TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
May 12, 2021
Nathan Hale Ray High School Auditorium

Mr. DiCristofaro, Chairman of the Board of Finance called the meeting to order at 8:33 pm.

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 Recording Secretary
- Marc Pisciotti, Chairman, Board of Education
- Karin Blaschik, Secretary, Board of Education
- Patricia Stricker, Board of Education
- Brian Reas, Superintendent of Schools
- Michael Gilroy, Library Director
- Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director
- Linda Zemienieski, Executive Assistant to the First Selectman

Mr. DiCristofaro, Chairman of the Board of Finance called the meeting to order at 8:33 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. DiCristofaro solicited Board feedback regarding the public comments. Mr. Gelston stated that he was in favor of paying people fairly but understood the concerns from the public. He inquired if we could not provide additional disclosure of what was being done. Mr. Smith stated that he could reach out to those impacted and see if they would be comfortable with releasing the information. Mrs. Gionta concurred that additional outreach is necessary, she stated that it would be a shame to see a good budget fail over $35,000. Mr. DiCristofaro stated that he concurred with the general sentiments.

Mr. DiCristofaro stated that the Educational Cost sharing grant has been disclosed by the State and the Town will be receiving $52,000 less than budgeted. He inquired how the town wishes to address the shortfall. Brief discussion ensued, it was recommended to remove an additional $52,000 from the undesignated fund balance and to leave the tax impact where it stands.

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to present to the Annual Budget Meeting scheduled to be called by the Board of Selectmen for May 25, 2021 at 8:00 pm at the Town Meeting Hall a total budget of $36,950,274 based on the Grand List as of October 1, 2019 of $903,786,404. The

budget would require a mill rate increase of .62 mills or a 3.5 tax increase. Mr. Dutch seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Mrs. Stricker stated that she appreciated the conversation regarding salaries. She stated that she would hate to see the budget fail over $35,000 transparency.

CORRESPONDENCE

Nothing noted.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

a. **Board Subcommittee Reports:**

Communications: Mr. Gelston was commended for a recent article.

No reports were given by either the Long-Range Capital Improvements or the Financial Policies Subcommittees.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Smith reported that Neptune Avenue has reopened and that an additional $50,000 worth of tree removal is occurring thanks to funding remaining from the snow budget. Paving will occur on Joe Williams Road as soon as school is out for the summer.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mrs. Varricchio reported that in June she will present a complete list of all grants that the town has received.

OLD BUSINESS

Nothing noted.

NEW BUSINESS

a. **Appointment of Auditor:**

The town is required to appoint the audit firm 30 days prior to the end of the fiscal year. It was noted that East Haddam is in the second year of its contract with Clifton, Larson and Allen LLC (formerly BlumShapiro) the cost for the audit is $45,800 which includes the audit, the state and federal single audits and the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (formerly the CAFR).

Mr. Gelston was reminded that the town went out to bid in 2019, and ultimately entered into this three-year contract with a two-year renewable option.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to appoint Clifton, Larson and Allen LLC as the Town of East Haddam Auditor for the July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 fiscal year audit. Mrs. Gionta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

b. **Tax Suspense List:**

Each year the Board of Finance is required to vote on the Tax Suspense List. The Suspense List is accounts deemed uncollectable by the tax collector. It does not mean that they cannot be collected, it removes them from the financial statements as an asset. Accounts on the suspense list will be sent to the collection agency.

Motion by was made by to approve the Tax Suspense List in the amount of $60,175.19. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

c. **Budget Amendment Interest Expense/Capital Projects Reserve Fund:**

When the 2010 debt was refinanced, a savings of $34,069 in interest payments for the current fiscal year resulted. In accordance with Board of Finance policy, it is recommended that the savings be transferred to the Capital Projects Savings Reserve Fund.

Motion made by Mr. Corbett to amend the 2020-2021 budget to reduce interest expense (10548990-58320) by $34,069 and to increase the Transfer to Capital Project Savings Reserve Fund (10549010-58010) by $34,069 and to request that the Board of Selectmen schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Dutch seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

d. **Grant Application Approval—State of Connecticut Survey and Planning Grant for Chapman Falls Archeological Survey:**

This pass-through grant is coordinated with the East Haddam Historical Society and Museum and the Eight Mile River Wild and Scenic Watershed and the East Haddam Municipal Historian Dr. Karl Stofko, along with support of emeritus state archaeologist Dr. Nicholas F. Bellantoni and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for an archeological survey to be performed at Chapman Falls and in Devils Hopyard. The focus of this survey is to locate, identify and document potentially significant archaeological deposits to guide future developments and document projects. A survey of the area has the potential to not only supply key information about Connecticut's industrial and revolutionary war eras but to also explore the relationship between colonists and the areas native American tribes who utilized the areas fishing stations. Please note the grant was due on May 3rd.

Motion was made by Mr. Corbett to approve the application of a grant from the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office for a Survey and Planning Grant for an

Archeological Survey for Chatman Falls in the amount of $20,000. Mr. Dutch seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

e. **Grant Application Approval/Grant Acceptance Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Watershed—Patrell Preserve:**

The Conservation Commission applied for a grant in the amount of $935 for the Patrell Preserve. They did not seek prior Board of Finance approval. The Board will need to approve the application and accept the grant. There is a $935 town match which the commission can meet through its budget.'

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to approve the application and acceptance of a grant from the Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Coordinating Committee and the National Park Service under CFDA: 15:962 Eightmile Wild and Scenic River Assistance, for native plantings along the ADA accessible trail on the Patrell Preserve in the amount of $935 (revenue account 26541-43000 and expense account 26541990-54010) and to request that the Board of Selectmen schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mrs. Gionta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

f. **Grant Acceptance—American Library Association:**

The Board of Finance authorized application for this grant on February 8, 2021. The purpose of the $3,000 grant is to host community conversations related to job growth. There is no town match.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to accept a Libraries Transforming Communities: Focus on Small and Rural Libraries initiative grant from the American Library Association in the amount of $3,000 (revenue account 28345-43000 and expense account 28345033-53010), contingent upon Board of Selectmen acceptance, and to request that the Board of Selectmen schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

g. **Grant Acceptance—Peach Pit Foundation/Community Foundation of Middlesex County for Library System:**

Motion by Mrs. Gionta to accept a grant from the Peach Pit Foundation/Community Foundation of Middlesex County for the East Haddam Library System in the amount of $1,000 (revenue account 28345-43000 and expense account 28345033-53010) contingent upon Board of Selectmen acceptance and to request that the Board of Selectmen schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion.

It was noted that there is no application process and no matching requirements. The stipulation for the grant is to do something fun. Mr. Gilroy was present and assured the Board that they look forward to presenting something fun for the library patrons. Mr. Gilroy noted that the grant is actually for $2,000, as there is $1,000 for each library.

Motion was made by Mrs. Gionta to amend her motion to $2,000. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion to amend carried unanimously.

The motion was unanimously approved as amended. Motion carried.

h. **Comprehensive Energy Efficient Facility Upgrade:**

Motion was made by Mr. Corbett to recommend to the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for a vote on a 48-month agreement on behalf of the town with Energy Resources for a comprehensive energy efficient facility upgrade to include a/c upgrades at the East Haddam Public Works. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion.

Mr. Gelston was advised that this is the same program as done earlier on other buildings. Upgrades will be made, and the cost savings applied toward the upgrades until the costs are paid off. Following that time, the new lower rate will be enjoyed.

The motion was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Nothing noted.

Mr. DiCristofaro noted the following important dates:

- May 25, 2021 Town Meeting.
- June 8, 2021 Budget Referendum, time to be determined at town meeting.

Mr. Dutch reiterated that it is a fine line to not be disrespectful to employees yet be transparent to the community. He noted that he was hopeful that something can be put out to be responsive to both. Mr. Gelston suggested a press release, to document the concerns.

Mr. Thomas stated that many worked very hard to bring forward a responsible budget to keep the town moving forward. He stated that he felt this budget had more work than any other one he had been involved with.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 9:14 pm. Mr. Gelston seconded them motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Denette