

TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Special Meeting
May 7, 2020
Municipal Office Complex Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

Mr. DiCristofaro called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:01 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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
Mark Knittel, IT Manager
Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director
Linda Zemienieski, First Selectman's Executive Assistant

Mr. DiCristofaro welcomed all. He noted that the meeting will complete the budget discussion as well as take care of some regular business of the Board of Finance

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Mr. DiCristofaro offered opportunity for questions or comments via email. None were received.

2020-2021 BUDGET

a. **Budget Discussion.**

Mr. DiCristofaro solicited Board members for comments or questions.

Mrs. Gionta stated that she was pleased how the process turned out.

b. **Set Mill Rate for 2020-2021:**

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to establish the mill rate for the 2020-2021 fiscal year at 30.44 representing a budget of \$34,189,100. Mr. Dutch seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved via roll call vote. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. **Regular Meeting, January 13, 2020:**

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2020 regular meeting. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved via roll call vote. Motion carried.

b. **Special Meeting, March 7, 2020:**

Motion was made by Mrs. Gionta to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2020 special meeting. Mr. Dutch seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved via roll call vote. Motion carried.

c. **Special Meeting, March 14, 2020:**

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2020 special meeting. Mr. Dutch seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved via roll call vote. Motion carried.

d. **Special Meeting, April 16, 2020:**

Motion was made Mr. Dutch to approve the minutes of the April 16, 2020 special meeting. Mrs. Gionta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved via roll call vote. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

Nothing noted

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

a. **Tax Collector's Report—February and March:**

The report was noted received for February and March. Mr. Thomas conveyed his expectation that abnormalities would be reported moving forward.

b. **Board of Assessment Appeals Spring 2020 Final Report:**

It was noted that there were adjustments for 10 out of 13 appeals, totaling \$387,300 and a summary of expenses was provided. Mr. Thomas noted that adjustments referenced an attachment that is not available. He noted that any approval is made in good faith in the absence of the detail. Mr. DiCristofaro noted that no action is required. Mr. DiCristofaro will add it to the agenda for next month with the attachments.

c. **Board Subcommittee Reports:**

Communications: Mr. Gelston noted that the next article would focus on the FEMA process and added that the Committee has not met.

Financial Needs RoundTable/Financial Policies: Mr. Thomas stated that the capital needs policy which was road tested this year worked reasonably well. Mrs. Gionta concurred that it worked well, but did not get to run its cycle, and will be tried again in the fall.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Smith noted he was thankful that the budget process was enabled to move forward, although he was sorry that the electorate were unable to vote. He highlighted the following:

- Hours at the Transfer Station will remain the same.
- Public Works is operating on a 50/50 schedule, they are moving forward with several projects including road grading.
- An Everbridge alert will be issued tomorrow.
- Most of staff comes in frequently some daily.
- Chatham Health are here regular hours,
- The Town Clerk's office is open every day.
- Tax Collector working mostly from home.
- Assessor comes in a couple times a week.
- Board of Education staff are here every day during the week.
- Slowly transitioning to Zoom meetings for all.

Mr. Gelston sought an update on tree removal. Mr. Smith responded that only trees that represent an immediate hazard are being removed at this time.

Mr. Thomas inquired about the status of summer recreation programs. Mr. Smith advised that we are still awaiting guidance from the Governor's office, Chatham Health District and the CDC.

Mr. Thomas followed up on his question asking about what is happening at the Sr. Center. Mr. Smith noted that meals on wheels and brown bag lunches have continued. He noted that volunteers are shopping for people. He further anticipated that the medical car would resume operating shortly. Mr. Smith expanded that Park and Recreation and the Library System are offering virtual programs.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. March YTD Budget Reports:

Mrs. Varricchio advised that the third quarter summary was provided. Last year actuals compared to this year actuals. Projections through year end are also included.

Mrs. Varricchio advised that the Board of Selectmen voted to offer the tax deferment for three months. Accordingly, cash flow will be reduced for the first quarter of the new fiscal year.

Mrs. Varricchio stated that she has nothing to report on FEMA pursuant to COVID at this time, however, staff is looking at any opportunities that may be available.

Expenditures and revenues by month were also presented.

Responsive to inquiry from Mr. Gelston it was noted that the snow budget has \$140,000 remaining. It was also noted that January had three payroll weeks, spiking the numbers from the average on the Board of Education budget.

Mrs. Varricchio clarified a one-time \$18,000 distribution to the Rathbun in how it was documented at the request of Mr. Gelston. Building permit revenues and numbers were discussed. It is anticipated that the spring months, April, May and June would typically see an increase.

Mrs. Gionta questioned the tax deferment period. Mrs. Varricchio advised it is for taxes issued between April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2020.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Grant Authorization Fire Department—David Clark Headset Grant:

On behalf of the Fire Department, Steve Dorfman has been instrumental in bringing about several grants. The first is for \$3,000 representing headsets for engine #4. It was noted that they have already applied and that there is no required town match.

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to authorize the Fire Department to apply for the David Clark Headset Grant at an approximate value of \$3,000 with no required town match. Mr. Dutch seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved via roll call vote. Motion carried.

b. **Grant Authorization Fire Department—CARES Act Personal Protection Equipment Grant:**

Grant authorization request from Fire Department to be funded by the CARES ACT is for first responders to purchase PPE. There is a 5% cost share. The value of the grant is approximately \$16,571 and there is a town match of \$829.

Motion was made by Mrs. Gionta to authorize the Fire Department to apply for a CARES ACT PPE grant at approximate value of \$16,571 with a required town match of \$829. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved via roll call vote. Motion carried.

c. **Grant Authorization Fire Department—Anheuser-Busch Bottle Water Grant:**

Grant authorization request from the Fire Department through the Anheuser-Busch Corporation will provide a pallet of bottled water. There is no required town match.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to authorize the Fire Department to apply for the Anheuser-Bush Bottled Water Grant for a pallet of water at no cost to the town. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Thomas inquired about the length of the grant. Mrs. Varricchio did not have the specifics of how much water or when it would end. She was aware that the water has a one-year shelf life.

The motion carried via roll call vote with Mr. Thomas abstaining.

d. **Appointment of Auditor:**

Mrs. Varricchio noted that this is an annual formality. A Request for Proposal for an audit firm was issued last Fall and awarded by the Board in December.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to appoint Blum Shapiro & Company PC as the Town of East Haddam auditor for the period of July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved via roll call vote. Motion carried.

e. **Tax Suspense List:**

A letter from Tax Collector Denise Dill requested action on accounts deemed uncollectable, pursuant to State Statute. Mrs. Varricchio explained that the action removes the taxes due as a town asset, it does not mean they cannot be collected. She noted that Mrs. Dill has had success in the utilization of a collection agency to pursue suspense items.

Motion by Mr. Dutch to approve the Tax Suspense List in the amount of \$45,661.39. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mrs. Gionta sought clarification of what the action represented.

Motion was unanimously approved via roll call vote. Motion carried.

f. **Gift Acceptance—Consumers Reports:**

Mr. Smith noted the Consumers Reports donated \$25,000 to East Haddam. \$15,000 to the Food Bank and \$10,000 to the Senior Center. As the Food Bank is separate entity and not run by the town, the town accepted the grant on its behalf and forwarded it along. As the Senior Center is a town entity acceptance of the gift requires formal action.

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to accept a gift from Consumers Reports for the Senior Center in amount of \$10,000 for the Senior Meal Program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and response, Governor's Executive Order 7CC issued April 21, 2020 permits the municipality's legislative body (Board of Selectmen) and the budget making authority (Board of Finance) to authorize certain actions by a majority vote of each such body to include (1) the application for or acceptance of any grants, funding or gifts. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved via roll call. Motion carried.

Appreciation for the donation was acknowledged by the Board.

Mr. Dutch inquired if Mr. Gelston was invited to sit in on the discussions of how the gift was distributed with Consumers Union. Mr. Smith noted that no meetings were held because of the COVID virus.

Mr. Thomas inquired why the Governor's order did not apply to the grants discussed earlier. It was noted these were requests to apply; if awarded, the Governor's Executive Order could factor, depending on whether or not it is still in effect at the time of the award.

g. **Gift Acceptance Neighborhood Assistance Act:**

The State of Connecticut provides tax credits for businesses that make cash donations to municipalities and non-profit organizations. Connecticare is looking to give the town \$9,758 for open Space Reserves.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to accept a gift from Connecticare, Inc. through the Neighborhood Assistance Act Program for the Open Space Trust Fund in the amount of \$9,714.28. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and response, 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 (1) the application for or acceptance of any grants, funding or gifts. Mrs. Gionta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved via roll call. Motion carried.

Responsive to inquiry from Mr. Thomas, Mrs. Zemienieski and Mr. Smith explained that the Act itself dictates where the funding is applied. It was also noted that the funding is spent in accordance with the Open Space Ordinance.

OTHER

Mr. DiCristofaro solicited additional questions from the Board members. None were received. .

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Motion was made by Mrs. Gionta to recess at 8:12 pm to provide opportunity for citizens to ask questions or offer comments. Mr. DiCristofaro seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved via roll call vote. Motion carried.

The email address budget.questions@easthaddam.org was provide for that purpose.

Mr. DiCristofaro reconvened the meeting at 8:17 pm.

Two questions were received.

The first inquired how a detailed copy of the budget could be obtained. Mr. DiCristofaro advised that the budget is on the town's website, Mrs. Varricchio will send a direct link to this individual requesting it.

Another question asked if funding for fixing the Hemlock Valley Road Bridge was included in the budget just adopted. Mr. Smith advised that it was not as the project will be covered by FEMA funds (75%) and the remaining 25% will be covered by funding in the 2019-2020 budget.

Mr. DiCristofaro expressed gratitude to each Board member and support staff. He felt that all did the best and added he was pleased to be moving forward with a budget with a zero mill rate increase.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 8:20 pm. Mrs. Gionta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Denette