

Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
August 7, 2024
Regular Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: I. Haines; T. Bourgoïn; E. Dill

Also Present: L. D'Aquila; N. D'Aquila; K. Daigle; D. Distefano; T. Gelston; M. Masci; R. Masci; J. Moreau; E. Smith; R. Smith; L. Woodward; L. Zemienieski; and other members of the public

1. First Selectman Haines called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoïn, to approve the agenda as written. Unanimous aye.

3. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting of July 17, 2024

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoïn, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 17, 2024 written. Unanimous aye.

4. Correspondence

A. Emails Regarding Tree Removal Public Hearing: Ms. Haines read the following correspondence into the record:

- Email from Robert Melinosky, dated July 31, 2024, complimenting Public Works Director Velez on the Public Hearing related to tree pruning and removal plans for Bone Mill and Hemlock Valley Roads.
- Email from Joseph Iannelli, dated July 31, 2024, to Public Works Director Velez complimenting her on the excellent job she did facilitating the Public Hearing on the tree pruning and removal plans for Bone Mill and Hemlock Valley Roads.
- Email from Lisa Costello, dated August 1, 2024, to Public Works Director Velez stating he felt she did an excellent job explaining the plans for tree pruning and removal on Bone Mill and Hemlock Valley Roads.

5. First Selectmen's Report: Ms. Haines reported on the following items:

- Road paving on several streets will begin on August 19th.
- Several responses to the RFP for a road study have been received and will be opened on August 18th.

- Public Works now has two mowers operating and cutting down the weeds along the sides of the Town roads.
- Public Works will continue to patch potholes, weather permitting.
- A Public Information meeting will be scheduled to discuss the plans for the new firehouse.
- A Public Information meeting will be held in September to discuss the recommendations of the Library Committee.
- The Broadband Committee hopes to get approximately 200 more people to sign-up to receive information on a proposed municipal broadband service.
- The Moodus master plan survey is up on the Town’s website; public information sessions will be scheduled this fall.

6. Public Comment: The following public comments were brought up at the meeting:

- Robert Smith – raised several questions concerning Public Works’ tree removal program and expressed his dissatisfaction with the program. He stated he feels that the definition of a “dangerous” tree has been inappropriately expanded and opined that Public Works Director Velez is being “manipulated” by Distinctive Tree Care. He added that he does not believe the current program complies with the Town’s Plan of Conservation & Development or its sustainability plan and will promote erosion. Mr. Smith provided the Board with photos of 100+ trees, and a list of their locations, that he feels should be removed.
- Ruth Masci – commented on the Public Works’ staffing levels, in particular the road crew, and expressed her concern about the high turnover rate in that department.
- Denise Distefano – voiced her support for Board Member Bourgoin’s recommendation to establish an Ambulance Service Task Force and stated she would like to see a thoughtful decision that considers all possibilities.
- Jay Moreau – noted the high turnover rate for Public Works’ employees and expressed concern that the problem may be a consequence of the current culture in that department. He also stated that he feels that recent letters to the editor of the East Haddam News regarding the current situation with the Ambulance Association are spreading misinformation and shouldn’t be taken at face value.
- Laurie D’Aquila – supported Ms. Bourgoin’s proposal to establish a Task Force to investigate how to move forward regarding the Town’s ambulance services and suggested surveying other municipalities to see how they are dealing with existing challenges. She noted that the East Haddam Ambulance Association and the towns of East Hampton, Haddam, Lyme, and Old Lyme have formed a collaborative group to develop solutions to the issues of volunteerism, low reimbursement rates, etc.
- Robert Smith – stated that he feels it is short-sighted to lay-off Public Works employees at this time; noting that, since he has provided the Town with a list of trees that he feels should be removed, it can be held liable for any future damages if any of them come down, and supported Ms. Bourgoin’s recommendation to establish an Ambulance Task Force.

7. Unfinished Business: There was no unfinished business discussed at the meeting.

8. New Business

- A. Ambulance Task Force Discussion: Ms. Bourgoin stated that she is a proponent of establishing a task force to research solutions to the current conflict about the provider of ambulance services in Town. She called the Board's attention to a draft resolution in their meeting packets addressing that issue.

There was a general discussion regarding Ms. Bourgoin's recommendation, and she responded to several questions from the Board. Ms. Haines invited Todd Gelston, the Chairman of the Finance Commission, to provide his thoughts on the matter.

Mr. Gelston stated that he is strongly in favor of establishing an unbiased task force to look into options available to the Town for its emergency medical response needs. He stated that he feels it is imperative to have a clear proposal that is fully substantiated to present to the public to eliminate any suggestions of prejudice or lack of transparency. He stated that he does not feel that the Town will have a problem finding volunteers to serve on the task force.

Ms. Bourgoin agreed to follow-up on several questions raised by Mr. Dill and the Board agreed to continue discussion of her recommendation at their next regular meeting.

- B. Grant Acceptance – FY 23 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG): Ms. Haines called the Board's attention to a copy of a grant award notice in their meeting packets from Pamela Williams, Assistant Administrator, Grant Programs, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, dated July 16, 2024, regarding this agenda item. She stated that the letter advised of a grant award of \$54,857.14 and, as a condition of the grant, the Town is required to contribute non-Federal funds equal to or greater than 5% (\$2,742.86) for a total approved budget of \$57,600.00. She advised that, when applying for the grant, the Fire Department noted that it would use funds from their 2024-2025 operating budget to cover the match expense.

Motion made by Ms. Bourgoin, seconded by Mr. Dill, to accept a grant in the amount of \$54,857.14 for the FY 2023 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, for the purpose of purchasing turnout gear, and send acceptance of said grant to the Board of Finance and Town Meeting for approval. Unanimous aye.

- C. Gift Acceptance – Boy Scout Troup 22: Ms. Haines called the Boards attention to an email from Recreation Director, Lisa Conroy, dated July 31, 2024, advising of a donation of \$734.47 to East Haddam Parks & Recreation from East Haddam Boy Scout Troop 22. Ms. Conroy noted that this donation is the balance of funds Eagle Scout Aaron Allen had raised for his Eagle Scout project. Ms. Haines provided additional background on the project.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to accept a gift for East Haddam Parks & Recreation of \$734.47 from East Haddam Boy Scout Troop 22 and send

acceptance of said donation to the Board of Finance and Town Meeting for approval. Unanimous aye.

Ms. Haines thanked Mr. Allen for all his work and the donation to East Haddam Parks & Recreation. The Board members concurred.

- D. Bashan Lake – Wake Surfing Potential Ordinance Discussion: Ms. Haines provided background on this agenda item and noted that there will be a Public Hearing scheduled to discuss the proposed ordinance. She responded to several questions from the Board.
- E. Call for Town Meeting: Ms. Haines advised that items approved at previous meetings need to be moved forward to a Town Meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to approve the following call for Town Meeting:

The Electors and citizens of the Town of East Haddam, Connecticut qualified to vote in Town Meeting are hereby warned and notified that a Special Town Meeting will be held in the Municipal Office Complex, Meeting Room 1 & 2 located on 1 Plains Road in Moodus, Connecticut on Wednesday, August 21, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., for the following purposes, to wit:

Item 1: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance to accept a grant in the amount of \$5,448.25 from the State of Connecticut, Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, entitled “FY 2022 Emergency Management Performance Grant”, (revenue account 10542-43000 and expense account 10542070-51590).

Item 2: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance to accept a grant in the amount of \$5,448.25 from the State of Connecticut, Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, entitled “FY 2023 Emergency Management Performance Grant”, (revenue account 10542-43000 and expense account 10542070-51590).

Item 3: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance to accept a grant in the amount of \$2,000.00 from the M. Jones Family Fund and the Mary Janvrin and Natalie Janvrin Wiggins Fund for Birds, Other Animals and Nature at the Community Foundation of Middlesex County for the purpose of supporting summer camp programs (revenue account 28045-44709-R1099 and expense account 28045033-56900-R1099).

Item 4: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance to accept a grant in the amount of \$54,857.14 for the FY 2023 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program from the U.S. Department of Homeland

Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, for the purpose of purchasing turnout gear (revenue account 33050-43000-G2901 and expense account 33055011-58820-G2901).

Item 5: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance to accept a gift in the amount of \$20,000 from Consumer Reports for the Town Beach Playground (revenue account 33050-43000-G2701 and expense account 33055011-58820-G2701).

Item 6: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance to accept a donation in the amount of \$500.00 from Plum St. Productions LLC, and to appropriate said funds to Open Space Reserve Fund (33250-43000-25022).

Item 7: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance to accept a donation in the amount of \$734.47 from Boy Scout Troop 22, and to appropriate said funds to Parks and Recreation (revenue account 28045-44709-R1099).

Item 8: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance to approve a transfer in the amount of \$100,000.00 from the BOF Contingency (10541020-58910) to Capital Reserves Account (332-10506 Project 25024) Ambulance Reserves.

Item 9: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance to approve funding for the East Haddam Ambulance Association in the amount of \$59,316.52 from the 2023-2024 BOF Contingency Account (10541020-58910).

Item 10: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance to approve capital project transfers totaling \$7,853.84 from Middle School Scoreboard (account number 33250013-58926 Project C0261) in the amount of \$3,750 and School Wide Maintenance Supervisor Vehicle (account number 33250013-58926 Project C0259) in the amount of \$1,403.42 and High School Boiler (account number 33250013-58926 Project C0077) in the amount of \$2,700.42 to High School Softball Scoreboard (account number 33250013-58926 Project C0288) in the amount of \$1,679 and Elementary School Playground (account number 33250013-58926 Project C0215) in the amount of \$666.45 and High School ADA Softball platform (account number 33250013-58926 Project C0256) in the amount of \$4,955.59 and Middle School Generator (account number 33250013-58926 Project C0296) in the amount of \$552.80.

Item 11: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance to approve a transfer in the amount of \$96,798.27 from 2023-2024 BOF Contingency (account number 10541020-58910) for \$71,818.48 and \$24,979.79 from 2023-2024 Highways and Streets Regular Employees (account number 10543030-51510) to Trees Grounds Maintenance (account number 10543350-54303).

Unanimous aye.

F. Board/Commission/Committee Changes: The following Board, Commission, or Committee changes were discussed at the meeting:

Commission on Aging

Ms. Haines called the Selectmen's attention to the draft minutes of the Commission on Aging's May 23rd meeting in their meeting packets noting several changes in their membership.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin to accept, with regret, the resignation of Suzanne Bostelman from the Commission on Aging. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Ms. Bourgoin, seconded by Mr. Dill, to change the status of Elaine Flaherty from an alternate member to a regular member on the Commission on Aging to fill a vacant three-year term to expire June 30, 2026. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to reappoint June Guertin and Jovita Cozean as regular members on the Commission on Aging for three-year terms to expire June 30, 2026. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Ms. Bourgoin, seconded by Mr. Dill, to reappoint Maureen Gillis as a regular member on the Commission on Aging for a three-year term to expire June 30, 2027. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to reappoint Mary Ellen Klink as an alternate member on the Commission on Aging for a one-year term to expire June 30, 2024 and another one-year term to expire June 30, 2025. Unanimous aye.

Sustainability Team

Ms. Haines called the Selectmen's attention to a copy of an email from Matt Shea, dated July 21, 2024, resigning as a member of the Sustainability Team.

Motion made by Ms. Bourgoin, seconded by Mr. Dill, to accept, with regret, the resignation of Matt Shea from the Sustainability Team. Unanimous aye.

G. Tax Refunds: Three tax refunds were considered at the meeting:

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to award tax refunds in the amounts as presented.

- \$ 10.33 to Dylan Ryan,
- \$312.27 to Gary Izzo, and
- \$333.75 to Erin Hermann.

Unanimous aye.

9. Public Comment: The following additional public comments were brought up at the meeting:

- Robert Smith – stated that any proposed ordinance restricting the use of wake boards on the Town’s lakes would have to be approved by the CT DEEP. It was noted that this was already done.
- Laurie D’Aquila – noted that she had informed Public Works Director Velez about a dangerous tree on Warner Road and inquired about the status of her notice. She also advised that a fundraising “triathlon” for the East Haddam Ambulance Association would be held at the Town Beach on August 17th between 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
- Edward Smith – advised that he had worked for Public Works during the past five summers and stated he did not see how all of the projects the department has to accomplish can be done with the current reduction in staff. He also expressed his hope that a resolution to the situation of who will provide the Town’s emergency medical response will be found soon.
- Denise Distefano – raised several criticisms of Ms. Haines roles in the negotiations with the East Haddam Ambulance Association and expressed her concern for the lack of transparency.

Ms. Haines read emails into the record from Giovanna Watters, Amalia Shaltiel, Ken Tosi, and Margy Roberts supporting the establishment of an Ambulance Task Force.

- Denise Distefano – read an email from Mark Theide in support of the creation of an Ambulance Task Force.
- Nick D’Aquila – advised that he had attended the Public Hearing to discuss the proposal that the Fire Department assume responsibility for managing the Town’s response to emergency medical calls and asked why the Fire Department staff was allowed to attend the meeting in their dress uniforms. He stated that he is a former firefighter, EMT, and combat veteran and he noted that dress uniforms are typically reserved for official events and ceremonies; he commented that he felt the Fire Department’s attendance the Public Hearing in full dress uniforms was an act of intimidation.
- Jay Moreau – voiced his opinion that the salary expense for the Fire Department and Ambulance Association should not be considered in the evaluation of which organization should oversee the Town’s emergency medical response because the Town will have to bear that cost no matter what decision is made. He said he is skeptical that a Task Force can resolve the matter because of the negative history between the two organizations.
- Laurie D’Aquila – concurred with Mr. Moreau’s comment about the appropriateness of assigning the salary expense for the Fire Department’s career staff primarily as an EMS cost and provided justification for her opinion.

10. Selectmen’s Discussion

A. Liaison Reports: Ms. Bourgoin advised that the Sustainability Committee will be hosting a Repair Café at the Grange on August 25th between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. She stated that, in addition to repair work that will be offered, there will also be a clothes/toy/school supplies swap at the event.

B. Other: There were no other items discussed at the meeting.

11. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to adjourn the meeting at 9:53 p.m.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Erik Dill, Secretary