

**TOWN OF EAST HADDAM**

**Board of Finance**

Special Meeting Minutes

March 27, 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 15 staff and citizens were in the audience.

**PRIOR BUDGET WORKSHOPS FOLLOW-UP:**

Correspondence in support of reinstating funding for an Assistant Librarian at the East Haddam Free public library (EHFPL) was received from Lenore MacLean. Dawn Barlow also sent correspondence in support of funding staffing levels at the EHFPL.

Mr. DiCristofaro noted that the Board of Education and Board of Selectmen oversee operations of the school and town; the Board of Finance allocates an appropriation. He noted, however, that the Board of Finance should listen to the request. Mr. DiCristofaro requested Mr. Gilroy to respond. Mr. Gilroy stated that the EHFPL is down two positions, one because the reference librarian passed away, those hours are being made up by other staff members, the Assistant Librarian has moved on to another position. The existing staff does not have the skill set to manage staff, fill in for the director in his absence, and do statistical reporting and grant writing.

Mr. DiCristofaro requested the Board of Selectmen to provide the color as to why they eliminated funding for the position. Mr. Lyman stated that the Probate Court has the matter to authorize the transfer the building to the town, Mr. Lyman is doubtful that the town will accept it. If it does not, he does not want to be in a position of having to eliminate staff that was just hired. He stated that the Board of Selectmen was in favor of making do for a while and seeing what happens with the libraries. It

was further noted that Mr. Gilroy will be taking a parental leave this summer. Mr. Thomas encouraged cross training. It was the consensus of the Board of Finance to revisit this after building issues are resolved if the need remains.

Mr. Gelston questioned the \$65,000 for a boat in public safety. It was noted that was in the current year's budget.

Lengthy discussion was held relative to engineering issues associated with reclamation efforts of Petticoat Lane. Mr. Gelston was concerned that additional engineering needed to occur for long term value. The Board of Finance was confident that Mrs. Lunt had the matter under control.

Discussion was also held relative to dust containment on the town's dirt roads. It was noted that the Selectmen eliminated \$19,500 from the budget. Mrs. Lunt spoke in favor of applying the product to minimize erosion and dust. She noted that the chemical binds the road, but does wash off. It was determined that half of the funding could be restored so that calcium chloride could be applied on the most frequently traveled dirt roads.

**Motion by Mrs. Gionta to restore \$9,750 to the FY 2018-2019 budget for limited application of calcium chloride by Public Works. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

Further technical discussion was held between Mr. Gelston and Ms. Lunt regarding repairs and maintenance. This line was noted to cover parts for the fleet such as tires, brakes, etc. She added that we employ a full time mechanic to maintain the fleet. Mr. Gelston felt the line should be labeled differently. Mrs. Varricchio explained the categories of MUNIS (the town's accounting system).

Interfund transfers were reviewed. The decrease in debt service was noted to be an increase in capital reserves.

## **GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

Terry Dickinson stated that she appreciated the effort put in by the Board of Finance. She also was thankful that the calcium chloride was restored to dirt roads. She raised concern with the changes to the Fire Department and noted the importance of coverage particularly for the early morning hours.

Jay Moreau encouraged the Board of Finance to consider matters of life and death very seriously before reducing the Fire Department by 30 hours as proposed. He further noted the experience and professionalism of the part time staff that would be reduced with the current plan.

Laurie D'Aquila spoke in support of the part time fire fighters. She encouraged the model in place to remain, as the prior model was not working which was why it was changed. She noted concern with the skill set that could be lost.

Laurel White spoke in support of funding the Assistant Librarian.

Mr. DiCristofaro closed the Guests and Audience Comments.

He noted that the budget request as it stands is \$31,562,517.00. He stated that this would represent a mill rate impact of .19 mills and a tax increase of 2.1%.

Mr. DiCristofaro called for a brief recess.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to recess at 8:00 pm. Mrs. Gionta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

The meeting reconvened at 8:05 pm.

Mr. DiCristofaro distributed a draft motion prepared by Mrs. Varricchio for the Board's consideration. Mr. Thomas stated that he would like to entertain discussion on utilization of fund balance prior to voting. He noted concern that carrying the balance at the high end of the goal (nearly 14%) might make the town a target for additional State cuts. He suggested that it may be prudent to expend some of those funds to not look so attractive to the State and to lower the mill rate impact to our residents.

Mr. DiCristofaro apologized for missing the dialog. It was noted that a reduction of \$100,000 or \$150,000 did not have significant impact on the percentage of fund balance remaining. It was noted that approximately \$500,000 would be necessary to effectuate a 0 budget increase. Several different scenarios were discussed. Mr. Thomas suggested a \$100,000 general fund balance reduction, Mrs. Gionta favored a lower number given the uncertainties of additional funding requests that may come forward.

It was noted that \$160,000 reliance from fund balance would effectuate a 0 mill rate increase. Mr. Gelston stated that he would favor that approach. He consented, however, that he could split the difference and would support \$100,000 reliance on fund balance.

#### **VOTE TO SEND BUDGET TO PUBLIC HEARING**

**Motion was made by Mr. Lauria to utilize \$100,000 of the General Fund to offset the 2018-2019 budget. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

**Motion was made by Mrs. Gionta to present to Public Hearing scheduled for April 10, 2018 at 7:00 pm at the Nathan Hale-Ray High School a total budget of \$31,452,517 based on the grand list as of October 1, 2017 of \$871,380,752. The budget would require a mill rate increase of .08 mills or a 1.7% tax increase. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

Once again Mr. DiCristofaro thanked all for their participation.

**Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 8:35 pm. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Deb Denette, Recording Secretary