

EAST LYME BOARD OF FINANCE
SPECIAL MEETING OF MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2022
MINUTES

PRESENT: Denise Hall, Chairperson; John Birmingham, Vice Chairperson; Richard Steel, Peter DeRosa, Paul Maxfield and Lauren McNamara
ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Kevin Seery and Finance Director Anna Johnson

Ms. Hall called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. She stated that all of the departmental reviews have taken place, and tonight they will begin deliberations.

III. Delegations

There were none.

IV. New Business – Budget Deliberations

Board of Education

All of the Board members are in support of the Board of Education and the school system, and they recognize the challenges that the pandemic has brought forth for both the students and the administration. All agreed that although the added positions may be needed at the moment, they are concerned that going forward these positions will be absorbed into the budget instead of expiring when the ARPA funding runs out. Some points of interest:

- All of the Board of Finance members agreed that this proposed budget is too high for the current fiscal situation that we are in.
- Mr. Newton stated that their labor attorney ran a report of comparable districts to confirm that the salaries are in line with surrounding communities.
- It was noted that although there is an increase in the budget with added staff, the population has decreased and is projected to continue to decrease in the next couple of years.
- East Lyme's school system attracts young families who move to the community based highly on the education opportunities alone, but there is a large elderly population on the other end that are struggling due to the change in the economy; all of our residents need to be taken into consideration when adopting a budget.
- We should be concentrating on keeping programs that affect all or at least a good portion of the student population; for instance, adding new sports at the middle school does not impact a majority of the students so maybe could have waited a couple of years to implement.
- The Board of Education members were not all supportive of this budget and a couple of them voted in opposition of moving it forward.

Ms. Hall thanked the Board of Education members and the administration for their hard work and noted the challenges of trying to balance the need to take care of the young and elderly alike. She explained that in order to keep the increase to 1 Mil, the total budget would have to come in at an approximate \$2.7 million combined increase for both Town and Board of Education; the Finance board members agreed that the optimal target is to keep the Mil rate from increasing more than 1 Mil. Mr. Seery noted that for this year's budget, the Town has received unexpected revenue for the sale of a commercial property, as well as the proceeds of the tax auction sale of which some delinquencies have been paid in advance of the event. The Board discussed possible use of the undesignated fund balance to bring the total down, but it was ultimately agreed that this was not the right option.

FILED

April 19, 2022 AT 1:16 AM/PM
Brooke Hansen A/C
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

The Board proceeded to review each budget.

101 First Selectman

MOTION (1)

Mr. Steel MOVED to reduce line #111 by \$3,000.
Seconded by Mr. Birmingham. Motion passed 6-0-0.

102 Assessor

It was noted that there was an increase in this budget made by the previous administration.

103 Tax Collector

No changes made to this budget.

104 Building

MOTION (2)

Mr. Steel MOVED to reduce line #211 by \$2,500.
Seconded by Ms. McNamara. Motion passed 6-0-0.

MOTION (3)

Mr. DeRosa MOVED to reduce line #216 by \$7,500.
Seconded by Mr. Birmingham. Motion passed 6-0-0.

MOTION (4)

Mr. Maxfield MOVED to reduce line #320 by \$500.
Seconded by Mr. Birmingham. Motion passed 6-0-0.

109 IT

MOTION (5)

Mr. Birmingham MOVED to reduce line #218 by \$800.
Seconded by Mr. Maxfield. Motion passed 6-0-0.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Steel stated that in conjunction with the hiring of an IT Director, he would like to open the discussion of combining this role to be shared between the Board of Education and the Town.

110 Registrars

MOTION (6)

Mr. Maxfield MOVED to reduce line #204 by \$1,300.
Seconded by Ms. McNamara. Motion passed 6-0-0.

134 Brookside Farm Museum

MOTION (7)

Mr. Birmingham MOVED to reduce line #415 by \$2,000.
Seconded by Mr. DeRosa. Motion passed 6-0-0.

216 Police Department

MOTION (8)

Mr. Birmingham MOVED to reduce line #511 by \$30,222 to phase in the second police officer.
Seconded by Mr. Maxfield. IN FAVOR; Hall, Birmingham, Maxfield and McNamara. OPPOSED;
Steel and DeRosa. Motion passed 4-2-0.

MOTION (9)

Mr. Birmingham MOVED to reduce line #514 by \$20,000.
Seconded by Mr. Maxfield. IN FAVOR; Hall, Birmingham, Maxfield, McNamara and DeRosa.
ABSTAINED; Steel. Motion passed 5-0-1.

217 Niantic Fire Department

MOTION (10)

Mr. DeRosa MOVED to reduce line #611 by \$28,090.
Seconded by Mr. Birmingham. IN FAVOR; Hall, Birmingham, Maxfield, McNamara and DeRosa.
ABSTAINED; Steel. Motion passed 5-0-1.

224 Fire Marshal

MOTION (11)

Mr. Maxfield MOVED to reduce line #213 by \$5,000.
Seconded by Ms. Hall. Motion passed 6-0-0.

226 Animal Control Officer

DISCUSSION: Mr. Seery noted that the ACO has mentioned increasing the part-time ACO position and that will be discussed further with the Chief and Waterford.

317 Public Works

MOTION (12)

Mr. Birmingham MOVED to reduce line #224 by \$20,000.
Seconded by Mr. Maxfield. Motion passed 6-0-0.

MOTION (13)

Mr. Steel MOVED to increase line #225 by \$5,000 for traffic calming measures.
Seconded by Ms. Hall. Motion passed 6-0-0.

724 Capital

MOTION (14)

Mr. Maxfield MOVED to reduce line #708 to by \$63,800.
Seconded by Mr. Birmingham. Motion passed 6-0-0.

The reductions total \$179,712, leaving the overall budget at \$81,165,042. Town budget equals \$20,181,612, an increase of 4.13%. Ms. Johnson stated that there will be a reduction of about \$7,000 in payroll taxes, insurance and FICA for the positions not recommended. Mr. Steel felt as though the Town should use money from the undesignated fund balance to keep the increase down to about a ¼ Mil. Ms. Johnson reported that a special meeting will be scheduled for after the Public Hearing on the 25th in order to have an opportunity to make any changes necessary before the town meeting in May.

Ms. Hall read into record the following comments received by Mr. Mike Schulz, Lovers Lane, East Lyme: In all due respect, I find the budget % increase for the town and BOE completely unacceptable. Especially the BOE. The budget for the town at least serves all the taxpayers, not just the 20% of the taxpayers that at most, contribute only about 20% toward the costs of enrolling their kids in the EL school system and still they complain. Without even counting the extra support personnel brought in, paid for by the Feds, they now want to pass that associated cost on to the taxpayer. Their chart shows that the student population will decrease by forty-one students in 2023 and still they want \$2.5 M more dollars. I could go on for hours and show where the BOE has failed in transparency and is abusing the taxpayers. It would seem that our

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leadership and employees don't have an appreciation for what is going on in the world and that many taxpayers are having to choose between heat and medications. \$750.00 to fill my oil tank! The maximum budget increase for the town and BOE should be limited to no more than 2% and that in my opinion is more than we should be spending. The taxpayers have provided funds for school modifications, a new police station and many other WANTS. Enough is enough. I hope other folks will speak up and show their concern.

Mr. Eric Bauman, Chairman of the Board of Education, stated that the number of reductions that the Board of Finance have discussed would have a dramatic impact on the Board of Education, and he stated that he foresees that the parents will not support these reductions. Mr. Newton explained that they had run some numbers using an approximate reduction of between \$250,000 and \$300,000; but if they need to reduce the budget by more than \$500,000 that is going to cause an issue.

Ms. Hall stated that the Board member should think about this and be ready to discuss this further at Wednesday's meeting. She reminded the Board that the Board of Education will be making their own decisions as to how to proceed with the budget as we move towards the referendum.

V. Public Discussion

There was no public discussion.

VI. Board Comments

Mr. Birmingham stated that this is going to be an arduous process, but that as long as they come to the best compromise that they can then that is the best they can do. Ms. Hall thanked everyone for their hard work.

VII. Adjourn

MOTION (15)

Mr. Birmingham MOVED to adjourn the April 11, 2022, special budget meeting of the East Lyme Board of Finance at 9:42 p.m.

Seconded by Ms. McNamara. Motion passed 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted By:



Sandra Anderson
Recording Secretary