TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Minutes
November 9, 2020
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 and 2
Via YouTube Live

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. DiCristofaro called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. 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
- Tracey Gionta
- Harvey Thomas

Others
- Robert Smith, First Selectman
- Deb Denette, Town Clerk and Board of Finance Recording Secretary
- Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director
- Toni McCabe, East Haddam Youth and Family Services

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. DiCristofaro requested an item be added to the agenda under New Business regarding acceptance of the Historic Document Preservation Grant and to move up the request of Youth and Family Services to accommodate Ms. McCabe.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to revise the agenda to add New Business—item f—Historic Document Preservation Grant Acceptance and to move New Business—item a after Guests and Audience Comments. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

a. **Youth and Family Services Request:**

Mr. Smith noted that the workload for the manager of the foodbank has greatly intensified since COVID, exasperating an already difficult position. Requirements have exceeded what can be expected of a volunteer. Youth and Family has funded a stipend for the food manager at

$20.00 per hour, 15 hours per week through December 31. Funding was available due to repurposing funds targeted for group events that could not be held. Ms. McCabe explained the history of the food bank and how it came under the auspices of Youth and Family in 1999, due to their 501(c)3 status.

Ms. McCabe also noted the need for increased social services for the community. She noted that the community she serves needs to be taught the skills to help themselves. She will be proposing a half time position.

Mr. DiCristofaro was concerned with the lack of an entire plan. He also raised significant concern that the food bank manager was being proposed as a municipal employee. After discussion among the Board of Finance members there was concurrence that it was acceptable to fund the food manager position, but not as a municipal employee. Further study and information were requested regarding expansion of a social services position.

Responsive to inquiry, it was reported that 65 people rely on the Food Bank every week. Ms. McCabe noted that the Food Bank falls under the auspices of Youth and Family but it takes away from its general mission. Mr. Smith noted that most towns have a Social Services Department, East Haddam does not.

Mr. Gelston noted the importance of lightening the load on the manager, by removing some of the tasks. He noted, for example, that maintenance of the equipment should fall under facilities management and monitoring of temperature controls could be automated. All agreed that this item would need a better plan brought forward through the budget process, but that funding the current stipend through the end of the fiscal year was reasonable. Mrs. Varricchio noted that contingency could be utilized or a special appropriation made.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to transfer $7,800 from the Board of Finance Contingency Fund to Youth and Family Services for the purpose of funding the stipend for the food manger through June 30, 2021. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. **October 19, 2020 Regular Meeting:**

It was noted that on page four, paragraph one, the word "state" needed to be added at the end of the following sentence "Mr. Smith asked if the septic system had been approved by the *state*?" Mr. DiCristofaro noted that on page four, paragraph one that he indicated that the difference between our paid firefighters and their service is $3.00 per hour, he clarified that this is incorrect statement and the difference is $4.00 per hour, however, the minutes reflect what was stated. Mr. DiCristofaro corrected the time the meeting was reconvened on page 11 from 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm.

Motion by Mr. Gelston to approve the minutes the noted changes. Mrs. Gionta seconded the motion and was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE

Mr. DiCristofaro asked if any questions had been received via email. There were none.

Correspondence

Nothing noted.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

a. **Tax Collector's Report—July, August and September:** Mr. DiCristofaro noted that even with COVID the Tax Collector is on target for revenue collection.

b. **Board Subcommittee Reports:**

Communications: Mr. Gelston noted that articles on Benefits of refinancing town debt and FEMA funds are on target for publication mid-December. Bond rating information is anticipated by that date. Mr. DiCristofaro suggested an article to help people understand CAFR (Comprehensive Annual Financial Report).

Long Range Capital Improvements Committee: Mrs. Gionta advised that the Committee had not met.

Financial Policies/Increasing Revenue: Mr. Thomas noted that the methodology for the assessment tool for Capital Projects has been tweaked to help create a strategy for the Town. He noted that it will be implemented for the next budget cycle.

c. **Board of Finance Annual Report:**

There was consensus that the minutes of Town Meetings would be incorporated into the annual report. Mrs. Denette stated that she would supply them.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Smith noted that additional trash compactors will soon be located at the Transfer Station. He also noted that demolition coverings have increased in cost but will soon be installed. He further noted that Comcast cable will be available enabling the employees to be connected as the rest of town buildings are. He noted that mask wearing pushback still occurs.

Mr. Smith explained delays for repairs at Neptune Avenue. He noted that ledge required re-engineering. The project continues to move forward.
The specification for the Quint Fire Truck is being put together at this time.

Challenges for the East Haddam Village Revitalization Committee are how to hold public hearings in the COVID world. Centerbridge Group is being recommended at the Letter of Intent is forthcoming.

Mr. Smith presented a comprehensive plan regarding tree removal and coordinated efforts with Eversource. He noted that by the end of the fiscal year it is anticipated that 75% of the dead or dying trees will have been removed. He noted that residents could expect five to six teams per day in town through the end of the fiscal year. Priorities have been ranked and given to intersections, schools, playgrounds and ballfields. The next grouping of targets is the Transfer Station, Grange Hall, cemeteries, etc. The Board expressed appreciation for the comprehensive report. Mr. Gelston stated that he was pleased with the number of trees cut and the price at which they are being cut at.

Mr. Smith noted that Mr. Reas has taken the lead on filling the Human Resources position that will be shared by the Town.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. **August YTD Budget Report:**

Mrs. Varricchio noted that there are no surprises. She noted that the deferment of taxes through October has limited the penalties or interest being collected. She noted that the Town Clerk's Office has seen the financial benefit of the current housing market and is above projections in revenue.

There is concern regarding COVID and the Tri-Board meeting scheduled for December. She stated that members should be prepared for a potential return to remote meetings in the future. The use of Cleargov will be very beneficial in the budget process.

Mrs. Varricchio spoke regarding the rating agency presentation (Standard and Poor's) to refund the USDA debt, as well as to issue new debt for the firehouse improvements, elementary school improvements, town-wide radio towers and the remaining costs of improvements for the Municipal Office Complex as well as open space. It was noted that the presentation went very well and we believe we established all the criteria to improve our bond ration to AAA from an AA+, however, it is anticipated that we may stay the same given the COVID world.

Blum Shapiro is scheduled to come to the Board's January meeting for a review of the audit.

It was also noted that a special meeting may be necessary to request a special appropriation to move the proposal of the East Haddam Village Revitalization Committee forward.

OLD BUSINESS

Nothing noted.

NEW BUSINESS

a. **Youth and Family Services Request:**

Moved to an earlier point in the agenda.

b. **Grant Acceptance—Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership Program:**

We have received a grant for bulletproof vests as we had hoped for during the budget season.

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to accept a grant in the amount of $3,200 from the U.S. Department of Justice, Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and response, the Governor's Executive Order 7CC issued April 21, 2020 permits the municipality's legislative body (Board of Selectmen) and budget making authority (Board of Finance) to authorize certain actions by a majority vote of each such body to include (i) the application for and acceptance of any grants, funding or gifts. Mrs. Gionta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

c. **Gift Acceptance—East Haddam Free Public Library and Reading Room Association:**

The Association has donated $2,500 toward the replacement of the heating system at EHFPL.

Motion was made by Mrs. Gionta to accept a monetary gift in the amount of $2,500 from the East Haddam Free Public Library and Reading Room Association, Inc. to be put towards the replacement of the heating system at the East Haddam Fee Public Library. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and response, the Governor's Executive Order 7CC issued April 21, 2020 permits the municipality's legislative body (Board of Selectmen) and budget making authority (Board of Finance) to authorize certain actions by a majority vote of each such body to include (i) the application for and acceptance of any grants, funding or gifts. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

d. **Grant Authorization—Connecticut Community Connectivity Grant Program:**

Mr. Smith noted the grant application was due on October 16th and did not make it on the Board of Finance October 19th agenda. This grant was ready to be submitted, as it was previously submitted as a STEAP grant that was never awarded and would extend side walks along the Municipal Office Complex to the Moodus Green and expand the Green area by eliminating the road to the west.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to authorize the First Selectman to apply to the Connecticut Community Connectivity Grant Program in the amount of $470,941.13 with

no Town match. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

e. **2021 Board of Finance Meeting Calendar:**

Provided to the Board for review. Approval of the calendar will be slated for the December meeting.

f. **Grant Acceptance Historic Document Preservation Grant:**

Mrs. Denette noted that permission to apply was recently granted and has now been awarded. This grant will be utilized to expand electronic land record indexes.

Motion was made by Mr. Corbett to accept a grant in the amount of $5,500 from the Connecticut State Library for the Historic Document Preservation Grant contingent upon acceptance by the Board of Selectmen at their November 18, 2020 meeting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and response, the Governor's Executive Order 7CC issued April 21, 2020 permits the municipality's legislative body (Board of Selectmen) and budget making authority (Board of Finance) to authorize certain actions by a majority vote of each such body to include (i) the application for and acceptance of any grants, funding or gifts. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

OTHER

Mr. Gelston inquired if there was a root cause that could be identified regarding the number of incorrect assessment's at Banner. Mrs. Varricchio noted that the last revaluation was a full one and occurred in 2017. The next one in 2022 will be statistical.

The Board of Finance recessed at 9:13 pm to solicit comments and questions via email. The meeting reconvened at 9:18 pm. No comments or questions were received.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 9:19 pm. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Denette