

EAST LYME BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 5, 2020  
MINUTES

PRESENT: Mark Nickerson, Kevin Seery, Rose Ann Hardy, Marc Salerno, Paul Dagle and Dan Cunningham  
ALSO PRESENT: Finance Director Anna Johnson, Harbor Management Chairman Stephen Dinsmore, Flanders Fire Chief Bill Rix, and Niantic Fire Chief John Dwire

Mr. Nickerson called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1b. Fire Fighter Badge Pinning

The Fire Chiefs were called up to introduce their newest full-time fire fighters, and it was noted that both men started working for the departments already and that tonight's public introduction and pinning is a ceremony to introduce them to the Board and to the public. Chief Rix introduced David Swinburne and stated that he has been in fire service for 31 years, starting with the Niantic Fire Department in 1989. Chief Dwire introduced Kevin Carrico and stated that he started his fire service career at Niantic Fire Department in 2012. Both men had their badges pinned by family members.

FILED

1c. Additional Agenda and Consent Items  
There were none.

1d. Delegations  
There were none.

Feb 11 2020 AT 4:00 AM (PM)  
*Anna Johnson*  
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

1e. Approval of Minutes

DISCUSSION: Mr. Dagle stated that on the last page of the minutes with the sentence beginning “. . . having completed . . . “ the following changes should be made. The sentence should read “. . . having completed construction drawings to go out to bid . . . “. All Board members agreed with this change.

**MOTION (1)**

Mr. Seery MOVED to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 22, 2020, as amended  
Seconded by Mr. Salerno. Motion passed 6-0.

1f. Consent Calendar

**MOTION (2)**

Mr. Seery MOVED to approve the Consent Calendar for the meeting of February 5, 2020, in the amount of \$581.10.

Seconded by Mr. Salerno. Motion passed 6-0.

2a. Harbor Management Plan

DISCUSSION: Mr. Nickerson stated that on September 4, 2019, this Board approved the updated Harbor Management Plan, with the stipulation noted by Mr. Dinsmore back in September that the DEEP would need to have the final sign off on the plan. Mr. Nickerson noted that the state did review it and make one minor change, and that is to remove the sentence as outlined in the resolution below.

**MOTION (3)**

Mr. Seery RESOLVED, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 22a-113m, to accept and adopt the one change made by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to the 2019 Revised Harbor Management Plan which plan replaced the Harbor Management Plan adopted by the Board of Selectman on May 4, 1994 and was adopted by the Board of Selectman on September 4, 2019 as follows:

Page 3-12: In the section concerning “Water and Waterfront Access Issues and Considerations” delete the last sentence as shown below.

3. Use of Town-Owned Street Ends and Water Access Right-of-Ways: Some opportunities for visual and physical access to the HMA are provided by Town-owned waterfront street ends and water access rights-of-way, some of which were once used as Town fire docks. These areas currently provide only limited water access opportunities due to lack of parking, other space limitations, lack of facilities to support access, particularly physical access, and private encroachments. Some waterfront street ends traditionally have been used only by neighborhood residents and are located within the boundaries of private beach associations. Some neighborhood residents have expressed concern that increased use of waterfront street ends and old fire dock areas for water access could adversely affect existing neighborhood character. Neighborhood residents also describe deed restrictions preventing any development of these areas for general public use. In addition, there is currently some uncertainty regarding the ownership of certain street ends, including some shown as Town-owned on maps prepared by the Planning Department. ~~The Town Attorney has indicated that efforts to clarify the current titles on street end and water access rights of way likely will be costly and time consuming.~~

The 2019 Harbor Management Plan as revised above is effective immediately.  
Seconded by Mr. Dagle. Motion passed 6-0.

3a. CNRE

This item is not ready and will be addressed at the February 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

3b. Appointments

**MOTION (4)**

DISCUSSION: Mr. Nickerson explained that our longtime Tree Warden, Mr. Bill Jezierski, has recently passed away and he recommends that we appoint Mr. Bragaw, who is a certified Tree Warden, to take over this task and bring it up to meet the recently adopted purchasing policy as it relates to the bid process of hiring a company to remove the trees. It was noted that the tree warden is the person that evaluates potential trees to be taken down; and then he would hire a contracted company to come in to trim or take down the subject tree. Mr. Nickerson stated that the Jezierski family has supported this town in many ways for many years, and the Town is very grateful. He stated that this is an opportunity to get in line with the newly adopted purchasing plan. WJ Tree Removal will have to bid for a contract going forward along with other companies that may be interested. It was noted that all liability and all equipment will be provided by, and will be covered by, the contracted tree removal company, and will not be the liability of the town as each contractor carries their own individual liability insurance. The Tree Warden, by State Statute, is directed to appoint the Deputy Tree Warden, and Mr. Bragaw stated that he intends to appoint a current Public Works employee, which are out on the road all day every day and will be effective in spotting and tagging suspect trees. This appointment will be effective as soon as Mr. Bragaw gets sworn in by the Town Clerk.

Mr. Seery MOVED to appoint Joe Bragaw, 19 Attawan Avenue, Niantic, as the Tree Warden for the Town of East Lyme with a term to expire on January 8, 2024.

Seconded by Mr. Salerno. Motion passed 6-0.

**MOTION (5)**

Mr. Seery MOVED to appoint Frank Ellsworth, 49 Blue Hill Road, Bozrah, to serve as Deputy Fire Marshal for the Town of East Lyme through January 3, 2022.

Seconded by Mrs. Hardy. Motion passed 6-0.

3c. Schedule Budget Meetings

DISCUSSION: Budget meetings were scheduled for February 10<sup>th</sup>, February 19<sup>th</sup>, March 2<sup>nd</sup> and March 4<sup>th</sup>. An agenda for each meeting will be filed outlining which departmental budgets will be reviewed.

4a. Ex-Officio Reports

Mr. Salerno reported that the POCD Public Forum was very well attending with a lot of great feedback from the public. They will be meeting again in March, and he will communicate the date once it has been scheduled. He stated that there was a lot of discussion regarding open space and aquaculture, as well as other conservation and development issues. Overall the meeting was very positive and was well attended.

Mr. Dagle reported that at the Board of Education meeting, they recognized the retirement of James Wood, the long-time custodian of Lillie B. Haynes, and awarded Mr. Wood the Viking Valor Recognition Award for his many years of service to the school and for all of his work on the schools' renovation project. They heard a lot of feedback from the public regarding their budget and specifically that they are dropping the reading recovery program, which affects kindergarten and first grade. Mr. Dagle stated that the Board of Education found this to be necessary in order to hire additional teachers for those grades based on the number of incoming students. He reported that they have not voted to approve the budget as of yet, but that currently they will be asking for an increase of upwards of 5%. He reported that they approved a half day schedule for the Niantic Center School on April 28<sup>th</sup> for the Presidential Primary. Mr. Dagle stated that a couple of weeks ago they partnered with Waterford schools to bring a speaker in to present on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention; the speaker was outstanding the event was very well attended. There will be another forum scheduled in the near future. The Public Safety Building Vision Committee met and received the final drawings and they are making a couple of minor changes, one of which is to move the IT equipment to space on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. They will meet again next week and expect that the final drawings will be available at that time. They discussed the sprinkler system, and Mr. Dagle reported that they consulted with the Fire Marshal, the Building Official, and the architect who are all in agreement that a sprinkler system is not required. This will remain an open item for future discussion. Mrs. Hardy stated that recently the high school is experiencing difficulty in interacting with the Town's IT equipment, such as recording and channel 22, and she would like the Board of Education to be involved in the IT discussions to coordinate everyone's ability throughout town to utilize the new system. Mr. Nickerson reported that the Town has applied for an \$85,000 grant for a full IT system upgrade; this grant is through the Town and is not specific to the Public Safety Building but will digitize and connect all town functions. He reported that Carmen Ames, our IT specialist and Mike Meinz, a citizen volunteer, are working together to secure this grant for the Town.

Mrs. Hardy reported that after the Board of Education meeting, they received notification that Niantic Center School was cited as a "school that has shown marked improvement" from the State reporting and evaluation. She also stated that the Reading Recovery Program is a one-on-one program that is geared toward students in kindergarten and first grade that are struggling with reading in order to prevent the amount of remedial reading that we now see at the high school level. Mrs. Hardy feels that the Town would be doing the community a disservice for eliminating this program; and since this program requires one-on-one, student to teacher communication, it is not a program you can have in a classroom setting. Mrs. Hardy asked Mr. Dagle what the plans are for a generator in the new building. Mr. Dagle reported that a full building generator will be in the plans.

Mr. Dagle noted that we will be needing to hire a Clerk of the Works to support the interfacing with the general contractor, and that the public is welcome to submit a bid and should be looking for that official announcement in the near future. As an overview they are seeking someone with previous building and/or inspection experience that will be working daily to provide key interface with the contractor, our Town Officials, and the Town Building Committee. Mr. Salerno inquired as to if the Town Building Committee has been contacted yet, and Mr. Dagle confirmed that Mr. O'Connor has been attending meetings and has

offered to be a part of the bid review process. Mr. Dagle also stated that they are requesting that three members of the Public Safety Building Vision Committee be appointed to the Town Building Committee for the extent of the project.

Mr. Cunningham reported that the Historic Properties Commission is working on a video documentary of Town residents that have been living in this town throughout the years and create a digital record of these stories of our town's past. Mrs. Hardy stated that they had applied for a grant to fund this project but did not get it and are committed to completing this project without the grant money.

4b. Selectmen's Report

Mr. Nickerson read into record his annual budget letter for fiscal year 20/21, which is attached hereto as Exhibit 1.

5. Public Comment

There was none.

**MOTION (6)**

Mr. Seery MOVED to adjourn the February 5, 2020, regular meeting of the East Lyme Board of Selectmen at 9:15 p.m.

Seconded by Mr. Salerno. Motion passed 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Sandra Anderson  
Recording Secretary

# Town of



# East Lyme

Mark C. Nickerson  
First Selectman  
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February 5, 2020

To: East Lyme Selectmen:

I present you the proposed town budget for fiscal year 2020-2021.

Municipalities in Connecticut have been struggling for over a decade. The balance of providing quality education, top-rate town services, and protecting our property values (Grand List) is extremely challenging. This year's budget was especially difficult to bring together. Many departments and town services need attention, revamping, and upgrades.

Every dollar spent in our town is reviewed against the filter of efficiency and value. If we don't need it, we don't spend money on it. From an outsider, this statement is typically met with skepticism and doubt. As a taxpayer, I understand that viewpoint. Before being involved with town government, I also viewed empty school buses, fleets of public work trucks and police cars, a dozen fire trucks sitting in fire stations 95% of the time as wasted money. But that doesn't tell the whole story of the responsibilities, the mandates and the state statues that we are required to provide to our citizens.

Those elected to public office who are charged with reviewing budgets come to realize very quickly the heavy costs and responsibilities of town government. While we all want to keep our property taxes as low as possible, the costs associated with municipal services continue to rise. These days, elective services that add to the quality of life and maintain our property values are minimal in most cases. More and more of our recreational and optional services have moved to "user fee" systems and away from general taxpayer obligations (Parks and Rec programming, beaches, Senior center activities, special events).

The two most primary functions/obligations of town government is safety and education. The Board of Education will present their budget in the coming weeks.

An argument can be made also for roads, trash removal, and other basic services but ultimately there cannot be any compromise with public safety. This year's budget will be driven by these two primary responsibilities.

Public Safety: This is the year we will be renovating and opening the new Public Safety Building. Most of the funding is secured thru a referendum a year ago. Key financing still hangs in the balance for us to deliver a proper facility to our first responders for the benefit of our citizens. The PSB Vision Committee along with work by our Police Chief, the Building Inspector and the Fire Marshal have done extensive work in research and planning to be sure we will deliver the best product possible.

East Lyme's police force personnel needs to increase. Our citizens demand more services, enforcement and presence. Our independent police status has given us proper management, supervision, training enhancements, and a new level of professionalism and pride. But we are woefully short-handed as a result of being a Resident State Trooper town for so many years. Adding 2 police officers in this budget will bring our force closer to the recommended level. In addition, the police commission intends to enhance the supervision of the force by promoting the administrative sergeant to a Lieutenant position. This is an important improvement in supervision and gives the force additional coverage in our most active 24/7/365 department.

We have 2 fire trucks that have been on life support for a couple years. The Flanders truck is no longer operable. \$25-30k would be needed just to jump start the truck back to life. It's nearly a 30-year-old truck. Currently we are utilizing a loaner fire truck to ensure our department can meet the needs of our town. Niantic's 2<sup>nd</sup> engine is nearing the end of its useful life as well. Be assured that great care is taken in maintaining our fire trucks and equipment but a necessary cost of doing business for a town is proper fire protection. The town MUST provide safe and dependable equipment for our paid and volunteer firefighters to use. We will pursue replacing both engines; one in this capital budget and the other in a couple years. We will investigate and calculate the savings if we can get a better value buying 2 together (delivered a year apart).

Last year, we added overnight fire fighters 5 nights a week. For the first time in our town's history, we have fire and EMT coverage 24 hours a day. I credit East Lyme Ambulance for stepping up, acknowledging the need for change, and agreeing to help pay for the enhanced coverage. Dependence on volunteer firefighters to cover overnight and weekend shifts has become unpredictable and erratic across the country. The trends suggest that personnel in our two proud volunteer FF companies are dwindling. We have added hours in the fire departments to pay for part-timers that were once covered by volunteers. The evolution of paying more for fire coverage in East Lyme is inevitable. We must continue to plan for the future.

Informational Technology (IT) is obviously a growing area that we can no longer ignore. Absolutely every department is dependent on a robust and secure network, connectivity to outside programs and systems, and information storage. We have made it this long with individual departments handling their own IT issues and leaning on an outside contractor to come in and put band-aides on more complicated solutions. We do have a full-time IT person and she is great (Carmen Ames). She has been terrific being our "help desk" for everyday connectivity issues with computers and phones for 120 town employees. She also coordinates with our outside contractor (Star Computers) when they are needed.

But we desperately need more. We need a full-time position responsible and accountable to all our computer and telephony technology. When something goes down, we need someone on staff who can fix it. In this year's IT budget we are collecting the IT expenses from all town departments into this centralized budget. For too long, it has been spread throughout the budget. We think it will better demonstrate the full costs of IT in our town. From a management perspective, it was eye-opening to see the collective IT needs brought together.

Our town operates 24/7/365. We are obligated to be always 100% connected and functional. To be otherwise is to risk the lives of our citizens, our first responders, and public works team during an emergency. Unfortunately, technology doesn't break down only during daylight hours Monday thru Friday...yet our current contract covers only those hours. Inoperable technology is not an option in emergency operations. This year we are proposing a stepped approach to reach the final solution of a full-time director. We will upgrade our contract with the contractor to a 24/7/365 on-call contract and then we will explore options in the coming year to bring a full-timer on board. In addition, we will work with the Board of Education to discuss and discover some synergies and savings through shared services.

HEALTH: We have stabilized the cost of health insurance to our employees. By moving to the State's health plan a year ago, we eliminated the uncertainty and risk of being self-insured. It is estimated that the plan will call for a rate increase of 9% next year. Again, predictability is good for planning however there is no option for significant savings in this environment. Liability insurance, unemployment insurance and workman's comp all have flat budgets due to the town's improved performance in risk management.

SAMUEL SMITH: We must continue to invest in our town smartly. There are capital obligations this year that have been well thought out, well planned, and investigated from every angle. The Board of Selectmen were crystal clear when they authorized the purchase of the Samuel Smith House 10 years ago. We all agreed that the house was worthy of saving but it was agreed that the operation and capital improvements to the facility would be borne by the independent volunteers who pushed for the purchase and its preservation. This has not developed. In order to make this site the asset it should be for the town, I am proposing a capital budget that would match funds up to \$10,000 year for this, and the next 5 years. If we don't act at this point, I'm afraid someday it will be too late.

We will continue to invest in our 120 miles of town roadways. Joe Bragaw's road maintenance schedule was crafted to minimize long term costs to our taxpayers by extending the life of our roads. In addition, our plan for equipment continues to pay dividends by ensuring our equipment is in working condition when we need it. Our town is well-served by our outstanding Public Works Director and his deputy, Bill Scheer. In fact, the whole team continues to impress.

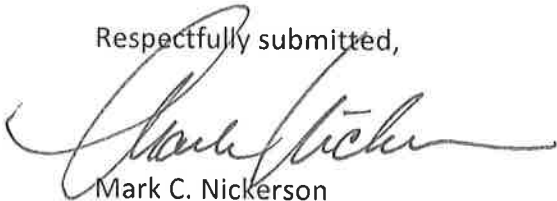
I need not remind you of the outstanding leadership we have throughout our town departments. We have Champions leading every departments and they, in turn have become mentors and excellent examples to their teams. Our citizens appreciate those who serve our town.

Lastly, Anna Johnson, our Finance Director puts 110% of her effort to the budget year in and year out. She is a leader among the leaders at town hall. I could not do the job I'm doing without her guidance and support. Her knowledge and expertise in all the town's functions is

incredible. There is significant value when someone with her talent works in a position long enough to understand the bigger picture and can guide others. I am very grateful for her service to our community.

In closing, the budget is one of the most important things the Board of Selectmen does in the course of the year. Reviewing each department's past successes and future plans is an important part of the management process; and I'm proud to say that we do it quite well. I encourage and welcome your participation. I encourage debate and discussion. Through this process we will best serve the citizens and taxpayers of this great town of East Lyme.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark C. Nickerson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark C. Nickerson  
First Selectman  
Town of East Lyme