

Lyme Board of Finance Meeting Minutes

Thursday February 8th, 2018: Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm

Board Members Present: Chairman Matthew Sharp, Kathryn Wayland, Jarrod Leonardo, Dan Hagan, Lori Caine & Dave Brown, absent: Judith Duran, Herbert Ross & Peter Evankow

In attendance; Town First Selectmen, Steve Mattson

Numerous public in attendance including fire and library representatives

Approval of February 1st, 2018 Meeting Minutes; motion made by Dan Hagan and approved by Dave Brown, all approved.

Presentation of the Lyme Fire Company Budget: by Josh Adams, Assistant Chief

A detailed presentation illustrating the current budget year, through 2023-24 was handed out a week previously to all board members.

The Lyme Fire Company received approximately \$34,500 in donations last year. The endowment, currently at \$280,000; the company wants to see grow to be able to support and supplement the department with their needs. Therefore, they are only allowing 1.5% spend per year now while the endowment grows. They are predicting a 4% growth annually as supported by their financial planner, Essex Financial Services. Goal is to get the endowment to \$500,000 as of right now. Once they reach their goal they will contribute 4% annually to the budget.

With endowment funds they purchased Hurst tools this year for about \$30k. The 18/19 budget includes \$41,500 from the endowment funds to reduce cost to town taxpayers. It was noted that a new Treasurer is set to take over next year.

New truck to arrive in 5-6 weeks, manufactured by Four Guys, stainless body.

Recruitment and Retention: By Jamie Leatherbee, Lyme Fire Company Chief

6 or 8 under 20 members, couple going to the Academy

Training for firemen is staying in the fire companies spend, not towns spend in projections to 2024.

Retention and recruitment, hard to retain college students, people cannot afford to live in town. Steve Mattson and Dan Hagan are working with affordable housing to try and retain additional volunteers, specifically young people to assist in our department. Another possibility is to find a resident willing to rent at a lower rate to allow for a qualified applicant whom would join the local fire company and or ambulance.

Training just finished an EMR class with 11 students. R1 supplemental response with both Fire Co and Ambulance to respond together, so all officers now will have both fire training and EMR training to possibly drive the Ambulance if necessary and assist the Ambulance, since number of volunteers available during work day is dwindling. Each officer of the Fire Company has: duty officer night, so one officer will be on call and available to respond and bring one apparatus to any call.

How to increase donations, specific cause? Fill the boot? Lyme Fire Company does often receive Pfizer match and on Essex Savings Bank ballot for donations through their charitable program. Goodwill events raise awareness but also raises donations. Building the grill outside has increased attendance at the steak dinner.

Looking at adding a donate now on website, but all decisions require a company vote and finding the manpower to make all ideas happen is sometimes a problem. If you have an idea, please feel free to reach out to them.

Next new truck apparatus would not be until 2025 and probably projected to be about \$450,000. Hadlyme station needs work but maybe 5-8 years out, but challenge is the size of the building and the weight of the trucks. There is some land next door owned by the town to renovate the space. Maybe add a training space for that area. Could cost \$500-\$1mill to replace the Hadlyme station. The members currently do visit and look at what neighboring towns do for advice on how to proceed.

Slightly over from last years' projections mainly due to increase in hose expense and replacement. Numerous hoses required replacement and new truck will require new hose. Tire plan, numbers are working, projections lower than anticipated over the whole.

Capital Expenditures:

Regulations are influenced by NFPA, nationally accepted standards to follow, which does drive some expenditures like a gear washer planned to be purchased in 20/21.

Training facility could be a regional location and influenced by all neighboring towns, could be 1-10 acres. Often training happens with other towns and some does take place at current Hamburg station.

Currently use a software system that is not quick, current system is \$1200 annually. In budget for 18/19 is a new Firehouse software system, keeps all electronic books, instant upload and less paperwork for volunteers.

Stabilization is for shoring up a building, truck and what all neighboring towns use, capital expense for 19/20 budget cycle.

Goal is to have matching equipment at each station to get to accidents and fire timely and to keep all trucks similarly equipped for increased efficiency.

Will Firgelewski, to speak on radio receivers; no questions asked.

Truck Maintenance:

Consolidating vendors to reduce truck maintenance cost, same company does pump testing and the truck maintenance, saves time and money and finger pointing if something goes wrong. DOT inspections must be done legally, they would tag it, then person wasn't available to sign off on the remedy previously causing time delays and increasing costs of travel. Anyone who inspects or works on a vehicle should be Emergency Vehicle Technician, protects the towns liability and makes it happen efficiently. More of a preventative plan than reactive plan. Can repair within 24 hours per incidence, and stand behind their work, approximately \$6,000 savings to the town annually against current system. In Lyme Fire Company Officers executive session, it was unanimously agreed to transition to this in next fiscal year. One town employee previously was working on the trucks one day a week and that will change once this new plan takes place. Do all testing in under two days so apparatus is away for less time.

Look at neighboring towns as mutual aid is extremely important along the shoreline. Each departments seems to focus on one specialty but none overlap. Essex often handles big heavy equipment rollovers, Old Saybrook specializes training to save a firefighter caught in building, so each department has a specialty. The thought is if Lyme can garner a specialty ,it might motivate more attendance and participation. Lyme is considering a Ropes response training. Especially since accident on CT River last year from falling off cliff, it might bring kids together too and foster more combined training opportunity of multiple units.

Bub Plimpton passed away recently, and, in his honor, the new truck will be dedicated to him.

Changed age of joining the department to age 15, previously 16 to increase retention.

Overall, with capital and operating expenses, less endowment contribution the fire company is proposing \$110, 035 for fiscal year 18/19 of which \$50,432 is for operating budget.

Dan Hagan pointed out town only spends \$129,000 per year for about \$2.5 mill in services, when evaluating the combination of Fire, Ambulance and Emergency Management, less of course expenses relating to buildings and properties.

Presentation of the Lyme Library Budget: Jack Sulger, Chairman for the Lyme Library Board

And Teresa Conley, Library Director.

Of concern is the state funding of the its own library system which facilitates interlibrary lending and offers 40% discount on books. In addition is the library's challenge of maintaining quality books and electronic media to meet demands of patrons. It seems to be divided how many patrons prefer books and others prefer e-books.

Friends of the Library is a separate entity, not included in budget presentation and they run the programs. Very positive response from programs and attendance has reached an all-time high. The number of cardholders remains relatively similar to last year at 1,271. Circulation was down but due in part to the issues with interlibrary loan system at the state level. The patron count decreased from 17,900 in 15/16 to 17,054 in 16/17. The public meeting space at the library has also experienced increase use by local groups.

One request from the board was a \$14,000 request for a capital expense for fiber optics to install high speed internet at the new library.

Jeanne Rutigliano of the Lyme Public Library Foundation

The LPLF currently has \$1,107,488 in the balance. Goal is to continue to try to rebuild the foundation to sustain an annual 4% contribution to the budget annually. For past few years the amount has been kept a constant at \$42,000 as donations have not exceeded the contribution. The LPLF did again mention the \$300,000 donation to the new library building of which \$100,000 was received from a grant and set aside for the new library project. After this large contribution of fund's, the LPLF has been working to rebuild the foundation.

It was mentioned by a board of finance member, Kathryn Wayland, the concern that for the past three plus years the LPLF annual donation to the operating budget has stayed a constant at \$42,000. The board of finance is aware the library board and foundation board did lose some very long-time dedicated board members and has suffered with a change in leadership. The board also recognizes the loss of funds from the large donation to the project but feels they need to share their goals and appeal to townspeople in a different manner. As expenses increase it would be ideal to share the increase with the townspeople and the foundation.

The event this year with the concert brought in \$15,600 on the event. The annual appeal letter raised its lowest numbers in years, coming in only at about \$15,000. So, both the directors and foundation members are hosting a joint meeting this month with two organizations to try to garner new enthusiasm and events. Demographics are changing and what worked in the past isn't working today. Any public with comment or ideas please share them with the library board.

Of note again, the capital needs on both fire and library do not include their buildings and will come from Selectman's budget.

Lori Caine made a motion, to allocate up to \$15,000 for fiber optics for the Lyme Library from the Lyme Library Trust Fund. Dave Brown seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by Board of Finance members.

Departure of Fire and Library Boards, followed by a brief discussion of how to proceed with budget preparation by Steve Mattson and the board of finance.

Steve discussed the Financial Health Components: philosophy of building specific fund balances would avoid big swings in mill rate and increase savings, while naturally going to debt free over time. Capital plan has not been revealed and Steve is evaluating the needs of equipment and buildings. Realistically looking at a mill rate that keeps increasing slowly over time. Steve said the town has starved for years and put off some major capital expenses and evaluation of infrastructure. He wants to put forward a budget plan, that over time will take care of infrastructure while achieving the lowest mill rate possible. Being conservative in our projections and taking our time to make large purchases over time and with caution is the historical approach of the board. The board would like to project for a general fund balance, as recommended by their auditor to total 2 months of expenses or \$1.65 mil.

In budget plan Steve will present two plans for McIntosh bridge, as well as an assessment on that and review of 20 bridges. Steve's budget will include numbers on school budget except student count which will not be known until April. Steve will recommend the budget as proposed and it's our job to evaluate and decide how to proceed.

Matt Sharp and Dave Brown attended the Board of Education meeting the prior night, inquired on declining enrollment and increase in expenses and was disappointed in the response. Even though enrollment is projected to decrease continuously going forward, as it has been doing for past few years, there seems no plan or ability to decrease expenses. Board of finance members urge taxpayers to attend Board of Education meetings and pay attention to the budget presentations this Spring and make their voice heard.

Next meeting is next Thursday March 15th at 6:30pm and will be the Selectman's Budget Presentation

Meeting adjourned at 8:32pm

Respectfully submitted by Clerk of Board of Finance,

Kathryn Wayland