2,500
Structure/Dune Fires	3	\$2,305,000	3	\$2,305,000
Financial / Credit Card / Identity	4	\$391,296	1	\$5,000
Work Employment Related	3	\$6,150	1	\$5,250
Domestic	10	\$0	9	\$0
Illegal Dumping	1	Unk	0	\$0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>\$2,804,834</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>\$2,386,665</b>

2023		
Reported	\$	Solved
6	\$2,240	0
8	\$15,800	0
12	\$7,050	1
4	\$2,000	3
7	\$72,035	0
1	\$1,885	1
3	\$0	1
<b>41</b>	<b>\$101,010</b>	<b>6</b>

Please note that a detective doesn't prevent crimes, they only solve them after they occur. We have a greater need to fill our existing open position for a patrol officer.

I was hoping for an option that would allow us to have detective capabilities on a parttime basis, but no alternative arrangements were presented for consideration. If this situation changes and a viable new approach is available, I would not hesitate to fund it.

Best regards,

Tom

## Heather Finnell

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**From:** Carlton Pittman <rucpitt@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 16, 2024 8:39 PM  
**To:** Heather Finnell  
**Cc:** Rick Paarfus; Rick Smith; Page Dyer; Tom Myers; Tracey7.thomas@gmail.com; Alan Holden; David Hewett  
**Subject:** 2024-2025 Budget - Public Feedback June BoC Meeting

**The two greatest assets this town has are town employees, and the beach. As I stated previously, without town employees, and the work they do individually and collectively, not one single person could live here, visit here, rent a house here, or own or run a business here.**

Town employees deserve more than a 1.82% MERIT increase. For YEARS, most if not all of our town employees were underpaid, significantly in some cases. It took a mid-year adjustment in January 2023 and a beginning year additional adjustment in July 2023 to get many employees to the bottom of their pay scale, of the midpoint at best. If you do not continue appropriate staff salary and wage adjustments, we risk not only town employees falling further behind again, or worse, a place where no one wants to work. How will we replace staff that leave in the coming years if we return to sub-par pay scales?

You have just said to all town employees they did not do a good job last year, and that is simply NOT true, and not acceptable. Merit - performance.....

There is no reason to implement a tax reduction at this point, other than patting yourself on the back, when the town is still staring as several expensive projects, and another in the stormwater project in the immediate future. A one cent reduction amounts to a total of \$100 tax deduction on a million dollar home. Put that money towards staff salary increases or the detective position.

Town Manager Hewett proposed a balanced budget that included roughly a 5% MERIT increase for town employees. The proposed budget could have and should have been approved as is.

Commissioner Myers ran for office stating repeatedly that - his words - "*we have a 30 to 40% budget variance and that is not acceptable to me*". In one of the very first budget meetings, after explanation of FOUR line items by town staff that were placeholders - again - Commissioner Myers' words - "*well there's your budget variance*". There IS no and WAS no budget variance. It was simply his not understanding, or refusing to understand budgeting in and for a small town. Commissioner Myers stated to me that you waited 10 years to run for office here to be prepared for the job. This has proven woefully incorrect.

For several months Commissioner Myers stated publicly during budget meetings that "*it appears we have a revenue problem*". Not only did we not have a revenue or spending problem, we have a budget SURPLUS, balanced budget. This town has plenty of money, and plenty of money to fund a detective position AND staff pay increases. Penny wise and pound foolish comes to mind. We do not have a revenue problem, we have a leadership problem.

Commissioners Myers and Thomas have repeatedly tried for months to find a Gotcha or Ah Ha moment in the town budget. It Does NOT Exist. They have been through the entire budget with a fine toothed

comb, and TMK, not found one single thing out of place, nefarious, misspent or misappropriated. How far do you intend to take this farcical approach in managing town affairs?

Commissioners Myers stated when shoving all of the budget meetings on the schedule that *"no actions will be taking during these workshops"*, yet Commissioners Myers and Thomas have done so repeatedly. And did so again last Wednesday night. Is there ANY reason a single person should believe anything they say?

Commissioners Myers wrote in email, now available publicly via the FOIA request, and also reported in the Brunswick Beacon - that *"we don't trust town staff"*. How dare you? You owe every single town employee a public apology. I doubt you have the guts to do it, but you should stand up publicly and apologize to every single town employee.

I welcome any feedback you have. I don't particularly like being so critical. When you repeatedly state one thing, then do the opposite over and over, simply to force your will onto the town, that is not leadership.

Carlton

## Heather Finnell

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**From:** Carlton Pittman <rucpitt@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 16, 2024 4:29 PM  
**To:** Heather Finnell  
**Cc:** tmmyers56@gmail.com; Rick Paarfus; Page Dyer; Rick Smith; Alan Holden; Tracey7.thomas@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Police Detective - Public Comment June 2024 Board Meeting

To:

Commissioners Myers and Thomas, who voted to remove the requested detective position from the proposed 2024-2025 budget.

One of the number one responsibilities of elected officials is to provide resources to protect the people and their property. Commissioners Myers and Thomas have done a terrible disservice to the entire community in refusing to support our police chief and police officers. There is plenty of room in the town managers budget for a detective.

By the numbers noted below, we average almost 1 crime a week that should or needs to be investigated. A single investigation can take days, weeks, or even months. Police do not PREVENT crime, they show up AFTER a crime has been committed to clean up the mess. How long do Commissioners Myers and Thomas plan to wait to approve a detective for the town - until we have MORE crime? How much more crime will it take to convince Myers and Thomas?

Chief Dixon stated a detective would also have other duties as assigned - working festivals, holiday and vacation coverage and the like. We spent over \$100k in overtime last year for police salaries. A detective would give us additional coverage potential as the town was short 2 patrol officers for over 2 years and still has an open patrol officer position that should be filled.

Commissioner Myers ran for office stating the intent to put property owners and residents first. I have not heard, spoken to, or read a single comment from anyone that we should not have a detective. In fact, Commissioners Myers and Thomas are the ONLY ones to say we should not have a detective position. Commissioner Myers stated during the election and since, that he was going to listen to the public - which Myers has repeatedly said, and now are refusing to do what he stated publicly. This proves Commissioners Myers and Thomas are just going to impose their will on the town regardless of town residents and owners opinions or input. That is sad, and a horrible way to lead or govern.

Respectfully

Carlton Pittman

On 6/14/2024 9:42 AM, [tmmyers56@gmail.com](mailto:tmmyers56@gmail.com) wrote:

Carlton,

Thanks for your message and your concerns about Holden Beach.

Unfortunately (or fortunately) I don't believe our crime numbers over the past two years justify the need for a new fulltime detective position, and I don't feel it is prudent to hire a new resource when we don't have enough work to keep them busy. My opinion is based on the data in the chart below

along with the understanding that fulltime detectives typically work around 100 serious cases a year (i.e., not including misdemeanors).

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Structural/Dumb Fires	3	\$2,305,000	2	\$2,305,000	4	\$2,000	
Financial / Credit Card / Identity	4	\$891,238	1	\$5,000	7	\$72,038	
Work Employment Related	3	\$6,150	1	\$5,250	1	\$1,885	
Domestic	10	\$0	9	\$0	3	\$0	
Illegal dumping	1	Unk	0	\$0			
<b>Totals</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>\$2,804,834</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>\$2,386,665</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>\$101,010</b>	

Please note that a detective doesn't prevent crimes, they only solve them after they occur. We have a greater need to fill our existing open position for a patrol officer.

I was hoping for an option that would allow us to have detective capabilities on a parttime basis, but no alternative arrangements were presented for consideration. If this situation changes and a viable new approach is available, I will not hesitate to fund it.

Best regards,  
Tom

## Heather Finnell

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**From:** Sylvia Pate <sylviahpate@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 18, 2024 11:03 AM  
**To:** Heather Finnell  
**Cc:** Alan Holden; Rick Smith; tmmyers56@gmail.com; tracey thomas; rpaarfus@gmail.com; Page Dyer  
**Subject:** Comments for 6/18/2024 Meeting

### Please include as Comments Regarding Budget Ordinance

There are three points I would like to make regarding the adoption of the proposed budget ordinance:

First, it is wonderful that the Town of Holden Beach is in a financial situation wherein our budget actually reflects we have a surplus contrary to information that has been shared publicly by some. However, that surplus needs to be guarded carefully as we do have a lot of projects/issues that are going to need to be addressed in the near future that are not currently budgeted for (i.e. storm water study recommendations, extra needed for lift station upgrade, recommendations from water study, what to do about Block Q other than restrooms, what to do about a pavilion, what to do about additional boat trailer parking/additional car parking, what to do about addressing the needs of the fire station, pier property project and just general maintenance of items and the list goes on). Given all of these issues/projects, ***now is not the time to lower the tax rate by one cent*** and then have to turn around and possibly raise it later just to say you lowered the tax rate. A one cent tax rate reduction would result in a small savings to the taxpayers of Holden Beach (for example, a property valued at \$1 million, you are only talking about \$100) which like myself, I think most taxpayers would say to just keep it and take care of the items that need addressing to move our Town forward in a positive manner.



Secondly, the Chief of Police has expressed that his department needs a detective, therefore I think you should trust your Manager and Department Head's recommendation and ***leave the detective position and associated costs in the budget as it was proposed.*** I think you have received enough commentary regarding this item, that you should honor the wishes of the taxpayers of Holden Beach.

Last, the staff of Holden Beach work hard and many do the jobs of multiple people. You should support and reward those deserving of a merit increase. Hiring and retaining staff in today's world is difficult at best so we need to retain the ones we have. Five percent (5%) was proposed for merit increases but was reduced to 1.8%, therefore I ***recommend you adjust the proposed budget to fund the merits at 5% rather than the 1.8% that is currently proposed.***

Even with these 3 recommendations, you still have a balanced budget and additional funds available that could be appropriated or left in the General Fund as needed as well as surplus balances in the BPART and Water/Sewer Funds.

Thank you for your consideration.

**SYLVIA PATE**  
**111 Charlotte Street/Holden Beach**