

TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
BOARD OF FINANCE
Special Meeting
March 20, 2014
Nathan Hale-Ray High School Cafeteria

The special meeting of the Board of Finance was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chairman Susan Link.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and emergency exits were identified.

In attendance:

Board of Finance Members:

Susan Link, Chairman
Robert Bennett, Secretary
William DiCristofaro
Bruce Dutch
Harvey Thomas
Raymond Willis

Others:

Mark B. Walter, First Selectman
Emmett Lyman, Selectman
Deb Denette, Town Clerk & Recording Secretary
Denise Dill, Tax Collector

Board of Education Members:

Tracey Gionta
Bryan Perry
Marc Piscioti

Library Trustees:

Maureen Gillis
Shea Jezek
Barbara Kiley
Celina Nelan
Andrea Pascal

Michael Gilroy, Library Director
Mary Beth Iacobelli, Superintendent of Schools
Beth Lunt, Public Works Administrator
Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director

Lakes Association:

Joe Broder
Randy Miller

Teresa Dickinson
Janet Kelly
Kelly Nickerson
Lisa Treat Perry
Patty Stricker

Attendees were asked to refrain from talking amongst themselves.

2014-2015 BUDGET

Lakes Association:

Lakes Association Representative Randy Miller offered a detailed presentation on the benefit of the lakefront properties in East Haddam. He noted that these properties encompass 20% of the grand list. He identified the return on investment to the Town due to its partnership with the Lakes Association and that the partnership is to work to control invasive species from taking over the lakes. Mrs. Link inquired what percentage of the lakefront owners contribute to the Lakes Association. Mr. Miller did not have that figure for Mrs. Link. He stated, however, that Lake Hayward has the largest association. Mr. Thomas recalled that the plan was for maintenance in most years and a major treatment in others. He inquired where things were in that cycle. Mr. Miller stated that the plan this year is for the weeds to be pulled up from the roots by divers rather than chemical treatment.

Mr. DiCristofaro sought and received assurance that although all lakefront owners do not contribute to the Lakes Association, all are asked to.

Mr. Walter stated that the initial request was for \$32,305. He added that the Board of Selectmen agree with the request, however, they lowered the request to \$19,000 to challenge the Lakes Association to raise more funding. He further added that it is necessary to keep ahead of the weeds or they will overtake.

Mr. Broder commented that the treatments have been working and he encouraged them to continue. He noted that the condition of the lake increases property values, and increased property values equate to hire taxes for the Town.

Libraries:

Michael Gilroy, Library Director briefly reviewed the history that merged the two libraries into one Town system nine months ago. Mr. Gilroy reviewed the general operating budget which includes a \$9,000 increase to grounds maintenance and an \$11,500 decrease in machine/equipment repair. He noted that this change was primarily to correct an error in last year's reporting.

Mr. DiCristofaro noted that donations and fund raising were down. He asked if the Library was addressing that. Mr. Gilroy reported that Madeline Franchesi was spearheading fund raising efforts.

Computers and programs were moved to Shared Services. Mr. Gilroy reported that there is a different system in each library and that the systems cannot interface. He stated that the Library Trustees have reviewed a series of different programs and are recommending that the East Haddam Free Public Library integrate the LION system, which is in place at the Rathbun. It was noted that there is an \$11,000 conversion fee, and thereafter a \$25,000 annual cost. Mrs. Varricchio reported that the LION system will support the computers.

Mr. Bennett recalled that several years ago the East Haddam Free Public Library did not want the LION system.

The Capital requests for the libraries were reviewed. Rathbun needs to replace the HVAC system. Mr. Gilroy advised that grants are being investigated to assist with the costs. It was also noted that a drop box is needed at the East Haddam Free Public Library, \$8,000 has

been incorporated into the budget as a place holder. Mr. Gilroy advised that he is hopeful that one can be found at a lower cost.

Public Works:

Public Works Administrator Beth Lunt reported that the budget request includes increasing her hours from 30 to 35 per week as she puts in way over that now. She also noted that there were modest increases to mileage, equipment and gasoline to reflect inflation. The wage increases for the public works crew were noted to be contractual obligations. Responsive to inquiry from Mrs. Link, Mrs. Lunt reviewed an in kind hours spreadsheet broken down by man hours and equipment. The main in-kind projects were noted to be the Town Hall and Grange Hall, senior center (Heritage Park) and the Harris property. Mrs. Lunt also reported that Parks and Recreation uses in kind services a lot, but it is a few hours here and there. Mrs. Lunt stated that the tree trimming by CL&P has reduced the Town's tree trimming burden of late. Mrs. Lunt advised that public works employs a talented rock mason in Danny Tierney and that a rock wall will soon be constructed at the Town Hall and Grange.

Mr. DiCristofaro inquired if overtime is ever associated with in kind services. Mrs. Lunt responded that only with set up for voting at the school as staff cannot gain access during its working hours.

Snow Removal: Mrs. Lunt noted that a five year average is utilized. She noted that this has been a winter of many small storms that have used up the entire snow line. Mr. DiCristofaro recalled that at last report there was \$12,000 remaining and another weather event has not occurred. Mrs. Lunt reported that East Haddam was out of salt and has been able to purchase it.

Transfer Station: Mrs. Lunt noted that there are nominal increases. She noted that the recycle rate is lower, she also noted that less fees are being collected in demolition as minimal building is occurring. Responsive to inquiry from Mrs. Link, Mrs. Lunt stated that we could look at fees for utilization of the Transfer Station. She stated that we are one of a few Towns that do not charge. Some towns charge a sticker fee and other charge a per bag fee. Mrs. Link quickly calculated that a \$35.00 sticker fee would result in approximately \$194,000 in additional revenue.

Capital Projects: Mrs. Lunt stated that Landing Hill was on the schedule for reclaiming this year, however, due to the detour, Smith and Trowbridge are the roads that will be addressed in the 2014-2015 budget. Regarding O'Connell Road, Mr. Walter stated that funds have been allocated and are in the budget, an engineering study has just been received. Mr. Walter stated that it will be his suggestion that the \$63,000 that is in the capital projects fund for O'Connell (as well as remaining funding from other road projects) be repurposed to address the parking lot at the Grange Hall as that needs immediate attention. He stated that the Town is not ready to tackle O'Connell Road yet and that there is time to address that with the 2015-2016 budget.

Mr. Walter reported that the pipe under Haywardville Road has been addressed. He reported that it was a great job with very little traffic disruption.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mrs. Varricchio reported that the Board of Finance has opportunity to weigh in on non-educational issues that address efficiencies. She stated that it is already doing that through Shared Services. Accordingly, there was no urgency to address the Board of Education final

number this evening. Mrs. Link inquired if the costs associated with common core have been refined for this budget process. It was noted that \$112,500 for curriculum writing and \$65,000 for text books to support that curriculum can be attributable to common core. Mrs. Link questioned who does curriculum now? Dr. Iacobelli stated that there was a curriculum council that had curriculum on a five year review cycle. She stated that she does not know what happened, but that it has not met in ten years. She stated that in 2010 new standards were established and efforts have been on going to align curriculum with those standards. She stated that for 2015 the standards are again being revamped and need to be aligned again. She advised that right now curriculum is being developed around teams. She stated that there is a lot of work to do and that the hiring of a consultant will address it.

Mrs. Link also asked Dr. Iacobelli to address the evaluation that is part of the State assessment. Dr. Iacobelli advised that the new testing is known as SBAC. She stated that 22.5% of the teachers valuation is tied to the student's performance She noted that to evaluate the teacher requires over 40 hours per teacher of administrator work. She stated that it is labor intensive.

Mrs. Varricchio reported that Youth & Family Services, the Fire Department, Registrar of Voters, Recreation Commission and the Senior Center are scheduled for Monday. She inquired if there were any other departments that the Board would like to have presentations from? Responsive to inquiry, it was noted that the Town's Finance Advisor from Webster Bank Xaykam Khamsyvoravong "Xay", would be at the meeting on Tuesday to discuss the Town's debt.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Shea Jezek noted that a merger of the two libraries has been discussed for decades. She stated that now that it has occurred, the Town and the library need to work together to assure its success. She stated that she hoped that the Board of Finance would be respectful to the proposals brought forward for the library system.

Patty Stricker inquired when the Board of Finance anticipated making its decisions regarding cuts. Mrs. Link reported that meetings are scheduled next week Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and that its final determination needs to be made by Monday, March 31st.

Terry Dickinson encouraged the Board of Finance to really look at the board of education budget. Regarding enrollments, she added that the numbers presented here are not the same figures that she received under her FOI request. She added that an additional eight or nine students have left this semester. Mrs. Dickinson encouraged cuts to occur with administration and not with textbooks and teachers.

Mrs. Link advised Mrs. Dickinson that the Board of Finance can control the amount of dollars that the Board of Education spends, but not what they spend them on.

Motion was made by Mr. Bennett adjourn at 8:22 pm. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted

Deb Denette
Town Clerk and BOF Recording Secretary