

Town of Easton
Board of Finance – Regular Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: December 7, 2021 – 7:00 pm

Location: Easton Senior Center, also on Zoom

A recording of this meeting can be found at the
Agenda, Minutes & Recording section of the town website.

Attendees: Members in person (P): Andy Kachele, Ira Kaplan, Michael Kot, Art Laske
Members on Zoom (Z): Jackie Kaufman, Paul Skrtich
Alternates : Gregg Saunders (Z)

Absentees: None (note two empty Alternate seats not yet appointed)

Guests: Christine Calvert (P)-Finance Director and Treasurer,
Dave Bindelglass (Z)-First Selectman,
Kristi Sogofsky (Z)- Selectman,
Danielle Alves (Z)- Director of Park & Recreation,
Lisa Farasciano (Z)- Recreational Programmer of Park & Recreation,
Steve Waugh (P), Fire Department Chief,
Richard Doyle (Z), Chief of Police,
Jonathan Arnold (P), Chief of Emergency Medical Services

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at: 7:04 pm by: Andy Kachele

Appointment of Alternates

Action/Motions: No appointments were necessary

Agenda Item 1 ***Public discussion regarding the use of the American Rescue Plan Act funds***

Discussion: Andy presented his view on guidelines for ARPA spending and background on other possible government funding, noting that about \$1.1million (\$1,112,922.17) was received in 2021, and the same amount will be received in 2022. He then presented seven letters from the public, giving his summary of each of them. Letters 1 and 2 concerned tonight's agenda, and BOF email addresses. Andy did not state who the letters were from. Letter 3 (Paul Altieri) suggested some ARPA funding be used for EMS building, and recommended borrowing money as well for EMS because of low interest rates. Letter 4 (Cathy Alfandre) asked about guidance on ARPA spending. Letter 5 (John Meyer) concerned spending ARPA within guidelines and avoiding continuing expenses. Letter 6 (Wendy Bowditch) spoke of needs for Town Hall facilities. Letter 7 (Grant and Peggy Monsarrat) promoted spending for EMS building and expressed concern for the process and transparency.

Andy then opened the discussion to members present at the meeting.

EMS Chief Jon Arnold advocated for Fire, Police, and EMS getting ARPA funds, and noted special need for EMS building. He noted that these services were the ones that have been providing greatest service to Easton during the pandemic.

Fire Chief Steve Waugh spoke in agreement.

Paul Lindoerfer (P) supported spending for Emergency Management consultant.

Devon Wible (Z), Easton Community Center Board member, supported ECC spending.

June Logie (Z) suggested supporting town IT systems, expressed concern about costs at Health Department that may need funding, and suggested contacting all town boards to see if they have ARPA funding proposals

Gloria Bindelglass (Z), EMS Commission member, echoed support for EMS building

Dave Bindelglass, First Selectman, thanked Andy for having this discussion.

Agenda Item 2	<i>Election of New Officers</i>
Action/Motions:	A nomination was made for Art Laske as Chair, a nomination was made for Andy Kachele as Chair
Nominations:	Nomination for Art by Ira, nomination for Andy by Mike
Result:	Tie vote 3-3 (Andy, Mike, Paul for Andy; Art, Ira, Jackie for Art) It was acknowledged that the decision to select the Chair now belongs to the Board of Selectmen. There was disagreement as to whether Andy, who served as Chair for December 2019 to November 2021, was still Chair, in light of tie vote. Andy argued that he was chair until a successor was chosen. Art argued that Andy was chair only for the prior seated Board, that we currently have no chair, and should adjourn. Art's position was supported by Ira, and by public comment from John Arnold (Z). Andy was unconvinced. Art agreed to allow the meeting to proceed with Andy acting as chair "without objection", and we did so proceed.
Commentary:	Art's agreement without objection effectively accepted Andy as Acting Chair for this meeting, preserving the legitimacy of the meeting and its motions, whether one viewed Andy as Chair or Acting Chair.
Agenda Item 3	<i>Discuss and approve the meeting minutes of October 5, 2021</i>
Notes:	November 9, 2021 regular meeting was cancelled.
Action/Motions:	A motion was made to approve the minutes with amendments to correctly spell Gregg (under Appointment of Alternates) and Skrtich (under Item 1).
Motion (Second):	Mike (Ira) Result: All in Favor
Agenda Item 4	<i>Review and discuss Park & Recreation Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter projections for the activity fund.</i>
Discussion:	Lisa Farasciano presented projections for the Activity Fund, and Danielle Alves presented projection for the Field Use account.
Agenda Item 4b	<i>Meeting Clerk</i>
Notes:	We did not formally add this item to the Agenda, but we executed it in practice. Art noted that after the standoff over who is Chair, we failed to vote on a new Clerk. The Clerk for the prior two years, Paul Lindofer, is no longer on the Board, so it is unambiguous that we do not currently have a Clerk to take minutes. Rather than take a vote on who the new Clerk would be, Andy simply asked for someone to volunteer to take minutes for tonight's meeting (in effect as Acting Clerk), and indicated to Ira that he would welcome Ira so volunteering. Ira volunteered and was accepted without objection.
Agenda Item 5	<i>Discuss and possible action on using American Rescue Plan Act funds for Fire Gear.</i>
Discussion:	Chief Steve Waugh described how gear effectiveness decreases and is non-compliant after 10 years.
Action/Motions:	A motion was made to appropriate \$37,000 from ARPA funds for requested Fire Gear.
Motion (Second):	Art (Paul) Result: All in favor.
Agenda Item 6	<i>Discuss and possible action on using ARPA funds to hire a consultant to review the Emergency Management Services</i>
Discussion:	First Selectman Dave Bindelglass presented, discussing process of choosing consultant ESCI (Emergency Services Consulting International). There was discussion about oversight of ESCI's work, and their coordination with plans for EMS building.

Action/Motions: A motion was made to authorize use of \$60,278 from ARPA funds to hire ESCI.
Motion (Second): Paul (Art) **Result:** All in favor.

Agenda Item 7 ***Discuss and possible action on using ARPA funds for a Radar Message Sign with trailer.***

Discussion: Police Chief Rich Doyle presented, explained that this request was on his wish list but was, in comparison with EMS needs, a low priority, and was willing to forgo this request so long as the money (\$18,860) goes to EMS instead. In response to question from Jackie, Chief Doyle explained the purpose of the sign (speed dependent messaging to discourage speeding) and Chris noted it was also useful for messaging from Public Works. Mike commented that he preferred a speed camera with automated ticket writing capability, but Chief Doyle explained those systems are very complicated to implement successfully.

Action/Motions: None

Agenda Item 8 ***Discuss and possible action on Ambulance bid***

Discussion: EMS Chief Jon Arnold expressed his gratitude to Police Chief Doyle re Radar Message Sign. Jon explained ambulance is about \$186k, and gave details of which model could be purchased and how costs can change over time. There is 180k in fund for purchasing ambulance, and there was discussion of how to appropriate the differential from that fund, and when. Given the scheduling it was agreed that this request can be delayed and made part of the regular annual budget.

Action/Motions: None

Agenda Item 9 ***Present draft of budget letter to BOF***

Discussion: Andy presented to BOF the draft letter to be sent to Easton Boards, Commissions and Department Heads concerning the annual budget process. Ordinarily this letter would come from the Chair but Andy proposed that, given the current ambiguity, it come from the full Board. That view was accepted without any objections.

Action/Motions: No formal motion made. Letter will be sent from full Board.

Agenda Item 10 ***Treasurer's Report***

Discussion: The Treasurer presented this month's report and answered questions from attendees. Questions focused on 1.5 million in outstanding taxes. Andy suggested establishing written policy to give guidance to Tax Collector on tax sales. Chris said she and Dave have been in discussion on how to approach tax sales. Ira suggested issuing no guidance at this time, in light of such discussions.

Action/Motions: None

Agenda Item 11 ***Discuss and possible action on Munis Financial Report for appropriations and revenue presented by the Director of Finance***

Discussion: The Finance Director presented this month's report and answered questions from attendees. Questions focused on Police (Chief Doyle: one officer left force, they have increased overtime because they are short staffed, they are in process of possible new hire); Pension being at only 13% (funding by Pension Board not yet executed); Audit (awaiting final numbers from Board of Education, a 30-day extension was filed).

Action/Motions: None

Agenda Item 12 ***Adjournment***

Action/Motions: A motion was made to adjourn at 9:09 pm

Motion (Second): Mike (Art)

Result: All in favor.

Submitted by,
Ira Kaplan- Acting Clerk