

Board of Selectmen  
Tri-Board Meeting with Boards of Finance and Education  
Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School Cafeteria  
January 8, 2018  
Special Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: Emmett Lyman, First Selectman, Robert Smith. Absent: Susan Link  
Board of Finance Members: William DiCristofaro, Chairman, Gregory Lauria, Secretary, Bruce Dutch,  
Todd Gelston, Tracey Gionta, Harvey Thomas  
Board of Education Members: Bryan Perry, Chairman, Marc Piscioti, Secretary, Erik Anderson,  
Karin Blaschik, Shawn Conroy, Tracy Delventhal, Nicole Hendry, Jill Kelly  
Also present: Brian Reas, Superintendent of Schools, Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director  
Approximately 40 individuals in were in the audience.

1. Mr. Lyman called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order at 7:09 pm.  
Mr. DiCristofaro called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:09 pm.  
Mr. Perry called the Board of Education meeting to order at 7:09 pm.  
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. Tri-Board Meeting, 2018-2019 Proposed Budget-Boards of Finance, Education and Selectmen

Mr. DiCristofaro stated that the purpose of the meeting was to provide for public input into the budget process. He requested that citizens advise what is acceptable and not acceptable. He stated that the format of the meeting would be to receive questions and then post the questions and answers on the town's website so that everyone can see them. Mr. DiCristofaro noted that immediate answers to inquiries were not intended, but that we would endeavor to provide timely answers. Mr. DiCristofaro encouraged all to remain respectful and courteous.

#### A. Review and Discussion

Mr. DiCristofaro reviewed the following key points on behalf of the Board of Finance:

- Last year we encountered many challenges in developing East Haddam's current operating budget to include the State's fiscal mess and its impact on our community.
- We did not pass our first budget, and many citizens expressed frustration that their voices were not heard. We are listening and clearly understand this message.
- We have increased public input opportunities for this year's budget, including the *Citizens' Guide to the Budget*, sent to every household via *East Haddam News* this Tri-Board meeting and a Public Hearing prior to the Board of Finance budget review and deliberation.
- We have established three Board of Finance subcommittees, addressing key areas of concern and to better position us for the future. Communications, Revenue and Long-Range Planning and we plan to keep citizens informed on our progress.
- We encourage citizens to check the website for information as we move through the budget process.

Mr. Lyman reviewed the current state of affairs:

- Finished FY2017 with a \$37,671 general fund budget surplus

- AA+ Standard and Poor's bond rating (2<sup>nd</sup> highest credit rating)
- Municipal Office Complex, tracking on time and on budget
- Firehouse Renovations nearly completed and on target
- Ambulance Association provided \$40,000 to the Town toward a future ambulance in accordance with our agreement
- \$90,000 state shortfall projected this year, prudently planning for greater cuts, how will we adapt:
  - General spending freeze implemented
  - Benefit of last year's surplus funding from Ambulance Association
  - Monitoring expenditures and revenues closely
  - Sufficient fund balance to absorb (if necessary)

Mr. Lyman noted looking to that future that:

- The State was slated to contribute \$4,900,000 to East Haddam, anticipating cuts we budgeted for \$3,800,000 and we anticipate receipt of \$3,700,000.
- A Transfer Station Committee has been appointed. The Town needs to be "SMART" (Save Money And Recycle Trash). Looking at generating additional revenue from the Transfer Station.
- The town has been mandated to take over the Circuit Breaker Program at a cost of approximately \$70,000 annually. Mr. Lyman anticipated that the state will continue to burden municipalities more and more in this fashion.
- The Library System is being scrutinized.
- Moving to the Municipal Office Building Complex will create great opportunities for Moodus and to develop the East Haddam Village area.

Superintendent Brian Reas noted a focus on:

- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as that is where future jobs are trending.
- K-12 World Language Program
- Dynamic Online Curriculum
- Supporting our students with special programs. He elaborated that by educating our special needs students in district we have saved approximately \$300,000.

## B. Guests and Audience Comments

Mr. DiCristofaro opened the floor up for comments and questions. He reminded all to be respectful, keep comments and questions to no more than three minutes and to state name and address. He reiterated that questions and answers would be posted on the Town and Board of Education's websites.

Irene Morsch, 37 Landing Hill Road questioned why the increases in 2016 were so much higher than in other years, as depicted on the slides presented. Mr. Reas advised that 2016 followed a very low budget increase year, he stated that if 2015 and 2016 were factored together it represented a 1.75 increase.

Bob Morsch, 37 Landing Hill Road, stated that he left Long Island due to out of control taxes. He stated that it was refreshing to see a thoughtful approach. He stated that he appreciates a quantitative approach, he stated that he would like to see costs per students and how that compares in districts with similar demographics.

Michael Callahan, 21 Augusta Circle cautioned against relying on State funding as a source of income. He inquired about the Grand List.

Chris Read, Hemlock Valley Road Extension asked how we are planning for reduced revenue from the state. He stated that he would like to see a five year tiered plan documenting what will be funded or not funded based on income received from the State.

Bill Cross, Alger Road noted that within budgets are salaries. He questioned if the value of each job was known and whether performance factored into raises or are they automatically given. He further inquired how salary decisions were made when not contractually obligated.

Dick Everett, Town Street relayed how discouraged he was with the State of our Nation, State and local government. He stated that he does not have to be highly educated to know that the future does not look bright. He noted that people with the means to leave in their retirement years are leaving and added that the people that are remaining require more services. Mr. Everett advised that he will remain because of an irreplaceable home that he loves. He also discussed water conditions and real estate on Martha's Vineyard. He departed thanking all for their service despite being doomed.

3. Adjournment: Motion was made by Mr. Lyman to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 7:55 pm. Mr. Smith seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Motion was made by Mr. Piscioti to adjourn the Board of Education Meeting at 7:55 pm. Mrs. Hendry seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Emmett Lyman, First Selectman

Recorded