

Board of Selectmen  
Town Office Annex  
February 12, 2015  
Special Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: Mark Walter; Emmett Lyman, Ernest Malavasi

Also Present: Jay Moreau; M. Colpoys; J. Connolly; M. Connolly; M. Davis; M. Francese; C. James; B. Lunt; B. Parker; W. Parkus; T. Quinn; N. Reinwald; C. Varricchio; S. Wheeler; M. Ziobron and L. Zemienieski

1. First Selectman Walter called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Lyman, to approve the agenda as written.  
Unanimous aye.

2. Bid Award – Energy, ADA & General Renovations at Oak Grove Senior/Disabled Housing: Mr. Walter invited Mr. Parker, President of the East Haddam Senior Housing Corporation, to speak regarding this award recommendation. Mr. Parker advised that they had received eleven bids and chose the lowest bidder. He stated that L. Wagner Associates reviewed Stanley Construction, LLC's bid and informed him that it meets all the required criteria.

Mr. Parker reviewed the work that will be done in Phase I, including ADA compliance features, new windows and doors, and upgrades to the bathroom and approximately half the kitchens. He stated that it is planned that Phase II of the renovations will complete all of the kitchen upgrades and the Housing Corporation will apply for a second grant next year to complete the Phase II work.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Malavasi, to award the contract for Energy, ADA & General Renovations at Oak Grove Senior/Disabled Housing to Stanley Construction, LLC in the amount of \$497,100.00 for base bid, \$49,300.00 for Alternate #2 and \$3,500.00 for Alternate #3 totaling \$549,900.00. Unanimous aye.

It was also noted that the Housing Corporation would also work on completing as much of alternate 1 as possible with whatever funds were left to do the kitchens.

3. Grange Hall – Beer & Wine Approval: Mr. Walter called the Selectmen's attention to an email from Jared Mondelci, requesting permission to serve beer and wine at the Grange Hall for a "Mondelci Family Birthday Party" on February 22, 2015.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Lyman, to approve the serving of beer and wine at the Grange Hall for a "Mondelci Family Birthday Party" on February 22, 2015.  
Unanimous aye.

4. Preliminary Budget Discussion: Mr. Walter provided a brief overview of the budget review process and advised that, at its February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Board of Education had approved their budget with a 3.7% increase. He stated that the Town's proposed budget represented an increase of approximately \$1.2M, or 4%, over last year's budget.

Ms. Varricchio noted that she had not yet completed the Revenue Discussion notes but the Selectmen would have them for their February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. She stated that the clerical union agreed to a 2.25% salary increase in their contract negotiations and the same increase is reflected for non-union salaries in the proposed budget. Several discrepancies from the 2.25% salary increase were noted and Ms. Varricchio stated she would check the spreadsheets for rounding errors.

5. General Budget Review Workshop

- A. Revenues Discussion: In response to a request by Mr. Walter, Ms. Varricchio agreed to do a long term analysis of the Town's revenue.

- B. Other Budgets: The budgets for the following departments, boards and commissions were reviewed:

- Assessor: Mr. Walter advised that the Town shares an Assessor with the town of Chester and, consequently, East Haddam will received revenue of \$48,000.00 from Chester next year. He noted that, otherwise, there was very little change to the Assessor's budget.
- Building, Maintenance & Operations: Mr. Walter noted that the major change to this budget is due to locking in the cost of diesel and fuel oil at a significantly reduced cost. He also noted that a new Greens, Grounds & Fields budget had been created for the 2015-16 budget and a number of related expenses have been moved to that account.
- Central Services: It was noted that this budget was reduced by approximately \$13,000.00. Part of the reason for the reduction was because the Town has made its final sewer payment to East Hampton.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Malavasi, there was a general discussion regarding the cell phone expense. Mr. Walter and Ms. Varricchio stated that they believe the Town's cell phone expense is reasonable and Ms. Varricchio stated she would provide the Selectmen with an updated spreadsheet that she maintains for this expense.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Malavasi, Ms. Varricchio also agreed to research whether or not the Town received a discount for its first contract year for voice-over IP service.

Mr. Walter noted that the dues & fees line had increased due to the Town's payments to the Council of Governments (COG) and he provided some background related to the change in COG fees.

- Elections/Registrars: It was noted that there is a slight decrease in this department's budget.
- Finance Office: Ms. Varricchio advised that she had requested \$10,000.00 for overtime since the department is understaffed in comparison to other similar Connecticut towns. She advised that she feels, at this time, it is more efficient and cost effective to pay the departments administrative assistant overtime rather than bringing in temporary help.
- Land Use Office: Ms. Varricchio advised that there is a reduction in longevity and a lower increase to the salary line in this budget due to the fact that a new hire started in the department recently.
- Old Middle School Operations: It was noted that there was a reduction in this budget of \$1,450.00 due to moving some of the expense for grounds maintenance to the new Green, Grounds and Fields budget.
- Regional Probate Court: There was no discussion of this budget.
- Selectmen: It was noted that Ms. Zemienieski is no longer a union employee.
- Tax Collector: There was no discussion of this budget.
- Town Clerk: It was noted that collections of preservation surcharges was down resulting in lower payments to the State. Ms. Varricchio stated that the budget projects a reduction of \$5,000.00 in revenues due to fewer conveyance tax assessments.
- Fringe Benefits: Ms. Varricchio reviewed several items in this budget. She stated that she had projected a 15% increase in health insurance premiums but she expects the final increase will be less than that.
- Insurance (Risk Management): Ms. Varricchio advised that the budget projects a \$19,000.00 Workers' Compensation premium increase for 2015-16. She stated that she and Mr. Walter are exploring opportunities to reduce the premium.
- Legal Services: It was noted that there was no change to this budget.
- Agriculture Commission: Mr. Walter noted that this Commission has been reconstituted this year.

- Board of Assessment Appeals: Mr. Walter noted that this budget is down from last year since the revaluation project has been completed.
- Board of Finance: It was noted that the contingency funds for 2014-15 for the old middle school project have been moved to the Capital Projects budget.
- Conservation Commission: Mr. Walter advised that the Conservation Commission had tried to partner with the Public Works Department to maintain Open Space and clear/mark trails; however, the Public Works has limited excess time and a number of the projects did not move forward. Consequently, the Commission has requested an increase in their budget to hire outside contractors in 2015-16.
- Economic Development Commission: Mr. Walter reviewed the history of the Consulting Fees line of the EDC's budget and noted several projects the Commission is contemplating which will incur consultant fees. He stated that the Commission had requested \$20,000.00 for the budget line but that he had reduced that amount to \$10,000.00.
- Historic District Commission: There was no discussion of this budget.
- Open Space Committee: A minor increase to the salary line was noted.
- Zoning Board of Appeals: It was noted that there was little change to this budget.
- Ambulance: There was no discussion of this budget.
- Animal Control: Mr. Walter advised that this budget would be discussed at the Selectmen's February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Building Department: It was noted that there was a reduction in the salary line of this budget due to two new hires.
- Emergency Management/911, Fire Department, Fire Marshal and Police Officers: It was noted that these budgets will be reviewed at the Selectmen's February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Resident State Trooper: Ms. Varricchio noted that a 3% increase has been estimated for this budget.
- Cemeteries: Mr. Walter stated that the Town maintains thirteen cemeteries and noted that part of the expense for the maintenance has been moved to the Greens, Grounds and Fields budget. Ms. Varricchio provided details regarding equipment rental needs for next year's maintenance of the cemeteries.
- Chatham Health: It was noted that the rate for this budget had increased \$0.45 per capita.

- Human Services: Mr. Walter noted that there was no change to this budget.
  - Senior Services: Ms. Varricchio advised that this budget was reduced \$3,190.00.
  - Youth and Family Services: It was noted that this budget will be reviewed at the Selectmen's February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.
  - Early Childhood Council: Mr. Walter reviewed this program and advised that East Haddam shares the program with the town of East Hampton. He stated that the cost is shared by the towns, the Board of Education and the United Way and that he feels that the program is well run and effective.
  - Lakes Association: Mr. Walter stated that the maintenance of the Town's lakes is a joint effort with between the Town, the State and the Lakes Associations and he feels it is a very successful program. He advised that he recommends maintaining the budget at the current level. In response to a question raised by Mr. Malavasi, Ms. Varricchio stated she will research whether or not the Associations raised the amount they agreed to match.
6. HeartSafe Communities Presentation (6:00pm): Mr. Walter introduced Ms. Connolly who reviewed the HeartSafe Communities program which includes equipment, education and training. She stated that East Haddam had recently completed all the requirements for the designation and would receive a commendation of same from the State. Mr. Walter thanked all of the individuals involved in the project for achieving their goal of making East Haddam a HeartSafe Community.

Representative Ziobron extended her congratulations to the individuals who drove the HeartSafe project to success and provided the Town with written citations from the Connecticut General Assembly. Ms. Ziobron also noted Ms. Quinn's work, at the state level, on the Safe Haven project.

The meeting adjourned for a short break at 6:12 p.m. and resumed at 6:23 p.m.

7. General Budget Review Workshop
- A. Recreation Commission (6:15pm): Ms. Quinn distributed materials related to the Recreation Commission's proposed 2015-16 budget. She advised that the most significant change was the Commission's request for funds for an intern. She stated that she had worked with Southern Connecticut State University for two years to create the internship and noted that the intern is paid a stipend of \$2,000.00 which is significantly lower than what other towns pay. She stated that the reduced stipend is offset by an offer for summer employment which is valuable experience for the intern. She introduced Ms. Reinwald, the current intern, who provided details on her experience with the East Haddam Recreation Commission. Ms. Quinn stated that Ms. Reinwald will be working on a Needs Assessment during her internship.

Ms. Quinn responded to several questions from the Selectmen and Ms. Varricchio. She advised that the Department's revenues had increased and her focus for the upcoming year will be on developing programs that foster strong youth/adult relationships and encourage self-confidence.

Ms. Quinn stated that the Recreation Department budget also included an increase to her salary. Ms. Francese stated that the Commission would like to make a \$2,000.00 market adjustment to Ms. Quinn's salary and apply the Town's 2.25% salary increase to the new base salary. She identified several reasons why the Commission feels so strongly about the adjustment and increase to the Recreation Director's salary. Several of the Commissioners present also stated their support for the increase. Mr. Malavasi advised that he, too, was in favor of the adjustment/increase to the Recreation Director's salary.

- B. Public Works Budgets (7:00pm): Ms. Varricchio noted that the General Highways budget-Gasoline line had been reduced by \$25,000.00 because the Town locked in a significantly lower cost for diesel fuel. There was a brief discussion concerning projections for salary increases.

Ms. Lunt provided the following information regarding the Public Works budgets (General Highways, Snow Removal, Town Garage Maintenance, and Transfer Station):

- There were small increases to the budget due to increases in equipment maintenance, electricity costs and cell phone service.
- There was a minimum increase to the General Highways budget lines of Repairs and Maintenance and Electricity.
- She uses a 5-year average to project the Snow budget; the increase in this budget is primarily due to increases in the cost and usage of salt.
- There was a small increase in the Garage Maintenance budget due to the increased costs of the internet contract and propane.
- The increase in the Transfer Station budget is due to the increased cost of propane and salaries.
- A \$4,200.00 decrease in revenue is projected.

Ms. Lunt reviewed several items in the Public Works Capital budget. She stated that the main expense will be for paving and making improvements to drainage on O'Connell Road Extension. She noted, however, that there are no plans to reclaim/repave any other roads and the amount allocated to the O'Connell Road Extension project is similar to the cost of road projects scheduled in previous years.

- C. Other Budgets (as time permits): The Selectmen reviewed the following budgets:

- East Haddam Public Library System: Ms. Varricchio reviewed background information regarding the requested increase in the salaries budget line. There was a general discussion regarding purchase versus leasing the new computers. Ms. Varricchio advised that LION does not service leased computers.

- Town Greens, Grounds, Fields: Ms. Varricchio advised that this is a new budget and she reviewed expenses that were transferred into the budget from several other areas. Mr. Walter stated that \$5,000.00 has been allocated to this budget for fill and re-seeding the fields at the Old Middle School.
- Principal & Interest: It was noted that there was a \$13,424.00 reduction in this budget primarily due to the fact that the sewer debt to East Hampton had been paid off.
- Interfund Transfers / Shared Services: Transfers to Capital Projects budget reflects an increase of General Fund support for Capital projects of \$214,631.00. Ms. Varricchio advised that Transfer to Shared Services budget increase of \$26,000.00 is mainly a consequence of increases in salaries and benefits.

The Selectmen discussed several items in the Board of Education budget.

The Selectmen discussed whether they should make a contingency plan due to bad weather predictions next week. It was decided not to reschedule the February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting at this time.

4. Adjournment: There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Malavasi, to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 p.m.

Taped

Respectfully submitted,

Emmett Lyman, Secretary