

Board of Finance  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, April 5, 2022  
7:00pm via Zoom &  
Clifford B. Green Memorial Center

**Present:** Sandy Brodeur, Drew Dionne, David Lee, Ken Dykstra, Heather Allen, and Sara Deshaies, substitute recording secretary

**Also Present:** Austin Tanner, Lou Brodeur, Steve Breen, Mike Podzalne, Brian Pepin, Bucky Lohbusch, Mike Gaudreau, and Gil Maiato.

1. **Determination of a quorum and Call to Order:** Sandy called the meeting to order at 7:00pm
2. **Public comment:** None
3. **Action on minutes of 3/16/22 and 3/21/22 meetings:** D. Dione made motion to accept the minutes as presented. K. Dykstra seconded. Motion passed 5-0.
4. Old Business
  - a. **Other old business:** None
5. New Business
  - a. **Presentation of Fire Department Budgets for 2022-23 year:** M. Podzalne, Board of Fire Commissioners, gave an overview of joint budget \$269,360. Board of Fire Commissioners unanimously voted to pass budgets for both departments. East Brooklyn budget request is \$112,960, includes an operating budget of \$91,690 and safety and capital budget of \$21,270.

On the operating side, that represented a 2.1% increase from last year, which amounted to \$1,960. Safety and capital 30% increase, equal to \$5,000. The major increase in safety and capital, East Brooklyn was using budget prices set in 2006. Those have been updated, explaining the sudden increase. The major increase on the operating side is insurance in the amount of \$1,400. Mortlake budget request is \$156,400. On the operating side was a 2.1% increase amounting to \$2,685.

Their safety and capital request was 0%, for a total increase of 1.74%.

Again, Board of Fire Commissioners unanimously voted to pass the increase in Mortlake's budget to 2.18% nearing East Brooklyn. That brought them down to 1.74%. Some of the larger requests in Mortlake's original proposal were associated with professional fees, maintenance, and wages. Chief Breen will speak to that after.

Fire Commissioners are working on a tax abatement proposal for the Town. At a certain threshold, and if firefighters meet it, they would qualify for a tax abatement within the Town in the amount of \$2,000.

They are also looking at a compensation program for volunteers. Basically, a pay per call system. This is in the early stages. It will take a funding commitment from the Town at some point. It would be a dollar allotment for the entire year and distributed equally per call to volunteers.

Commission is also getting both departments up to speed on legal requirements, training, operating guidelines, OSHA requirements. Would eventually like both

departments to share resources such as software, training, etc to lighten the financial burden on the Town. Safety for the first responders is key.

Long term, the Commission is aware of paid staffing concern and looking into it.

H. Allen asked about the tax abatement compensation program for next year. She asked for clarification on in which fiscal year this would begin. M. Podzalne stated that the tax abatement won't be a funding request because it's an abatement. The information will be presented to the Town Tax Assessor and the Assessor will knock the \$2,000 off each qualified individual's tax statement.

Compensation program will be a funded line item. There is more involved with getting a system in line that is the same for both departments so they can track, not only the calls each responder makes, but the training, meetings, etc. Everyone needs to get on the same page about what it is they want and come up with a dollar amount sufficient to carry it out. Next fiscal year 23-24 is more likely.

The Board discussed the likelihood that the tax abatement would need to go to a town meeting as would the compensation program. A. Tanner asked if these were programs the State has agreed to. M. Podzalne said yes. K. Dykstra asked what would happen if a volunteer didn't own property in Town. M. Podzalne said it could be applied to autos as well. D. Dione asked why the Mortlake proposed budget had a decrease and the budget total has an increase to their operating budget. According to the paperwork looking for \$98,000 as opposed to \$125,000. S Brodeur stated that that was a difference in insurance that will not be discussed right at this moment.

S. Breen, Chief of Mortlake, stated that they had originally proposed a budget that included a significant increase to their building maintenance line because they have to replace all of their overhead door mechanical parts over two years. Other increases that were beyond their control were things like professional fees, fuel expenses. The insurance increase that was to be included will possibly be discussed later. But the other big piece was a \$13,000 addition to budget to pay a bookkeeper to assist the volunteer treasurer. There is a tremendous amount of work. More than should be asked of a volunteer to continue to do. Those were the big items in the original increase. As stated, the Board Fire of Commissioners felt it would be equal across the board to give them the 2.11% that was given to East Brooklyn.

K. Dykstra asked about the \$0 in safety and capital. D. Lee stated its new and hasn't been used yet. D. Dione asked about the empty insurance line. S. Breen explained the insurance for both companies is paid by the Town. For many years, the companies budgeted for insurance, the Town pays the bills and then the companies give that money back to the Town. A discussion will be had about eliminating that back and forth and just having the Town pay it directly.

K. Dykstra asked about Mortlake asking for more money for building maintenance but it's not in the budget. S. Breen stated that they removed as much as needed from building maintenance to balance to the amount voted by the Board of Fire Commissioners. They are shifting the larger budgetary asks to the Capital Commission for consideration.

B. Pepin, Chief of East Brooklyn, stated the largest increase is in safety and capital. The way its listed has been the same for many years. One adjustment was the quantity and amount of equipment they have. Equipment has decreased over the years. Just like

everything else we see right now, the price has greatly increased, fire equipment is no different. The budget requested would allow for replacement of safety capital without appealing to the Board of Finance again.

D. Lee asked if East Brooklyn modified from what was submitted. It is not, with the exception of the \$400 for fuel. D. Dione asked for the updated budget requests. More discussion took place.

D. Dione made a motion to accept the proposed budget as voted on by the Board of Fire Commissioners. D. Lee seconded. S. Brodeur posed the question of whether to include the fuel as it was or tell the Fire Commissioners to go back review again with no fuel to eliminate the back and forth. \*unintelligible (too many talking at once)\*

Insurance was discussed on whether or not to keep insurance transactions as they are or eliminate the back and forth. S. Brodeur stated that the fire companies never know what the insurance is going to be. The insurance policy is under the Town and paid for by the Town. D. Lee stated that years ago the fire companies managed the insurance. The other issue was that the policy was named as Town of Brooklyn Fire **Departments (corrected)**. This is not a legal entity. He said if the Town is going to continue to manage the policy there is no issue. He asked if they should accept the motion and vote this motion with the insurance as a separate issue. He thinks they should. And then as a Board go about removing the insurance lines from both departments.

S. Brodeur asked for all in favor of accepting for consideration the figures presented by the Board of Fire Commissioners. Accepted 5-0.

- b. **Presentation of Parks and Recreation Budget proposal for 2022-23 year:** B. Lohbusch, Director of Parks & Recreation presented. Increase of 3.75% for recreation this year. Program budget of \$404,032, an increase of \$17,041. The reason \$14,038 is in parentheses is that the staff salaries were not put in Parks & Rec budget. The money was put into contingency for salaries, not in individual budgets. S. Brodeur explained that in years past if there was going to be a contract change, they would ignore it not plan for the contingency or budget increase. When the negotiations took place, the budget looked like everyone had overspent. So, the money is put in a general line. B. Lohbusch noted that if not for salaries, the budget would have decreased. Minimum wage is now \$14 per hour. He then addressed overtime stating that a full-time employee works 35 hours per week. Overtime isn't a consideration until you reach 40 hours in a week. So, if someone works 37 hours it's paid as regular payroll, not 2 hours of overtime. Finance requested they put overtime monies into their salary account, so the number don't show as negative. For other professional services the budget decreased by \$2,500, the reason is for COVID purposes they added money for in house programs because they couldn't go on trips. This year they took that money and used it for bus trips and Summer Camp. B. Lohbusch pointed out where the breakdown of different programs budgeting can be found. Summer Day Camp will cost \$125,660, Summer Teen will cost \$20,880, Before and after school program costs \$100,670, Full Day Recreation costs \$11,000, etc. He also noted that if you add together Summer Day Camp and Summer Teen Camp that is what the department will be reimbursed by the school through ARPA funds. S. Brodeur asked for clarification that the school will, in fact, reimburse for those programs again this year. B. Lohbusch confirmed. He then directed the Board to where they can find further breakdown of monies. Spooky

Night/Fear Grounds is the same budget at \$14,500. He mentioned where to find the budgetary information for bus trips, ski trips, bunny drive, holiday lighting contest, and all the other programs. He directed the Board to where they can find the description and budget for each line item. H. Allen asked if bus transportation was covered under ARPA. B. Lohbusch confirmed that it is. B. Lohbusch then discussed revenue. He stated that revenue is a lower amount for 21-22, and covers fiscal year to date. So far, they have taken in \$252,362 in revenue, he hopes to be close to the projection, but have had a few hiccups with COVID. He gave a lot of the credit to his staff stating that there was no shutdown in Parks & Rec for COVID. They kept going all throughout the pandemic. He stated that when kids were learning from home Parks & Rec set up tutoring for at home learners. He is proposing revenues for Summer Camp to be around \$153,540. Before and after school program will be around \$126,000, Spooky Night/Fear Grounds revenue will increase. The department has decided to increase the ticket price to \$15 this year. Proposed total revenue is a total of \$307,690. 70% revenue versus expenses. He directed the Board where to find the breakdown of all revenue line items. B. Lohbusch also directed them to the comparison between expenditures and revenues to show a profit of \$27,104 this year based on projections. Lastly, the toy drive was exceptional this year, collecting \$15,353.95. Between that and what was left over from last year there was \$19,000. Some examples of what can be done with that money include, with the permission of the Parks & Recreation Commission, helping the family that lost everything due to a house fire get winter coats and gift cards. The Beagery Trust Fund has once again pledged \$12,000 over three years. That money also goes to the Summer Day Camp fund. That money is used to help any child go to camp who would otherwise be unable to afford it. The Jim Boyle Scholarship Fund was put together for the same reason, though Parks & Rec has not solicited funding due to COVID. K. Dykstra asked if that money was in a separate account. B. Lohbusch confirmed. S. Brodeur mentioned that the Board is not provided revenue report along with expenditures, though they have been asking for some time now. B. Lohbusch mentioned that he met with someone today, who wants to remain anonymous, but is interested in maybe making a substantial donation to the Jim Boyle Scholarship Fund on an annual basis. That would be an incredible gift. Almost to the point that everyone would receive a scholarship of some sort. D. Lee asked about the COVID fund. B. Lohbusch explained that is the ARPA funds received last Summer. Last year it cost \$122,205.35 to run Summer Camp and that is the amount that was received back. B. Lohbusch then addressed that Parks is unfortunately a little different story. There are a lot of increases contractually that out of their control. Under building repairs, parks and grounds, the cost for the rented port-a-johns placed around town went up a large amount of money, costing \$6,000 for the year. S. Brodeur asked how the company justified the cost increase. B. Lohbusch said it was likely the fuel increase everyone is feeling. He also stated that the cost of each unit per month has increased from \$110 to \$140. Also, the cost of paper products has risen. L. Brodeur asked if B. Lohbusch gets new bids periodically. B. Lohbusch said not in the past as the current company was the lowest bidder. Now wouldn't be a good time for that as companies are putting sanitizing measures in place that increase the cost.

For parks the budget is \$2,000 for grass seed and fertilizer, the cost of which has quadrupled recently. Diesel fuel is down due to not much of their equipment is fueled by diesel. Electricity is up \$300. They are getting ready to address some bulb outages at the basketball court, since COVID the lighting hadn't been used. Equipment maintenance and repair remained the same, gasoline went up \$1,750. He hopes that is enough. The current budget has almost nothing left and they will likely run in the red from now until June 30<sup>th</sup> as there is a lot of mowing needing to be done. Payroll is contractual. B. Lohbusch did mention that they did the same thing with overtime is this department as in programs, added for the part time winter employee. It didn't increase payroll, just got moved from another line item. Telephone went up \$320, everything else stayed the same. That budget is up \$13,882, which is a 10.5% increase. B. Lohbusch showed everyone where to find the details for the budgeted items. S. Brodeur asked if the department still has a service that takes care of the weeds. B. Lohbusch stated that they have hired a consultant to do the integrated pest management for Town and the schools, which is required by the State. He is also paid for all the soil testing at all the sites. The information about the program is online. The consultant's cost is an in-kind donation, so very minimal cost. Most of the cost is supplies. Recently spent \$9,000 for Spring pesticide control applications around town. S. Brodeur asked who does the applying. B. Lohbusch stated his department does the work, but it is under the supervision of the consultant. There needs to be a certified person present when doing these applications. They use a sprayer now and that is saving a lot of money. H. Allen asked about the status of the permanent bathrooms at Prince Hill. B. Lohbusch said some conversations have taken place. At some point a decision will need to be made. It is in the Capital Plan. It's a matter of when and at what cost. The well pump will need to be replaced. The vandalism needs to be addressed; the thought was stainless steel but that is very costly. Securing them is an issue as well. The conversation will have to be weighing the cost of the port-a-johns versus constant vandalism control and repair. B. Lohbusch stated that this has been a problem for many years. S. Brodeur asked if any of the vandalism is covered by insurance. L. Brodeur stated that the deductible was too high. B. Lohbusch asked if there were any questions on the Park's maintenance budget. F. Dystra asked if there was a gray area between office equipment and telephones. He wondered why telephones are in the park budget instead of the First Selectman's budget. B. Lohbusch stated that it has always been that way. He also said it was initially put in the park budget because they were going to have phones for the maintenance crew, but they didn't want them. There are only three phones currently. F. Dykstra asked about the office equipment. B. Lohbusch stated that is separate also. S. Brodeur thanked B. Lohbusch for his budget review. B. Lohbusch stated that he had an additional item he wanted to discuss. He has had a discussion with the Parks & Recreation Commission and they supportive of his request for an additional \$5,000 per year. He has been an employee for 23 years in September. He does a lot of additional work for the Town that he doesn't get paid for. He does plowing, shoveling, etc. outside of normal hours. And while he recognizes that the Town is going to do a salary survey, he'd like to request from the Board of Finance a \$5,000 raise. Discussion took place. M. Gaudreau of Parks and Recreation Commission lent his support for B. Lohbusch's request. M. Gaudreau stated that the Town would have to

pay someone else far more than the \$5,000 B. Lohbusch is asking for. More discussion took place.

Heather made a motion to accept the park & recreation budget for consideration plus the additional \$5,000 for Bucky. D. Dione seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

- c. **Capital Committee and the Board of Education will present their budgets on April 28, 2022.** As well as any revisions from tonight's meeting.
  - d. **The Selectmen will present their budget on May 3, 2022.** S. Brodeur asked A. Tanner if that date still works. He stated it does.
  - e. **Other new business:** None
6. **Selectmen's Report:** A. Tanner stated he didn't have much. One big change this year is that the Town Finance Department will need another finance person. Either full or part time. The amount of time spent on school business was underestimated.
- A. Tanner also brought up the project that is looking into a State sponsored grant program to add charging stations in Town. The State pays 100% of the installation and 50% of the equipment. S. Brodeur asked about the time limit on the program and the cost. A. Tanner stated the program will go on for several years and the cost is between \$1,200 - \$1,500 for each unit. S. Brodeur asked if the Town will be paying the electrical cost for these. A. Tanner stated that the units will be pay for use. He is not sure yet how the money gets to Eversource. B. Lohbusch asked where they would be installed. A. Tanner stated there is a lot still to be decided.
- A. Tanner stated he's still trying to find funds for Little League. S. Brodeur mentioned she sat in on a Selectmens meeting, or maybe it was Board of Finance, and someone wanted to donate funds to Little League, but nothing ever happened with it. M. Gaudreau stated they put it on the Parks & Recreation Commission agenda and the person never showed up. The donor spoke with B. Lohbusch after that and stated they wanted to put lights in at the Saveway field. The only problem he foresees is the locational proximity to the wetlands. Discussion was had on who would pay for the additional electricity. That would have to be determined. B. Lohbusch stated that the Town pays for Riverside Park electricity.
7. **Liaison Reports:** S. Brodeur stated that the Housing Authority last week an extra person joined so they could have a quorum. Bruce Parsons cancelled that last meeting because Don Francis couldn't be there. So there was no meeting and there isn't another scheduled until May. S. Brodeur thinks something should be done about that.
8. **Public comment:** G. Maiato commented that as a resident he is supportive of Bucky getting the raise. He also asked if Bucky didn't do the extra work, who does it? Point is, the Town would have to pay him more than \$5,000 to get all that work done.
9. **Adjournment:** D. Dione made a motion to adjourn at 8:35pm. Heather seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sara Deshaies  
Substitute Recording Secretary