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EAST HAVEN, CT
Stacy Gravino, CCTC
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**East Haven Town Council
Public Hearing**

The East Haven Town Council Held a Public Hearing Monday, April 26, 2021 via Zoom in order to hear the following:

Chairman Deko called the hearing to order at 7:04 p.m.

Roll Call-12 Present 2-Absent (Ranfone and Ruggiero)

Staff Present: Stacy Gravino Town Clerk, Erica Forti Superintendent of Schools, Michael Luzzi Town Attorney, and Richard Caponera Director of Grounds and Maintenance.

**TOWN OF EAST HAVEN NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE 2021 – 2022 FY
TOWN BUDGET**

In accordance with Chapter VII, Section 5 of the East Haven Town Charter, the East Haven Town Council will hold two public hearings regarding the proposed 2021 - 2022 fiscal year Town Budget, as follows:

Public Hearing #1

Vice Chairman Pacelli read the following:

A Public Hearing with regard to the Board of Education portion of said budget was held via Zoom, Monday, April 26, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Deko recognized Erica Forti Superintendent of Schools.

Superintendent Forti stated that they are responsible for the emotional growth of their students. It is their intent to offer the students and their families' comprehensive and academic programs at all levels by addressing our extracurricular interest along with our social and emotional needs. In addition, to innovative programs in our schools and to that end our district needs to be competitive along the shoreline, as school choices forces us to be and do better. We do know our students have options and we

want to keep our students in the district. We discussed salaries and benefits being drivers of our request, again the BOE requested \$49,021,836, which is an increase of 2.14%. This increase sustains education, athletic, and enrichment programs; it maintains their commitment to safety and security with facility care and maintenance. In addition, it allows them to meet their contractual obligations alongside new positions, which will help advance our programing and our students' educational experiences.

Tiffany Foley, 22 Ure Avenue stated this last year has presented some unprecedented challenges to the town and the Board of Education. In the upcoming year there will be difficulties which are likely to be unseen by this council or the board. None of us will know what these challenges will be; it can range from unknown expenses to cuts from the state and federal funding. It is not time to make an unprecedented situation more difficult, she urges the council to provide the full amount requested by the board in this years' budget request. If the situation stabilizes the council can take stock of the new budget needs in the following year's budget.

Lorena Venegas, 73 George Street stated she is speaking as a parent to make sure the town does fully fund the BOE budget of \$49,021,836. She is aware that the ESSER2 will come through and it will be a large amount but it does have a dateline in which to be used. We have to be cautious and educated in how we are going to be using that funding. Not only for summer programs but how will it be used this coming fall. Parents were able to push this year to have remote learning and a social media program because we do need communication and we do need more connectedness between our town government, Board of Health Department, and our Board of Education. She has stated this in the past that the enrollment is going to keep increasing and that has been happening across the state. It will migrate across the state because this town has very nice amenities available. She believes that this budget has to help and enhance the educational experience. She would like to see all our students excel in reading and math. It is important to her that we increase the graduation rates and that they are able to read, write, and do math. In terms of transparency and accountability she believes the last three months have been a wakeup call for the town and BOE and she thinks this is an improvement, this is the way things are supposed to be. We should be malleable and adapt to policies. On the BOE agenda they are cleaning up some financial policies that is a good thing to see and she fully supports and endorses the BOE budget for this year for the \$49,021,836.

Chairman Deko brings comments back to the council and recognizes Salvatore Maltese.

Councilman Maltese read a statement. As a Town Council person he is extremely disappointed that this administration has cut one million dollars from this budget because he is an advocate of education. Our children deserve the best possible education, with this reduction by the Mayor it unfortunately does not give our children the opportunity to prosper. We need to provide our educators all that they need and deserve, especially during this pandemic and the ramifications our students endured with not being able to have in school learning. This increase will allow them to bridge the gap and exceed expectations. He is a big advocate of education being on the Board of Finance for 4 years. He knows what it takes and to educate these students, we have to find a way to fund it. He is in favor of the increase.

Chairman Deko addressed Councilman Maltese's comments. The budget was not cut, the Mayor's recommendation was not what they requested but the budget was not cut, that's very important to understand because that would be against the law.

Councilman Balter thanked the two members of the public who addressed the council with their concerns.

Cesare stated she didn't have any questions but did want to give the BOE administration and members; kudos for the Deer Run playground. It is probably the most beautiful addition to the school in the 20 years that she has worked at that school.

Vice Chairman Pacelli thanked the Board of Education for working with them for the past four nights.

Chairman Deko thanked the members of the public, the council, and the Board of Education members and staff.

Vice Chairman Pacelli moved to adjourn.

Councilwoman Lesco second the motion.

Voice vote-All in favor. None opposed. No abstentions.

Meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta A. DeLuca
Council Clerk