

**EAST HADDAM  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
March 6, 2006**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bob Bennett, Matthew Budzik, Mark Fortier, George Giesey, David Meade, Tony Shetensky

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Brad Parker, Mary Jane Plude, Randy Dill, Ed Barry, Jim Ventres Sr.

### **1. Call To Order**

Mr. Giesey called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. at the River House.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **2. Approval of Minutes**

a. Special Meeting of February 6, 2006

**Motion by Mr. Meade, seconded by Mr. Bennett, and unanimously passed to approve the minutes of the special meeting on February 6, 2005 with the following amendment:**

- **Page 1, Item 2, motion to return to regular session: Change vote to unanimous.**

b. Regular Meeting of February 6, 2006

**Motion by Mr. Giesey, seconded by Mr. Bennett, and unanimously passed to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on February 6, 2006 with the following amendments:**

- **Page 3, Item 4, second paragraph, first sentence: Strike “not” and “yet”**
- **Page 9, last paragraph: Add “because a contractor would have to make subjective job comparisons” to the end of the third sentence.**
- **Page 11, Item 11: First sentence: Change “he” to “the Board of Selectmen”, and replace “assist with the fees for this case” with “represent the Town”**

Regarding Mr. Giesey’s amendment to page 3, Mr. Fortier did not believe the contract had been received at the last meeting. Mrs. Plude stated she had the contract, and was not able to attend last month’s meeting. Mr. Fortier noted that the Board has not yet voted on the assessor’s contract.

### **3. Correspondence**

Mr. Giesey acknowledged receipt of an email dated February 27, 2006 from Todd Moss, Building Committee Chairman, informing the Board of an informational meeting on March 22, 2006, 7:00 p.m. in the high school auditorium to answer questions about the project.

### **4. Chairman’s Report**

Mr. Giesey stated he has been meeting with the Board of Selectmen on various departmental budgets.

a. Loreta Zdanys, Assessor

Mr. Giesey introduced the new assessor, Ms. Loreta Zdanys. Ms. Zdanys distributed copies of the new Grand List total figures, and the top 10 taxpayers. She stated there had been a 1.65% increase from the 2004 Grand List to the 2005 Grand List.

Ms. Zdanys informed the Board that since she came on board, she has completed the 42 new constructions, and has also reviewed additions, large barns, etc. She stated she has not yet reviewed small sheds, pools, etc., but those would be done for the next Grand List.

Mr. Parker stated since Ms. Zdanys began on January 9, she has been very accommodating, has brought much experience, and has been a good addition to the office.

Mr. Fortier questioned the Grand List figures presented by Ms. Zdanys. Ms. Zdanys stated she would go back to her office and re-check the numbers. She apologized for printing the wrong report, and she distributed corrected information to the Board.

The Board thanked Ms. Zdanys for coming to the meeting.

## **5. First Selectman's Report**

Mr. Parker distributed information he received from CCM regarding the legislative short session, and how Towns will be affected long term through State aid. He also distributed a booklet regarding the business climate in this area. He believed this might be helpful during budget discussions and decisions.

Mr. Parker informed the Board that the police study committee had been reviewing East Haddam's policing needs, and possible adjustments and/or changes. This committee, chaired by Mr. Dill, would like to issue a town-wide survey. Mr. Parker acknowledged there was no line item in the budget for this survey, and the cost would be approximately \$1,075 to print and mail the survey. He asked Mr. Dill to speak about the survey.

Mr. Dill stated this study was an initiative begun last fall. They have been reviewing current services, alternate services, and possible options for police services. The proposed survey is three pages, and they hope to gather data on how the town feels about the current police services, if their needs are being met, costs, etc. Mr. Dill stated it would cost approximately \$500 for printing approximately 4,200 surveys. The remainder of the cost would be for postage.

Mr. Parker informed the Board that this survey has been discussed at the Board of Selectmen meeting, and the Board of Selectmen supports this project.

NOTE: Further discussion on this topic occurred later under Item 11.

Mr. Giesey questioned if there was any information regarding the car tax proposal from the State. Mr. Parker explained that while some towns would gain from this proposal, others would lose. Although not all of the data has been compiled, it looks like East Haddam would lose. He stated the reimbursement would be based on last year's rate, and would remain the same for the next three years. New vehicles, mill rate increases, etc. will not be considered.

Responsive to inquiry by Mr. Meade, Mr. Parker stated the car tax proposal could mean anywhere from a \$100,000 to \$250,000 loss to many towns the size of East Haddam. Mr. Parker stated that Ms. Zdanys is getting the appropriate software, but it looked like there would be a \$65,000 loss for East Haddam.

Mr. Parker stated that per the CCM information he received, the majority of towns would request some adjustments if this proposal is approved. He added that residents would also lose their tax write-off of approximately \$350.

Mr. Meade asked if CCM was recommending any other forms of tax relief. Mr. Parker stated there were a number of things circulating at this point. Mr. Fortier stated that this might never even happen, and it was senseless to worry about it at this point.

## **6. Finance Director's Report**

Mrs. Plude stated there was a budget schedule in everyone's packet. She announced that the March 7 meeting had been cancelled. She stated the Board of Education would make its presentation on March 13, the Board of Selectmen on March 14, and the Public Works Department on March 20.

Mr. Giesey inquired about the public works tour. Mr. Parker stated he forgot to mention this in his report. He stated the tour was scheduled for Saturday, March 11, 2006, beginning at 9:00 a.m. at Public Works. The tour should be completed by 12:00 p.m. He distributed itineraries later in the meeting. Mr. Shetensky stated he would be unavailable for this meeting.

Mrs. Plude stated she was not present at the last meeting, but she read in the minutes about the library discussion. She informed the Board that a letter had been mailed to the library, and was included in the December 2005 packet. The letter stated that since there were no issues after the heavy rains, the Board would take no action at that time. Mr. Bennett stated he spoke with the library staff last week, and there still have been no issues.

Mrs. Plude informed the Board that the Fire Department was looking into a new Homeland Security grant for a \$800,000 to \$900,000 ladder truck to replace engine 8-15. This truck was scheduled for replacement in 2007-08 at a cost of \$325,000. She explained if this grant were awarded, there would be a maximum Town match of \$90,000. The Fire Department would like approval from the Board to submit this grant application.

Mr. Bennett stated if the grant was awarded, the Town could get a truck for \$90,000 versus \$325,000 if the grant was not awarded. Mrs. Plude noted the cost would likely be more than \$325,000, as these numbers were a couple years old now. Mr. Bennett stated the Town would have to expend the money one year earlier if the grant was awarded. Mrs. Plude stated the town has been saving in anticipation of this replacement.

Mr. Meade asked if this 75-foot ladder truck would fit in the existing garage. Mrs. Plude stated she would ask this question. Mr. Fortier stated that everything he has read on Homeland Security indicated that Connecticut would be getting much less than in previous years. He suggested the Town might be better off asking for radios, etc. rather than asking for one big-ticket item and possibly having it rejected. Mr. Meade suggested the radios and other equipment could be added to this grant request. Mr. Bennett understood many of these grants were only for certain items. Mrs. Plude received a document from the Fire Department, which stated their belief that now is the time to request these items, as the funding will likely be decreased in the future. She stated she could ask the Fire Department if this was the best route.

Mr. Meade stated that radios were the biggest issue after 9/11. Mr. Fortier added that they were still an issue after Hurricane Katrina. Mr. Bennett believed the Fire Department was getting new radios. He stated there were a number of things mandated by the Department of Emergency Management, but there was no money available to assist with them.

Mr. Meade asked if there were items the police could request before the Homeland Security funding was decreased. Mr. Dill stated the items would have to be linked directly to Homeland Security. Mrs. Plude stated this grant was specific to firefighters. Mr. Meade suggested they could ask the police and emergency management services if they were exploring grant opportunities. Mr. Bennett commented that Mr. Craig Mansfield had indicated he continually looks for opportunities.

Mrs. Plude asked if the Board would like this item added to next month's agenda. The consensus was to add this topic to the next agenda. Mrs. Plude asked if the Board was in favor of the Fire Department moving forward with this grant application. The Board was amenable to this.

## **7. Liaison Reports**

Mr. Meade asked if there were any questions regarding the Board of Education's information. Mr. Fortier questioned how firm the numbers were for the roof project. Mr. Meade indicated all of the numbers were in the budget. Mrs. Plude distributed the budget to the Board. Mr. Meade recommended the Board of Education's budget be placed on next week's agenda for discussion after the Board has read through it.

Mr. Bennett informed the Board that as the new Open Space Committee member, he is now a full, voting member of this Committee. He was not aware of this previously. Mr. Dill commented that the ordinance stipulated that the Committee be comprised of full members representing the various boards and commissions.

## **8. Guests and Audience**

No comments were offered.

## **9. Old Business**

### **a. American Legion Funding Request**

Mr. Giesey stated that unless Mr. Barry or Mr. Ventres, Sr. had additional information on the lighting project request, he was not sure what the Board could tell them at this point. He suggested the Board visit this issue again during the budget discussions. He commented that since this was not a town-owned property, it would be considered a grant, if awarded.

Mr. Bennett inquired if the American Legion submitted a request, and what, if anything, else they needed to do. Mrs. Plude stated they had the numbers. Mr. Fortier acknowledged the Board has the letter requesting the funding. Mr. Giesey suggested the Board could use the proposal received at the last meeting. Mr. Bennett stated this would be similar to the libraries' requests.

Mr. Meade asked how the use of this field would work with the schools. Mr. Ventres, Sr. stated the American Legion had an agreement with the middle school, and they would talk with the high school. Mr. Meade stated he would like to see the high school plan, and to learn if the high school would have preference for games. Mr. Barry responded that the educational facilities would have preference over other activities.

Mr. Meade asked if the fees paid by the school would continue to be collected. Mr. Ventres, Sr. believed the fees would continue, as these fees went toward the maintenance of the field. Mr. Barry stated the American Legion had every reason to believe this field would be used by the schools, particularly for night games.

Mr. Meade questioned if something ever happened to the American Legion, what would happen to the fields if the Board approved this funding. Mr. Barry suggested the American Legion could add language into its deed that if it ever dissolved, that the fields would be turned over to the town. Mr. Budzik commented that this type of language was frequently used for non-profit organizations.

Mr. Budzik asked about the maintenance fees for the fields. Mr. Ventres, Sr. stated they needed help with the maintenance costs to keep the fields mowed, fertilized, and in generally good shape. Mr. Barry stated that any money received from the town was much less than the actual costs. Mr. Ventres, Sr. stated the American Legion's budget for field maintenance was approximately \$15,000.

Mr. Budzik asked if there were any fields that could be used other than this one. Mr. Ventres, Sr. stated that the middle school has no fields, and he did not believe the high school field would ever be lit.

It was agreed that Mrs. Plude would work with Mr. Ventres, Sr. to prepare a budget to present to the Board during the budget process. Mr. Meade recommended this documentation include the scheduling of the fields and agreements with the town, and what would happen if the American Legion ever dissolved. Mr. Barry stated he would lead the charge to ensure this language was incorporated into the deed. He stated the American Legion would still retain the right to sell the property and purchase another suitable property. However, if the American Legion dissolved, the property would revert to the Town. Mr. Meade stated it would be important if the town gave \$50,000 and then the American Legion sold the property two years from now, that the town might want something back. Mr. Giesey requested in addition to the proposal, for a resolution for sale or dissolution of the American Legion.

Mr. Fortier asked if Mr. Barry and Mr. Ventres, Sr. were satisfied with this outcome. Mr. Barry asked how the grant process would work. Mr. Parker explained that if the town gave the American Legion money, it would be in the form of a grant. If the Board of Finance approved the funding request, it would have to go to the townspeople for a vote. Mr. Barry asked if there was an alternate process rather than calling it a grant. Mrs. Plude noted that anything that goes through the budget process would be considered a grant. Mr. Fortier indicated that since the amount was over \$20,000 it would have to go to a Town Meeting. He explained the two ways this could possibly work. The first would be if the Board approved the request, it would go to a Town Meeting for a vote. The second option would be if the request went through as part of the overall budget process, it would go to the Town for a vote as part of the entire budget.

Mr. Barry stated he would consult with the American Legion's attorney for the proper language in the event of dissolution, and then coordinate with Mrs. Plude. Both Mr. Barry and Mr. Ventres, Sr. thanked the Board for its consideration of this request.

#### **b. High School Flooring Appropriation**

Mrs. Plude stated she read the minutes from the last meeting, and noted that there were some questions about the flooring. She explained that a portion of the flooring amount was set aside in the Capital Non-recurring line. Now that the project was complete, the Board needed to transfer funds to Line #890, Board of Education Capital Improvement Projects.

**Motion by Mr. Bennett to transfer \$141,785 from the Capital Reserve Non-Recurring Fund to Line #890, Board of Education Capital Improvement Projects. Seconded by Mr. Meade, and carried by unanimous vote.**

### **10. New Business**

### **a. Supplemental Budget Request – Grange Hall**

Mr. Parker stated the Grange needed additional funding to cover building maintenance. He stated this was one area where reductions were made last year. He stated they needed \$2,000 to get through the rest of the fiscal year. Most of this cost was due to heat and electricity.

**Motion by Mr. Fortier to appropriate \$2,000 from Contingency to Line #737, Grange Hall Maintenance. Seconded by Mr. Bennett, and carried by unanimous vote.**

### **b. Supplemental Budget Request – Tax Refunds**

Mr. Parker informed the Board that each year, the town budgets the same number for tax refunds. This year, there were a number of refunds due to revaluations on personal property, etc. They have a \$1,700 refund for which they could not send the check until money was approved. Mr. Parker requested \$5,000 to carry through to the end of the year. He distributed a list of all of the tax refunds given thus far.

**Motion by Mr. Fortier to appropriate \$5,000 from Contingency to Line #722, Tax Refunds. Seconded by Mr. Meade, and carried by unanimous vote.**

### **c. Board of Education CIP Projects**

Mr. Meade stated he would like to give all Board members a chance to read through the material distributed tonight, and to discuss it at another meeting. Mr. Giesey suggested this discussion could occur during the Board of Education's budget presentation meeting.

## **11. Other**

Mrs. Plude informed the Board that the tour on Saturday, March 11 would be posted as an official meeting. Mr. Parker distributed the itineraries to each Board member. Mr. Budzik asked if the Fiscal Year 2007 Review matched Mr. Thumm's needs. Mr. Parker responded affirmatively.

Mr. Bennett noted that the Board did not act on the request for additional money for the police survey, discussed earlier tonight under Item 5. Mr. Fortier asked why the Board of Selectmen did not go over on their budget for this, and then come back for an appropriation later in the year. Mr. Parker stated they could do this, as long as they had an understanding and consensus from the Board of Finance. Mrs. Plude noted this is what is typically asked of other departments. Mr. Fortier stated the Board could only make one adjustment without going to a Town Meeting.

Mr. Fortier stated there had been no Board of Finance discussion on the over budget amount for the new school. He would like to see it put on the next regular agenda. He asked if anyone had done any tax assessment impact studies. Mr. Giesey asked if adding this to the next agenda would be beneficial before having all of the data. Mr. Fortier recalled when Mr. Moss was here last month, the Building Committee had stopped looking for cuts. Mr. Budzik stated that was not the way he understood Mr. Moss' comments last month. Mr. Fortier recommended further clarification be obtained on this. He stated he heard from a Board of Education member that no cuts were made. Mr. Meade stated he would attend the next Building Committee meeting.

Mr. Shetensky asked if Ms. Larson had sent the bonding spreadsheet yet. Mrs. Plude stated she had it, but had not had an opportunity to do anything with it due to preparing for budget meetings.

Mr. Meade stated the Board of Education and Building Committee talked about equipment. Mr. Fortier stated the Board of Education has a technology budget. He thought it might be possible for them to set this budget line to zero for the next couple years, if they planned to purchase new equipment when the 4-8 school opened.

Mr. Fortier stated that the town previously approved \$5 Million for open space, it would cost approximately \$4 Million to renovate the middle school for municipal space, there would be additional overhead and operating expenses for the new school, operating costs of keeping the middle school as town offices, etc. He believed they used a \$150,000 delta for the additional heat and electricity. Mr. Parker stated they were already paying to heat the middle school. Mr. Fortier stated they needed to know what the tax impact would be. Mr. Giesey stated that is why Mr. Fortier was asked to be the liaison for long term debt.

## **12. Adjournment**

**Motion by Mr. Meade to adjourn at 8:35 p.m., seconded by Mr. Shetensky, and carried by unanimous vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

David Meade  
Secretary