

TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Budget Public Hearing
May 5, 2020
Municipal Office Complex Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

Mr. DiCristofaro called the hearing to order at 7:07 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. DiCristofaro read the call to the Public Hearing. The Public Hearing was available for viewing for the public on YouTube Live.

In attendance:

Board of Finance Members

William DiCristofaro, Chairman
Bruce Dutch, Secretary—via zoom
Joseph Corbett—via zoom
Todd Gelston—via zoom
Tracey Gionta—via zoom
Harvey Thomas—via zoom

Others

Robert Smith, First Selectman
Theresa Govert, Selectman—via zoom
Carleen Quinn, Selectman—via zoom
Deb Denette, Town Clerk and Recording Secretary—via zoom
Brian Reas, Superintendent of Schools—via zoom
Marc Pisciotto, Chairman, Board of Education—via zoom
Mark Knittel, IT Manager
Cindy Varricchio, Director of Finance
Linda Zemienieski, First Selectman's Executive Assistant

Mr. Smith reviewed the following questions that were received in advance of the Public Hearing.

Q: Are actions being taken to eliminate all overtime for East Haddam employees and to eliminate new hires?

A: We are not incurring any overtime except for public safety when necessary. The budget includes an additional EMT/firefighter to meet the needs of EMT services.

Q: Are procedures being implemented to move all East Haddam employees into high deductible health insurance plans?

A: We have already done that.

Q: What are current East Haddam employee health insurance deductible requirements for single and family plans before cost sharing begins?

A: \$2,000 and \$4,000 (single and family)

Q: What major efforts are being taken to reduce health insurance premium costs?

A: We work with an insurance consultant. We have put health insurance out to bid in the past. In ten years we have increased approximately 30% in total for health insurance.

Q: Are East Haddam employees required to participate in online healthy living programs in an effort to premium reduce costs?

A: Employees are not required to participate in healthy living programs. We do have a very strong wellness program where employees have participated in mindfulness, maintain/don't gain over the holidays, yoga, disc golf, nutrition, biometrics and much more.

Q: Given past performance issues with Chatham Health District, are alternative options being reviewed in an effort to save tax dollars? If not, what has Chatham Health District done to improve their performance?

A: Chatham Health hired new Director of Health and the services have improved greatly. Regular hours are held here by Chatham Health employees at the Municipal Office Complex.

Q: Why doesn't East Haddam consolidate our library system in an effort to reduce costs?

A: The budget includes funding for a feasibility study to do an analysis of a consolidation.

Q: What have our library attendance trends been over the past 3-5 years?

A: Use of the libraries have continued to increase. For 2018-2019 alone circulation increased by 10%, teen participation in programs doubled and there was an 11% increase in library visits.

Q: Can library hours of operation be scaled back in an effort to reduce costs?

A: We have not considered that option.

Mr. DiCristofaro responded to questions/comments that were received in advance of the Public Hearing.

Q: There is no increase in mill rate but a 1.8 percent increase in spending in the budget.

A: Mr. DiCristofaro confirmed that there is no increase to the mill rate but there is an increase in spending based on grand list growth.

Q: Debt per capita has increased from fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2019.

A: It was noted that costs associated with paying the debt for the Municipal Office Complex increased, but as planned, reserves are being utilized to offset those increases. Mr. DiCristofaro stated that this practice is in accordance with the town's debt policy which states that when debt is retired, funding for the same payment is maintained and the excess funding is moved into reserves to use for future debt costs. Mrs. Varricchio added that the Board of Finance policy recommended debt level is below 10 percent we are presently at 7.7 percent.

Q: Was there any attempt to reduce the budget and the mill rate given current circumstances?

A: Mr. DiCristofaro advised that the present budget was substantially lowered from what was originally proposed.

Mr. DiCristofaro recessed the Public Hearing for five minutes to provide opportunity for receipt of additional questions at 7:18 pm.

Mr. DiCristofaro reconvened the Public Hearing at 7:25 pm.

No additional questions were received.

Mr. DiCristofaro inquired if any Board of Finance members had questions.

Mrs. Gionta expressed her opinion that a good budget was reached and added that she was appreciative of the efforts made.

Mr. Dutch offered no questions or comments.

Mr. Gelston offered no questions. He commended all for the effort put forth.

Mr. Corbett, offered no questions. He noted the challenging times, felt the result was a job well done, and added that he was happy to have been be a part of it.

Mr. Thomas, stated that he listened carefully to citizens' questions and answers. He noted that not everyone will be satisfied with the results. He felt, however, that we have done the best we can and given that no one know where economy is headed not having an increase in the mill rate seems very prudent.

Mr. DiCristofaro noted that the Board of Finance will meet on Thursday, May 7, 2020 at 7:00 pm. The Board of Finance will vote to set the mill rate at that time. He added that there will be another opportunity for public comment prior to that occurring.

Mr. DiCristofaro adjourned the Public Hearing at 7:28 pm.