

**TOWN OF EAST HADDAM**

**Board of Finance**

Special Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2019

Municipal Office Complex

Meeting Rooms 1 and 2

Mr. DiCristofaro called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and recording devices started.

In attendance:

Board of Finance Members

William DiCristofaro, Chairman

Gregory Lauria, Secretary

Bruce Dutch

Todd Gelston

Tracey Gionta

Harvey Thomas

Others

Emmett J. Lyman, First Selectman

Susan Link, Selectman

Robert Smith Selectman

Deb Denette, Town Clerk and Recording Secretary

Bryan Perry, Chairman, Board of Education

Irene Haines, State Representative

Norman Needleman, State Senator

Brian Reas, Superintendent of Schools

Ron Turner, Director of Operations

Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director

Approximately 25 individuals were in the audience.

Mr. DiCristofaro welcomed all to the workshop to structure a budget that the townspeople will accept.

**GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

Chris Behilo noted that he has a meeting with the Selectmen tomorrow regarding the Transfer Station. He stated that he is unhappy with their current plan.

Mr. DiCristofaro recognized State Representative Irene Haines and requested that she update the Board on what it could expect out of the legislative session. Mrs. Haines reported that it is still very early in the process, but many items have bubbled up to the top. She noted that regionalization has been a theme of discussions. She anticipated that many of the bills will likely die in favor of studies. She anticipated that tolls will be implemented. Mrs. Haines encouraged all to follow bills on the CGA website and to watch testimony on CTN to be informed.

State Senator Norman Needleman noted that over 5,000 bills have been produced this year, he stated that there has been an endless sea of hearings. He concurred with Mrs. Haines that it is too early in the process to predict exactly what will happen. He did anticipate that teacher pension costs will be shifted to municipalities. He anticipated that the legislature will put forward a blend of tax increases and budgetary cuts.

Mr. DiCristofaro invited Board members to ask questions of either Mrs. Haines or Mr. Needleman. Mr. Gelston, Mrs. Gionta and Mr. Thomas took advantage of the opportunity. Mr. Thomas noted that it would be very beneficial if the State finished its budget sooner than later as municipalities budgets are greatly impacted by what is received from the State, yet must finish their process first.

### **BOARD OF FINANCE BUDGET REVIEW**

Mr. DiCristofaro noted that the Board of Education was asked to respond to questions formulated at the last meeting. Superintendent Brian Reas presented and expanded upon the following:

- Contractual obligations, fringe benefits and staffing levels
- Special Education costs
- Educational Cost Sharing trends
- Enrollments
- The functions of requested new positions, and what needs are not being met now.
- Replacement of smart boards (aging technology) with Chromebooks and other portable technology.
- Resource media
- Electricity review (averaging a monthly \$1,778 offset from Shagbark solar)
- Purchased services

Considerable discussion was held relative to the half time Human Resources position requested. The Board of Finance inquired what other alternatives had been explored, and noted that there are outside services that can be contracted, rather than hired. It was also noted that a shared position with the Town would be welcomed.

Considerable discussion was held relative to capital. Mr. DiCristofaro noted the desire to bundle projects for bonding, as debt retires. It was noted that the parking lot at the high school has reached a priority status and constitutes safety risks if delayed. Mr. Perry noted that the pavement is 23 years old and should have been sealed more than ten years ago. It was further noted that a track and irrigation at the high school have been in the capital budget for years. Mr. Perry noted that the Board of Education's priorities are the "envelope" at the elementary school and drainage and paving of the parking area at the high school.

Mr. Dutch stated that the School Resource Officer was not discussed. It was noted that the budget presented by the Selectmen calls for an existing officer to be "stationed" at the schools.

### **TOWN GOVERNMENT**

Mr. DiCristofaro solicited questions regarding Public Works or Public Safety to be forwarded to Mrs. Varricchio in advance of the next meetings so that staff can be prepared to address them. Mr. Lauria

stated that he would like to see the replacement cycle for apparatus and vehicles for the various departments. Mr. Gelston stated that he would like to see a cost benefit analysis regarding full time and part time personnel for fire and police.

### **GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

Karin Blaschik noted that the Board of Education employs approximately 200 staff and the town employs approximately 40-50. She noted that she was aware of no other company with a staff of that size that did not employ a Human Resources Director.

Mrs. Blaschik noted that the police department budget is \$11,000 less than last year and needs to "reassign" an officer for the schools. She inquired how it could do more with less. Mrs. Varricchio reported that the funding difference is because a special revenue fund was created to address special duty pay meaning that funds have been redirected. Mrs. Blaschik further inquired what impact the reassigning will have on the police force? It was noted that Public Safety budget review will occur on Saturday.

Susan Link stated that she chaired the Safety Study Committee and that the proposal within the budget is not the proposal brought forward by the Committee. She stated that the Committee considered the proposal put forth in the Board of Selectmen budget, but discounted it because it did not cover the biggest issue and it left risk.

Marc Piscioti stated that while he appreciated the outsourcing comments, he stated that it is unheard of for a \$20,000,000 operation with over 200 employees not to employ a human resources manager. He also noted concern with police coverage of the Town if an existing officer is stationed at the schools.

**Motion was made by Mr. Dutch motioned to adjourn at 9:16 pm. Mr. Lauria seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Denette