TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2023
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 and 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Life

Participating:

Board of Finance Members:

Joseph Corbett
Bruce Dutch
Todd Gelston
Tracey Gionta
Harvey Thomas
Rebecca Whatley

Others:

Donald Angersola – Facilities Director
Linda Zemienieski – Executive Manager

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Gionta called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. and the attendees said the pledge of allegiance.

2023-2024 BUDGETF

Ms. Gionta remined the public that the Board of Finance's consideration of the FY2023-2024 budget is the final stage of the review of the proposed budget. She advised that the Board of Education had drafted their FY24 budget in October/November and the Board of Selectmen had drafted the Town's budget in February. She noted that both Boards' budget review workshops were open to the public and are available to view on YouTube.

The Board reviewed the following operating budgets:

a. Selectmen

It was noted that the only change in this budget is a 2.5% increase in the Salaries & Wages budget per the negotiated union contract rate increase. There was a general discussion regarding what drives the increase in Salaries & Wages, and it was noted that the contractual union increase is typically carried forward to the Town's non-union employees. In response to a question from Ms. Whatley, Ms. Zemienieski stated she would remove the Redevelopment line from the narrative for this budget.

In response to a suggestion made by Mr. Thomas, the Board agreed to review the remaining budgets in the order in which they appear in their budget books. Their discussions on each budget, however, are recorded below in the order in which the budgets appear on the agenda for this meeting.

The Board took a break at 11:05 a.m. and the meeting resumed at 11:45 a.m.

b. Legal Services

Mr. Funk stated that the only change to this budget was the new Redevelopment Agency line with an addition of $15k. Ms. Zemienieski responded to several questions from the Board. There was a general discussion regarding the Labor Counsel expense and whether or not the new Human Resources position had had any mitigating impact on that budget line.

c. Probate Court

In response to a comment by Ms. Gionta, Ms. Zemienieski confirmed that the Town's contribution to the regional Probate Court is determined by a municipality's Grand List.

d. Insurance (Risk Management)

Ms. Zemienieski advised that the final figures for insurance premiums have not yet been received, consequently she used maximum increases as placeholders to project the expense for each budget line. The Board discussed the Town's cyber-security coverage and Mr. Thomas requested IT Manager Kaplita provide an overview of the department's program for proactive risk reduction. He also asked to schedule a cyber-security training session for the Board members.

e. Town Office Building

Facilities Director Angersola provided an overview of the reductions in this budget. There was a general discussion regarding the on-going expense for Water/Sewer in the vacant building.

f. Town Meeting Hall

Mr. Angersola provided background information regarding the increased expense for Building Maintenance and responded to questions from the Board.

g. Riverhouse/Annex

Mr. Angersola provided an overview of the reductions in this budget and responded to questions from the Board. In response to a comment made by Ms. Gionta concerning the Riverhouse, Mr. Angersola stated he would research whether there are minimum maintenance requirements for buildings designated as Landmark structures. There was a general discussion regarding the status of the Riverhouse's roof.

h. Grange Hall

Mr. Angersola provided an overview of the operating budget and proposed capital projects. He and Ms. Zemienieski responded to questions from the Board.

i. Millington School House

Mr. Angersola provided an overview of the operating budget. He and Ms. Zemienieski responded to questions from the Board.

j. Municipal Office Complex/Central Services

Ms. Zemienieski provided information about several changes in this budget. There was a general discussion regarding the lease for the Town's telephone system. The Board also discussed whether or not the Municipal Office Complex budget is the appropriate place to carry the expense lines for Dues and Fees. Mr. Angersola confirmed that he is comfortable with the reductions in the Repairs & Maintenance and Building Maintenance lines since most of the "big ticket" items are being covered by the surplus remaining in the Building Committee's budget.

k. Board of Finance

In response to a comment made by Ms. Gionta, Mr. Funk provided an explanation for the increase in the Auditor expense for FY24. He noted that funding for the Human Resources personnel had been moved out of Contingency and, as a consequence, the Contingency Fund will return to $90k for FY24. Mr. Funk responded to several questions from the Board.

l. Finance Office

The Board reviewed the operating budget for the Finance Office and Mr. Funk responded to their questions.

m. Assessor

The Board reviewed the Assessor's proposed FY24 budget and Mr. Funk noted that there is an additional $12,854.00 for the department's technology needs in the Shared Services budget. In response to a question raised by Mr. Thomas, Mr. Funk advised that the increase of $6,246.00 in Purchased Professional Services is for software for the Assessor. Mr. Funk responded to questions from the Board.

n. Board of Assessment Appeals

The Board reviewed this budget and, in response to a question raised by Ms. Whatley, Mr. Funk clarified how elected officials' salaries/wages are determined.

o. Collector of Revenues

The Board reviewed the proposed FY24 operating budget for the Collector of Revenues and no questions or comments were raised.

p. Town Clerk

The Board reviewed this budget and, in response to a comment made by Ms. Whatley, Mr. Funk confirmed that the expense for CT Marriage Licenses was the state's share of the fee the Town charges for marriage licenses. There was a general discussion regarding several line items in the Town Clerk's proposed FY24 budget.

q. Town Clerk Reserves

The Board reviewed the proposed FY24 operating budget for Town Clerk Reserves and no questions or comments were raised.

r. Registrar of Voters

Mr. Funk advised that the $5,000.00 of the increase in the budget's FY24 Salaries & Wages expense is a placeholder in anticipation of advance voting legislation being passed in CT. In response to a comment made by Ms. Whatley regarding the change in the expense for Voting Machine Setup, Mr. Funk stated he would research the reason for the proposed increase and provide the Board with his findings. There was a general discussion regarding the age and reliability of the Town's voting tabulators and the need for a back-up plan and Mr. Funk also agreed to research that issue for the Board.

s. Land Use

Mr. Funk provided an explanation for the increases to the expenses for engineering services for the WPCA and the Transfer to WPCA. In response to a request from Mr. Gelston, Mr. Funk agreed to provide the Board with a simple balance sheet for the WPCA. In response to a question raised by Mr. Gelston, Mr. Thomas clarified that the Town's expense for sub-division engineering fees are, to the extent allowed by state statute, passed through to the developer.

t. Zoning Board of Appeals

The Board reviewed the proposed FY24 operating budget for the Zoning Board of Appeals and no questions or comments were raised.

u. Open Space Committee

The Board reviewed this budget and Mr. Thomas explained that the $3,000.00 (133.3%) increase in Purchased Professional Services is the result of the state requiring a higher level of appraisals be done on properties they are considering for grant opportunities, as well as a increase in the cost of appraisal services in general. Ms. Gionta noted that the Committee had

overspent in this line item in FY23 and expressed concern about how overages are funded. Mr. Funk provided an overview of how he deals with overages and noted that he expects this expense to go down in FY24. Ms. Whatley noted a terminology correction that should be made.

v. Historic District Commission

The Board reviewed the proposed FY24 operating budget for the Historic District Commission and no questions or comments were raised.

w. Conservation Commission

The Board reviewed this budget and, in response to a question raised by Mr. Thomas, Mr. Funk clarified the function of the Transfer to Special Revenue Fund expense.

x. Agriculture Commission

The Board reviewed the proposed FY24 operating budget for the Agriculture Commission and no questions or comments were raised.

y. Economic Development Commission

Mr. Funk distributed a document with an updated narrative for the Economic Development Commission's FY24 operating budget but it was noted that no changes were made to the budget numbers. He provided an explanation for the $12k reduction in Purchased Professional Services. No questions or comments regarding this budget were raised.

z. Redevelopment Agency

Mr. Thomas advised that the Redevelopment Agency's proposed FY24 budget is not completely defined since the Agency is in the process of developing its work plan for the upcoming fiscal year and noted that that objective may not be achieved before the BOF completes its review of the Town's budget. There was a general discussion regarding the appropriate structure for the Agency's operating and capital budgets. Mr. Thomas recommended adopting the proposed $30.7k operating budget and $15k legal budget with the understanding that it may be necessary for some additional contingency funding. Ms. Gionta asked Mr. Funk to invite the Agency's Chairwoman to the BOF's March 18th budget workshop to discuss the proposed budget.

The meeting broke for lunch at 11:45 a.m. and reconvened at 12:30 p.m.

aa. Shared Services

Mr. Funk reviewed the Shared Services proposed FY24 operating budget and reviewed the increase in the Town's technology budget lines. He suggested moving the Library's technology budget out of Shared Services and into the Library operating budget. In response to a question raised by Ms. Gionta, Mr. Funk confirmed that the BOE fringe benefits expense was not included in the Salaries & Wages line or in the Town's FY23 Fringe Benefits budget. There

was a general discussion about the pros and cons of separating out employee benefits costs from the Salaries & Wages expense.

In response to a question from Mr. Gelston regarding why the Human Resources salary is being carried in the Shared Services budget, since the individual is only supporting the Town government, Mr. Thomas suggested asking Superintendent Reas and First Selectman Haines for clarification at the BOF's March 13 budget workshop.

Mr. Thomas noted that he felt the expense for departmental software is high and there was a general discussion regarding ways to mitigate the cost. Ms. Gionta asked about the discrepancy in the internet expense between several buildings and Mr. Funk agreed to invite IT Manager Kaplita to the BOF's next budget workshop to respond to the Board's technology questions.

Mr. Angersola and Ms. Zemienieski clarified the purpose of the Maintenance Fund expense lines for the Town and the BOE and there was a brief discussion regarding transferring excess Maintenance funds to cover the technology overage.

Motion made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 1:32 p.m. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
Bruce Dutch
Secretary