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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

EAST HAVEN, CONN

Lisa Balter

TOWN CLERK

**EAST HAVEN BOARD OF FINANCE
BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES
MARCH 6, 2024**

The East Haven Board of Finance held a Budget Workshop Meeting on Wednesday, March 6, 2024, at 6:30 P.M. in the Mario Giamo, Joseph Vitale Meeting Room, Lower Level to transact the following

Roll Call

Mayor Joseph Carfora was not present. Rich Esposito, Beth Purcell, Al Purzycki, Ronald DeSena and Chris Perdo were present. Ralph Vitale was present via phone. Jim Keeley, Finance Director was also present.

Jim Keeley spoke (inaudible)

a. Administration and Management (120)

Michelle Benivegna presented for this department. Everything is staying the same except a COLA increase for the Administration staff. There are a few minor increases in office supplies. There is an increase on the significant side is for physicians and other medical services. This comes back to the Police Accountability Act. Our police officers are required to have more screenings and based on a full staffed police department, that increase is what is recommended to cover those costs. We have additional animal control officers who had additional screenings. Those expenses come out of that line item. Al asked what were the 2-line item increased. Michelle stated regular wages and we increased the medical 0681 line by \$5,000.00 for additional screenings. Beth asked how many people are in this budget. We have a part time assistant, myself, and Ed. We went to a part time assistant last year. Al asked about Emergency Services and Conservation and Development Plan had not seen any expenses this year and you have money in for next year, what is that for? Michelle stated we have used a little bit. This is for when we have situations in Town where we have to put people up, for instance if a house gets condemned, if our building department states it is inhabitable, due to infestation of animals to no heat and running water, and if we condemn it, we are responsible for putting them up in a hotel. We can pull from that, where individuals need food we can work with social services department and provide gift cards to Stop & Shop.

b. Housing/Urban Renewal (445&446);

Michelle Benivegna presented for this department. No change in housing authority.

Meetings are on a quarterly basis which saves us clerk fees. Rich asked if that was enough to get us through. Michelle stated yes.

c. Senior Center (665);

Bob Petrucelli presented for this department. Majority of budget increase are for salaries. There are 2 differences this year. You have heard me for years talk about the Connecticut Dept. of Transportation Grant I have written for the second bus. It will be here, and will cost the Town \$64,000 for a sixteen-passenger bus. The part time wage increase is for a part time bus driver. I divided my current bus driver who is full time salary in half. I thought it was prudent to get a part time driver to start. \$21,840.00 for the part time bus driver. The second increase is overtime. Amber, my current bus driver we had a great interest in driving seniors to concerts on the green, fall festival and those types of things. We are putting money toward that this year. We have bingo events and community events back-to-back and we need the custodian coming in to clean so there is a little bit of money there for overtime. We have 250 active members which is our highest ever. Beth asked if the van only picks people up from Messina Drive?. Bob said the big two are Messina Drive and Woodview. We have asked people to register for that. Al asked where does the routine maintenance and fuel come from. Bob stated public works. Beth asked what the equipment and maintenance budget for? Bob stated 0658 is for (inaudible) Chris asked about overtime. If we are doing more bussing and hiring a part time person, and the second bus will be for appointments, etc. are we going to try to divide up the use of that part time person before we use overtime? Michelle stated the challenge is that it would be a 19.5-hour person and capped of that amount. The ideal situation is that the person who is 19.5 hours based on the appointments they have that week, if they have extra hours they can do it. (inaudible) Having Amber be the only bus driver and having her commit to 6 days is a lot. That is why we did the pre-registration for the activities on the green on Sunday. Rich stated by the increase flow they are doing a great job over there.

d. Social Services (442);

Bob Petrucelli presented for this department. The idea here was to have a one stop shopping. Youth Services has been moved out of Social Services department to its own department (664) That leaves us with my stipend as Social Services director, a full-time position, and supplies.

e. Registrar of Voters (110);

Rich DePalma and Alberta Vitale presented the Board with information about the State Mandates. Alberta stated as registrars we have a lot of duties, we are the administrators of the elections and primaries and we have responsibilities to the electors, to the Voter of Registration laws to administering the state and federal election laws, administering early voting. In addition

to all those responsibilities, we have to recount as required on occasion. We can make referrals to (inaudible) we have responsibility to have continuing education and a number of credits. Rich and I are certified but we have to keep up with it. We spend a lot of time to be sure we are complying and our data bases are clean. We get 75 to 200 envelopes a month with new registrations, people who move out of Town, people who moved to a different address in Town. We Notice requirements, office hours requirements, deadlines for elections and primaries. Rich handed the Board, Guilford, Branford, and North Haven's ROV budgets from last year, and this does not include early voting and what we requested for early voting does not even match some of what they have. (inaudible) Michelle stated they have a larger tax base. Rich stated the state came out with an early voting handbook. He showed the BOF. Early voting has added a huge burden, we had to go to go over the drafts, we have to provide our input, attended many zoom meetings with the SOS, answered surveys plus.

Salary account has been inaudible for many years. In 2015 I think they requested \$15,00.00 each. I requested what they requested 8 years ago. We are in and out of the office, seems more in the office lately, and basing on a 10 hour week. Some days it is 20 hours, but I based it on 10 hours a week. In the past there was a stipend for increased election hours. If there were 2 elections there were 2 stipends and it was not built into the salary. We added into the salary the increase for early voting. The state states that the ROV and deputies you need to always have one of each party. It will be (205?) hours this year. We did not anticipate this but the SOS made it clear we each need to be in the office during early voting hours. Special elections are 4 days of early voting, regular primaries and general elections are set amounts, primaries are 10 and general elections are 14. The hours vary by day. Part time wages will be good for the two elections, not the early voting. Rich and Alberta each get \$1950. for administering the election. That has always been through part time wages. 115a primary day, 115b is early voting and the people that needs to be staffed. (14 days) Chris asked if they were looking to increase the stipend. Alberta stated no, we included it as an hourly wage instead of a stipend. Presidential election is a heavy turnout. We cannot reduce staffing. Jim asked about the hourly wage on the 110 it states what the secretary of state recommends, Rich stated it is something he got earlier in the year. Jim was curious why the hourly wage increases. Rich stated that is up to your discretion. Alberta stated we have to provide a bit of an incentive and we are asking them to work extremely long hours. Michelle asked what the hourly rate is for their secretary. It is \$22 or \$23 per hour per Alberta and Rich. Michelle stated would not it make more sense to increase her hours at her rate to cover some of these extra duties in the office. She is not a registrar so she cannot do all the duties. Michelle stated she understands they are trying to make it consistent with what other people get paid in general. Your proposing part time wages a requested increase of 4.5% increase for your secretary. Michelle stated our Unions are between a 2 and 2.5% increase. From the Mayor's perspective and Finance, we stay in line with our Unions and CBA and that increase you are requesting is significantly higher. Inaudible. Michelle asked if they received State supplemental funding for early voting. Alberta and Rich stated yes it will cover this fiscal year. \$10,550.00 offered from the State. Alberta and Rich spoke about each election, the November, and the

primary elections. I looked at the Mayor's recommendation and it probably will not cover the early voting hours and that is why I worked up this spread sheet to see how we can cover this better. The minimum that we think we could do this would be half days for each of our deputies. We know the primary will be light. We are only basing our future early voting one place and it may suffice but as far as November if it is a very heavy turnout we may need another polling place. If we expect a 90% turnout (inaudible). Chris asked historically what is the turnout. Rich stated 90% for presidential. Chris asked what is our registrar of voter count. 18 thousand per Rich. Alberta stated that Michelle asked about the grant, in this fiscal year it is covering some of the equipment. We need more laptops, and Tina found us laptops. Rich asked how the equipment is holding up in general. Rich and Alberta stated the tabulators are old, but the State has a ? approval for a replacement but we don't have that yet. Jim stated on the recalculation you are saying a half of day for each one of you and the deputies? Rich stated the State one of us from each party has to be here whether myself or my deputy or Alberta or her deputy for the 205 hours of early voting you need an R and D in that office. We cut the time in half for the registrar and deputy so we can tag team it. We previously budgeted for 2 representatives from each party. We think, depending on how complicated it gets and how busy it is, there is a possibility where there may be some over-lap, but we cannot predict it because this is all new to us. Jim stated it looks like you cut \$5000.00 from 115c. Alberta stated the way it is calculated that was on the number of hours for the registrars and the deputies so we cut the 71 hours for each of us in the primary to 35.5 and 134 to 64 for each of so it reduced the wages for the primary, inaudible. Jim wants to know if there inaudible. Alberta stated we have to set up each polling place so they need to come in a half an hour earlier. There is a State statute that covers the time workers need to show up at a polling place. Jim said you cannot use half of them to come early and half to stay late. No, because they have responsibilities, sealing bags with the moderator, the checkers are going through all the sheets telling them how many people voted for the day, the tabulator and the greeters could go home. Jim stated he understands and appreciate how hard it is to get workers. Rich stated he has a good staff but it is hard to get people in the summer with vacations, etc. They have to be trained every year. The clerk's pay I based it on 3.5 inflation and 1 percent raise. Mileage is flat. Professional development. Alberta and Rich and Cindy are certified, but Alberta's deputy is not. We need the \$1600.00 to get his certified. There are training modules and we let the clerk has taken some of that training and education Reimbursement is for out of pocket. Office and ? We are paying 2 of the laptops we are buying with this budget so \$1600.00 you can take out. The battery for the tabulators last 3 to 4 hours, and we have a backup battery, so we need more batteries. Inaudible The laptops are ordered and we could use the early voting money for any hardware. \$10,500 funding from state is basically one time. This is an off election so I put in for breakfast and lunch for \$1000.00 to feed our poll workers. Advertising: It is part of the election calendar. We need to tell the electors about early voting, etc. Printing and binding; They use a lot of envelopes, with the canvas, and change of voter status we get notified. We have to pay for the ballots. The State has not provided us with early voting envelopes. Equipment and maintenance. The tabulators have a memory card and has

all voting info on it. We have 16 tabulators and the cards go to New Hampshire and they do the coding for the voting. Rich Esposito asked what happens if the battery fails. There are backups. Board of Ed charges for the custodians. Jim stated he has been here for 17 years and commends both. It is refreshing to hear people running the department and running it correctly. Jim stated I do not necessarily disagree with any individual thing, but we look at everything. It is a 35% increase, and if we did that over the whole budget, we are looking at 14 million dollars or an increase in taxes of 5.5 million dollars. Everyone always wants more which Jim understands. Alberta stated the State added this burden and that is why the budget increase is significant. We have to work so many more days based on the mandates and Rich and I are part time employees. I do not know how he and I as registrars could possibly hire all the extra pole workers and work all these additional days without a budget increase. Rich is not stating we want 40 or 50k but what we gave you is other towns without early voting budget. We are just asking what they are getting or close to it without early voting. Skip stated that Jim stated he cannot raise the percentage across all departments and Skip agrees with him. The other departments do not have all the mandates that the ROV department has from the State. All the extra work and duties and the BOE gets a lot of money every year. Every other department does not have this extra mandate. Michelle stated that one of the biggest challenges that the Towns face is the Federal and State unfunded mandates, Police get it all the time and unfortunately there is only so much money we have as a Town. Rich DePalma stated we want to make sure we do not violate election laws. Alberta stated with respect to the unfunded mandates, she has spent time reaching out to legislators. Skip stated to Michelle that they (ROV) would go to jail, not her. Alberta stated this is not a volunteer position, it is an elected position and we report to the electors. The State Statute requires that we be reasonably be compensated. With respect to unfunded mandates, we do not like that but in addition if Rich and I do not perform our job, we face (inaudible). I do not want any convictions. Rich Esposito thanked them for all the information. Ralph asked if we recommend the budget be hire.

f. Town Clerk (109)

Lisa Balter presented a handout about what their office does in addition to running the election alongside of the ROV. We are the keeper of the Town's records and keeper of the Town Seal. We work along with many departments of the State such as Dept. of Environmental Protection, Dept. of Agriculture, the SEEC. Many divisions of the Secretary's office, business division. We work to bring in funds to all these divisions and then we distribute it to them monthly as well as bring in revenue. Along with that, like the registrars, come a lot of statute required duties that we do along with requests involved. I have been doing my best since my term began based on statistics, history and looking forward as best I can. We have unpredictability with early voting. That might throw off the absentee a little. It is a coin toss. I am predicting the presidential preference primary will be pretty much a typical where you will not see a lot of walking in for the early voting. As knowledge gets out there, it will start kicking up. Secretary of State's office tends to be social media heavy and advertising heavy. I share a lot of information on my

Facebook page. We have the mandated legal notices. I just did the first one which includes the first two primaries for the presidential preference and early voting. That will be hitting March 14th and that was about \$180.00. I just got it in so we did not have to go to the New Haven Register. Salaries went down this year because we had staffing turnover. We have one employee starting this week at the bottom level. We do not have the resource of modules like the ROV. Each in person is for, it does not necessarily have to be for the end result of certification. They are offered twice a year; they are 2 days and each day so far been about \$150.00. I do not want to take the mileage away, although I have not been submitting my mileage. I may use it. The start of Certifying is the CT. Town Clerk title. There are also two other titles which will require further driving. I have one coming up in the next budget season in Newport, one is in Massachussets. Professional development. I have 2 new employees who have never been through training, and Assistant Clerk who I believe started a couple of classes early on and never completed all of them and my first two years had not desired to continue that training but now has put forward a request to continue her training. I requested training and it was knocked down a little by the Mayor. Town Clerk conferences are twice a year. They tend to run about \$275.00 each. I have one coming up in Newport next year, I believe I added enough to cover one conference and hotel in the 3290. By dropping it down I am reducing it inaudible a cost of \$300.00 per conference for the entire staff to attend an evening which is a banquet and presentations. She gave finance all the information as she had available. Jim asked if we raised the professional development back up to \$3,300.00 can we take the \$1300.00 from printing and data processing. Maybe use the grant. Lisa stated the money she had left in the grant she was anticipating using for the presidential primary and there probably would not be much left. Lisa will get back to Jim on that. All our Boards and Commission minutes, other than Town Council, BOF and Ordinances were not being kept on the proper archival paper and the election results were not being kept in the proper binder in our vault. Those are projects I am working on and made that part of my grant. The other thing I found is the only thing I need to be putting on archival paper are the Minutes, not the Agendas. I tried to keep it even but the cost of paper is going up. I have not worked on the 2025 grant yet, and I need a little bit more of cabinetry so what I can do is compensate more in this line item to cover that difference. Jim stated if she can move money out of another line item to cover the professional development that would work. Lisa said she would try to do that inaudible. Office supplies across the board have gone up. I order and get the most for my money in bulk. 525-line item. Advertising. Lisa has been keeping it down and does her best and estimates. Printing and binding I raised by \$500.00 basically the cost of items has gone up slightly. Lisa gave the Board a copy of the election cost. The pricing for the supplements for the ordinances, I just completed number 39 and I am updating Ordinance books for anyone who has them one time, because the list is not in my office currently and I am trying to build a list of who has books currently. I am offering a one-time update so they are all up to date and moving forward they will receive the supplements moving forward. Equipment: is about the same. Rich asked what is going on with the software. The charge is the same over the last several years it is \$4.60 per document. I can only average out; We went down last year

because of the housing market. It is starting to pick up again. Lisa gave examples on the averages for past few years. Chris asked about overtime and if that was just due to shortage of employees. Lisa stated that overtime was for elections. Equipment maintenance. The vault doors needed repair and that was expensive. The lock was not working and it is digital so that had to get done. Temporary part time help. This is for our state mandated audits. You can have your work outsourced and that would include this but we have a union position that we cannot outsource and we have a person who has gone many years without a raise. He gave her \$200.00 last year, but wanted to give her \$50.00 more this year. The last line item is Vitals. If we send to any town billing for Vitals that would cost more than \$26.00, then they get charged. It is \$2.00 per item. That is a State requirement. Microfilm storage is estimated \$1,790.00, so I requested \$1,800.00. Al asked when the charge hits. Lisa gave a handout to the BOF.

g. Public Health (440);

Mike from East Shore District Health Dept., Director of Public Health presented and stated he submitted his budget. Our budget is unlike some of the other town budgets. We are a regional public health department. Our budget works through the CGS. We have a per capita, it is based on population. The population is 27,804 and we are using 2021 data. There was a glitch with the data in 2022. The State is working out that glitch so we were told we need to use the 2021 data. The population flat lined from last year to this year. Our per capita rate is \$13.41 per person, which brings it to \$372,852.00 and that is all core funding. The mosquito control budget, we manage that, the Town pays the invoices directly. There is a \$3,000.00 pump out (inaudible). From last year to this year the increase is \$14,458.00. Al asked if the pump out is based on (inaudible). Mike stated it is a flat fee. That program is funded 75% by DEEP and the other 25% is made up for inaudible services and each Town puts in \$3,000.00. Rich asked if there was any news on the shellfish beds. Mike stated we are doing a higher level of water quality sampling. The data showed bacteria contamination on the beaches. We just wrote a grant to DEEP to do DNA analysis. We pluck the samples, if it comes back high, there is a special process, they filter it, they freeze it and they send it into a lab. They do species identification. If it is human it is human, if it is an animal we try to find out what type of animal it is. We have done it on the Farm River before, and now we are doing it at the East Haven Beach. The quality for swimming is good, but for eating shell fish there is a higher threshold. We must take it to the next step, maybe another year or two. Rich asked about cases of West Nile. Mike stated we have cases as in positive for mosquitos, but have been lucky in the last few years not to have human positive cases in our community.

h. Counseling & Community Svcs. (444);

Jim presented and stated we have the BH contract that makes up the majority of it, \$137,000+_ and we give we another \$11235 to the umbrella center for Domestic Violence Services which is an off shoot of BH Health care and they service 317 individuals from East Haven.

i. Building Official (221);

William Brown presented and stated the salary item which is contractual and the other is for office and lab equipment for the copier that we have to pay for every month.

j. Police (332);

Jim Keeley stated we asked the Departments, Police and Fire, to look at real numbers, not what we hope would happen. What do we really need. We asked for their budget and we would be willing to listen, instead of doing a million transfers and budget appropriately.

Chief Lennon stated that contrary to what you are told tonight, we have a lot of unfunded state mandates. Chief states staffing right now we have one vacancy, one light duty and one on long term injury. In addition to that, all civilian positions are filled and you will see one change in the regular salaries which we made. One of the unfunded mandates the State put on us is that the Police Accountability Act required us to require every law enforcement agency in CT, going back to July of 2020, to have every Agency be accredited. At the time it could be Nationally accredited or State. The legislature went back and changed it because a lot of agencies could not afford one or the other, so now it is both again. An agency of our size, it is not possible. We have a part time per diem employee that covers it. The number of hours she works just will not cut it to meet our mandates of January 1, 2025, January 1, 2026 and not by January of 2027. We are moving the salary (inaudible). Other than that personnel line stays the same for salaries. All other increases are contractual. Jim stated one other thing you see; they are moving gasoline to stay in Public Works. Over time is an actual reflection of what it has been, the 10 year look back on overtime. We will probably be very close to that this year also. Other impacts on why overtime is increasing is hospital watches are nonstop, risk protection letters, light duty unfunded mandates and training have sky rocketed. For example, 22/23 training class, we spent about, between straight time and overtime, \$200,000+. One of the other small increases in our budget is just inflation. We cannot get a simple repair now. Even with Public Works doing the labor, the parts are very expensive. The body camera line is (inaudible) Last year we had the rest of the capital budget that we had to use so it was a split last year. It is a 10-year contract, approved by TC about 16 months ago. Vehicles: A Dodge Charger 5 years ago to police vehicles now we have seen almost 37-point increase. Radios are even more, and we recycle them. Beth how many cars this is for. Chief stated 5 hopefully 6. I do not know what the number will be. The Durango is following the 3rd year of a police package so they might be a viable source. They are priced in the same ball park as the Chevy Tahoe. The Ford Explorers have problems. The Tahoe, Durangos and the Fords with the emergency equipment, they are priced within \$1,000.00 of each other. Chris asked if he looked into what it would cost if we have to go to electric, starting with the charging stations. Chief stated we try to run a car no more than 16 hours a day, sometimes that does not happen. I do not know if we can handle that. Al stated a 2-station charger is probably about \$250,000.00.

Chris asked when it comes to the training and professional development and travel, out of state. Are they police or leadership courses. Chief stated all of the above. One of our sergeants had to go to Florida for training for part of the SWAT team. Chris asked if the State required classes are they done in State. Some are limited to on-line as well per Deputy Chief. Chris asked about replacement vacation days. Is that just a reflection of real numbers? Chief stated it usually sits about \$50,000.00. Chris asked if there are grants for vehicles. Chief stated we got a grant for the crime scene truck but not for day-to-day Chief stated we have a good repair plan now. Beth asked if gas is going out of Public Works now. Chris asked when it comes to the camera system in the contract, how often are we sending this out to get fixed and repaired? Chief Lennon stated it is mostly the cloud storage. If we had the servers on sight, which nobody does any more, it would be a lot of money. Deputy Chief stated built into the contract is an automatic replacement plan, there is a shelf life on every component, for instance our body cameras, the battery will start to not last as long so an officer would not be able to get through a double shift. Chris asked if each officer have their own. The answer was yes, it is another state mandate to have dash cameras.

k. Board of Police Commission (330)

Chief Lennon stated that there is no change on this budget

l. Public Safety Dispatch Ctr. (336)

Rich asked what the call volume is. Chief stated over all dispatch center dispatched 34,536 calls for service last year between police and fire. Rich asked if we are still seeing a lot of overdoses. Chief stated yes. Deputy Chief stated each officer has one on their person. The positions here are very hard to fill. We hired a new full-time dispatcher and she starts on Monday. Part time, same difficulty. Very hard to find a certified dispatcher. Other than that, we have contractual changes. Rich stated it looks like uniforms are getting expensive. They wear the same thing every day and they get worn down. The other big increase is the computers because they are at the end of life and there are 4 different stations and they need to get replaced. It is recommended they all get done at once. Chris asked if this was part of the old system, Chief replied no we replaced them. This is the 3rd time we have replaced them since they moved to North High St. They are on 24 hours a day, 365 and they have high computing power, they are starting to slow down and not being as functional.

m. Emergency Operations Center (338)

Chief Lennon stated that there is no change on this budget

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

**Board of Finance Clerk
Susan Mauro**