

OCTOBER 18th, 2022

BUDGET HEARING  
REGULAR MEETING  
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS  
Held at 255 Main Street  
Eastchester, NY 10709

PRESENT: Chairman Commr. Paul Carlo  
Commr. Paul Ranellone  
Commr. Anthony Lore  
Commr. Brian Keating

ABSENT: Commr. Thomas Roche

IN ATTENDANCE:  
Chief Brian Tween  
Treasurer Jamie Hedstrom  
Secretary Marissa Isang Smith

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MOTION by Commr. Carlo and unan. Carried to open the meeting at 7:02 pm to the public, followed by a salute to the flag. The Promotional and Award Ceremony program included:

Commr. Carlo motioned to open the budget hearing and was unan. Carried.

Budget Hearing Discussion by Treasurer

Treasurer Jamie Hedstrom recapped the timeline of the 2023 Budget. On September 7th, a public meeting was held for a Budget Workshop. On September 27th, the proposed budget was identical from September 7th with exception of one item being retirement costs due to information received, and that budget was adopted as a proposed budget, with a total tax levy of \$19,837,022.50. The 2023 Budget would exceed the tax cap at a Total of 9.788%.

Commr. Keating asked if the increase is near 10%, but if the Board moved forward in paying for the Ladder Truck for the 2023 Budget, it would be 18%. Treasurer Jamie Hedstrom agreed. Commr. Keating discussed the scenarios for financing the Ladder Truck.

Commr. Carlo expressed he wasn't in favor of raising the budget more than 10%, and was interested in financing the Ladder Truck.

Commr. Ranellone agreed with Commr. Carlo on financing the Ladder Truck over 5 years and shared his opinion that the position the District is in is due to previous boards' inactions. Commr. Ranellone discussed the District's numerous capital projects and repairs needed in the near future.

Commr. Keating asked Treasurer Jamie Hedstrom a question regarding the construction of the firehouses and if it was included in the 18%, which Hedstrom advised it was not. Commr. Keating hypothesized it could cost an additional 5% - 6% of the budget. Discussion took place between the Commissioners regarding construction project costs and what the potential future costs may be, and how they would be funded.

#### Board Discussion

Discussion occurred between Board members and Union President Steven Ranellone regarding the overtime numbers and the number of sick days. Discussion occurred between the Commissioners and the Chief regarding how the sick days are processed and how they have been addressing the issue. Commr. Keating and Union President discussed the vacancies and the impact on the budget, and disagreed on sick day numbers and Overtime. Commr. Keating asked Jamie for the number of absences this year per badge number

#### Public Discussion

Mike Parici shared his belief that sick days should be available to someone who is sick and that residents would not be concerned with overtime issue if personnel called out since one can't prevent getting sick.

Letter read by Commr. Carlo submitted by Resident Jeff Zuckerman:

October 17, 2022

I am sorry I could not be at your meeting this evening but I have been in an accident and will have surgery on Thursday for a broken ankle. I ask this be read into the minutes of tonight's meeting and I thank you for doing that.

I watched your last meeting and discussion about the new budget with great consternation. I understand you will adopt this budget tonight. Unless something has changed, it sounds as though every Eastchester taxpayer will have their fire taxes increased by 10% in the coming year. It also sounds as though you will be borrowing another \$2 million, meaning that the debt service on that borrowing will be part of annual increases as we move forward.

Westchester County Executives for many years have managed to present their budgets without increases anywhere near 10%. The Town of Eastchester has not blown through the 2% tax cap for as long as I can remember. Neither have the Village governments of Tuckahoe or Bronxville felt the need to surpass the 2% tax cap. Finally, none of the school budgets in Eastchester, Tuckahoe or Bronxville have EVER asked their voters to disregard the 2% tax cap.

And so the county can run their parks, roads, police, buses, courts, elections and EVERYTHING else; and our town, villages and schools can provide police, public works, roads, courts, building departments, tax collections and educating our children . . . all within the 2% tax cap. And yet, the Eastchester Fire Department requires a 10% increase. What is wrong with this picture? To add insult to injury the tenor of the last meeting led this viewer to believe that your board felt no compelling reason to assure Eastchester residents that this unconscionable 10% increase would simply be an unfortunate "one-off." I was left extremely uneasy that we would be seeing more of this in the future.

Jeff Zuckerman

24 Bronx Street, Tuckahoe

Union President Steven Ranellone shared that 10% of his fire tax is less than 2% of his school tax.

Discussion continued between the Commissioners and the members of the public comparing other departments such as Scarsdale budget and Eastchester. Commr. Keating believes the budget could balloon up to 40-50 Million dollars in the near future.

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS OVERRIDE REAL  
PROPERTY TAX CAP**

WHEREAS, the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Eastchester Fire District must adopt a proposed budget for 2023 and an estimate of fund balances in preparation for the annual fire district budget hearing and did so in preparation for the budget hearing,  
and

WHEREAS, the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Eastchester Fire District held the annual fire district budget hearing with notice to the public on October 18, 2022,  
and

WHEREAS, the Board has considered the proposed budget and comments received on the proposed budget on October 18, 2022 at said budget hearing, and WHEREAS, the Board has determined that the financial needs of the Eastchester Fire District for fiscal year 2023 cannot be supported by a budget that would comply with the real property tax cap established pursuant to Section 3-c of the General Municipal Law as the proposed budget for 2023 calls for a real property tax levy that will exceed the real property tax cap permitting only a 3.8 % increase with allowable carryover in said tax levy;

and

WHEREAS, Section 3-c of the General Municipal Law provides as follows: A local government may adopt a budget that requires a tax levy that is greater than the tax levy limit for the coming fiscal year, not including any levy necessary to support the expenditures pursuant to subparagraphs (i) through (iv) of paragraph g of subdivision two of this section, only if the governing body of such local government first enacts, by a vote of sixty percent of the total voting power of such body, a local law to override such limit for such coming fiscal year only, or in the case of a district or fire district, a resolution, approved by a vote of sixty percent of the total voting power of such body, to override such limit for such coming fiscal year only.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Eastchester Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners hereby approves a

determination to override the real property tax cap for the 2023 budget only in order to permit an annual real property tax levy that will exceed the real property tax cap permitting only a 3.8% increase with allowable carryover in said tax levy and result in a final annual fire district budget in the amount of \$19,837,022.50 and MOTION on the above Resolution was offered by Commr. Carlo seconded by Commr. Ranellone, adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly put to a vote and upon roll call the vote was as follows:

Commr. Lore	-	Aye
Commr. Ranellone	-	Aye
Commr. Keating	-	No
Commr. Carlo	-	Aye

MOTION CARRIED \*\*\*\*\*

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS APPROVE FINAL BUDGET FOR 2023**

WHEREAS, the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Eastchester Fire District must adopt a proposed budget for 2023 and an estimate of fund balances in preparation for the annual fire district budget hearing and did so in preparation for the budget hearing, and

WHEREAS, the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Eastchester Fire District held the annual fire district budget hearing with notice to the public on October 18, 2022, and

WHEREAS, the Board has considered the proposed budget and comments received on the proposed budget on October 18, 2022 at said budget hearing, and

WHEREAS, the Board has determined that that financial needs of the Eastchester Fire District for fiscal year 2023 cannot be supported by a budget that would comply with the real property tax cap established pursuant to Section 3-c of the General Municipal Law as the proposed budget for 2023 calls for a real property tax levy that will exceed the real property tax cap permitting only a 3.8% increase with allowable carryover in said tax levy; and

WHEREAS, Section 3-c of the General Municipal Law provides as follows: A local government may adopt a budget that requires a tax levy that is greater than the tax levy limit for the coming fiscal year, not including any levy necessary to support the expenditures pursuant to subparagraphs (i) through (iv) of paragraph g of subdivision two of this section, only if the governing body of such local government first enacts, by a vote of sixty percent of the total voting power of such body, a local law to override such limit for such coming fiscal year only, or in the case of a district or fire district, a resolution, approved by a vote of sixty percent of the total voting power of such body, to override such limit for such coming fiscal year only.

WHEREAS, previously this Board of Fire Commissioners passed a resolution to override the real property tax cap for the 2023 Budget.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Eastchester Board of Fire Commissioners hereby approves the Final Budget for the Eastchester Fire District for 2023 attached hereto and made a part hereof in the amount of \$19,837,022.50 with a tax levy of \$19,816,022.50.

MOTION on the above Resolution was offered by Commr. Carlo and seconded by Commr. Ranellone, adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly put to a vote and upon roll call the vote was as follows:

Commr. Lore	-	Aye
Commr. Ranellone	-	Aye
Commr. Keating	-	No
Commr. Carlo	-	Aye

MOTION CARRIED \*\*\*\*\*

TREASURER'S REPORT

The following report was submitted by Treasurer Jamie Hedstrom:

The financials as of September 30, 2022 present a net budget surplus of approximately \$950K.

Budget Transfer Recommendation

Through pay date 10/21/22, OT through 10/14/22, we have expended approximately \$955,000 of our \$1,010,000 overtime budget, leaving approximately \$55K in budget. We have 5 payrolls left for the remainder of the year, plus the first payroll of 2023 will include 2022 overtime. While we have averaged approximately \$45K in overtime per pay period throughout the year, we have been averaging approximately \$26K for each of the pay periods since the summer ended, which is typically when our overtime is highest. Based on this, I would anticipate that we will need an additional \$100,000 in overtime budget to continue running at full staff for the remainder of the calendar year (\$26K \* 6 payrolls = \$156K less the \$55K we have remaining in our budget). The recommended transfer is as follows:

From To Amount

3410.15 Uniformed Firefighters Salary 3413.1 Overtime -  
Firefighters 100,000.00

Station 4 Construction

We continue to use our capital reserve fund to fund the work being conducted at Station 4. Below is a summary of the capital reserve spending for this project and the anticipated future spending:

Authorized Amount Per Permissive Referendum \$ 745,000.00

8/16/2021 \$ (15,627.50)

11/22/2021 \$ (85,110.50)

1/24/2022 \$ (46,778.00)

2/22/2022 \$ (19,000.00)

4/21/2022 \$ (125,357.25)

6/14/2022 \$ (124,979.30)

8/11/2022 \$ (125,710.79)

8/29/2022 \$ (138,793.63)

Remaining from Permissive Referendum as of Current \$ 63,643.03

Vinco Original Contract Sum \$ 561,500.00

Change Order #5- Approved May 2022 \$ 133,454.31

CO #1 Removal of Coal Shoot and Garbage Shed \$ 22,842.55

CO #2 Rock Removal at Foundation to Accommodate  
Waterproofing \$ 1,092.60

CO #3 Reconnect Circuits Removed in the Slab \$ 48,237.50

CO #4 Dewatering Cost for Excess Water Infiltration \$ 4,240.30  
 Allowance #3 Electrical \$ 40,000.00  
 CO #6 \$ 26,200.00  
 CO #7 \$ 14,907.50  
 Revised Contract Total \$ 852,474.76

At this time, the known revised Vinco contract costs exceed the amount of the permissive referendum, Per the direction of the Board, the general fund will be used to cover any costs over the initial estimate of \$745,000.

As of September 7, 2022, the Board has authorized a second expenditure from the capital reserve in the amount of \$760,000 for the next phase of the Chester Heights project, which is currently in the permissive referendum period.

Other:

Budget Encumbrances- Purchases initiated in 2021 that won't be complete until 2022

Water rescue equipment- purchased June 2022

10,096.38

Turnout gear- purchased June 2022

63,977.40

Bailout system- purchased 4/8/22

50,050.80

VHF Radios (approx)- partially purchased as of June 2022

100,000.00

Total Budget Encumbrances

224,124.58

Treasury Direct Investments

As of October 17, 2022, we have \$11,000,000 invested in 4-week Treasury bills through our Treasury Direct account. The current rates have increased to around 3.18%, as compared to the 0.03% rate on our JP Morgan Chase account. Interest earnings to date are approximately \$70K.

#### 2023 Budget Process

The Eastchester Fire District conducted a budget workshop on September 7th to review a draft budget that would meet the District's needs for 2023, accounting for rising operational costs and Board-requested additions to the budget, including the reinstatement of an Assistant Chief and increasing the total number of firefighters from 57 to 61. The Board and Treasurer discussed possible options for funding the increases, including tax levy and appropriated fund balance. The draft budget as presented would not appropriate fund balance, and would exceed the tax cap.

The Board adopted the proposed budget at our September 27, 2022 meeting. The budget adopted mirrored the budget presented at the budget workshop, except that line 9010.8 NYS Retirement was increased to reflect the projected liability released by NYLSRS in mid-September after the budget workshop.

The adopted proposed tax levy for 2023 exceeds the 2022 tax levy by \$1,766,612.80, broken down below:

#### 2023 Budget Highlights

This budget includes compensation and benefits for 79 paid firefighters and officers

Firefighter

61

Lieutenant

10

Captain

6

Assistant Chief

1

Chief

1

Total

79

In comparison, the 2022 budget included compensation and benefits for 74 paid firefighters and officers

Firefighter

57

Lieutenant

10

Captain

6

2023 Proposed Tax Levy 19,816,022.50

2022 Tax Levy 18,049,409.70

Difference 1,766,612.80

Less: Appropriated Fund Balance in 2022 (640,253.12)

2023 Anticipated Increase to Expenses 1,126,359.68

Salary Increases 488,959.39

Benefit Increases 366,450.30

Operational Increases 270,950.00

1,126,359.68

% Salary and Benefits 76%

% Operational 24%

Assistant Chief

-

Chief

1

Total

74

Comp & Benefits account for approximately 87% of the budget  
 This budget includes an estimated 5-year financing arrangement  
 for the Tower Ladder purchased for  
 delivery in early 2024

This budget does not include any reserve for future apparatus  
 purchases or capital improvements

As of 9/19/22, NYSLRS has released its projected invoices for  
 2024. Per the rates provided, our  
 contribution rates are increasing in all tiers by approximately  
 4.5%, as opposed to 2022 where most rates  
 decreased.

NYSHIP premium rates for 2023 will not be released until  
 November. 2022 rates increased 12% from the  
 prior year. It is unknown at this time what the percentage  
 increase will be, but is assumed to be 10% for  
 purposes of this discussion.

Other Items

- PERMA has requested the Board send a letter to the Counsel to  
 the Governor of NYS requesting a  
 veto to Bill S.768/A.1118. The bill would provide that awards of  
 compensation be paid at the  
 employee's total rate regardless of their % of disability.

- JPMorgan additional fraud protection steps- I am recommending  
 that we add positive pay to our  
 checking account, and ACH blocks to all bank accounts

- NYSLRS- Prepayment due by 12/15/22 to take advantage of 2%  
 discount. Final invoice is not yet  
 available; estimated invoice broken down as follows, net of 2%  
 discount:

PFRS \$2,639,886

ERS \$8,160

Total \$2,648,046

Motion by Commr. Carlo seconded by Commr. Ranellone to transfer funds to general ledger account 2413.1 Overtime-Firefighters, which is predicted to exceed its currently budgeted amount, from general ledger account 3410.15 Uniformed Firefighters Salary, in the amount of \$100,000.00.

Commr. Lore	-	Aye
Commr. Ranellone	-	Aye
Commr. Keating	-	No
Commr. Carlo	-	Aye

MOTION CARRIED \*\*\*\*\*

MOTION by Commr. Carlo seconded by Commr. Ranellone to pay the bills and vouchers as presented. The Board has been supplied with one set of bills and one credit card bill for Board approval. Chief Tween has reviewed all prior to the meeting, except certiorari claims and those specifically marked as reviewed by the Treasurer. The Treasurer has requested the Board approve the following:

Warrant 1- 10/18/22 - \$108,044.90

Credit Card - 10/18/22 - \$527.59// Total \$108,572.49

Commr. Lore	-	Aye
Commr. Ranellone	-	Aye
Commr. Keating	-	No
Commr. Carlo	-	Aye

MOTION CARRIED \*\*\*\*\*

CHIEF'S REPORT

The following report was submitted by Chief Tween:

Alarm activity: 332

Fire: 3

EMS/Rescue: 165

Mutual Aid Given: 1 (Hartsdale FD)

- 1) Vehicle maintenance continues through the use of outside vendors.
- 2) Tim Dalton weekly reports for July were emailed to the Board on October 17<sup>th</sup>.
- 3) Fire Prevention and Code Enforcement activities continue with numerous plan reviews and inspections and their report was been emailed to the Board on October 4<sup>th</sup>. October 9<sup>th</sup> through October 15<sup>th</sup> was Fire Prevention week and Captain

Tom Pintavalle and the members have visited two public schools and two private schools reaching over 750 children to spread fire safety information. He has had several schools rescheduled due to rainy weather and will visit five more schools in the next few weeks.

- 4) Currently two members are out on long term absence.
- 5) The four probationary firefighters at the Career Fire Academy continue to do well according to Lt. DiRienzo.
- 6) We have two live fire training days coming up later in October and Tech rescue next week.
- 7) I mentioned in last month's report that the Fire District has eliminated using paper apparatus check reports and the members are currently using the iPads and desktop computers to record their apparatus checks. The Vector Solutions software is up for renewal and the Board was forwarded the renewal quote on 10/3/22 for a total of \$8,674.52. I request the Board authorize me to renew the Vector Solutions software with Vector Check it.
- 8) I emailed the Board a request from the Captains for reimbursement for a recliner chair for their dorm room. The purchase was made at Costco and the cost was \$249.97 which is minus the tax paid. We do purchase the recliners for the firefighters in the day rooms in each firehouse. Would the Board consider reimbursing the Captains for the cost of the chair minus the sales tax?
- 9) Westchester County Department of Human Resources will be holding a C-PAT series beginning with orientation in December, timed trials in January, and the C-PAT in February. I would recommend that the Board consider participating.
- 10) On 10/14/22 the Board was emailed a proposal from Highland Associates for moving forward with the Bronxville firehouse floor replacement. Their proposal is for a lump sum fee of \$34,500.00 for architectural and mechanical drawings for removal and replacement of the 75% of the floor where the apparatus sits. I would request the Board consider moving forward with the proposal contingent on C&G review of the proposal. Reinstallation of the severed utilities are not included and can be done if requested at the Standard hourly rate schedule in the proposal.
- 11) On 10/14/22 the Board was emailed a proposal from Verizon for FIOS Internet and phone service. The monthly service is estimated to be \$196.47 and once installed the Optimum service would be cancelled in the four out firehouses (fire stations 2, 3, 4, and 5). We have had several issues with the Optimum service affecting the IP station phones. Lightpath says it is the internet service causing the

issues and Optimum has not been able to resolve the problem.

Respectfully submitted October 18, 2022 by Chief Brian Tween

Motion that the Board authorizes Chief Tween to renew the Vector Solutions software with Vector Check at Annual Fee of \$8,674.52

- Commr. Lore - Aye
- Commr. Ranellone - Aye
- Commr. Keating - Aye
- Commr. Carlo - Aye

MOTION CARRIED \*\*\*\*\*

Motion to authorize the purchase made at Costco for a recliner chair for Captains Office at the cost of \$249.97 which is minus the tax paid.

- Commr. Lore - Aye
- Commr. Ranellone - Aye
- Commr. Keating - Aye
- Commr. Carlo - Aye

MOTION CARRIED \*\*\*\*\*

Motion to authorize Chief Tween to move forward changing the monthly service, estimated to be \$196.47 and once installed the Optimum service would be cancelled in the four out firehouses (fire stations 2, 3, 4, and 5).

- Commr. Lore - Aye
- Commr. Ranellone - Aye
- Commr. Keating - Aye
- Commr. Carlo - Aye

MOTION CARRIED \*\*\*\*\*

Motion to authorize Chief Tween to sign off on the proposal from Highland Associates. Their proposal is for a lump sum fee of \$34,500.00 for architectural and mechanical drawings for the removal and replacement of 75% of the floor where the apparatus sits. I would request the Board consider moving forward with the proposal contingent on C&G review of the proposal.

- Commr. Lore - Aye
- Commr. Ranellone - Aye
- Commr. Keating - Aye
- Commr. Carlo - Aye

MOTION CARRIED \*\*\*\*\*

Discussion around the Exam Survey to submit to Civil Service. The Board approved Jamie Hedstrom sending back the survey indicating interest in the Assistant Chief exam in 2023.

Motion to authorize the Secretary to schedule interviews with 6 Captains for a provisional appointment to Assistant Chief.

- Commr. Lore - Aye
- Commr. Ranellone - Aye
- Commr. Keating - Aye
- Commr. Carlo - Aye

MOTION CARRIED \*\*\*\*\*

Discussion took place regarding sending a FOIL letter to the VOA/VBA.

Treasurer Jamie Hedstrom discussed the Captain list if the Board decided to promote the Assistant Chief position.

Treasurer Jamie Hedstrom discussed the 2 additional FF positions the Board approved of and within the budget. Treasurer Hedstrom advised she would be submitting two additional LJ3s in order to send candidates to CPAT for 5 Spots.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary Marissa Isang Smith submitted the following report:

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- 1) 7 Social Media Posts in September on Eastchester Fire District Social Media Platforms
- 2) Website Metrics:
  - a) 666 Visits
  - b) 103 New Users
  - c) Hiring Process Page - Top Performing Page
- 3) Fire Prevention Week Social Media Campaign Launch Oct 9-15
- 4) October Newsletter created and sent out October 5th

FOIL OFFICER

- 1) 5 FOILs were received and processed

RECORD MANAGEMENT OFFICER

- 1) Notice LGRMIF Grant award of **\$39,038** (50% to be funded in the next few weeks). Continued work on onboarding materials for temporary staff and work plan.

#### GRANT WRITING

- 1) DHSES research of BRIC and FMA due January 2023
- 2) SAFER Grant: Lexipol Webinar for application review and research October 18, 2022
- 3) Continued research on grant application options for equipment, staffing, and capital projects.

#### MISC.

- 1) OML Document for October Budget Hearing
- 2) Continued work on Fire District Election
- 3) Meeting Minutes updated and posted to the website
- 4) Updated 2022 resolutions spreadsheet
- 5) Regular office tasks as needed including scheduling, billing, customer service, and staff support.

The website stipend item was tabled to a future meeting.

The PERMA letter was discussed but would the Board decided to look at it closely later.

#### LOCAL 916 COMMENTS

Union President Steven Ranellone thanked the Board for righting the wrongs of past boards in regard to passing the proposed budget of 2023 and for the expansion of the membership and the position of Assistant Chief.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mike Parici asked for updates on Chester Heights. Chief Tween provided updates on Chester Heights and the next stages.

Member of the public discussed the item regarding the FOIL for the VOA/VBA and disagreed with the approach for what was allowable for documents to be provided.

Mike Parici discussed the sick time and the importance of life and property and the importance of the budget recently passed.

Mike Parici asked about candidates for the upcoming Fire Election.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commr. Ranellone shared his monthly activity in the community. Commr. Ranellone asked to close the meeting in moment of silence for passing of retired FF Lawrence Mignon.

Commr. Lore shared updates from the community events and wished everyone a safe and Happy Halloween and to clear the fire hydrants.

Moment of silence followed for FF Lawrence Mignon.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Commr. Carlo and unanimously carried that this meeting adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Marissa "Isang" Smith  
SECRETARY TO THE BOARD OF  
FIRE COMMISSIONERS