

TOWN OF EAST HADDAM

Special Meeting

March 11, 2015

Town Grange

A special meeting of the East Haddam 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
Deb Denette, Town Clerk and recording secretary
Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director
Approximately 15 individuals in the audience, in and out throughout the meeting.

2015-2016 BUDGET WORKSHOP

a. Police

Officer Craig Mansfield and Resident State Trooper Ian Hawes presented the police budget. The biggest change was noted to be the addition of a third full-time police officer. It was also noted that the uniform allowance was adjusted upward accordingly. The cost of ammunition supplies have also gotten more expensive. Questions were asked and answered including the number of shifts that the additional hours would cover, Statistics were reviewed that strongly indicate that having two full-time officers is working. It was noted that the part-time officers typically handle school events, and traffic control.

Lengthy discussion occurred relevant to police vehicles. Mr. Bennett noted that the town renegotiated fuel, but there was not a decrease in that line. Mr. Mansfield advised that the costs for diesel and heating oil were recently negotiated. Unleaded fuel has decreased, but is offset by the additional miles of another officer.

Police capital needs were discussed. Replacement of the Tahoe is being pushed out another year. The Tahoe is a 2003 and is primarily used for towing. Officer Karabeinikoff does take it out in bad weather, however. It was also noted that the 1985 boat is acceptable for the lakes, but not effective on the River. Mr. Walter stated that he is starting dialog with the other RiverCOG towns regarding regionalized ownership of a boat. All newly purchased police vehicles will be AWD.

b. Libraries:

Michael Gilroy joined the Board at the table. He emphasized that in 2014 the two systems were joined as one to avoid collapse. He stated that the Lions system has been launched and both now share a cataloging system. Mr. Gilroy advised that two-thirds of the town's citizens have library cards.

Mr. Gilroy stated that they are looking for an increase to both hours and salary for the Assistant Director. Rationale was explained. Responsive to inquiry from Mrs. Link, Mr. Gilroy advised that there are seven (7) FTE employed by the library system.

Mr. DiCristofaro noted that donations were down. Mr. Gilroy responded that he was hopeful that the creation of a special revenue fund will address that. An aggressive goal to merge the friends groups was also discussed. Mr. Gilroy added that he is waiting on the attorney who is reviewing whether the friends group can be renamed or whether it is necessary to dissolve and create a new 501c(3). Mr. Gilroy added that another challenge is that the East Haddam Free Public Library and Reading Room incorporated is still the official owner of the building.

Technology and capitol was also reviewed in connection with the 2015-2016 budget request. The LION system supports the technology. A request to replace the carpet for the East Haddam Free Public Library is estimated at \$20,000. The Rathbun has issues with the windows that were ruined by air conditioning units. They also need a new HVAC system. Approximately \$30,000 is estimated for that expense. Responsive to inquiry regarding the reliability of the estimate, Mr. Mansfield responded that it was a quote given by Mike Fisher. Mr. Bennett noted that all too often \$30,000 projects become \$60,000 projects.

c. Youth & Family Services:

Toni McCabe and Mike Sassi joined the Board at the table. Ms. McCabe explained that there was an error in last year's budget and payroll tax was not incorporated. She stated that they made do and this year corrected the error. Responsive to an inquiry from Mrs. Link, Ms. McCabe advised that they have not re-created the secretarial position. Ms. McCabe stated that she is concerned that State budget cuts could greatly impact their programming. She stated that if such cuts materialize, they would have to draw down their reserves. Ms. McCabe was reminded to provide their annual financial statement.

If grants remain the same, Y&FS should be the recipient of approximately \$11,000 in grants. Peter Govert arrived and joined in at the table. Mr. Bennett noted that we provide a dollar amount, they determine how to spend it. Mr. Walter stated that the Town, Board of Education and Youth & Family Services work very well together. He noted recent collaboration regarding coffee shop meetings geared at drug prevention that is helping to identify dealers.

Responsive to an inquiry regarding facilities, Ms. McCabe stated that the space identified for Y&FS at the proposed new town office site is smaller than their present facility and does not allow room for growth, accordingly, there is no plan to relocate.

d. **Lakes Association:**

Randy Miller presented a comprehensive analysis of what hinders the lakes, how it is best addressed, the impact a quality lake vs a poorly maintained lake have on the taxes and the financial impact the waterfront owners have on the grand list. He stated that the owners in the lake zones pay more in taxes; and they are looking to get something back for the extra that they pay to support the reason that they pay the extra tax.

Mr. Miller added that the financial contribution from the town is leveraged as much as possible with both volunteerism, grants and private contributions. He also noted that many lake owners are seasonal property owners and do not burden our school system. Mrs. Link noted that the funding appropriated last year remains unexpended. It was noted that the expenses will be drawn down in June. Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Miller both spoke on the subject. Eradication of all plant life is not the answer, accordingly, mapping and spot treatment have been documented to be very effective.

Mr. Dutch noted that the Board of Selectmen cut the requested amount by \$10,000. He questioned why it was cut if it is demonstrating that it is working. Mr. Walter responded that the initial budget requests were over a 2 mill increase. The amount of funding recommended by the Board of Selectmen keep the lakes budget flat.

e. **Other Departments as time allows:**

Animal Control: Mr. Mansfield stated that several years ago the East Haddam dog pound was regionalized with East Hampton. He noted that negotiations are occurring to regionalize animal control as well. Both towns would maintain a vehicle. The goal would be to have one animal control officer and four part-time stipend positions to assist. 24/7 coverage would then be available. Mr. Mansfield noted that there have been 7 calls in the last 24 hours and that presently there are 10 dogs in the pound due to a hoarding situation and a collapsed roof.

Responsive to questions from Mr. DiCristofaro, it was noted that there is \$24,000 in the reserve account for the replacement of the vehicle. The need to improve the software was also discussed. The reporting requirements to the State are not efficient the way that they are done at this time. Mrs. Denette noted that when the ACO software is procured, it requires a commitment that she stay with the present licensing system. She stated that she is very pleased with the program, however, she has been looking at other cost effective opportunities.

Mrs. Link sought assurance that this agreement with East Hampton could be terminated if it was not working out. Mr. Mansfield stated that there will be an annual renewal component.

Emergency Management: Mr. Mansfield noted a reduction to the cell phone account. Other supplies have been moved to equipment. The radio system was discussed. \$680,000 for three (3) years will be necessary to do the \$2,100,000 project in three phases. He noted that it will be necessary to have the first phase completed by August 2015. He also noted the frequency purchases and their expiration dates. Mr. Mansfield reported that piggy backing on the State project on Mount Parnassus site will save thousands in labor and installation costs. He stated that a formal presentation will be made at a tri board meeting scheduled for March 30th.

Mr. DiCristofaro inquired about life cycle and on-going costs associated with the radio tower. Mr. Mansfield stated that a reserve account would be appropriate in a few years.

Guests and Audience Comments:

Nothing noted.

It was noted that the next meeting will be tomorrow at 6:00 pm at the Town Grange. It was noted that Mr. Bennett and Mr. DiCristofaro were unavailable for this meeting. Public Works, Fire Department and Fire Marshal are scheduled. It was also noted that next week's meetings will occur at the high school.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 8:55 pm. Mr. Willis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Denette