

BOF April 4th, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
EAST LYME, CT

2024 APR 15 A 8:53

Causty
TOWN CLERK

Minutes of Board of Finance April 4th, 2024, Special Meeting - 04/04/24

Date and time: 04/04/24 5:30 PM to: 04/04/24 7:25 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, Jerry Lokken, Parks & Recreation Director

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

Link: <https://app.meetingking.com/meetings/412980>

Topics

1. Call Meeting to Order & Pledge

Note Chairperson Hall called the April 4th, 2024, Special Meeting of the Board of Finance to order at 5:32 p.m. and led them in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Delegations

Note There was none.

3. New Business- Budget Deliberations

Note Ms. Hall noted they're continuing with budget deliberations and the next item up for discussion is #114, Government Miscellaneous Benefits.

Note Mr. Birmingham mentioned reducing legal fees for the Conservation and Planning Departments, based on utilization percentages, which the Board briefly discussed.

Note Mr. Cunningham and the Board also discussed potential future depositions for these Departments, and Mr. Cunningham said these considerations will likely apply more to Zoning than Planning, but he's hesitant to reduce the budgeting for legal fees.

Note Ms. Hall observed that they probably shouldn't reduce Planning since they're already at 85% utilization for this year, but that she does think they can reduce Conservation by \$9,000 given the 16% utilization.

Decision MOTION (1)

Mr. Birmingham moved to reduce under Government Miscellaneous Benefits, Legal Services, item #238, Conservation, from the proposed \$24,000 budget by \$9,000, to \$15,000.

Ms. McNamara seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note The Board and Mr. Cunningham discussed the budgeted legal fees for Zoning, and Mr. Maxfield wondered whether the \$42,000 is sufficient.

Note Mr. Cunningham said we need to make sure we have the resources to protect the town, Zoning has the most exposure.

Note Mr. Steel said he concurs with Mr. Maxfield, that given their exposure in that line he'd feel more comfortable if they had a bit more of a cushion.

Note Mr. Gervais said we're talking about individual lines within legal, so why don't we just put it in contingency since it has to be transferred anyway?

Note Mr. Gervais also discussed reducing labor attorney fees for Public Safety and General Government based on current negotiations and future projections. They could cut \$4,000 from the town Attorney side and then \$8,000 on the Public Safety side in an effort just to kind of save that Zoning line, or they could cut everything and put a small amount into contingency.

Decision MOTION (2)

Mr. Steel moved to reduce account #114, line 235, Labor Town, by \$4,000, and line 236, Labor Public Safety by \$8,000, so that both lines have a value of \$12,000.

Mr. Birmingham seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note Ms. Hall and Mr. Gervais discussed retirement liability.

Decision MOTION (3)

Ms. Hall moved to reduce the Retirement Liability account #128 by \$25,000, to \$175,000.

Mr. Birmingham seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note Mr. Maxfield inquired about the health insurance increase for this year and Mr. Gervais replied that it's 2%.

3-1. 114- General Government

Note see attachment.

 [114-Gov-Misc-Benefits-FY25_\(1\).pdf](#)

3-2. 115- Services to the Community

Note Ms. Hall noted they spoke a bit about this at the previous meeting, they've heard that one of services to the community isn't really even in existence anymore, and she's very sensitive to taxing our residents in order to donate money on their behalf. She thinks that if you're going to have a not-for-profit in your community, you need to make sure that you've got the support of your community.

 [115-Services-to-Community-FY25_\(1\).pdf](#)

Note Ms. Hall added that past Boards have likely approved these services because we weren't providing these services in town, and the idea was to foster some of these organizations as a result, in order to help meet the needs of our residents. In this year's budget we have created the Youth and Family Services budget, and there's a lot of overlap between some of the organizations.

Note Ms. Hall said there also isn't a real policy in terms of how much we give to these organizations. She suggested cutting the budget in half and having the Board of Selectmen craft a policy, and decide how to administer it.

Note The Board debated on reducing funding for community services, with suggestions to cut the budget significantly or eliminate it.

Note Mr. Steel said he would not cut # 905, Family Service Association, #906, Homeless Shelter, New London Hospitality, and the TVCCA, which provides the Meals on Wheels. He thinks the East Lyme Student Government Scholarship should be reduced from \$2,000 to \$1,000, since the high school graduation gives a lot of scholarship money out.

He also thinks that the East Lyme Vets should be cut from \$2,200 to \$1,000, but that Brian Burrige, the Veterans Rep, should have his mileage reimbursement.

Note Ms. Hall suggested reducing the total dollar amount and having Mr. Steel work with the Board of Selectmen on this matter, since he has such a great grasp of what all these organizations do. She added that the Board of Selectmen can determine who receives what, and a policy can be formulated.

Decision MOTION (4)

Mr. Steel moved to reduce the Services to the Community by \$21,450, to \$20,324, and the definition of which agencies receive money and how much to be decided upon in conversation with the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Hall seconded the motion.

Mr. Birmingham commented that going back a few years, a lot of these dollar amounts for these different organizations were very subjective.

Vote: Motion carried, 6-0-0.

3-3. 116- Zoning Commission

Note see attachment.

 [116-Zoning-Commission-FY25.pdf](#)

Note Ms. Hall asked how much had been expended for miscellaneous supplies and Mr. Gervais replied 61%.

Decision MOTION (5)

Ms. Hall moved to reduce the Miscellaneous Supplies budget in account 320, by \$200, to \$1,200.

Mr. Ginsberg seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

3-4. 117- Planning Department

Note see attachment.

 [117-Planning-Department-FY25.pdf](#)

Note Ms. Hall and Mr. Gervais discussed adjusting the budget for a GIS intern in the Planning Department, reflecting the timing of hiring and the amount allocated.

Note The Board further discussed the GIS intern.

Decision MOTION (6)

Ms. Hall moved to reduce the GIS intern assistant, Town Planner intern budget in line 213 by \$5,000, to \$5,000.

Mr. Ginsberg seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note Mr. Ginsberg asked about miscellaneous supplies and Mr. Gervais replied that 85% has been expended so far this year.

3-5. 118- Finance Department

Note see attachment.

 [118-Finance-Department-FY25.pdf](#)

Note There were no reductions.

3-6. 120- Contingency

Note see attachment.

 [120-Contingency-FY25.pdf](#)

Note Ms. Hall said she thinks they could reduce personal contingency a bit, and while she completely supports the Coastal Resiliency Fund creation as well as the creation of the OPEB Trust, perhaps they could start off with smaller numbers in these areas.

Decision MOTION (7)

Ms. Hall moved that they do a total reduction of \$20,000 in Contingency, made up of \$10,000 from Personnel, \$5,000 from Coastal Resiliency, and \$5,000 from OPEB Trust.

Mr. Birmingham seconded the motion.

Mr. Steel and Mr. Maxfield said they'd like to see the Coastal Resiliency fund left at \$25,000. Mr. Ginsberg observed that it might be more effective with the rating agency if they start low and raise it next year.

Vote:

Yay- Ms. Hall, Ms. McNamara and Mr. Ginsberg.

Nay- Mr. Maxfield, Mr. Birmingham and Mr. Steel.

Motion failed, 3-3-0.

Note Mr. Steel mentioned the Open Space Fund and its importance, and noted he'd like to see a future line item in the budget for this.

Note Mr. Cunningham suggested meeting somewhere in the middle in terms of reductions.

Decision MOTION (8)

Mr. Birmingham moved to reduce Coastal Resiliency and the OPEB Trust by \$2,500 each, and Personnel Contingency by \$10,000.

Mr. Birmingham seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 4-2-0.

Nay- Mr. Steel and Mr. Maxfield.

3-7. 126- Board of Finance

Note see attachment.

 [126-Board-of-Finance-FY25.pdf](#)

Note Ms. Hall said she did look at PT Clerical Recording Secretary and said she thinks that can be reduced. Mr. Gervais said \$798 has been expended so far this year.

Note Ms. Hall said she thinks it can be reduced by \$2,000, to \$1,500.

Decision MOTION (9)

Ms. Hall moved to reduce the Admin Clerical line in the Board of Finance by \$2,000, to a balance of \$1,500.

Mr. Steel seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note Mr. Gervais suggested they take a look at their miscellaneous supplies budget noting whatever they need comes out of the budget for his office.

Decision MOTION (10)

Mr. Maxfield moved to reduce line 320, Miscellaneous Supplies, to 0, a reduction of \$750.

Ms. McNamara seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

3-8. 127- Board of Assessment Appeals

Note see attachment.

 [127-Board-of-Assessment-Appeals-FY25.pdf](#)

Note There were no reductions.

3-9. 130- Zoning Board of Appeals

Note see attachment.

 [130-Zoning-Board-Appeals-FY25.pdf](#)

Decision MOTION (11)

Mr. Birmingham moved to reduce the Zoning Board of Appeals item 320, Miscellaneous Supplies, by \$100.

Mr. Steel seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

3-10. 132- Inland Wetlands Agency

Note see attachment.

 [132-Inland-Wetlands-Agency-FY25.pdf](#)

Note Mr. Steel asked if line 213 is the same in turn as what was in the Planning Department?

Note Mr. Gervais explained that they had a budget of about \$30,000 for interns, they had a person that was working remotely out of Boston for a while doing GIS work, she then got a full-time job, and we haven't had anybody for the last nine months. The idea is to fill it with interns for the time being.

Note Mr. Ginsberg asked how much has been expended from the Recording Secretary line item and Mr. Gervais replied \$750.

Decision MOTION (12)

Mr. Ginsberg moved to reduce the Inland Wetlands Agency, #132, the Recording Secretary, line 412, by \$500 to \$1,500.

Mr. Birmingham seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note Mr. Ginsberg asked about the consultant adding that he noticed that nothing was expended in 2023.

Note Mr. Gervais explained this money is set aside if there is something that happens at a commission level meeting, where they need to hire an expert. He added that they would still need to go before the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance and ask for a transfer out of contingency.

Note Mr. Birmingham asked about line #245, Dues and Memberships, which he and Mr. Gervais briefly discussed.

Decision MOTION (13)

Ms. Hall moved to reduce the Inland Wetlands Agency, #132, Miscellaneous Supplies by \$750, to a total of \$250.

Mr. Ginsberg seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

3-11. 134- Brookside Farm Museum

Note see attachment.

 [134-Brookside-Farm-Museum-FY25.pdf](#)

Note Mr. Birmingham suggested reducing item 225, Services & Landscaping Maintenance, by \$1,000, depending on what has been expended so far.

Note Mr. Gervais replied that line has been fully expended for this year, as have most of her lines. He noted she's pretty ambitious with her scope of work.

Note Mr. Gervais detailed how there was no Curator on staff when the budget was set last year, so that money was put in contingency.

Note Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Gervais briefly discussed some of the plans the Museum has.


Note Ms. Hall asked why Parks & Rec does the landscaping at all the town buildings, with the exception of this one? Mr. Cunningham replied that Parks & Rec tries to help them out, but they don't have the staff to do it on a regular basis.

Note Jerry Lokken, Director of Parks & Rec, came forward and said they typically go on a kind of on-call basis, and when they have a special event coming up, they take care of the property, mowing it, and trimming, and the like. In the off season, as their time allows, they'll go in and do larger projects such as brush removal.

Note The Board, Mr. Cunningham, and Mr. Gervais further discussed the Brookside Farm Museum, and no reductions were made.

3-12. 135- Town Building Committee

Note see attachment.

 [135-Building-Comm-FY25.pdf](#)

Note The Board and Mr. Gervais discussed how Town Building has not met this year and the previous school and Public Safety projects have been closed out.

Note Mr. Gervais said there are the school roof projects coming up, which the Board of Selectmen could assign to them.

Decision MOTION (14)

Mr. Ginsberg moved that for the Town Building Committee, #135, they reduce the postage expense, line 204, from \$100 to 0.

Ms. McNamara seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note Mr. Gervais suggested they do the same for miscellaneous supplies since anything needed can come out of the Finance or First Selectman's office.

Decision MOTION (15)

Mr. Ginsberg moved that for the Town Building Committee, #135, they reduce line 320, Miscellaneous Supplies, from \$200 to 0.

Ms. McNamara seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note Mr. Gervais said he wants to clarify the circumstances of Harbor Management and WELSCO, and shared the following:

WELSCO is kind of self-funded based on the permits they're pulling in and is separate from the Harbor Management Commission.

Harbor Management has its own fund now.

There's a dollar amount in WELSCO in case they need future contributions from us, but Harbor Management will be entirely self-sustaining.

3-13. 138- Conservation of Natural Resources Commission

Note see attachment.

 [138-Conserv-of-Natural-Res-FY25.pdf](#)

Note There were no reductions.

3-14. 139- Historic Properties Commission

Note see attachment.

 [139-Historic-Prop-Comm-FY25.pdf](#)

Note There were no reductions.

3-15. 214- Public Safety

Note see attachment.

 [214-Emergency_Management_FY25_Draft.pdf](#)

Note Mr. Gervais explained that next year they'll notice these accounts are not going to have the same names, but the amounts will be the same. For example, it says miscellaneous supplies, but really it should be technical supplies. He observed that these changes will make everything more uniform.

Note Ms. Hall asked what they've expended so far in the training uniform and technical supplies and Mr. Gervais replied that the training was fully spent, and they've spent \$16,500 of the \$19,000 in technical supplies, transferred in \$2,400, \$200 out of phones, and \$2,200 out of that emergency resources line.

Note The Board reviewed the Public Safety budget.

Note There were no reductions.

3-16. 215- Dispatch

Note see attachment.

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

Note The Board reviewed the Dispatch budget and what was expended last year for training, payroll, uniforms, and miscellaneous supplies.

Decision MOTION (16)

Ms. Hall moved to reduce the \$9,000 in line 217, Training Payroll, by \$2,000, to \$7,000.

Mr. Birmingham seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Decision MOTION (17)

Ms. Hall moved to reduce line 243 by \$1000, to \$5,000.

Mr. Ginsberg seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Decision MOTION (18)

Ms. Hall moved to reduce line 313, uniforms, by \$1,000 to a new budget of \$4,000.

Mr. Maxfield seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Decision MOTION (19)

Ms. Hall moved to reduce line 320, Miscellaneous Supplies, by \$1,000, to a balance of \$1,500.

Ms. McNamara seconded the motion.

Motion carries, 6-0-0.

3-17. 216- PS Police Department

Note see attachment.

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

Note Mr. Birmingham inquired about overtime for Boat Duty and asked how much has been expended so far, and Mr. Gervais replied \$6,500 but noted the boat isn't in the water yet, and last year they expended around \$14,000.

Decision MOTION (20)

Mr. Birmingham moved they cut the Overtime Boat Duty by \$4,000, to \$16,000, noting that it will give them \$2,000 more than last year.

Ms. Hall seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note Mr. Birmingham asked about operating expenses, public relations, 329, noting that it more than doubled from the previous year. Mr. Gervais replied that it's for the National Night Out, which started last year.

Note Ms. Hall asked how much has been expended under contracted operations, computer maintenance and Mr. Gervais replied \$400 so far, and last year they spent \$2,300.

Decision MOTION (21)

Ms. Hall moved to reduce computer maintenance by \$2,000 to a balance of \$3,000.

Mr. Steel seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note The Board further reviewed the Police Department budget.

Note Mr. Maxfield wondered when the new radios went into service and Mr. Steel said he would imagine that they're in pretty good shape.

Decision MOTION (22)

Mr. Steel moved to cut \$10,000 from line 221, Radio Maintenance, in Department 216, to \$15,000.

Mr. Maxfield seconded the motion.

Ms. Hall said she definitely agrees with cutting this, but she wonders whether this is cutting it a little bit too close. She added that \$20,000 would give them more of a cushion.

Mr. Ginsberg said that given the radios are new, he's split the difference and reduce it to \$17,500.

Vote:

Yay- Mr. Steel, Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Birmingham.

Nay- Ms. Hall, Mr. Ginsberg and Ms. McNamara.

Motion failed, 3-3-0.

Decision MOTION (23)

Mr. Ginsberg moved to reduce the Radio Maintenance in the Department 216 budget to \$17,500.

Ms. Hall seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note The Board further reviewed the budget and concerns were raised about potential duplication of costs in telecommunications, specifically related to IT and phone services.

Note Mr. Steel asked if the prisoner expenses have been going up each year, since we've been able to house prisoners. Mr. Gervais replied that \$2,900 has been spent and the other \$1,000 is encumbered.

Note No further reductions were made.

3-18. Fire Marshal

Note Ms. Hall noted they're kind of zeroing out the Niantic Fire Department and the Flanders Fire Department, and we'll have the new Fire Services, but they still have a small amount left in Public Safety Fire Marshal.

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

Note There were no reductions.

3-19. East Lyme Fire Services

Note Mr. Cunningham said they're trying to create the East Lyme Fire Service and have sort of planned out the way the numbers are working, and he hopes the budget doesn't get disturbed, so they can make this work.

Note Ms. Hall said she thinks it's a great idea and that they have the right Fire Chief, who has a great deal of budgeting experience.

Note Mr. Cunningham said he appreciates the support of the Board and is hopeful for success. He noted that the budget is the first puzzle piece and if it survives, they can address the contractual and legal pieces.

Note Mr. Maxfield said based on when they last discussed this, he feels that the EMS is driving all of this, and not so much the Fire side. He added that we haven't really gotten everyone together to properly put this together.

Note MOTION (24)

Mr. Maxfield moved that they not fund the extra union firefighter at this time.

Note Mr. Cunningham said they're trying to ensure adequate coverage throughout town, for the various shifts, and need the additional firefighter to make that happen. He explained that last night, at the Board of Selectmen meeting, they did extend the East Lyme Ambulance Service's contractual arrangement with the town, for one more year, which will give them a window of opportunity to renegotiate.

Note Mr. Cunningham briefly detailed some of the next steps for solidifying this department.

Note Mr. Maxfield said there was no second to his motion and Mr. Birmingham replied that he can second it, and Mr. Ginsberg said he thinks they need to give this new concept a chance.

Decision MOTION (24)

Mr. Maxfield moved that they not fund the extra union firefighter at this time.

Mr. Birmingham seconded the motion.

Motion failed, 2-4-0.

Yay- Mr. Maxfield and Mr. Birmingham.

Nay- Ms. Hall, Mr. Ginsberg, Mr. Steel and Ms. McNamara.

Decision MOTION (25)

Mr. Steel moved to fully fund the East Lyme Fire Services Department 225 as budgeted.

Mr. Ginsberg seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 5-1-0.

Nay- Mr. Maxfield.

3-20. 226- Animal Control

Note see attachment.

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

Note The Board briefly discussed the variable costs associated with animal control, and Mr. Ginsberg inquired about veterinary services.

Note There were no reductions.

3-21. 317- Public Works, Highway & Sanitation

Note see attachment.

 [317-PublicWorks-HwySanitation-FY-25.pdf](#)

Note The Board reviewed the budget for Public Works, including road reconstruction and fleet maintenance.

Decision MOTION (26)

Ms. Hall moved to propose a budget of \$204,000, for line 224, Road Reconstruction and Repair, a decrease of \$6,000.

Mr. Maxfield seconded the motion.

Motion carries, 6-0-0.

Note Mr. Ginsberg asked about the miscellaneous supplies and Mr. Gervais said \$20,000 has been expended, and they transferred \$2,500 to that line as well.

Note There were no further reductions.

4. Public Discussion

Note There was none.

5. Board Comments

Note The Board discussed the scheduling of future meetings to ensure all budget discussions are covered within the available time.

6. Adjournment

Decision MOTION (27)

Mr. Maxfield moved to adjourn the BOF April 4th, 2024, Special Meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Ms. McNamara seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

Note Respectfully Submitted,
Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary