

Town of Easton CT
Board of Finance – Special Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: Tuesday March 14, 2023 – 7:00 pm
Location: Easton Senior Center, 650 Morehouse Road; also on Zoom
Recording: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/easton-board-of-finance>

Attendees: Members in person: Art Laske, Andy Kachele, Michael Kot, Paul Skrtich, Ira Kaplan
Members on Zoom: Jackie Kaufman (started on Zoom, arrives 8:46)
Alternates in person: Gregg Saunders, Michael Gutowski, Maureen Williams

Absentees: none

Guests: Christine Calvert, Treasurer and Finance Director
Dave Bindelglass, First Selectman
Bob Lessler and Kristi Sogofsky, Board of Selectmen
Krista Kot, Tax Collector
Jason McKinnon, ER9 Superintendent
Randy Hicks, Easton Board of Education Chair
Sara Scrofani, ER9 Director of Finance, Operations, and Technology
Jeff Parker, Devon Wible, Alicia Young, BOE members

Call to Order: By Chair Art Laske at 7:04 pm

1. (Agenda item #1) Review Budgets for the Following:

- a. Tax Collector (7:04)
- b. Board of Education (7:27)

Krista presented her budget, and requested an increase of \$1,600 above what was presented to bring in a replacement hire one month earlier to allow for some training time. (Her assistant is retiring April 2024.) No action was taken. We also discussed upcoming tax sales, and possible policies to provide guidance on when that is initiated.

Jason and Randy presented the BOE budget. Randy remarked on the drivers of the increase (contractual salaries, health care, utilities and transportation, and academics), and Paul noted a discrepancy between the Google sheet and the presentation slides: the sheet is the most updated, and correctly reflects an increase in requested budget of about \$640,000 or 3.56%. (Devon later noted the discrepancy is due to a \$15,000 reduction in textbook costs, not yet reflected in the slides.)

The spreadsheet (scroll to bottom) and slides (slides are not exactly the same as presented at meeting) may be found at: <https://sites.google.com/er9.org/easton-budget/home>

Jason said student achievement is not meeting goals and is low compared with other DRG A scores (7:36). Randy discussed (7:45) budget drivers. Andy requested 5 year history on drivers, asked about policy on Easton, Redding, Region 9 helping one another as needed with health care reserve shortfalls, and Jason will look into Ira's request to find where this policy or memo of understanding is documented. Mike G asked about our offset from SSES Solar Panels; Sara later answers \$33,000 for FY22 and Jeff reports it was \$28,000 for FY21.

Jason discusses staff changes (7:58) including a new Math Coordinator, noting we are “shallow” in our educational leadership positions in comparison with other DRG A schools. He discussed a new plan for managing facilities, acknowledging that the plan implemented last year was not effective. We discussed the pros and cons of different approaches, and the details of what the responsibilities and compensation for the new Facilities and Operations position were. Jason argued for the return on investment of giving more emphasis to this role within Central Office, and that we should seek to do more than just fix what is broken, that longer range planning and grant seeking is worthwhile. He also noted that if Easton has a different approach to managing facilities from Redding, it only makes coordination within Central Office more difficult.

Randy and Jason delved into the cost centers (8:41), and Jason said that while the budget for curriculum and instruction has increased, it should be three times what it is now, that this is the “engine” to improve student learning and engagement.

Andy asked about a budget report given out in February, and Sara explained the inconsistencies in that report, and why it was not very helpful. (8:57)

Andy said this was far and away the most transparent BOE presentation he had seen. Jason invited BOF members to come to the schools to understand more about what they are doing, and their goals and plans.

2. Fill-in budgets: Any other budgets as deemed necessary.

No budgets were presented, and this item was skipped.

3. Motion to adjourn by Mike K/Paul. Result: passes 6-0 at 9:05.

Submitted 3/14/23 by Ira Kaplan, BOF Clerk