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*Lisa Balter*

TOWN CLERK

**EAST HAVEN BOARD OF FINANCE  
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 7, 2024**

**The East Haven Board of Finance held a Budget Workshop Meeting on Wednesday, March 7, 2024, at 6:30 P.M. in the Mario Giamo, Joseph Vitale Meeting Room, Lower Level to transact the Following:**

**Beth Purcell made a Motion to add Rich Esposito as Temporary Chair. Al Purzycki Seconds. Rich Esposito made a Motion to add Sue Mauro Temporary secretary. All in favor.**

***\*\*The undersigned clerk was not able to retain a complete recording of this meeting. \*\****

**Roll Call**

Mayor Joseph Carfora was not present. Richard Esposito, Beth Purcell, Al Purzycki were present. Chris Perdo and Ralph Vitale (both attended by phone). Jim Keeley, Finance Director was also present.

**a. Insurance/Legal Services (881/113)**

Danelle Feeley presented for Insurance and Mike Luzzi presented for Insurance/Legal Services. Attorney Luzzi stated he knows the BOF wants an update and that will be done at a regular meeting.

Insurance: Danelle stated the first 3 line items are remaining the same as the current budget. Worker's Compensation went down by \$200,000. The various insurances are always increasing and they expect an increase of 20 to 30%. We did come before you for a \$250,000.00 transfer in this 23/24 budget so we are trying to adequately budget because we know we need at least that and it is going (inaudible). Worker's compensation is going down but we still have to fund it. We get an estimate from PMA. Attorney Luzzi stated insurance costs are going up. There are fewer companies doing the public side of the insurance. Fewer players. It is driven by PMA based on history.

Legal Services. Attorney Luzzi stated part time wages stayed the same. Others are our wages for our Assistant Town Attorney, Labor Town Attorney and Land Use Town Attorney. Books/maps we appropriated in 2023 (inaudible) a lot of that money pays for sheriff's fees, court entry fees, subpoenas regarding litigation. We kept the number the same. We have gone up in legal and lawyers' fees. We are a 1995 set up for Town Attorney litigating against firms that are in 2023, driven by Tweed, the Quarry appeal, which is pending. Rich asked if this was going to be enough. Attorney Luzzi stated it depends. Jim stated that we do have a self-insurance reserve for

certain claims and we can take monies from there. Rich asked how that fund is. It has always normally been a deficit because as a municipality we have to record all the payables. Whatever liability claims we have whether it is something that we are going to win, it goes by the dollar amount. So, if someone sues us for One million dollars and there is a 20% chance of them winning, we have to book \$200,000.00 for that and that is why it will always be a negative number.

Attorney Luzzi said he believes it is a typo on the \$1,000.00. Jim stated it is a typo, should be \$10,000.00. Investigative services whether it is worker's compensation or we use investigators on the litigation side. Litigation you do not know where it is going to take you so you have to be fluid.

**b. Employee Benefits (167)**

Danelle Feeley presented and stated this account includes a lot of contractual line items and those tend to increase every year. Some of those line items stated the same. One of the big ones is Anthem Blue Cross. Our department request which is backed by the mayor's recommendation basically came from our preliminary meetings that we had with our brokers and we have another meeting with them at the end of the month. It includes claims, policies we must pay HAS, broker fees and we put that all together. Life insurance is the same, basically keeping it the same. I look at how many retirees, new hires, etc. Pension contribution is contractual and grows every year. The current budget that we are in the rate the Town had to pay for employee pension contribution was 24.68% for police and fire and 20.39 for general employees. These rates are increasing. We may be good with some vacancies throughout the year. Unemployment we always keep funded. We paid about \$24,000.00 this year. Anticipated inaudible and raises. Sometimes it is low, it fluctuates. We can decrease it when we know Union contracts are done. We have Town Hall, Supervisors, Police, Public Works and Dispatch have opening for at least wages, so wages have to be put in place and retro pay. Beth asked if this is a lump sum. Jim stated yes, we don't have them separated by departments, and we don't want to be short and there are so many contracts this year. The lump sum is the retirement payments. Rich asked if there are buyouts. Danelle stated yes. There is new legislation in play in July 2025 for pension so some senior employees have told me that they want to go before the changes. Jim stated if you look at a few years ago there were a lot of firefighters retire and MERS is starting to change the floor on the pension on COLAS.

**c. Engineering/Inlands/Flood/Erosion (223,117,118)**

Jonathan Bodwell, Town Engineer presented and stated there are no big changes in the budget for all 3 departments. Basically, the same budget with a few changes. Rich asked if he thought this was sustainable this year. Jonathan stated yes. Jim stated Jonathan does a lot of work in a small amount of time. For 117 we keep the money in there for a commission. Al asked about the advertising. Jonathan stated if we have a meeting we need the money, so we need to keep it as a contingency. 118 . He has had to cancel the last two meetings because lack of

applications. The most expensive part is the clerk and advertising. There is some training the commission is asking for to be up to date on the rules and regulations.

**d. Public Service & Sanitation (224,226)**

Charlie Coyle spoke and stated 224 stated he is ok with what is listed on the sheet. Jim stated the biggest change as stated at last meeting is the gasoline. Al stated this is how it used to be before, broken out in all different departments, now it is back in one account again. He asked why are we doing this. Jim stated he would rather have it broken into all separate departments and we don't have the man power to do that. Al wanted to know when people go the gas pump and put their card in, is there a breakdown. Jim stated yes, it's broken down. Al asked about safety equipment. Charlie stated it is for boots. The mayor came down on the snow and ice and Charlie stated he could live with that. Chris asked about the wages, the Mayor is coming in a little lower, are there vacancies? Charlie stated there are a couple, and there are a few guys out on comp so we are fine with that also. Al asked about classification differential and we already expended \$11,000.00 and the budget is for \$10,000.00. Charlie stated it varies. Al stated 2022/2023 we were up to almost \$24,000.00. Charlie stated it varies and we don't know that. If we take a guy from maintenance and upgrade him for labor for the day he gets the differential. Rich stated he is doing a great job. 226: Charlie stated a contract is coming up so these are estimates. The tipping fees for disposing is an issue. Al stated hazardous waste looks like it will be \$5 or \$6k low based on previous history. Charlie stated we don't know where that goes from day to day.

**e. Building Maintenance (229)**

Charlie Coyle stated this is the staying the same. We don't have a crystal ball on repairing buildings. We are still trying to play catch up. Our guys do a lot, which does help.. Al asked if there are any real problems that he can see in the buildings. Charlie stated they are old. That is the biggest concern. We are doing the best we can.

**f. Planning and Zoning (111) Zoning Board of Appeals (112)**

Joe Budrow presented and sated the salaries cover myself, Admin Assistant and a part time employee and those increases are out of my control. I have two board clerks that are covered as well for P&Z and ZBA budgets. Section 112 I am proposing a decrease of \$40.00 to the total and that is coming off the Board Clerk line. I am looking for decreases as much as possible. It is tough to give anything back. I need to have some office supplies for them. The advertising is ridiculous. The Charter sometimes require the Register. For 3 lines I propose deductions. Recording and record supplies; books, maps ref. materials; and printing and binding. We have an increase in office equipment and we are looking to get 8 new cabinets at the cost of \$280.00 each for storage.

**g. Purchasing (105)**

Jim presented and stated this department is basically staying the same.

**h. Library/Library Building Comm. (551)**

*\*Below was provided by Sarah Mallory, Library Director*

1. FY 2022-23 – a year of change
  - a. New roof
  - b. New leadership, director and BOT chair
  - c. Started working on building stronger community partnership with town departments including town hall, the Senior Center, Youth Services Department, Adult Education, The Family Resource Center, and the East Haven Chamber of Commerce
2. Three Main Services: Circulation, Access to Technology, and Programs
  - a. Circulation:
    - i. 22,974 children's items
    - ii. 3,759 teen and young adult items
    - iii. 37,311 adult items
    - iv. Total of 64,048, a 7 percent increase
    - v. Circulation of digital materials also increased to 9,798 items, 16% increase. growing desire and need in the community for instant access to online materials
  - b. Free Access to Technology:
    - i. 7,483 sessions on free public access computers, an increase of 22 %
    - ii. We also had 65,706 sessions on the library's Wi-Fi
  - c. Programs: source of free education, entertainment, and enrichment for all
    - i. 495 in-person, on-site programs with attendance of 5,022, 39% increase
    - ii. 15 off-site, outreach programs with attendance of 229
    - iii. Virtual participation of 7,223
    - iv. Self-directed participation of 956, increase of 63%
    - v. Drop-in tech help sessions 500
    - vi. In addition to library sponsored events we also provided a community meeting space for 495 meetings with attendance of 5,770
    - vii. AARP Tax Prep 294 tax returns
    - viii. Total program participation of 19,994
    - ix.
3. In more practical terms: 157,231 library service interactions for the year
4. Requested Budget:
  - a. Aggregate increase of \$25,503, or 2.7 percent, over the current year
  - b. Compared to the average increase of \$37,354 in the most recent 3 years
  - c. \$48,593 in the three most recent years under previous leadership
5. Significant increase in the requested amount for Books/Map/Reference Materials:

- a. In addition to funding from the Town, the library receives an annual disbursement of 3.5 percent from the Hagaman Fund, with a 1.5 percent disbursement at end of the year
- b. Value of the fund has dropped in market value, year over year
- c. In the past two years:
  - i. dividend has decreased by 18.3 percent, or \$10,105
  - ii. year-end distribution has decreased by 73 percent, or \$13,916
  - iii. Combined, the library has received \$24,000 less than 2 years ago
  - iv. In more practical terms, we are able to provide \$7,600 *less* in material expenditures than we did just two years ago, while inflation has caused costs to rise
  - v. We requested an additional \$5,300 for large print and digital materials, help serve the needs of residents with visual impairments, who cannot use other resources

**i. Animal Shelter (331)**

Emily Higgins presented and stated there is a change in salaries because there is a whole new staff. Veterinarian costs have increased quite a bit so there is an increase on our end. We see a lot of call backs, an increase in domestic violence. There is also an increase in safety equipment and clothing as there are new hires.

**j. Probate (114)**

Jim Keeley stated this has basically stayed the same with a slight increase.

**Adjournment**

Rich made a motion to adjourn. Beth seconds. All in favor.

**Board of Finance Clerk**

**Susan Mauro**