



TOWN OF EAST LONGMEADOW  
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EAST LONGMEADOW, MA 01028

**TOWN COUNCIL**

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Kathleen G. Hill, President  
Michael J. Kane, Vice President      *Joseph A. Ford*  
Donald J. Anderson      Kevin M. Manley  
Paul L. Federici      Thomas C. O'Connor

**FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

May 20, 2019 at 10:30 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 Tom O'Connor, Council President Kathy Hill

Chair Saulnier opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m., and made note that ELCAT was taping the meeting.

Chair Saulnier said at this meeting the Oversight Committee will complete a final review of all the recommendations. She acknowledged the receipt of an e-mail that was sent to her (regarding the Committee's recommendations), and has also asked each Committee member to consider IT's request of a help desk administrator and think of how that position can be funded. The Committee will also further discuss the dispatch budget. Chair Saulnier said that Town Manager Denise Menard sent her minutes of a September 11, 2018, Town Council meeting at which the funding of dispatch was discussed, as well as how dispatch was proposed.

President Hill said she read those minutes to refresh her mind and some things stuck out in those minutes, especially the comment by Councilor Ford: "Councilor Ford added that if it doesn't work out the Council has to reassess what the long term plans are." President Hill said in reference to a need for a partner community, the Council gave the "nod" to go forward with a dispatch department and staff it. She added that the Town had to have a product to market dispatch to a potential community. President Hill doesn't have an issue with having a dispatch department; but now listening to Vice President Kane and Dispatch Director Scott Burns, as well as seeing an organizational chart with a full time director, four additional full time employees, three part timers, and one part timer in training, she feels they've staffed as though we have a partner community, and we don't yet. President Hill said she feels like the Town has overspent, but not intentionally, and feels the product is too big for the budget.

After discussing potential partner communities, President Hill felt, after reading the September 11 minutes that the Town has not yet attracted a partner to staff the way dispatch is proposing. She said the Town can't staff that high yet, and she would support the Oversight Committee's recommendation of not funding that high, and believes it would not be sacrificing public safety to do so.

Chair Saulnier thanked President Hill for her comments, and looking at the September 11 minutes, she had noted the comment, "(Town Manager) Ms. Menard added that if it's not clear right now if there will be shared service or individual dispatch, there could be a problem with the budget next year." In addition, Chair Saulnier also noted Councilor Ford's comment about reassessing the long term plans of dispatch.

Mr. Broderick said he agreed with President Hill, and when he looked at the number of calls received with the amount of staffing, it looks low. He also noted the \$311K in police overtime, and said if dispatch was being staffed properly, he would expect that number to go down, but it seems steady. Mr. Broderick would like to ask Ms. D. Menard how that works. Chair Saulnier felt they weren't shorting the police department since they have three in the academy and one that just returned. Also, she said the Oversight Committee never received the police line item budget, so they can't see how the overtime was impacted.

Vice President Kane said he made numerous phone calls over the weekend about the dispatch budget that seems to be higher than what people would expect. Vice President Kane commented that scheduling was one of his responsibilities in a former position. He made a schedule for the month of June, and how it would be staffed, and then created a budget from that schedule. Vice President Kane then compared his calculated budget with the budget that was submitted.

Vice President Kane distributed his proposed schedule and reviewed how he scheduled the month of June, and then went over the math based on staff and hours worked. He said dispatch is asking for 280 hours a week, but he would suggest that the five full time employees work 200 hours a week, which would cost \$223,916.47. From there, they still need to make up 80 hours of labor to satisfy the 2-2-1 model (2 dispatchers on first shift; 2 dispatchers on second shift; and 1 dispatcher on third shift). That 80 hours of labor, at \$18.50 an hour would be \$76,960 a year. That figure added to \$223,916.47 totals \$300,877. Vice President Kane said he would have to know how much time off is allowed, and multiply that by five. President Hill said, since the staff started in February, and guessing they accrue one day a month, they probably haven't accrued that much time yet.

Chair Saulnier commented that Vice President Kane's figures are only salary, without benefits included. Vice President Kane replied that the salaries submitted also don't include benefits. He added that dispatch budgeted \$342,192 versus his calculation of \$308,277. Mr. Broderick thought overtime would still have to be added to Vice President Kane's estimate, and Vice President Kane said you would use part time employees, and there are five part time positions allocated in their budget. The savings would occur by not having overtime, and he estimates \$34K in savings.

Chair Saulnier said, in looking at Vice President Kane's schedule, you would need four full time dispatchers and one part timer for the various shifts. She asked Vice President Kane, in his experience, do any other communities have a dispatch manager. Vice President Kane replied no, and added that the average hourly salary of the dispatchers is \$20 an hour. The manager is paid 50% more, at \$30 an hour. In Vice President Kane's experience, the manager can pick up a second call if needed, if he is in the building. If he is not in the building the second call can roll over to the fire department.

Vice President Kane said East Longmeadow is showing approximately 55 minutes for time on task for an eight hour shift based on call volume. Also, he ran all call volumes for surrounding communities and came in at approximately 400 a week. Councilor O'Connor said after talking with friends and colleagues, he found they have a standard practice of not recognizing multiple calls as one event; otherwise that number is skewed.

Mr. Broderick said, to confirm what Vice President Kane is saying, that he's utilizing all hours of full time employees with a budget of \$224K, then estimating 80 hours a week of part time fill in positions. By making that assumption, that adds \$77K for part time, and that's basically what dispatch is asking for their part time wage budget. Mr. Broderick said the savings is really because holidays and overtime are not added.

Vice President Kane said another large item budgeted is office furniture for \$31K, and last year \$20K was budgeted. He felt if a feasibility study for the police station is being done, they probably would not be

buying office equipment. Mr. D. Menard said that is the actual amount paid for monthly maintenance and service fees. President Hill said if the Town received the \$1.1M grant for the police station, there would be a plan to redesign the station, and they would keep the equipment they have for dispatch. Ms. D. Menard confirmed that is correct.

In looking at Vice President Kane's schedule, Chair Saulnier asked him if he would suggest using one part time employee or two. Vice President Kane said it doesn't matter how many; it depends on how they're staffed. He staffed his schedule with 280 hours, which is what dispatch asked for, at a \$100K savings. He suggested they use the same staffing they have in the past until the Town gets a second community to join dispatch. He still feels the fire department could help out the dispatch area, and he is trying to be creative with financing to cover another position.

Mr. Broderick said, if he understands Vice President Kane's staffing model, the budget for salaries pretty much matches up. The real question is do you use that model while the call volume is a little lower than anticipated and there is no partner community to share expenses. Vice President Kane said the luxury of what he's presenting is that there is already an officer in the station, and staffing could be helped with the fire department.

Chair Saulnier said Vice President Kane's schedule appears as if it's set up for four full time dispatchers and one part time dispatcher, with the suggestion of a second part time position being available. She said the Oversight Committee is trying to bring the dispatch budget down to a reasonable proposal for the Town Council.

Ms. D. Menard commented that the 911 grant is a standard grant they can get every year, and is used to subsidize dispatching costs. Finance Director Sara Menard said the two grants dispatch receives are about \$40K-50K each year, for a total of \$80K-90K.

Vice President Kane commented on his schedule and said dispatch is asking for 280 hours a week, and he is showing dispatch can be staffed for 200 hours without hiring an extra person. Mr. Broderick referred to information that Ms. D. Menard had sent the Oversight Committee relative to \$311K of police overtime. He asked Ms. D. Menard if that number would be reduced because of civilians taking over dispatch. He thought he'd see that in the police department's budget to reflect that, instead it looks flat.

Ms. S. Menard said the contract provided for increasing salaries, so with the costs not going up it's actually reducing the number of hours. She added that there was an open position that needed to be filled, so there will potentially be some overtime possibilities. Police Chief Jeff Dalessio also said a lot of his focus this year will be on training. Ms. D. Menard said overtime for dispatch was paid for by a grant.

Mr. Broderick said to Ms. D. Menard, given the current dispatch budget model, it was clear that if a second community was not picked up she had predicted that there was a possibility that there would be trouble with the budget. He asked her if there was a plan to back away from that staffing model to a less robust staffing model until another community joins East Longmeadow. Ms. D. Menard replied that when she talked to the Council, she gave them a model of 2-2-2, and what they're using now is 2-2-1; therefore, they haven't fully done what they predicted.

Councilor O'Connor said you would need the 2-2-2 model for two communities, but the Town does not have that yet. Vice President Kane said he understands why dispatch is staffed the way it is to attract a second community, but that's not happening anytime soon.

Chair Saulnier said dispatch has a requested budget of \$401,508, which is an increase of \$90,508 from the startup that occurred in this fiscal year. She thinks it's going to take more than the Financial Oversight

Committee's suggestion to resolve this. Chair Saulnier suggested simply reducing the budget by a specific amount and leave it to the Council to work out. Ms. D. Menard read Councilor Ford's motion from the September 11 meeting, "Councilor Ford made a motion to move forward with the hiring of a dispatch staff in house with FY19 budgeted funds, regardless with entering into a partnership with another community." She said it was her understanding that the Council was voting on the staffing.

Chair Saulnier then referred to Ms. D. Menard's comment in the September 11 meeting that "it's not clear right now if there will be shared service or individual dispatch, there could be a problem with the budget next year", and indeed there is a problem. Chair Saulnier said it's a frustrating scenario to have a dispatch set up for two towns and have taxpayers pay for a two town dispatch. She feels they should look at possibly rolling over calls to the fire department to save money. She also felt it should be up to the people that set up the dispatch to figure out how to save the taxpayers some money. Chair Saulnier's suggestion is that the dispatch budget be reduced by \$90K.

Mr. Broderick said he was thinking of reducing the dispatch budget by \$50K, since the fiscal year is July 1 and a number of people have already been hired. Vice President Kane suggested \$76K, which is the approximate amount of 80 hours of labor. This is the amount which represents one individual, but there are already employees on the payroll that could fill that same capacity. Mr. Broderick recommended an even \$75K, but after further discussion the Committee agreed on the exact amount representing one hire.

**Motion:** Councilor O'Connor made a motion to recommend reducing the dispatch budget in the amount of \$76,960, which represents 80 additional hours of labor. Mr. Broderick seconded and all were in favor.

Chair Saulnier then asked Ms. S. Menard if she had been able to get the levy amount that she used, and she'll need that number today so she can fine-tune the Committee's presentation to the Council the next day. Ms. S. Menard said she thought she had answered that question already, but will e-mail it to Chair Saulnier.

The Financial Oversight Committee then discussed IT's request for a help desk administrator. Chair Saulnier said in their discussions with IT Director Ryan Quimby, he said he would take what he could get; however, given the timing, giving him that position for six months instead of twelve months really wouldn't help with his summer needs and the students' Chromebooks.

Vice President Kane suggested taking the money they're reducing dispatch by and funding the IT position with it. Mr. Broderick commented that the amount is pretty much a wash. He would be in favor of that, given all the responsibilities that are being centralized to IT, additional devices, and their needs for the summer. President Hill said she didn't think it was responsible to fund a 1:1 program without supporting a position to help make the program work.

**Motion:** Mr. Broderick made a motion to recommend the full time help desk administrator for IT for the full twelve months for FY20. Vice President Kane seconded and all were in favor.

Chair Saulnier said that Mr. Broderick has been working on potential budget adjustments, which would be the document given to the Council at their meeting the next day (May 21, 2019). She then reviewed those adjustments as shown on Mr. Broderick's document, and confirmed that the last number represents all the combined recommendations.

Mr. Broderick thanked Ms. S. Menard and Ms. D. Menard for forwarding him the format they used for the budget presented on April 29, 2019. He said it gets a little uncertain where the Committee has deferred full time positions, since the Committee's recommendations are based on benefits and salary, and the Town departments' line items are only salary. Given that, he wasn't sure what the best way was to present those

numbers. Ms. S. Menard then showed Mr. Broderick where the payroll taxes and benefits appeared, and where he should make the recommended reductions for salary and benefits. Chair Saulnier complimented Mr. Broderick on the fantastic job he did compiling the Committee's recommendations.

Referring to the Community Preservation Fund, Chair Saulnier asked where the \$263K revenue is that offsets the \$106,280 sources amount. Ms. S. Menard said it nets itself out. The estimated revenue is \$250K, and there are outstanding receivables.

The Committee and Ms. S. Menard then discussed the valuation rate Mr. Broderick used for his calculations, and Mr. Broderick said he used the \$1,994,987,436 valuation and increased it by 1.25%. Chair Saulnier said she took a look at the valuation increases over the last three years and came up with an average. After consulting with one of the assessors, she felt they could use 1.25% safely.

Chair Saulnier said the Committee's next meeting is tomorrow, May 21, and they will take a final look at the budget before presenting their recommendations to the Council that evening.

**Motion:** Mr. Broderick made a motion to adjourn at 12:08 p.m. Councilor O'Connor seconded and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne R. Quaglietti  
Assistant Town Clerk