EAST LYME BOARD OF FINANCE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
BUDGET REVIEWS FY2016/2017
Monday, MARCH 14th, 2016

Members In Attendance: Lisa Picarazzi, Acting Chairman
Camille Alberti
Beth Hogan
Jason Pazzaglia
William Weber

Also In Attendance: Mark Nickerson, First Selectman
Anna Johnson, Finance Director
Sgt. Mike Macek, Police
Donna Bekech, Assessor
John McCulloch, Tax Collector
Joe Smith, Chief Building Official
Cathy Wilson, Senior Services Director

FILED IN EAST LYME
CONNECTICUT
Mar 21 2016 10:05 AM/PM
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Absent: Steve Harney, Chairman

A. Call Special Meeting to Order
Acting Chairman Picarazzi called this Special Meeting of the East Lyme Board of Finance to order at 6:30 PM.

B. Pledge of Allegiance
The Pledge was observed.

C. Delegations
Ms. Picarazzi called for Delegations.
There were none.

D. New Business
a. Budget Reviews – FY 2016 – 2017

- **Police (216) – Sgt. William Blanchette, Resident State Trooper**

Mr. Nickerson explained that the budget before them is assuming that they are staying with the State Resident Trooper system. He said that he knows that Montville just had their independent Police force defeated however there are vast differences between us and what they have and would need. He will bring forward information on an independent police force here at a later time. It would have to be a cost neutral proposal. This budget is requesting the addition of a part time person to the front office, not just to provide extra window time but for more man hours due to the amount of paperwork. The Resident Trooper percentage increased last year and they are now paying 85% which is the $183,094 although there is talk in Hartford of that rate also going up. 100% of the cost would be $209,391.02. He recalled that Sgt. Blanchette had recently been promoted and that they have a new Resident Trooper. Sgt. Macek picked up the budget information from Sgt. Blanchette prior to his leaving and would go over some of the highlights.

Sgt. Macek noted the highlights of the budget – the increase in line 412 - part time clerical to help the full time person get the work done plus this helps after hours when people have issues and are looking for someone right away. They have also tasked the full time person with more duties. Line 514 – Overtime – they requested $300,000 which was cut to $280,000 by the Selectman. This amount includes some contractual days (holidays) and minimum staffing standards (3 men minimum). He said that he would answer any questions that they might have.

Mr. Weber asked if they use alternate sources for ammunition.

Sgt. Macek said that they do shop around.

Ms. Alberti thanked them for the fine job that they do and asked if the Resident Trooper is in charge of 21 or 22 officers.
Sgt. Macek said that it is 22 and that he would clean up the paperwork going forward.

Ms. Alberti said that the salaries from last year to this year were up by some 6.67%.
Ms. Johnson said that every year by contract the Town has to pay for accrued holidays and the dollar amount keeps growing. By contract they received a 2.5% increase.

Ms. Alberti said that she would strongly suggest that when contract negotiations come up again that they look for a 'use it or lose it' approach.
Mr. Weber said that it is really a wash as someone has to work it and cover it anyways.

Ms. Alberti asked in line 314 – admin overtime why they would budget higher than what is actually used.
Sgt. Macek said that for the roughly $1700 difference that they thought it would be better than coming back for a special appropriation.

Ms. Hogan asked how they handled the holiday payouts before it was in the budget.
Ms. Johnson said that in the past they were just fortunate to have it work out with various other items such as military leave, etc.

Ms. Picarazzi asked where they thought they could save some dollars in this budget.
Sgt. Macek said that he would try to work on the overtime area.
Ms. Picarazzi asked that he return at a later time to let them know what he has come up with.
Ms. Alberti noted that one out of five of the townspeople are over 65 and they received no social security increase so it is tough budgeting. She does not want to chase them out of Town.
Ms. Picarazzi said that their budget increase is almost 8% so she would like to see them try to help the process.

- **Assessor (102) – Donna Bekech, Assessor**

Mr. Nickerson noted that Ms. Bekech was present in the event that they had any questions for her. With regard to her budget, it is mostly contractual with no new initiatives.

Ms. Bekech said that the slight increase in vendor software is something that they have no control over. It is a $205 increase. She said that she decreased transportation due to now being able to share a vehicle with the Engineering department.

Ms. Alberti said that she has seen year in and year out a 2.5% COLA increase when inflation is only 1%.
Mr. Nickerson explained how the management contracts work.

Ms. Alberti said that they only spent $120 in PT Clerical but have budgeted for $1120.
Ms. Bekech explained that last year the summer person did not work the whole time due to scholarship issues. They do expect to have a summer person work the full summer this year.

Mr. Pazzaglia said that many times he sees two aides go out measuring properties. He suggested that they could get a laser measurer and one go out.

Ms. Picarazzi said that she thinks that two go out for safety reasons.
Ms. Bekech said that was the reason for two and added that she would check into a laser measurer.

- **Board of Assessment Appeals (127) – Donna Bekech, Assessor**

Mr. Nickerson noted that there is a reval coming up so the increase in this budget is due to that.

Ms. Bekech explained that in a reval year they will see more appeals. They see approximately 300+ out of 9,500 properties which involves a lot more time.

- **Tax Collector (103) – John McCulloch, Tax Collector**

Mr. Nickerson noted that Mr. McCulloch was present and said that he has requested to have two full time people instead of a full time and a part time person however the economic times do not dictate the increase. He currently has one person at 25 hours and the other at 35 hours.

Mr. McCulloch explained that he has a full time person at 35 hours and a part time person at 25 hours per week and that they are behind on filing.

Mr. Weber asked how it was impacting the department other than with the filing. He suggested some out source staff.
Mr. Nickerson said that there is no issue unless Mr. McCulloch is out and people are out sick. He added that he has thought that a secretarial pool would help out everywhere. He added that if the hours are increased to 30 that there is a $20,000 benefit package that would have to be added.

- **Building Department (104) – Joseph Smith, Chief Building Official**

Mr. Nickerson said that this is fairly clear; they are looking to add two hours (28 hours to 30 hours) to this which would also mean a $20,000 benefit package.

Ms. Hogan noted that they had several part time people help out last year.
Mr. Smith said that he has tried the three people working different days but if he has just the two people he can split projects with that person.

Ms. Hogan asked if the administrative assistants cover all the departments.
Mr. Smith said yes.

Ms. Alberti said that she realizes that the department generates revenue – but she sees anticipated revenues of $350,000 for this year and they have pulled in $191,000 so far – she asked if he thought that they would make it.
Mr. Smith said that he hopes so and added that the figure is a best guess and that typically February is a slow month.

Ms. Alberti said that in comparison to last year that she sees an actual decline in the revenues and projects and that things were busier and were handled so she is not sure that she can wrap her head around this and the benefit package.
Mr. Smith said that he would go down to one other person no matter what the hours are.

Mr. Pazzaglia asked if he could hire a guy for 28 hours instead of 30 so that they would not need the benefit package.
Mr. Smith said that the guy that he will hire does not need them now and would only need them if his wife were to be laid off.

Ms. Picarazzi asked about the administrative situation and the suggestion to eliminate one.
Mr. Nickerson explained that was due to a challenge that he put out to the department heads to come up with different budget scenarios. This department cannot do without the part time administrative person.

- **Commission on Aging (418) – Cathy Wilson, Senior Services Director**

Mr. Nickerson noted the expanding elderly population in Town and the very busy transportation system that they run.

Ms. Wilson said that with no increase in social security this year that the transportation has been a big item although it is cyclical. Some of the older people will age out but there are others coming up behind them. With that, transportation is one of the issues driving the budget. She said that she is looking for 2.5 hours more for the full time driver to get them from 35 hours per week to 37.5 hours. Also, in line 215 there is an increase as she is looking for transportation software so that they will not have to continue to write everything down on paper and then go back over it to compile it for the statistical information that they need for grants, and other reports. The software would be able to do this for them. She continued that she had a full time person retire in July and that she hired a Program Coordinator to replace her in October to assist with new programs and fund raising.

Ms. Picarazzi asked how many seniors they are serving.
Ms. Wilson said that they serve about 1500 people form the community off and on.

Ms. Hogan asked if there is any assistance from State or Federal Grants for them.
Ms. Wilson said that they get a transportation allowance for people age 60+. She added that she is working on a transportation grant for replacement vehicles.

Mr. Weber asked about the extra half hour each day for the driver and if there are times during the day where there is down time.
Ms. Wilson said that for the most part they are busy all day.

Ms. Picarazzi asked why the revenues were lower than last year.
Ms. Wilson said that some of them have moved to the Special Revenue Account. Those of her programs that typically do not make money are transitioning so that they will pay for themselves and then they will be moved to that account also. If they do not pay for themselves, they will do fundraising to make it work.

Ms. Hogan said that she likes the way that the Special Revenue Account is done and reported.

Ms. Johnson said that Mr. Putnam could answer all of their questions about this account when he presents and that they should ask him whatever they want to know.

- **First Selectman & EDC (101) – Mark Nickerson, First Selectman**

Mr. Nickerson explained that the increase in part time clerical is to cover for the Executive Assistant when she is on vacation and he is in Hartford or at a meeting so that there is someone in the office for four hours per day. He noted that he does not typically put in for mileage.

Mr. Pazzaglia asked about postage.
Mr. Nickerson said that is for the postage for the entire Town. He also noted that the $1000 for welfare/general assistance has been there for years as they do not have a social services department in this Town. They typically spend all of it.

Mr. Weber said that he would like them to keep an accounting of it and where it is spent and also when it runs out.
Mr. Nickerson said that he would have his Executive Assistant log it.
Ms. Alberti noted that they have spent $690 so far. She asked if they knew where it went.
Ms. Johnson said that she could research where the checks were cut to.

Ms. Alberti asked about the 5% increases that she is seeing for management.
Mr. Nickerson said that is a 2.5% step (in some cases) and the 2.5% GWI and that it is due to contracts.
Ms. Alberti commented that no one gets 5% - not even the schools with their 3%+. She suggested to him that the 3.99% overall increase that he is looking for with Town Government be reduced to something more reasonable.

- **Finance Department & HR (118) – Anna Johnson, Finance Director**

Ms. Johnson said that she would answer any questions that they might have.

Ms. Picarazzi asked why they had an adopted budget and an amended one in the same year.
Ms. Johnson explained that the contract was settled after the year started so that changed the figure.

Ms. Picarazzi asked about Wellness at $200.
Ms. Johnson explained that the Insurance provider gives them dollars for programs.

- **Health & Welfare (419) – VNA, presented by Mr. Nickerson & Ms. Johnson**

Mr. Nickerson said that this reflects a slight decrease and is based on a formula and the number of people that the VNA serves here.

There were no questions.

- **Debt Service Interest & Principal (522 & 523) – Anna Johnson, Finance Director; Mark Nickerson, First Selectman**

Mr. Nickerson noted that this shows a reduction.

Ms. Johnson said that they like to keep it on a fairly even keel and that this reflects our existing debt only.

- **Long Range Capital Plan (5 year plan) – Mark Nickerson, First Selectman**

Mr. Nickerson noted that this would be presented at a later meeting as the Board of Selectmen is still reviewing it.

E. Public Discussion

Ms. Picarazzi called for any comments from the Public.
There were none.

F. Board Comments

There were none.

G. Adjournment

****MOTION (1)**
Ms. Hogan moved to adjourn this Special Meeting of the East Lyme Board of Finance at 10:05 PM.
Mr. Pazzaglia seconded the motion.
Vote: 5 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Zmitruk,
Recording Secretary