

**TOWN OF EAST HADDAM**  
**Board of Finance**  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
September 9, 2024  
Municipal Office Building – Room 1 & 2  
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

Participating:

Board of Finance Members:

Joseph Corbett  
Todd Gelston  
Maureen Goff  
Eric Kolasinski  
Harvey Thomas  
Rebecca Whatley

Others:

Valerie Belles, Finance Director  
Rochelle Davis  
Laurie D’Aquila  
Denise DiStefano  
Irene Haines, First Selectwoman  
Attorney Timothy Herbst  
Susan Kinsman  
Michael Masci  
Ruth Masci  
Colleen Shaddox  
Amalia Shaltiel  
Linda Zemienieski, Executive Manager  
And other members of the public

**CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Gelston called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and the attendees said the pledge of allegiance.

**GUESTS & AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

The following citizens spoke at the meeting:

- Susan Kinsman – read a prepared statement sharing her objections to transferring funds into the Department of Public Works tree budget and listing her reasons for same.
- Ruth Masci – expressed her concern about Public Works’ management of their budget. Ms. Masci stated she agreed with Ms. Kinsman objections to transferring funds into the tree budget.

Mr. Gelston stated that he had inadvertently mis-represented the request for the transfer at the Town Meeting. Finance Director Belles explained her rationale for the request and noted it is normal at the end of the fiscal year to make such transfers in the budget. She confirmed that since the request for the transfer of funds from the BOF Contingency and the Highways and Streets Regular Employees accounts into the Trees Grounds Maintenance budget was voted down at Town Meeting, it would not occur and, consequently, the discrepancy would be noted in the Town's 2024 audit.

- Mike Masci – inquired about the cost of the proposed road study and suggested that the Director of Public Works and the Road Foreman conduct the study instead of hiring an outside consultant. Ms. Belles advised that the Town had allocated \$80k for the road study from ARPA grant funds.
- Amalia Shaltiel – advised that the 8-Mile River & Scenic Watershed organization had completed a culvert study for East Haddam which may provide the Town with some information for the planned road study and it may also offer grants for the study. Ms. Belles noted that the Town had earmarked ARPA grant funds for the cost of the proposed road study. Ms. Haines stated that the last road study had been conducted in approximately 2012-2013 and the Town wants to get up-to-date information about its road conditions.
- Rochelle Davis – stated she was opposed to transferring funds into the Trees Grounds Maintenance budget and provided her reasons. She encouraged Public Works to focus their tree removal work on dead and dying trees rather than healthy ones.
- Denise DiStefano – ask for clarification about which projects the fund transfers, which were approved at the August 21<sup>st</sup> Town Meeting, would benefit and Ms. Belles stated that they will go to approved Board of Education projects.

## CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Belles advised that she had received an email from Colleen Shaddox stating that it is her opinion that the use of ARPA funding should be just as thoroughly scrutinized as is the use of tax revenues. Ms. Belles stated that allocation of ARPA grant funding involves numerous discussions involving the Board of Selectmen and often other Boards and departments, as well as a general consensus of the Selectpeople.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Regular Meeting – August 12, 2024 – Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the minutes of their August 12, 2024 regular meeting. Ms. Whatley noted several spelling corrections.

**Motion made by Ms. Whatley to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 12, 2024 as amended and Mr. Thomas seconded the motion. Mr. Corbett abstained from the vote and the motion was approved by a majority aye vote. Motion carried.**

## **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

### a. Board Sub-Committee Reports

- i. Communications – Mr. Gelston reported that the Communications Subcommittee was unable to meet on August 14<sup>th</sup>; however, they have a draft article explaining the audit process which they will circulate among the Board members. He stated that they also plan to update a previous article about financial terminology to include audit terminology.
- ii. Long-Range Capital Improvements –Mr. Thomas reported that the Long-Range Capital Improvements Subcommittee met on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. He stated that the Subcommittee members agreed to ask the Board of Education and Town Department heads to review the 10-year capital project list and update it with any deletions, additions, and/or changed projected cost estimates. He stated the Subcommittee is scheduled to meet again on October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Ms. Haines stated that the Subcommittee also discussed tightening up the “Funding Source” category and segregating on-going/repeatable capital projects from the one-time requests so that the members can focus more scrutiny on the one-time capital project requests.

- iii. Financial Policies – Mr. Thomas reported that the Financial Policies Subcommittee was unable to meet since the last BOF meeting. He advised that he will coordinate another meeting with Ms. Belles and Mr. Corbett. He reiterated the Subcommittee’s draft of the General Fund Revenues policy is undergoing a final review and it will be submitted to the full Board for their review and approval. He stated that the Subcommittee’s next project will be to streamline the policy related to the Long-Range Capital Improvements Subcommittee process for evaluating and ranking proposed capital improvements.
- b. CCM Conference Attendance – Mr. Gelston requested the Board inform Finance Director Belles if they would like to attend the CCM Conference this year. Ms. Belles stated that registrations submitted up to November 8<sup>th</sup> will qualify for a discount.

## **FIRST SELECTMEN’S REPORT**

- a. First Selectmen Updates – Ms. Haines distributed copies of the proposed East Haddam Fire & Emergency Services budget. She stated that Assistant Chief for EMS Jennifer Reynolds helped her draft the budget. She reviewed the budget and noted that it represents what is currently being spent by the Town for emergency services, including fire and emergency medical response calls.

Ms. Haines advised that the CT Department of OEMS had affirmed its decision to award the Fire Department’s medical division authorization to run an ambulance in East Haddam and bill for it. She noted that that decision can be appealed. In response to an inquiry from Mr. Gelston, she confirmed that OEMS has not yet decided who should hold the PSAR.

b. Executive Session – Legal Matters

**Motion made by Ms. Goff to enter into executive session to discuss legal matters and to invite Attorney Timothy Herbst, Irene Haines, Linda Zemienieski, Valerie Belles into this session at 7:52 p.m. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion. Mr. Kolasinski voted nay and the motion was approved by a majority aye vote. Motion carried.**

The regular meeting reconvened at 9:37pm.

**FINANCE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

- a. Year-to-Date Budget Report – Ms. Belles reported that as of June 30, 2024, the expense budget was under budget by \$878k and over budget on the revenue side by \$841k. She stated that she anticipates a positive surplus at the end of the fiscal year; however, the Public Works’ tree removal line will be over budget due to the fact that her requested transfer was not approved at the August 21<sup>st</sup> Town Meeting.

Ms. Belles encouraged the Board members to read the Management Discussion and Analysis section of the 2023 audit report, as well as the RS1 and RS2 financial statement snapshots of the General Fund at the end of the year.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Town Meeting Results – There was a general discussion about the failed vote to approve transfers into the Trees Grounds Maintenance budget.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Grant Acceptance – Connor Meaney Young Memorial Fund – Ms. Belles provided background information about this agenda item.

**Motion was made by Ms. Whatley to recommend to the Board of Selectmen to accept a grant in the amount of \$1,185.00 from the Community Foundation of Middlesex County Connor Meaney Young Memorial Fund for the purpose of supporting summer camp programs (Revenue budget 28045-44709-R1099 and Expense budget 28045033-56900-R1099) and to ask the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Ms. Goff seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.**

**Motion made by Mr. Thomas to add item 10b – “Grant Authorization Request – Historic Preservation Grant” to the agenda. Mr. Kolasinski seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.**

- b. Grant Authorization Request – Historic Preservation Grant – Ms. Belles explained that the Town Clerk applies for, and receives this grant annually which provides funding for the Town to purchase electronic and online access to land records. She stated that having electronic copies available preserves the hard copies and the Town Clerk plans to purchase two volumes with this grant.

**Motion made by Ms. Whatley to authorize the Town Clerk to apply for a grant from the State of Connecticut Historic Preservation Grant program in the amount of \$5,500.00, with no match to the Town, to preserve historical documents. Mr. Kolasinski seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion made by Mr. Kolasinski to adjourn the meeting at 9:48pm Ms. Whatley seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Rebecca Whatley

Secretary