

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes 1/24/11

Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes 1/24/11

The Easton Board of Selectmen met this evening at the Easton Town Offices, Selectmen's Office, 136 Elm Street, with Chair Colleen Corona presiding.

Members present: Colleen Corona, John Haederle, Ellen Barlow and Town Administrator David Colton

Members not present: Irwin Cohen and Sean Noonan

Corona called the meeting to order at 7pm and announced that the meeting will be televised.

Announcement Selectman John Haederle

Haederle announced his resignation and noted his new job opportunity in Washington DC. He spoke of the past 8 years as a remarkable experience and read the attached prepared statement. Haederle spoke of the importance of community service and the need for others coming forward to serve. In closing, Haederle remarked that he will miss working with the Board of Selectmen and he has cherished his time as parent and volunteering for this community and hopes that Easton is a better community because of his involvement.

Introduction of the Easton Housing Authority Executive Director

Executive Director Michael Forbes and Housing Authority Chair Dennis Sheedy and Vice Chair Tom Downey were present.

Forbes spoke of his experience as director of the Mansfield Housing Authority where he has served for 12 years. The Easton Housing Authority has contracted with the Mansfield Housing Authority. Forbes thanked the Board for the opportunity to work with the Town.

Corona noted we are looking forward to opening the lines of communications between the Town and the Easton Housing Authority.

Sheedy wished Haederle the best in the future. Sheedy stated that Forbes came to the Easton Housing Authority on November 1 with hopes of starting to address maintenance issues.

Barlow asked about the maintenance issues and turning around empty apartments. Forbes confirmed that this is his goal. It was noted that Easton residents have preference but the list is lengthy. Corona thanked Forbes and suggested they should come back in a few months to give another update.

Housing Production Plan

Community Housing Planner Tim Harrigan was present.

Corona referenced the draft copy submitted a few months ago and the fact that the Selectmen's comments have been incorporated. Harrigan noted both the Selectmen and Planning Board must endorse the plan. He spoke of the things incorporated into the new document and stated the final version is not much different than the draft.

Barlow thanked Harrigan for his hard work and all that he has accomplished on a part time basis. Corona referenced several interesting projects coming up that Harrigan will be working on.

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Voted: (Barlow/Haederle) voted unanimously to approve the Housing Production Plan as written

Fire House Staffing

Chief Stone was present. Colton spoke of the attached memo and the current budget deficit. He spoke of the current situation of closing one station at least half of the time. Colton suggested that the Board consider appointing a study committee to look at this issue for a few months. Colton suggested that the committee look at the existing information, talk to Chief and others in the Fire Department, other communities, and do some public outreach to see if closing the third station and saving money in the budget would be appropriate or fill the current firefighter vacancies and acknowledge that that we need to have three fire stations.

Stone spoke of the prior Fire Study Report which was completed in the past. Colton suggested the need to look into other communities and check with the Town's information today.

Barlow spoke of the Boston Globe article a few years ago regarding response times and asked if the existing report can be updated. Stone noted this was done a few years ago and it could be updated. Chief noted that since he has been Chief, we haven't had to permanently close stations but with the new budget, we will be seeing station closings again. Stone suggested it is a grim picture across the state. Corona agreed; she spoke of the recent Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) annual meeting and the budget information relative to the entire state.

Corona noted that Noonan has expressed interest on this committee. Colton noted we should wait to appoint to see who else comes forward.

Voted: (Haederle/Barlow) voted unanimously to establish a Fire Study Committee

Continued Discussion Announcement – Selectman John Haederle – Presentation by Senator Brian A. Joyce

Senator Brian Joyce was present and spoke very highly of Selectman John Haederle. Senator Joyce read the resolution from the Massachusetts Senate. Senator Joyce suggested Easton to be the best run town of all the communities that he serves and Haederle is absolutely a big part of this. He wished him the very best and thanked him for all he has done, specifically all he has done for the schools, athletic fields and the preservation of open space and also for being a friend.

Haederle also thanked Senator Joyce for all he has done for the Town.

7:15 Adjudicatory Hearing – Alchemie Investments V, LLC dba South Easton Variety – 447 Turnpike Street, Easton, MA - alleged sale to minor

Present: Police Chief Allen Krajcik, Town Counsel Jay Talerma, Officer Mark Ferretti, Officer Darren Mangott, Underage Operatives Fabrice Dragon and John Alicea, Steve Dias and other representatives from Southeastern Variety

Haederle read the notice of hearing into the record and referenced the letter sent to the establishment. Corona noted that the representatives from South Easton Variety and witnesses were present. Corona introduced Town Counsel Jay Talerma. The Southeastern Variety representatives and the witnesses and police officers were sworn in.

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Dias introduced himself to the Board. Talerman noted that he has talked to Dias and stated that Dias has agreed to and signed a stipulation acknowledging that a representative from his establishment sold to and underage individual. Talerman explained the process and procedure of offering the establishment owner an opportunity to stipulate to the fact that there was an incident; this avoids the timely process of the length hearing.

Corona asked Dias if he has counsel. Dias replied no. Talerman offered the signed stipulation into the record. Corona asked who sold the alcohol to the minor. Dias noted it was an employee. Dias noted they bought the store 5 years ago and that he is very sorry for what happened. He noted that this hasn't happened before; most employees are long term and they understand the issue of checking identification. The girl working at the time of the sale is an Easton resident, a college graduate; she was very upset she knew right away it was a mistake not to card the customer. Dias noted they have had a perfect record and asked for the Board's leniency.

Corona asked if Talerman had any other information. Talerman had no further information.

Voted: (Barlow/Haederle) voted unanimously to close the hearing (7:25pm)

Corona noted the very strict policy with liquor violations; generally for the first offence it depends on the circumstance, in this case, the employee did not ask for identification. in the past, the Board has issued a three day suspension.

Voted: (Corona/Haederle) voted unanimously to suspend the alcohol license for three days, February 22, 2011, February 23, 2011 and February 24, 2011

The Board expressed concern with teenagers consuming alcohol.

Corona noted that Dias will be notified in writing of the suspension and the requirement to post a sign stating the reason for suspension. Corona stated that this is the policy of the Board of Selectmen and that Dias has the right to appeal to the Alcohol Beverages Control Commission (ABCC)

7:25 Adjudicatory Hearing – Paparo Liquors, Inc., dba Scott's Fine Wines & Spirits – 669 Washington Street, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Present: Police Chief Allen Krajcik, Town Counsel Jay Talerman, Officer Mark Ferretti, Officer Darren Mangott , Underage Operatives Fabrice Dragon and John Alicea, Attorney Scott Rubin of Silverstein & Creedon, and Scott Paparo, manager of Scott's Fine Wines

Haederle read the notice of hearing into the record and referenced the letter sent to the establishment.

Rubin and Paparo were sworn in.

Talerman noted he spoke with Attorney Creedon late last week and we have a stipulation signed by the establishment. Talerman submitted the stipulation into the record.

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Attorney Scott Rubin spoke on behalf of Scott's Fine Wines and gave history of this establishment which has been in Easton since 1950's; after the owner's death a few years ago, the business was sold to family. The family has had possession of the license since 2006 and they have not had any record prior to this violation. Rubin referred to the family and staff as experienced, educated and they understand the circumstances. The employee who sold to the minor no longer works at the store. Rubin remarked that this has been difficult especially since she is a family member. Rubin further suggested that a suspension of the license will be a financial hardship to this small store. Rubin acknowledged that it is unfortunate that the incident happened. He understands that there is an opportunity for a warning but also understands the Board's position. In closing, Rubin reiterated the financial hardship.

Vote: (Haederle/Barlow) voted unanimously to close the hearing (7:35pm)

Corona noted we are dealing with eight hearings tonight and that when a new license is issued, the Board strongly suggests the importance of checking the licenses.

Voted: (Corona/Haederle) voted unanimously to suspend the alcohol license for three days on February 22, 2011, February 23, 2011 and February 24, 2011

Corona noted they will be notified in writing of the suspension and the requirement to post a sign stating the reason for suspension. Corona stated that this is the policy of the Board of Selectmen and that they have the right to appeal to the Alcohol Beverages Control Commission (ABCC). Corona apologized and acknowledged the business in Town but noted that the Board must enforce this until there are no violations in Easton.

7:35 Adjudicatory Hearing – Marawi, Inc. dba White Hen Pantry 1-0201-2 – 277 Washington Street, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Present: Police Chief Allen Krajcik, Town Counsel Jay Talerman, Officer Mark Ferretti, Officer Darren Mangott, Underage Operatives Fabrice Dragon and John Alicea, Joseph Mawari and another representative of White Hen Pantry

Haederle read the notice of hearing into the record and referenced the letter sent to the establishment.

Joseph Mawari introduced himself to the Board. Corona asked if Mawari would like the opportunity to speak with Town Counsel before the hearing to understand the choices regarding the hearing. Mawari agreed to speak with Town Counsel.

Voted: (Barlow/Haederle) voted unanimously to suspend the hearing (7:45pm)

One Day Liquor License Requests

Colton read the Stonehill College requested the following one day licenses:

A one day beer and wine license for a faculty meeting at the Martin Auditorium on February 2, 2011 from 5-7pm

A one day beer and wine license for the Salemeno Lecture Reception/Dinner at the Martin Auditorium on February 17, 2011 from 4-8pm

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A one day beer and wine license for a Benefactor & Student Scholarship Dinner at Alumni Hall on April 2, 2011 from 4pm to 10pm

Easton Police Department details are not required.

Voted: (Haederle/Barlow) voted unanimously to approve the one day licenses as requested by Stonehill

Bid/contract award for water mains and appurtenant work on Linden, Pleasant and Holmes Streets – Blume Construction

Colton referenced the 10 bids received and the low bidder of \$251,451.08 contract price which came in lower than our estimate. Corona referenced the spreadsheet listing the bid amounts.

Voted: (Barlow/Haederle) voted unanimously to approve the bid/contract in the amount not to exceed \$251,451.08

Continued Adjudicatory Hearing – Marawi, Inc. dba White Hen Pantry 1-0201-2 – 277 Washington Street, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Voted: (Barlow/Haederle) voted unanimously to resume the White Hen Pantry Hearing at 7:40pm.

Talerman noted he had the opportunity to speak with the owner about the stipulation and submitted a signed stipulation into the record.

Mawari was sworn in and noted that the employee who sold to the minor no longer works at the store. They have signage all over the store and it is policy that they check identification of everyone. Mawari suggested they are very sorry for what happened.

Voted: (Barlow/Haederle) voted unanimously to close the hearing

Corona noted that this is very disappointing because White Hen Pantry was just issued the license only a few months ago and the Board had the opportunity to issue license this to somebody else.

Voted: (Corona/Barlow) voted unanimously to suspend the alcohol license for three days on February 22, 2011, February 23, 2011 and February 24, 2011

Corona noted they will be notified in writing of the suspension and the requirement to post a sign stating the reason for suspension and to post notes on the cooler doors. Corona noted that they have the right to appeal to the Alcohol Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) and suggested that she hopes not to see them back before the Board again for a violation. Mawari agreed.

7:45 Adjudicatory Hearing – Porticello Inc., dba Porticello Ristorante – 454 Turnpike Street, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Present: Police Chief Allen Krajcik, Town Counsel Jay Talerman, Officer Mark Ferretti, Officer Darren Mangott, Underage Operatives Fabrice Dragon and John Alicea, Mario Sanfillippo and Michael Nadeau of Porticello

Haederle read the notice of hearing into the record and referenced the letter sent to the establishment.

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Owner Mario Sanfilippo and Bartender Michael Nadeau were sworn in. Talerma n noted that he spoke with the owner and he has agreed to the stipulation which was submitted into the record.

Sanfilippo noted that they are very sorry that this happened. They do not cater to young people as the cliental is usually in the age group of 30-60; Nadeau was the bartender the night the minors were sold alcohol and he is very sorry. Nadeau acknowledged it was a very busy time he apologized for what happened.

Voted: (Barlow/Haederle) voted unanimously to close the hearing at 7:55pm

Corona noted that this issue is taken very seriously; there was no identification requested.

Voted: (Corona/Haederle) voted unanimously to suspend the alcohol license for three days on February 22, 2011, February 23, 2011 and February 24, 2011

Corona noted that they will be notified in writing of the suspension and the requirement to post a sign stating the reason for suspension. Corona stated that this is the policy of the Board of Selectmen and that they have the right to appeal to the Alcohol Beverages Control Commission (ABCC).

Minutes

Voted: (Haederle/Barlow) voted unanimously to approve general minutes dated 1/10/11

Voted: (Corona/Barlow) voted unanimously to take a brief recess (7:50pm)

The Board reconvened open session at 8pm.

7:55 Adjudicatory Hearing – Café Hayashi, Inc. – 447 Turnpike Street, Unit#8 – Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Present: Police Chief Allen Krajcik, Town Counsel Jay Talerma n, Officer Mark Ferretti, Officer Darren Mangott , Underage Operatives Fabrice Dragon and John Alicea, Attorney Bruce Rich, Hayashi owner Young Suk Yeom and manager Lydia St. Thomas

Haederle read the notice of hearing into the record and referenced the letter sent to the establishment.

Attorney Rich, Young Suk Yeom and Manager Lydia St. Thomas were sworn in.

Talerma n noted that through the attorney, the owner agreed and signed the stipulation which was submitted into the record.

Attorney Rich noted that the owner is very sorry this happened. After this happened, the employee went back to TIPS training and there are signs posted throughout the restaurant.

Voted: (Haederle/Barlow) voted unanimously to close the hearing (8pm)

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Corona noted that this is upsetting because it was the manager that sold to the minors and she should be fully aware. The Selectmen take this very seriously as Easton is a college community; the Police Department conducts stings a minimum of twice a year. Again, Corona suggested this is more concerning because it was the manager who sold to the minors and the manager is supposed to be aware of the rules. Corona noted that this is the first offense.

Voted: (Corona/Barlow) voted unanimously to suspend the license for three days, February 22, 2011, February 23, 2011 and February 24, 2011

Corona noted that they will be notified in writing of the suspension and the requirement to post a sign stating the reason for suspension. Corona stated that this is the policy of the Board of Selectmen and that they have the right to appeal to the Alcohol Beverages Control Commission (ABCC)

8:05 Adjudicatory Hearing – Arturo Lopez-Michel dba El Mariachi Mexican Restaurant - 620 Washington Street, Unit 6, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Present: Police Chief Allen Krajcik, Town Counsel Jay Talerman, Officer Mark Ferretti, Officer Darren Mangott, Underage Operatives Fabrice Dragon and John Alicea, El Mariachi Representatives Luis Contreras, Arturo Lopez and accountant Mohammed Mabrook

Haederle read the notice of hearing into the record and referenced the letter sent to the establishment.

The El Mariachi representatives were sworn in.

Talerman noted that the representative of the establishment agreed to the stipulation which was submitted into the record.

Voted: (Haederle/Barlow) voted unanimously to close the hearing (8:05pm)

Corona noted that Easton is a college town and we take this very seriously. Corona reiterated that you must card everyone that looks under 35 and spoke of the importance of the employees becoming TIPS trained. Mabrook noted that this employee has since been TIPS trained.

Voted: (Corona/Haederle) voted unanimously to suspend the alcohol license for three days, February 22, 2011, February 23, 2011 and February 24, 2011

Corona noted that they will be notified in writing of the suspension and the requirement to post a sign stating the reason for suspension. Corona stated that this is the policy of the Board of Selectmen and that they have the right to appeal to the Alcohol Beverages Control Commission (ABCC)

Mabrook asked for clarification if the three days suspension applies to a first offense. Corona confirmed yes; in this case nobody asked for identification. Corona stated that the Easton Police Department conduct stings at least twice a year. Corona noted for the record that the Board is acting on hearings this evening for eight establishments who sold to minors.

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Selectmen's notes

Voted: (Corona/Barlow) voted unanimously to accept Haederle's resignation with regret

Corona noted that since this is within 100 days of the next election, we can place this vacancy on the next ballot.

Voted: (Corona/Barlow) voted unanimously to place the vacancy on the ballot for a one year term expiring April 2012

Voted: (Haederle/Barlow) voted unanimously to take a brief recess at 8:10pm
The Board reconvened open session at 8:15pm

Town Administrator Notes

Colton referenced a letter submitted by the Senate to Governor Deval Patrick dated 1/21/11. Colton read the letter into the record requesting the Governor's support and assistance in seeking an independent investigation of the shooting and death of Danroy Henry, Jr. of Easton. Corona asked that a copy of the letter be sent to the Henry family.

Selectmen's Notes

Corona spoke of the annual MMA meeting held last weekend and the Governor's message. While the state may be increasing funding for some things, there is an overall decrease over last year. She spoke of the classes held at the MMA which she and Barlow participated in.

8:15 Adjudicatory Hearing – May East, Inc. dba May East Restaurant – 594 Washington Street, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Present: Police Chief Allen Krajcik, Town Counsel Jay Talerma, Officer Mark Ferretti, Officer Darren Mangott, Underage Operatives Fabrice Dragon and John Alicea, May Easton Owner Christo Wong

Haederle read the notice of hearing into the record and referenced the letter sent to the establishment.

Owner/Manager Christo Wong was sworn in.

Talerma noted that Mr. Wong has agreed to the stipulation which was submitted into the record. Wong noted that they are aware that this is a college town; they take this issue very seriously and he has talked to the staff. Corona asked about the employee who served the liquor to the minors. Wong stated that the employee had only worked at the restaurant for a few months. He acknowledged that the employee needs to get used to the system and they are currently reviewing the policies.

Voted: (Haederle/Barlow) voted unanimously to close the hearing at 8:20pm

Corona noted the importance of not waiting a few months to train the employees. She noted the prior violation back in 2008 and the fact that this will be taking into consideration as this is the second violation within five years. Corona confirmed that no identification was requested and the underage visitors were served.

Corona motioned and Haederle seconded to suspend the alcohol license for six days February 22, 2011, February 23, 2011, February 24, 2011, February 25, 2011, February 26, 2011, and February 27, 2011

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Barlow asked how long the policy has been to double the suspension days for a second violation. Corona noted since the policy was established.

Voted: the Board voted unanimously on the six day license suspension

Corona noted that they will be notified in writing of the suspension and the requirement to post a sign stating the reason for suspension. Corona stated that this is the policy of the Board of Selectmen and that they have the right to appeal to the Alcohol Beverages Control Commission (ABCC)

8:25 Adjudicatory Hearing – North Easton Union Villa, dba Union Villa – 190 Washington Street, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Present: Police Chief Allen Krajcik, Town Counsel Jay Talerma, Officer Mark Ferretti, Officer Darren Mangott, Underage Operatives Fabrice Dragon and John Alicea, Union Villa owner Michael Richard

Haederle read the notice of hearing into the record and referenced the letter sent to the establishment.

Owner Michael Richard was sworn in.

Talerma noted that Mr. Richard has agreed to sign the stipulation which was submitted into the record.

Mr. Richard stated that he is aware that it is a college town. They have an ID verification machine, a doorman and everyone is TIPS trained. He explained that the night of the incident, there was a large get together and his sister-in-law served the minors. She was not in the right place at the time because of some sad information that she had just received and she thought the minors had already been carded. Corona noted as a part owner of the establishment, she should be more aware. Richard noted this will not happen again.

Voted: (Barlow/Haederle) voted unanimously to close the hearing at 8:27pm

Corona noted that the Board has the right to expand the policy where the owner was involved in the sale to the minors. Corona noted that this is a first offense based on this information; she recommends a three day suspension.

Corona motioned to suspend the alcohol license for three days on February 2/22/11, February 23, 2011 and February 24, 2011; **Haederle seconded** the motion.

Mr. Richard asked for the Board to consider the suspension on Monday, February 21, Tuesday February 22 and Wednesday February 23rd instead. Corona explained the dates as proposed have been standard for all establishments this evening.

Voted: the Board voted unanimously on the three day suspension on February 22, 2011, February 23, 2011 and February 24, 2011

Corona noted that they will be notified in writing of the suspension and the requirement to post a sign stating the reason for suspension. Corona stated that this is the policy of the Board of Selectmen and that they have the right to appeal to the Alcohol Beverages Control Commission (ABCC)

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Talerman thanked the Police Department and the officers for putting together all the facts pertaining to the hearings. Corona agreed and thanked them and the underage operatives for doing the compliance checks in such a professional manner.

Public Participation

None

Selectmen's Notes

Corona submitted a plaque to Haederle on behalf of the Selectmen. She knows now that Haederle cares so much about the community and suggested it will be awful to work without him. He has always been there for her under all circumstances and it has meant so much to work with him over the last eight years. She is happy for him that he is happy with his new job and relocation.

Haederle noted it has been an honor. Haederle thanked Town Administrator David Colton and Mary Southworth for all their hard work and preparation for all the meetings and spoke of the dedicated employees and volunteers within the Town.

Colton noted he will miss Haederle because he can call any time and rely on his judgment; Haederle has had great success and Colton is very happy for him. Colton spoke of Haederle's wife, Tricia and how she served as Chair of the Easton Conservation Commission; we will miss her as well.

Press Notes

None

Voted: (Corona/Barlow) voted unanimously by roll call to adjourn open session for the purpose of discussing pending litigation, not to return to open session (8:40pm)
Haederle-yes; Corona-yes; Barlow-yes

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Southworth

Approved 3/14/11

List of Documents and Other Exhibits Used:

Agenda Notes

Selectman John Haederle resignation announcement

Easton Housing Authority Letter re: management contract with Mansfield Housing Authority

Housing Production Plan

Fire House Staffing Memo

Memo from DPW re: Construction of water main and work on Linden, Pleasant and Holmes Streets

Tabulation bid results Construction of water main and work on Linden, Pleasant and Holmes Streets

Liquor License Violation Policy – Policy 36A

Alcohol Enforcement Compliance Check Policy – Policy 36B

Process for conducting liquor hearings

Sample stipulation relative to the sale of alcohol to minors

Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission Compliance Check guidelines

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Easton Police Department Incident Narrative relating to liquor violations

Massachusetts Senate letter to Governor Patrick re: Danroy Henry, Jr. of Easton

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Notice of Hearing – Paparo Liquors, Inc. dba Scott's Fine Wine & Spirits – 669 Washington Street, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Notice of Hearing – Marawi, Inc., dba White Hen Pantry – 277 Washington Street, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Notice of Hearing – Porticello Inc., dba Porticello Ristorante – 454 Turnpike Street, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Notice of Hearing – Café Hayashi, Inc. – 447 Turnpike Street, Unit #8 Easton, MA-alleged sale to minor

Notice of Hearing – Arturo Lopez-Michel dba Elm Mariachi Mexican Restaurant – 620 Washington Street, Unit 6 Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Notice of Hearing – May East, Inc. dba May East Restaurant – 594 Washington Street, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

Notice of Hearing – North Easton Union Villa, Inc. dba Union Villa – 190 Washington Street, Easton, MA – alleged sale to minor

General Minutes dated 1/10/11



TOWN OF EASTON
MASSACHUSETTS
Office of the Town Administrator

DAVID A. COLTON
Town Administrator

Interoffice Memorandum

To: Board of Selectmen
cc: Tom Stone, Fire Chief
Wendy Nightingale, Town Accountant
Finance Committee
From: David A. Colton, Town Administrator
Subject: FY'12 Budget - Fire House Staffing
Date: 1/10/11

The purpose of this memorandum is to elaborate on the following discussion included in the FY 2012 Preliminary Budget Memo dated January 6, 2011:

The Fire Department has three vacant positions due to retirements which have been on hold. This hold will soon result in rolling closure of the Depot Street fire house as the overtime budget is depleted. One way to reduce expenditures without layoffs is to cut funded, but vacant positions. This action avoids the payment of unemployment compensation and theoretically lessens the impact on services as they are currently delivered. However, it is not necessarily the best course of action. If these vacancies were cut from the FY 2012 budget and overtime were not used to compensate, then the closure of Depot Street would become semi-

permanent. In other words the fire house would be closed unless the full complement of fire fighters was present and reporting for duty. This action would reduce the FY 2012 budget by \$150,000. As the potential closure of a fire house is a serious matter deserving of a full and public discussion I will address the issue in more detail in a separate memorandum.

A full complement of personnel in order to fully staff three fire houses consists of four groups of nine people consisting of a captain and lieutenant with seven firefighters deployed across the three stations. This arrangement allows for excellent coverage and response time with minimal need for overtime. Overtime is used when the group on duty drops below seven people or emergency conditions dictates a need. Along with the Chief and Fire Prevention Officer, the department would have 38 full time public safety personnel.

The current fiscal year budget contains 35 positions of which three are vacant. As a result the department operates with 32 public safety personnel. When the Chief and Fire Prevention Officer are accounted for, only 30 are available to staff the three fire houses. The four groups are currently allocated as two with eight personnel and two with seven. Exacerbating the situation is the temporary absence of one firefighter on military duty. As a result, overtime is needed frequently to keep the staffing to at least seven on duty. During calendar year 2010, federal grants were available to cover some increased overtime costs. Those funds are depleted leaving us with no choice but to periodically drop below seven firefighters on duty and close the Depot Street Fire House. We estimate this to occur 50% of the time remaining in this fiscal year.

Since Easton is the only area town (Stoughton, Sharon, Foxboro, Mansfield, Norton, Raynham, Bridgewater, and West Bridgewater) with more than two firehouses; and inasmuch as the Easton Fire Department has not operated with a full complement in recent memory; and it is unlikely to in the near future given the budget deficit the Town should study whether to permanently reduce the size of the fire department. The study should consider whether any combination of two existing fire houses will produce adequate response times and how many firefighters will be needed to staff two fire houses before overtime is needed.

It is therefore my recommendation that a study committee be appointed with a limited mission to examine the following questions:

1. Should the Town move to permanently reduce the number of fire houses to two? Or should the Town continue to operate one fire house part time and work towards the eventual restoration of a full complement of staff?
2. What number of fire personnel should be deployed to staff two fire houses if the Town permanently reduces the number of active fire houses to two?
3. Which location should be closed?
4. Are the two remaining locations appropriate? If not, generally speaking, what alternative location would produce an adequate result?

I believe that this study can be accomplished in a short time frame by a small committee as much of the information needed already exists. Perhaps a three member committee with a 90 day deadline would be sufficient to review existing data, solicit public input and draft a report.