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

### **MINUTES FOR TUESDAY MARCH 9, 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:  
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The East Haven Board of Finance held a Board of Finance Budget Workshop meeting on Tuesday, March 9, 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. Assessor/Board of Assessment Appeals (107/108)**

Mike Milici presented for this department. Mike sent a letter dated to the Board of Finance regarding a reduction in one of his positions. This letter was read into the record.

Beth Purcell asked if there were 2 full time people now and looking to hire a 3<sup>rd</sup> full time? Mike stated we had 3 full time and the vacancy has been cut to part time. Rich DePalma asked how long has he been without the 3<sup>rd</sup> person. Mike stated probably 2 or 2 ½ months. Noreen Clough with the inaudible? out going on, moving forward, I know you said next year, when does it effect our tax bill? The tax bill for the revaluation won't be until the following July 2022. Mike stated basically everything is up, all the neighborhoods, the condos are up and we have been getting this influx of people from New York and New Jersey that are paying higher prices particularly down in some of the shore areas. The average neighborhoods are selling for \$20,000.00 to \$30,000.00 higher and some of the Morgan Point areas I have seen it up \$100,000.00 right now. This is what you want. You want your town and your values to be higher rather than lower because it makes you more attractive to buyers. Rich DePalma stated the years we have had drastic increases to our property values, what is the percentage of appeals? Mike stated it depends. Mike said the commercial side is a little heavier, residential is mostly heavy with the water front folks after a large increase. You get pockets here and there of other neighborhoods.

Michelle Benivegna spoke next specifically regarding to his request that he wanted this position be full time. Michelle stated this position historically has been a part time position. In 2015, when the individual who just vacated the position, was placed in this position, it was made to be a full-time position. Also, I have been approached by Mike within the last year to go back to making this position a part time position so I don't know why we are advocating now to make it a full-time position. Secondly this position had been vacant for almost a good part of year, solidly since December it has been vacant and most of the summer it was vacant. The Department has been functioning, meeting all the guidelines and requirements they need to make so the decision to go back to a part time position is really based on the department's work that it is producing and also the savings. There is about a \$64,000.00 savings by cutting this position to part time. \$47,000 in health insurance and \$17,800.00 in salary and also if you look at the assessor's budget, we have added \$8,000.00 for overtime. That item can be used at Mike's discretion, if overtime is needed for his staff. We have also increased Mike's hourly wages so he gets paid for an additional 2.5 hours a week, so we have increased the department's overall ability to meet the demands while keeping this position part time and actually vacant. I don't know why there is confusion on that. This is what the Mayor is proposing and that is what will be funded because we are responsible for the needs of the employment requirements for the town and the departments and that is the decision regarding that.

As far as the staff moral goes, I am a little concerned about you saying they have been working without getting paid. That is a conversation we need to have because this is the first, I am hearing about it. Michelle really wants the Board to look at the budget and see the additional monies we put in there at Mike's discretion to use and we are doing this because historically this has been a part time position and the significant savings that the Town would gain.

Mike stated that historically this has not been a part time position. Michelle stated it went full time in 2015. Mike stated from the time that he got here in 1990 to 2015, we had 3 full time positions. That position was cut out of spite at that time. Then when they put the other person in and they made her full time that was for different reasons. The vast majority of the time we have had 3 full time individuals in the office. Rich DePalma reiterated to Mike that he stated they were working without getting paid, now I know you didn't have overtime in that budget, so how were you doing it. Mike stated they just did it because they wanted to get the work done and they didn't want to make a fuss and did not want to get the unions involved. The two of them are extremely dedicated individuals and I myself put hours in that I did not charge for. We wanted to get the work done and wanted to get the work done on time and that is just how we operate in my office. We are all very diligent about what we do.

Rich DePalma asked if the over time would be enough. Mike stated for now it is fine.

Board of Assessment of Appeals:

Mike presented for this department as well and stated that the Board of Appeals is going to be heavier traffic because of the revaluation. I originally put a figure in of \$6,000.00 and that is what I put in for the prior full revaluation from around 10 years ago so I used that figure. We can go with that for now and if I need more I can go back for a transfer. Rich DePalma stated we would not deny Mike or taxpayers the right to appeal their requests.

## **b. Finance (102)**

Jim Keeley spoke for this department. Before getting to the budget Jim wanted to say thank you to his employees, Danielle, Sue, Bess and Candy. This year has been quite an adventure for us. We had employees doing payroll from their sick bed, etc. Our benefits and risk manager took calls and emails at 10:00 and 11:00 P.M. from first responders worried about COVID. Jim stated they are remarkable women that were so flexible in us being able to perform our duties this year. I just wanted to thank them. I would also like to say that we applied for and received, \$363,000.00 in CRF funds from the state. I worked in conjunction with Chief Marcarelli as well as Chief Lennon and Marsha at the PD to secure these funds which was great news for the Town. Rich DePalma asked where those funds went and what were they for. Jim stated that the CRF funds are only to be used for COVID related (inaudible)? When we first applied for them, they had to be used by 12/30/2020. We started to put expenditures against them and they have since increased it and are allowing up to 12/30/2021. We are also holding on to some of the monies to make sure to be sure we are financially sound for this year, next year and years going forward. We have the money and we will see where it is needed and used for Covid related costs and I plan on using every bit of that \$363,000.00. I will tell you in our budget you will see an additional position for salaries. That is the main reason why. As we receive funds and as we

need funds, we want to make sure we are first in line to receive those funds. We want to make sure all our t's are crossed and all our I's are dotted. Unfortunately, the state at times has put in their preliminary budget numbers, funds, and toward the end, they run out of funds. We want to make sure we are first in line. We want to make sure we have someone in place to make that turnaround as quick as possible. Also, I would like to use that position to help us getting running on this MUNIS program that we have talked about for so long. Right now, we just don't have the people power to have someone working on big projects without getting interrupted. We do payroll every other week, we cut AP every week, we have the audit, 1099, W-2, 1095s, so it is hard to have someone concentrate on the big projects, like grant accounting and fund accounting, so this is the reason we are requesting this position. Most of our other line items are staying about the same. The (inaudible)? and accounting services has decreased this year. This is an update year, ever other year is a comprehensive year and an update year, comprehensive reports require a lot more time and effort so the bill is larger. This year is a lot smaller than last year.

Al asked (inaudible)? Charge their expenses to (inaudible)? Jim stated that what has happened that when we originally had the funds. We follow guidance from the State which is why we are looking for another person because every time you get a funding source there could be different stipulations. By the time we get around to budgeting grant funds it will be in a different fiscal year and the last thing we would hate is for something not to be done 100% correctly and we would have to give funds back. That would create a hardship. When they originally came out with these funds the stipulation was that they had to be spend by 12/30/2020 so I put the funds in the general fund, I have since moved them to a special revenue fund. It can then be carried forward to the next year. We are looking forward to consistency. We will fully use them and use them as we are supposed to use them by the state. The funds will show up on the audit report.

#### **c. Mayor (101)**

Michelle Benivegna spoke for this budget. The Mayor's budget had a decrease of \$13,439.00 that was attributed to our Economic Development Director Ray Baldwin who came in at a lower salary than that position has been budgeted for in the past so there is a salary savings there.

#### **d. Community Services (880)**

This department had a lot of reallocations and was also decreased from the prior year as well. The goal this summer coming out of Covid is to really get our residents out back in the community and join the activities that we all were unable to participate in last year. We did up some of those events. We increased the garden club, we had plans for a Halloween celebration that we could not have last year, senior day. We have also increased funds to the food pantry because they have been tremendous. We have upped the misc. community services to \$13,000.00. That is because we do want to have the ability to jump to any opportunity to do additional activities outdoors, for example we did some movie nights which were a success. We plan on doing that again this year and do a few extra and maybe a couple of extra summer concerts on the green and on the beach. We wanted to make sure we had that money there to be used. Even with those reallocations and the enhancing of some of those line items there was still a decrease in the budget of almost \$15,000.00. Beth asked about line item, adult day care, I see

that they have not spent anything the last few years, is that for transportation out of town? Michelle stated some of these items we have had. Because they have not been used in the past, we had lowered them. Jim stated there was a payment to East Shore Regional, unfortunately our system does not give too much information. Michelle stated we left it there because we don't want to take items out of the department.

Rich DePalma stated that we transferred money from the Fall Festival even though we did not have one last year. Michelle stated the fall festival received their money so they, obviously did not have a fall festival so, we are hoping that with the funds last year and the funds that are budgeted this year that we can really pick it up a little bit. The residents really need a way to get out and enjoy our community, however I do foresee some Covid expenses that the fall festival committee will be incurring. They may need to have a few less vendors due to social distancing, hand sanitizing, etc.

#### **e. Employee Benefits (167)**

Danielle Feeley presented for this budget. I am going to highlight some of the items under the employee benefits account. As this budget is proposed to you, the account would be increasing by \$959,000.00. That includes one line item decreasing, 4 line items remaining the same and 5 increasing. The 0901 Anthem Blue Cross insurance is our largest line item under this account. The original department request that you see came from using Anthem's renewal that we received directly from them plus we were including estimated costs for our over 65 Medicare supplement group, our (inaudible)? HSA payments and (inaudible)? broker fees. After receiving our renewal, we did have a presentation from our agent of record. They presented to the Town and they showed a claims cost detail and provided us a history of claims that reached or are reaching the \$155,000.00 stop loss and basically gave us projection ideas that lead the town to the \$6.8 million recommended budget. The 0904 life insurance, those rates are locked in until June of 2023, so I looked at the current census that we have and the knowledge that we might have some additional fire fighters and police officers being hired soon and we should be able to have no increase to that line item. The 0910 retirement fund contribution increase is due to Public Act 19-124. This Act is increasing employer contributions by 11.4% for Police and Fire Department employees and 6.9% for Town side which includes Town Hall, public works and dispatch. 0965 Unemployment compensation. Putting it at \$40,00.00 for this year would increase it from \$30,000.00 in 20/21. There are still some unknowns relating to Covid extended benefits and then historically this is a line item that is always increased in an election year because there is a possibility of a change in appointed personnel. The 0970 is a new line item that was put in for anticipated labor negotiations/raises. There are union contracts expiring. Town Hall, Public Service, Dispatch has a wage opener so that what will be covered there. 0972 Retirement lump sum payments. Some of these expenses are already known. They are for retirees that get half of their payout when they leave and then the other half the next fiscal year. We try to estimate some future possibilities based on the fire contract and the estimated number of people who expressed an interest in retiring.

Al stated he was looking at a note that he had last year was discussion of looking into the State employee health plan available to teachers, etc. Danielle stated that she does not know that the

town is looking into that at this time. This was handled more by the labor attorney and the administration. To my knowledge we are not moving toward that at this time.

Noreen stated previously when we had labor negotiations, they were put in a budgeted salary line item. If the contracts are negotiated don't they still go to salary line item? Or are we transferring from this line item into salaries. Jim stated the reason I put them into one line item this year and added an additional line item is because we have so many contracts that are coming due you will see the decrease from what was originally requested to what the mayor recommended and part of that is two-fold, one because of the settlement of the fire contract and hopefully we will have another contract settled in the next few weeks. That lowers that number. Because the personal service report is so long and involves so many people what would happen is if the contracts were resolved and we go to change the numbers it changes so many pages and it is so hard to keep track. When you are dealing with only one or two unions and you kind of know what they are, that is easy enough but because it was basically every single contract that we have we put it in one number. Noreen stated so we will transfer from that line item when we need it to a specific department salary line. Jim stated, yes. Some contracts are expired now. This is only for current employees not retired employees. Beth stated in theory next year that number should be zero next year at the end of FY 22. Jim said he hopes so because that would mean all the contracts are settled.

#### **f. General Services (885)**

Jim Keeley stated we do not have too many changes. We have special assignments. Same as last year. It works in conjunction with the revenues. Town requested Police Overtime, you will see that this year we have not spent a lot of money and that stems from us not having a lot of things going on such as fall festival. We anticipate the activities hopefully in full swing this year, so we brought it back up to past amount. Street and traffic lights, we decreased it based on Honeywell's project being done. They promised us savings. Telephone utilities we lowered, Tina in the Mayor's office did a good job of renegotiating with the lines we had going in and out. Ray Baldwin is our regional economic developer and we have increased that and gone out and now subletting for a grants person to get us grants to work with economic development. He is working hard to get more business into the town to increase our grand list. Town wide capital improvements. (sidewalk repairs and maintenance) Rich DePalma asked why this is in a general budget and not in Capital. Jim stated as we talked about before, we are trying to get away from bonding and paying interest for long periods of time. We are trying to put as much as we can and show a real picture of what it costs to run a town every year. Sidewalks repairs and maintenance come up. The Town did have a town wide capital improvement, which has not been included in the budget in 10 years or so, but if a project comes up or we need these repairs we are trying to put them in the budget and get in front of it and not bond.

Noreen stated to Jim that basically we are doing what we did with the police cars. Jim stated correct. We are trying to create a more balanced budget where more expenses that are occurring on a yearly basis are being represented in the general fund budget and we are paying for it now vs. 20 years from now. Rich DePalma asked if there are any stipulations on these funds in how they are being used for projects. Jim stated right now when I put it in the preliminary one, I put

it in the Town wide capital improvements. There has been some discussion about making it more specific. Jim will send a revised budget that will say so it will be more specific. The last thing that you will see is Honeywell services that is a caveat that is in the Honeywell ESPC services Contract which is new. This is the Energy Savings Performance Contract and is what we are going to have to pay Honeywell for the next 20 years to make sure that we get our guaranteed savings under the contract. The contract is very long and nobody currently had any part of that contract when it was originally signed. The bill came in January and I asked what the bill is for because they are done, and they referenced the contract, and it is in there and we will have a meeting with Honeywell and will verify all of this but this year it is \$52,000.00 and in year 20 it is close to \$80,000.00. The fact that we are under contract and the fact that we have to pay we need to put it in the budget and we need to prepare to pay it. Rich DePalma stated this is the year that we are supposed to set the rate for our savings, but since it has been a COVID year and the lights have been shut off in a lot of areas, how will we absorb those savings. They were not going to start judging us until the year was completed. I think is either 12/1 or 1/1 which obviously it delays our payments only if we are not getting our savings that we are looking for. During most of the Covid period they would not start evaluating us yet and it would not have been until December 2020, but I am not certain on date.

#### **g. Tax Collector (106)**

Anna DellRosso presented for this department. She stated the salary item is lower because her salary is lower than the prior tax collector. Longevity is gone. The prior tax collector was the last one who was eligible for that. That is a decrease. The other decrease is all the way on the bottom which is line item 694. That account was being used prior years for a local 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendor to print out demand notices for large mailings for delinquent notices. That 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendor has closed during the pandemic so Lucille was left with some hardships so she had no choice but to use Quality Data Services. Based on her using that service, I realized that QDS is less expensive than the local vendor so I am hoping that all the estimates that I received from QDS, all the demand notices and delinquent notices are enough in that line item. Other than that, everything stays the same. December and January due to the pandemic we were helping every tax payer by phone, on line or at the door. Our collection rate is at 97%. As of today, it was set at 96.7 so we met it already. We collected 98% in real estate taxes already only for the 2019 grand list. That 2% we work on every day to find these people. We are working with the assessor's office and they help us tremendously when we get business/personal property bills as undeliverable. They keep us up to date whether the businesses have moved, etc. Motor Vehicle is a very challenging account. We collected so far 91% for 2019 grand list. We collected 77% of the motor vehicle supplementals. Keep in mind that the supplements went out December 31<sup>st</sup>. So, we collected 77% of those bills in January and February. That is a lot of work. It is very hard with motor vehicle because people move, they sell, they don't change their addresses with DMV, it is a challenge. Per Rich DePalma, they have to register if they come to you? Ann stated yes. Every single delinquent motor vehicle bill has been reported to DMV so they have no choice but to contact us. Noreen congratulated Anna.

#### **h. Recreation/Pool (661/662);**

Michelle Benivegna presented for this department. There was a slight increase for \$5,000.00 for this department. Jim stated we had some leagues that were cancelled this year that we knew ahead of time, so we have the rec league, umpires, and the rec basketball, so hopefully we plan on everything being full function this year. Michelle stated that we are hopefully posting the position for the director. We hope to have someone in place for the beginning of May, and they will pick up with the beach, etc. The goal is to have a season next year. We left a revenue in there. The budget for the ice rink came in a little lower because we are anticipate having a functioning rink, but there wasn't going to be as much of an expense because of electricity and things like that. Electricity should go down. Rich DePalma asked if Michelle was anticipating opening up the summer camp and how are we going to do that with COVID. The plan Michelle stated that the YMCA is offering summer camps and they have a very solid history of running camps during Covid. They were able to run a full summer camp last year during Covid and they will run our camps this year. We will have more programs this year. This will give us a little more time to get the rink up and running and enhancing the rec department to bring it to an elevated level and provide more activities for our families which they have never really had in the past. Rich wanted to know how we would pay for the YMCA. Michelle stated it is their own entity. We will have a significant savings there. It is in the budget and it is \$160,000.00 savings in this department. Noreen asked if there was any movement on the pool. Michelle stated we are working a few avenues. We are exploring a few options. It is a very expensive endeavor. We had some discussion with WINN corporation. We have worked out something with the YMCA with our seniors. The Mayor and Ray Baldwin are actively working on a feasible plan to get us a Town Pool. Rich DePalma asked if she sees us losing any teams. Michelle stated we are working really hard with youth hockey to help them understand the situation we are in and also working aggressively to get these R&P's back and get a bid out to get some ice made so we don't lose the season. Our intention is not to. I don't think we will have ice this summer, but we are going to do everything in our power to have it late fall for the hockey season to start. Beth asked if the position she is posting a full-time position. Michelle stated it is a full time 30-hour position.

#### **i. Fire Department. (333)**

Noreen commended the fire department for what they went through.

Chief Marcarelli stated my ask was \$7155781. Mayor's office came back with \$6963403. They made some reductions based on anticipated vacancies being filled anticipated retirements and new hires coming in at a lower salary rate. I believe that I will be able to come in around that number. The other reductions in the Mayor's budget were not that significant. A reallocation of funds from some accounts to other contractals. One account I would of liked to see my ask was for EMS supplies. For some reason this year surprisingly, we did not spend as much money on EMS supplies. In the past we have either come in at budget or over budget. It



is close to 90% of our activity, but I am contributing that to decrease in calls during the last year fiscal year. Our call volume during 2020 as compared to 2019 was down 1000 calls for service for the year. Comparing this year to where we are right now, to where we were last year, we are way up and we are actually way up to the year prior to that. Post pandemic we are seeing a demand for services. The opioid crisis has not left East Haven alone. We have had many fatalities this year and many over doses for which the fire department routinely responds to.

There is a new line item. It is volunteer tax abatement (33440) This is the first time this is in our budget. I am estimating it at \$70,000.00 per year. The year before last a new ordinance was passed to increase, after state law was passed, the ability for the Town to increase the tax incentive that is given to volunteer fire fighters. Essentially doubling it. It is difficult for us to predict because it is based upon previous years activity, individual volunteers and there are new folks that are eligible for the life time benefit. That will increase the number as well. I did the best I could to estimate that number. Jim Keeley stated that it is the first year that we put it there just so it was a bit more transparent. In years past it was net it against the tax collections. That number was very small then. Rightfully so, the volunteers do a tremendous job in the Town of East Haven, and the fire chiefs have fought to get them increases and to reflect people going out to do the work.

Rich DePalma asked how many volunteers do we have. Chief did not have an exact number but he believes the active volunteer list is 19. Some of those members don't qualify for benefit because of residency or participation. It is between 11 and 19 town wide.

Noreen asked the Chief how many people were out on medical leave. Chief stated that 21 numbers were impacted by COVID. During the first wave we weathered it well and nobody was sick. We had many people required to quarantine, not through exposure at work. The second wave we had a lot of folks get sick, including myself. A lot of the career fire fighters became ill and some actually caused other folks in the fire house to get sick. Currently nobody is on injury. I have 8 vacancies. I will have 12 effective 4/1/2021. Possibly 2 additional retirements in June. We initiated 2 hiring classes and by the time I went to hire the first group they were all hired in other departments. We gave another test so we are interviewing on the 17<sup>th</sup> and are planning on running our own recruit training program which typically we spend money on tuition to send them to the academy because of covid the last academy was changed and the physical ability test at the state level was not as available due to covid and it altered our ability to get anyone into the academy class that is going on now. We have to run our own. With a number of 12 candidates, it is a reasonable number to run our own. We have a new and enthusiastic training officer James Murray, who will spear head that. Hopefully in house in about 10 weeks.

Noreen asked how the 24-hour shifts are working out. This seems to be working out ok. It allows us to maintain a competitive edge with surrounding departments who are on that schedule. The new fire fighters coming in don't want to work the old conventional schedule.

Al asked How is fleet doing chief stated it is in good shape. We are custom building one now which should be ready in about 12 months for station 4 which will allow us to retire a 30-year-old apparatus. Command vehicle is good

Al asked How is fleet doing chief stated it is in good shape. We are custom building one now which should be ready in about 12 months for station 4 which will allow us to retire a 31-year-old apparatus. Command vehicle is brand new and allowed us to retire a pickup truck that was no longer suitable for emergency response that the pw is still using. The most lacking are is are facilities.

The yellow truck was basically thrown in as part of the purchase of squad one to replace the old engine 6. That will be retiring in about a year. Al asked about the status of fire fighters vaccinated. Chief said we are almost at 100%. The fact that they are not all vaccinated is requiring us to all wear masks in the fire house with the recent CDC guidelines, if you are cohorting with folks all vaccinated you don't need to wear a mask.

Fire Commission: This is pretty straight forward, hovers around \$15,000.00 used to provide medical exams for the volunteers ff and career on an annual basis required by OSHA. The other is prof dev and training. We can bring outside venders to provide prof training for vol and career fire fighters. The other is for secretary for minutes.

#### **j. Debt/Revenue Service (771)**

Debt Service: Rich DePalma asked how we reduced the principal so much. Jim Keeley stated last year we passed the budget and we went and restructured that after the budget was passed so that is how the principal is lower. We will have a savings the year we are currently in and also next year. Jim stated we have a better rate. Last year as we were going thru the budget process, we had a lot of questions about whether or not we were getting covid money, about revenue sources not being there for us, retirements in the fire department. We also had (inaudible) ? revenue, the million dollars from Honeywell. At the time we restructured and that created some flexibility. We wanted to make sure that if all or any of the above things happened that we would still be financially set. Currently just for the retirement lump sum we are over by almost \$300,000.00. There have been negotiations as you are aware with the fire department, to reduce the costs going on so that they are getting paid out over 3 years v. 1 year. The reality was that last year we had over 1.5 million dollars being paid out for ff retirements. We had to restructure as a safety net. It seemed like a prudent move with interest rates so low. That is why you are seeing a decrease. It will start going up next year and what we are looking for is to not financing anything this year. We do have cash available to use to fund the programs we already approved and we look to keep the capital projects limited again this year. This is what we need to do to bring the debt service down. Rich DePalma asked what the rate would be from and to when we refinance. Jim stated before when we were refinancing, most of our rates are between 4.5 and 6.5. The rates are more toward now are 2.37 up to 5 in later years. Jim stated our principal will be a little higher than previously but the interest rate will be lower.

Noreen's Clough mentioned that Information systems is in the budget but they hadn't discussed it. Jim Keeley stated this is something that was something new last year. We put \$100,000.00 last year and we are looking for \$150,000.00 this year. We are getting Microsoft 365 under contract. We also will use some of this toward our MUNIS program to get it up and running. IT

is old to say the least. We need to get started in the right direction. What we are finding is unfortunately with more IT comes contracts associated with it. Jim does not have an itemized list. When we started the budget the CRF money was supposed to expire last year but when they made the announcement that you can carry it forward (inaudible) Jim stated the service is not acceptable at the Town Hall as he is in his office and it keeps cutting out. Noreen asked when we have IT issues, where do we go. Jim stated it is 2-fold. We have a person that comes in that has been our IT person. It is a sole proprietorship. If he is on the other side of the state when we need him, we have to wait. Tina Hedley in the Mayor's office has been our IT liaison right working with us. We call her for problems where we don't have to pay the outside vendor for.

Noreen thanked Jim for putting the revenue in because we usually don't see it till the end.

Motion to adjourn: at 7:59 P.M.

*Clerk's note: Jim Keeley faded in and out at times, along with other members. Therefore, the minutes are as clear and concise as what was heard.*



ASSESSOR'S OFFICE  
MICHAEL J. MILICI, C.C.M.A. II  
Assessor

Dear Board of Finance members,

I am respectfully requesting your review and consideration to restoring the position of Chief Assessment Clerk/ Computer Operator from its budgetary reduction to a part-time position back to full-time status. Please consider the following:

The perceived workload this past year is skewed due to COVID closures and health challenges associated there with. When the normal office visitor load is present, all three positions need to be staffed to service the public's requests.

- Title searchers and related persons.
- Tax bill adjustments – particularly during the July and January tax season.
- Elderly/Additional Veteran exemption application periods for literally hundreds of residents.
- Annual Personal Property Declaration processing – we are approaching 1,600 active businesses and out of state motor vehicles on the Grand List.

During Grand List processing periods, Kirstin and myself must perform complex calculations to ensure the accuracy of all grand list figures. The third full time person is needed to cover the incoming calls and counter traffic with the other clerk.

This is a revaluation year. The Town will be spending \$327,000 on this project. There will be a marked increase in workload as we coordinate with eQuality Valuation Services to complete the project by January 2022 so this is the worst time possible for reduced staffing. It is the most critical time for the office and of pinnacle importance to the Town as this will set the stage for the next five years with respect to real estate assessments and tax dollars generated there from. Under the proposed cut the thoroughness the office is expected to maintain, and is accustomed to, will be in question.

Morale wise this will be very detrimental. Kirstin and Patty have been stretched to the limit all year trying to keep the office up to date. They both have worked additional hours without pay to complete our duties effectively. These contributions were an integral part of generating the significant increase to the Grand List we experienced this year and the timeliness of its completion in turn did not slow down the budget process.

In essence we have dealt with a full-time person working at a part-time capacity in the Chief Assessment Clerk position for 5 years which forced both remaining staffers to take on additional duties and responsibilities. It became mentally taxing (no pun intended) and created a continual stressful situation when it came to needing time off (planned or unplanned) because the other staff member is left handling the entire workload for that time period not to mention planning difficulties for me as the Department Head from a work perspective. In my view, Kirstin and Patty will be punished for their diligence if this reduction in hours stands which would be truly unfair and unjustified. The unwarranted, additional complication this proposed cut would create would exacerbate what has already been an unhealthy and frustrating work environment which that has already begun to improve with the expectation that a reliable replacement would be found to fill the post.

In summation, the Assessor's Office is the primary revenue producing agency for the Town. I am cognizant of the Town's finances as my budget has ended in the black for thirty-one years and have always been a proponent of smart spending but the chief revenue producer is the last place that should be cut. Once again, thank you for your consideration regarding this matter of our mutual concern.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MJ Milici', with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael J. Milici, C.C.M.A.II, SPA  
Assessor