

EAST LYME BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING OF FEBRUARY 8, 2021
MINUTES

This meeting was held via Zoom online meeting services and was available for the public to view, listen and participate via videoconference and dial-in options.

This meeting, in its entirety, is available to view by visiting the East Lyme Town Hall webpage.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Finance Director Anna Johnson, Public Works Director Joe Bragaw, Town Engineer Victor Benni, Tax Assessor Diane Vitagliano, and Parks & Recreation Director Dave Putnam

Mr. Nickerson called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. 2020 Grand List

Diane Vitagliano, Tax Assessor, presented an overview of the final 2020 Grand List for the town and reported an increase of 2.14%. She stated that motor vehicle taxes are up 7.76% and personal property is up 14.36%. She reported that the Town is doing well, and it is great to see all of the investment into our community.

3. Budget Review

421 Parks & Recreation – Mr. Putnam spoke on this budget and started by introducing the Commission’s recently elected Chairman, Tom Beebe. Mr. Putnam reported that Carol Rossiter, Program Coordinator, will be retiring at the end of June after 49 years with the Town, and he stated that he and the Commission are recommending that the department be restructured at this time. Mr. Putnam is suggesting that they eliminate one program coordinator position and create a new position in its place entitled Assistant Director. Currently one coordinator oversees all of the general programming and the other one concentrates on youth services and special events. Mr. Putnam stated that the Assistant Director would create and oversee the budget, parks and special events, and the program coordinator would oversee all programming. He stated that the First Selectman is not supportive of these changes, so it was decided to present the budget without the proposed restructuring. Mr. Nickerson stated that Mike McDowell has done a great job in his role as Program Coordinator, but he just does not support the creation of an elevated position. He does not think this is necessary, and it would also require other changes that cannot be made at this time. Mr. Nickerson wanted this presented to the rest of the Board for everyone to weigh in, and none of the other Selectmen had any questions or comments. Mr. Nickerson stated that they are adding a full-time maintainer and reminded everyone that one maintainer was cut from the budget last year so now it is restored to four full-time maintainers; this position will be filled January 2022. There will also be a reduction of one seasonal maintainer. Mr. Dagle inquired if there are any other Assistant Directors within the Town; there is a Deputy Director of Public Works. The Library is a separate entity, but there is an Assistant Director. The fire departments are also structured with an Assistant Chief, but they are not Town employees. Mr. Nickerson reported that overall, the budget presented is a 0.90% decrease from last year. Mr. Seery stated that this department has taken on much more responsibility, and Mr. Putnam provided a list which is attached hereto as Exhibit 1. Ms. Johnson stated that the UPSEU union contract is currently under review

FILED

Feb 22 2021 AT 8:40 AM/PM
Karen Thelin
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

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so the payroll is in the Contingency account until the contract is resolved, at which time the monies will transfer into the respective departmental payroll accounts within this budget. Ms. Hardy inquired as to why account 317 Uniforms is double from last year, and Mr. Putnam stated that he had carried the money in the wrong account, so this is a housekeeping matter and is now correct, but it has not really increased. Mr. Cunningham noted that the revenue account for athletic field lighting is down, and Mr. Putnam stated that this is because usage is down. Ms. Hardy inquired about the increase in line 201 Telephone/Cable/Internet, and Mr. Putnam stated that he will take a closer look at this account and get back to the Board. Mr. Putnam reported that they increased the non-resident fees for beach passes to keep up with the increase in the minimum wage over the next year. Mr. Nickerson reported that at the next Board of Selectmen meeting they will begin discussing Parks and Recreation's request to take over the park at Darrows Pond, which will be a nice addition to the Town's park system; stay tuned for more discussion on that.

317 Public Works / Highway / Sanitation – Mr. Bragaw stated that with union employee salaries factored in, this proposed budget is showing an approximate 0.1% increase; the budget currently shows a 0.47% decrease but that is because the salaries are still sitting in contingency. The salary line is showing a 2.49% increase, and Mr. Bragaw reminded the Board that last year his 24th employee position was reduced back to a quarter of the year, so he needs to get the budget back on track to show this person as a full-time employee for the full fiscal year of 2021/2022. Mr. Bragaw reported that under 210 Services, 295 SCRRRA Tipping Fees has gone down because they changed the way this account is handled, and it is now directly billed instead of subsidized. For 239 Tree Maintenance, Mr. Bragaw noted that although \$50,000 seems like a large amount, he will need the full \$50,000 to continue keeping up with the tree work. He stated that he has been working very closely with Eversource and they have been doing an outstanding job of taking down trees that they are responsible for, but he will need to continue to work closely with them so that the work does not get behind as it was. Mr. Bragaw noted a large reduction in 310 Fuels line item 221 Fleet Fuel, and he stated that this is due to his locking in the fuel contracts back when the fuel prices were much lower; he noted that this has benefited budgets in Board of Education and the fire departments as well. Mr. Bragaw stated that we are in year six of seven in the process of paying off the new LED streetlights. After year seven, this line item will drop to about \$45,000; currently \$145,000 of the \$212,000 budgeted is a payment which goes away after year seven. Regarding tipping fees, he stated that the trend seems to be that residential trash pickup is going up and commercial pickup is going down. He noted that a lot of businesses in town have been getting rid of their dumpsters and purchasing town supplied cans for their waste, so you will see that the number of cans out on the street downtown on pickup day has increased substantially. Ms. Hardy stated that she would like Mr. Bragaw to look into whether or not we should be collecting trash from commercial businesses as she believes that the ordinance specifies that commercial businesses were not eligible for municipal trash collection; Mr. Bragaw is going to investigate this. He noted that businesses have historically made the choice as to whether they purchase cans for municipal pickup, go to the transfer station directly with their refuse, or they contract with a trash company directly for a dumpster. He noted that they have recently discontinued cardboard pickup at businesses, which is something that the town offered for many years previously. Mr. Nickerson inquired as to what other municipalities do, and Mr. Bragaw stated that only New London and Waterford operate similar to us in that they provide municipal trash pick; the other towns use contractors. He stated that both New London and Waterford also give the commercial businesses the choice of how to dispose of their refuse. Due to increases in fees over the past couple of years at the transfer station, revenues have increased substantially. He noted that they have stopped accepting cash at the transfer station and that process has proven to be much more efficient.

Mr. Nickerson stated that regarding the UPSEU contract, he is currently in communication with the union and they are considering an extension of the current contract for one year because of the current climate of the pandemic. He will continue those talks and bring more information to a future meeting.

Mr. Dagle inquired as to the \$250 difference in the line item 317 Uniform Allowance, and Mr. Bragaw stated that this occurred because a new employee did not complete the probation period but had already been provided the uniform allowance. They had a second person come on board to fill that vacancy, and again needed to provide the \$250 allowance hence the overage. Regarding roadwork, Mr. Dagle stated that only 31% of this budget has been expended to date and inquired if the scheduled work will be completed for the fiscal year. Mr. Bragaw assured Mr. Dagle that they are right on schedule and have the bulk of the scheduled work coming up in the spring. Mr. Dagle commended Mr. Bragaw on having the foresight to lock in the fuel prices when they were at such a low rate.

105 Engineering – Mr. Bragaw explained that this budget is basic, with the increase coming from contractual salary increases.

113 Building Maintenance – Mr. Bragaw stated that this proposed budget is showing an increase of 10.85% because of the new public safety building coming online, as well as the need for better coverage at all of the existing buildings. This proposal involves hiring one additional full-time custodian to work exclusively at the new public safety building. Mr. Nickerson stated that building maintenance is something that we have discussed a lot in the past year or two, and everyone agrees that keeping up with the maintenance is imperative, especially moving into a new building. It was discussed that the expenses tied to the new public safety building are an estimate and may need to be adjusted as we go.

115 Services to Community – Mr. Nickerson stated that all of the funds that were cut from this department last year have been restored for the 21/22 fiscal year, and one additional line item has been added to support the SECT Cultural Coalition.

101 First Selectman – Mr. Nickerson stated that the only increase in this budget is for salary.

114 General Government Misc & Benefits – Mr. Nickerson stated that this budget has a 3.81% increase. Ms. Johnson reported that they will continue to watch and there may be opportunity to make reductions, especially in healthcare which she will watch closely. She noted that there will be negotiations with all union groups in the upcoming year. She noted that legal fees have increased, primarily due to the newly created Police Accountability law that went into effect in 2020.

MOTION (1)

Mr. Seery MOVED to adjourn the February 8, 2021, regular meeting of the East Lyme Board of Selectmen at 7:39 p.m.

Seconded by Mr. Cunningham. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted By:



Sandra Anderson
Recording Secretary

EXHIBIT 1

East Lyme Parks and Recreation Department Parks/Amenities/Maintenance Responsibilities

PARKS

McCook Point Park (21.32 Acres)

8-10 Atlantic Street, Niantic

Amenities:

- Band Shell
- Pavilion
- Tent (Seasonal)
- Walking Path
- Restrooms (2)
- Playgrounds (3)
- Beach (Seasonal Lifeguards and Gate Attendants)
- Garden Areas
- Book Exchanges (2)
- Bocce Court
- Picnic Areas/Tables
- Gatehouse
- Parking Lot (210 spaces)

Hole in the Wall (1.83 Acres)

4 Baptist Lane, Niantic

Amenities:

- Storm Water classroom
- Restroom (1)
- Bike Repair Station
- Book Exchange (1)
- Garden Areas
- Beach (Seasonal Lifeguards and Gate Attendants)
- Walking Path
- Boardwalk Entrance
- Gate House
- Parking Lot (85 spaces)

Cini Memorial Park (2.57 Acres)

22 Main Street, Niantic

Amenities:

- Fishing Pier
- Canoe/Kayak Launch (Niantic River)
- Picnic Areas/Tables

EXHIBIT 1

- Restroom (1)
- Volleyball Courts (2)
- Beach (Seasonal Lifeguards and Gate Attendants)
- Boardwalk Entrance
- Gate House
- Parking Lot (167 spaces)

Niantic Bay Boardwalk (1.1 Miles long)

Main Street, Niantic

Amenities:

- Concrete Walkway
- Benches (200)
- Plaques
- Informational signage

Veterans Memorial Park: (8.5 Acres)

10 Memorial Park Road, Niantic

Amenities:

- Regulation Baseball Field (90' bases)
- Softball Field (lighted)
- Press Boxes (2)
- Concession Stands (2)
- Batting Cages (2)
- Restroom Building (1)
- Trailhead for Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve
- Overflow Parking along Memorial Drive
- Parking Lot (92 spaces)

Smith-Harris Park: (10 Acres)

31 Society Road, Niantic

Amenities:

- Little League Baseball Fields (4, 1 lighted)
- Youth Football Field (lighted)
- Multi-Purpose Field (Soccer and Football)
- Storage Building/Concessions/Restrooms (2)
- Batting Cages (2)

EXHIBIT 1

Samuel Peretz Park @ Bridebrook: (23 Acres)

221 West Main Street, Niantic

Amenities:

- Regulation Baseball Field (90' bases)
- 2 Softball Fields (1 lighted)
- 3 Multi-purpose Fields (Lacrosse and Soccer 1 lighted)
- 2 Basketball Courts (lighted)
- 3 Pickle Ball Courts (lighted)
- .8 Mile Walking Path
- Pavilion
- Playground
- Restroom/Maintenance Building (1)
- Throw/Kick Wall
- Parking Lot (194 spaces)

Liberty Green (.26 Acres)

231 Main Street, Niantic

Amenities:

- Gazebo
- War Memorials (2)
- Commemorative Pavers
- Public Announcement Banner Poles

Park on Penn and Main (.36 Acres)

224 Main Street, Niantic

Amenities:

- Commemorative Bricks
- Benches
- Gardens

EXHIBIT 1

OPEN SPACE AREAS

Roxbury Road (25.51 Acres)

Roxbury Road, Niantic

Amenities:

- Open Space (Parks and Recreation Maintenance mows open field area 2-3 times per year).

Darrow Pond (300 Acres)

16 Mostowy Road, East Lyme

Amenities:

- Hiking Trails (Goodwin Trail)
- Picnic Tables
- Kiosk
- Parking Lot (10 spaces)

Historic Houses/Grounds (Grounds Maintenance)

Brookside Farm (4 Acres)

Society Road, Niantic

- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.

Samuel Smith House (10.09 Acres)

82 Plants Dam Road, East Lyme

- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.

Bridebrook Wedding Rock (.03 Acres)

West Main, Niantic

- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.

EXHIBIT 1

Town Owned Properties

Rotary Park:

Main Street, Niantic

Amenities:

- Rotary Clock
- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.

East Lyme Police Department (.68 Acres)

278 Main Street, Niantic

- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.

Community Parking Lot Methodist Street (.41 Acres)

Main Street and Methodist Streets, Niantic

- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.

Community Parking Lot Hope Street (1.0 Acre)

11 Hope Street, Niantic, CT

- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.

Niantic Fire Department Station 2 (.92 Acres)

227 West Main Street, Niantic

- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.

Field Services Building (3.84 Acres)

8 Capitol Drive, East Lyme

- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.

East Lyme Library and Community Center (10.78 Acres)

33-45 Society Road, Niantic

- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.

Town Hall (3.03 Acres)

108 Pennsylvania Avenue, Niantic

Amenities:

- Seebeck Picnic Pavilion
- Electronic Message Board
- Gardens
- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.

Public Safety Complex (17.05 Acres)

277 West Main Street

- Parks and Recreation Maintenance Crew cuts and trims all grass areas.