

April 28, 2014

MINUTES

Easton Town Meeting

April 28, 2014 – 8:00 p.m.

Samuel Staples Elementary School, 515 Morehouse Road, Easton

Present:

Adam W. Dunsby, First Selectman; Scott Centrella, Selectman; Robert Lessler, Selectman;
Christine Halloran, Town Clerk

Attendees:

Over 100 members of the public

The First Selectman convened the meeting at 8:03 p.m.

The First Selectman asked for a motion to appoint a Moderator. Roy Gosse nominated Dennis Laccavole. The motion was seconded. The nomination was approved by voice vote.

The call of the meeting was read (copy attached). The Moderator preceded with agenda items.

Item 1: Acceptance of the 2013 Annual Town Report

MOTION:

The Moderator called for a Motion to vote on the acceptance of the 2013 Annual Town Report. A resident moved. The motion was seconded. No further discussion, public comment or questions. Motion carried by voice vote.

Item 2: Discussion of the proposed annual Town budget of \$41,993,878 for fiscal year July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015 as recommended by the Board of Finance. NOTE: The Town Meeting may act to reduce, but not to increase the proposed annual Town budget.
The Moderator called for presentation of official comments, public comment and questions.

Official Comments: Chris Griffin, Chairman, Board of Finance

Town of Easton, Annual Town Meeting, Budget Proposal FY 2014/2015 (attached)

Overview of budget, main drivers and conclusions

- Budget of \$41,993,878 as proposed represents an increase over last year of 1.81%
- Tax impact of a little over a 2% increase year over year
- Revenues slightly down
- Workmen's Compensation costs up by about \$125,000 over last year

- Region 9 portion of budget based on population (\$285,000 additional costs incurred by Easton)
- Salary increases many in second and third year (contract costs reflected in budget)
- Re-evaluation mandated to do – costs spread out over two years at cost of about \$67,000/year
- Reduction of over \$630,000 from original proposed budgets from several different areas
- Health care costs continue to go up; however, this year on town and education side town was able to bid for services and effectively lower costs for town in aggregate over \$280,000
- In addition, Board of Finance has had reductions in proposed capital of \$350,000 savings
- A few areas to highlight for reduction from budget: Police Department extra patrolman on third shift and contingent kindergarten teacher
- Invest in areas: additional funds for math books, expansion of world language program, expansion of social worker hours, parks and rec seasonal help, new computers for Town Hall, and in process of upgrade to town website
- AAA rating for bonding purposes with undesignated fund balance ending at higher value
- Pension 91% funded
- Morehouse Road improvements

Public Comments:

Four residents commented on the Board of Finance presentation.

Official Comments: Jeff Parker, Region 9 Board of Education

Easton Board of Education Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Operating Budget Request Presentation (attached)

Mr. Parker gave a slide presentation for the Board of Education Budget.

Public Comments:

One resident questioned the math curriculum.

Official Comments: Christopher Hocker, Chairperson, Board of Education, Region 9 School District

Projected enrollment slightly down over next few years. Increase of 3.1% in contractual increases in teacher wages offset by teacher retirements and new teachers with lower compensation. Capital reserve fund for 5 figure items (\$00,000) and lower debt service. Further review of slide presentation.

Public Comments:

One resident questioned the Common Core.

Item 3: Five year capital plan.

MOTION:

The Moderator called for a Motion to vote on the acceptance of the Five year capital plan. Victor Alfandre moved. The motion was seconded. No further discussion, public comment or questions. Motion carried by voice vote.

Item 4: Set July 1, 2014 for the grand list bills.

MOTION:

The Moderator called for a Motion to set July 1, 2014 for the grand list bills. Matt Gachi moved. The motion was seconded. No further discussion, public comment or questions. Motion carried by voice vote.

Item 5: Discussion and possible approval of a revision of a Conservation Easement at 25 Rock House Road.

The Moderator called for presentation of official comments.

Official Comments: Roy Gosse, Conservation Commission

Mr. Gosse discusses the request from new owner of 25 Rock House Road to alter boundary line of conservation easement to follow the property line.

Public Comments:

One question regarding reason for conservation change taking place at town meeting.

MOTION:

The Moderator called for a Motion to vote on the approval of a revision of a Conservation Easement at 25 Rock House Road. Adam Horowitz moved. The motion was seconded. No further discussion, public comment or questions. Motion carried by voice vote.

Item 6: Discussion and possible approval of a Right to Farm Ordinance.

The Moderator called for discussion on the Right to Farm Ordinance.

Official Comments: Jean Stetz-Puchalski and Victor Alfandre, Agricultural Commission
Right to Farm Ordinance offers a policy statement that follows the Right to Farm law in Connecticut and supports local farmers. This is best practice specific to Easton, re-affirms the town's commitment to farming, and provides greater opportunity for farms to receive grant funding.

Public Comments:

Over 10 people commented on the Right to Farm Ordinance.

MOTION:

The Moderator called for a Motion to vote on the approval of a Right to Farm Ordinance. After discussion, public comment and questions, a resident requested a “Call the Question” signifying a motion for a stop to the discussion and a movement to a vote on the ordinance. The Moderator called for a Motion on the discussion indicating that “aye” signifies no further discussion, and “nay” signifies continuing the discussion the ordinance. Motion carried by voice vote. No further discussion.

The Moderator called for a Motion to vote on the approval of the Right to Farm Ordinance. A resident moved. The motion was seconded. Motion carried by voice vote.

Item 7: Discussion and possible approval of \$19,900 as a second appropriation for 660 Morehouse Road, Town Hall, and Library natural gas conversion from the Unassigned Fund Balance.

The Moderator called for discussion on the appropriation.

Official Comments: Ed Nagy, Department of Public Works

Mr. Nagy discussed the availability of grant funds to increase the efficiency of gas boilers in Town Hall and the Easton Library providing for a long-term cost reduction. This is a reimbursable project from United Illuminating.

No further discussion or public comment.

MOTION:

The Moderator called for a Motion to vote on the approval of \$19,900 as a second appropriation from the Unassigned Fund Balance. John Broadbin moved. The motion was seconded. Motion carried by voice vote.

Item 8: Discussion and possible approval of \$282,500 from LoCIP funds for the reconstruction of Morehouse Road.

The Moderator called for official comments on the use of LoCIP funds for the reconstruction of Morehouse Road.

Official Comments: Ed Nagy, Department of Public Works

- 100% state funded grant reimbursable by Connecticut

Public Comments:

Two residents inquired about the project.

MOTION:

The Moderator called for a Motion to vote on the approval of \$282,500 from LoCIP funds for the reconstruction of Morehouse Road. Ray Martin moved. The motion was seconded. Motion carried by voice vote.

Item 9: Adjournment of the Town Meeting to a machine vote to be held on May 6, 2014 at Samuel Staples Elementary School to vote on the annual budget for fiscal year 2014-2015 of \$41,993,878 or such lower amount as may be approved by the Town Meeting.

MOTION:

The Moderator called for a Motion to vote on adjournment of the Town Meeting to a machine vote May 6, 2014. Aaron Flagg moved. The motion was seconded. No further discussion. Motion carried by voice vote.

Item 10: Adjournment.

The Moderator, Dennis Laccovole, called to adjourn the meeting. Ray Martin moved. The motion was seconded. Motion carried by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Halloran, Easton Town Clerk