

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

Date/Time: Tuesday, March 1, 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,  
Paul Skrtich, Ira Kaplan, Michael Kot, Maureen Williams (seated temporarily for J.  
Kaufman); Alternates Present, but not seated:, Michael Gutowski, Gregg Saunders  
**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: 7:09 pm by: Art Laske

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***Appointment of Alternates***

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Maureen Williams was temporarily seated for Jackie Kaufman. Andy Kachele made a motion to appoint and it was seconded by Michael Kot. Jackie Kaufman joined the meeting at 7:11p.

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**Agenda Item 1      *Discuss and approve the meeting minutes of February 1, 2022.***

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Notes:

Action/Motions: Motion was made to approve minutes as submitted.

Unanimous vote to approve.

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

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Notes:

- Dr. Bindelglass had no new comments.
- Andy Kachele inquired of a recent grant for the changes to the intersection of Center/Westport Road: is this grant outright or reimbursable, who will handle it (state of town); regarding the design – is it final or can there be changes; will there be streetlights? Dr. Bindelglass replied: the grant is outright, not reimbursable, we are hoping to do all design in house, design is not done yet, the design proposed 2 years ago required putting a pathway through the churches property they don't want; smaller scope on road but no final design yet.
- Andy Kachele acknowledged that an EMS building committee has been appointed and asked if any of the members have construction and PM experience. Dr. Bindelglass replied that member, John Foley, has professional construction management experience; and another new member (unnamed) has residential construction background.

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**Agenda Item 3      *Budget Overview Presentation by A. Laske***

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Notes:

- Art Laske provides the public and new members with an overview of the budget procedure.
- Art Laske entered into the record communications between Board Members about requests by Board Members to certain departments.
- Art Laske reviews public participation component and discusses same with Andy Kachele.

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Agenda Item 4      ***Review Department Budgets***

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**a. Senior Center**

- Val Buckley and Randy Shapiro appear on behalf of the Easton Senior Center
- Ms. Buckley is in her 34<sup>th</sup> year with the Senior Center.
- Ms. Buckley submitted a history of the Senior Center and overview of its financing history
- The top priorities of the 2022-23 budget are: Computer upgrades, transportation, center maintenance, and staffing increase
- Staff needs: 2 people are not enough. We have too many patrons. Realization in covid. Ms. Buckley stated that the Senior Center needs an increase in staffing, but mostly hours. There are too many volunteer positions that have been lost during covid.
- Ideally, the Senior Center needs: 1 new, 29 hour position.
- Senior Center receives many grants and Ms. Buckley spends significant time on grant writing. But this is challenging when also needed to run programming and respond to patron needs.
- Q&A

**b. Fire Marshal**

- Peter Neary, Fire Marshal appeared to present budget requests
- He has been Fire Marshal since 1989
- Mr. Neary stated he does not need a new truck this year. He convinced the Town to accept a 2007 Chevy pick up from Aquarion; the department only needs gas mileage reimbursement
- Service and Fees – up by \$600
- We need \$1000 for a cloud to replace an aging server; and \$2250 for computers. We have additional requests in for software, ipads, photos
- We haven't replaced Lucy yet.
- No money needed for deputy marshal account
- Any money the department do not use that you share with the Fire Marshal gets returned to the Town.
- Grant writing: Mr. Neary cannot write grants on a part time salary. Please share the CCM grant list and he will review of opportunities.
- Wages: overtime; it was time to start increasing wages.
- Q&A

**c. Fire Department**

- Robert Klem, Fire Chief proposes the Fire Department budget presentation.
- Chief Klem has been Fire Chief for 2 months

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- Review of decrease in wages
  - Contract negotiations are currently in progress
  - Abatement program – 60 calls (Christine notes this was approved at a Town Meeting)
  - \$7000 fee for medical exams
  - GRANT FOR Fire Capital – new engine. We’ve demonstrated need.
  - Chief Klem notes there was a price increase on engines this year. Chief Klem stated that if the Fire Department waits another 3 years – it will be over \$800,000. It is 21 years old now. The longer the Fire Department waits, the more challenging it is to get parts and the greater price increases we expect.
  - From the beginning of a truck design process to delivery date takes 1 year.
  - Q&A

**d. Emergency Management**

- Chief Richard Doyle, Chief of Easton Police Department and Police Commissioners, David Smith and Richard Colangelo, present Emergency Management Budget proposal
- The budget for this year will be directed toward: Generator maintenance, UPS maintenance (power) - it’s a bridge between the power and generator; and UASI – regional communication system – 6 portable radios - used during storms
- Q&A

**e. Police (Communication, Police, and Animal Control)**

- Chief Richard Doyle, Chief of Easton Police Department
- Animal Control: review of staffing, van/mileage; dog run ductless split (capital item) needs work – \$1,000; replace 2 new outdoor cameras - more expensive because of weather proofing expense.
- Communications: review of staff, and training a new person
- A. Kachele asks: will we join the central dispatch center? Would it impact ISO rating?
- Chief Doyle responds: Westport central dispatch is slow to roll out; it is an efficiency improvement, not a costs savings to the Town. It has a 16 station capacity. If Easton participates, it would mean our police station is dark after hours, unless we hire a clerk at the desk.
- Chief and Commission to look into this and to present to Town and Board of Selectmen if this is a good idea for Easton. This will be undertaken within the next year.
- PSAP funds – bills proposed that would cut budgets under 40k
- Chief Doyle commented: We are an older police department and it is important to hire younger officers. This financial item is under Education because younger officers require more training.
- Chief Doyle negotiated the cost associated with the newest and youngest hire taken from another community (Waterbury) to the \$40,000 range from the \$66,000 range. This officer is an asset due to his age, he is local (Bridgeport), and is bilingual.
- Fringe benefit line – family, insurance, pension costs...

- Pre-hire and testing: up 20% - police accountability bill - more officers this year have to have exams and testing – this is a 5 year cycle and this year it is required.
- Capital down – only purchasing 1 car this year.
- Board members asks about overtime breakdowns (“OT”):
- Chief Doyle responds: When we are fully staffed, OT is lower; OT has been higher due to covid, quarantining times, illness and recovery, and two officers on medical leave.
- P. Skrtich asks: If you hired an extra officer, would it help? Can the department function with less patrolmen on certain shirts (such as always having 2 on shift, not the occasional 3 on shift?)
- Chief Doyle responds: YES; hiring more officer could help; but we’d have to crunch the number to ensure it covers the OT. Mr. Colangelo says it maybe will not have the impact the Board wants it to.
- Chief and Commissioners respond: we operate very efficiently. We do not want to cut or add an officer at this time.
- Chief Doyle and Commissioners reply that this creates a scheduling rift. It is not as simple as removing the 3<sup>rd</sup> officer, that has to do with the cycle of the shift assignments.
- I. Kaplan asked why there is no line item for K9 in the budget? Chief Doyle responds that the K9, TJ, is by virtue of a grant. It is historically a donation item. A. Kachele says it was in place at some point and then one year it was eliminated and, as a result, it became a public funding project.
- A. Kachele asked about long range vehicle backup.
- M. Williams asked about the server cost/switch cost. Chief and Commissioners answer that the switch is for the router.

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**Agenda Item 5      *Treasurers Report***

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Notes: Christine Calvert reported that tax collections are in (96.8%). She has further corrected an error on Treasurer’s report. The \$3.3 million collected by credit card does not include fees.

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**Agenda Item 6      *Discuss for appropriations and revenue presented by the Director of Finance***

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Notes:                      • No issues.  
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**Agenda Item 7      *Fill-in Budgets***

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Notes:                      None.

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**Agenda Item 8      *Adjournment***

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Action/Motions:      P. Skrtich made a motion to adjourn at 9:32 pm.

Motion (Second):      M. Kot seconded.

**Result:**      Unanimous vote to adjourn.

Submitted by,

Jackie Kaufman – Clerk

*\* In Record from  
BOF meeting 3/1/22*

**Art Laske**

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**From:** Art Laske  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 17, 2022 3:25 PM  
**To:** 'rdoyle@eastonctpolice.com'; 'Richard.colangelo@ct.gov'  
**Subject:** FW: BOF Budget requests

Dear Chief and Chairman Colangelo:

I am forwarding to you a recent email from two members of the Board of Finance, as well as my response, regarding their request to "see some budget options" from particular departments.

I do not interpret the Ordinances as requiring department heads to provide alternate budget proposals to the one they submitted to the Board of Selectman, and so there is no need to restructure your budget request already submitted to the BOS based on this inquiry. I am providing this email chain to you so that you may be adequately prepared to address the issues raised therein. Please feel free to share this email with members of the Police Commission and any other constituencies you deem appropriate in order to assist you in responding to this area of inquiry. I expect that the issues raised below may likely be brought up during the budget sessions with your department. .

I look forward to seeing you in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

Art Laske

**From:** Art Laske <acl@laskelaw.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 17, 2022 3:09 PM  
**To:** 'Michael Kot' <michaelpkot@gmail.com>; 'Paul Skrtich' <paul.skrtich@gmail.com>  
**Cc:** 'Jacqueline O. Kaufman' <JKaufman@carmodylaw.com>; 'Christine Calvert' <ccalvert@eastonct.gov>; 'Andy Kachele' <arkbof@hotmail.com>; 'arkbof@hotmail.com'; 'Ira Kaplan' <eastonbof\_ira@outlook.com>; 'Gregg Saunders' <ghsaunders@optonline.net>; 'Maureen Williams' <maureenpwilliamsbof@gmail.com>; 'MICHAEL GUTOWSKI' <michael.gutowski@ymail.com>; 'David Bindelglass' <dbindelglass@eastonct.gov>; 'Robert Lessler' <rlessler56@gmail.com>; 'Kristi Sogofsky' <ksogofsky@eastonct.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: BOF Budget requests

Paul and Michael –

Thank you for sending along your emails.

As you know, the first two weeks of our budget hearing process allows for members to ask questions of department heads as well as committee members responsible for the operations of certain departments. The schedule of those meetings will be sent out shortly and we all will have time to review the proposed budgets and follow up with questions as to operations and the potential effect of decreases in a particular departmental budget.

Under our Ordinances, the boards, commissions and departments of the Town submit their budgets to the Board of Selectmen, and in doing so shall identify "...the items and details of their respective budgets for the next fiscal year". Those budgets are thereafter provided to the Board of Finance for review and action during the course of our budget process. Under our process, therefore, the department head or committee charged with the creation of a budget

submits their proposal to the BOS and that budget is reviewed by the BOF. While both of your emails requested an opportunity to "see the following", or "see some budget options", I do not interpret your requests to seek, or require, that any department head or committee create an alternate budget pursuant to your identified inquiry. As the BOF we review the budgets submitted to the BOS, and it is not within our authority to request, or require, an alternate budget be created by any department or committee.

Of course, the interests that both of you have identified in your emails regarding potential cuts can certainly be brought up to the department head or committee submitting their budget presentations to the BOF. I will forward the content of your emails to the department head/committees charged with the creation of the budgets for the Police, Emergency Medical Services, Board of Education, Library and Park and Recreation so that they are aware of your areas of inquiry and can therefore be prepared to address your concerns when they appear before the BOF. Given that we should all have time between now and the start of the budget process to review these particular budgets (including the BOE, whose budget is now on-line and accessible for review), you will have the opportunity to review the particulars of these budgets and propose, if you are so inclined, how these budgets could be adjusted to meet your concerns and still provide to our residents the level of services deemed necessary.

I will forward your emails to the relevant department heads/committees so that they can address your concerns during our budget process.

Thanks.

Art Laske

(In order to avoid potential issues of creating an on-going discussion amongst BOF members that may implicate FOI concerns, I'd appreciate any further discussion amongst the entire BOF (particularly with regard to communications through an email chain) to take place in the context of our next public meeting. I wanted to address your concerns here in writing and I will disclose the content of these emails at our next meeting, but any further BOF membership communication on this topic should take place at our next meeting).

I am attaching the Ordinance section below that addresses the budget formation process for your reference.

#### § 60-5 Submission of budgets.

All officers, boards, commissions and departments of the Town entrusted with the expenditure of Town funds shall submit to the Board of Selectmen, at least four meetings before the annual budget meeting, the items and details of their respective budgets for the next fiscal year. The officers, boards, commissions and departments shall thereafter submit the items and details of their respective budgets, in such form and detail as the Board of Finance may from time to time prescribe, to the Board of Finance at least two months before the annual budget meeting. No officer, board, commission, or department shall expend any sum for any purpose unless such expenditure shall first be approved by the Board of Finance and appropriate transfers in such budget shall have been made by the Board.

From: Michael Kot <[michaelpkot@gmail.com](mailto:michaelpkot@gmail.com)>

Sent: Monday, February 14, 2022 11:26 AM

To: Paul Skrtich <[paul.skrnich@gmail.com](mailto:paul.skrnich@gmail.com)>

Cc: Art Laske <[acl@laskelaw.com](mailto:acl@laskelaw.com)>; Jacqueline O. Kaufman <[JKaufman@carmodylaw.com](mailto:JKaufman@carmodylaw.com)>; Christine Calvert <[ccalvert@eastonct.gov](mailto:ccalvert@eastonct.gov)>; Andy Kachele <[arkbof@hotmail.com](mailto:arkbof@hotmail.com)> <[arkbof@hotmail.com](mailto:arkbof@hotmail.com)>; Ira Kaplan <[eastonbof\\_ira@outlook.com](mailto:eastonbof_ira@outlook.com)>; Gregg Saunders <[ghsaunders@optonline.net](mailto:ghsaunders@optonline.net)>; Maureen Williams

<maureenwilliamsbof@gmail.com>; MICHAEL GUTOWSKI <michael.gutowski@ymail.com>; David Bindelglass <dbindelglass@eastonct.gov>; Robert Lessler <rlessler56@gmail.com>; Kristi Sogofsky <ksogofsky@eastonct.gov>  
Subject: Re: BOF Budget requests

Art,

As a follow up to Paul's request, I also would like to see the following since future budget years are going to very bleak due to rampant inflation in the last year.

Police: I would like to see an option with one Police Officer. There are 5 officers on the day shift, 5 days a week. It's not up to the BOF to run the Police Department, but there is a way to accomplish appropriate coverage with 5 people in the department at once to cover the town.

Emergency Medical Services: I think building the new building on EVFC property and a loan from the town eliminates a significant portion of the cost. Let's think about what this building really is. A garage with rooms including a kitchen and a bathroom overhead. The most expensive house in Easton was on sale recently for \$2MM. A structure with simple accommodations can't be twice as much as the most expensive house in Easton. Similar to the way the existing firehouse was built.

Board of Ed: I would like to see the number of students that are currently in pre K through 8th grade by year over the last 5 years. I then would like to see the cost for running both schools and central office separately.

I too would like to see an option that decreases the budget by \$1,000,000 from last year's spend.

Library: I would like to see an option with two less full time employees and possibly restructuring the hours to accomodate more townspeople.

I would like to know how many active library cards there are currently, how many individual people come into the library on a daily basis and use those cards. In other words, if we have 7500 people in town, how many of those people have come in to use the library in the last year? What's the number?

Parks and Rec: I agree with Paul: I would like to see two options: One proposal where the P&R budget is zero. I think this would entail relegating all activities to the ECC and perhaps Public Works. Another proposal I'd like to see is one where the budget is net zero. Historically, this was a worthy goal that seems to have been forgotten about.

Region 9: We have no say in this budget.

Michael P. Kot  
Freedom Capital Corp.  
15 River Road Suite 235  
Wilton CT 06897  
203 590 1385

On Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 9:53 AM Paul Skrtich <[paul.skrnich@gmail.com](mailto:paul.skrnich@gmail.com)> wrote:

Hi Art,

During our last meeting you had requested that we notify you of anything in particular that we would like to see with this years budget presentations. As usual I would like to see some budget options with significant cuts in spending in some areas. Here are the options I would like to see:

Police: I would like to see an option with one less full time employee. I don't care which one.

Emergency Medical Services: I would like to see a proposal for a new building with zero cost to the town. I think this would entail building the new building on EVFC property and a loan from the town. Similar to the way the existing firehouse was built.

Board of Ed: I would like to see an option that decreases the budget by \$1,000,000 from last year's spend. I think it's pointless to go line by line since we don't have line by line authority and they don't listen to our suggestions anyway.

Library: I would like to see an option with two less full time employees. I don't care which ones.

Parks and Rec: I would like to see two options: One proposal where the P&R budget is zero. I think this would entail relegating all activities to the ECC and perhaps Public Works. Another proposal I'd like to see is one where the budget is net zero. Historically, this was a worthy goal that seems to have been forgotten about.



Region 9: I would like to see an option where the budget is \$1,000,000 less than last year's spend.

Thanks Art. Let me know if you have any questions.

Paul

Sent from Mail for Windows