

# BOF March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes

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TOWN CLERK

# Minutes of Board of Finance March 27th, 2024, Special Meeting - 03/27/24

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**Date and time:** 03/27/24 05:30 pm to: 03/27/24 08:03 pm

**Present:** Brooke Stevens, Rec Secretary (\* Ms. Stevens was not in attendance), Jay Ginsberg, Richard Steel, Lauren McNamara, John T. Birmingham, Paul Maxfield, Denise Hall, Chairperson

**CC:** Kevin Gervais, Finance Director, Dan Cunningham, First Selectman, Julie Wilson, Deputy Director of Public Safety, Michael Finkelstein, Chief of Police, Bill Bundy, Fire Marshal, Erik Quinn, Deputy Fire Marshal, Dan Cleary, IT Director

**Location:** East Lyme Town Hall, Upper Conf. Room, 108 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Niantic, CT, 06357.

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## Topics

### 1. Call Meeting to Order & Pledge

**Note** Chairperson Hall called the March 27th, 2024, Special Meeting of the Board of Finance to order at 5:30 p.m. and led them in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 2. Delegations

**Note** There were none.

### 3. New Business- Budget Reviews

#### 3-1. 109 IT

**Note** see attachment.

 [109-Information-Technology-FY25.pdf](#)

**Note** Dan Cleary, the IT Director, came forward and discussed the IT Department's efforts in managing and improving the town's technology infrastructure, addressing cybersecurity, and planning for future needs while ensuring cost efficiency.

He provided an overview of the Department's activities, budget changes, and the need for additional staff, noting some of the following:

Notable budget increases include the addition of IT support staff and IT engineer, and a significant increase in other IT services due to the shift of communication services budget.

The IT Department has decreased contracted hours with Star Computers and lowered the five-year lease on copier maintenance, leading to cost savings.

They're making strides in cybersecurity, including rolling out multi-factor authentication and aiming to meet insurance requirements.

The current IT staff supports approximately 180 people, with a significant workload that justifies the addition of another IT staff member.

They're at a constant deficit for time in the IT Department.

They're fortunate enough to have Mike Meinz who helps them out.

He's a resident of the town who volunteers his time to do programming, help maintain the webpage, and is also key in the cable TV service we offer out.

The town's technology infrastructure is complex and unique to each department, requiring specialized IT support.

Over the last few weeks Carmen Ames, his support staff, has been working the Voter Registrar's Department to get ready for early voting.

They nearly tripled the amount of equipment that they're using in order to enable early voting.

She's been shifting that whole department around at the same time as reconfiguring and redoing networking for Youth Services, who is moving into that same physical area.

The new IT Engineer position will primarily support emergency services, highlighting the critical nature of IT in public safety.

The Department has implemented various measures to save costs and increase efficiency, including transitioning to cloud VoIP systems and extending PC replacement cycles.

Future IT budgets may include requests for additional cybersecurity measures to further protect the town's data and systems.

Long-term plans include consolidating IT systems for improved efficiency and security, potentially through a private fiber network.

**Note** Mr. Cleary and the Board discussed the potential IT Engineer position, which will cost around \$76,000 for a full year.

**Note** Mr. Cleary briefly discussed the PC replacement plan, which did not exist prior to him working for the town.

### **3-2. 214 Emergency Management**

**Note** see attachment.

 [214-Emergency Management FY25 Draft.pdf](#)

**Note** Julie Wilson, Deputy Director of Public Safety, came forward and discussed their approach to preparedness, response, and recovery in emergencies, including public education, planning, training, and coordination with various stakeholders.

Ms. Wilson highlighted some of the following items:

There is a notable shift towards cloud-based systems for various applications despite potential risks.

The Emergency Management Department plays a crucial behind-the-scenes role in preparing for and responding to emergencies, often unrecognized by the general public.

The Department engages in public outreach and education on emergency preparedness, including social media, emergency alerts, and presentations to vulnerable populations.

In addition to social media and alerts, they utilize the town website and the Everbridge program for these purposes.

They spread the word about Millstone, KI pills, and the like.

In 2023, the Department developed emergency action plans for various hazards, including air quality alerts and cyber-attacks, enhancing local preparedness.

Continuous training and education are needed.

She herself recently graduated from the National Emergency Management Advanced Academy that was held at Fairfield University in 2023.

She was able to bring a lot of what she learned back here to the town and implement it into her daily duties.

Effective emergency management requires networking with public safety, regional, state, and federal partners, especially in large-scale emergencies.

The Department works on mitigation measures to reduce potential loss of life and damage to property from identified hazards, and specifically works closely with Public Works and Land Use to update plans with identified hazards.

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the importance of preparedness for public health emergencies, including PPE distribution as well as vaccination efforts.

The Department co-chairs a regional cybersecurity team to address the increasing risks of cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure.

Public Safety makes efforts to advance school safety through a comprehensive approach that includes addressing physical security, mental health, and emergency operations plans.

Preparation for the increased frequency and severity of natural disasters due to climate change is a priority, including coastal resiliency planning.

The Department conducts monthly testing of siren systems and participates in FEMA-evaluated exercises for radiological emergency readiness.

The Department is also prepared for 24/7 emergency response, including EOC activation, emergency alerts, and coordination with the American Red Cross.

They work with 5 local municipalities for opening of the East Lyme Middle School, which serves as a multi-jurisdictional shelter when needed.

They work closely with their Eversource Liaison during storms to ensure power is restored at a priority level for critical facilities.

Post-disaster, the Department conducts damage assessments and collects information required by FEMA for public and individual assistance.

Significant grant funding has been acquired to support emergency management initiatives, including the establishment of a new EOC funded by the Nuclear Safety Fund.

The Department's budget includes considerations for contractual increases, equipment needs, and transportation allowances for regional meetings and trainings.

**Note** Ms. Hall asked where our residents might see the evacuation plan and Ms. Wilson replied that every year residents receive the new Neighbors of Millstone planning guide, which has a map, and that same information can also be found on the Emergency Management landing page on the town website.

**Note** Chief Finklestein explained that his salary as Police Chief includes a stipend for his additional role as Public Safety Director, and a significant portion of it is reimbursed by the state.

**Note** Mr. Steel observed that her salary line has gone from \$70,000 to \$74,000, but the next page it says, "rate doesn't include the anticipated non-affiliated rate increase on 7/1/2024."

**Note** Ms. Wilson explained that when Mark Nickerson was First Selectman and her position was created, she agreed to a gradual increase since the position was just getting started. She added that she loves East Lyme, was willing to make that sacrifice, but knew she deserved more.

**Note** Mr. Birmingham asked her to speak about the capital part of the budget and Ms. Wilson shared some of the following:

The Public Safety Communications Tower is something that she has been trying to get a grant for. She will keep applying.

In addition to the tower, they're going to need microwaves that go on it, which are also expensive.

The tower is needed because at the new facility there is 6.2 miles of fiber optic cables that carry communication from that tower to the Public Safety building.

If anything happens to those communication cables the Police, Fire Services, and 911 won't be able to communicate with one another.

The main purpose for the tower is to eliminate that possibility.

**Note** Mr. Birmingham inquired about the \$50,000 for an SUV.

Ms. Wilson justified the need for a dedicated Emergency Management vehicle due to the mileage on her personal vehicle, and the efficiency it would bring to operations, especially in towing equipment.

She explained that it would save her from putting miles on her personal vehicle since she attends so many regional trainings, and it could be utilized to tow the new traffic control trailer that they purchased with Nuclear Safety Fund money, which houses all the traffic cones.

**Note** Mr. Birmingham asked how many miles she has on her personal vehicle, and Ms. Wilson said 32,000, but she always drives two miles back and forth from work, so that illustrates the amount of traveling she does.

Ms. Wilson added that they do have the state contract price for that vehicle, so it's the lowest price they can possibly get.

**Note** Mr. Gervais clarified that the First Selectmen cut the Emergency Management vehicle as well as the Planning and Zoning vehicle, and they're the only vehicles that are not replacements.

### 3-3. 215 Dispatch

**Note** see attachment.

 [215-Dispatch-FY25.pdf](#)

**Note** Chief Finklestein discussed the challenges in staffing the Dispatch Center and the necessity of overtime to maintain operations.

**Note** Chief Finklestein shared the following:

We have eight full-time Dispatchers.

The Dispatch Center handles 911 calls originating within the town of East Lyme, provides dispatch for the East Lyme Police Department, the Flanders Fire Department, the Niantic Fire Department, and the East Lyme Ambulance.

It also provides monitoring and dispatch services for the East Lyme Water and Sewer Department and controls the Channel 22 services.

They're asking for an increase for Dispatch overtime to meet actuals.

We barely have any part-timers and are full timer focused.

The need to have over time has increased and this year they budgeted for actual.

You have to always have two people seated in the Dispatch Center.

### 3-4. 226 ACO

**Note** see attachment.

 [226-ACO-FY25.pdf](#)

**Note** Chief Finklestein discussed the regionalization of animal control services with Waterford and its financial implications. We have two full-time ACOs that work for both towns.

**Note** Mr. Ginsberg asked about the Animal Control configuration, Chief Finklestein provided a brief history, and then explained that this year, they're estimating \$56,880 for reimbursement from Waterford, for overtime. Overtime is broken down by the location of the call; If Waterford gets 60% of the overtime, they pay 60% of the bill, and right now it's about 70-30 Waterford, for the overtime.

### 3-5. 216 Police

**Note** see attachment.

 [216-PS-Police-Dept-FY25.pdf](#)

**Note** Chief Finklestein explained that the Police Department is responsible for maintaining the safety and security of all residents and visitors, and highlighted the achievements, accreditation and community engagement efforts of the East Lyme Police. He provided a presentation of crime statistics, and comparisons with other towns' police departments in terms of budget and staffing.

**Note** He noted that in terms of current staffing, we have 30 full-time authorized officers and minimum patrol is one sergeant and two patrol officers, though most shifts are at a higher level. Our staffing's at 1.95 per 1,000 population, which is currently the 13 lowest per capita in the state; the staffing rate for the State of Connecticut is an average of 2.54 per 1,000 population, and that includes all personnel.

**Note** Chief Finklestein further detailed the following:

We currently have one individual in the academy and that officer will be on the road helping us will be November.

Besides himself as Chief, we have two lieutenants, six sergeants, three detectives, one school resource officer, 17 patrol officers, and three part-time officers, which incur very little cost to the town.

Most of the work done by part-time officers is supplementing road construction .

**Note** Mr. Birmingham asked about the part-time police officers and Chief Finklestein clarified that the two additional part-time officers this year, making a total of 3, essentially come out of full-time. Two officers retired from the Force and one of them is staying on to assist with the road construction jobs, while the other is doing our training and marine patrol.

**Note** The Chief and the Board further discussed staffing.

**Note** Chief Finklestein noted the mutual aid agreement with the Law Enforcement Council, which covers Eastern Connecticut and facilitates officer support for events across different departments.

**Note** Chief Finklestein briefly discussed the vehicle replacement plan funded by road construction hours, aiming to maintain a functional and reliable fleet.

**Note** Chief Finklestein explained that the Police Department is transitioning from a 40 to a 9 platform for firearms, thereby aligning with industry standards and replacing old weapons.

### **3-6. 225 East Lyme Fire Service**

**Note** see attachment.

 [225-East-Lyme-Fire-Service-Budget-Final-FY25.pdf](#)

**Note** Fire Marshal Bundy explained that he has recently been appointed as Acting Fire Chief for the town, gave a brief history of his background, and discussed how fire services are being consolidated to streamline operations and improve efficiency.

Ms. Hall said she distributed the consultant report on Fire Services that was done a few years ago to the rest of the Board to review.

Mr. Bundy said he is presenting a consolidated budget comprised of the Niantic Fire Department, Flanders Fire Department, and the Fire Marshal's Office.

Mr. Bundy gave a brief history of both Fire Houses.

Mr. Bundy explained that the consolidation is essentially going to take the responsibility from before with respect to vehicle maintenance, staffing, building maintenance, and all the operational expenses associated with fire service from the volunteer companies, and give it to the town, who funds these services.

Mr. Bundy detailed the significant increase in call volume for fire services, the need for more structured staffing and resources, volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention, and emphasized the importance of volunteers that provide these services.

**Note** After some further discussion Mr. Maxfield noted he was a bit disappointed that as a Member of the Fire Service, the first time he heard about the consolidation was by reading about it in the newspaper. He asked if they have met with the volunteer companies.

**Note** Mr. Bundy replied with the following:

This predated Chief Quinn, but he (Mr. Bundy), met with Chief McDonald, Chief Taylor, Dave Baer, President of the Ambulance Association, and First Selectman Seery in October of 2022.

He repeatedly offered to speak at the volunteer companies and do some Q&A sessions but was not extended the invitation to do so.

**Note** Mr. Maxfield said he felt there was more town input when they went from a Resident Trooper service to a Police Department. He wondered how the EMS Service is going to be factored in with everything else.

**Note** Mr. Bundy replied that the East Lyme Ambulance Fund does hold the PSA, and they're currently in conversations and negotiations to hopefully determine these details.

**Note** First Selectman Cunningham came forward and had the following remarks:

They have additional meetings planned to iron out responsibilities for both the town and Ambulance Service.

He appointed an Acting Fire Chief as an interim move since they didn't have the luxury of time.

They have contract negotiations going on with the Fire Union and East Lyme Ambulance Association while trying to roll out an East Lyme Fire Service itself.

There are a lot of inefficiencies having the volunteer services be responsible for putting tires on the trucks and doing repairs, some of which wasn't getting done.

We really needed someone who was an employee of the town to take responsibility.

Until a few weeks ago, he was the Administrative Chief, and he has absolutely no qualifications for this.

He has instructed the Town Attorneys to work on contract language so that we have sort of line of authority between the volunteers, the Fire Chief, and himself.

An ordinance had been proposed by Selectman Seery, that referenced these contractual arrangements, but they hadn't been drafted yet.

When the Town Attorneys draft this language, the contracts can be reviewed by the respective volunteer Fire Departments, make sure that we're in agreement with responsibilities, lines of authority, and contractual arrangements.

When that is in place, he's going to propose the ordinance that will create the East Lyme Fire Service officially.

He will also ask the Board of Selectmen to appoint the Acting Fire Chief as permanent.

First, he wanted there to be an opportunity to vet that position and have a vote of the full Board of Selectmen.

People can come to the meetings and voice their thoughts.

He wants the process to be transparent.

Like we have a Board of Police Commissioners, he's also directed our attorneys to draft language to set up a Fire Commission.

He wants the Fire Commission to be a similar model to the Board of Police Commissioners.

There are many moving parts to this and some of them have to happen simultaneously, which is why he acted when he did, but he will vet it in front of the Public and Board of Selectmen.

**Note** Ms. Hall applauded Mr. Cunningham for trying to put this together. She added that the communication aspect Mr. Maxfield referenced illustrates why this centralized town department is needed.

**Note** Mr. Cunningham noted there is a lot of misinformation out there and he in no way, wants to eliminate the volunteer program, and is hopeful that this misconception can be corrected.

**Note** Mr. Bundy and Erik Quinn, Deputy Fire Marshal, and discussed the proposed staffing model, which aims to ensure adequate coverage throughout the day and night, adjusting the number of full-time and part-time firefighters.

**Note** Mr. Bundy and Mr. Quinn further detailed various aspects of fire department operations, and discussed some of the following with the Board:

Community engagement, administrative roles, revenue generation, logistical challenges, and the exploration of more efficient emergency response methods.

Fire Prevention Month Activities.

The roles of the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief- the Fire Chief as the primary leader and the Deputy Chief as a tactician involved in day-to-day operations.

Revenue generated through inspections and permits- the Fire Marshal's Office has generated revenue by charging for inspections and permits, exceeding their projected revenue.

The possibility of increasing the fire prevention budget to expand activities and possibly hire more staff.

The long lead times for receiving new fire engines, which can be up to 48 months.



**Note** Mr. Bundy also discussed Capital Projects for the current year, which include apparatus replacement, SCBA bottle replacement, turnout gear, fire hose replacement, radio replacement, Scheduling & Responder Software, a portable tank, a station alerting system as well as a female bunkroom for the Flanders Fire House.

**Note** Mr. Bundy shared that the proposed staffing, which is in negotiations, includes:  
Day shift (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.) Niantic & Flanders- 4 full-time firefighters, 1 part-time firefighter, 2 Chief Officers/Fire Marshals.

Evening shift (4 p.m. to 12 a.m.) Niantic & Flanders- 4 full-time firefighters, 1 part-time firefighter, and East Lyme Ambulance staffing with 2 EMTs.

Night shift (12 a.m. to 8 a.m.) Niantic & Flanders- 4 full-time firefighters and East Lyme Ambulance staffing with 2 EMTs.

**Note** Mr. Bundy and Mr. Cunningham discussed the rationale behind using fire trucks for emergency medical response including proximity to incidents and the need for equipment, and exploring alternative vehicles for emergency responses to reduce wear on fire trucks and possibly improve efficiency.

**Note** Mr. Bundy and Mr. Quinn discussed how the goal is to streamline fire services while enhancing rather than sacrificing safety.

### 3-7. 224 Fire Marshal

**Note** see attachment.

 [224-Fire-Marshal-FY25.pdf](#)

**Note** This item was discussed along with the Fire Departments.

## 4. Public Discussion

**Note** There was none.

## 5. Board Comments

**Note** Ms. Hall asked for a moment of silence for Senator Joe Lieberman, acknowledging his service and expressing condolences to his family.

## 6. Adjournment

**Decision** MOTION (1)

Mr. Birmingham moved to adjourn the BOF March 27th, 2024, Special Meeting at 8:03 p.m.

Mr. Maxfield seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

**Note** Respectfully Submitted,  
Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary

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Meeting title: Board of finance april 1st, 2024, special meeting  
Date and time: 04/01/24 05:30 pm to: 04/01/24 02:34 am  
Location: East Lyme Town Hall, Upper Conf. Room, 108 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Niantic, CT, 06357.