

Town of East Hampton
Town Council Regular Meeting
Tuesday, May 28, 2019
East Hampton Town Hall

MINUTES

Present: Chairwoman Melissa Engel, Vice Chairman Mark Philhower, Council Members Kevin Reich, Josh Piteo, Tim Feegel, Pete Brown and Dean Markham, and Town Manager Michael Maniscalco

Call to order & Pledge of Allegiance

Chairwoman Engel called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made by Vice Chair Philhower, seconded by Councilor Piteo, to adopt the agenda. Voted (7-0)

Executive Session

A motion was made by Vice Chair Philhower, seconded by Councilor Brown, to enter into executive session at 6:30 to review the draft employment agreement for the Public Works Director candidate. Voted (7-0)

Possible Action on Executive Session Item

A motion was made by Vice Chair Philhower, seconded by Councilor Markham, to accept the draft employment agreement for the Public Works Director candidate. Voted (7-0)

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Councilor Reich, seconded by Councilor Feegel, to approve the minutes of the Town Council Regular Meeting of April 23, 2019 as written. Voted (7-0)

Presentations

Quarterly Report from Town Facilities Building Committee

Lisa Motto was present to discuss the building progress. She reported that the project is on schedule to be substantially complete by the end of February. Steel is being erected now. There was discussion on possible future (additional) drainage in a couple of areas on the site. More information on this will be forthcoming. All building permits have been obtained; they are waiting only on the fire suppression permit. There was a discussion on change orders, which currently amount to \$108,000, and the moving of some money into the interest & bonding bucket from another area of the project.

Public Remarks

Bob Yankner, Spellman Point, with the group Save Lake Pocotopaug stated that his group represents about 800 households within the watershed. They support expenditure of funds to protect the lake and increase water quality, implementation of the 9-element plan, and establishment of an employee role to help guide and implement the watershed plan.

Karen Asetta, Fern Lane, is in support of restoring the \$10,000 for private road maintenance that was cut from capital. Fern Lane is a private road with poor conditions. She noted that it would be mutually beneficial to keep the road in a better condition so that the homes there do not lose their value.

Tania Sones, Curry Lane, asked the council to take into consideration that the education budget was only defeated by 19 votes. She is concerned that ballots ran out at 7:00pm with only 1,600 voters and that manual counting of paper ballots can lead to mistakes.

Pam Hatfield, 37 Fern Lane, is concerned about the cuts to private road maintenance funding. Fern Lane is now a safety concern. Their garbage service was affected as the truck could not get down the road. Pothole repair would be appreciated. She asked the council to reconsider cutting the \$10,000 from the budget.

Joyce Fishman, 13 Fern Lane, had her garbage pickup affected by the poor quality of the road. She asked that the funding be restored.

Lon Fishman, 13 Fern Lane, asked the council if they lived on Fern Lane, why would they support the budget if the roads are not fixed? There is no sidewalk, no water, no sewer, etc. He asked that the funding be restored for at least minimum services.

Carol Bystrek, Fern Lane, had to recently have the ambulance come down the road and they had a hard time.

Nancy Oakley, 71 Pocotopaug Dr., stated in response to comments made at the BOF meeting that in discussing the notion of fairness in the budget she noted that it would be "fair" to cut on a 4:1 margin (meaning that there was a 4:1 margin between no/yes on the town budget therefore 4 times the amount of people voted no on the town budget than the education budget). She stated the chromebooks cut from the capital budget is significant and dramatic.

Chuck Yankner, 65 Spellman Point Rd., stated that it is fair to cut the budgets in proportionate amounts.

Bob Kovach, Clark Hill Rd., stated that the BOE budget is too high at \$17,000/student and that we are within the highest top 10-15 towns for teacher pay. He stated that the budget has to be cut because we are not addressing other things in town.

Bids & Contracts

None

Resolutions/Ordinances/Policies/Proclamations

None

Continued Business

Discussion & Possible Recommendation on the 2019-2020 Town Operations and Board of Education Budgets/Set Town Meeting & Referendum Dates

Last week the BOF cut \$77,500 from the general government budget and about the same from the BOE from the education budget bringing the mill rate increase to 1.2.

There was discussion on the \$151,185.00 that is on the general government budget. This item is funding for the teacher pensions that the State is shifting to municipalities. It was ultimately decided to remove this line item from the budget.

The state legislature session ends June 5. There was discussion on whether the state will pass a budget, and whether the town should wait until next week to review the budget again based on the state's budget. This led to a discussion regarding the fact that waiting could possibly lead to supplemental tax bills in January, which could be confusing for citizens as it was this past January. After discussion it was decided to not wait until June 5, particularly as the state budget may not even be done by then and in light of information on the cost of creating and sending supplemental bills. There is also a chance that additional ECS funds will be restored and could be used if the state decided that the town will have to pay for the teacher pension line item that the council decided to remove.

A motion was made by Councilor Feegel and seconded by Councilor Piteo to accept the budget as presented by the Board of Finance, but with an additional reduction of \$151,185.00 from the general government. This represents a total cut of \$228,465.00 from the general government budget and a \$77,500.00 cut from the Board of Education budget. Voted (5-2) with Councilors Reich and Markham opposed.

Discussion: There was no add-back for any of the items discussed (private roads, police officer, chromebooks). Councilor Piteo noted that a new Public Works Director will take a look at the roads that are in bad shape and repair those that need it. Chair Engel noted that the \$10,000 would not begin to cover the private roads that need to be repaired, so vote yes if you like this budget or there will be further cuts. Councilor Brown asked about the process in an emergency when a vehicle can't get down a road (in reference to Fern Lane). Town Manager Maniscalco noted that there is a private road fund, with funds still in it, but it's not being added to in this year's budget.

Vice Chair Philhower moved to hold a town meeting on June 10, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. and set the referendum for June 18, 2019. Second by Councilor Feegel. Voted (7-0)

New Business

Business Incentive Program Application for KOCO Child Care Center

Vice Chairman Philhower recused himself from this discussion.

Ted Turner, Chairman of the Economic Development Commission, was present to discuss their review of the tax abatement application. The EDC scored the application and passed a tax abatement recommendation for KOCO.

During discussion it was noted that the EDC does not have formal training in scoring this type of application. There was also question on the job creation portion of the application. After discussion it was noted that even if the scores for the job creation portion were completely taken away, the application would still fall into the same class of abatement.

Councilor Brown moved to waive the second reading of the application, Councilor Feegel seconded. Voted (5-1) with Councilor Reich opposed.

There was further discussion on the scoring for job creation. It was noted that this application brings to light the fact that the scoring for job creation needs to be further clarified; particularly whether the score is in reference to new jobs or retaining existing jobs.

*Councilor Piteo moved and Councilor Brown seconded to accept the recommendation from the EDC to provide tax abatement for 207 B West High Street and to direct Town Manager Maniscalco to enter into the agreement for such abatement. Voted (6-0)
Discussion: Councilor Reich will support the motion based on the EDC's ability and hopes that the items that have been discussed will be taken to heart. Councilor Brown suggested that the Town Manager obtain training in tax abatement for the EDC.*

Public Water System Operating Budget & Water Rate Recommendation 2019-20

Scott Clayton of the WPCA was present to discuss recommendations for increases to the budget and water rates. The increases are due in part to the Hampton Woods system, the storage tank inspection in the town center water system, replacement of carbon filters in Royal Oaks and the town center system and change of pumps in the Royal Oaks system. Rate increases will impact the average user of the village center system at \$6.34/month and the Royal Oaks system at \$10.17/month. There will be a public hearing on the rate increases. There was discussion on the possibility of sending bills quarterly vs. monthly. Mr. Clayton will look into this further.

Realtor Recommendation for 20 East High Street & 1 Watrous Street

Nick Morizio from Colliers was present to answer the council's questions about selling the two properties.

Councilor Reich moved to waive the second read, seconded by Councilor Markham. Voted (7-0)

Vice Chairman Philhower moved to allow Town Manager Maniscalco to enter into agreement with Nick Morizio and Colliers; second by Councilor Piteo. Voted (7-0)

Set Public Hearing Date for Neighborhood Assistance Act (June 11th at 6:15 pm)

Vice Chairman Philhower moved to set the public hearing for the Neighborhood Assistance Act for June 11, 2019 at 6:15 pm; second by Councilor Piteo. Voted (7-0)

Town Manager Report

Update on Library Roof Project

The roof is currently on schedule and budget.

Update on Public Works Director & Public Utilities Administrator Search

The PW Director was discussed earlier in the agenda. Five highly qualified applicants for the Public Utilities Administrator will be forwarded and interviewed June 4.

Update on North Main Street Paving Bids

Three bids were received. References are being researched for the council to award a bid at their next meeting.

Appointments

None

Tax Refunds

A motion was made by Councilor Reich and seconded by Vice Chairman Philhower to approve tax refunds in the amount of \$4,957.46. Voted (7-0)

Public Remarks

Kim Fentress, Curry Lane, stated that with the common core curriculum, expectations are much different than even 10 years ago. People move to East Hampton because of the good schools and we do well with less than other towns.

Joyce Fishman, Fern Lane, stated that with the \$10,000 for private road maintenance out of the budget the road will just get worse.

Bob Kovach, Clark Hill Rd., said that cuts need to come from the education budget, the teachers are only teaching for college and money has to come from elsewhere, not the taxpayers. He votes no on the education budget because he has no kids in school.

Pam Hatfield, Fern Lane, asked the council to reconsider the cut to the private road fund if at all possible. She doesn't understand what services people on Fern Lane receive and feels it is a small thing to ask to make the road passable. Cobalt Lodge further deteriorated the road for their own benefit.

Vice Chair Philhower stated that this is a P&Z issue and asked the Town Manager to put a report together with planner Jeremy DeCarli regarding Cobalt Lodge and Fern Lane.

Communications, Correspondence & Announcements

April 2019 Board and Commission Summary

In councilor's packets

Adjournment

A motion was made by Vice Chair Philhower and seconded by Councilor Brown to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Eliza LoPresti
Recording Secretary