

Town of Easton CT
Board of Finance – Special Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: Tuesday March 26, 2024 – 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, Ira Kaplan, Michael Gutowski, Jackie Kaufman
Alternates in person: Gregg Saunders, Maureen Williams, Joe Glavan

Absentees: Member Paul Skrtich

Guests: Christine Calvert, Treasurer and Finance Director
Dave Bindelglass, First Selectman
Jason McKinnon, ER9 Superintendent
Sara Scrofani, ER9 Director of Finance, Operations and Technology
Katherine Matz, ER9 Director of Special Education
Danielle Alves, Park and Recreation Director (Zoom)
Ed Nagy, Public Works Director

Call to Order: By Chair Art Laske at 7:05 pm

Art appoints Gregg as alternate in place of Paul, per Paul's request.

Motion to appoint alternate Joe in place of Jackie until Jackie arrives, by Andy/Gregg. Result: passes 5-0. Jackie arrives 7:10.

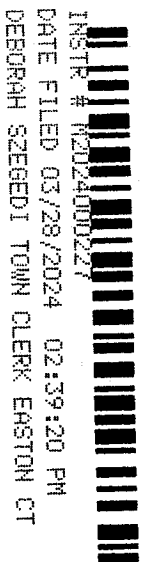
1. (Agenda item #1) The Board of Finance will make revisions and prepare final recommendations for the budget document to be presented at the Annual Town Meeting on April 29, 2024 to include any and all departments with specific attention to the following:

- a. Board of Education (7:08)
- b. Department of Public Works (7:51)
- c. Emergency Management Service (9:32)
- d. Park & Recreation (8:32)
- e. Registrar of Voters (9:02)
- f. Pension (9:14)
- g. Fringe Benefits (9:23)
- h. FICA (9:28)
- i. Any other budgets as deemed necessary (9:47)

Jason (a) answered questions about spending per pupil, class size, kindergarten sections, staffing, teacher contract, capital planning, paraeducators. No action taken. Ed (b) answered questions about 5-year capital plan, and Ira raised question about benefits of using capital project fund. There was consensus to make process more efficient, and that BOF will move unused funds into capital project fund in June. Art asked about funding an open position, Ed discussed difficulty of attracting new hires. Mike asked about the South Park barn roof. Danielle (d) answered questions about increased hours for Extended Day Supervisor.

Motion to retain the Extended Day Supervisor position at its current 19.5 hours per week, by Andy/Gregg. Result: fails by vote of 2 in favor (Andy, Gregg) – 3 opposed (Ira, Jackie, Mike) – 1 abstains (Art).

Chris (e) discussed if we can reduce budget. Dave and Chris will discuss with ROV. Andy wants to know the minimum required staffing. Chris (f) discusses how Pension amount is determined, using an estimated \$350,000 for Police Special Duty to derive an estimated \$700,000 for MERF payments. Chris (g) discussed changes to Fringe benefits budget based on new estimates for health insurance. Chris and Dave will discuss health plans with unions. Chris (h) explained derivation of \$575,000 FICA budget, and why she rounds up from the indicated contribution.



Chris (c) gave update for EMS, noting \$35,000 reduction due to removal of capital request for car. Chris and Dave also discussed reduction in part-time wages because of lower request for weekend hours: an arrangement for an increase in volunteers is expected shortly in coordination with Sacred Heart University. Art felt that before we decided upon the increase in weekend hours, we should hear directly from EMS, and will ask them to attend our next meeting. Dave and Art said there would be a joint BOS-BOF meeting on 4/2/24 to discuss EMS building plans.

Andy (i) explained his desire to review Planning and Zoning. He raised the question of if the Land Use Consultant should be paid from P&Z budget for work done related to EMS Planning and Building Committee. He also asked if the Consultant's allowable hours should be increased as presented in the P&Z budget, or if there is extra time available in his hours already, since he had time to work on the EMS state grant request. Dave said the consultant's job description was flexible enough to reasonably include work on the EMS grant, which includes watershed protection and septic system replacement. Dave also said that other grant money has come to Easton with the help of the consultant. Motion to set allowable hours for the Land Use Director and Planning Consultant back from the requested 26 hours per week to the 24.76 hours in the current fiscal year, by Andy/Gregg. Result: fails 2 (Andy, Gregg) in favor – 2 (Ira, Jackie) opposed – 2 (Art, Mike) abstain. Chris, Maureen, Jackie noted legal cases the consultant helps with, including 3 active cases. Andy explained his disagreement with the "Welcome to Easton" Gateway sign that is planned. Motion to eliminate \$3,500 capital project funding for Gateway sign, by Andy/Jackie. Result: fails 1 in favor (Andy) – 3 opposed (Ira, Jackie, Mike) – 2 abstain (Art, Gregg).

Gregg (i) questions (10:18) the Library request for new chairs for the community room and asks if at least the purchase can be spread over two or three years. Dave says the new custodian has been cleaning carpets and will be asked to clean the existing chairs. We will hear back on the results Tuesday and consider action then.

Mike (i) asks (10:23) about Technology and the cost savings if we switch to a Cloud server.

2. Discuss and possible action on Park & Recreation capital requests. (10:27)

Art explains we are acting upon an earlier request, which we were unable to act on because it was not specified on the earlier special meeting agenda. Motion to grant Park & Recreation permission to use \$42,000 from Activity Account, consistent with figures presented at 3/12/24 presentation, by Ira/Jackie. Result: passes 5-1 (Gregg). Motion that Park & Recreation has permission to use funds from the Field Use account for the following: \$15,000 for Annual Baseball Field Renovations; \$46,000 for 96" TORO Replacement Mower; \$7,500 for Replacement Trailer; \$23,000 for Annual Field Work, totaling \$91,500, by Jackie/Ira. Result: passes 6-0.

1. Motion to adjourn by Gregg/Mike. Result: passes 6-0 at 10:34.
Next meeting: regular meeting Tuesday, April 7, 2024

Submitted 3/28/24 by Ira Kaplan, BOF Clerk