

TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
March 20, 2018
Municipal Office Building
Meeting Room 1

The special meeting of the Board of Finance was called to order by Mr. DiCristofaro at 7:00 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

In attendance:

Board of Finance Members
William DiCristofaro, Chairman
Gregory Lauria, Secretary
Bruce Dutch
Todd Gelston
Tracey Gionta
Harvey Thomas

Others:

Emmett Lyman, First Selectman
Deb Denette, Town Clerk and Recording Secretary
Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director

Approximately 20 staff and citizens were in the audience.

Mr. DiCristofaro thanked all that have been a part of the process to date. He noted that tonight's meeting would continue with presentations by departments.

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to approve the agenda as presented. Mrs. Gionta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Mr. DiCristofaro advised that the Superintendent has advised that they have been able to find \$100,000 of reductions in oil and employee benefits. Responsive to inquiry from Mr. Gelston, Mrs. Varricchio advised that no reduction in benefits to employees occurred with that savings.

BUDGET WORKSHOP SCHEDULED DEPARTMENTS

a. **Building Department:**

Vin Garofolo, the Town's Building Official was present to discuss his budget. Mr. DiCristofaro noted that the Board is looking to increase fees where feasible. Mr. Garofolo stated that he believes an adjustment to square footage costs, the figure which fees are calculated on, needs adjustment. Mr. Garofolo noted that due to staffing adjustments, the budget has already gone down \$30,000. The administrative secretary position was reduced to 30 hours and he is part time. Mr. Garofolo noted the

need for the town to invest in permit software for day to day tracking. Mr. DiCristofaro returned questioning to increasing fees. Mr. Garofolo noted that permit fee calculations are based on square footage at \$98.00 a square foot. He noted that in three or four months he would be making recommendations. Mr. DiCristofaro inquired if any adjustments could be made to the budget in anticipation of increased revenues. Mrs. Varricchio noted that the budget has already had a \$30,000 reduction in expenditures, she stated that is a substantial reduction in one fiscal year. She suggested that the budget remain as is for the time being.

Mr. DiCristofaro inquired how many hours were worked by the Building Official on average. Mr. Garofolo responded 20-23. The hours of operation for the Building Department were reviewed. It was noted that the Land Use office takes in applications when the Building Department is not staffed. Mr. Gelston asked if these hours were sufficient, Mr. Garofolo stated he has not received complaints. Mr. Gelston noted that one would be foolish to complain to the Building Official with an open permit. It was noted that a rather significant backlog has been sent out for scanning.

Mr. Garofolo noted that he is surprised at how busy East Haddam is. Brief discussion was held relative to electronic issuance of permits to save on postage fees. It was noted that Munis has a component to it for permit tracking. Mr. DiCristofaro stated that at a future meeting he would like to learn more about what Munis can do as he believes we are just scratching its surface.

b. **Assessor:**

Assessor Loreta Zdanys noted that she is shared with the town of Chester and she works 20 hours in East Haddam. The Assistant (Patty) works 30 hours and also assists the Tax Collector. The office is open 34 hours weekly. The circuit breaker and elderly homeowners tax credit program were discussed. It was reiterated that the burden for funding of those programs has shifted to the municipality.

It was noted that several reductions were made by the Board of Selectmen. It was noted that conference costs were reduced by 50%. Ms. Zdanys noted that she is required by law to maintain certifications.

c. **Senior Center:**

Municipal Agent Brad Parker distributed handouts depicting "sign ins" and maintenance items. He noted that the Board of Finance supports the building and the staffing, the remainder of items needed are provided by the seniors through fund raising and other efforts. The Senior Center was noted to be self-sustaining in its programming. Mr. Parker stated that tax preparation assistance and energy assistance have been notable activities this month. Discussion on the meals programs were held. Mr. Parker noted that many of the activities with fees have a small fee built in for the special revenue fund; this is how items are purchased without the need to burden the tax payers. He noted that he added \$765.00 to those funds today.

It was further noted that the HVAC is maintained on schedule. Cleaning costs were transferred to the town Central Services budget where they have been consolidated.

d. **Recreation Commission:**

Mr. Parker noted that he had been interim rec director after Tiffany Quinn departed. He introduced Lisa Conroy who assumed the permanent role yesterday. He noted that the Park and Recreation budget is like the Senior Center in that the programs are self-sustaining. The town provides the staff and benefits.

Mr. Parker noted that Mrs. Quinn prepared the budget prior to her departure. He noted that it has been difficult to find life guards to staff the beaches. He stated that he believed the reason was becomes East Haddam's compensation for those positions was low.

Mr. Gelston inquired what the grounds maintenance line item was in the budget. He was advised it was for the town beach, and Nichols field park other maintenance items were addressed by the town.

e. **Public Works:**

Mrs. Lunt noted that the price of salt has gone down which has been helpful in keeping the operating budget with minimal increases. It was noted that budgeting is based on five year averages.

Responsive to inquiry from Mr. Lauria, it was noted that the energy savings realized from the Shagbark solar program is targeted to the Board of Education. The utility companies have been contacted regarding conversion to LED on street lights to save money. Staffing at Public Works was reviewed at the request of Mrs. Gionta. Overtime and professional services were discussed. Discussion was held regarding last year's reduction of calcium chloride. Funding was reduced from the budget for this for a second year.

Mrs. Gionta inquired why the State and town could not partner together with a formula to pay x for miles plowed. She noted that lifting the plow because it was not your route was ridiculous. It was noted that cleaning services have also shifted from the Public Works department to an overall cleaning/maintenance budget. Mr. Gelston suggested that it would be more cost effective to hire a cleaning service rather than employees.

The transfer station budget decreased \$83,000. The purchase of a roll off truck will enable existing staff with CDL licenses to transport the waste rather than paying a hauler. The purchase of the truck will be made up in 1.5 years. The truck is estimated to cost \$155,000 and funds are in the reserve funds for it (which will be repaid from the savings). It was noted that there may be additional savings that can be implemented based on recommendations from the Transfer Station Committee. They are scheduled to present to the Board of Selectmen on Wednesday and to the Board of Finance next Saturday.

The purchase of a back hoe is needed, upon purchase the existing back hoe will move to the Transfer Station. The gas monitor has failed, it is functioning, but in need of replacement. Petticoat Lane is well overdue. Federal projects are on target to move forward, state projects are on hold. The Bone Mill bridge has accordingly halted, the Johnsonville and Fox Hopyard bridges are gearing up to move forward.

Engineering issues regarding the Petticoat Lane project were discussed between Mr. Gelston and Ms. Lunt. Water issues on Petticoat Lane were acknowledged, the project is being engineered in house. Mr. Gelston questioned the fate of the John Deere 550 bulldozer. He opined that it had not moved in five years. Mrs. Lunt concurred that it is no longer needed. She added that she is planning to trade it in when the backhoe is acquired. It was anticipated that there would be a \$20,000 to \$30,000 trade in value. Mrs. Lunt stated that she wanted to have the town's mechanic work on it first. Mr. Gelston inquired if housing for the roll-off truck was envisioned? He noted that equipment lasts longer under cover. It was further noted that the hopper is in good shape, however, the computer mechanics are failing. The replacement cost is \$65,000. The cost of the new truck was determined a good investment as it would save funding in the long run.

Mr. DiCristofaro suggested ending the meeting by 9:00 p.m. Mr. Gelston reminded to leave room for audience of citizens. Mr. DiCristofaro stated that the Board has much deliberation to do, he stated that he would like to start the next meeting with deliberation on the security issue, economic development and transfer station costs.

There are additional staff that are still needed to present, public safety departments and youth and family services.

f. **Other Budget Review:**

Mrs. Varricchio noted that the Registrars budget reflects a \$700 increase. The increases are for additional supplies and increased costs to address a gubernatorial election.

Mrs. Varricchio reported that the Finance Office budget is down. She again noted that clerical shows at a 2.0% increase to balance last year when a 2.5% increase was in the budget but the contractual obligation came in at 2.25%.

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Bill Barney encouraged the Board to restore funding for the Assistant Librarian. He noted the number of patrons served and the numerous functions that the position performs. Mr. Barney stated that presently the Libraries do more with less than most of their surrounding communities. He added that turning over the East Haddam Free Public Library to town control is now in the hands of the Probate judge. He concluded that our libraries are an incredible resource to the community, he encouraged the Board of Finance not to diminish that resource.

Terry Dickinson noted calcium chloride was removed from the budget last year and she added that the roads were a mess because of it. She encouraged it to be reinstated. Mrs. Dickinson inquired about the recording and broadcasting of meetings. Mrs. Varricchio advised that finishes to the building are still being provided. She pointed out the camera and advised that it is being tested this evening.

Jane Chisholm encouraged retention of the Assistant Librarian position.

Mr. Gelston stated that two more articles for East Haddam News have been written., he noted that he needed to review them with Mr. Dutch and then present them to the Board. He hoped that time would permit for that for Saturday.

Next meetings were noted to be Saturday morning at 9:00 am and Tuesday evening at 7:00 pm,

Motion made by Mrs. Gionta to adjourn at 9:10 pm. Mr. Lauria seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Denette