

**EAST LYME BOARD OF FINANCE  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
BUDGET REVIEWS FY2015/2016  
Monday, MARCH 16th, 2015**

**Members In Attendance:** Steve Harney, Chairman  
Camille Alberti  
Steve Carpenteri  
Beth Hogan  
Steve Kelley

FILED IN EAST LYME  
CONNECTICUT  
March 24 2015 AT 2:00 AM/PM  
*Brook D. Donnamite*  
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

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

**Absent:** Lisa Picarazzi, Secretary

**A. Call Special Meeting to Order**

Chairman Harney 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. Harney called for Delegations.  
There were none.

**D. New Business**

**a. Budget Reviews – FY 2015 - 2016**

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

Mr. Harney called upon Mr. Nickerson for any comments.

Mr. Nickerson noted that Ms. Bekech was present in the event that they had any questions for her. With regard to her budget, as they could see, it is basically the same.

Ms. Alberti noted that on 1/14/15 this Board approved a line 111 salary increase that would equal \$82,180 rather than the \$82,791 that is showing on the sheets.

Ms. Johnson said that she would research that and get back to them.

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

Mr. Nickerson noted that this budget is \$1530 which is a decrease from the previous year budget of \$230.

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

Mr. Nickerson noted that Mr. McCulloch was present and explained that they had taken the full time position of 30 hours here and when that person went to a new position in another department, they made it a 25 hour per week part time position and added the five hours to the Town Clerk part time position to make it full time (30 hours). The Tax Office now has a full time person and a part time person in addition to the Tax Collector.

Mr. Kelley noted that line 258 was reduced by \$4600.

Mr. McCulloch said that was correct and that it was due to a newly enacted Public Act that eliminated a previously mandated fee payable to the DMV.

Ms. Alberti noted that on 1/14/15 this Board added \$1,576 to line 111 Salary for Tax Collector and that the total for the line should be \$71,279 rather than what is showing.

Ms. Johnson said that she would research these to see what is happening as the monthly expense statement is correct.

Mr. McCulloch noted that he had written a statement on the state of his office and that he would like to give them a few facts on where they stand. To date they are at a 97.74% collection rate which is nearly the same as this time last year. The lien and foreclosure notices go out in April so they will be collecting more. All of the tax information is on-line on the Town website.

Ms. Hogan asked about the \$48M in taxes for this year – what is the balance due.

Mr. McCulloch said that figure is \$1,124,328.

Ms. Hogan asked what percentage of that would come in by the end of this fiscal year.

Mr. McCulloch said that they would collect about \$400,000.

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

Mr. Nickerson noted that he had discussed this at their last meeting – line 212 – Building Official had money added to it for someone to work up to 28 hours per week at around \$30 per hour. This is for a person to do inspections when needed. They also increased the part time Administrative position by five hours per week. What had been requested was a full time Building Official and a full time administrative secretary but they are not putting any new people on at this time.

Mr. Smith said that the plan reviews have become more complex and the building codes have been revised and are in line for another revision. His hope is to have one person do the 28 hours per week so that any over-lapping of different people can be alleviated. He noted that he has been fortunate with the three part time people that he has helping him now. He noted that for the larger projects that he has sent out the plan review to another firm.

Ms. Alberti asked how that works and who pays for it.

Mr. Smith explained that part of the permitting fees that they would collect go to the plan review firm. He said that he has used them for a few of the larger projects and while it helps, he has also found that he has to be in more contact with them when there are questions on the job.

Mr. Kelley asked if the Board of Selectmen had given more than what was requested.

Mr. Nickerson explained that Mr. Smith had asked for full time and the Board of Selectmen had initially cut it and then brought it back up to the \$43,000 for the 28 hours per week. \$58,000 would be the 37.5 hours plus the cost of the benefits would have to be added to that. He noted that while the revenues are up for this department for now, that the larger projects are in progress and that business of this nature typically is cyclical.

Mr. Kelley asked if they could add independent contractors so that they would not have to carry the benefits.

Mr. Smith said that while those type of people/companies do exist, they charge a lot more per hour. He said that ideally he would like to have him and another person so someone could also cover the counter at times to answer questions.

Ms. Hogan asked what the benefits would cost.

Ms. Johnson said that she would have to get that information for them.

Ms. Alberti noted that line 211 the Chief Building Official salary line that this Board had approved a transfer of \$1,877 on 1/14/2015 for a total of \$84,918 rather than the \$85,550 that is showing.

Ms. Johnson said that she would review all of these and get back to them with the information.

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

Mr. Nickerson said that he had the privilege of going out on Meals on Wheels today with the Mayors for Meals program.

Mr. Kelley noted that anyone could volunteer at any time to help with this program.

Ms. Wilson said that the major change with her department is that her 20 year employee will be retiring in July. With this she has looked at the positions at the center and has worked on re-allocating the duties to reflect more of what they actually do. She is changing the program assistant to a program coordinator and the salary would be a wash as the new person would be coming in at entry level. The Administrative Secretary position would become known as the Senior Center Associate with more institution specific tasks rather than office specific. She said that she is also looking for fund raising.

Mr. Nickerson said that there are no new people – just a re-arrangement of the current positions and duties to better serve the needs of the Center.

Mr. Harney asked if there are any grants available to them.

Ms. Wilson said that she does one each year for the multi-towns and that Groton manages it. The local senior centers all work together and keep each other informed.

Ms. Hogan asked about revenues and the projected increase.

Ms. Wilson said that was due to offering more programs and people who have been coming to them and letting them know what they would be interested in seeing for programs.

Ms. Hogan said that the job outlines seem to be more flexible.

Ms. Wilson said that she is trying to have them reflect the reality of the center.

Ms. Alberti noted that line 211 for the Director salary does not match as with the others.

Ms. Johnson said that he has it noted to check all of them.

Ms. Wilson noted that the population statistics for East Lyme reflect that the median age is 45; in the 65+ group there are about 3400-3500 people and the 50+ group comprises 49% of the Town population.

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

Mr. Nickerson explained that the jump 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.

Ms. Alberti asked how many hours or weeks this amount if for.

Ms. Johnson said that it is around six weeks of part time coverage.

Ms. Alberti asked what the rate per hour was.

Ms. Johnson said that it varies.

Ms. Alberti noted that the salary lines here also needed to be checked.

Ms. Johnson said that she had it listed.

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

Ms. Johnson explained that she had left everything in operating the same. She moved the extra dollars that was in 212 HR/Office Coordinator to line 412 PT Clerical to help cover the office. The increase is due to having to move up one of her fiscal assistants.

◆ **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.

Ms. Johnson noted that the year change for 2015 would be fixed on the sheets.

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

Mr. Nickerson commended Sgt. Blanchette and his department for how well they have done and how well he manages the department. He said that this is as flat a budget as can be provided.

Sgt. Blanchette said that he had also asked for extra administrative assistant coverage as there is only one person there and there are events that go on in the evening at the station and it would be nice to have someone be there when people arrive for their meetings, etc. However; he understands that it is not feasible. He noted that one of his officers has been deployed since September and that he had one officer retire and is filling that position with a new one. He explained that what drives the overtime is that they have to have three (3) officers on per shift. This puts further restraints on the budget.

Mr. Harney asked about the State Resident Trooper System and if there was any further insight on this. Sgt. Blanchette said that it is still at 70% however the fringe benefits are at an excessive rate. If it does go to the 100% that the Governor is proposing – then that is a decision that each Town will have to make on its' own regarding what to do.

Mr. Nickerson said that they have used the figure of \$45,000 as the additional amount that they would have to cover should the 100% go forward and it would have to come from contingency.

Ms. Alberti asked about grant overtime as she recalled that they had approved some grant money carry over. Sgt. Blanchette said that program starts in November and ends in September so it runs over two budget cycles. He added that having it in the budget makes it easier.

Mr. Harney and the Board thanked Sgt. Blanchette for his presentation and extended their appreciation for all that he does for the Town.

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

Ms. Johnson noted the refunding that has been done. The principal follows along with the interest and they also have the debt redemption.

Mr., Kelley said that he would like to see the debt reflected in a visual bar graph.

Ms. Johnson said that she would have that for their next meeting.

Ms. Alberti asked about the NEW GOB at \$85,000.

Ms. Johnson noted that should be \$15,000.

Mr. Kelley asked how long the 'Mobil station' item stays 'open' as it is listed in the NEW GOB.

Mr. Nickerson said that he has asked the Town Attorney about it and he said that there is nothing regarding time statutorily on it.

Mr. Kelley asked if it affects bond rating.

Ms. Johnson said that it appears as authorized but unissued debt and that they note it that way. It is already bonded.

Mr. Carpenteri asked if they already have the money in an account.

Ms. Johnson said that we do.

Mr. Nickerson noted that the property does come up for discussion.

Ms. Alberti asked the average cost of funding – the interest rate.

Ms. Johnson said that it is in the 2.25% to 2.5% range.

Ms. Hogan asked if the debt service of the budget went up.

Mr. Harney said that it had and that it was due to the water regional interconnection project coming on-line.

Ms. Johnson noted that they try to keep the debt in the \$5M to \$6M range.

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

Mr. Nickerson reviewed this five year plan noting that reval has to happen next year and that they cannot pull from this line item as it has to be funded. They are converting the Community Center over to Yankee Gas for savings.

Discussion on the ladder truck for the Fire Department involved the potential for investigating the purchase of a lightly used truck instead of a new one, as fire apparatus has to satisfy OSHA and other requirements and a slightly used one would have to be certifiable.

Mr. Kelley asked about the Public Works dump truck and the need for two pick-ups.

Mr. Nickerson said that would be conversation for the Thursday evening meeting when public works people are present.

Ms. Hogan asked for the break-out on the long range plan from last year.

Ms. Johnson said that she would provide that on Thursday.

Mr. Kelley asked if the Board of Ed and the Town used the same computer company for replacements and if it would be cheaper for us to work with them on replacements.

Mr. Nickerson said that from what he has been told – that we can't participate in that program as it is a special purchase program for schools only.

Mr. Kelley asked about the tennis court lighting as he was sure that when they approved the \$750,000 for the tennis courts that the lights were included. He wanted to know why they are asking for another \$105,000 for lighting.

Mr. Nickerson said that is a good question for the Board of Ed when they come to present their budget.

#### **E. Public Discussion**

Mr. Harney called for any comments from the Public.

There were none.

#### **F. Board Comments**

Mr. Kelley said that he had read that there is a \$692,000 increase in the Town side of the budget and asked for an idea of what that budget would look like if it was a \$550,000 increase instead.

Mr. Harney said that he received his copy of the Board of Ed budget and has a question on what Salem pays per student as they are showing declining revenue.

Ms. Johnson said that the formula is defined in the agreement and explained that if they do not pay enough that they have to make it up in the next year and if they have overpaid then they would get a credit.

Mr. Harney noted that Salem also has declining enrollment numbers and asked for an explanation of the formula and information on it prior to the Board of Ed presentation so that they will have it to ask questions.

Ms. Johnson said that she would get the information for them.

Ms. Alberti asked that they receive an updated CIP and also the prior year information as requested.

Ms. Johnson said that she would get it for them.

#### **G. Adjournment**

##### **\*\*MOTION (1)**

Mr. Kelley moved to adjourn this Special Meeting of the East Lyme Board of Finance at 8:27 PM.

Mr. Carpenteri seconded the motion.

Vote: 5 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Zmitruk,  
Recording Secretary