

RECEIVED FOR FILING  
DATE 4/7/2022 TIME 2:11 P.M.  
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE  
EAST HAVEN, CONN

*Lisa Balter*  
TOWN CLERK

**EAST HAVEN BOARD OF FINANCE  
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 10, 2022**

**The East Haven Board of Finance held a Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes on Thursday, March 10, 2022, at 6:30 P.M. at the Senior Center.**

**Roll Call:**

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

**RECREATION ICE RINK (661/662)**

Liz Franco Spano started in July and since then has 38 programs started. 27 are active and in progress and the remaining will be started in the spring and summer. Everything's going well. Liz has a great relationship with the superintendent using the gym facilities without having to use our money so that's helping us out. Targeting all age groups. Our website will be up and it's free. Sign up and you will get an email blast. We are old school now. Liz went over a couple of the line items that were increases. Part-time wages. Liz is asking for an increase for her for 30 hours a week instead of 20 and everything's contractual. I also have an increase for professional development training. We have \$3,500 in there there's a lot online I can take. I could go to class at night. I would like to have it in there just in case I would like to utilize it. The next one is recreational supplies and arts and craft supplies. I need some very large items like safety mats, volleyball standards. They go for \$2 -\$3000.00. The Pickleball nets will probably last about 10/15years. But we're getting good ones, so that they last. I want to get tennis rackets and we are looking to improve our tennis courts. We want to offer soccer; we want to offer lacrosse.

Rental equipment is the next item. When I first started I did games on the green. Blowup slides etc. DJs bounce houses. We had the boo bash which was great. That is what that line item is for. Hockey line items. Office supplies everything is out of the room. I want to get somebody new over there and they are going to need everything over there, a desk, table, etc. there's not one thing left in that room. Overtime wages increased a little bit because I consulted with at least three other ranks and they said when you open a new rink you are going to need about three or four people part time. We are going to offer more programs like figure skating. We would like to do our own skate shop as well. Rich D asked if we would do sharpening too, Liz stated we do not have our own machine. Beth asked who are regular salaries in here are. Liz stated it was for Frank Butler and Steve Cacace that is contractual. I just added about \$7,000 more to the overtime. We haven't decided fully on that. The last item that is mechanical.

These are like the big-ticket items we don't want to get into a situation where we were before where our stuff is not repaired. I have to take care of the Zambonis and the scoreboards and that's a lot, the lighting etc.

Beth asked what the plan is for the Rink. Mayor stated that the skating rink about two weeks ago we had some more contractors come through so we actually extended the deadline to March 18th. All of these increases we've been talking to other rinks and other managers. I am getting estimates for example on electricity because we were planning on opening up in September, that is the goal. Rich D asked what has to be done. Mayor stated for the mechanicals, the boards and actual ice, brand new ice with brand new mechanicals under the ice, putting in a whole new chilling system. We are going to have to purchase a new Zamboni. Rich D asked if that's covered under the bond. Mayor stated capital. The mayor stated we're going to purchase brand new ice skates so we can rent them out which is about \$15,000.00. We want to get approval by our consulting firm for our ARPA funds. The company has been giving us preliminary numbers but it's hard to nail down solid number. We are coming up with estimates that might work for us, per the Mayor. We may need more money in future but maintenance was a big issue.

Chris stated at one of the town council meetings, Public Works were doing a lot of the work. Chris asked if this is coming out of the grant money or this budget. Mayor stated public Works will be doing the front foyer and the concession stand. The lockers are going to be part of this bid process. Rich D asked if ARPA money vs money we have approved from bonding. The money hasn't been bonded yet correct. Jim stated correct. Jim stated there's a lot of funding available for a lot of different projects. We have approved money but we haven't used it yet. If we haven't used any of it my suggestion would be to de-authorize it.

Beth asked if they had an estimate on how much it would cost. \$4 1/2 million dollars per Mayor. Rich E asked if we had any commitments from the old programs like Guilford, etc. Mayor said Guilford is coming back. Ray Marscico is doing youth hockey.

Mayor stated that when we awarded the design build to SLAM, SLAM came to us and said we can do the conventional system right now, they can renovate it for a lot less but in 7 to 8 years, the skating rink would not be in compliance and we would be forced to change it to a .?? system. That would cost another six or \$700,000. That system would then be good for 40 to 50 years. In my eyes that's a no brainer. We will be good for 40 to 50 years.

Rich D asked about the programs that we used to offer like the YMCA in town, how did that work out last year as far as costs is it a big cost increase. Liz stated it is going well and we have a MOU with them and could always take that back. When I did it we had 200 kids. Everything has gone down because of lack of interest, etc. but it is going pretty good there. Trying to get a lifeguard program too because we were short last year.

Mayor stated getting back to the recreation, the part-time wages. Liz came with a dept request of \$32,283.00. She is doing a great job with all these programs, she has so much going on, and we increased her part time wages from 19.5 to 30.

Liz stated seasonal wages beach covers lifeguard the. Parking lot attendants, my supervisors on the beach and then seasonal wages will be pretty much everything else the whole year to run the programs. That is where we pay YMCA, etc. Beth asked, if the rink is \$4.5 million, we have only gotten \$1.2 approved where is other money coming from. \$1.7 was approved through ARPA, Jim stated he believes there's enough money to cover it's just once we get approval then we'll know exactly where we are.

Mayor stated we have to have ARPA appropriated by 2024 and used by 2026. We have a meeting with a consulting firm looks at everything. Beth asked about the pool. Mayor stated we are looking for money for the pool too. Trying to get funding to build a new pool to put it where it belongs at the high school.

### **Employee Benefits (167);**

Danelle Feeley spoke and stated the most of the line items are either decreasing or staying the same. Anthem Blue Cross item. The original line-item department request is from the Anthem renewal that we received and it also includes some estimated costs that we know we. The 65 Medicare supplement, HSA contributions for police and fire employees and our broker fees. The first version of the renewal came with a 40% increase to stop loss which is fees that we pay directly to anthem, our broker is aggressively working to get that number down. We get our second version of renewal around May and usually we have a better projection. Danielle feels the budget line item from the mayor is sufficient. The life insurance line item is locked in until June 2023. We looked at our current census we have some vacancies. Those will be filled soon so we'll have an increase in that line item. The MERS retirement fund contributions is contractual, but public act 19-124 increases what the employee and the employer contributions are. When we put the budget request in we had preliminary rates. Last week the official rates for MERS came in including their admin fees. The new rate is going to be 24.82% for police and fire 21.58% for other Government employees which includes Townhall employees, Supervisors, Public Works and Dispatch. One of the budget books has therefore changed and I spoke with Jim

We use the personal service report for estimated budget and came up with a calculation so the one in the budget that you have has changed so with that I spoke with Jim today because the 881 account, which is our property insurance, those rates went down so what we're going to actually ask of you is to take \$100,000 off the 0970 from 881. We had asked for 500,000 would like for that to go down to 400,000 and put \$100,000 back into this line item. Rich D stated so you want this to be 4225. Danielle said yes. These are contractual so they need to be funded.

0965 is unemployment. So, we decreased this by \$10,000. 0970 is a new line item which is set in last year's budget for any anticipated labor negotiations and raises. The police contract did just get ratified so we decreased it by \$86,000 because we don't have that anticipated any longer. We do have contracts at the Town Hall, Public Works, Fire, and then Supervisors and dispatch have wage re openers. So just based on the way the contracts were recently ratified, I took a 2% raise and all of those and used that. The 0972 is the lump sum retirement. This line item decreased by \$74,000. As you know we had of an exodus so I have a spreadsheet where I keep track of what I know is coming, people get the second half of their installment, the third half and then you always have to budget for some anticipated for this fiscal year.

Al asked about the state health care. Al asked if we were still looking at that. Danelle said no.

881: I was going to talk about Worker's Comp. The estimated budget that we received from our carrier PMA is included and you have a breakdown of it. The estimated town responsibility is just over \$2 million. Rich D asked why it's such a big jump. Last year we budgeted \$1,550,000.00. Per Danelle. Actually, claims are going down but we still have to fund for retirees, we have settlements to come out of there, medical bills, etc. 0945 and 0970 where we pay for our general liability and our vacant properties, and occupied properties. We were told that our general liability and excess we were looking at a 22% increase. That is staying firm. On the flipside they were originally telling us that the property, vacant and occupied, was going to be more like 15 to 22% increase today its 10 to 12 percent. We also asked for preliminaries for the ice rink. That's going to be about \$10,000 for coverage.

**MAYOR:(103)** Michelle Benivegna stated there are no department increases. Everything is remaining the same. We are functioning well.

### **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (339)**

Michelle Benivegna presented. Last year we created a line item for information technology and we funded it under other contractual services because at that time with covid we were anticipating the need which was right in front of us how antiquated the systems were in the Town of East Haven in primarily Townhall. We knew those funds were going to be needed but we didn't know how we were going to access it, whether it was through a consultant. That line item gave us a little more of an umbrella to navigate what the needs are. Since then and in diving more into the needs of the town for information technology and a large amount of funding from ARPA that can be used for our infrastructure upgrading that we truly feel there is a need for a department to be created with department head. We are in the process of finalizing the job description and presenting it to town council for that to be approved. Once that's approved we'll go through the process of having that filled. Rich D stated we went from \$39,000 to 261 on that. Michelle said no, we funded it with \$150,000, the \$39,000 is what we expended. But to fund the department correctly we would need a supervisor's position. That would be about \$75,238.00. We would anticipate some overtime due to the nature of IT in general. Beth asked if supervisors get overtime. Michelle stated supervisors get overtime after 40 hours. Professional development and training we wanted to make sure we had a resource there. We put equipment for \$20,000 because we do see a need for laptops because many of our department heads do not have laptops. The monitors are outdated. Munis program is also in this budget. Phones all converted. Only the ice rink will need to be done.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICES (880)**

Michelle Benivegna presented for this department. There were two increases from previous years. One was the Halloween celebration, based on the need and the interest from the residence last year. We successfully and safely held all of our events, and I think it was evident in the turnout. The miscellaneous community services we did ask for an increase of \$2500. more and that again is for in anticipation of expanding our beach concert series. The former Christopher Columbus parade has now been renamed the Italian American heritage parade. It gets rotated between towns and this year is our year.

### **TAX COLLECTOR (106);**

Anna DelRosso stated the only increases are for overtime wages in the summertime for when the taxpayers want to come in for after working hours so we stay open in the summertime. You stay open at

least one Saturday in the summertime in the month of July. Also, some of the staff members are still doing some courses. Some of the courses have been at night and that would be at night. Salaries are contractual. The fees for the courses also went up. Toner went sky high, so we have to print every single document for paper trail and the price is double. I've also included a Lexus/Nexus access for deputy tax collector. More people are paying online each year. Collection rates are great.

### **FIRE/CIVL PREP/BOARD OF FIRE COMM (333) (334)**

Chief Marcarelli presented.

Civil service: Emergency Operation. There is a typo on 338 fund. Top number should be \$20,000.00. 0115 should be \$20,000.00. Operating expenses was reduced from \$30,000 to \$15,000. This is a relatively new item anyway for a department I should say, and it's utilized for civil preparedness civil defense. We used this a lot during Covid the \$15,000 that will remain in the 0800 is primarily going to go to the reverse 911 system that we purchased in the beginning of the pandemic which costs about \$12,000 a year. It allows us to use that outside the parameters of the state reverse 911 system. We could use our own system for less than life-threatening emergencies. The state's system is really for life threatening situations. If we need to get a message out about a storm situation or heat wave, we could use that system. The salary line is reimbursed by the state 50% that is the stipend that I get and the police chief gets.

Board of Fire Commissioners. I requested no increases in the budget. \$14,075 is utilized for paying secretary, professional development and training. Physicians for annual physicals. Rich D asked why we aren't using this out of Michelle's account. Chief stated that is for pre appointments. We usually do physicals in June. The other contractual items utilize for notification system. They are notified through an iPhone app and the other is the use of paging system. Used for career and volunteers as well.

334. Part time wages. That is a substantial increase which was previously funded at \$15,650 which is for part-time fire inspector. I'll be coming up on five years here and the person who was filling the position and we haven't filled it since. There is really nobody that's going to take that job for 20 hours a week for \$15,000 a year. The fire marshal that we have now is very aggressive and he's really taking a serious look at code enforcement. He can utilize a part-time inspector. I need to get the number up to where other 19.5 employees are in town to at least make a desirable. The fire marshal is responsible for inspecting every building except for one- and two-family homes, so any apartment building, condos commercial occupancy, the entire industrial park, Main Street, all of those are required by Connecticut General Statutes. With one person in the office, he is not even scraping the surface. He is also required to respond to fires after hours and investigate any fires or explosions after hours per statute as well, and also he is required to inspected all the day cares annually required by the state and issue liquor permits, coupled with the responding to complaints a code violations. Everything is pretty much flat funded for the budget except a couple of items which I will go over. One is data processing software. The computer that the data management system that we utilize to keep tabs on all of the responses in the department, all the department activities which allows me to massage data to make grant reports. I need accurate data. We've been using a program which is about 20 years old. It is called Call Firehouse software. It was the only product that was available. We were notified last year that they were no longer going to be supporting the product starting in January so we need to find a new program. We think we've nailed down a program we want and it is between \$20 and \$30k a year. Opposed to what we pay now which is

only about \$3,500.00. It will have any annual fee to go along with it. I am hoping because of some of the modules that are available in the program we can eliminate some of the other software currently using, we have a bunch of different platforms. I'll believe it when I see it. I've been fairly successful at getting grants for the town which comes as a great savings for us. Most of those would've been bonded projects. Without that data management program, I'm not getting those grants.

Other contractual services there was a decrease The mayor cut that \$5000 and I can live with that. There was a little bit of confusion based on my narrative, I didn't update it from last year as far as the fire tax abatement is concerned. I did request \$135,000 the mayors recommended was \$150,000.00 and that is pretty much a contractual item. There's a bill passed by the state legislature allows volunteer firefighters if they meet criteria to get reimbursed for what they would pay for real property tax, the first year was phased in was \$1,000.00, now it is \$2000. The volunteer firefighters have to be a point system. Once they get 40 points they are eligible for the tax abatement. Because the firefighters have individual associations they are able to get 40 points even after the no longer responding to calls by remaining active in the company. The way it was codified by the Town Council it doesn't allow me to exclude them. There are about 16 that are currently active they get the tax abatement. There are 48 in total. Rich D asked how many calls come in. The chief stated we do about 85% medical calls of our runs. We responded to 6000 calls. We had 20 structure fires last year. Rich E asked if we had any long-term or short-term disabilities this year. He stated we have no long-term disabilities this year. We are losing one of our firefighters Sunday he is being deployed. We had a bunch of retirements; we have four vacancies. There are currently only three people that are eligible to retire. Nobody has notified the chief as of yet. Mayor stated volunteer tax abatement went up from \$1000-\$2000. The mayor stated when he got the budget the department request stated \$1,000.00 to \$1500.00. But it is actually doubled. Mayor stated that the chief is doing a great job, but year after year I look at this in the water bill and is shocked. \$510,000.00.

### **GENERAL SERVICES (885)**

Jim Keeley did you choose the bottom line somewhat. Jim stated we are offsetting some of our expenses for that from the solar farm. Special assignments we went up. These are contractual. The Town requested overtime is basically the same thing, contractual. This is for Special events for the town. Contingency account. We've talked about this many times. We keep this just in case of emergency, and we move money out of there when Covid originally happened. Normally there's very few expenditures that come out of the contingency account. We do utilize and we have large offsetting transfers towards the end of the year.

### **REVENUE/DEBT SERVICE (771)**

Revenue to be reviewed at next meeting. Debt/771 as you are all where we restructured debt a couple years ago to give ourselves some breathing room for a number of reasons. Two negative audits, as well as Covid at the same time with the uncertainty of where we were going to be. We did restructuring. That grace period is over, the numbers we're looking at now are at the peak of where they are going to be. We haven't bonded anything under this administration yet. We are trying to keep capital at a minimum and we're trying to use all the ARPA funds we can. I personally looked at restructuring, just a ballpark figure, they are not reflected here but we could've given you a budget that was short of \$1 million of what we gave you, it would've increased our lifespan of a debt of another three or four years. The value of the payment would've increase buy \$5 million. In all fairness to the mayor, he may or may not have

been here when it started increasing. The numbers that you see here is based on all the debt we had in the past, we don't have any intentions on bonding this year at this point, we plan on using all available resources. Cash is not a problem. We have our funds and we've already received half. We will be in the process of receiving the other half in about four or five months. The numbers you see in front of you are high but they are real and it's one way for us to start on getting the numbers to go back down. Rich D asked why education went up so much. Jim stated when you go to Bond they will ask you specifically what projects you are working on and the underwriters will give us (paper shuffling inaudible).

#### **FINANCE (104)**

Regional economic development we're trying to get more involvement with the communities, probably possibly running some programs. Talk to businesses. We use that for meetings and seminars. Beth asked if this was for current commercial businesses or potential. Jim stated it was for both. Chris asked about phone utilities. Jim stated when we originally had done the budget I didn't realize we were two months behind in that one so when I do the cost analysis it came out to that is original number.

This budget increased about \$24,000. Most of it has to deal with contractual salaries. Accounting services are actually actuarial services. Those deals with our inaudible....Comprehensive report. Data Processing: Right now, the system that we use is ??? and is \$30,000 a year. You will need that the next year no matter what when we switch to Munis. Our payroll system is very antiquated. Trying to move to a cloud service that we moved to municipal have all the data there. We have \$5,400.00 for computer maintenance when we have certain mandates they charge us.

#### **ASSESSOR/BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS**

Jim did this budget. We are using the same positions as we had in the past. We have one full time person and someone who has worked in that department prior and we brought her back, and we have Gary who were paying a per diem rate, he is a certified Assessor from North Haven. We have one permanent in there and we're looking for a full-time assessor and then we will see how that staffing will work. Beth asked if the fee for whoever does their appraisals are in this? Jim stated it is Equality and it is a yearly fee and is in the data processing, software line item. Anytime there's been a Reval in the town we've always bonded hundreds of thousands of dollars to go through the process. Rich E asked if we are using the drones. JIM stated he's not sure.

#### **Adjournment: 8:05 P.M**

Board of Finance Clerk: Susan Mauro