TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
August 27, 2020
Municipal Office Complex Meeting Rooms 1 and 2

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. DiCristofaro called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:00 pm and the recording devices were started. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

In attendance:

Board of Finance Members
- William DiCristofaro, Chairman
- Bruce Dutch, Secretary
- Joseph Corbett
- Todd Gelston
- Tracy Gionta

Others
- Robert Smith, First Selectman
- Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS

None were received prior to the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to approve the June 22, 2020 special meeting minutes with one addition under New Business—Grant Authorization Open Space—to add that there is no cost to the town to apply for the grant. Mrs. Gionta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

a. **Blum Shapiro Memo Regarding Audit to the Board of Finance:**

Mr. DiCristofaro asked Mrs. Varricchio to review the memo to the Board. Mr. Gelston cited a statement in the memo "Management agrees to oversee the nonattest services by designating an individual, preferably from senior management, with suitable skills, knowledge, or experience; to evaluate the adequacy and results of those services; and accept responsibility for them." He asked who that individual would be. Mrs. Varricchio stated that she is that individual. Mr. Gelston inquired about the timeline for completion of certain documents wanting to know if we were meeting the timeline. Mrs. Varricchio responded that we are.

Mr. DiCristofaro noted that memo acknowledged that COVID-19 may impact the timeline of the audit. He went on to state that it has slowed us down on things that we planned and that he is confident we will get back on track, but we will need to be patient.

b. **Letter from Superintendent of Schools—Board of Education Year-End Results:**

The Board reviewed a letter from Superintendent of Schools Brian Reas with regard to the 2019-2020 year-end results. The Board of Education budget was $20,425,060 of that amount $19,822,313 was expended, $381,912 encumbered leaving $220,835 unexpended. It was noted that there was savings in areas such as transportation, spring sports and activity resulting in the $220,835 unexpended. The letter from Superintendent Reas requested that the unexpended balance of $220,835 be transferred to the Board of Education Capital Reserve Fund upon completion of the annual audit.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

a. **Tax Collector's Report—June:**

The June report was reviewed by the Board. Mr. DiCristofaro inquired as to how tax receipts are tracking. Mrs. Varricchio responded that information will be provided at the September meeting. Mr. Gelston asked about the taxes collected for personal property. Mrs. Varricchio responded that the information will be obtained from the Tax Collector.

b. **Board Subcommittee Reports:**

Communications: Mr. Gelston noted that the subcommittee has been meeting and is working on an article for the *East Haddam News* regarding the September 2018 storm damage. Mr. Dutch and Mr. Corbett thanked Mr. Gelston for his efforts in coordinating this communication.

Long Range Capital Improvements Committee: Mr. Gionta stated that this Committee has not met due to COVID-19. Mrs. Gionta indicated that she has been receiving questions regarding where we stand with some of the projects. There was discussion the Committee will be reactivated in the near future.

Financial Policies: Mr. DiCristofaro stated that this Committee has also not met due to COVID-19.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Smith reported the following:

a. **COVID:**
- The Municipal Office Complex will open to the public on August 31. Masks and social distancing will be required.
- We will continue to live stream meetings—a lot of people are watching meetings.

- We are hopeful that the libraries will open shortly once the sneeze guards are installed. We are offering curbside pickup.
- There are concerns with opening the Senior Center especially due to a vulnerable population. We will be coordinating with Chatham Health District and may delay opening until October.

b. **FEMA:** We have been awarded a grant from FEMA in the amount of $904 thousand for a Quint fire apparatus. The great efforts of Steve Dorfman were recognized in coordinating this effort.
c. **Nutmeg:** Has purchased the property across from Moodus Barbeque—potential for a grocery/drug store.
d. **Director of Operations:** Donald Angersola has been hired as the Director of Operations. Mr. Angersola is currently the Fire Marshal (which he anticipates giving up).
e. **Neptune Avenue:** It is anticipated that the construction will begin shortly. The August storm delayed the paperwork.
f. **Isaias Clean-up:** Over 81 roads were blocked, with several trees down and 99.46% of East Haddam residents without power. The storm did not greatly impact dead trees.
g. **Tree Work:** Is being completed in the Lake Hayward area where trees are threatening structures. There are approximately 100 trees that need to be removed.
h. **FEMA Storm 2018 Update:** To add to information from the article prepared by the Communications Subcommittee:
    - Initial clean-up is done.
    - Working on gravel roads
    - Hemlock Valley opened in July
    - East Shore Drive gravel road—experienced two equipment breakdowns, anticipate being completed after Labor Day
i. **Police Union Negotiations:** Moving slowly. Impacted by the weather and illnesses.
j. **East Haddam Village Revitalization Committee:** Anticipate bringing information to the Board of Finance in the near future.
k. **Goodspeed Airport Committee:** Review is being conducted with Planning and Zoning, Economic Development Commission and the East Haddam Village Revitalization Committee.
l. **Career Firefighters:** We have lost three per diem firefighters. We are looking at solutions to replace and add additional full-time firefighter.
m. **IT Needs:** We are reviewing pricing to add additional audio/visual capacities to other rooms in the Municipal Office Complex. We have limited areas for streaming—looking at Meeting Room 3, the Recreation Activity Room and the gymnasium for additional areas. Anticipate $10,000 to $15,000 to implement in the gymnasium. That will enable us to hold up to 100 people for Town Meetings and Public Hearings.
n. **East Haddam Ambulance Association:** We are looking at scheduling options. There is a verbal agreement (with Ambulance Association and Mark Walter) that the Town will fund coverage from 6 am to 6 pm. The Ambulance Association has billed the Town for $3,037.50 for additional Vyntech coverage to supplement when we were down on staff. There is no precedent for this or agreement for the Town to remit payment to the Ambulance Association in these situations.

Follow-up questions/comments from the Board included:

- Mr. Dutch asked if we were being reimbursed for out-of-town ambulance runs. The response was yes.
- Mr. Dutch asked about Mr. Angersola being able to do two positions—Director of Operations and Fire Marshal. Mr. Dutch expressed his concern about the volume of work with the Director of Operations position. There was also discussion of there being a conflict of interest with the two positions. Mr. Smith assured that Board that in instances where a conflict could occur a third party would be used.
- Mr. Corbett asked about the timeline in remedying the career firefighter situation. Mr. Smith responded that in the next few weeks.
- Mrs. Gionta asked about the anticipated completion date of Neptune Avenue. Mr. Smith responded middle of December.
- Mrs. Gionta asked about the Goodspeed Airport and whether there was any indication of an addition buyer. Mr. Smith responded that it is a private process and that it is moving forward.
- Mr. Gelston expressed his concern with regard to the amount of funding for trees and the scope of the trees that need to be remedied. Mr. Smith indicated that he is looking to form a Tree Committee.
- Mr. Gelston sought clarification with regard to the Ambulance Association billing and the concern about establishing a precedent with regard to paying the invoice.
- Mr. Gelston stated that he believed there are two suitors interested in the airport—an individual and the Town. Mr. Smith responded that the Committee has been formed to identify the advantages and disadvantages to the Town in acquiring the airport.
- There was discussion about ways to live stream meetings from the Municipal Office Complex with overflows into other meeting rooms if necessary. Other meeting locations in Town were discussed.
- Mr. DiCristofaro asked for an update on the Transfer Station. Mr. Smith noted that there was an opportunity for a small STEAP grant but the timeline was too tight to respond. He noted that he is hopeful for the next grant round. Mr. Smith indicated that covers have not been ordered, another item impacted by COVID. In addition, we are down one staff member and have scheduled vacations. Mr. Smith stated that he is looking at innovative ideas for trash and recycling at the Transfer Station.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. **June Year-End Preliminary Budget Report:**

Mrs. Varricchio reviewed the preliminary 2020 year-end budget report. She reported that expenditures are $859,936 below budget and revenues are $270,892 below budget for a preliminary net to the good of $589,044. Mrs. Gionta inquired about what happens with unspent funds. It was noted that it increases our General Fund balance. Mr. Gelston inquired about Building Fees revenues being $18,559 under budget and is that related to the raising of fees. Mr. Smith responded that permit numbers are up and the department is very busy. Mr. Gelston inquired if the surplus could be used toward additional tree remediation.

b. **Audit/CAFR Update:**

Discussed under communications.

OLD BUSINESS

Nothing noted.

NEW BUSINESS

a. **Grant Authorization CARES Act PPE:**

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to authorize the Fire Department to apply for the CARES Act Grant for PPE for First Responders due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the amount of $19,054.71 with a town match of $1,003.50. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

b. **Grant Authorization Safe Polls and State Elections Grants:**

Motion was made by Mrs. Gionta to authorize the Town Clerk and Registrars of Voters to apply for the State of Connecticut Safe Polls and Safe Elections Grants each in the amount of $1,000 to help offset the cost of the elections to the town with no required Town Match. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

c. **Grant Acceptance—FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program COVID-19 Supplemental:**

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to accept a grant from FEMA for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program COVID-19 Supplemental for PPE due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the amount of $16,421.27 with a required town match of $781.97. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

OTHER

Mr. Dutch shared his concerns that we are compensating employees appropriately and within market value. It was noted that a compensation study was completed at the end of 2018 that Mr. Smith is currently reviewing. There was also discussion regarding the budgeted Human Resources position that has not yet been filled.

The Board requested that representatives of the Board of Assessment Appeals and East Haddam Ambulance Association attend the next meeting to review. Assessment Appeals for declining values in certain areas of Town and the Ambulance Association for outstanding matters/issues.

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Mr. DiCristofaro called for a brief recess to allow for public comment to be received via email at 9:06 pm.

Mr. DiCristofaro reconvened the meeting at 9:11 pm. No questions or comments were received.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 9:12 pm. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Varricchio