



BOARD OF FINANCE
HALL 480 HAMBURG ROAD LYME, CT 06371

LYME TOWN

LYME BOARD OF FINANCE
Regular Meeting
March 26, 2024

The Lyme Board of Finance held a Regular Meeting Tuesday, March 26, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. at the Lyme Public Library, 482 Hamburg Rd, Lyme, CT 06371.

Members Present: Alan Sheiness (chair), Steve Mattson, Bob House, Dan Hagan, Jim Miller, Walter Burhans (alternate), Adam McEwen (alternate), Jeff Oyster (alternate).

First Selectman Lahm, **Present**.
Members of the public **present**.

Call to Order - 6:30 p.m.

Seat Alternate Member – Alternate member Oyster was seated for absent member Brown.

Approve the Minutes from the March 5, 2024, Regular Meeting – Hagan made a motion to approve the minutes. Seconded by Mattson. Unanimous.

Appoint Seward and Monde as auditors for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2024, audit – Hagan made a motion to appoint Seward and Monde as auditors for the fiscal year ended June 20, 2024. Seconded by Miller. Unanimous.

BOS additional capital request: Affordable Housing – Lahm spoke; the Affordable Housing Commission is looking for \$750k from the town to budget for a house purchase. This purchase would be used as a rental property for First Responders. A single-sex dormitory which would have a common kitchen and living space run by the commission. Lahm believes it has merit but would be a million tax dollars. A letter Lahm received from Chief Evans said it needs to be matured more; as of now, it is just a concept.

Hagan questioned if it was in the budget yet. Lahm said not as of now. Sheiness said the board should all give comments. Hagan also agreed it has merit but needs development before approval. He feels it's a rental business/frat house and needs a business plan. He would like to see a letter from the building inspector on what needs to be done to the property to be up to code. Who would pay the operating expenses? How many cars would that be? Will tenants be allowed to have boyfriends/girlfriends live there? How would it be possible to have one sex without the town being sued? What are the liabilities for the town? The list goes on and on; without a good business plan, including finances, Hagan stated he could not approve this. Lahm commented that the property will not be listed very long. Burhans commented that the proposal needs time, a better plan, and to show financials.

McEwen agreed there should be a business plan with financials and added there should be more cohesion between fire and ambulance.

House said he feels it's a rushed plan, and the town-owned/ town being the landlord is a nuisance, and using an outside agency would be best. However, an outside agency changes control on bringing people in. As presented could cause issues, where the town could then need to hire police and such. Mattson commented he agrees with Hagan. This is premature and not vetted and explored enough. What would the operating costs be? This could cause a 6% increase in the budget, 21% without schools and capital. Therefore, we could be better off just giving the money monthly to help with living costs. Mattson said this should be in a volunteer program, not through Affordable Housing.

Oyster commented that he agrees with everyone else. There are no numbers within the proposal; it's a good concept, but the Board of Finance should be last. The Affordable Housing Commission should engage 1-2 people from the Board of Finance if they need assistance with the Board of Finance's strengths.

Miller, who sits on both Affordable Housing and Finance boards, commented the property is unique and there is no impingement on neighbors. The timing is inconvenient, and there needs to be a business plan. He doesn't want to enter an "open-ended commitment" for money to be expended.

Sheiness commented he agrees with everyone else; it's open-ended, there is a lack of certain information, and the whole thing goes beyond just the finance aspect. General policy goals. Clarification is needed on problem statements. Is this Affordable Housing or for the volunteer corps? Costs, resources, and residency does not seem like a scalable Affordable Housing solution. Do we understand volunteer turnover and whether or how providing housing would change that? Sheiness also listed questions about choosing residents and what guidelines would exist for residency. Just volunteers may cause housing issues. Sheiness questioned what other towns have in place, who would do any maintenance, and who would sponsor that type of living. Sheiness understands the concept and believes it will be time well spent for the Board of Selectman and Affordable Housing Commission to take up these questions.

Lahm asked Sheiness if he could yield a few minutes to the Affordable Housing co-chairs, who were present. Sheiness said yes.

Sheiness welcomed Carol House, co-chair of Affordable Housing, to speak for a few minutes.

House started by explaining why Affordable Housing is trying to move so fast, including the desires of the owner and their passing. He explained what they are trying to do and how they hope to get there. House explained they went before the P&Z to try and get a special permit to add multi-unit houses, but the commission believed it best to wait for the POCD results later this year.

Carleen Gerber, co-chair of Affordable Housing, made a few relatable comments. The \$750k budget does not commit the town to buying the property.

No further discussion. No action taken.

Selectman's review of complete 24/25 budget proposal- Lahm spoke and said he thinks this is a good budget. Oyster questioned the bridge grant. Lahm said he has not heard back yet. April 15th will be the Town meeting regarding the Senior Center budget. Lahm explained the specific funds, and then Mattson gave a background of the specific funds.

Mill rate scenarios, pending final Region 18 Impact to Towns (April 1 student counts) – Sheiness reviewed the mill rate numbers on screen based of the handouts given to the board. Sheiness explained the general funds balance and the 14.75 mill rate. The Region 18 budget will be discussed at next week's meeting with Superintendent Ian Neviasser present. Sheiness explained the debt services are lower than last year's estimates because of the HVAC grant. Mattson commented on the mill rate. Hagan questioned what bids are out for the schoolwork and who is on the building committee. Sheiness

said that would be good questions for next week. A possible town meeting date was mentioned but not finalized yet. Sheiness said all the numbers should be finalized by the next meeting.

New Business—Lahm requested the town cover the full-time employee health insurance. Brief discussion. Hagan made a motion for the Town to now cover 100% of the premium for health insurance for all full-time Town employees, eliminating a two-tier system of coverage. Seconded by Mattson. Unanimous.

Adjournment – 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lannie Mossberg, Secretary