

March 10 2020 AT 11:45 AM/PM SPECIAL MEETING OF MARCH 2, 2020

Wendy Wilson
 EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

MINUTES

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

EXCUSED: Paul Dagle

ALSO PRESENT: Anna Johnson, Cathy Wilson, John McCulloch, Chief John Dwire, Chief Bill Rix, Mary Smith, Barbara McGrath, Barbara Johnson Low, Gary Lakowsky, Benn Bullock, and Maggi Prokop

Mr. Nickerson called the Special Meeting for the purpose of Budget Reviews to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

#106 – Human Resources

Ms. Johnson spoke and explained that they are requesting an increase in funding to support the recent increase in hours from 20 to 30 hours per week; and they request that this position become a 37.5 hours position on January 1, 2021. She reported that already they are receiving very positive feedback from employees on the increase in office hours. She noted that line 096 Wellness is no longer funded since we switched insurance companies in July 2019; the new insurance carrier does not offer funds for wellness programs. Mrs. Hardy suggested that it might be an option to combine future wellness events with the BOE to pool resources. Mr. Nickerson stated that he supports increasing the hours for the HR Coordinator, and the other Board members concurred.

#418 – Commission on Aging

Mrs. Wilson presented the budget for the COA and noted that this budget is being presented at a 10% reduction from last year. She thanked the Board for their support of increasing the hours of the Senior Center Associate to 37.5 from 30; this has been very helpful and has made a positive difference in how the office functions. After cutting back on the Dial & Ride program in this year's budget they found that they have a little extra, so they are able to provide some extra transportation assistance to seniors in need. She anticipates that the vehicle, which was procured through the DOT grant, will be on the road by the fall. She stated that she is already working on the same grant for next year. She stated that they are moving into a new revolving system for programs, and that a new line item for program subsidy has been created to act as a cushion during the transition period; she anticipates that this line item will no longer be needed in the 23/23 fiscal year budget. Mrs. Hardy inquired as to solutions to the transportation issues; and Mrs. Wilson reported that she is actively working with Groton and Eastern CT Transportation Consortium (ECTC), as well as other communities, to explore regional solutions to the region's transportation needs. Mr. Nickerson stated that in Stonington they have eliminated the SEAT bus routes and moved over to a ride share program, and that this might be an option also.

#110 – Registrars

Mary Smith and Barbara McGrath were in attendance to speak on this budget. Ms. McGrath stated that this year is an election year, and election years are the most expensive. Along with the election, we can also expect two primary election days in August. For the current year, we still have two primaries in April, as well as the budget referendum in May. The biggest challenge is that it's very hard to estimate total costs, so they are prepared for all situations, such as the expense of a recount and/or audit. There is also an increased cost for adding a third polling place, which will be Niantic Center School.

#103 – Tax Collector

Mr. McCulloch, Tax Collector, presented the budget and it was discussed that the tax bills are currently done manually, and the increase in this budget is to allow for that process to be outsourced. Currently it takes the Tax Collector's office staff two full weeks to print, prepare and mail the tax bills. Outsourcing this process will free up staff for daily activities and save money over time.

#104 – Building

Mr. Steve Way, Building Official, presented this budget and stated that this budget is driven by the number of projects. Currently there are a lot of projects. He is requesting another part-time assistant to supplement his team; currently he has one part-time assistant who works two days per week, so the new assistant would work the off days. He also noted that two part-time assistants save money in expenses, salary and benefits over having one full time person. He is also proposing about a 30% increase in fees, which will bring East Lyme in line with surrounding towns, and still lower than some.

#134 – Brookside Farm Museum

Gary Lakowsky and Maggi Prokop spoke on this budget and reported that the house needs a lot of work. Priority is the back porch, which needs to be completely torn down and rebuilt. He stated that they will be replacing it with a porch that is fully ADA compliant. He also noted that the roof replacement is on the Capital project list.

#139 – Historic Properties

Barbara Johnson Low and Benn Bullock were in attendance to speak on this budget. She stated that as per the Board's request during last year's budget process, they are pursuing other revenue opportunities, including grants which require guaranteed funds match from the Town so they will be back as the grant process evolves. The house will require some work this year, and Mr. Nickerson supports their budget request of \$9,000 for #222 Building Maintenance, and the \$10,000 match for the grants in CIP. She reported that she is working with Joe Bragaw to get assistance from Public Works in maintaining the walking paths, utilizing Town resources. She reported that they will be holding another free public scanning event for residents to bring in their personal items to be photographed, scanned and documented into the East Lyme history books.

Capital / CIP

Ms. Johnson and Mr. Nickerson reviewed the Capital and CIP items for 2020/2021. Niantic Fire Department Chief John Dwire and Flanders Fire Department Chief Bill Rix were in attendance to discuss the requested upgrade to both fire departments radio equipment. They explained that once the up-to-date radio equipment is purchased, the only recurring cost would be battery replacement every 5-7 years. It is necessary to upgrade these radios as they do not have the technology to communicate with new equipment, which most area towns already have; this equipment cannot be modified to work with newer technology. These new radios will also allow our emergency personnel to interact with State emergency personnel. Chief Rix reported that they have a tanker truck on the list that needs to be replaced; it is currently out of service and will cost more to fix it than its worth.

#115 – Services to Community

Ms. Johnson reported that this budget is pretty much status quo except for increasing the EL Cemeteries line item by \$1,000 to give them \$2,500 total; and add \$250 the EL Historical Society line to bring that up to \$2,500.

#120 – Contingency

Ms. Johnson stated that a line item for Public Safety Building has been added because it is unsure when the building will be ready for them to move in, and the cost of maintaining the building is yet to be determined.

#522/523 – Debt Service

Ms. Johnson briefly reviewed these line items and explained the staggered payment plan.

MOTION (1)

Mr. Seery MOVED to adjourn the March 2, 2020 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectman at 8:50 p.m.
Seconded by Mr. Salerno. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sandra Anderson
Recording Secretary