



INSTR # M2022000170  
DATE FILED 03/09/2022 12:38:27 PM  
CHRISTINE HALLORAN  
TOWN CLERK  
EASTON CT

## Board of Finance – Special Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: Wednesday, March 2, 2022 – 7:00 pm

Location: Easton Senior Center, 650 Morehouse Road, Easton, CT and  
Virtual meeting using the Zoom app.

*A recording of this meeting is located at:*

*<https://vimeo.com/showcase/easton-board-of-finance>*

**Attendees:** Members: Art Laske-Chair, Jackie Kaufman-Clerk, Andy Kachele,  
Ira Kaplan, Michael Kot, Paul Skrtich; Alternates Present, but not seated: Michael  
Gutowski, Gregg Saunders, Maureen Williams

**Absentee(s):** --

**Guest(s):** Christine Calvert-Finance Director/Treasurer, Dr. David Bindelglass-First Selectman, Kristi  
Sogofsky, Second-Selectmen

**Call to Order:** Meeting called to order at: 7:01 pm by: Art Laske

---

### Agenda Item 1 *Review Proposed Department Budgets*

---

#### A. Town Assessor

- The Town Assessor, Rachel Maciulewski, CCMA1, appeared before the Board and presented the budget proposal.
- Significant line items discussed included: purchasing State Assessor Car Tax Book (which results in efficiency); a total of two (2) employees; continuing education tuition and fees for staff; two (2) file cabinets for materials and supplies, a total of two (2) employees.
- The mill rate is expected to decrease (per Ms. Calvert).
- Q&A with the Board regarding Farm Land assessment (consistent with State requirements) and the last revaluation change after the appeals process was completed. P. Skrtich asked Ms. Maciulewski to provide the breakdown of commercial, 1 and 3 acre properties by email, following up to initial February request.

#### B. Board of Assessment Appeals

- The Town Assessor, Rachel Maciulewski, CCMA1, appeared before the Board and presented the budget proposal, which was minimal.

#### C. Tax Collector

- The Town Tax Collector, Krista Kot, appeared before the Board and presented the budget proposal. Ms. Kot has been Tax Collector for 6 years and worked for the Town for 12 years in other departments.
- Tax collection is slightly ahead of where it was in 2021, with \$95,000 expected [tomorrow].
- Online payments: 8%.
- Significant line items discussed included: two (2) employees (Ms. Kot and an assistant); increased operating budget which include QDS/vendor fee increases, postage, recertification hours (50 hours required by a date certain Ms. Kot must retest); transportation costs associated with travel to continuing education classes; decreases this year for legal notice costs and miscellaneous expenditures because Ms. Kot tries to run her department on a "shoestring".

- When asked if there has been a decline in collectability, Ms. Kot replied collections were not in decline and last year were better than expected. Further discussion of the potential need or establishment of a policy that would initiate a tax sale.

#### **D. Town Clerk**

- Town Clerk, Christine Halloran, appeared before the Board and presented the budget proposal.
- Significant line items discussed included: review of Town Clerk employees and responsibilities; the role the Town Clerk has played in integrating Town Hall departments and website maintenance; the service and fees that are statutory and contractually determined (Ms. Halloran provided supplemental data to support the breakdown of costs); general office fees, including mandatory legal notice publication fees, postage (the Town Clerk charges for postage when it can).
- Ms. Halloran further provided that 2020-21 land recordings increased by 35%, which resulted in a tremendous increase in work and indexing for staff. Her office is always looking to find ways for technology to make the department more efficient. One new program of interest is the Property Alert System, which has an associated fee reflected in written budget.
- Discussion of Proposed Property Alert System: Ms. Halloran described the service as an automated online notice system where registered users may receive certain property documents or alerts when filings are made to its address. She confirmed the Town does not have OCR recognition yet. Board members asked if: 1) there was demonstrated taxpayer interest in this program; 2) confirmation that platform provider would not sell the registered emails to third parties; and 3) whether additional insurance is required to cover it. M. Williams stated that the program may require more investigation, so the Board understands what exactly is provided, the security of same and any hidden costs to consumers.
- I. Kaplan asked Ms. Halloran to comment on department revenue lines. Ms. Halloran replied that the \$18,000 is subscriptions based and other revenue if from recording. Given the number of real estate transactions in the last year this was a profitable year.

#### **E. Park & Recreation (P&R)**

- Danielle Alves, Director, appeared before the Board and presented the budget proposal. Ms. Alves has worked with P&R for 17 years.
- Ms. Alves submitted a written narrative summarizing P&R operations and budget.
- Significant line items discussed included: review of employees; budgetary requests and year to year changes; capital projects – field use account; unencumbered balance, need for new lawn mower; field space and field time highly sought after; increased demand for programming as Covid-19 restrictions have eased.
- Q&A with Board:
  - Mower (hours operated, motor, maintenance): is there any cost analysis for owning v. leasing the mower? P&R to review and provide response. Ms. Alves noted mower replacement should have been prioritized in last year's budget and was not; now it is important to address: she predicted that lead time to fix an older mower might long and more costly than a new one.
  - Fields: How is the lower Morehouse doing? Does it require any additional maintenance? It has been remediated but will not open until May.
  - Field maintenance is in MISC expense line item.

- A. Kachele encouraged P&R to limit its budget as much as possible because it is a challenge to balance needs of P&R with those of the BOE, as an example; but acknowledged that P&R does a lot to ensure a great portion of its budget paid for by people who use their services.
- A. Laske compliments P&R on its work for the Town and presentation.

**F. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**

- Chief Jon Arnold appeared before the Board and presented the budget proposal. Chief Arnold has worked with EMS since 1992.
- Significant line items discussed included: review of employees and shifts/ hours and operational staffing needs; overtime demand and increases (staff must take classes on nights and weekends); revenue sources; demand for service; technology improvement needs (EMS needs a new computer, approximately \$2500 or less).
- Total budget request represents 11% decrease from last year.
- Revenue: Chief Arnold confirmed that each ambulance transfer to a hospital results in approximately \$800 revenue to EMS. EMS has a 97% response rate, which means a substantial amount of revenue is received. Typical revenue for in home calls can be about \$280, but not as often collected because EMS does not bill for this regularly as this may deter the public from making important health and safety calls.
- Demand: Easton EMS had a 14% increase in call volume; 101 more calls than last year; and since EMS services are strained everywhere (a system wide problem in EMS) Easton EMS gets called to service other towns calls as well (Bridgeport, etc.) Last year, EMS responded to 516 calls. This year, 586 calls. Of those calls 1/3 (180 calls) resulted in hospital transfers (approximately \$144,000 revenue).
- M. Kot asked about the difference between a paramedic and EMT? Chief Arnold states a paramedic must have 2 semesters of college and may administer drugs; and EMT is only required to meet a specific number of training hours and is trained to stabilize a patient and provide it with access to the right medical help. The State requires Easton EMS to have paramedic availability now. We call upon AMR and Trumbull to provide us a paramedic as needed - then the patient gets billed.
- The two greatest expenses for EMS include stipends and gift card incentive program.

---

**Agenda Item 2      *Fill-In Budgets***

---

The Board reviewing the following fill-in budgets (no presentations made):

- A. **Treasurer:** 2 year position, Town employee reflects decrease; postage and office supplies (toner) increasing; looking for a new hire and that will require education and training fees and mileage for them to attend training and go to the bank.
- B. **Debt Services:** \$900,000 decrease.
- C. **First Selectman's Office:** review of employee needs and salary; fees to agencies (no change from last year); materials and supply increases; education and transportation fees; communications.
- D. **Professional Services:** subdivision regulation land use consultant fees, discussion of possible other fees.
- E. **Probate:** mandatory expense; this is not discretionary.

- F. **Town Hall:** custodian for Town Hall & Library, services and fees (custodian coverage when he is away, garbage removal, etc.); increase in cost of office supplies and associated fees.
- G. **Cemetery:** service and fees associated with fixing knocked over headstones; Park & Rec takes care of the lawn maintenance/mowing.
- H. **Contingency:** decreased by \$25,000, but if one employee must be replaced, it could wipe out the bulk of it and that could result in double payroll where the departure is unintended; retirement is sometimes unpredictable; non-union employees have sick payout, as does Fire Department; we need to review this more closely and see what the actuals v. the budgets dollars were since 2018.
- I. **Auditors/BOF:** 3 year agreement; BOF has fees associated with legal notices and budget books.
- J. **Town Attorney:** budget determined hourly and on an as needed basis. Ongoing land use litigation.

---

Agenda Item 3      *Adjournment*

---

Action/Motions:      J. Kaufman made a motion to adjourn at 9:30 pm.

Motion (Second):      M. Kot seconded.

**Result:**      Unanimous vote to adjourn.

Submitted by,

Jackie Kaufman – Clerk