

BOF March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Special Meeting Minutes

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TOWN OF EAST LYME, CT

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EAST LYME, CT

# Minutes of Board of Finance March 26th, 2025, Special Hybrid Meeting - 03/26/25

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**Date and time:** 03/26/25 5:30 PM to: 03/26/25 7:55 PM

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

**CC:** Dan Cunningham, First Selectman, Kevin Gervais, Finance Director, Lt. Michael Macek, Acting Police Chief, Regina Hitchery, Board of Police Commissioners Member, Bill Bundy, Fire Marshal & Fire Chief

**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** Chair Hall called the March 26th, 2025, Special Hybrid Meeting of the Board of Finance to order at 5:30 p.m. and led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 2. Delegations

**Note** There was none.

### 3. Additions to the Agenda

**Note** There was none.

### 4. New Business- Budget Reviews

### 5. Information Technology

**Note** Mr. Gervais noted some of the following:

\*The IT budget shows a significant increase, partly due to the reallocation of funds from other departments.

\*The increase also covers the full-year salary of a previously hired IT engineer.

\*The budget now includes three full-time IT staff members.

 [1054143-Information-Technology-FY2026-BOS-Approved.pdf](#)

**Note** -\$70,000 moved from Police and Emergency Management to IT budget.

\*IT budget increased from \$43,000 to \$116,000.

\*15% increase in personnel services due to full-year salary for IT engineer hired in November.

\*Miscellaneous supplies increased from \$8,200 to \$34,000 for computer-related equipment.

**Note** \*Computer replacement moved from capital budget to operating budget.

**Note** \*IT budgets growing in municipalities.

\*1 IT professional per 40 employees.

\*Potential need for additional IT staff, such as help desk person in the future.

\*Challenges in keeping IT budget down expected to continue.

## 5-1. Police Body Cam Contract

**Note** Lt. Michael Macek, Acting Police Chief, explained the following:

The Axon Body Cam Contract increased from \$36,000 to \$84,000.

The actual increase is \$18,298 per year.

The increase is due to more officers added, additional hardware costs and licensing fees.

He was able to save the town \$47,135.71 in the new contract, by committing earlier.

## 5-2. Emergency Management

**Note** Ms. Hall noted the Emergency Management budget decreased by \$50,000 and Mr. Gervais remarked that the decrease is due to the reallocation of radio maintenance and miscellaneous supplies to the IT budget.

Chief Macek shared the following:

\*Ms. Wilson, the Deputy Emergency Management Director, receives a stipend of \$250 per week.

\*The only change in his compensation since assuming the role of acting Chief is an adjustment of his base pay to match the previous Chief's base pay.

\*The stipend was specifically attached to the Emergency Management Director title, which the current acting Chief does not hold personally (as the previous Chief did).

\*He acknowledged that there have been comments in the media and on social media suggesting the town is paying two chiefs.

While he has received a little bump in base pay due to taking on the Chief role, his total compensation is not the same as what was previously paid for Chief Finklestein (who held both the Police Chief and Emergency Management Director roles and received the stipend.)

 [1054223-Emergency-Management-FY2026-BOS-Approved.pdf](#)

**Note**

**Note** Mr. McAllister inquired about IT training and Mr. Gervais and the Board briefly discussed how \$3,600 is allocated for internal IT Staff professional development/training.

## 5-3. Dispatch

**Note** Chief Macek was present to present the budgets for Dispatch, Animal Control, and the Police, which he detailed and discussed with the Board.

Some of the following was imparted:

\*Contractual change shifts first right of refusal from part-time to full-time dispatchers for vacant shifts.

\*Overtime costs have increased due to full-time employees filling shifts at a higher rate.

\*Current staffing is at 8 dispatchers, with potential changes upcoming.

\*Training payroll and operating expenses are separated in the budget for transparency.

\*Adding a single dispatcher doesn't fully solve scheduling issues due to PTO and work schedules.

 [1054202-Dispatch-FY2026-BOS-Approved.pdf](#)

## 5-4. Animal Control

**Note** \*Animal Control is shared between East Lyme and Waterford, with East Lyme providing the Officers.

\*The budget increase is due to Allison Ryan becoming a full-time Animal Control Officer as well as contractual raises.

\*Overtime covers after-hours, callouts, and weekend animal care in four-hour blocks.

\*East Lyme has two full-time Animal Control officers.

\*An annual report is provided to the Police Commission which details animal control activities.

 [1054215-Animal-Control-FY2026-BOS-Approved.pdf](#)

## 5-5. Police Department

**Note** \*The Police Department budget is experiencing increases due to previously unaccounted expenses, such as holiday pay and longevity shift differentials.

\*The budget also reflects contractual raises and attempts to increase staffing levels.

\* Training costs have risen due to reduced in-service availability and outsourcing.

\*Their budget for the upcoming fiscal year, totals \$3,666,345, representing a 9.30% increase.

\*This increase includes the absorption of holiday pay and other existing expenses from other departments. Without these absorbed costs, the actual budget increase would be much smaller.

 [1054201-Police-Dept-FY2026-BOS-Approved\\_\(1\).pdf](#)

**Note** \*Holiday pay of \$137,000 (108 hours per officer) is being moved into the Police budget from the town budget, causing an 11.77% increase in the Police Officers line item.

**Note** \*The Department had requested two new officers, but this was reduced during the budget process.

\*Longevity, shift differential, and Detective stipends are now properly accounted for in the budget, totaling \$31,054.

\* The part-time administrative position request increase to full-time, was not approved.

**Note** \*They're consolidating multiple phone systems to reduce costs. (Consolidating Police Department telephones, internet-related expenses, and Emergency Management.)

\*There are increased fees for memberships in Police Associations and the Law Enforcement Council- (provides various services for 15 towns.)

\*Other purchase expenses cover towing, vehicle inspections, tower dump data requests etc.

\*Prisoner expenses - the costs are variable for meals and potential cleanup of biohazards.

Average of 250 prisoners per year.

\*New meal arrangement with Stop & Shop- \$2 per meal.

\*Uniforms- 1.21% increase.

\*Miscellaneous supplies cover office supplies, investigative tools, and Narcan.

\* Fingerprinting Services- recently introduced \$20 fee for fingerprinting.

\*Emerging issue of cell providers charging for data in investigations Overall budget increase of 9.30% to \$3,666,345.

\*Slight increase for community events like National Night Out & Citizens Police Academy.

\*Testing and accreditation- reduction due to moving out of CALEA accreditation.

\*Camera system upgrades- needed to cover liability issues and meet security recommendations.

**Note** Chief Macek and the Board further reviewed the Police budget.

**Note** Chief Macek gave more particulars regarding the current camera situation and planned purchase:

When they moved into the renovated building, a robust camera system was initially planned.

Due to change orders and unexpected expenses during the project, cuts had to be made, and the camera system was one of the areas where coverage was reduced.

**Note** There are currently several spots in the building that are not covered by cameras, which is a significant liability.

\*Homeland Security recently conducted a security risk assessment of the building and recommended even more cameras than what is currently being requested.

\*This assessment will be presented to the Police Commission and the town.

**Note** Specific uncovered areas include a section where prisoners are walked from their holding cells to the front of the building; about 40 feet lacks camera coverage.

A hallway near the elevator, behind a closed door leading to a public bathroom, is also not covered.

\* \*This became an issue when vandalism occurred in the bathroom, and it was difficult to determine who was responsible due to the lack of camera coverage in the hallway leading to it. The camera is not being requested inside the bathroom itself, but in the hallway. \* \*

**Note** There are also some blank spots on the exterior of the building where camera coverage is needed, similar to security upgrades that were done at the field services building.

The requested camera purchases will cover all the current blank areas inside and outside the police department facility.

He confirmed that they have an updated quote that reflects the recommendations from Homeland Security as well as the necessary upgrades.

**Note** Regina Hitchery of the Board of Police Commissioners was in attendance and spoke in support of the proposed Police budget. She acknowledged the budget increase wasn't solely due to operational needs and that the Board would work within it. She expressed concern that the Board of Selectmen did not support their request for two additional half-time headcount positions (starting mid-year).

**Note** Her reasoning for this request included the following:

1. Lengthy training process-

Unlike other town departments, new Police hires require a significant training period (close to a year including the Academy and field training) before being fully operational.

2. Anticipated retirements- the Police force is aging, and several potential retirements are on the horizon.

3. Regional hiring challenges- there's a limited pool of experienced officers readily available in the region who might want to work for East Lyme.

4. Relative pay rates- East Lyme's Police pay rates are not currently highly competitive.

She appreciates the BOF members who requested data on how East Lyme's Policing compares to other towns, noting that lower crime numbers often indicate good Policing.

While wanting to ensure adequate Policing capacity, she also understands the desire of citizens to avoid tax increases.

## 5-6. East Lyme Fire Service

**Note** see attachment.

 [1054205-Fire-Service-FY2026-BOS-Approved.pdf](#)

**Note** Bill Bundy, Fire Marshal & Fire Chief, was in attendance to present the Fire Service budget and had a lengthy discussion with the Board about the newly consolidated Department, encompassing the previously separate volunteer services (Niantic and Flanders) and the paid staff, all operating under one budget. This consolidation is a primary driver for the overall budget increase.

**Note** Mr. Bundy touched on the history of fire service in East Lyme, which dates back to 1876, and shared significant events from 2024, including a double fatality fire, a high school evacuation, arson fires, a marine rescue, and brush fires.

**Note** Some of the following items were highlighted:

\*Two paid Chief Officers (Chief and Deputy).

\*11 full-time Firefighter EMT positions (currently one vacancy).

\*5 part-time Firefighter EMTs (currently down to two, with onboarding in progress).

\*Two part-time Deputy Fire Marshals (primarily for large event support but could be utilized more for inspections).

\*12 volunteer firefighters as of December 2024, which has significantly decreased to one active volunteer by January 2025 due to hiring, military enlistment, and college departures.

**Note** 1. Station Locations-

\*Station 1 (Headquarters - Grand Street): Two buildings (1923 & 1957), recently received a new roof.

\*Station 2 (West Main Street): State-owned building (1976), maintained by the town.

Flanders Station (North end): Built in 1979.

**Note** 2. Fleet-

\*A list of the fire service fleet was provided, including the year of each vehicle and potential timelines for refurbishment or replacement. (Boat 1, a 1969 Boston Whaler, is out of commission and needs replacement for sound-related rescues.)

**Note** 3. Staffing Schedule Change-

\*Full-time firefighters now operate on a 24/48 schedule with a Kelly day (every third Saturday off). This schedule necessitates the use of part-timers or overtime for Saturday coverage, significantly impacting the overtime budget due to double-time pay for full-timers called back on their Kelly day.

**Note** 4. Current Staffing Levels-

\*Two firefighters at Headquarters and Flanders 24/7.

\*Four full-time firefighters per shift.

\*Station 2 is ideally staffed from 8 AM to 10 PM using overtime or part-timers but currently averages only 50 hours of part-time coverage out of a potential 112 hours.

**Note** 5. Decline in Volunteerism-

\*Data from July to December 2024 showed volunteers responded to less than 4% of the 1963 calls. This trend has continued into 2025, with very low volunteer response numbers.

\*National articles and a recent Connecticut fire study confirm this is a statewide and national trend.

\*East Lyme has seen a dramatic decrease from 84 active volunteers in 2014 to just one in January 2025 (a 98% reduction over 10 years.)

**Note** 6. Increase in Call Volume-

\*Call volume has increased by 47% over the last 10 years (from just over 2100 in 2009 to over 3500 in 2024), with a nearly 4% increase from the previous year.

Projections suggest this trend will continue.

\*The number of full-time firefighters remained stagnant for a decade while call volume increased, highlighting the need to catch up on staffing.

Fire service remains active in the community through training, school visits, and community outreach.

**Note** 7. Budget Increase-

\*The proposed budget shows a 26% increase, primarily due to the absorption of the Fire Marshal, Flanders Volunteer Fire, and Niantic Volunteer Fire budgets into one East Lyme Fire Service budget.

**Note** \*Marshall & Deputy Salaries (6.6% increase)- solely due to an increase in work hours from 37.5 to 40 per week (no hourly wage increase).

**Note** \*Administrative Assistant (46% increase)- transition from part-time to full-time (40 hours) to align with Public Safety hours and improve efficiency in revenue-generating activities like inspection scheduling.

**Note** \*Union Firefighter- requesting funding for 1.5 additional full-time equivalent positions to address the current staffing shortage and the need for consistent coverage at both stations.

**Note** \*Part-time Employees- anticipating less reliance with the addition of full-time positions.

**Note** \*Training & Prevention- now covers training for the entire consolidated service, including Fire Marshals, volunteer certifications, and mandatory recertifications.  
\*They're trying to conduct more in-house training to save costs.

**Note** \*Fire Hydrant Maintenance- a \$12,000 line item that primarily benefits the Water & Sewer system. Future costs are projected to significantly increase.

**Note** \*Volunteer Expenses- \$12,000 allocated (\$6,000 per former volunteer department) for recruitment and retention efforts.

**Note** \*\*Medical Supplies (New Line)- necessary due to the East Lyme Ambulance now operating independently, requiring the Fire Service to equip their engines for R1-level first aid.\*\*

**Note** \*Uniforms (large increase)- consolidated budget for uniforms for both paid staff (contractual obligations) and volunteers.

\*Miscellaneous Supplies (large increase)- consolidated budget for general operational needs.

**Note** \*\*The Fire Marshal's Office bills for inspections and plan reviews.

They are on track to generate approximately \$100,000 in revenue this year and project around \$150,000 for next year with increased administrative support and potential for more part-time inspectors.\*\*

**Note** \*Chief Bundy believes that hiring a full-time inspector focused solely on inspections would likely pay for their own salary and help address the backlog of annual inspections.

**Note** Chief Bundy and the Board further discussed the challenges of retaining staff:

New hires often stay for only two to three years.

The position is sometimes used as a steppingstone to full-time employment in other municipalities.

Individuals gain experience and training in East Lyme before moving on to other departments.

An example was mentioned where a local individual who volunteered for both the Ambulance and Fire Service, and was hired part-time, has now taken a full-time position in another town.

Fire Chiefs statewide are discussing solutions to improve retention.

## 5-7. Capital Expenditures

**Note** The Board discussed the following Capital items:

1. Fire Rescue Boat- the boat needs to be replaced. The CI Committee previously received valuable input from Don McKenzie, and they are working on determining the exact cost.

**Note** 2. Utility Truck- a request for a utility truck was made because the Fire Service no longer has access to the Ambulance company's trucks for towing trailers, ATVs, and the boat.

**Note** 3. Rescue Equipment- funds are requested to replace rescue equipment, including hydraulic and extrication tools, some of which is used for confined space rescues with the Water & Sewer Department.

**Note** 4. Tires- a significant portion of the request is for replacing non-compliant tires on six vehicles in the fleet. The cost of tires ranges from \$1,000 to \$1,200 per tire, with some vehicles requiring six tires.

**Note** 5. Fleet Size- the size of East Lyme's fleet compared to similar communities. The Fire Department is actively working to reduce the number of vehicles, recognizing that having too many vehicles that are not staffed is inefficient.

**Note** 6. Apparatus Replacement Plan- The Fire Department has developed a 25-year replacement plan that analyzes the cost-effectiveness of refurbishing versus replacing vehicles.

**Note** 7. SCBA and Turnout Gear- funds are requested to replace outdated self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and turnout gear. A set of turnout gear can cost between \$5,000 and \$6,000.

**Note** 8. Budget Adjustment- there was a budget adjustment where \$90,000 was moved from hoses and turnout gear to a general firefighting equipment line item to provide more flexibility in purchasing needed equipment.

**Note** 9. Radio Upgrades- the town has applied for a state grant or bonding to fund a town-wide radio upgrade to improve communication infrastructure. The current infrastructure is outdated, and there have been issues with radio communication in certain areas, such as Rocky Neck.

\*The town is exploring the possibility of using a tower at Giants Neck Heights to improve radio coverage

## 6. P<sub>t</sub> and eliminate dead zones.

**Note** There was none.

## 7. Board Comments

**Note** There was none.

## 8. Adjournment

**Decision** MOTION (1)

Mr. Maxfield moved to adjourn the BOF March 26th, 2025, Special Meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Ms. McNamara seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-0.

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

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## Next Meeting

Meeting title: Board of finance march 31st, 2025, special meeting

Date and time: 03/31/25 05:30 pm to: 03/31/25 07:55 pm

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