

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
March 2, 2016**

Present: Norman M. Needleman, First Selectman
Stacia R. Libby, Selectman
Bruce M. Glowac, Selectman

Norman Needleman called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion was made by Norman Needleman to approve the Agenda with one addition under New Business: Budget Meeting 2016-2017. Bruce Glowac seconded the motion. All in favor.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion was made by Stacia Libby to approve the February 17th Minutes. Bruce Glowac seconded the motion. All in favor.

Informational Items, Communications and Correspondence: None

Public Announcements / Comment: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Budget Meeting 2016 - 2017

Middlesex Hospital - Paramedic Program – Tab 27, Page 30

New request for funding. Jim Santacroce, Manager of the Middlesex Hospital Paramedic Department and Laura A. Martino presented. Mr. Santacroce reported that Middlesex Hospital recently held a forum regarding the financial challenges associated with the Paramedic Program. The program started in 1987 and the program covers a total of 19 Towns. The paramedics are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. There are three (3) paramedic units; located in Westbrook, Middletown, and in Marlborough. The paramedics are used for Advanced Life Support (ALS) level of 9-1-1 calls. An EMT can also call a paramedic. It is a higher level of care. Paramedics are licensed by the State of Connecticut. A paramedic has more hours of training and more equipment, such as heart monitors, etc. and they can give care on scene like emergency room care.

Laura Martino reported that the program needs financial support from the Towns. Ms. Martino explained that the paramedic program gets paid with what is referred to as the “bundled billing”. For example, the Town’s bill insurance companies for services and the payment goes directly to the Town ambulance service, then a small portion of the funds then goes to the paramedic program. The program is in the red. They have made internal adjustments, like hiring freezes, and reducing employee benefits, etc. The program is an important service and they will not be able to continue to provide the level of service without additional financial assistance. There was discussion regarding reimbursement for paramedic services. Ms. Martino stated that a large portion of the reimbursement is withheld because they are an intercept program, not a transport program. There are currently 32 paramedics who are paid between \$18.00 and \$31.00 per hour with a minimum of 3.5 years’ of experience. Some paramedics have more than 30 years’ experience.

Ms. Martino stated that the proposal is to have the Towns start to help offset the costs for paramedic services at \$1 per capita with an escalating scale over the next 5 years of an additional \$1 per year per capita. There was discussion on the creation of an oversight board to oversee and investigate options and ways at controlling the escalating costs.

Judi Reynolds from the Essex Ambulance Association stated they are appreciative of the quality of care of the Paramedic Program. Ms. Reynolds reported the program also provides training. Both Judi Reynolds and Amy Sypher are in full support of the funding for the Paramedic program. Ms. Reynolds felt that the program is a bargain to Towns, but is fearful of the unknown and what the cost may be after 5 years.

Mr. Glowac stated that no one is contesting the value of the program, but the cost of the program is the issue. There was discussion that the executive salaries are quite high.

Essex Ambulance – Tab 27, Page 30

There is a slight increase for Worker's Compensation.

Park and Recreation Commission – Tab 22, Page B25

Mary Ellen Barnes stated the budget included 15 hours for the Recreation Aid and the Recreation Director is budgeted at 25 hours. The current Recreation Aide will primarily oversee the maintenance at the parks and working with public works. Funds are being included in the budget for water testing in case swimming opens up at Viney Hill Brook.

Ms. Barnes reported that the mowing increase was by contract and the quality of work is very worthwhile. The parks included in the mowing are Grove Street, Sunset, Dickinson, and Viney Hill Brook. The contract includes weeding the gardens and the hedge in Ivoryton, which must be kept at 36 inches. You need a professional to maintain the parks.

The Ivoryton Garden Clubs maintain the flower beds in Ivoryton. The Essex Garden Club maintains Main Street, in Essex.

Ms. Barnes reported that the Recreation Program had a little extra funds leftover from last year, but it is not a money making venture and all excess funds are placed back into the programs.

Robert Russo, Park and Recreation Commission Chairman, stated the Commission is working on a five (5) year plan. The board is looking at what improvements are needed at Comstock Field.

Budget Meeting 2016 - 2017

Motion was made by Bruce Glowac to approve and recommend to the Board of Finance a Board of Selectmen's Budget for Fiscal Year 2016 – 2017 in the amount of \$7,662,584 at an increase of 2.76%. Stacia Libby seconded the motion. All in favor.

OLD BUSINESS:

Capital Committee

Bruce Glowac reported that the Essex Elementary School bidding for the repaving at the elementary school will be going out soon so work can commence in July, 2016. The solar project will be installed when school is let out. Work is continuing in the Land Use Office. There is no asbestos, but lead was found, which will need to be abated.

Evans Lane Dispute – “Pending Litigation” for FOIA Purposes

Motion was made by Stacia Libby to table this item until the March 16th meeting. Bruce Glowac seconded the motion. All in favor.

Appointments and Resignations Board and Commissions None

Public Comment: None

SELECTMEN GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Old Street Signs

There was discussion on donating the retired Essex street signs to the Community Fund to auction off to raise money for the community. Stacia Libby would communicate this idea with the Community Fund.

New Full Time Essex Police Officer

Mr. Needleman announced that Christopher McCarthy will be starting on Sunday, March 6th as a new full time Essex Police Officer.

Credit Cards in the Tax Collector's Office

Mr. Needleman announced that the Town anticipates that credit cards will be accepted in the Tax Department soon. Hopefully by July 1st

Town of East Haddam joins Valley Shore Emergency Communications Inc. (VSECI)

Mr. Needleman announced that the Town of East Haddam voted to join VSECI.

Motion was made by Norman Needleman to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m. Bruce Glowac seconded the motion. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria P. Lucarelli