

East Lyme Board of Finance  
Public Hearing  
April 23, 2012

Present: Raymond J. Hart, Chairman  
Richard A. Bengtson  
Steven J. Kelley  
Lisa H. Picarazzi  
Stephen F. Harney

Absent: Steven J. Carpenteri

A. Call Public Hearing to Order. Chairman Hart called the April 23, 2012 East Lyme Board of Finance Public Hearing to order at 7 p.m.

B. Pledge of Allegiance. The Pledge of Allegiance was observed.

C. Comments by Board of Education Chairman. Mr. Hagan thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to discuss the Board of Education budget. The budget was reduced by \$350,000. The Board of Education will meet tomorrow night to discuss necessary cuts to reduce its budget by this amount. Three teaching positions have been eliminated in the proposed budget.

D. Comments by the First Selectman. First Selectman Paul Formica stated the budget process begins in January. The Town Meeting will be held on May 14. A Referendum will be held on the second Thursday following the Town Meeting.

The Field Services building is operational. A Safety Fair will be held on May 4 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Public Safety garage. The public is invited to attend. Care and Share would like to use portion of the old Town Garage. The Children's Museum would like to use a garage facility for exhibits and displays. A Public Hearing will be held to discuss these uses on May 2 at 7 p.m.

The Streetscape Committee is working on sidewalks, lighting and parking spaces on Rt. 161.

The Athletic Complex is being designed. The state DOT is studying the merits of a train stop in East Lyme.

On May 13 AMTRAK is expected to complete its bridge replacement. It will give us a new beach which will bring new costs and new revenue.

There will be new bathrooms at Veterans Field and McCook's Park.

The Town has managed its money wisely and any unspent money is returned to the General Fund. The Town has returned \$2.5 million and the Board of Education nearly

\$500,000. The budget has increased by 1 ½%. We received new information on Friday that for the fourth year our insurance premiums have remained flat. We have had full reevaluation this year.

The Public Works has purchased fuel for 2013 at a good price. It has had a 3-4 year maintenance program. Parks and Recreation and Youth Services have merged. Fire management and emergency management have been combined.

We have two new police dogs and added a new police officer.

This is the first budget without Esther Williams as our Town Clerk. The Assistant Town Clerk Leslie Blais was appointed interim Town Clerk at a lower salary.

The Probate Court is now a four town Probate District with a slight increase. The costs are shared by each town.

Boards and Department heads are helping to keep costs as tight as possible. We can only estimate what will come from the state.

E. Board of Finance Presentation of Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2012/2013. Chairman Hart reported the Board of Finance has had seven meetings.

There has been work on the Boardwalk, an Athletic Complex will be built, the purchase of Darrow Pond was approved, and the Field Service Building has been completed. A meeting will be held after this Public Hearing in the Media Room. A Town Meeting will be held on May 14 and a Referendum on May 24.

New handrails have been installed on the Boardwalk; a walking path has been completed at Bridebrook Park. The Field Service building was completed and improvements have been made downtown. The AMTRAK beach is expected to be open by the summer of 2013. The East Lyme Athletic Complex has been approved.

We received a budget from the Board of Selectmen with a 2.5% increase. The Board of Finance reduced the increase to 1.81%, which would give a .728 increase to the Mill Rate. The total increase in revenue is \$299,619. The total decrease in revenue is \$649,129. The total reduction in the submitted budget is \$438,518. The Board of Education budget was reduced by \$350,000. The Town budget was reduced by \$88,518. The 2012/2013 budget increased by .81%. The total increase to revenue is 1.8%. Because of the decrease in assessments of property, the Grand List decreased by 12.7%.

F. Public Discussion—Comments from the Public. John Drabik of 18 Drabik Road felt the budget should be flat because houses are being foreclosed and in Southeastern Connecticut there is considerable unemployment. The school system also has 5% less students.

John Bialowans of 61 Walnut Hill Road, East Lyme, asked when will funds be available to repair Walnut Hill Road? There are significant pot holes on Walnut Hill Road. He feels Walnut Hill Road is one of the worst roads in East Lyme, and the Town is lucky no one has gotten hurt on it.

First Selectman Paul Formica replied Walnut Hill Road is a road that needs complete reconstruction. It will cost \$250,000 a mile to reconstruct it. We need \$400,000 to pay for drainage. This must be done first.

Ron Rando of 194 Boston Post Road, East Lyme stated we bonded \$4.3 million for Darrow Pond, \$10 million for the water connection. How much will bonding increase. When will it be paid off?

Mr. Formica stated \$4.2 million was for Darrow Pond and \$3.5 million for the Athletic Complex. For those two projects we anticipate 23.7%. We anticipate 10.7% for the water project which included money for land acquisitions.

Mr. Rando asked if \$10.4 million was to complete the water project? Mr. Formica stated this is for the tank, water line and some land acquisition. We get a 20% subsidy from the state, \$300,000. \$8 million is through the State of Connecticut from Federal EPA land to municipalities.

Mr. Rando felt more than \$300,000 can be cut from the Board of Education. He stated there are 115 less students and it costs \$15,000 per student. We can't afford this budget in the present economy, and he does not expect the economy to improve.

Mike Schultz of Lovers Lane, East Lyme was hoping to get more public input. He felt the water connection is important. He did not believe the gas station downtown was worth much. He felt residents are sending the wrong signal to youngsters. Many homeowners are upside down. Twenty homes in East Lyme are in foreclosure. We need to look closer at what we are spending money on. Our Grand List is \$282.5 million; real estate is \$290.7 million. We need new schools. We will be asking for an increase in the budget of 1.81%. All taxpayers have a vested interest in this budget. Everyone interested in the Board of Education budget will support it. The Town has union contracts, longevity and incentive checks to employees of the Town and school and we pay 80% of health insurance. The school system is opting out of the Town's medical plan. He suggested that the Board of Finance sit in on the Board of Education's contract meetings.

The Town of Salem sends its students to our High School. We are spending \$3.45 million for an Athletic Complex. Will Salem students participate in its cost? We receive \$12,000 per student from Salem but it does not include extra costs. We need to be honest about the true cost of education.

Jim Lombardo of 4 Maple Street state he is speaking as a resident. He recognizes the work of the Board of Finance in these difficult fiscal times. He also knows what makes

any town is quality services and a good educational system. What keeps residents moving forward and students moving forward are the quality of life in our community.

John Drabik felt the quality of life in East Lyme has decreased. The Town accepted the AMTRAK bridge and now we need a beach cleaner. The Board of Finance has a fiduciary responsibility. This budget is bloated in these economic times. He asked the Board of Finance to reduce the budget to a flat budget, because the economy demands it.

G. Board Comments. Lisa Picarazzi thanked the public for attending this Public Hearing and taking interest in the budget. She appreciates comments from the public. However, the Chairman of this Board has worked countless hours.

Mr. Hart stated we now have new information which will bring the budget down. He asked the public to attend the Special Meeting after this Public Hearing in the INTV Room. In order to continue the services we have a slight increase is necessary.

MOTION: Mr. Bengtson moved to adjourn the Public Hearing at 8:30 p.m. Seconded by Ms. Picarazzi. (6-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Gheri  
Substitute Recording Secretary