

EAST LYME BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SPECIAL MEETING OF FEBRUARY 19, 2020

MINUTES

PRESENT: Mark Nickerson, Kevin Seery, Marc Salerno, Rose Ann Hardy, Dan Cunningham and Paul Dagle

ALSO PRESENT: Anna Johnson, Mike Finkelstein, Mike Macek, Dan Price, Joe Bragaw, Bill Scheer, Bill Rix, John Dwire, Dave Baer and John Way

Mr. Nickerson called the Special Meeting for the purpose of Budget Reviews to order at 5:33 p.m. and asked Sgt. Macek to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Dagle arrived at 5:40 p.m.

#109 – IT

Mr. Bragaw addressed the Board and he stated that the Town is falling behind in IT gave an overview of the progression of the IT staff over the years, beginning with Bill Scheer early on and then including Carmen Ames, who stepped up in around 2004 to become full-time IT support.

Mr. Scheer explained that when he began overseeing the IT systems around 2002, there were a handful of computers in various offices, a few printers and the police department only had four computers. Today there are hundreds of pieces of equipment in various departments, and the police department alone have more than 20 computers in the building; not to mention all of the computer equipment in the vehicles including different software applications that need to be maintained. Also adding to the complexity is networking all of that with emergency services; dispatch, fire marshal, and the fire and ambulance services. Early on, Carmen Ames stepped up and took on mid-level IT duties, but the needs have exceeded our current staff's expertise. Also adding to the shortfall in staff expertise is the fact that the key employees that were involved in all of this infrastructure and supported the systems have all retired and taken with them their expertise and knowledge. A few years back the Town brought in Star Computers on contract to help with the IT needs, especially with the public safety infrastructure which has become increasingly complex and specialized. The town can no longer support the growing IT needs with the existing model.

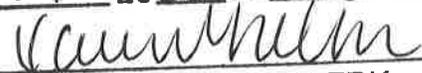
Mr. Bragaw stated that the need for improvement has been recognized, and a group has formed as an IT steering committee to begin working on a town-wide solution to this issue. The committee currently consists of the Director of Public Works, The Deputy Director of Public Works, the current IT Supervisor, the First Selectman, the Director of Finance, the Chief of Police, the Fire Chiefs from both Flanders and Niantic Fire Departments, and the President of the Ambulance Association. They have only met once so far, and he stated that they are first concentrating on assessing the current infrastructure and working together to build a strong town-wide infrastructure. Star Computers was invited to attend that meeting, but they are not a member of the Committee. It was also decided that in order to truly make this a strong town-wide infrastructure, the Board of Education will be asked to join the steering committee and work together on a shared IT Department. A quick comparison was done of a couple of comparable communities and East Lyme is behind in our IT efforts.

All of the Emergency Responders in attendance concurred that that town needs to focus on infrastructure, that all of these departments should work together, and an IT Director position needs to be created to oversee and manage the entire system. It was agreed that each department's individual budget line item for IT services will be pooled into a shared line item for the entire town; and to hopefully include the Board of Education.

Mr. Nickerson stated that the Connecticut Council of Governments has begun discussions about creating shared services amongst municipalities and has created a task force to begin exploring these opportunities. Mr. Nickerson stated that he will keep everyone updated on this matter. Mr. Cunningham suggested that the Board of Selectmen form a subcommittee to work with the steering committee through this process and is supportive of the town becoming

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independent upon an internal IT director instead of relying on Star Computers. Mr. Dagle stated that he would support an independent needs assessment study if needed, and all board members concurred and will look into how much a needs assessment will cost.

#215 – Dispatch

Chief Finkelstein spoke on this budget and reported that they currently have six full time and five part time dispatchers; and the schedule is two on during the day (7am-3pm) and evening shifts (3pm-11pm) and one on overnight (11pm-7am). Mr. Seery asked if the new building will be staff with two on every shift, and the Chief stated that no that is not the plan as that would require a staff of nine full time dispatchers. The overtime in this budget is for coverage of full-time dispatchers when there aren't any part-time people available to cover shifts. They continue to do the best that they can until they can increase the full-time staff.

#216 – Police

Chief Finkelstein stated that the mission of the East Lyme Police Department is to ensure the safety and well being of all citizens and visitors to the Town of East Lyme. This is accomplished through a positive relationship with our community and effective Policing strategies. He reported that the staffing schedule for the police department has not changed in 17 years, and that although the town and its population has grown, the department still only has three officers on duty each shift 24/7. The department consists of 24 full time officers and one part time officer who works two 4-hour shifts per week. In this year's budget, the department is asking for an additional two full time officers, and this request is fully backed by the East Lyme Board of Police Commissioners. He reported that most of the overtime that occurs is necessary to maintain minimum patrol standards, and that the need for in depth investigations of crimes also uses a lot of overtime hours. Mr. Nickerson stated that the Commission members present to support the Police budget are Chairman Dan Price, Mark Powers and Joe Perkins. Mr. Nickerson noted that the part time officer line item appears to have increased but that is actually the correct number. He explained that the part time officer has willingly given up shifts over the last couple of years, but that he is back to working his normal hours as per his contract. Chief stated that the Town did not receive the annual DUI Grant from the State this year, but that they will continue to pursue all available state and federal grants for additional funding. It was noted that a full report of calls and arrests can be found attached to each month's Police Commission meeting minutes.

#226 – Animal Control

Chief Finkelstein reported that this budget has an increase in contractual wages only, and that it is running well and working well with Waterford at the New London facility. The agreement that the town has with Waterford is that East Lyme pays for the personnel and the vehicle, and that Waterford covers costs for the facility.

The Board took at recess at 7:11 p.m. They returned at 7:21 p.m. and resumed the special meeting.

Mr. Nickerson stated that both of the Fire Chiefs are volunteers, and that the Town is very appreciative of their hard work and dedication. Both fire departments are having a difficult time attracting and keeping volunteers as people can no longer volunteer for no pay. Mr. Nickerson also noted that the East Lyme Ambulance Association supports the fire departments immensely and that they are a crucial partner in helping keep our residents safe and our emergency services ready to respond.

#217 – Niantic Fire Department

Chief John Dwire spoke on this budget and stated that the majority of the increases in this budget are due to contractual wage and uniform increases. Line 222 for building maintenance is due to all three buildings, 8 Grand Street, 6 Grand Street, and 237 West Main Street, are aging and require a lot of maintenance. He noted that the line item for fuel remains at zero due to the agreement that the Town has with the Ambulance Association. There was a total of 2,171 calls for service by the Niantic Fire Department from July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019.

#218 – Flanders Fire Department

Chief Bill Rix spoke on this budget and stated that the majority of the increases in this budget are due to contractual wage and uniform increases. Line 221 appears to have increased significantly, but it was noted that this expense has historically been in the capital plan and is now moved into this budget.

Mrs. Hardy inquired about the Town Ordinance regarding false alarms. Chief Rix stated that this ordinance was suspended a few years back so it would just be a matter of reinstating the policy going forward in order cite people for excessive false alarms.

#224 – Fire Marshal

Fire Marshal John Way spoke on this budget, and it was communicated by Chief Finkelstein as well, that this budget still requires some work as previously it was the overall emergency management budget. All of the individual budgets are now being broken out into their own budget, and there are still a couple of items that need to be review and possibly moved around. That noted, Mr. Nickerson went on to explain that there has always been a full-time deputy fire marshal on staff. When Mr. Taylor took over as Fire Marshal when Mr. Morris left, it was decided at that time to eliminate the Deputy Fire Marshal position. Going forward, the new Fire Marshal, Mr. Way, would like to increase his part time deputy fire marshal line item expense in order to have a number of deputies available as needed.

MOTION (1)

Mr. Seery MOVED to adjourn the February 19, 2020 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectman at 8:03 p.m.
Seconded by Mr. Dagle. Motion passed 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sandra Anderson
Recording Secretary