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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE  
EAST HAVEN, CONN  
*Stacy Giacino, CTC*  
TOWN CLERK

## **TOWN OF EAST HAVEN BOARD OF FINANCE**

### **MINUTES FOR MONDAY MARCH 8, 2021, AT 6:30 P.M. BUDGET WORKSHOP SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**

*Noreen Clough read into the record:*

#### **TO THE RESIDENTS AND TAXPAYERS OF THE TOWN OF EAST HAVEN AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:**

Due to Governor Ned Lamont's March 10, 2020 declaration of a public health emergency and civil preparedness emergency and his subsequently issued Executive Orders 7B and 7D: and, due to the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 in the State of Connecticut including New Haven County, in-person public access to this meeting will not be permitted. **This will be a 100% electronic meeting.**

**The Public can access and participate in this Meeting  
from a computer, tablet, or smartphone:  
Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6420630043?pwd=c2t3dno5Wk5QbEtLT25pL2lWOFBqUT09>

Meeting ID: 642 063 0043

Passcode: budget

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The East Haven Board of Finance held a Board of Finance Budget Workshop meeting on Monday, March 8, 2021 which commenced at 6:30 P.M. via ZOOM, in order to transact the following:

#### **Roll Call:**

Rich DePalma, Noreen Clough, Beth Purcell, Rich Esposito, Ralph Vitale and Al Purzycki were present. Mayor Joseph Carfora was absent. Jim Keeley, Finance Director was also present.

#### **a. Engineering/Inlands/Flood/Erosion (223)**

Johnathan, Town Engineer presented. We have taken a reduction in the Engineering due to the fact I only work 20 hours a week. That brought it down \$65,850.00. There were a few cuts by the Mayor of what I requested but I think we can survive on the \$65,850.00. Beth Purcell stated that the Mayor reduced it by \$7,000.00 so the regular salaries are now \$57,200.00. That is based on 20 hours a week for 52 weeks per Jonathan. Rich DePalma asked if 20 hours was enough for the job to which Johnathan replied this was the agreement when he came out of retirement for this job.

Flood and Erosion-there was a minor cut. The part time wage, due to COVID, we have had a lot less meetings and applications so I think we can live with this too.

Inlands, same thing. We only met about half the time and we can squeeze by with those cuts.

## **b. Public Service (224) Sanitation (226)**

Charlie Coyle stated that his budget is staying the same and we are staying within our means and doing a great job with it. The union will be having negotiations later this year so we are not sure where that is going to go but we filled a lot of positions in the laborers and we are trying to keep everything the same as last year. Noreen asked if there were any open positions. Charlie stated that there is one laborer left. Noreen asked how the trucks are doing. Charlie stated that basically we had minor repairs through the winter because we were hit pretty hard in February, but our 2 mechanics have been doing a great job and we are trying to keep everything in one piece. Noreen stated they were doing a great job. Charlie stated his guys are working hard. Al asked a question although it was inaudible to the undersigned clerk. Related to a credit for \$20,000.00 in 20/21 for non-road repair ?? Jim Keeley stated we received some money from ? control authority, they had to cut into one of the streets so they reimbursed us instead of doing it themselves so they put it in that account but that just haven't gotten around to doing the work yet. Rich DePalma asked how the snow budget worked out. Charlie stated we are right on the money with that.

Sanitation: That is for landfill and that is staying the same as last year. Rich DePalma asked if the transfer fees are the same. Charlie said yes and we have been making money on that from when we instituted that last year. We eliminated a lot of guys from coming in for free or only paying \$5.00 for loading up the dump. Beth stated she remembered we were doing a lot of transfers/recycling costs and asked if that was a different. Inaudible....Jim Keeley stated we were doing a lot of transfers for the account above, trash master, so I made sure I called down this year and made sure they were using the contract right. If you remember last year and even the year prior, the amount that was used was not the contractual price and we made quite a few transfers. This year I made sure I gave them the number ahead of time and said this is the number we need to use.

## **c. Building Maintenance (229)**

Charlie Coyle presented as well. He stated they stayed the same as well here. We have been doing a lot of preventative maintenance on buildings that have not been done in many, many years. We have tried to upgrade our existing buildings. We did the work at the Public Works department; we are in the process of putting new windows and doors that have not been replaced in years. We are going to do the Town Hall roof which will be done within the next month and we are going to do the roof down at the building behind the ice rink and do that in house to save a lot of money. We have the money in the roofing account, and we are going to the roof down there ourselves to save money. We will save \$45,000.00 by doing it with our own guys. Noreen asked why natural gas got cut. Jim Keeley stated we looked at what we ordered, and we looked at what our bills are looking like this year. Inaudible At the old high school we shut the utilities off so that save money too. Last year we spent \$71,000.00. Rich DePalma asked Charlie if we are using LoCip money. Jim Keeley stated we have not used Locip money

the projects that Charlie mentioned for Building and Maintenance. Last year we had some money for the ice rink. Every year when they give us our budget, we must dictate to them exactly what they use it for. Last year we used a big sum for the ice rink, \$300,000.00 and probably paving. Rich DePalma stated we used that money and now we are waiting on the state for future monies? Jim stated yes, we will be getting \$221,000.00 this year if the budget stays as it is.

#### **d. Town Clerk (109)**

Stacy Gravino presented. She stated that public works is doing a great job and the Town Clerk's office is grateful that we are no longer selling dump passes and that is down at Public Works in the proper place and we are grateful for that.

The Town Clerk's office is doing very well. We have not skipped a beat during Covid. We are just as busy post Covid vs. pre Covid. Our revenue goal for this fiscal year is \$499,000. As of March 1<sup>st</sup>, we are at \$505,000.00 with 4 months to go in the fiscal year so we more than covered our budget and we will have excess. Stacy stated her staff is doing an excellent job, we all pulled together during a tough election time with all of the absentees and my staff more than rose to the challenge so I am grateful for the staff I have. Noreen asked why the salaries went down from last year by \$2,000.00. Beth stated perhaps there is one less pay period. Al asked the 3 or 4 pages write up about the clerk's office and one thing that was not in there was a grant for 20/21 but didn't state the amount. Stacy stated it was from the Connecticut State Library and it is for \$7,500.00. Rich DePalma asked if she was at full strength in our department. Stacy said yes. Beth asked if we were good with our software. Stacy stated that the IQS program has been a Godsent and everyone that is using it loves it and the staff loves it. It was a great change for us. Rich DePalma asked if our mapping and photocopying is done. Stacy stated that is done and now we are starting a project with the next state grant money for \$7,500.00 plus monies from our \$2.00 fund. We will have our software company index and scan the Military Discharge documents so that they are on our system safely and only the staff can access. We won't have to go into the books we can just print a certified copy from our computers.

#### **e. Purchasing (105)**

Jim Keeley is presenting for Purchasing. Currently we have a vacancy in purchasing. We sent it out and we had about 18 to 20 applicants and there were some very good qualified individuals. Michelle sent out an award letter today and we are waiting for that person to get back to us. This person has a lot of municipal experience, over 20 years including some extensive purchasing experience. We are really looking forward to working with this individual and working on our team. I think it will be a great help as we go through more bidding and leasing agreements which tends to be a little more extensive than actual purchases. In the budget, everything has stayed the same other than the purchasing agent. As the Board is aware, we did increase the hours from 20 to 30 hours, so the increase is for the 30 hours. I always thought that this was a position that when utilized correctly could use more hours to make sure our bidding is up to par, that our procurement policies are being followed and to get the best possible prices for the Town. Noreen asked if that was the position for Katie that we increased the hours. Jim stated yes. They were increased prior to her leaving and going to a different department. The members of the finance team Bess, Sue and Danielle and Candy have really done a great job, and even though we have been without an agent, the work flow is going really well, everything is still getting paid ahead of time or on schedule so no concerns at the same time we still do look forward to having a new purchasing agent.

Rich DePalma asked if he was doing grants out of this. Jim stated no. A little bit ahead of ourselves but I did put in for a new position for the finance department and so that would be grant related in that

position. Al asked if in terms of purchasing department, what is the future of the Purchasing Department in terms of your connection to it because your ?? is heavy handed in terms of handling purchasing. Jim Keeley stated he knows he is looking at revising the charter which is a positive thing. There are things in the charter that are very black and white, and it is 30 years old. At the end of the day what we are looking for is cost efficiency and having the tax- payers get the most out of their money. Some things that are worded in there, times have changed and technology has caught up and you don't necessarily need a purchasing agent to call around for the best price to 2, 3 or 4 area vendors, when you can get on line and get prices. Shipping is relatively cheap, so it is not like it was going back 30 years. The purchase orders would still come through me. Ideally, the couple of the people we looked at have experience in both the system we have now, our paper system, and in munis which is where we are going. Rich DePalma asked if she does coordination with the BOE. Jim stated strictly town but they will have some bids that go out for capital still get run through this office so our new purchasing agent would still run the bids for the capital projects for BOE, but only capital projects.

Jim also recognized Bruce from the Library. Last year they got back a lot of money from the town for applying PPT grants that the municipality was not eligible for so I just want to give credit to him and the library staff for making that extra effort in being able to return money back to the town in their budget and doing that on their own. We really appreciate it.

## **f. Library**

The library budget is \$36,598.00 in increase which is salaries and related costs, health insurance and building maintenance, all of which are important. The increase has been granted by the mayor's recommended budget. In terms of the payroll protection program, we knew there was an issue of revenue and ? inaudible and we would not be eligible for a second draw from the paycheck protection program. The first draw we were eligible and the second draw we are not. That is due to not showing enough of a decrease in revenue between 2019 and 2020. We are thankful for getting the increase.

Noreen thanked Bruce. Noreen noticed his health reimbursement account has gone down by \$20,000.00. Bruce stated that the Town recalibrated health insurance costs for this current fiscal year. Noreen asked how the building itself doing. Bruce stated that we have been getting support from the DPW and we received a grant to fix the roof and that is being worked on now. The building is doing ok. Al notice that the line item stated the roof is being fixed by fall of this year. Al asked what part of the roof is being fixed. Bruce stated the flat roof to the 1975 building, two out of 3 of them are not in great condition. The 1928 building is a flat roof and all 3 roofs were replaced and the slate roofs is ?? on either side of the building and will be repaired. This will bring things up to code, especially with the flat roofs and will stop the leaking which is the reason this is being done. ? asked because it is a new roof, did he consider having solar put on? Steve Haddon from library board stated we have not considered solar panels for the roof because when we got the engineering scope of work that was needed to do the existing repairs, you would have to factor in what the load of those panels would be and possible damage that the panel mountings would cost and what we would have to put in. That was not possible or feasible. The roof replacement came about after doing our due diligence on another capital improvement program that we were considering. We discovered we had an issue with the roof. We are a year behind that project, and we cannot afford to make any alterations to what we are funded for this project. Bruce stated that the flat roofs that will be installed will have a solar ?? index of 85 so they will not be absorbing a lot of heat. Steve stated we had core samples taken of that roof and the project cost doubled when we discovered that it was loaded with wet asbestos.

Rich DePalma stated the budget was in line with your request and the Mayor's allocation with an increase from last year and it looks like this one is maintainable.

## **g. Animal Shelter**

Owen presented for this department. Since Covid started, Sean and I have been here every day. We have been able to handle every call. What we had done is have a small fundraiser and raised about \$4,500.00 And purchased cat food, dog food and supplies. We have been making deliveries to East Haven residents and right on the New Haven line and North Haven line. Our goal was to keep as many animals out of the shelter during this pandemic which we accomplished. We are looking to put some money away; we have several thousand dollars to start our long-term project to put vinyl siding on the building. Since then, everything is up to speed. Public Works and I have been working well with it and the shelter are in really good shape. We also took on Branford Veterinary Hospital, they were able to reduce our veterinary costs and our willing to come to the shelter. We had a case in the middle of winter, a hoarding case, and we removed 29 cats from a residence, and they were all sickly and we had 100% adoption rate and the volunteer fund paid for all the costs. Rich DePalma stated he sees the biggest increase is in motor vehicle. Owen stated we have a pickup truck is approximately 3 years old with 53k on it and the van is 11 years old and we have 250k miles on it. It is getting tired. We are chasing after little stuff on it, we have had some transmission work done on it, but doorknobs are falling off, paint is falling off and it just starting to come apart on us. Rich DePalma asked if this was going to be enough money, and Owen stated one of the things he spoke to the finance director about was maybe we can consolidate some money out of here. It is approximately half of what I asked for, but we are hoping we can get some money out of this budget and if we have to wait, we will, but what we are looking at is nothing extravagant, we are looking at a van, a van is a part of the shelter that we need for getting larger items like cases of dog food or moving, and it works well in a large cruelty case with having multiple animals in it at the same time. Jim Keeley stated Owen is correct. Owen put in a request for \$52,000.00.?? Our goal was really trying to get a flat budget and have no tax increases, and unfortunately, we did have to cut that out and I spoke with Owen and he thought he could raise some money and maybe we could save some from this year and build on it for next year. We are hoping that during the process if the Board or the Town Council sees fit to cut something then we could put money back into and get this vehicle, so they don't have to do fund raising. We wanted to give more than the \$26,000.00, but the goal was to not have a mill rate increase. Owen also mentioned that there was a reduction in what was asked vs. what is what the mayor recommended but through the negotiations with local 818, supervisor union, we have moved my assistant, Sean to Tuesday and Wednesdays being off and working Sundays and the union has agreed to not look at that as time and half. It was previously overtime on Sundays, so we agreed to move him to Tuesdays and Wednesdays off and the Town no longer must pay overtime for anyone on Sunday. Two-fold, it eliminates ot on Sunday and he is happy to have 2 days off.

## **h. Insurance//Legal Services**

Michael Luzzi presented. We submitted our legal budget. It is the same as it was last year, there are no increases. If you look at the 0113/0115 part time wages, the \$179,660.00 Those are the stipends for the lawyers for the town attorney's office and our 3 assistant town attorneys. They will stay the same. Ryan and Ryan are our labor attorneys and Jennifer Coppola and Attorney Donofrio are land use lawyers and Hugh Keefe's firm is our litigation firm. We anticipated a great number of increases in fees for litigation matters specifically for land use matters and obviously the Maturo matter regarding the Quarry. The Courthouses were shut down during Covid. While we didn't see the increase that we anticipated on the litigation side, we did with respect to labor and land use. Every move that we made, and I give a tremendous amount of credit to the Town Hall Union and the Supervisor's union, Public Works, we negotiated every step of the way with them regarding closures and separation of crews, so we had significant increase in labor legal fees with Ryan and Ryan that we did not anticipate and we had a

couple of terminations so while we saw some savings with respect to the litigation because the courts were closed and cases were not moving, it worked out that we were actually budgeted for actual legal fees and replaced it with some increased costs on the labor side.

## **i. Insurance:**

We have a couple of items that have gone up. The biggest one would be worker's compensation. That is increasing \$150,000.00 vs. last year. Our claims have been getting better. We have old claims that as they age, medical expenses increase and even though we have less claims and your trend is getting better as far as people going out on worker's compensation you have people that have claims against the town that go back a number of years and their medical prescriptions are increasing. We get an estimate from PMA and they handle our wc plan, so they give us a spread sheet and use that as a guideline. We originally put a a million six, When the mayor and I talked and looked at numbers we are having a good year this year and are projected to be under last year's budget, not by a lot, but about \$100,000.00, so we felt we could cut it \$50,000.00 there, still increase by \$150,000.00 but felt good with that number.

Mike Luzzi stated we are having regular meetings and case evaluations with PMA and I want to say even more so than every quarter, and we are trying to move some of the older cases and Jim is correct worker's compensation cases never close, sometimes you don't have the opportunity to close out the cases. Over the course of the last 6 or 7 months we have tried, along with PMA, to close out some of cases. So, some of the liability stuff that exists, you are talking about some are from 25 years ago. We are trying to move some to close them. Our comp rates are driven by accident rates and we are trying to educate people and we are trying to get boe online, bc the town is also responsible for that wc side as well. We are talking about things like safety seminars and reporting accidents when they occur. Rich DePalma asked if they had an accident team. Mike stated it is reported immediately to pma who is a 3<sup>rd</sup> party administrator and they have a contracted investigation, ultimately it is their decision what to do with the case and what direction to move in. They present the facts to us and we make the determination along with them whether the case is compensable and of course medical decisions made by their experts as the case moves forward. If there is an opportunity to settle the case, they will make the recommendation if they think the case is ready to settle and we will talk about it. Even if we do that up front, we evaluate them up front.

Mike stated we have been fortunate bc the pma program that we have it really has a great deal of resources for us and we have been utilizing it.

Beth asked if the fire property and misc. insurance line, what does that entail. Jim stated that most of that is property insurance. We have property insurance and we have the senior bus and municipal bonding for the Town Clerk and Tax Collector that need to be bonded employees. But the majority is property. I will say that we have investigated the property insurance for some things that we have, especially we have made big purchases this year and if we were to lose that that is a large sum of money. Mike stated that we are evaluating because we do have some new equipment, we have asked our agent of record to really evaluate if we have the appropriate insurance as we are self-insured. We want to see if it is more cost effective to possibly insure those outside of our self-insurance.

**Adjournment: 7:22 P.M**

***Susan Mauro***

**BOF Clerk**

