

**Enfield Budget Committee (EBC) MINUTES (Approved)- Thursday, October 29, 2015 DPW Building
6:30PM**

Members present: Sam Eaton (chairman), James Buffington, Annabelle Bamforth, Shirley Green (vice chair), Mike Diehn, David Stewart,

Excused: Janet Shepard, Mark Eisener, Fred Cummings (ex-officio)

Others present: EPD Chief Richard Crate, Jr.

Sam called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

Administrative:

Sam made a motion to approve the October 22 draft minutes. Annabelle suggested changing a section regarding a possible recreation van CIP purchase from “will” to “would,” as it is not yet a definite purchase. David suggested striking the other business section, as it was informal discussion of a recent select board meeting. The minutes, including those changes, were approved unanimously. Holly abstained, as she was excused from the October 22 meeting.

New Business:

The new tax rate has been set at \$25.08. Steve noted that some state revenue, including rooms and meals revenue, did not come in as high as expected. The town portion is \$6.60, up from \$6.25. There was discussion of the tax rate setting process, including the state’s involvement in setting the rate. There was also discussion of changing to a fiscal year with a later town meeting. Steve concluded that there’s not much that can be done regarding the fiscal year, town meeting, etc. without receiving permission from the state.

Steve showed the increase in the local school portion of the tax rate, which is now up to \$14.29 over last year’s \$12.74- an 11% increase. The county portion is \$1.72, and the state portion of the school tax rate is \$2.47.

Shirley asked what the impact will be on a \$200K house. Steve calculated a \$384 increase in taxes on a \$200K house.

David noted that for people on a fixed income, this increase leaves even less room to adjust personal spending to pay for those taxes.

Steve noted that Canaan’s tax rate is now over \$30. Their school rate is about \$5 more than in Enfield, while their town rate is comparable to Enfield. Sam opined that attempting to sell a home in Canaan at this point might be difficult.

Sam said it’s important to have a tax rate that doesn’t rise faster than inflation.

Holly asked what happens to a resident who can’t pay their taxes. Steve said Enfield is more generous than many banks, and noted that about 96% of property taxes are paid. For the 4% who are struggling,

the select board is able to delay the tax lien process. Arrangements can be made between the owner and the select board for certain hardships on a case-by-case basis. Steve noted that Whaleback received quite a bit of patience from the town. Arrangements are not quite the same if the resident has a mortgage, however. Steve said the bank is likely to take your house first if you're not paying property taxes.

Police Presentation: EPD Chief Richard Crate presented the police budget. He said there are no major changes. The personnel line makes the bulk of the increase. In the vehicle line, Crate explained there was a significant accident involving one of the cruisers that will be offset by insurance. The telephone line has increased, but that line has also increased across many departments.

Crate discussed officer-worn body cameras. He said that a 2011 model cruiser had a camera. When the cruisers transitioned from Crown Victoria to the Interceptor, the cruiser camera no longer fit in the new cruiser. The department still has the camera, but there is nowhere to put it and nowhere to sell it. Crate said he would prefer moving to body cameras and no longer use cruiser cameras.

Holly asked how the officers feel about body cameras. Crate answered that it's more a question of how would they wear them, and the officers have discussed which method might be best. There are dozens of different cameras available with different features to be considered. There are a couple of models that allow for blacking out or obscuring "non-essential" people, which Crate said might be preferable. This feature allows for department transparency while also protecting innocent people who may be caught in the middle of right-to-know laws.

James asked if funds have been set aside in the budget. Crate said not yet. Sam pointed out that there are grants available for the cameras, but costs of storing footage are high.

Crate said that patrol time has increased, as he wants officers out on the street. Crate said that the heroin crisis continues in the state and also in the community. Police officers are now carrying Narcan (a heroin treatment that reverses an overdose). Crate noted that police are often among the first responders to an emergency call. The officers are trained to administer this treatment.

James inquired about the cost of Narcan. Crate estimated it's approximately \$ 6 per dose.

Crate noted the Good Samaritan law that does not allow police to arrest users overdosing or witnesses calling in an overdose.

Crate also discussed an influx of fentanyl, an opiate that is many times stronger than heroin. Police are taking additional precautions.

Discussion turned to the replacement of metal doors at the police station. Three doors have significant rust. Crate said there have been two quotes, and he is waiting on a third quote to replace the doors. Lavalley's Building Supply quoted \$13,500, and Trumbull & Nelson quoted \$9,300. Crate said there have been several issues with the doors not operating properly. Crate noted that the carpets need replacing as well. He is seeking basic, industrial carpet.

Crate explained there were some additional pieces added to the police uniform.

In the new equipment line, Crate explained the cost was for a speed trailer donated by Stearns Septic. That cost will be totally offset, said Crate. He mentioned an approximate \$400 cost for buying a trailer hitch for a cruiser to transport the trailer as well as lettering for the trailer. Steve noted that while there is no camera, the trailer reads data which increases the ability for perpetual speeding cars to be located.

Emergency management: Crate discussed the fee for hazmat team service. He explained that for a while the agency had stopped collecting the money but has now resumed collection, which accounts for the increase. Sam asked who benefits from hazmat service. Crate responded that in the case of a hazardous spill, an overturned tanker for example, there would be a cleanup crew ready. Steve said the town has 2 major roadways: Route 4 and the interstate. The town has a high enough traffic level in those areas to warrant payment for this insurance. Crate noted that this is unrelated to the police department; he is the emergency services director.

Steve asked for a better description of the Hazmat services.

Dispatch services: Enfield utilizes the town of Hanover's dispatch service. This number fluctuates as they operate on a different fiscal year. Crate said that Hanover does not make a profit off of serving Enfield.

Public comment: none.

Other Business:

Shirley said she talked to Diane Heed, Enfield's human services director, and received packets containing regional association applications.

Discussion returned to the increased tax rate, and it was noted that the increase in school taxes this year was quite large.

Mike asked what the median house valuation is in Enfield. Steve answered that \$200K is the general median value. This tax rate amounts to a nearly \$400 increase for that type of home.

David suggested that people keep an eye on the school tax increases, and asked about the possibility of level funding for some town departments. He pointed out the steady increases in health insurance costs for the town employees.

Sam said there is an estimated upcoming 23-30% increase in some states' health care costs. Steve said the town is at the mercy of different suppliers for these costs. Sam noted that town salary makes up most of the budget, at least 60%. Steve said that decisions made going forward need to be affordable for the community.

Steve said that town employees currently contribute 5% to their health insurance costs. James noted that many private employees pay 50% of their health care costs.

James said that most people are not seeing an 8% increase in their income, but are seeing an 8% increase in taxes. Sam said that the tax rate percentage should not rise faster than home values. Steve said that Enfield provides a good value for what residents pay in taxes. Sam said that tax increases outpacing home values can put the town at risk of going into a tailspin. Sam also added that increased home valuations will not raise a tax bill and that it actually lowers the tax rate.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33.