

**TOWN OF EAST HADDAM**  
**Board of Finance**  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
October 21, 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

Others:

Don Angersola, Facilities Director  
Theresa Bourgoin, Selectwomen  
Michael Callahan  
Robert Casner, EDC Chairman  
Dr. Theresa DeBrito, Superintendent of Schools  
Christopher Guilmette  
Matthew Guilmette  
Irene Haines, First Selectwoman  
Cindy Hughson, BOE Business Manager  
Michael Robidoux, EDC  
Joseph Spurgeon, BOE  
Patricia Stricker, BOE Chairwoman  
Kenneth Tosi, Ambulance Association  
Michele Valez, Public Works Director  
Linda Zemienieski, Executive Manager  
Dan Zimmerman  
And other members of the public

**CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Gelston called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and the attendees said the pledge of allegiance.

**GUESTS & AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

There were no guests or audience comments discussed at the meeting.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence discussed at the meeting.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. Regular Meeting – September 9, 2024 – Mr. Gelston called the Board’s attention to the minutes of their September 9, 2024 regular meeting.

**Motion made by Mr. Corbett to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 9, 2024 as written and Ms. Goff seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.**

- b. Special Meeting – September 9, 2024 – Mr. Gelston called the Board’s attention to the minutes of their September 9, 2024 special meeting.

**Motion made by Mr. Corbett to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of September 9, 2024 as written and Mr. Kolasinski seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.**

## **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

Mr. Gelston reported that Rebecca Whatley had resigned from the Board of Finance and they are working for fill the vacancy. He stated that they have received seven applications and will be interviewing six applicants on October 26<sup>th</sup> and will schedule the seventh interview at a later date.

- a. Board Sub-Committee Reports

- i. Communications – There was no new update on this agenda item.
- ii. Long-Range Capital Improvements – Mr. Thomas reported that the Long-Range Capital Improvements Subcommittee will meet on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. He reiterated that the First Selectman has asked the Town Department heads and the BOE to review the 10-year capital projects list and update it with any deletions, additions, and/or changed cost estimates. Also, the Committee is updating the process for reviewing and evaluating new capital requests.

Mr. Thomas stated that the Committee has asked Finance Director Belles to segregate annually recurring capital projects from the one-time requests and they will ask Ms. Hughson, Business Manager for the BOE, to do the same for the BOE requests.

- iii. Financial Policies – Mr. Thomas called the Board’s attention to a draft revision of the General Fund Revenues policy in their meeting packets. He requested the Board review the updated policy so it can be discussed and voted on at their November meeting. He thanked Financial Director Belles and former Director Cindy Varricchio for their work on updating the policy.

b. Discussion on Public Comment

Mr. Gelston stated that the BOF appreciates and encourages public input. He noted, however, that there are time constraints that must be recognized. Mr. Gelston suggested limiting individual public comments to 3-5 minutes and stated he would like to discuss a policy for same at the Board's November meeting.

There was a general discussion regarding a policy for the Public Comment portion of the Board's meetings and several additional suggestions were raised.

- c. Board of Assessment Appeals – Mr. Gelston reviewed a report submitted by Edward Blaschik, Chairman of the Board of Assessment Appeals. He noted that two vehicle appeals had been heard at a public hearing in September, resulting in a reduction of \$10,020.00 in the grand list. He advised that expenses for the public hearing totaled \$144.00 and noted that the appeals had a relatively low impact this year.

**FIRST SELECTMEN'S REPORT**

- a. First Selectmen Updates – Ms. Haines provided the following updates:

- The Swingbridge is on schedule to be completed in February 2025; there will be one final 56 hour closure.
- Early voting will begin on October 21<sup>st</sup> between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. She noted that from October 29<sup>th</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup>, the hours will be extended to 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- The BOS approved a test of automated traffic enforcement safety devices (ATESD) on several streets in Town. She stated that the BOS is considering purchasing a ATESD system to help reduce speeding on the Town's roads. She reviewed how the system works and what needs to be done to implement and manage the program.

Ms. Haines introduced Public Works Director Velez. Ms. Velez apologized for not attending the previous meeting when she had been on the agenda to address citizens' concerns about the tree removal program and staffing. She explained that a family emergency prevented her from coming at the last minute. She confirmed that she had watched the YouTube recording of the meeting, as well as other recordings related to the Public Works' tree removal program.

Director Velez reported that the first of the two cases related to the tree removal program that were brought against the Town had been dismissed by the court and the second case has been postponed until April. She noted; however, that the parties in the second case have had discussions about a settlement.

Ms. Velez advised that, on average, it costs \$1,500.00 each to take down a tree. She stated that a Cenobegan was used to remove a large number of trees on Powerhouse, Cherry Swamp, and North Moodus Roads. She noted that, due to the speed at which the equipment operates, the average cost per tree for the removal on those roads was \$61.00 each.

Director Velez advised that, contrary to misinformation that is out in the community, she reviews each tree that is tagged and makes the final decision about its removal. She stated that she also keeps detailed records about every tree that is removed. She stated that she has had 17 years of experience in forest management.

Ms. Velez stated that she feels there is a lot of false information that has been given to the public and clarified that the terms of the recent employee lay-offs are such that she can hire the laid-off staff back; however, she cannot hire anyone else in those positions within 6 months of the date of the lay-off.

Concerning the budget for road paving, Director Velez stated that she had requested \$3.8M to pave 10 miles of Town roads but only \$400k was approved in the 2024-2025 budget.

Ms. Velez responded to several questions from the Board members and confirmed that she will be reaching out to the EightMile River and Scenic Watershed organization to request a copy of their culvert study report.

Mr. Gelston reviewed the department's Tree Care and Removal expenditures for the past two fiscal years and the current year-to-date expenditure.

## **FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- a. Year-to-Date Budget Report – Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the YTD budget report in their meeting packets. He reported that, as of August 31<sup>st</sup>, the Town has collected 41% of its revenue and spent 9% of its projected expenditures. He stated that the Finance Director noted that there were no major changes or concerns.
- b. Upcoming Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) – Mr. Gelston reported that, upon the advice of Mr. Lindsay, the Town's financial adviser, the Town plans to enter into a short-term Bond Anticipation Note to finance the following approved capital projects: the Elementary School envelope, the purchase of the Open Space Kronberg property, and the BOE HVAC/Chiller, Athletic Complex projects. He reviewed the rationale entering into a BAN rather than immediately bonding for the projects and noted that the decision was driven primarily by timing constraints.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

- a. East Haddam Ambulance Association Budgets – Past, Present and Future – Mr. Gelston recognized Mr. Tosi of the East Haddam Ambulance Association.

Mr. Tosi stated that the Ambulance Association appreciated the opportunity to respond to the Board's request for additional financial information. He reviewed a presentation that covered the Associations' FY2024 statistics, an updated Profit & Loss statement, and its forecasted budgets for fiscal years 2025 and 2026.

Mr. Tosi stated that it should be expected that the Ambulance Association will continue to run a deficit. In response to a question from Mr. Gelston, he confirmed that the surrounding towns are experience similar problems. Mr. Tosi noted that lower volunteer rates result in the need to hire paid staff which has a significant impact on expenses. He responded to additional questions from the Board and confirmed that a regional emergency medical response team has been discussed and stated that Ms. D'Aquila would have more detail on those discussions.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Grant Acceptance – SHPO Partners in Preservation Grant – Mr. Gelston provided background information on this agenda item. He stated that the SHPO Partners in Preservation grant will allow the East Haddam Redevelopment Agency to consult with a community planning firm to facilitate visioning workshops for the redevelopment of the Old Town Office Site at 1 & 7 Main Street. He noted that the SHPO Partners in Preservation Grant requires a Town match.

**Motion made by Mr. Thomas to recommend to the Board of Selectmen to accept a grant in the amount of \$15,000.00 from the State of Connecticut, Department of Economic and Community Development, Community Investment Account (revenue account 33050-43000-G3101 and expense account 33055011-58820-G3101) for consulting services of a community planning firm to facilitate visioning workshops for the redevelopment of the Old Town Office Site, 1 & 7 Main Street, East Haddam, upon the terms and conditions set forth in an Assistance Agreement between the State of Connecticut, acting by the Department of Economic and Community Development, and the Town of East Haddam and to ask the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Ms. Goff seconded the motion.**

In response to questions raised by Board members, Ms. Haines confirmed that there is a 100% Town match requirement with the grant and it is restricted for use related to the Old Town Office site.

**Motion was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.**

- b. Grant Acceptance – Secretary of State – Early Voting – Mr. Gelston advised that, through the Secretary of State, municipalities have been awarded a one-time grant from the U.S. Treasury Dept., State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, for costs related to implementing early voting, such as salaries, printing, equipment and supplies.

**Motion was made by Mr. Corbett to recommend to the Board of Selectmen to accept a grant in the amount of \$2,899.74 from the U.S. Department of Treasury State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds through the Secretary of State (revenue account 33050-43000-G2101 and expense account 33055011-58820-G2101) for the purpose of costs related to implementing and conducting early voting upon the terms and conditions set forth in an Agreement between the State of Connecticut, Office of the Secretary of the State, and the Town of East Haddam, and to ask the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Ms. Goff seconded the motion.**

In response to a question from Mr. Gelston, Ms. Haines confirmed that the grants the Town has received to date for the purpose of compensating for additional expenses related to complying with early voting mandates do not cover the actual additional expenses. Mr. Gelston suggested the BOF should petition the state for additional funds and Ms. Haines agreed to provide him with the actual increase in expenses related to the mandate.

**Motion was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.**

- c. Grant Acceptance – Bureau of Justice – Bullet Proof Vests – Mr. Gelston advised that the Town has been awarded a grant in the amount of \$2,666.62 for body armor vests.

**Motion made by Mr. Kolasinski to recommend to the Board of Selectmen to accept a grant in the amount of \$2,666.62 from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance, Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program (revenue account 33050-43000-G3201 and expense account 33055011-58820-G3201) and to ask the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Ms. Goff seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.**

- d. Financial Policy Review and Approval – General Fund Revenues – This agenda item was postponed.
- e. Amendment Resolution Authorizing an Increase in the Appropriation and the Amount of General Obligation Bonds and Notes of the Town to Finance said Appropriation from \$4,150,000 to \$6,200,000 for the HVAC Improvements and Chiller Replacement Projects.

Mr. Gelston read the following into the record:

**AMENDMENT RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN INCREASE IN THE APPROPRIATION AND THE AMOUNT OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS AND NOTES OF THE TOWN TO FINANCE SAID APPROPRIATION FROM \$4,150,000 TO \$6,200,000 FOR THE HVAC IMPROVEMENTS AND CHILLER REPLACEMENT PROJECTS.**

WHEREAS, on December 20, 2023, the Board of Finance (the “Board”) of the Town of East Haddam (the “Town”), recommended to the electors and citizens eligible to vote at town meetings of the Town a resolution authorizing an appropriation of \$4,150,000 for the funding of HVAC improvements and other indoor air quality improvements at the East Haddam Elementary School and the purchase, installation and replacement of an air cooler and chiller at the Nathan-Ray High School (the “Projects”) and the issuance of bonds and notes to finance such appropriation in an amount not to exceed \$4,150,000 (the “Resolution”);

WHEREAS, the Resolution was approved by the voters at referendum on January 30, 2024;

WHEREAS, the Board wishes to amend the Resolution, subject to the approval of the voters at referendum, in order to increase the amount of the appropriation and the amount of bonds and notes to finance such appropriation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board hereby accepts the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, adopted at its meeting held on October 16, 2024, and recommends to the electors and citizens eligible to vote at town meetings of the Town, the following:

- 1) That the Resolution is hereby modified to replace “\$4,150,000” wherever it appears in Sections (1) through (6) of the Resolution with “\$6,200,000”.
- 2) That other than as expressly set forth herein, the Resolution shall be unchanged and remain in full force and effect.
- 3) That this amendment resolution shall become effective after approval at referendum vote.

At a meeting of the Board of Finance held on October 21, 2024, on a motion duly made by Board Member Harvey Thomas, and seconded by Board Member Eric Kolasinski, the foregoing resolution was adopted by the following roll call vote:

In Favor: Harvey Thomas, Eric Kolasinski, Joseph Corbett, Maureen Goff, Todd Gelston  
Opposed: None

- f. Amendment Resolution Authorizing an Increase in the Appropriation and the Amount of General Obligation Bonds and Notes of the Town to Finance said Appropriation from \$2,800,000 to \$2,944,387 for the Nathan Hale-Ray High School Track and Field Athletic Complex Project

Mr. Gelston read the following into the record:

**AMENDMENT RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN INCREASE IN THE APPROPRIATION AND THE AMOUNT OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS AND NOTES OF THE TOWN TO FINANCE SAID APPROPRIATION FROM \$2,800,000 TO \$2,944,387 FOR THE NATHAN HALE-RAY HIGH SCHOOL TRACK AND FIELD ATHLETIC COMPLEX PROJECT**

WHEREAS, on April 26, 2022, the Board of Finance (the “Board”) of the Town of East Haddam (the “Town”), recommended to the electors and citizens eligible to vote at town meetings of the Town a resolution authorizing an appropriation of \$2,800,000 for the funding of the Nathan Hale-Ray High School Track and Athletic Complex Project (the “Project”) and the issuance of bonds and notes to finance such appropriation in an amount not to exceed \$2,800,000 (the “Resolution”);

WHEREAS, the Resolution was approved by the voters at referendum on May 24, 2022;

WHEREAS, the Board wishes to amend the Resolution, subject to the approval of the voters at referendum, in order to increase the amount of the appropriation and the amount of bonds and notes to finance such appropriation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board hereby accepts the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, adopted at its meeting held on October 16, 2024, and recommends to the electors and citizens eligible to vote at town meetings of the Town, the following:

- 1) That the Resolution is hereby modified to replace “\$2,800,000” wherever it appears in Sections (1) through (6) of the Resolution with “\$2,944,387”.
- 2) That all expenditures heretofore made in respect of the Project which are consistent with this amendment resolution are hereby ratified and confirmed.
- 3) That other than as expressly set forth herein, the Resolution shall be unchanged and remain in full force and effect. (4) That this amendment resolution shall become effective after approval at referendum vote.

At a meeting of the Board of Finance held on October 21, 2024 on a Motion duly made by Board Member Maureen Goff and seconded by Board Member Joseph Corbett, the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the following roll call vote:

In Favor: Harvey Thomas, Eric Kolasinski, Joseph Corbett, Maureen Goff, Todd Gelston  
Opposed: None

f. Executive Session

**Motion made by Eric Kolasinski to enter into executive session to discuss Banner Golf Course Real Estate and to invite Irene Haines, Linda Zemienieski, Robert Casner, Michael Robidoux, Michael Callahan, Daniel Zimmerman, Christopher Guilmette and Matthew Guilmette into this session at 8:40pm. Joseph Corbett seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.**

The Board of Finance returned to regular session at 10:10 p.m. No motions or decisions were made.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion made by Ms. Goff to adjourn the meeting at 10:11 p.m. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Todd Gelston  
Chairman