

**EAST LYME BOARD OF FINANCE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
BUDGET REVIEWS
Monday, MARCH 26th, 2012**

Members In Attendance: Raymond Hart, Chairman
Steve Harney, Secretary
Richard Bengtson
Steve Carpenteri
Steve Kelley
Lisa Picarazzi

Also In Attendance: Paul Formica, First Selectman
Anna Johnson, Finance Director
Gary Goeschel, Planning Director, IWA Officer
Marc Salerno, Zoning Commission Chairman
William Mulholland, Zoning Official
John MacDonald, Chief, Niantic Fire Department
Jim Levandoski, Chief, Flanders Fire Department
Dick Morris, Fire Marshal, Emergency Management

Absent: No One

A. Call Special Meeting to Order

Chairman Hart 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

Mr. Hart called for Delegations.
There were none.

D. New Business

a. Budget Reviews – FY 2012 - 2013

◆ Planning Department & Commission (117) – Gary Goeschel, Planning Director

****MOTION (1)**

Mr. Harney moved to open the budget review for Item 117 – Planning Department & Commission.

Mr. Carpenteri seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Mr. Formica explained that they had merged the Planning Commission with the Planning Department and the increase has to do with the maintenance of equipment and having more tech based systems such as with the GIS. He noted that they had also instituted an Economic Gardening program at the beginning of this year to be able to offer this to the businesses in Town to help them.

Mr. Hart asked Mr. Goeschel if line 215 – Maintenance of Equipment allowed enough to continue the program as they have used 97% of that line item so far for this year.

Mr. Goeschel said yes and noted that the on-line version of the software is where they get the biggest bang for the buck.

****MOTION (2)**

Mr. Kelley moved to close the budget review for Item 117– Planning Department & Commission.
Mr. Bengtson seconded the motion.
Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

◆ **Inland Wetlands (132) – Gary Goeschel, IWA Officer**

****MOTION (3)**

Mr. Kelley moved to open the budget review for Item 132 – Inland Wetlands.
Mr. Harney seconded the motion.
Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Mr. Formica explained that the Wetlands Officer is a one day per week position. Mr. Goeschel works four days per week on Planning and one day per week as the Inland Wetlands Officer. He said that he had passed out a packet with a letter where he had requested further information on the Inland Wetlands Activity as a result of a letter that he and the Board of Selectmen received requesting that the hours for the position of Wetlands Officer be increased to 20 per week and then to full time. He said that they could review the information as it was not received in time for the Board of Selectmen to review it. However, he said that it is his opinion, based upon the information presented that they do not need Mr. Goeschel for half time as an Inland Wetlands Agent. If he was going to increase this, he could hire three more Zoning Officers to go out looking at properties or 12 more police officers to go out on the streets patrolling. He said that when he first came into Office that they had just divided the Conservation Commission into the Inland Wetlands Agency and the Natural Resources Commission. The Planning Director position was a four day per week position and Inland Wetlands was set up for one day. He said that he passed out this request as a courtesy to the Chairman of the Inland Wetland Agency as he feels that the one day per week is fine for this position as neither area – Planning or Inland Wetlands are very busy.

Ms. Picarazzi asked what the basis of the request was.

Mr. Formica said that he thought it was the impression of those on the Commission that they could then go out and look for all types of things in the community.

Ms. Picarazzi said that she understood – they would be out looking for things to happen.

Mr. Formica added – then everyone would be walking around on tip toes with all of the enforcements.

Mr. Hart asked if line #243 – Training/Consultant – for outside help could be reduced from the current \$8000.

Mr. Carpenteri asked what happens to it if it is not spent.

Mr. Formica said that it is a floating number and that if it is not spent it stays in the general fund. He asked

Mr. Goeschel if it could be lowered.

Mr. Goeschel said that it could probably be comfortably lowered to \$5000 as it is a place holder.

****MOTION (4)**

Mr. Bengtson moved to close the budget review for Item 132 – Inland Wetlands.

Ms. Picarazzi seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

◆ **Zoning Commission (116) – Marc Salerno, Zoning Commission Chairman, William Mulholland, Zoning Official**

****MOTION (5)**

Mr. Kelley moved to open the budget review for Item 116 – Zoning Commission.

Mr. Harney seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Mr. Formica said that it is a fairly flat budget and represents the combination of the Commission and Department.

Marc Salerno, Zoning Commission Chairman said that in the budget that was sent to the Board of Selectmen that they had added a \$5000 line item for traffic consultants and that it was removed by the Board of Selectmen and he would like them to consider putting it back in their budget. He explained that it has to do with court cases where they might need a traffic engineer to present another aspect from that of the

applicant's traffic engineer. He said it would be helpful to have the money there in case they need it and if they don't then it would just stay there.

Mr. Bengtson asked if it was possible that it could be reimbursed by whoever requests the traffic consultant. Mr. Mulholland said that he did not think that it could be done that way but he would check on it. He said that this would be used when they feel that a court case is imminent and a judge is reading a transcript and it would help to have more in depth traffic information contained in that transcript rather than only what the applicant had presented at the hearing. They would present their own traffic information for the record and it would be a part of the record.

Mr. Salerno noted that traffic information can be skewed depending upon who hired the consultant.

Mr. Kelley asked how long in advance of the need for a traffic consultant would they know that they would need one.

Mr. Salerno explained that they have 65 days, then 35 days and possible an extension of another 35 days on an application.

Mr. Kelley said that every Commission meets at least once a month and that they could come before the Board of Selectmen and this Board if they needed the money appropriated.

Mr. Salerno said that they just wanted to have it in their budget and that the Commission voted that he should come and ask the Board of Finance for it to be put back into their budget so they would have it when they need it.

Mr. Formica explained that what Mr. Salerno is speaking about is if the applicant came with a traffic engineer that if necessary they could engage one to present another view. He said that he does not know that they would have that much of a need for this and added that if they were considering this that they could transfer the \$3000 from the Inland Wetlands consultant line item reduction.

Mr. Kelley said that they move money all year and that his position is that they and the Board of Selectmen meet often enough that if it were necessary it could be done through those channels. He asked when they would know if this were necessary.

Mr. Hart asked Mr. Mulholland if he would know if it were necessary ahead of time of the public hearing phase.

Mr. Mulholland said that he would be able to make that determination when he reviewed a potential application and met with staff to do a staff review on it.

Mr. Salerno said that while it does not happen that often, perhaps only once in many years time, that they would like to have it in case they do need it.

****MOTION (6)**

Mr. Kelley moved to close the budget review for Item 116 – Zoning Commission.

Mr. Bengtson seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

◆ Economic Development Commission (131) – presented by Paul Formica

****MOTION (7)**

Mr. Kelley moved to open the budget review for Item 131 – Economic Development Commission.

Mr. Harney seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Mr. Formica explained that this Commission has been having attendance and identity issues and that they have recently re-appointed members to it for a year to see what can be done. If things do not work out they will look into disbanding it. He said that he has met with them and discussed different avenues with the idea that they will see what they can do in the next year. There are a few vacancies on the Commission and he suggested that they be filled by Main Street people or other public group members to see how it goes. He said that he is suggesting that as this is a year trial that they leave the dollars as they are as they are used for community events. He said that he had thought originally of having an EDC event person who would be funded at \$10,000 using some of the dollars left from the merging of Parks & Rec with Youth Services and of

the Emergency Management position merge – but has held off on that for now and will see how the year trial goes.

Mr. Hart asked how many people are on the Commission.
Mr. Formica said that there are seven members.

Mr. Bengtson asked about marketing as they have already spent 100% of that money.
Ms. Johnson explained that some of those dollars are contracted ahead of the actual events.

****MOTION (8)**

Mr. Bengtson moved to close the budget review for Item 131 – Economic Development Commission.
Mr. Carpenteri seconded the motion.
Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

◆ **Ledge Light Health District (108) – presented by Paul Formica**

****MOTION (9)**

Mr. Kelley moved to open the budget review for Item 108 – Ledge Light Health District.
Mr. Harney seconded the motion.
Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Mr. Formica explained that this is set at a per capita rate of \$6.85 per person. He recalled that they had explored other regional efforts but would have had to start from scratch so they have asked Stonington to join this Health District and they are currently in the Public Hearing phase. If they do decide to join that would bring the per capita rate down for everyone.

Mr. Hart asked if we are required to have our own Health department or to belong to a Regional Health District.
Mr. Formica said that the State is pushing the regional health district concept. He added that Ledge Light pays \$4500 to the Town for a room downstairs in the Land Use area and that we provide some counter clerical support for them.

****MOTION (10)**

Mr. Harney moved to close the budget review for Item 108 – Ledge Light Health District.
Mr. Kelley seconded the motion.
Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

◆ **Niantic Fire Department (217) – John MacDonald, Niantic Chief**

****MOTION (11)**

Mr. Kelley moved to open the budget review for Item 217 – Niantic Fire Department.
Mr. Harney seconded the motion.
Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Mr. Formica noted that Chief MacDonald and Chief Levandoski both do excellent jobs. In the Niantic Fire Department line #218 OSHA shows an increase of \$1500 which is for additional testing and line #220 Vehicle Maintenance shows a \$6300 increase which is for tires. He said that the Ambulance Fund would help with the fuel costs and that he would have that information for them before they make decisions on the budget.

Ms. Picarazzi asked how often they replace the tires.
Mr. MacDonald said that they do not replace them very often and that this is for two new tires for the rescue truck; four new tires for Engine 1 and eight new tires for the ladder truck. The expense is in that they are all necessary at the same time.

Mr. Kelley asked about the PT Firefighters – line #612 noting that it is up to over \$148,000 and that line #614 – Overtime is also up by another \$7000 – all representing nearly a 33% increase in four years time.
Mr. MacDonald said that it was due to the need last year to increase the part time hours at Station 2 due to the AHEPA's and the district being built out more and requiring more calls.

Mr. Hart asked if they feel that they are maxed out on part time people and have adequate coverage.
Mr. MacDonald said yes.

Mr. Hart asked about line #220 – Vehicle Maintenance as they have only used 33% so far this year.
Mr. MacDonald said that there are some big bills coming in – one involves an accident that they had in which they have to pay the first \$1000 deductible to have the vehicle fixed.

Mr. Hart asked about the OSHA testing increase.
Mr. MacDonald said that they have to test the new pumper and it is for the air packs.

Mr. Hart asked if they expect things to remain the same for next year.
Mr. MacDonald said yes, he thought so.

****MOTION (12)**

Mr. Kelley moved to close the budget review for Item 217 – Niantic Fire Department.
Ms. Picarazzi seconded the motion.
Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

◆ **Flanders Fire Department (218) – Jim Levandoski, Chief**

****MOTION (13)**

Mr. Harney moved to open the budget review for Item 218 – Flanders Fire Department.
Mr. Bengtson seconded the motion.
Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Mr. Formica noted that Mr. Levandoski is the new Chief at Flanders. He explained that they have a request before them to increase the part time coverage and that the rest is fairly flat.

Mr. Hart asked if the dollars that would come from the ambulance fund would be used only for fuel.
Mr. Formica said that is the most noticeable area however they do buy gear and other items.

Mr. Levandoski explained that a set of gear costs \$2400 and can very easily be destroyed in a fire and the ambulance association; as long as the person is EMT, EMR or MRT certified, pays for the new gear. They also pay for office equipment and software supplies. Any extras and amenities, they try to get the ambulance association to purchase for them. All of those items would be in the budget if they did not purchase them.

Mr. Kelley asked about Overtime and Part time line items increasing by about 40% in four years time and if he saw it stabilizing.
Mr. Levandoski said that outside of the five hours time required that it is pretty much on a day by day and call by call basis. He added that they are trying to increase coverage but there is also a need for the coverage as the volunteers are dropping off and that means paid people have to cover the time.

Ms. Picarazzi asked what is different in the way of doing business from before to now that might account for this change.
Mr. Levandoski said that it could be the increase in the number of calls that they get and respond to and a number of things that just add up.

Mr. Bengtson asked about line #218 OSHA as they have only expended 12% so far.
Mr. Levandoski said that he has a \$6000 bill on his desk and another bill for \$6000 that is coming in that will have to be paid – this is the season when all of this comes in.

Mr. Carpenteri asked about Vehicle Maintenance.
Mr. Levandoski said that comes due in the springtime as that is when they have a lot of work done.

Mr. Hart asked about the concept of the new program for ambulance calls and how it would affect them.
Mr. MacDonald said that in Niantic they responded to around 1300 ambulance calls last year and with the volunteers dropping off they will have to pay regular workers \$150 per call – with \$50 going to each of the two EMT's and another \$50 to cover the FICA and payroll taxes.

Mr. Levandoski noted that in Flanders that he does not want to do this as they do not want to be an employer.

Mr. Harney asked what they would attribute the drop off in volunteers to.

Mr. MacDonald said that this is something that has been happening everywhere. He added that he would be recruiting soon for the new EMT class and hoped to get some volunteers from that.

Mr. Hart asked how much of the money received from the calls would be used in paying for the people to do the calls.

Mr. MacDonald said that he estimated that it would be 95%.

Mr. Kelley asked how many full time firefighters there are in Niantic.

Mr. MacDonald said four.

Mr. Kelley asked when it becomes more economically feasible to hire another full time person.

Mr. MacDonald said that he would not get the coverage that he does now if he did that.

Mr. Hart asked if they were to add the part time and overtime together could they add more people and get more coverage in that way.

Mr. Levandoski, Flanders Fire Chief said that while it sounds good in theory it does not work in the way that they would think that it would. He added that it has not worked for the Police either. He added that he would not be doing ambulance calls as Mr. MacDonald will as he currently does have the volunteers and also does not want to be an 'employer'.

Mr. MacDonald said that there have been 448 EMS calls since January 1, 2012 and that two thirds of them have been in Niantic.

Mr. Hart said that the ambulance takes up space in all three buildings and does in-kind services in return – sometimes buying gear, etc –

Mr. Formica said that he is in discussion regarding that aspect and explained for the new members that what has happened is that the ambulance association goes out on a call and bills the insurance company for the call and then keeps the dollars that they receive. With that - they have, in the past purchased a number of items for the departments such as fuel, gear, contributing a large amount to a new truck, etc. They are in discussion on how this can best be handled going forward.

Ms. Picarazzi asked Mr. Formica what he expects to come back with.

Mr. Formica said that he did not know at this time but expects to have that information before the Public Hearing.

****MOTION (14)**

Mr. Bengtson moved to close the budget review for Item 218 – Flanders Fire Department.

Mr. Carpenteri seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

◆ Emergency Management (224) – Dick Morris, Fire Marshal

****MOTION (15)**

Mr. Harney moved to open the budget review for Item 224 – Emergency Management.

Ms. Picarazzi seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Mr. Formica noted the overall reduction of about \$10,000 in this budget due to personnel changes that were made there when Ms. Rathbun retired. Also, the part time non-union clerical position was merged into the Admin. Assistant position. He said that he has looked into moving dispatch which is tied into the Police Department. There have been meetings regarding the Resident Trooper program but nothing has been affected yet. He noted that Mr. Morris has asked for a fifth dispatcher however at this time he has put it on hold.

Dick Morris, Fire Marshal said that he would hire an additional fourth dispatcher (replacing one who left) from the part time dispatchers as there are some that are qualified to move up.

Ms. Picarazzi asked about line #313 – Uniforms – as it has increased by 25%

Mr. Morris said that the cost of everything has gone up and that they have to replace items that are ripped, torn or damaged.

Mr. Hart asked Mr. Morris what his feelings are regarding a regional dispatch center.

Mr. Morris said that he has mixed feelings on it as they cover a lot of services and provide a personal touch. They have also put a lot of money into a better system for better connectivity. He said that they have great equipment, good service and that they do a good job and it works as it is.

Mr. Hart asked about the call volume.

Mr. Morris said that from January 1, 2012 through March 26, 2012 that they had: 2821 Police calls; 448 Ambulance calls; 104 Fire calls and 952 Routine calls.

Mr. Formica noted that the CIP has in it simulcast and a new antenna for the radio system (\$41,838).

Mr. Morris explained that they went around to the other Towns and looked into the other systems as they wanted something at Darrow Pond for better connectivity. They put three antennas together as a simulcast program. It is under State bid so the company doing it would be good.

Ms. Picarazzi asked what they would do with that if they regionalized.

Mr. Morris said that they would use it as it would be great and provide a stronger system. It is a well needed project and probably the last build out that they would need and would last for some 30 years.

Ms. Picarazzi asked if they are looking at regionalization with Waterford.

Mr. Formica said that it is a complex process and that they are looking at a lot of different models. He said that he feels that they cannot speak about dispatch without discussing Police also.

****MOTION (16)**

Ms. Picarazzi moved to close the budget review for Item 224 – Emergency Management.

Mr. Kelley seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

◆ Animal Control (226) – presented by Paul Formica

****MOTION (17)**

Mr. Kelley moved to open the budget review for Item 226 – Animal Control.

Mr. Harney seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Mr. Formica explained that this budget represents 50% of what it costs for the Animal Control Agent who is a police officer in Waterford. They have left the number the same however the new number is \$58,659 which represents the contractual increase. (increase of \$3476) He said that over the last six months that he has been meeting with Waterford and Old Lyme regarding joining together for tri-town coverage. While it would probably not be that much cheaper, they would have better service and would have a full time ACO and Waterford would get their police officer back. He said that they are in the process of working all this out and doing the ordinance writing.

****MOTION (18)**

Mr. Kelley moved to close the budget review for Item 226 – Animal Control.

Ms. Picarazzi seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

◆ Services to Community (115) – presented by Paul Formica

****MOTION (19)**

Mr. Kelley moved to open the budget review for Item 115 – Services to Community.

Mr. Harney seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Mr. Formica noted that these items have been kept at the same level. EL Beautification and Main Street are similar in that they provide planters, benches, etc and Niantic Main Street is the main reason that downtown has been so successful. Regarding the Regional Homeless Shelter, he said that they do utilize it.

Mr. Hart asked about Celebrate East Lyme showing a zero.
Mr. Formica said that was moved to the Special Revenue Fund.

****MOTION (20)**

Mr. Bengtson moved to close the budget review for Item 226 – Animal Control.
Mr. Kelley seconded the motion.
Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

E. Public Discussion

Mr. Hart called for any comments from the Public.

Jim Levandoski, Dean Road said that the radio purchase upgrade is important and that it affects him in the Fire Department and Police Department everyday with the bad communications that they have in the north end of the Town as there are a lot of dead spots. He said that while his State Police radio does work, that without it he would be lost. The simulcasting and antenna should fix those problems and carry them well into the future.

He added that while the majority of people who live here are very fortunate that there are also some who are not so fortunate and that in his police capacity they frequently transport people from here to the New London Shelter during the winter. He asked that they please leave that line item intact.

F. Board Comments

Mr. Hart asked if the Board members had any comments.
There were none.

G. Adjournment

****MOTION (21)**

Mr. Kelley moved to adjourn this Special Meeting of the East Lyme Board of Finance at 8:35 PM.
Ms. Picarazzi seconded the motion.
Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Zmitruk,
Recording Secretary