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*Stacy Jasano, CTC*  
TOWN CLERK

Thursday, March 4, 2021 6:30PM

MINUTES for BOF Budget Workshop Subcommittee Meeting from Thursday, March 4, 2021

**TOWN OF EAST HAVEN  
BOARD OF FINANCE**

**MINUTES FOR THURSDAY MARCH 4, 2021, AT 6:30 P.M. BUDGET  
WORKSHOP SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**

*Noreen Clough read into the record:*

**TO THE RESIDENTS AND TAXPAYERS OF THE TOWN OF EAST HAVEN  
AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:**

Due to Governor Ned Lamont's March 10, 2020 declaration of a public health emergency and civil preparedness emergency and his subsequently issued Executive Orders 7B and 7D: and, due to the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 in the State of Connecticut including New Haven County, in-person public access to this meeting will not be permitted. **This will be a 100% electronic meeting.**

**The Public can access and participate in this Meeting  
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The East Haven Board of Finance held a Board of Finance Budget Workshop meeting on Thursday, March 4, 2021 which commenced at 6:30 P.M. via ZOOM, in order to transact the following:

## **Roll Call:**

Rich DePalma, Noreen Clough, Beth Purcell, Rich Esposito, and Al Purzycki were present. Mayor Joseph Carfora and Ralph Vitale were absent. Jim Keeley, Finance Director was also present.

## **Misc:**

Noreen Clough nominated Rich DePalma for temporary chair for the meetings. Beth Purcell seconds. All in favor

Noreen Clough nominated Sue Mauro for secretary, Beth Purcell seconds. All in favor.

### **a. Administration and Management (120);**

Michelle Benivegna presented for this department. The budget for this department is slightly less than what was actually proposed for the last budget year because the Economic Development Director was hired at a lower rate than what was budgeted for the previous year. It was a savings as well as other department savings. We are asking for a little less than \$285,187.00. Rich DePalma stated to Michelle that this whole department budget is in line with the previous budget other than the salary decrease. Michelle agreed. Rich DePalma asked if there were any salary increases for administration. Michelle responded that there were no salary increases for anyone in the administration. Noreen asked what ???? inaudible the Youth Center line item was. Michelle stated that the Youth Center was always something that was budgeted for ?? This would be used for the teen activity at the fall festival and some events for teens to go bowling, etc. Michelle stated it hasn't been utilized in the past years. Michelle further stated it really should be under Social Services, and perhaps this is something that can be added to Social Services next year.

### **b. Senior Center (665);**

Bob Petrucelli presented for this department. He stated the budget is the same format as it has been in previous years with the bulk of it being salaries. Regular and part time salaries include my salary, a bus driver, full time custodian, secretary. This also includes Jim Cody's money who opens and closes the building as well as my part time instructors. There is also money for supplies; the monthly Ricoh bills, Comcast, Magma cleaners. We have been shut down for over a year but still manage to do other activities. The Social Service end of it, we do energy assistance applications, rent rebate applications safely in person and I deliver 75 meals a week. We have still been very busy during these trying times. We are a vaccine clinic on Fridays. We look forward to trying to open up in mid-May with partnership with the YMCA, some new activities and a new format. I was here last year and we combined Social Services and the Senior Center in February and I was here for about a month before we shut down.

Rich DePalma asked Michelle what some of the salary changes are. Michelle stated that the salary jump has to do with the Counseling Center being partly East Haven counseling to being completely under BH care. There are 3 employees that are Town employees. One Town Hall Union employee and 2 Supervisor Union employees. Two of those employees are going to be moved laterally over to the Senior Center in the capacity of a secretary to support Bob and the

assistant that he currently has and also a clinician who works with the seniors already at the Counseling Center. She is going to be an assistant director to Bob. There are a lot of exciting plans for the Senior Center per Michelle, including an increase in capacity and increase of hours and in light of Covid, many of the activities that used to be 30 or 40 people have to be reduced to the number of people and we will have multiple classes. We are going to have staff from 7:30 to 5:00 now. This combining of the individuals from counseling center to Senior Center is really going to improve the programing and help with the continuing of the Covid-19 compliance regulations and bring our Senior Center to a level that it has never been at.

Bob stated that everything Michelle stated is true and that we are looking at a new business model to try and increase attendance and have folks register for activities in advance. We want to offer more programs. One of the things that stood out for the month I was here before we were shut out was there were not enough activities and diverse activities. We are going to look at art programs, partnerships with the YMCA, and aerobics in addition to the things we have always been doing. We have to do things differently, spacing wise and safety wise. Bob further stated that the 2 people coming over to the Senior Center really add value and will not only lighten my load and increase our efficiency, but will allow me to get out on the floor more. We are pointed in the right direction and will come out of this a lot better than when we started regarding the Senior Center.

#### **c. Registrar of Voters (110);**

Al Fucci states their budget request this year is \$169,255.00. There is an increase from last year and that is that there are a lot of things that have gone on with the pandemic and I think things will still be in place this year. Most of our budge remained the same, the increase is in the part time wages which covers the pole workers and a variety of other things. Stacy helped me with the budget and I went over it with Skip in Donna's absence. We are going to have a full slate at the poles. We need one moderator at each district, 2 assistant registrars at each district and there are 2 official checkers, 2 challengers, 2 ballot clerks, 2 machine tenders and office help and the Registrar of Voters which falls under the salaries. I have included in this budget for an election and a primary and a recount and an audit. There are things I removed from the budget and put them in other places. There was a line item for machine mechanic/technician and the position no longer exists. I put this in as casual labor as another line item as part time wages. There are increases for an area for other contractual items for things we need. There are things in there that we need to cover for contractual services. There was a lot that came up for this election, such as the boards, the sanitation equipment, plexiglass and other services we had to have that I think we are going to need in the coming election.

Stacy Gravino, Town Clerk, who helped Al with this budget, stated that they have to do a yearly canvas and we had to put in for supplies and software that they will be using for the canvas, as well as the workers will need to go to school, for example moderator school and classes and get re-certified.

Al reiterated that some of this extra money is for the canvas and we have Debbie mailing out over a1000 envelopes to people who moved out of town or moved into town and also a service we hired and they provide us with information of people, monthly, who is moving out of Town and into Town and a death list as well. Al did take out \$415.00 for pay going to the assistant

registrars. There are 2 assistant registrars in each district and they were getting this pay yearly in addition to getting paid for being an election worker/pole worker. They would get \$300.00 for being an assistant registrar and then \$415.00 yearly. We started to eliminate that. They did earn it by demonstrating the mechanical machines to teach people how to register and they would be there the nights we had to be there and they would come in and zero in their machines. There were about 8 of them left. It isn't really fair for the 8 people who were there for a long time as Assistant Registrars are getting this kind of money and other Assistant Registrars are not. I talked it over with Stacy and Skip and we agreed to take that out. Al stated that he increased the pay for pole workers. We had been paying minimum wage to machine tabulators and we had to increase. Al also thanked Stacy Gravino for helping him with the budget.

**d. Social Services (442);**

Bob Petrucelli presents for this department as well. As Michelle mentioned, the majority of the "55 ish" total budget is a part time? coordinator. I am the Social Services and Senior Center Director and there is a stipend I receive for Social Services in there. The majority of this budget is my stipend and the coordinator. Michelle stated we are in the process of hiring the Youth Coordinator. We started the process and had 2 top candidates, pre Covid-19 and one of them was offered the position and then withdrew their "acceptance of the job" due to covid. We put it on hold and the other candidate is fabulous and he is still interested in the position and hoping to start in April to fill that position to work closely with Bob to learn the history of the program and how it helps the youth in East Haven and will work with the YMCA with their youth leadership program as well. Noreen asked Bob as far as the fall festival goes is that who she would dealing with? Bob concurred. Bob further stated that Social Services is where we do the energy assistance applications, we usually take 400 to 500 of those every year that and is about \$300,000.00 in energy utility savings for East Haven residents. We have the rent rebate program which is about 500 applications and that gets about \$250,000.00 back to East Haven residents. The idea last year was to combine in one spot to increase the efficiency of services but also to increase the attendance at the senior center.

**e. Planning & Zoning (111);**

Michelle spoke on behalf of this department. We are in the final stages of hiring a ZEO who will hopefully be starting in the next week or so. Pretty much the department stayed the same. There was a slight decrease in salaries. That savings is because that former ZEO upon retirement was at higher step in the contract. It is a contractual salary decrease. There were a few minor decreases based on past spending habits in the department that the funds were not always used.

**f. Zoning Board of Appeals (112);**

Michelle spoke as well for this department. It went up a little for equipment maintenance. We are in process of upgrading copiers and there is a lot of copying that has to go in creating these packets that have to go to the board members. We want that cost covered. Beth Purcell asked about the clerk stipend. Michelle stated they get paid \$100.00 to clerk a meeting.

**g. Civil Service & Personnel (115);**

Andrea Liquori presented for this department and stated the budget is basically the same. The budget is for salaries and the rest is for advertising, other contractual services and supplies. It stayed the same for last year. Noreen asked what she would be advertising for this year. Andrea stated this has been the busiest year. She has given 2 entry level firefighter exams and I have never done as many promotional exams for the police and fire department. It seems like it does not stop. We are at the end of our police list and we are doing another firefighter list, perhaps this one will last. It is hard because there are not very many paramedics so they are trying to get EMTs, however the police and fire testing brought in \$13,000.00 in fees. This is something new. It is \$50.00 per application. This year because of COVID we have gone to a remote testing capability, which a lot of the testing companies that I would rent the hard copy testing from they have gone to remote testing, so there is an extra fee for that. I am doing a big firefighter test; I am not sure how much it will be but it will be covered by the \$13,000.00 application fees collected. We are doing small groups in person. If we are able to get the candidates in person. I am doing a lot of small groups. The Senior Center has also been a testing site. I have been using the conference room there and give tests to 1 or 2 people. It has worked out. We have done a couple of tests for the Board of Ed too. The Town side hasn't been too active right now. Al Purzycki asked about?? of \$5,000.00? inaudible, for professional services. Jim Keeley stated that is where we have been putting the money we collect from the test, so that is why you will see a negative, we had some monies that came in after year end for prior years so that is why you see a negative number there.

#### **h. Town Council (101);**

Jim Keeley stated it was a flat budget, the only thing that has changed is the charter revision services. We encumbered \$25,000.00 from last year and we have \$25,000.00 from this year. I spoke with Joe Deko and he is guessing about another \$10,000.00 so that is why it dropped by \$15,000.00. Other than that, it is the same. Rich DePalma stated it is a \$15,000.00 decrease in the budget. Beth Purcell asked if that means we accrued the \$25,000.00 from previous years so we could use that. Jim Keeley stated yes. And there is another \$25,000.00 from this year. Jim said when we spoke about it, he thought that \$60,000.00 should get us there.

#### **i. Public Health (440);**

Noreen Cough thanked Mike Pascucilla for all the support from East Shore and he in turn thanked Michelle for helping with the clinics. The population decreased by 130 so the population in accordance with the latest census data, which is 2 years behind, is 28,569 residents. The per capita is set at \$11.50 so that brings the total to you \$328,543 per capita. There are 2 other line items. One is mosquito control budget for \$16,268. That is a line item in your budget but we manage the account. That money does not come to East Shore. We handle it that way with all the communities. We have a boat that serves the waters of East Haven, all the way to Guilford and because there have been some cuts to the budget a few years ago, we discussed a one-time \$3,000.00 fee per year. All the communities are paying the \$3,000.00 per year. That brings the total request for our budget to \$347,811.00. That is the budget in a nutshell. Rich DePalma asked if he works closely with the Board of Ed, to which he replied yes. This Saturday we are vaccinating 250 school officials. We meet every week with our partners in Town and talk about the Covid numbers and we meet with the school officials. We are hoping through the vaccination

process that we are starting to hopefully see within the 6 months or so to get the pandemic under control.

**j. Board of Finance (102);**

Rich DePalma stated it was a flat budget.

**k. Counseling & Community Svcs. (444);**

Michelle spoke on behalf of this department. This item has significantly decreased. The Counseling Center costs \$664,000.00 to run it for the Town. As of today, it serves 181 residents, out of almost 29,000.00 residents. The cost of that per person is \$3,600.00. We definitely realized in COVID that the implementation of telehealth and telemedicine has been a way for consistency for these clients to receive care while not coming physically into the building. So, this counseling center has not had a client step foot in it since last March. We reached out to BH Care and talked about this very large cost to the Town for services that we now discovered can continue via telehealth. They gave us a proposal to continue their services and also take a few of the East Haven there were some residents that were still part of the old East Haven Counseling Center but they are incorporated in the total of 181 number figure. They will continue their care with no disruption in service. The only difference is there will no longer be a physical location in East Haven. They will meet with their counselors, pretty much in their living room which is the way they have been in the last year. At a time when it is safe for them to move to in person sessions, they will go to the closest location which is about 7 miles away, in Branford. In addition to that there are 6 total sites in the state. BH Care is the leading mental health provider for the State of Connecticut. The proposal for the Town to continue this service with BH Care is \$127,000.00. There is a significant savings right off the top. All the clients will be transitioned by May 1<sup>st</sup>. May 2<sup>nd</sup> when they tune in to receive their therapy and they will not know any different because the building is closed. The program currently costs, out of tax payers \$3600.00 per person. This new proposal will drop it to \$706.00 per person. A significant savings and we are fortunate to have a great relationship with BH Care. There are going to be 2 additional services that they don't receive now which is after hour mobile crisis services to the residents to divert emergency hospital visits when appropriate and there was an under-utilized after hour telephone crisis line that wasn't utilized to the max potential and that is something that will be increased. There are also physical improvements once? inaudible. The Town also has an extra bus so we are working with our insurance company to help transport residents to their doctor's appointments who are unable to drive that 7 miles to their appointment. A huge enhancement to the Town and a great savings without disruption to the services. The 3 Town employees that were there, 2 will be going to Senior Center and one who is an accounts receivable and billing person for the medical services is actually going to be located in the finance department. The work keeps piling on and we don't increase the bodies.

Rich DePalma asked if Branford can handle the flow when they resume in person appointments. Michelle stated yes. They are going to keep the telemedicine for people who want to continue too with that service. Beth Purcell asked if they participate with any delays in scheduling because this was an issue in the past. Michelle stated it should be less taxing because Branford is a bigger facility with more therapists. Michelle further stated that she can look into that to be sure there should not be any back log.

Beth also asked what the plan is for that building (counseling center). Michelle stated that they are looking to make that a one stop shop for fire marshal, zoning, building and potentially our town engineer. Many of our surrounding communities have those individuals under one roof which makes the ability to get a building permit or Co's signed off on is much easier. We are streamlining and improving the service for residents.

#### **l. Building Official (221);**

Jim Basset spoke and stated everything is same except for a couple of line items. Our degree of permits was not reduced through COVID. It did not slow down construction as there were not any restrictions on construction. They still needed permits and we adopted new procedures for COVID but things are now getting back to normal. The fees are the same. Noreen notes that under part time wages there is an increase. Jim stated part of that increase was for the building inspector that I bring in if I am on vacation, so that we can keep services going. I increased it slightly for that person because I was coming up a little short. Michelle stated also we are hiring a part time person 10 to 12 hours a week to support the building department. That department has not had a staffing increase, ever. They need some support with basic things such as filing, phones, especially if Roberta who is a seasoned employee, has her vacation time and Jim needs to be doing inspections. It is a non-union position and very flexible to give support to this department.

#### **m. Housing/Urban Renewal (445);**

Michelle stated that housing budget hasn't changed at all. Urban renewal we did do a decrease. We had requested the prior year \$10,000.00. It was never used so we lowered it to \$5,000.00.

#### **n. Police (332);**

Chief Lennon stated the budget is sustainable with the mayor's recommended budget going to the next year. There are a couple of updates. We had a ton of testing this year with still some testing to go. Andrea has definitely stepped up. It is a national problem but we see a huge reduction in the number of applicants, even though we are trying to do as much recruiting as we can. It is very difficult this year due to Covid. We have 2 vacancies currently. We have a couple more people left on the list. Police Commission is meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> to interview and potentially hire them. If we do hire them, it will put us at full staff. I say full staff lightly because currently I have 5 recruits in the police academy and I have the additional 2 vacancies I have 4 on long term injury and 1 on injury status that I don't even know about because it is so new. I am running with a deficit of personnel but on paper I am almost at full staff. Noreen stated that she was happy to see the police vehicle in the budget and not putting it in capital. This Board has asked for this for many, many years. Noreen asked if full staff included all of the promotions that the Police have made. Chief Lennon stated yes. All 62 sworn positions are filled. Rich DePalma asked if there are any promotions that are not filled. Chief Lennon answered there are 2 detective promotions that there is an active list for occurring on the 16<sup>th</sup> as

well. A lot of it due to Covid and a lot of it has been due to the some of the costs with the state. The Academy availability is very difficult to come by and on top of it the academy is very difficult. They have dealt it back down on the towns but they haven't reduced the fees to the towns and they are doing a lot of it remotely now. This takes away some of the experience for the recruits. They are only going to in person stuff when they have to. Rich asked about his fleet. Chief stated it is tough to tell because you have competition between Ford, Chrysler and they keep fluctuating their prices. Every year when we talk about cars, I buy as many cars as I can in our budget. We are getting a shelf life on the patrol cars of about 3 full years and then hanging around for construction jobs, road jobs or non-patrol functions for about 2 to 3 years. By end of 3<sup>rd</sup> year, they are close to 90 to 100k miles. It starts to get to a point for emergency driving it is not as safe as it should be. With the number that is requested in the budget it gives us the opportunity to continue with consistency of replacement of the fleet. Chief Lennon also stated that Deputy Tracy and Jim Keeley have been working on a leasing program for the fleet. It is a full fleet management system. Still in process to see if it is a good financial option for the town or to out-right purchase the cars. Regardless of that the monies requested in the budget would stabilize us for purchasing or part of the money to switch to leasing. Rich DePalma asked what was holding up better the SUVs or cars for longevity. Chief said it is a toss-up. They are waiting to see. A lot of communities swear on the Chevys but we are only on year 2 with them. The Dodge Chargers are starting to hit some of their issues and they are out of warranty now and are on year 3 right now. The Fords hold up decently too. Noreen thanked the Police and Fire Departments for dealing with everything the past year. Rich DePalma asked the Chief to do his best to keep the overtime down. Chief stated that after the budget passed last year the legislature passed the police accountability act and it puts certain time lines on training that had to be done and we had to cram to comply with the law in a short period of time. Especially in October and November because we had held off because of Covid for doing some of our in-person training. There were a few pay periods that were very high because we had to get it all done in time. Last year we were able to cover our overtime deficiency which was minimal, with our own budget and I am hopeful we can do that this year. Rich DePalma stated the budget was up \$500,000.00 and that is because of the cars and contractual salaries, so basically it is a flat budget. Chief Lennon stated yes, very close to it.

**o. Board of Police Commission (330)**

Not that much IS changing. Overall a very minimal increase from last year about \$200.00. Registrations and dues subscriptions and the clerk. The Clerk for the police commissioners serves as the clerk for the traffic hearings. The clerk does more than one meeting a month. She is paid out of this account for both.

**p. Public Safety Dispatch Ctr. (336)**

Chief Lennon stated we currently have one vacancy in the dispatch center. One of the dispatchers was hired as one of our new police officers. Right now, our detectives are doing backgrounds on dispatch applicants. I don't know if we will get a viable candidate off of that. The way their



contract works is that there are 4 vacancies that are filled every week by part time dispatchers. Due to COVID and obligations for our part time dispatchers full time employers, they would not let them do their secondary employment at the time so if we have a vacancy and can't fill it with a part-time, we have to pay overtime for full time dispatchers. Budget is pretty close to last year. Noreen asked how the calls were going. Chief Marcarelli stated that the calls were down almost 1,000 calls from where we were in 2019. The 20-21 numbers appear to be increasing substantially. People were not calling 911 because they didn't want to go to the hospital. The bulk of the calls for EMS were pandemic related and during the height of pandemic for fire we were doing many, many pandemic calls and that was the bulk of our work. Chief Lennon stated the same thing is true for police. We saw a reduction which mostly was last spring going into the summer. Starting late summer and fall our numbers have skyrocketed.

Rich DePalma asked both chiefs if we are in for reimbursements from the state for Covid related emergencies. Chief Marcarelli stated he applied, with Jim, for \$274,000.00 in reimbursement for COVID related expenses. Most of that was for cat b emergency protected measures to respond to the pandemic but the fed gov has been difficult to work with on that so we have not seen any money on that. 274k accounts for some equipment that was not purchased with town funds, for reimbursement and straight time for covid replacement for sick employees and extra staffing we had to put on. We brought back an extra person every day just to decon personnel and facilities.

## **Emergency Operations Center**

This was not on the budget workshop meeting list, so it was added here. Overall, it is a \$10,000.00 reduction from last year. ?? inaudible. The rest of it is resource money preparation we have in an emergency incident. It could be a hurricane or winter storm. The storms last summer in August that effected Foxon, those expenses would come out of this account. It is a floating number. The salaries are reimbursable by the state of Connecticut.

Meeting concluded 7:43 P.M.

Susan Mauro  
Clerk