

**Town of Easton**  
**Board of Finance – Regular Meeting Minutes**

Date/Time: Tuesday, January 4, 2022 – 7:00 pm  
Location: 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,  
Paul Skrtich, Ira Kaplan, Gregg Saunders  
**Absentee(s):** Michael Kot  
**Guest(s):** Christine Calvert-Finance Director/Treasurer, Dr. David Bindelglass-First Selectman  
**Call to Order:** Meeting called to order at: 7:06 pm by: Art Laske

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***Appointment of Alternates***

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Action/Motions: A.Kachele made a motion to appoint Gregg Saunders to fill in for Michael Kot in his absence.  
Motion (Second): I. Kaplan  
Seconded. **Result:**  
Motion  
Approved

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**Agenda Item 1**      ***Election of Clerk***

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Notes: A. Laske nominated J. Kaufman as BOF Clerk. J. Kaufman accepted the nomination.  
Action/Motions: I.Kaplan made a motion to appoint J. Kaufman.  
Motion (Second): A.Kachele seconded the motion. **Result:** Approved.  
Follow Up: Position effective immediately.

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**Agenda Item 2**      ***First Selectman's Report***

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Notes:

- Dr. Bindelglass, First Selectman addressed the Board regarding the EMS/Rescue funds. He suggested that a committee be formed to address financial and ownership issues. Dr. Bindelglass emphasized that budgets would commence next week and in February.
- A. Laske asked if the Board of Selectmen would consider a budget for technology improvements for hybrid municipal meetings.
- Dr. Bindelglass replied that the Board of Selectmen has initiated discussion with IT consultants to improve hybrid meetings and is open to insights from others.

Action/Motions: --  
Motion (Second): -- **Result:** --  
Follow Up: --

<b>Agenda Item 3</b>	<b><i>Discuss and approve the meeting minutes of December 7, 2021.</i></b>
Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Kachele initiated discussion on Item 2 of the 12/7/21 Agenda revisions, "Vote for a Chairman" language and requested that the editorialized language be removed under result section under Item 2 through the Commentary Section.</li> <li>It was further recommended that boiler plate language be added to the website/agenda/minutes to alert members of the public as to how to access a meeting and video access.</li> <li>Dr. Bindelglass agreed that a link would be useful.</li> </ul>
Action/Motions:	J. Kaufman made a motion to approve, as revised.
Motion (Second):	A. Kachele seconded the motion. <b>Result:</b> Approved as amended.
Follow Up:	Discussion about how amended minutes are captured and recorded. New minutes are not recorded, but corrections are documented in the meeting minutes.

<b>Agenda Item 4</b>	<b><i>Update on EMS Headquarters</i></b>
Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A.Laske provided an introduction of the matter and welcomed Chief Jon Arnold and Asst. Chief Adam Goldstein of EMS. A.Laske shared that federal funds may be allocated for municipal building improvements for the EMS building project and would like discussion with EMS in advance of said request for funds and any allocation. He has invited EMS to comment on how the building will be built, funded and identify what is needed (cost and otherwise) to manage this building project.</li> <li>Chief Arnold introduced himself and EMS's attorney, Robert Nicola, Esq.</li> <li>He stated it is the goal of EMS to remain centrally located in Town, expand the building by approximately 1,000 sf to accommodate existing staff and allow for future growth. The current building is 100 years old and in significant disrepair: terrible shower facilities, not enough room for overnight volunteers to sleep in the building (they often sleep in their cars), the kitchen is industrial and not suitable for EMS needs, new equipment is needed to operate well and up to current code/health and safety standards.</li> <li>Anticipated cost: \$4-6 million dollars to fund construction of new facility. This number is based upon consultation with 2-3 architects and 4 EMS personnel who have built new EMS facilities in CT in the last several years.</li> <li>Types of Funding: Chief Arnold stated that the following funding strategies are being considered: Covid [recovery] funds, Local fundraising with a matching donation from a private citizen[with a cap], Capital Project funds, bonding the project, and/or apply for a mortgage.</li> <li>Chief Arnold stated that it seemed like almost the entire community is behind this; and that support is what makes "Easton great."</li> <li>A. Kachele agreed there is "tremendous support," but also asked EMS to clarify the path because of the two governing EMS entities: the private entity and the commission created by ordinance. He asked EMS to provide the following: 1) explanation about land ownership and how building will be owned and managed; 2) itemization of building deficiencies in greater detail. He explained these answers will be critical to the Board in its decision making.</li> <li>Mr. Arnold replied and agreed and said EMS wants to be part of the community and wants to build a building that will provide an opportunity for community use. EMS wants to contribute to the fabric of the community. Individual rooms and bathroom facilities based on age and genders for sleeping/showering facilities based on the needs are necessary improvements.</li> </ul>

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- Attorney Nicola then spoke and stated the cost of any building will be at least \$2.1 million. He explained EMS is very limited to where it can rebuild and is negotiating for a place in the Town Center. Anywhere else in Town would require a zone change and would like result in a lengthy appeal period, which is not preferable. EMS would continue to use its building while a new one is built, preferably on the same lot as the existing building. There is a possibility to buy land from Frank Lissi, but very limited opportunity and likely a “dead” opportunity. Attorney Nicola stated that the EMS may have up to \$600,000 in cash to contribute to the overall cost if it maximizes its fundraising-matching opportunity.
  - A.Laske responded to Attorney Nicola and stated these decisions (about location and design) need to be made before BOF allocates funds.
  - Attorney Nicola stated it is possible to buy additional land from F. Lissi with its own funds but not strong success; but there were very few options available other than rebuilding in place. He discussed land next to the library, but it is tied up in litigation, so that is not a realistic option. EMS could build on Fire Department land, but this discussion had not advanced. There may be more grants out there available to EMS to explore as well. He further stated he had conferred with Ray Martin about options with a pragmatic contractor to build as a cost savings approach.
  - G. Saunders asked what the range for the investment is and asked for clarification about who owns the land and current location.
  - Chief Arnold replied and answered questions about the land and how it could revert to the Town depending on if it stays in place or not. Building is right up against the property line with no setbacks or very narrow rear setbacks. The dirt lots are not the property of EMS. EMS would have to acquire land of neighbors.
  - A. Kachele suggested the Board of Selectmen should form a building committee.
  - Dr. Bindelglass said he wanted to ensure the Town does not overpay for land once the land acquisition process or land is identified. Compared to the elementary school relocation.
  - A.Kachele and A.Laske and Second Selectmen Lessler replied regarding history of the land acquisition for the elementary school.
  - A.Laske concluded this is likely the biggest project in Town and all entities should speak regularly.

Action/Motions: --

Motion (Second): --

**Result:** --

Follow Up: EMS is invited back to the BOF meetings on a regular basis to continue this conversation in preparation for its more formal request for funding.

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Agenda Item 5

***Preliminary budget discussions with the Board of Education***

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Notes:

- A. Laske introduced John Stinson, Chair of the Easton Board of Education (“BOE”) and welcomed him to provide an overview of the prospective BOE Budget process 2022-23.
- Mr. Stinson introduced Devon Wible and Jennifer DeJesus. He reviewed the budget process procedure and priorities and announced upcoming meetings that the public may attend to participate in the budget crafting process, including a budget workshop. All dates posted on the BOE website.

- A. Laske explained the unique influence the Joel Barlow High School [Region 9] budget may have on this Easton BOE budget. Easton and Redding each pay a proportional amount to the Region 9 Budget for its students. Easton has had a larger number of students than Redding (51%, \$700,000 cost). This represents a cost increase to Easton taxpayers. Additionally, in years past, the Easton BOF has taken funds from the “undesignated funds” [in 2021, this amount was \$2.7 million] to keep taxes low in the face of rising BOE budgetary needs; but it is not guaranteed this option will be available to the BOF year after year. Lastly, the BOE manages the maintenance costs of the education buildings, and this is a responsibility that must be honored and BOE is responsible for stabilizing the buildings and must consider these costs in the budget.
- A. Kachele observed the Joel Barlow costs are based on October 2021 census numbers and the \$700,000 could increase if enrollment increased since that time. He also observed that there are new, key people in the administration. He would like to hear the philosophy and commitments about how the budget is determined and financial commitments will be determined. He would like comments from the BOE about financial management (to ensure both the curriculum and buildings are being managed). He commented about prior “breakage” issues with staff and how that impacted the budget. He also noted the BOE monthly summary reports used to be provided to the BOF documenting how spending of major line items were managed. It would be helpful for BOF to receive these again. He further requested documentation of what federal funding has been received and how it has been used or how the BOE expects to use it. He further stressed the need for transparency in the BOE budget process and referenced the “attitude” of the Board; for instance: FOIA issues regarding the BOE November meeting. Be meticulous and comply with FOI.
- I. Kaplan requests clarification of what BOE did wrong with regard to breakage in the past.
- A. Kachele said some people left who were not given the “buy out” option or left prematurely. That can be a significant amount of money given career spans and that people will retire and we’re told people aren’t leaving and then they do and that does not enhance the credibility of the BOE.
- Mr. Stinson said he understood the concern and will address it.
- I. Kaplan asked about a large sum needed for ER9 buildings. What has happened since then and what translates for short term needs for Easton BOE.
- Mr. Stinson noted that he will address same.
- A. Laske confirmed BOF is not looking for answers tonight, but would like to see incorporated in the future plan.
- P. Skrtich confirmed that A. Laske has stated his concerns well. If the budget and assessment require taxes to be a little higher, it is something we will have to address and will likely impact people [owners] in the south end of town more than elsewhere. We must be more conscious about the total number and percentage increase from one year to the next. His preference is that the change is negative. He stated his views are otherwise well known.
- I. Kaplan asked if there are any additional BOE expenses related to Covid or recovering from Covid.
- J. Stinson replied that the BOE will address the questions raised by the BOF and that many of these topics will begin to be discussed at the BOE 1/22/22 meeting. Reliability and trust among our boards is a priority. The BOE was not trying to “play games” last year. We will have you hear from the administrators as to how

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we will be responsible stewards of the budget. I was unaware the minutes were not posted, but could have been posted elsewhere, but we were facing a personnel change at the time. We will ensure BOF receive monthly statements.

- A. Kachele provided a summary perspective: if EMS expenses are on the high end, and the BOE budget it high, it will create a challenge and BOF will not know that until closer to the finalization of the budget.

Action/Motions: --

Motion (Second): -- **Result:** --

Follow Up: BOE will return to the BOF when more information is gathered and responses are prepared.

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**Agenda Item 6**      ***Treasurer's Report***

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Notes: The Town Treasurer, Christine Calvert, presented this month's report and answered questions from attendees.

- Ms. Calvert discussed the goal of increasing cash flow .
- \$2 million CoreLogic deposit – not reflected yet. Otherwise no change.
- We collected \$300,000 tax debt.
- There are large delinquent tax bills to be collected.
- A. Laske discussed if there would be a policy developed for tax arrearage if one does not exist.
- Ms. Calvert recommended BOF confer with the Tax Collector.
- Dr. Bindelglass noted there was a moratorium on certain tax sales due to Covid and that is now lifted, which is why collections are rising.

Action/Motions: --

Motion (Second): -- **Result:** --

Follow Up: --

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**Agenda Item 7**      ***Discuss for appropriations and revenue presented by the Director of Finance***

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Notes: Ms. Calvert stated the Building Department is doing well and revenue has exceeded expectation 6 months into the fiscal year. Demand is overwhelming and fees will continue to rise. Expenses are good shape everywhere.

Action/Motions: --

Motion (Second): -- **Result:** --

Follow Up: --

Audit has not started. A. Kachele recommends BOF should we invite the Assessor to attend next meeting.

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**Agenda Item 8**      ***Adjournment***

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Action/Motions: A.Kachele made a motion to adjourn at 8:48 pm.

Motion (Second): G. Saunders seconded. **Result:** All in favor.

Submitted by,

Jackie Kaufman – Clerk