

**EAST LYME BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES (Zoom)
FY 2021-2022 PROPOSED BUDGET
Monday, APRIL 26th, 2021**

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

FILED

May 3 2021 AT 11:00 AM/PM

EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Also In Attendance: Mark Nickerson, First Selectman
Anna Johnson, Finance Director
Jeffrey Newton, Superintendent of Schools
Tim Hagen, Chairman, Board of Ed
Amy Drowne, Kim Davis - School Staff

Absent: No One

A. Call Public Hearing to Order

Chairperson Alberti called this Public Hearing (by Zoom) on the FY 2021-2022 Proposed Budget of the East Lyme Board of Finance to order at 7:01 PM.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge was observed.

Ms. Alberti welcomed everyone, and said that they would first hear from the First Selectman, Mark Nickerson then from the Board of Education Chairman, Tim Hagen and Superintendent of Schools, Jeffrey Newton. After that she would present the highlights of the budget.

C. Comments by First Selectman

Mark Nickerson, First Selectman said that for the second year in a row what would be a routine budget season has been disrupted. He said that he asked for extra effort and patience from everyone in doing the budget and everyone came forward with their best. They all came forward even though Connecticut has never really recovered from the recession. We constantly ask everyone to do more with less as we have not recovered from the recession; but only about 25 cents of every dollar goes to the Town government portion; the rest goes to the BOE (schools) and capital and debt service. He noted that there would be some changes with the Annual Town Meeting due to the Governor's orders expiring on May 20, 2021. The Annual Town Meeting will be held on Monday May 3, 2021 at the High School Auditorium commencing at 7 PM. It will also be broadcast and available through Zoom. They will vote on two (2) items there – a \$144,000 NSEP grant for radios for first responders and the Capital budget. The Referendum will also be moved up to Wednesday May 19, 2021 one day before the Governor's Executive Orders expire. Voting will be at the East Lyme Community Center and all who can are encouraged to vote in person. Absentee ballots will be available on May 5 and those wishing to obtain one are encouraged to pick them up in person. He thanked everyone for their patience throughout all of the disruptions during this process.

D. Comments by Board of Education Chairman

Tim Hagen, BOE Chairman thanked the Board of Finance for their engagement in reviewing the BOE budget last week and for being a part of the process. It was a thoughtful and productive deliberations evening. He thanked the entire community for stepping up during this very difficult year in responding to a crisis. He especially thanked them for the support in technology as they could not have done this without it. He said that the students are back in school now five days per week and they are entering the recovery phase –

assessing what they need to address with the kids and acknowledging what was lost with the lack of a classroom situation.

Jeff Newton, Superintendent of Schools thanked Ms. Alberti and the Boards of Finance and Selectmen for the support with technology and putting devices in the hands of every one of the students. He said that they will not be put on a shelf now but will continue to be used. He said that they are ready to turn the page on Covid and move on. This next year is the recovery year and they have some means to hire some additional staff. He thanked everyone for all of their help.

E. Board of Finance Presentation of Proposed Budget for FY 2021-2022

Ms. Alberti posted her PowerPoint presentation for all to see regarding the budget process and final proposal. (See Attachment) She noted that all meetings had been by Zoom and that they will soon be moving away from Zoom to hybrid then in person again. She said that the proposed budget would be necessitating an estimated .15 mil increase. She noted that when any of the capital items come up that they still have to go through the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Town Meeting for approval. She explained the additional services (Page 5) noting that while the police would like two new officers each year for the next six years that they felt that this year they should proceed slow and steady with the one. They approved increased funds for more hours for the PT building officials to be able to alleviate and expedite some of the applications. They approved some funding for a PT Resource to assist the wetlands officer due to a new regulation change. And – the increased funding for the BOE would support social workers and professionals along with teachers to evaluate the setbacks from the past year due to Covid. In this funding are also funds from Esser and the Am Rescue dollars. She lastly explained the potential effects upon the taxes based on the estimated mil rate increase if approved at referendum.

F. Public Discussion

Ms. Alberti called for public comments and asked that speakers state their name and address for the record.

Mark Powers, 4 Round Rock Road said that he serves as a member of the East Lyme Police Commission. He noted that they had decided to add one police officer and thanked them for that but urged that they go back to the strategic plan of two officer per year for each of the next six years for a total of 12 officers. He said that he thinks that it is unacceptable of them to be near the bottom in any comparisons and that they need to adhere to the strategic plan that the police commission spent hours on. He said that perhaps the influx of dollars could be used for some of this.

Gary Lakowsky, 12 Methodist Street said that he is the Chair of Brookside Farm and that he watched the meeting on the budget and saw that the curator budget line was discussed, He said that they misunderstood that it could be cut as that was for this year and not for January so he wants the \$3000+ restored as they need all of it.

Steve Larcen, 43 Oswegatchie Hills Rd. congratulated them on what they have done and said that he has 'been there and done that' with respect to the budget and thinks the outcome is admirable. He said that he had three items that he would like answers to – the first is using the \$800,000 and what did you use in this current year; second – how much of that amount will you use and three – how much would be left in reserves after that.

Dan Price, 205 Upper Pattagansett said that he is the Chair of the East Lyme Police Commission and thanked them for going through the process. He said that he wants them to revisit and reconsider adding the second officer back to the budget. He said that they considered all of this very slowly and deliberately. And - they could use the extra PILOT funds for the officer.

Paul Dagle, 5 Riverhead Lane thanked the Board for their work to date. He asked that they reconsider the second officer and listen to the advice that they got from the professionals. He asked what the cost would be in the mil rate for the second officer. He also asked what the rate would be if the budgets that the BOS passed had not been cut.

Steve Larcen, 43 Oswegatchie Hills Rd. asked about the \$680,000 figure for capital expenditures and why the detail spending did not reconcile with it – the detail is higher.

Dan Cunningham, 3 Regatta Drive thanked them for their hard work and said that he was speaking to ask that they reconsider not reducing the police officer request. He suggested that culture change would begin with this.

Ms. Alberti thanked everyone for their comments.

G. Board Comments

Ms. Alberti said that she would address some of the questions that Mr. Larcen had asked – she said that we are using \$900,000 of reserve for this current year. Ms. Johnson provides a monthly report on how that is going and they have two months left to this year and it looks like we could return \$300,000 of the \$900,000 that we pulled to support the budget. She said that she is not sure where he got the \$800,000 from as they are looking to use \$900,000 again this year for the budget. There are also revenue sources that are coming very late that will hopefully allow for adjustments. ECS came in lower, and the two PILOTS are being eliminated in favor of a re-structured and new tiered PILOT fund that will allow us more funds. This could potentially reduce the \$900,000 to \$400,000.

Also, had they approved the budget in full it would have necessitated a .57 mil increase.

Ms. Santoro said that she had thought that it was a .06 mil rate difference with the second officer.

Ms. Cicchiello thanked everyone who helped them put this budget together this year and the many hours that everyone involved spent on it. She said that it is not an easy task and not everyone is happy. The budget is a collaborative budget to try to do the best for all of East Lyme at this time. The two basic purposes are to provide services to the taxpayers at a reasonable cost so that the taxes are reasonable. They worked hard to keep the increase to a minimum at .15 mils and she asked that they support the budget at referendum on May 19, 2021 by voting yes.

Ms. Santoro thanked everyone involved in this lengthy and detailed process. She thanked the public for their comments. For the public benefit she said that she would highlight the reductions – the Town side was reduced by \$202,913 and the BOE side was reduced by \$162,000 plus their own adjustment of \$431,916 (Esser funds). She said that they carefully arrived at the BOE reduction – they felt that one math coach should be added rather than three.

Mr. Birmingham said that it was a long and challenging year compounded by the Covid crises. While not everyone is happy with some of the cuts; they have probably heard that there could be more dollars coming and perhaps some of the subtractions mentioned could be paid for by other dollars that they do not know about yet or know how those dollars could be used or on what. They still have two months to go.

H. Adjournment

Ms. Alberti called for a motion to close the Public Hearing.

****MOTION (1)**

Ms. Cicchiello moved to close this Public Hearing of the Board of Finance on the proposed FY 2021-2022 Budget at 8:06 PM.

Ms. Santoro seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Ms. Alberti said that they would take a brief break and then commence their Special Meeting after that.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Zmitruk,
Recording Secretary



East Lyme Board of Finance

Public Hearing on Town Budget
Presentation
April 26, 2021
Camille Alberti
Board of Finance Chair

Attachment 1207 Public Hearing 4/26/2021

Board of Finance Members

- Camille Alberti, Chair
- Ann Cicchiello, Vice Chair
- John Birmingham
- Peter Derosa
- Anne Santoro
- Richard Steel

Summary of Budget Process FY 2021–2022

COVID–19 Pandemic Continues to Impact Municipal Budgeting Process

- 3/10/21: BOF Receives Town Budget
Increase of 3.41% from FY 2020–2021
- 4/8/21: BOE Presents Budget to BOF Identifying Possible
Additional Savings of \$431,916 due to ESSER Grants
- 4/12–4/19/21: GG & Capital Budget Presentations to the BOF
- 4/21/21: Budget Deliberations
BOF Adopts Budget of \$77,994,780
Overall Budget Increase of 2.37%
Estimated .15 mil increase
- 5/3/21: Annual Budget Meeting – Hybrid
(Option to attend in-person or via Zoom)
- 5/19/21: Town Referendum on the Budget
- 5/26/21: BOF Special Meeting to Set Mil Rate

Major Budgeted Capital Projects / Acquisitions FY 2021-2022

- ▶ Board of Education:
 - Continuation of Technology Upgrades \$500,000
 - ELHS and ELMS Roof Life Extensions \$435,000
 - ELHS and ELMS HVAC Upgrades \$350,000

- ▶ Public Works:
 - Town Road/Infrastructure \$850,000
 - Trash Truck & Dump Truck \$429,500

- ▶ Niantic Fire Department:
 - New Engine Truck \$680,000

Additional Services FY 2021-2022

▶ East Lyme Police Department

- One Additional Police Officer

Brings to 26.5 FTE's

▶ Building Department:

- Increased Hours for Part-Time Building Officials

(to be able to alleviate & expedite some applications)

▶ Inland/Wetlands Review:

- New Part-Time Resource to Assist Wetlands Officer

(helps with new reg.)

▶ Board of Education:

- Increased Human Resources such as Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Math Coaches and Social/Emotional Professionals

(also use of ESSER - Am Rescue \$'s)

Board of Finance Proposed Budget Compared to Prior Years

Expenditures	Approved 2020-2021	BOF Proposed 2021-2022	\$ Increase (Decrease)	% Increase Decrease
Total General Government	\$ 18,851,718	\$ 19,381,210	\$ 529,492	2.81%
Education	50,873,071	52,209,464	1,336,393	2.63%
Debt Service	5,817,505	5,720,993	(96,512)	-1.66%
Capital Outlay / Equipment	648,779	683,113	34,334	5.29%
Total Expenditures	\$ 76,191,073	\$ 77,994,780	\$1,803,707	2.37%
Mil Rate*	28.36	28.51	0.15	0.53%
* Note: Mil Rate for 2021-2022 is Estimated; Final Rate to be Set at Special Meeting of Board of Finance on 5/26/21.				

Scenarios for Mil Rate Increase



Home assessed at \$250,000
Estimated Taxes for FY 21/22 \$ 7,128
Taxes Paid in FY 20/21 \$ 7,090
YOY Increase \$ 38*

* \$3.13/mo



Home assessed at \$350,000
Estimated Taxes for FY 21/22 \$ 9,979
Taxes Paid in FY 20/21 \$ 9,926
YOY Increase \$ 53*

* \$4.38/mo



Home assessed at \$500,000
Estimated Taxes for FY 21/22 \$ 14,255
Taxes Paid in FY 20/21 \$ 14,180
YOY Increase \$ 75*

* \$6.25/mo