

EAST LYME BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SPECIAL MEETING OF FEBRUARY 19, 2019

MINUTES

PRESENT: Mark Nickerson, Kevin Seery, Dan Cunningham and Paul Dagle

EXCUSED: Rose Ann Hardy and Marc Salerno

ALSO PRESENT: Anna Johnson, Diane Vitagliano, Steve Way, Mike Finkelstein, Mike Macek, Chris Taylor, John Dwire and Bill Rix

Mr. Nickerson called the Special Meeting for the purpose of Budget Reviews to order at 7:05 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Assessor #102

Diane Vitagliano, Tax Assessor, spoke on this budget. She noted that the only increase, aside from contractual salary increases, was in the 200 Services-Contracted/Operating line item. Although there was an increase in services, including in the program shared with the Tax Collector, they reduced the expenses by \$1,500 by eliminating one of the public access computers in their office thus reducing it by one user fee. Mr. Seery noted that Ms. Vitagliano had reached out to neighboring tax assessors and organized a regional legal ad campaign for certain key dates that we all share, saving money in the cost of placing the legal ads.

Building #104

Steve Way, Acting Building Official, spoke on this budget. Mr. Nickerson stated that Mr. Way was the Assistant Building Official until Mr. Smith left, and since has moved into the Building Official role. Ms. Johnson stated that there is an 11% decrease in the salary line item because Mr. Smith was a long time employee. Mr. Dagle inquired about permit refunds, and Ms. Johnson stated that this was a refund from a permit issued in the prior fiscal year. Regarding a uniform allowance, Mr. Way stated that homeowners are more comfortable when they see someone from the Town arrive in a Town vehicle dressed in appropriate attire; also that having a uniform will eliminate the problem of ruining the employees' street clothing. Mr. Cunningham agreed that having the building officials wear a type of uniform and driving a Town vehicle makes the homeowners feel more at ease with their presence in their home.

Police #216

Chief Finkelstein and Sgt. Macek were in attendance to speak on this budget. Chief Finkelstein reported that the increase in line item 511 Police Officers includes the new officer that was hired recently, as well as contractual salary increases. He stated that they are looking to add another additional police officer, and is hopeful that he will be able to hire two this year. In comparison with the average of 2.1 officers per 1,000 residents, East Lyme currently has 1.2 officers per 1,000 residents. He reported that the Police Commission supports and has endorsed his request to add two officers. Chief Finkelstein stated that they need to be proactive and not reactive as there are numerous officers who will be up for retirement in the next couple of years, and it will be prudent to hire officers in advance of that happening so they will be trained and ready to be out on the streets when the retirements occur. Waiting until the existing officers retire will put a strain on the remaining officers and the overtime budget. The Chief stated that as soon as he receives word from any of the officers about retirement, he will communicate that. The line item for Power DMS Software will keep us in line with the new State Statutes, and will keep an electronic database of policies so that the officers do not have to have big binders to flip through and will also be a good check and balance that all officers are reviewing updated policies as they will have to sign off electronically. Currently, the Administrative Sergeant uses up many hours performing audits of the hard copy policies, and an online program will eliminate this burden. Line 321 for canine maintenance shows a spike in 2018 due to an unforeseen medical issue for one of the dogs, and is not a typical number for maintenance of the canine officers. Regarding alarm monitoring, a brief discussion was held on reviewing the current ordinance and process and

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EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

possibly beginning to charge a fee to any repeat false alarm offenders. It was reported that overtime is currently on track and actually lower than last year at this time.

Animal Control #226

Chief Finkelstein reported that the salary line shows a reduction because the former ACO left last year and was replaced by the current ACO at a lower salary. He reported that they reduced line item 321 veterinary services to put it more in line with actual expenses. Line 417 is the salary paid to the ACO when he attends training, and line 326 is the cost of the training itself.

Dispatch #215

Chief Finkelstein stated that they currently have five full time dispatchers and would like to hire a sixth full time person; this will significantly reduce the amount of overtime pay to the full time employees and cut the part time shifts in half. The goal is to have two full time dispatchers on the overnight shift, and then alleviate some of the workload on both the full time and part time employees. Line item 243 includes anticipated training costs if the sixth dispatcher is hired.

Public Safety/Fire Marshal #224

Chris Taylor was in attendance to speak on this budget. Chief Finkelstein pointed out that if the referendum passes and the three emergency management departments move into the new building; this should reduce the budget going forward. Mr. Taylor noted that line item 211 includes a stipend for the Chief of Police as he is also the Director of Emergency Management. He reported that line 215 is specifically for Millstone drills, and line 216 is down due to the former Fire Marshal retiring. Mr. Nickerson requested that they put together anticipated savings that the Town may see if the referendum passes and the Honeywell building is purchased.

Niantic Fire Department #217

Newly elected Chief John Dwire was in attendance to speak on this budget. He reported that both of the fire departments are seeking to add one full time fire fighter each to make sure someone is on staff every overnight shift; it was noted that there is an unfortunate lack of volunteers and the fire departments need someone on shift 24 hours per day. Mr. Nickerson noted that the Town Attorney is working with the EL Ambulance fund in coming up with an agreement, and this should be going before the Board of Selectman at an upcoming meeting. Line 220 is showing no increase, but they do have a truck that is aging and will need to be replaced; Mr. Nickerson stated that the new truck is in the Capital Plan. Regarding line 614 overtime, Ms. Johnson stated that the fire fighters are contractually guaranteed 260 hours of overtime, which is why the line item is so high. Mr. Dwire stated that this line also includes mandatory training that each fire fighter must take.

Flanders Fire Department #218

Chief Bill Rix was in attendance to speak on this budget, and he reported that aside from the addition of a fire fighter, which will be offset by revenues, this budget is generally flat. It was noted that because of last year's budget freeze, there are some expenses that need to be addressed in this year's budget. Mr. Nickerson thanked both the Chiefs for working together so well and on these budgets.

MOTION (1)

Mr. Seery Moved to adjourn the February 19, 2019 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectman at 8:38 p.m.
Seconded by Mr. Cunningham. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sandra Anderson
Recording Secretary