

TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
BOARD OF FINANCE
Special Meeting
March 24, 2014
Nathan Hale-Ray High School Cafeteria

CALL TO ORDER

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.

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, Selectmen
Deb Denette, Town Clerk
Denise Dill, Tax Collector & Recording Secretary
Laurie Alt, Registrar of Voters
Lucy Yacovino, Registrar of Voters
Newt Angersola, Fire Marshal
Mike Cooley, Fire Department
Shawn Daigle, Fire Department
Jay Moreau, Fire Department
Mickey Pear, Fire Department
Tiffany Quinn, Park & Recreation Director
Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director
Toni McCabe, Youth & Family Services
Mike Sassi, Youth & Family Services

2014-2015 BUDGET

Fire Department:

Fire Chief Shawn Daigle presented. He noted that as the fleet ages, additional maintenance is necessary. He also highlighted an increase in hours for firefighters. The intent is to hire on a per diem basis to cover shortages and to create a pool available to fill in as needed.

Capital needs for Fire Department. \$350,000 is reserved for the tanker.

Mr. Daigle reported that \$19,000 was in the budget for a light tower, he stated that the tanker will not need the light tower and he stated that the funding could be utilized elsewhere. The

\$19,000 will be removed from the Fire Department's capital budget and reallocated for Fire Department Reserves. It was noted that the Fire Department is not yet certain whether it will utilize all reserves on a new tanker or refurbish the existing tanker. Analysis will begin shortly.

\$50,000 was budgeted for reserves for fire equipment. Mrs. Varricchio referred Mrs. Link to the capital reserves line where the reserves were reflected. It was noted that if all of the reserves are spent on the tanker, then it will be necessary to beef up reserves next year. Responsive to inquiry from Mr. Bennett, it was noted that the average lifespan of a vehicle is 20 to 25 years, he noted that there are 11 vehicles in the Fire Department fleet. Mr. Bennett noted that current vehicles are smaller, he inquired if that would have impact on the future housing needs of the equipment. Mr. Daigle reported that the ladder truck will always be the largest vehicle and although vehicles are designed to be smaller and more compact he did not anticipate that housing needs would dissipate. The fire house needs a furnace that has been pushed out for several years now. Should a new project not go forward, it will need to be pushed up. The rescue boat was another large capital expense that is needed. The current rescue boat is 30 years old, it was reported that it continues to operate, however, its usage is monitored closely.

Fire Marshal:

Fire Marshal Newt Angersola noted that his budget was status quo other than vehicle maintenance and increases for gasoline. He noted that some of the fire proof equipment is ten years old and needs to be replaced. Specifically he noted that three coats for \$356 each, three pants at \$225 each, three boots for \$187 each. Code books were also needed. Mr. Angersola briefly described the public education planned and defined the costs such as videos, stickers, print outs, etc.

Registrar of Voters:

Mr. Bennett recused himself and left the room.

Mrs. Yacovino reported that the voting tabulators now need to be maintained by the Town. Up until this point the State of Connecticut was providing the maintenance. It was also noted that training and certifications for the moderator have become more stringent so there are modest increases there. Lastly, there are additional funds allocated anticipating a primary in this State election year. The variables, such as the number of referenda held as well as their duration noon to 8:00 pm vs. 6:00 am to 8:00 pm was also highlighted.

Mr. Thomas suggested that the funding could be utilized through contingency. Mrs. Alt stated that if additional events are not necessary the funding will not be spent.

Mrs. Varricchio reported that in all other years the Board of Finance did not spend all of its contingency, she noted that last year only \$20,000 was spent. Mr. Thomas responded that he did not find that relevant to the suggestion. Mr. Bennett returned.

Youth & Family Services:

Toni McCabe and Mike Sassi presented. Mrs. McCabe noted that the budget proposes a \$5,000 increase over last year. She noted that the increases are due to contracted services, health insurance and building needs. Mr. Sassi reviewed the unrestricted funds received in donations and fund raising efforts. It was noted that donations tend to remain level, however, costs associated with the programs they support increase. Mr. Sassi provided a

copy of the annual report for year ended June 30, 2013. Mrs. Varricchio reported that she would scan and send the report to the other members.

Mrs. Link inquired about the staffing level. Mrs. McCabe reported that there are three full time employees, one part time employee and two are contracted services.

Recreation Commission:

Recreation Director Tiffany Quinn identified a smart phone application called my trails that East Haddam will pilot. This will enable gps tracking. Mrs. Quinn reported that she was thrilled with what this app can offer both as Director to encourage recreation and as an EMT to determine the best way to get to someone or remove them from a situation in the woods.

Mrs. Quinn reviewed both accomplishments and goals and objectives. She noted that revenues are returning as they had been down. She also noted that due to better tracking, it can be determined that programs are covering fees. She noted that a big goal for 2014-2015 is to conduct a needs assessment. She stated that she is working with Southern Connecticut State University to obtain an intern to assist with this. She presented a sample of what she felt was a well done assessment.

She noted that a summer grounds person is needed. She stated that she has borrowed this person from Public Works in the past, however, her Department is receiving less and less support, so that she requested her own, 12 weeks at \$10.00 per hour. She provided a job description. She also presented a job description for part time clerical. She stated that she has brought this request forward for the past several years and it has continued to go unfunded. She also reviewed a capital request for soccer fields. She reviewed the need for the old middle school fields and advised that the Selectmen reduced the request down to \$30,000 for engineering only for this year.

Mrs. Link questioned \$10,000 for a walk way. Mrs. Quinn responded that at Nichols field steps need to be cut into the hillside to create a safer travel path between fields. She stated that it has become a safety issue. Responsive to inquiry from Mr. DiCristofaro, Mrs. Varricchio reported that \$20,000 in seed money is fronted annually to the Recreation Commission and approximately \$15,000 has been returned. Mrs. Varricchio reported that the goal is to become self-sufficient and that this year she believes that all of the funding will be returned.

It was also noted that Recreation Commission sells passes to Lake Compounce and Six Flags at a discount, this year they will be sold through the library system.

Regarding the needs associated with the grounds, Mr. Walter stated that by pulling funding out of what is presently contracted services, he can fund the facilities maintenance position discussed at the last regular meeting. He needs additional funding for equipment. Mr. Walter stated that Mr. Mansfield will be in attendance for tomorrow's meeting and he can speak to what equipment necessary and its cost. Mrs. Varricchio noted that there is also a change on Mrs. Quinn's salary line. She stated, however, that it is not an increase, but was input wrong last year.

Senior Services:

Senior Center Director Brad Parker was not present. Mrs. Quinn noted that she spoke to him earlier in the day and he advised that he was waiting to hear when he was on the agenda. Mr. Walter questioned whether the Board needed to meet with him, as his budget requests an increase of \$249.

He also highlighted that the state senior transportation grant revenues were redirected to the 9 Town Transit and that the center has been receiving a record number of attendees. Mr. Walter advised that Mr. Parker is the lowest paid department head.

Other Budget Discussion:

Mrs. Link requested input from Board members. Mr. Thomas noted concern that the proposed budget does not address debt service associated with the \$40,000,000 worth of projects on the table.

Mr. Thomas suggested that the Board entertain discussion of where it wanted to end up. He summarized that the direction would be easier to plot if we knew where we were going. Mr. DiCristofaro agreed.

Much discussion was held regarding the amount to increase debt service. Figures ranging from \$100,000 to \$1,000,000 were discussed. The need to hear from the Town's financial advisor, Xaykam Khamsyvoravong "Xay", was emphasized. Mr. Thomas suggested starting at the figure the Board wanted to be at and back out to see where they should end up. He noted that the specific cuts could be left up to the First Selectman and Board of Education once the Board of Finance determines what number it would be comfortable sending forward to the residents.

Mr. Dutch stated that he would like to start with the Board of Education. It was noted that technology under Shared Services has already received a \$50,000 reduction. Mrs. Varricchio stated that if it is cut further, it cannot meet the matching obligations of the grant. Mr. Bennett added that he would like to see the Board of Education held to the same level of spending that they had last year. Mrs. Link stated that she did not agree, and added that she would like to fund the contractual increases in salary. Mr. Thomas replied that such action is like the magic of compound interest. He noted that this is the first opportunity he has ever seen that the Board of Education budget could actually be reduced; he noted that it would be a travesty to not take advantage of it. He also stated that he is not his charge to tell them where they should spend the money, only how much of it they can spend.

All agreed that there needs to be a large cut to the budget presented and that they needed to balance the needs presented with a figure that they believe the public will support. Mr. Thomas suggested that Board members think on it overnight. He noted, however, that his belief is that the BOE should be at a zero percent increase and Mr. Walter ought to be looking at no more than a \$400,000 increase. It was noted that the Town's budget has not increased in seven years.

Mrs. Link requested statistics for ambulance calls. It was also noted that more participation in the health savings account is a goal. Mr. Bennett suggested that the two library buildings are a significant drain on Town funds. He noted that in this electronic age, libraries appear to be a dying breed. Mr. Walter reported that the libraries average daily visits are up.

Mrs. Varricchio was asked to prepare a debt service schedule for tomorrow's meeting. Mr. Walter stated that if debt service is included in the budget for a specific project and it does not pass, it gives indication of the strength of the project.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jay Moreau spoke in support of the additional hours for firefighters. He noted that the paid staff covers the calls between 7:00 am and 4:30 pm which is the timeframe that is negatively impacted with a volunteer crew. He encouraged support to the increase as it relates to the hours. He added that he would not have voted for the fire Marshal vehicle. Mr. Moreau encouraged the Board of Education budget request to be reduced.

Mrs. Varricchio reported that she will have year-end forecasts soon. Mrs. Quinn advised that there has not been a mutual aid call in over three months.

Motion was made by Mr. Bennett to adjourn at 9:07 pm. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted

Deb Denette
Town Clerk & Recording Secretary