



TOWN OF EAST LONGMEADOW  
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**TOWN COUNCIL**

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**FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

April 22, 2019 at 10:00 A.M  
Library Conference Room, 60 Center Square  
East Longmeadow, Massachusetts 01028

Present: Committee Chair Christine Saulnier, Jim Broderick, Council Vice President Michael Kane, Councilor Thomas O'Connor, and Council President Kathy Hill

Chair Saulnier opened the meeting at 10:20 a.m. The Committee discussed that they were still waiting for information, namely line item budgets submitted by department heads, from the Finance Director and Town Manager. They felt they were unable to react appropriately to the Town Manager's proposed FY20 budget without that detail.

President Hill discussed the school's three bonding issues, two of which were in the Town Manager's draft budget. One is replacing the portable modular trailers at Mountain View Elementary School, and the second is the door replacement project at Mapleshade Elementary School. The third issue was the replacement of the roof at Meadow Brook Elementary School, which includes the replacement of the HVAC units. Based on discussions at previous meetings, the Committee has agreed that the HVAC units should be replaced before the new roof is put on, so as not to damage the new roof. Mr. Broderick said Chair Saulnier had planned to speak with Superintendent Gordon Smith and DPW Superintendent Fenney about this to see if they had thought about replacing the HVAC units first.

President Hill asked if Finance Director Sara Menard had given the Financial Oversight Committee information regarding the status of the Town's debt service, and Mr. Broderick answered that she had not. President Hill recalled that the library owed very little. There was then discussion relative to the timing of the approval of the budget. President Hill said the Town Council is waiting for recommendations from the Financial Oversight Committee. The Town Council would take those recommendations into consideration at a meeting on April 29, 2019, and go into May reviewing the budget. The Council would then hold a public hearing, and after the public hearing approve a budget prior to June 1.

Chair Saulnier feels the school has been reasonable this year, and suggested that the Committee definitely wants to work with Sara Menard and Town Manager Denise Menard after they get the information they need. Vice President Kane said he was hoping for information last week regarding liability for ongoing lawsuits, which he feels is an important piece to the budget. President Hill said there are at least five cases that are still pending, and most will be covered by MIIA (Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association) insurance; however, they still need to know what part of this will affect the budget. Councilor O'Connor felt there was general knowledge in Town that two significant cases have been lost, and the Town is compensating back pay for those cases. Vice President Kane added that if those employees returned to work in a past position, they would also need that information.

Councilor O'Connor said it's his personal opinion that the legal line item needs to stay level. The Town Manager needs to determine if there are additional charges, then come to the Council, as opposed to trying to make an estimate. President Hill said this budget has a fairly significant increase in the legal fee line item, and some is attributable to the change of town attorney and his billable rate. There was more discussion of the legal fees line item and Chair Saulnier said usually a court judgment can be taken from the stabilization fund or free cash.

Mr. Broderick commented on the deputy chief position requested by Fire Chief Paul Morrisette, and asked if that position was discussed in the past with the Town Council. President Hill said it had not been, and also noted the position of captain being requested by Police Chief Jeff Dalessio. She said last year he had asked for a lieutenant position and this year he is asking for a captain position. President Hill asked why he is moving to a captain's position. Vice President Kane said promoting from within is a whole different issue than adding an additional position. President Hill said if you promoted within, then another officer would be needed.

Chair Saulnier said this conversation is making her uncomfortable in that she feels the person who may be hired for the police captain position would not be a benefit to the Town, and she would request that position be eliminated. Councilor O'Connor would support a part time position, but not a full time position. Vice President Kane said his feeling is to definitely revisit the added position of a police captain at a later point in time. Mr. Broderick said having one direct report and putting someone in position between the chief and everyone else makes no sense to him.

President Hill feels she could not rationalize supporting that position. She said the Town Council has always made a substantial commitment to the police and fire departments; however, at some point they can't ignore the other departments. President Hill added they are not opposed to those departments' capital requests and they are now both in good positions. She feels other departments can't be abandoned, and if there is approval of those requested positions for the police or fire departments, part time staff should be hired.

Turning to additions requested by the school, specifically the two social emotional teachers, President Hill said there is not a doubt in her mind that philosophically, in today's education industry, there is a complexity in society that bleeds into the schools. She feels that social emotional teachers give students the help that they aren't getting in the home and are essential in every school in America. The third request from the school is for an instructional technology specialist, which President Hill felt is also a necessary position given the technological dependence on computers in the classroom.

However, with that said, President Hill also feels that in the past the school has funded some of their needs by using money that was saved by replacing retiring staff with individuals at a lower salary. She feels the school would be able to fund these positions in a similar fashion. President Hill added that the school could be creative and make the teacher positions half time in each building.

Chair Saulnier said that the current FY20 request from the school is \$31,104,945, and if the proposed additional salary amounts were subtracted, that amount would equal approximately \$30,900,000. President Hill said she believed that the increase in Chapter 70 money has been imbedded in Finance Director Sara Menard's projections.

The \$50K the school is requesting for the curriculum supplies increase was discussed next. President Hill said the school has been requesting this amount the last couple years, even though they had stated they would not be asking for those funds again. She said Grades K, 1 and 2 need books purchased, but the others are on line. Chair Saulnier asked if IT should be absorbing that budget item and President Hill said she thought IT Director Ryan Quimby was planning on immigrating the licensing to his department.

The Oversight Committee then discussed the increase in School Committee stipends being requested. President Hill said she is not opposed to the increases. The teachers recently received a 1.75% increase, but she would be willing to increase the total stipend amount to 2%. Chair Saulnier felt she would increase the stipend amount by 25%. After discussion it was agreed that the total amount of stipends would be \$8,500 and the school could allocate to the School Committee chair and members as they see fit. It was also noted that the School Committee works very cooperatively with the Council and the Town.

Chair Saulnier continued discussion with the request from the Town Accountant for the full time position of a procurement manager. This position has a proposed salary of \$69K, with a total overall cost of \$94K. Chair Saulnier asked if the Town does that much procurement to justify this request. President Hill said she truly did not know how much procurement the Town does; the school does their own. She added that if that function is taken away and given to a new individual, what does that leave for the Finance Director. Chair Saulnier questioned the need for a full time procurement manager. Mr. Broderick said procurement is more complicated than just cutting a check, and would consider a part time position rather than full time. He would not like to think that the Finance Director is spending too much time on other tasks.

Councilor O'Connor said last year Town Manager Denise Menard wanted to consolidate departments to make it more efficient for the Finance Director. He questioned that department being the biggest in the Town Hall, yet they are requesting more help. Chair Saulnier said once RFPs (Request for Proposal) are done, they're all boiler plate, and it's a matter of opening the bids and choosing one. She didn't see a chronic need for a full time procurement manager.

Chair Saulnier next discussed the request from the Collector/Treasurer office for increasing a part time position to full time. She did not see a need for that since that full time position would add to the OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) responsibilities and be entitled to benefits. President Hill commented that she thought the planned new software was explained as streamlining duties so as to lighten the work load for that department's staff.

Regarding the requested IT positions of one help desk administrator and two summer interns, Chair Saulnier's opinion was to approve the two summer interns, but not the help desk administrator. President Hill suggested having the help desk administrator be part time, given the total number of devices and responsibilities IT has for their department. After discussion the Committee agreed they would recommend the two summer interns and a part time help desk administrator.

Referring to the Town Clerk's request for a part time position, Chair Saulnier said she would agree with that. President Hill also agreed, especially with the demands of early voting and the heavy upcoming election schedule.

The Committee then discussed the Town Clerk's request for voting machines that had not been recommended for the capital projects by the Capital Planning Budget Committee. Mr. Broderick, who was a member of that group, said even though the current machines are still working, it was felt that a voting machine could be purchased if one broke down, and added there didn't appear to be a risk by not purchasing new machines. President Hill said the total amount needed for the voting machines was \$26,500, and would suggest purchasing them now, in FY19.

Councilor O'Connor said he had worked as a registrar and the voting machines break down fairly often. The Committee discussed the Secretary of State's current emphasis on secure voting, and the scrutiny of the Town's voting processes in the recent past. They then agreed to purchase the machines, which would be an expense in FY19. President Hill said the Council would have to approve this, and it needs to be put on their agenda.

Referring to the request from the Building Department for a department assistant, Vice President Kane said in the original discussion the need was for an enforcement officer since there were deficiencies in this area. Mr. Broderick thought the department assistant would free up the Building Commissioner of administration so he could spend more time with inspections. Vice President Kane said if you look at residential properties growth is stagnant, but there is growth with commercial properties. Therefore, he questioned the need for help with enforcement, rather than administration. Chair Saulnier suggested a part time position, but would like more clarification from Building Commissioner Kevin Duquette.

At this point Mr. Broderick asked if the Oversight Committee should communicate to Town Manager Denise Menard what their thoughts are since she will be the one presenting her budget to Town Council. President Hill agreed but first felt they needed to look at the department's line items that they submitted.

Mr. Broderick said one of his concerns is the two year "catch up" on salaries and contractual increases that weren't budgeted for in FY19. This looks like an inordinately large salary increase. President Hill said when the wage study was done the Council was aware that some employees were overpaid, some were underpaid and some were redlined. The Council was not made aware of where the money came from for the underpaid employees.

In referring to the General Fund Sources, Mr. Broderick said the Town has enough sources to cover the proposed uses, but that would result in a substantial tax rate increase. Chair Saulnier said she does not want to go to \$22.

Chair Saulnier inquired about the feasibility study for the police department and Councilor O'Connor said it was taken off the capital request list, as well as the voting machines.

Chair Saulnier said she has marked questions for the following: the purchase of a truck for DPW, paving the upper lot of Pine Knoll, the sidewalk construction request, and the trailer mounted generator for the Town Hall, which should be prioritized for first responder uses. Discussion followed regarding the generator which is \$88K. Vice President Kane suggested that if that was approved, they should bring the other Town buildings up to speed for connectivity, based on priority. The Committee discussed the importance of the Town Hall to have a generator for day to day operations.

Chair Saulnier then discussed the request for a mini-excavator to be shared from the water and sewer enterprise funds. The question from the Committee was the frequency of use and if a lease had been considered instead of a purchase. Vice President Kane said they could share the rental fee with adjoining communities, instead of a lease. The equipment could be delivered and the rental cost would go down based on duration of use. Councilor O'Connor suggested that they could draw from four departments' operating budgets for the rental fees.

Vice President Kane said if they saved money on the generator and mini-excavator, could they add that to the \$100K for road improvement. Mr. Broderick said they could do that for the generator, but not the mini-excavator since that comes from the enterprise fund. Vice President Kane said they can all agree that something needs to be done for the roads, and Mr. Broderick said it is a bigger problem than \$100K, and there has to be a better way to approach it. Councilor O'Connor said the PCI (Pavement Condition Index) study done stated that almost \$1M a year is needed.

President Hill referred to the \$150K (casino) mitigation payment given to the Town each year, which will be reevaluated after five years. She felt this should be spent on anything relating to traffic, which could include the roads. Councilor O'Connor said there are revolving fund monies and the Council can vote to move that money, which has been done in the past. Chair Saulnier reminded Councilor O'Connor of Ms.

S. Menard's advice to check with those departments with the revolving funds to make sure they don't have intentions of using it.

At this point Building Commissioner Kevin Duquette arrived at the meeting to give clarification of his request for a department assistant. Mr. Duquette said construction is booming and he is asking for a department assistant to cover times when his administrative assistant is not in the office. These absences could be her four weeks of vacation, sick days, etc. When his administrative assistant is not in the office, he has to cancel inspections so he can cover the office duties. A SWAP (Senior Tax Work-Off Abatement Program) person isn't able to handle these day to day operations. He needs an assistant that can scan permits, issue permits and leave him more field time. Mr. Duquette said he will need another inspector in the future, but it doesn't make sense to get another inspector without another clerical position first.

Vice President Kane commented that if more of Mr. Duquette's time was freed up to do more enforcing, the revenue could help pay for the clerical position. The Committee and Mr. Duquette discussed the need for a full time position versus part time. Mr. Duquette also said that his administrative assistant's classification needs to be corrected. This hasn't been confirmed, but is moving forward.

The Committee agreed that Mr. Duquette's time is too valuable to have him spending time in the office. They would recommend a part time clerical position that could possibly go to full time if the need was there.

Regarding the \$45K capital request for a truck funded from the Stormwater Enterprise Fund, Chair Saulnier suggested the DPW receive a repurposed vehicle instead of a new truck. Councilor O'Connor said he would prefer that the police department receive a truck. Mr. Broderick said that the purchase of a truck for the DPW would not be a general fund tax rate impact; it would be a stormwater fee impact. President Hill felt stormwater was a brand new initiative and they should proceed slowly. She feels that she didn't want to pass on the \$45K to the residents, in addition to other fees.

Chair Saulnier referred to the truck being requested by the police department and said maybe they can reconsider that request if they are not recommending the requested captain's position. Vice President Kane said he recently went to a convention which was attended by surrounding police departments. He said when calls come into dispatch they are categorized based on the type of call. Priority 1 calls would require safety equipment, and include car accidents, house alarms, and domestic violence. He added that cruisers are driven 30K miles a year, and they are driven by different drivers at higher speeds and with more wear and tear than the average vehicle. He would support the requests for two cruisers and a truck. The truck would be an appropriate vehicle for setting up barriers, transporting equipment, especially the police department's UTV, and has an added advantage of four wheel drive capability.

Chair Saulnier noted that Police Chief Jeff Dalessio had decreased his request for a truck by changing the model from a Ford150 to a Chevy Silverado, which is a savings of \$5,800. Vice President Kane said the truck would be outfitted so it could be used as a cruiser. After discussion, the Committee agreed they would recommend the capital request for two cruisers and a truck.

Councilor O'Connor requested that they review dispatch since he feels they may be overstaffed, and questioned the renovations to the police department. President Hill said the Council never talked about renovations. Vice President Kane said surrounding communities of the same size operate their dispatch with one dispatcher per shift in contrast to East Longmeadow which has two dispatchers per shift.

Chair Saulnier said she would prepare something for the Town Council meeting on April 23, 2019, and e-mail President Hill prior to that meeting. The Financial Oversight Committee's next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 26, 2019, at 1:00 p.m.

Chair Saulnier made a motion to adjourn at 1:30 p.m. Mr. Broderick seconded and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne R. Quaglietti  
Assistant Town Clerk