

TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Financial Needs Roundtable
Thursday, October 27, 2011
High School Library
6:30 pm
Special Meeting

Members present:

Mark Walter, First Selectman
Paul Maxwell, Board of Finance
Bruce Dutch, Board of Finance
Nancy Haslam, Board of Education
Brian Pear, Board of Education
Bryan Perry, Board of Education

Others:

Deb Denette, Recording Secretary
Cindy Varricchio, Finance Administrator
Jeff Rhodes, Resident State Trooper
Craig Mansfield, Emergency Management Director
Jim Ventres, Land Use Administrator
Don Angersola, ("Newt") Fire Marshal
Dean Anderson, Ambulance Association
Kevin Cavallo, Ambulance Association
Matthew Cavallo

Call to Order

Mark Walter called the meeting to order at 6:38 pm.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

General Discussion

Review of 10-Year Capital Plan

A draft of the ten-year capital improvement plan was reviewed, line by line. Items highlighted in taupe were identified as new items that were not part of the budgeting process. The items in white were noted to be known items, some previously budgeted.

Discussion ensued on several items:

Regarding, police, fire, ambulance, and emergency management, Mr. Walter questioned whether one central location is preferable to maintaining several locations throughout town. Mr. Angersola stated that there are advantages and disadvantages to both. Mr. Mansfield stated that it may still be possible to rework a \$500,000 grant that was obtained for upgrading the old middle school facility as an emergency management center. The time limit for having spent the money would be the end of 2013; the Town's commitment would be \$760,000 to collect the \$500,000.

It was noted that the property next door to Company #1 is being reviewed for potential expansion. Roger Nemergut is being contacted (Jim Ventres arranging) to perform an engineering study to determine if the soils can support expansion and to what extent.

Another item that held notable discussion was public works. Three bridge projects are on the horizon that will ultimately have 80% reimbursement. The entire project amount, however, must be included, which Mr. Walter advised does "skew" the numbers. Mr. Walter also noted, regarding public works, that the numbers for road management are budgeted items, and follow a detailed plan for reclamation, shim and overlay and chip seal.

Other notable discussion involved the libraries. The East Haddam Free Public Library is interested in purchasing the Methodist church next door to it and expanding.

The recreation commission noted the need for additional playing fields—two soccer fields and two baseball fields are very permissible for construction at the old middle school. Mr. Ventres added that the topography and distance support the additional fields.

Brief discussion about reworking the elementary school for busses in the front at the same time a library/media center is incorporated in the center courtyard. The potential for an \$8,000,000 upgrade is being discussed. Mrs. Haslam advised that the school was built in the 1960's.

Mr. Walter stated that during Storm Irene it was learned that the generator at the new middle school does not sufficiently circulate the water which could be problematic in keeping the pipes from freezing in the event of a large scale power outage during cold weather. Mr. Ventres stated that he believed the generator in place is sufficient enough, he speculated that it may not be wired correctly. Mrs. Haslam stated that Norpro is scheduled to come out and assess the situation for the Board of Education.

Mr. Walter summarized that \$39,000,000 worth of projects have been identified on the 10-year wish list. Mr. Ventres questioned what portion is reimbursable? He also questioned how much of the \$40,000,000 was already included within the normal budget process, such as the roads.

Mrs. Varricchio stated that the next step is to incorporate grants, funding mechanisms, bonding impact, etc. She stated that the blue box of \$2,753,716 was already approved within the budget for the current fiscal year and future years are not approved. Mr. Walter stated that the \$39,000,000 did not address any costs associated with the village town office space or the old middle school at this time. Mr. Walter stated that to heat the building for the winter will cost approximately \$50,000. Mr. Ventres stated that failure to heat the building will result in mold and moisture issues. He also stated that the new middle school was sold to the Town with the understanding that the old middle school would be converted to town offices. Mr. Ventres also emphasized the economic development that would be enhanced if the town offices moved out of the Village and the benefit for Moodus if an office complex were located there. It was the consensus of the Committee that the proposed old middle school plans be included in the ten-year plan.

Mr. Ventres and Mr. Mansfield stated that the cost of rehabilitating the facility per square foot is cheaper than building new per square foot. Mr. Ventres estimated the cost of demolishing the building at approximately \$2,500,000.

Mrs. Haslam stated that the Board of Education would prefer to spend the \$30,000 that it spends and stay put rather than make the move to the old middle school. She stated that it does not need that much floor space. Mr. Ventres stated that no one ever told the Committee that. Mr. Perry stated that he was the liaison and no one ever asked. Mr. Ventres stated that another scenario that was reviewed took out 27% of the square footage, but only reduced the cost by 9%.

Mr. Walter suggested gutting/demolishing the old part of the middle school and incorporating a new a brick facade facilitating a two story complex that would remove all of the odd ramping in the back as a possible cheaper alternative. Mr. Ventres stated that was not the charge of the Middle School Conversion Committee.

Discussion returned to an emergency management complex versus scattering different companies throughout town. It was noted that 25% of the calls are in Moodus. Mark asked the various emergency departments to meet and discuss what would be preferred (one complex or scattered locations) and why. Simultaneously the potential expansion at company #1 will be explored.

Mr. Dutch inquired about the status of the brewery. Mr. Walter advised that getting an approved water system is taking a very long time.

No needs were identified at the Senior Center in this plan, that needs to be confirmed.

Mr. Walter advised that the Red Cross donated a small senior bus to the Town with 38,000 miles on it.

Mr. Angersola stated that company #2 needs replacement. He added that the building sways in the wind and that the roof still leaks, insulation falls off the roof, panels are rotted, internet is not accessible, there are no kitchen facilities, the second floor serves as storage and filing. Mr. Angersola stated that he did not believe it was worth investing \$40-50,000 in improvements in the structure that does not egress onto a main road.

Mr. Rhodes reported that Liberty Bank has offered office space to the police to operate as a command post. It is being investigated.

Approval of Minutes

No action taken.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 7:40 pm. Mr. Perry seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Denette