

**EAST LYME BOARD OF FINANCE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
BUDGET REVIEWS FY2018/2019
Thursday, APRIL 5th, 2018**

Members In Attendance: William Weber, Chairman
Lisa Picarazzi, Vice-Chairperson
Camille Alberti
John Birmingham
Anne Santoro

Also In Attendance: Mark Nickerson, First Selectman
Anna Johnson, Finance Director
Chief Michael Finkelstein
Sgt. Mike Macek, Police
Diane Vitagliano, Assessor
John McCulloch, Tax Collector
Joe Smith, Chief Building Official
Cathy Wilson, Senior Services Director
Jeffrey Newton, Superintendent of Schools

FILED

APR 10 2018 AT 10:00 AM/PM

EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Absent: Jason Pazzaglia

A. Call Special Meeting to Order

Chairman Weber 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. Weber called for Delegations.

There were none.

D. New Business

a. Budget Reviews – FY 2018 – 2019

◆ **Assessor (102) – Diane Vitagliano, Assessor**

Mr. Nickerson introduced Ms. Vitagliano noting that she would present her budget.

Ms. Vitagliano said that in working with Tighe & Bond that she has eliminated a complete set of maps that they used to have to pay for and now they only get replacement pages; also she was able to drop her user count down from 6 to 10 users to 2 to 5 users which saves some \$1650. She said that she applied some of those savings to her contracted operating services where she receives a better return for the dollar.

Mr. Weber asked about last years extra funds that they reinstated for her.

Ms. Vitagliano said that she spent \$3000 and got back over \$12, 000 so that is why she asked for the increase.

Ms. Alberti asked if the per audit charge is the same as last year – around \$500.

Ms. Vitagliano said that it depends on the vendor/company that they use however; she expects it to be around that price range.

Ms. Alberti asked if it would include 10 audits this year.

Ms. Vitagliano said that it would depend upon whom she goes with.

Ms. Alberti asked what the \$2500 in revenue was from.

Ms. Johnson said that it is primarily from the sale of large scale copies and copies of the grand list.

Ms. Santoro said that the PT Clerical was \$500 and asked why she was doubling it now.

Ms. Vitagliano said that she was new last year and did not take advantage of the summer intern as she should have. She won't let that help go by this year.

Ms. Santoro noted that there was a clerical error in the amount of the dues – it should read \$2210 instead of \$2110.

Ms. Vitagliano said yes and thanked Ms. Santoro. She explained that they have to keep up with legislative changes and there is re-certification every five years.

Mr. Nickerson asked if all three of them in the office are certified.

Ms. Vitagliano said no, two of them are and the third person is in the process of being certified.

◆ **Board of Assessment Appeals (127) – Diane Vitagliano, Assessor**

Ms. Vitagliano said that they are farther away from revaluation so there is less clerical right now.

Ms. Picarazzi asked if this Board receives a stipend.

Mr. Nickerson and Ms. Vitagliano said that the State requires that they do however only one person took it last year and no one took it this year.

Mr. Weber noted that when he was on the BAA that he thought that they had to take it per the State; so they did and then donated it to a charity or organization of their choice.

Ms. Vitagliano said that she would look into the Statute on this.

Ms. Alberti asked how the car was working out for them.

Ms. Vitagliano said that the car has worked out very well for them.

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

Mr. Nickerson noted that Mr. McCulloch was present and could answer any questions that they might have.

Mr. McCulloch noted that one of his employees who has served the Town for 18 years now will be retiring this week Friday. When Ramona retires, her longevity will be gone from the budget. He said that Sara will be moving up to the full time position that Ramona had. He noted that everything else was about the same.

Mr. Birmingham asked about line 258 – Collection Costs - \$600.

Mr. McCulloch said that Ramona has been successful finding people who owe taxes and this is for the system that they use – Accurint.

Mr. Birmingham asked what type of tools he has at his disposal when they find someone who owes back taxes.

Mr. McCulloch said that in the case of motor vehicles – they cannot register them in another Town until they make good on the taxes here; with property they can have the Attorney serve them.

Ms. Alberti asked about the service contract line item increase.

Mr. McCulloch said that it did not increase last year however they did increase slightly this year.

Ms. Alberti said that it went up 7% in 2015; 8% in 2016 and 7% in 2017 –

Mr. McCulloch said that they did not realize the 7% increase last year as the provider held the price flat for them. He noted that they are happy with this provider.

Ms. Alberti suggested going out to bid as sometimes it provides for a reduced amount.

Mr. McCulloch noted that Ms Vitagliano had utilized the one other company at her previous job and found the one that they are using now to be much better.

Mr. Weber said that if they ask each year that they get the company to re-evaluate where they are in relation to others in the field.

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

Mr. Smith said that there is not a lot of change here. They have been exceeding their mileage due to many breakdowns with the Town vehicle that they have. Supplies are higher due to the State Building code changes which now have been hitting them two times per year instead of the once per year that they previously had.

Ms. Picarazzi asked about building permit revenue.

Mr. Smith said that it is always a best guess – you hope for a lot of projects but some do not materialize when you think that they will. Currently there is the potential for two more buildings at Village Crossing and they are hoping for the 120 apartments at Gateway. Also, the Shell building is supposed to be totally redone at Flanders Four Corners.

Ms. Picarazzi asked how much time he estimated having to spend on the school projects.

Mr. Smith said perhaps 25% - he noted that a lot is due to the safety features being outdated.

Ms. Alberti asked about the 5% salary increase noting that the position is non-union but received a step and COLA last year. The trend over the years from 2015 to now shows a \$13,000 increase – she asked if additional responsibilities have been added on here.

Mr. Smith said that the 5% is a step year with a COLA. He said that he is now totally out of steps as he is at the top so he would only receive COLA. He added that he has no input on this, he is grateful for the pay that he gets and does not feel that he has anything to complain about. If he does not get anything this year, then that is how it is. The codes have become much more complicated and the storms that we have experienced have resulted in additional FEMA flood issues. We have to be more accountable now. He said that he was at a flood conference and is considered to be a Certified Flood Manager. This makes everything much more complicated.

Ms. Alberti thanked Mr. Smith for the information and asked Mr. Nickerson if he would provide them with the salary range for this and other positions.

Mr. Nickerson said that he could have it for them at deliberations.

Ms. Alberti said that her concern is that this is a 5% increase and traditionally they would be tied to the cost of living – but the cost of living has been at 0 to 1%. She noted that the private sector has a salary range and that is it.

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

Mr. Nickerson noted that Ms. Wilson runs the Senior Center. They have a Special Revenue Account for certain programs and she has a lot of volunteers that help them out.

Ms. Wilson said that Mr. Whritner and Mr. Bekech from the Commission on Aging are also here this evening. She said that she has office personnel, drivers and volunteers. She noted that a full time office person left for another job and the new person came in at 30 hours per week and a lower wage. She utilizes volunteers for the phones and various events. All of her office employees do everything, there are very few things that only one person does. That being said, she does the rental rebates and other allowances. The decrease in the budget is due to the staff change.

Mr. Birmingham asked about the revenue figure of \$23,951 and what accounted for the increase from last year.

Ms. Wilson said that there were greater numbers of participation in programs and events.

Ms. Picarazzi asked Ms. Wilson if she benchmarks with other communities to see what works and what does not program wise.

Ms. Wilson said that she does and added that some of the grants are written with seven other Towns.

Ms. Picarazzi asked if they look at the pricing for the programs that are offered.

Ms. Wilson said yes.

Ms. Alberti asked if she had any demographic information.

Ms. Wilson said that CERT was not showing big growth. Our 65+ population is at around 21%; CT as a State is at 15% and New London County in general is at 16%. It appears that Whiting Farms and Sleepy Hollow Hills are the two elderly housing complexes that are still being built out.

Ms. Santoro asked about line #321 – Program Supplies at \$2000 and asked how much needs to be replaced each year for weights, etc.

Ms. Wilson said that they do get worn and that they do need to be replaced.

Ms. Santoro asked if the instructors bring their own supplies.

Ms. Wilson said no.

Ms. Santoro asked about the Transportation Allowance and where they go on it.

Ms. Wilson said that she attends seminars as does her program director and that she does home visits. Ms. Santoro said that she would like to see a bit more of a breakdown on when employees use their vehicles and for what.

Mr. Weber said that he would be interested to know how many use the senior center. Ms. Wilson said that the figures, in unduplicated statistics for FY16/17, were that 1,583 people utilized the senior center. She noted that some numbers are not captured due to the nature of the program.

♦ **Police (216) – Chief Michael Finkelstein; Sgt. Mike Macek, East Lyme Police**
Mr. Nickerson noted that Chief Finkelstein and Sgt. Macek would present their budget.

Chief Finkelstein said that they looked at areas to increase productivity and efficiencies. They also looked at their IT needs. The part-time admin position shows a 20% increase as the full time admin has been with the Town for almost 30 years now and has more time to take off. The part time person fills in when the full time person is out or off. Line #513 – Foot Patrol/Parade Duty is used to cover events. It was increased as they are now also covering football games, etc for the schools. Longevity is contractual; Training is to get the officers up to their necessary level. They also utilize Star Computers for computer maintenance. Miscellaneous Supplies is up as items that were not kept up need to be. He said that they have been lucky that L & M has given them Narcan however; that is not always the case. Legal ads also fall under miscellaneous supplies. They increased the canine line item as they have two dogs and they require vet care. Line #326 – Training Supplies covers consumables such as cartridges, tasers and also training tuitions. New items that were added are line #331 – Scheduling Software – their software has reached the end of its useful life and is no longer supported. The new software would allow for better and faster scheduling under a number of parameters. Line #332 – Towing is a cost that they incur and have to pay for towing vehicles. They have always had to pay for it before – they just took the money for it from other line items in the past.

Ms. Picarazzi asked about line #519 – Grant Overtime (Reimbursement).
Chief Finkelstein said that this is a State DUI Grant and that the amount each year may be different. They get grant revenue to offset this.
Sgt. Macek explained that it runs through September so the account is never negative. The grant comes from the Feds and is 100% reimbursable.

Ms. Picarazzi asked about line #514 – Overtime and if they are over-estimating what that line should be. Chief Finkelstein said that by increasing it, this gives them the ability to do narcotics and other pro-actives. He said that he thinks that they are on-target with this figure.
Ms. Picarazzi asked if they have considered using other people to help with parade duty rather than the officers at overtime.
Chief Finkelstein said that he does – they use the Explorers on a regular basis.
Mr. Nickerson explained that this is an attempt to put items in the proper areas. He added that they are looking at the security for CEL and trying to determine a potential cost to vendors to try to recover some of the security cost in the vendor fee.

Ms. Picarazzi said that Computer Maintenance is up 200% from 2017.
Chief Finkelstein said that he realizes it is large however they utilize that amount.
Sgt. Macek explained that in the previous year \$5000 was only part of what was necessary for the private force and they ended up utilizing a lot more hours. This year they have more things coming up and have had issues with things that do not talk to each other and not being able to do everything at the same computer due to glitches.
Ms. Picarazzi asked for areas where they could see some potential savings/efficiencies.
Chief Finkelstein said that the goal is to find where they can work on operational economies. Most of this would come from actual small items such as lights in the buildings. He also noted that the road reconstruction funds are now set up to be used to offset their vehicle purchases. They are also looking at local tickets where revenue would come back directly to them.
Dan Price, Police Commission said that is also the task of the Police Commission and they are busy working on many things.

Ms. Alberti asked if they were going to do more policing of narcotics.
Chief Finkelstein said yes.
Ms. Alberti asked if there was a way to have a regional task force for this.

Chief Finkelstein said yes, they are looking into that.

Mr. Nickerson noted that at a minimum our Town would need to add four more officers to be able to do everything that they would like to do. Waterford has 46 officers, however; adding officers is not something that can happen this year.

Ms. Santoro said that it seems that future officers would need to be discussed especially with the number of overtime hours. She asked about the rental at Waterford and why that went up.

Chief Finkelstein said that was the agreement.

Ms. Santoro asked about Boat Storage #291 and if the maintenance is shared with Waterford.

Sgt. Macek said that they are only able to cover a very small amount of routine maintenance. Waterford received a grant for some major upgrades.

Mr. Birmingham asked if each vehicle has Narcan.

Chief Finkelstein said yes and that once it is used they have to pick up another from the office. As he noted previously, he said that they have been lucky that L & M has provided it to them without cost.

Mr. Birmingham asked about the basic training.

Chief Finkelstein said that it used to be free until the State had fiscal issues so now they have to pay by whatever the particular training class is. This is a ball park estimate.

Mr. Birmingham asked about uniforms at \$28,700.

Chief Finkelstein said that each officer gets \$700 for uniforms and \$350 for cleaning per contract. The Administrative Assistant keeps track of the spending on this and it is set up through purchase order.

Mr. Weber noted that the costs that have gone up this year would seem to go down next year as the holes have now been filled.

Chief Finkelstein said that he feels that this budget delivers the services and that it better shows what actually is.

Mr. Weber said that he thought that \$6000 was high for scheduling software and that perhaps it would come in less.

Sgt. Macek explained that they have easily spent six hours to do scheduling manually because the present system does not work. This will allow the officer to do other work and will schedule by availability, etc. and alert the officer who has signed up for overtime or because he is available to be notified quickly if he will be needed or not.

Mr. Weber said that while they are seeing items that they never saw before he does not see reductions elsewhere.

Chief Finkelstein said that they were taking the dollars needed for the items from other areas before as they did not have them itemized previously.

◆ **Dispatch (215) – Chief Michael Finkelstein; Sgt. Mike Macek, East Lyme Police**

Mr. Nickerson explained that this is now separate from the Emergency Management budget.

Chief Finkelstein explained that the standard in the industry is not to have one person staffing however they frequently do have that. Changing the 4.5 FT dispatchers over to 5 FT dispatchers is the biggest increase in this budget. They have nine part time and five full time people.

Ms. Picarazzi asked if they have considered using more part timers.

Mr. Nickerson said that it is a union issue.

Chief Finkelstein said that it is a staffing issue and they need people who can accommodate the shifts as most part time people have other jobs and then they would have to fill in with a full time person at overtime rates.

Mr. Nickerson added that contractually the full time people own the Monday thru Friday shift. There is also a CAD equipment issue.

Ms. Alberti said that it is a large increase for one department.

Chief Finkelstein said that it is a double-edged sword.

Mr. Nickerson said that the additional full time person was previously part time and is only adding 20 hours to become a full time position. The 80 hours on the weekends are covered by part timers.

Mr. Weber noted that they were told that the number and volume of calls has gone up considerably.

◆ **Animal Control (226) – Chief Michael Finkelstein; Sgt. Mike Macek, East Lyme Police**

Chief Finkelstein explained that this is a bare bones budget. They are looking to bring on a per diem person to break up how the part time person has to work and offer relief at no extra cost. They are also looking to make more training available for the ACO's. The equipment is comprised of net guns and other items for safety when handling the animals. Line #321 – Vet Services is large as when an animal needs care, the Town has to absorb it.

Ms. Alberti asked if they could charge the owner back for it.

Chief Finkelstein said not always.

Mr. Nickerson noted that they share this function with Waterford and that they have moved the ACO position here so the cost is much less than when it was in Waterford.

Ms. Alberti asked about fees for impounded dogs.

Chief Finkelstein said that they do collect some. He noted that the animals are currently housed at the New London facility due to problems with the Waterford facility.

Ms. Johnson explained that the revenues reflect those fees plus what we charge Waterford for their half.

Mr. Weber asked about uniforms.

Chief Finkelstein said that they have a purchase order set up and the billing comes through the Town and covers these two people. Uniforms can and do become ruined, worn or torn and have to be replaced.

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

Mr. Nickerson explained that this budget is flat.

There were no questions.

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

Ms. Johnson noted that line #311 is reduced due to the changing of staff in her office. The Accounts Payable position was put at 30 hours per week when the staff change was done.

Mr. Nickerson added that this person is also cross-trained for the Tax Collector's and Town Clerk's offices.

Ms. Johnson said that line #412 – PT Clerical – that while she did not use it much last year, she has it so that with the hours reduction she can get things done. Also, the office equipment maintenance line item went down.

Mr. Weber asked about Wellness at \$50.

Ms. Johnson said that it is intended to try to do things to encourage employees to do healthy things.

Ms. Alberti asked if 40% of her salary is paid by Water & Sewer.

Ms. Johnson said yes.

Ms. Alberti said that she had the same question as she had asked Mr. Smith – has anything changed with her position.

Ms. Johnson said that the Affordable Care Act requires more reporting; and State requirements.

Mr. Birmingham asked if the 4.91% salary increase is a catch-up.

Mr. Nickerson said no, it is a step and COLA.

Ms. Picarazzi asked if there were performance reviews prior to increases.

Mr. Nickerson said no.

Ms. Alberti asked that they be provided with the salary ranges for all of the department heads.

Ms. Johnson said that she would work on getting that for them for next week.

Ms. Alberti said that it is critical information to her decision making process and that she does feel that if people are getting raises beyond their salary levels then she would cut that amount and they will have to find where it comes from.

Ms. Picarazzi asked what the revenue line represents.

Ms. Johnson said that it comes from the lease for antennas on the towers.

Ms. Alberti noted that Ms. Johnson also operates as the Purchasing Agent for the Town.

◆ **Health & Welfare (419) – VNA, presented by Mr. Nickerson**

Mr. Nickerson noted that there is no change here.

Ms. Johnson said that within this, they do home visits, wellness checks, etc.

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

Ms. Johnson said that there would be new bonding for the schools and roadwork. Regarding the principal, the payments are for the same debt issues. They are typically made two times per year.

Ms. Alberti asked about the payment.

Ms. Johnson said that they pay what is required. The bonds are paid off by maturity.

Ms. Alberti asked if they pay only the bond amounts for what we need.

Ms. Johnson said yes.

Mr. Birmingham asked about our bond rating.

Ms. Johnson said that it is AA²; adding that the issue with the State has put us on watch with Moody's. They anticipate using Standard & Poor when going out for the school bonding.

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

Mr. Nickerson reviewed this plan noting that the items in black are items that they will purchase. He said that Mr. Newton was present to speak to his items as they have pulled back on a lot and pushed items off for a year due to the renovations at the three elementary schools.

Mr. Newton said that was correct, they are requesting only the technology plan stay in place for the upcoming year.

Mr. Nickerson said that there is very little here as the economic situation has caused the dollar issues everyone currently faces in our State.

Ms. Picarazzi requested that the \$6M for a police station in FY 2019/2020 be removed. With all of the money for the schools and the social climate she said that she wants it pushed out further – at least two years.

Mr. Nickerson said that it is a place holder however; if the opportunity came into play they would like to have it there.

Mr. Weber said that he does not put a lot of credence into this, their affordability generally dictates.

Ms. Picarazzi said that she wants it moved out to FY 2021/2022.

Mr. Nickerson reiterated that if there is an opportunity to pick up a fully outfitted building

Mr. Weber explained that he looks at this as something that they move around as necessary or available, further the Town would have to vote on it.

****MOTION (1)**

Ms. Picarazzi moved that the \$6M for the Police Station be moved from FY2019/2020 to FY 2021/2022 in the Long Range Capital Plan.

Ms. Alberti seconded the motion.

Mr. Birmingham asked if they move this, what if something comes up –

Mr. Nickerson said that it is only a plan and they are only approving the items for FY 2018/2019.

Ms. Santoro said that she just wants to make sure that if it were necessary that they could move it back.

Vote: 5 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

E. Public Discussion

Mr. Weber called for any comments from the Public.

There were none.

F. Board Comments

Ms. Johnson noted the updated items that she had provided them with – the BOE budget (+\$2,200) and answers to their questions from the BOE.

Ms. Picarazzi said that she realizes that the discussion on salary has become very contentious; for the record, she has nothing but good words to say about the people who work at Town Hall and for the Town – and understands well that it is not fun to have to cut dollars. She said that to think that it is something that they want to do is incorrect – they have to think about the taxpayers in Town. It is a very difficult budget picture – and she is sorry to hear from Mr. Nickerson the comment that he has heard that people are not happy with the comments from the Board of Finance however; she feels that he should support them and explain to these people that the Board of Finance has a tough job to do and that they work very hard at it. She said that she does not have any disrespect for anyone who works for the Town – but – the taxpayers are not sitting here and they are not hearing what the Board hears and this board has to represent them. They are in a hard spot and with less money coming from the State, and it is only getting worse.

Mr. Nickerson said that is not how it is coming across as it is looking like singling out the unaffiliated. They get the same raise that the other people get.

Ms. Picarazzi said that she feels that in sitting on the Board of Finance that she would be remiss if she did not ask questions. She provided the example of the longevity payments, asking about and hearing that is how they always do it or how it is done is just not a good enough answer. She questioned longevity, steps and colas all in the same time frame.

Mr. Weber asked for the information on pay scales for deliberations.

Ms. Alberti said that she has asked for four years in a row now for the job responsibilities and salary ranges of the positions here. She said that further – she would not apologize for advocating for the taxpayer as it is the taxpayer dollars that support the Town. Also, she feels that they should not be going after the lowest paid employees.

Ms. Santoro said that she thinks that the information will clear up a lot and that they will find that their thinking is a lot closer than it appears now.

G. Adjournment

Mr. Weber called for a motion to adjourn.

****MOTION (2)**

Mr. Birmingham moved to adjourn this Special Meeting of the East Lyme Board of Finance at 10:30 PM.

Ms. Santoro seconded the motion.

Vote: 5 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Zmitruk,
Recording Secretary