

**EAST LYME BOARD OF FINANCE  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, APRIL 8th, 2020  
Via Zoom Meetings**

Members in Attendance: Camille Alberti, Chairperson  
Ann Cicchiello, Vice-Chairperson  
John Birmingham  
Peter DeRosa  
Anne Santoro  
Richard Steel

FILED

Apr 13 2020 AT 1:10 AM/PM  
Karen Mellem  
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Also In Attendance: Mark Nickerson, First Selectman  
William Scheer, Deputy Public Works Director  
Jeff Newton, Superintendent of Schools  
Maryanna Sevens, BOE Finance Director  
Tim Hagen, BOE Member  
Anna Johnson, Finance Director

Absent: No One

**A. Call Meeting to Order**

Ms. Alberti called this Special Meeting of the East Lyme Board of Finance to order at 7:11 PM once everyone was in attendance via Zoom. She welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting and introduced herself and all of the Board members as well as the Recording Secretary and all others in attendance.

She said that the purpose of the meeting this evening was to have a discussion to discuss a revised schedule and process for the FY2020/2021 budget. Before that, reports on the state of the Town, budget and challenges would be given by Mr. Nickerson, Mr. Newton and herself.

**B. Reports**

**a. Board of Finance – Camille Alberti, Chairperson**

Ms. Alberti said that she would first like to take a moment to thank Mr. Scheer who has been the 'enabler' for the Town in establishing the Zoom platform that they will be using in lieu of public meetings while under the restrictions of social distancing.

She continued that when they first received the General Government and Board of Education budget that she was concerned about the proposed increases as she believed that they would enter a new recession before fully recovering from the Great Recession of 2007-2009. She does not think that anyone was prepared for the economic downturn that the Covid-19 pandemic would bring. She said that she is grateful that the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education are revisiting their original budgets and considering adjustments before presenting them to us. It is a significant change from the way the budget process has worked in the past.

By postponing the budget presentations and deliberations to may we will be in a better position to assess the impact of the Covid-19 event on our local economy. For the record, she said that while she understands and appreciates the Governor's intent to ensure public safety during this Covid-19 event by not having public meetings that she does not necessarily agree with his Executive Order to bypass a voter referendum. With this in mind, she said that she promises that they will do their best to adopt the most responsible budget possible given the uncertainty of the economic fallout and in return she asks that the residents of the Town of East Lyme believe in the Board's commitment to not abuse the power that has been bestowed them.

**b. First Selectman – Mark Nickerson**

Mr. Nickerson said that the world now is very different. He reported that Town Hall has been closed for weeks; and items are picked up at various intervals as they are trying to keep things going. The Governor has implemented many executive orders and they have been charged with enacting them. He said that he has weekly meetings via phone with the department heads. They are trying to keep the recreational areas open but are also watching to see what the Governor does – if he closes Rocky Neck then they will have to close the local areas also. He has been dealing with UPSEU, the largest bargaining unit in the Town and they have negotiated an MOA saying that they wish not to furlough or have to lay off – so some people are working some of their time and they are making up the difference with their own PTO time so it is a trade off and they are meeting halfway as some have quite a bit of PTO that they can use. The summer events are on hold at this time.

**c. Board of Education – Jeffrey Newton, Superintendent; Tim Hagen, BOE; Maryanna Stevens, Finance Director**

Mr. Newton said that he hopes that everyone is safe and noted that they are taking a very cautious approach. He reported that they have 293 devices (technology budget) deployed out to the community and have covered 30 families with internet service for in-home classes. They hope to get all of the devices back and in working order as they are items that they regularly use in the classrooms. They are using the Google Classroom platform which has been very helpful. It also comes with training for the teachers. Under SPED, 425 students need intervention services and he said that they are concerned with how long this event lasts due to these services that need to be provided. Under Executive Order 7R they are obligated to pay everyone and they are working to have the services working. Busing was also a part of the Executive Order so they also need to be paid (First Student). Ms. Stevens is trying to negotiate with them regarding what they pay as it does not seem that they should be paying for buses that are just sitting there idle. He also noted that they froze their budget just before the Covid-19 event. They are currently working on the budget as they realize that 4.98% is high. They are actively re-working it at this time.

Ms. Cicchiello asked if they had any savings that they will realize because the schools are closed.

Mr. Newton said that the only savings seems to be around the transportation issue.

Ms. Cicchiello said that she was thinking about the schools being closed and that they would save on heating and electricity.

Mr. Newton said that it has not been that cold this season and that they still have the custodians working.

Ms. Stevens said that they may have some savings on natural gas; she would see when the billing arrives.

Ms. Santoro asked if the BOE was going to revise their budget document.

Mr. Newton said yes.

Ms. Santoro noted that the schedule stated as of May 4<sup>th</sup> – with the presentation on May 7<sup>th</sup> – she asked if they could do the revisions earlier than the 4<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Hagen said that they are scheduling additional BOE meetings for April 21 and April 27 as they felt that it was very important to have those board meetings due to the tough discussions. Those meetings will also be public and could be tracked that way. The other game plan is that Maryanna will not redo the entire packet; she will red-line any changes or modifications.

**C. New Business**

**a. Discuss 2020/21 Modified Budget Process**

Ms. Alberti noted the new budget schedule process that they had saying that it is sort of a blessing in disguise as they would have a better idea of the impacts on our local economy. This would provide them with more information to make better decisions. However; it would not change the date that they would set the mil rate. She went over the schedule noting that they would have a Saturday (5/9) marathon for budget presentations some of which would be presented by Ms. Johnson and Mr. Nickerson. (She added that she would work out a time schedule with Ms. Johnson for those department heads who would be presenting so that they could join in at that time) The public would be able to dial in during the meetings. On 5/13 they would deliberate on the budget to be presented to the public on 5/18. The revised budget would be put on the website and an email would be set up for the purpose of receiving comments which they would discuss during deliberations. 5/27 they would set the mil rate. She called for discussion on the schedule.

Ms. Santoro said that she had some concerns and suggestions. She noted the Governor's orders and also having to adhere to the Town Charter. She suggested that the 5/9 Saturday budget presentation day be

divided into two (2) sessions – on 5/9 they could meet from 9 AM to 1 PM and then on 5/11 – Monday evening they could also meet to finish the presentations. She also suggested that they meet starting at 6:30 PM rather than 6 PM and would like the entire revised chart posted for the public to see.

Ms. Alberti asked for comments from the rest of the Board –

Mr. Birmingham said that he would not be opposed to the presentations over two (2) days instead of just one day.

Mr. DeRosa said that his work load has increased greatly with this so he just needs to know in advance when as he could go either way – he just needs to know so that he can adjust his schedule for it.

Mr. Steel said that he could go either way also although the one day may be a struggle.

Ms. Cicchiello said that she thinks that 6:30 PM is a good time to start the meetings rather than 6 PM. She also said that she was the one who suggested the all day event for the presentations however; splitting them up may be better as it would give them some time to digest what they have heard.

Ms. Alberti said that she would change the start times to 6:30 PM – noting that 6 PM was suggested due to the condensed schedule. She said that while she also prefers the all day Saturday that as the majority wants to split it up – that is also okay with her. Saturday 5/9 would be from 9 AM – 1 PM (approx.) and Monday 5/11 would have a 6:30 PM start time.

Ms. Cicchiello asked about the public dial-in.

Ms. Alberti said that people could dial in or they could also sign on and listen and see the webinar. Meetings will be recorded and published on the website and minutes will be done and also posted on the website. The public would also be able to comment on the website so those comments could be reviewed over a period of time.

Ms. Cicchiello asked if they could chat live during the meetings.

Ms. Alberti said that she would say no as generally there is no back and forth discussion during meetings.

Mr. Steel asked Mr. Nickerson if he would be presenting a revised Town side of the budget.

Mr. Nickerson said yes.

Ms. Alberti noted that the budget posted on the website would have two (2) new columns – the original/amended and BOF proposed.

Ms. Santoro asked Ms. Johnson when she would receive the figures from the State.

Ms. Johnson said that she has reached out to her contact and was informed that it is what they were told however it could be up in the air at this point.

Ms. Santoro asked Ms. Johnson if she would update the tax revenue figures – to see if those numbers may change.

Mr. Nickerson said that they would have those numbers later. He added that they are also expecting some Federal dollar reimbursement to make the State whole which would hopefully make us whole also. He added that they are in conferences with FEMA on this also and have been keeping a list for that potential reimbursement.

Ms. Cicchiello asked if taxes would still be due in July or if they would be pushed out.

Mr. Nickerson said that there have been options – to push them out for three (3) months to October but there is also the escrow issue which remains on the July time frame. They could also use July but let them be paid up to three (3) months late with a minor rate but if they were not paid during that time they would retro back to the full interest due.

Mr. Birmingham asked if they were to push out payment for 90 days if the Town would have enough cash to pay the bills.

Mr. Nickerson said that the Executive Order says that escrow has to be paid July 1 so that is around 40% to 50% of the tax dollars.

Ms. Johnson noted that the 90 days is not automatic – it is for hardship cases only which would also have to be proven.

Ms. Alberti said that she would get the revised schedule out to everyone.

**D. Adjournment**

Ms. Alberti called for a motion to adjourn.

**\*\*MOTION (1)**

Ms. Santoro moved to adjourn this Special Meeting of the East Lyme Board of Finance at 8:10 PM.

Ms. Cicchiello seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Zmitruk,  
Recording Secretary