Meeting Minutes

Town of East Haddam
Redevelopment Agency

Date: August 13, 2026

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair William DiCristofaro at 7:00 PM at the Municipal Office Complex, Meeting Room 1. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Attendance

Redevelopment Agency Members Present: William DiCristofaro, Andrew Lord, Randy Dill, Jacquelin Nowell, John Cotter, James Curtin, Cameron Hendry, Jeff Miller, Scott Brown, and Daniel Cobleigh.

Absent Members: None.

Other(s) Present: Matthew Conroy.

Absent Other(s): Harvey Thomas and Thomas Sevigny.

Additional Attendees: Richard Carella, Legal Counsel to the Agency; Todd Gelston, First Selectman; Robert Casner, Chairman, East Haddam Economic Development Commission; Tommy Boston, VHB; and Jim Ventres, Land Use Administrator.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Meeting – July 9, 2026

Randy Dill noted that on page 4, Jim Ventres' title should be corrected to **Land Use Administrator**.

Motion: To approve the July 9, 2026 meeting minutes as corrected.

Cotter/Curtin

Passed with Andrew Lord abstaining.

3. Committee Reports

a. Executive

Nothing to report.

b. Environmental

John Cotter reported that completion of the environmental report is anticipated by the **end of August 2026**.

c. Finance

Jeff Miller reported that the Board of Selectmen had approved the resolution for the Town to participate in the **Connecticut Municipal Development Authority (CMDA)**. Miller noted that the Town's participation in CMDA, together with the Village Master Plan, may provide opportunities for future funding in support of the redevelopment effort.

d. Community Engagement

Nothing to report.

e. Legal

Attorney Richard Carella, Legal Counsel to the Agency, provided an overview of the statutory authority, responsibilities, and procedures governing the Redevelopment Agency, with particular emphasis on familiarizing newer members with the Agency's role. He explained that the ten-member Agency acts by a majority of its entire membership; therefore, **six affirmative votes are required to carry a motion**, regardless of the number of members present.

Carella reviewed the process for eventual approval of a redevelopment plan, including review by the Planning & Zoning Commission for consistency with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development, a public hearing by the Redevelopment Agency, required statutory findings and Agency approval, followed by submission for final Town Meeting approval.

In response to members' questions, Carella advised that the Agency has authority to acquire interests in real property within the redevelopment area, including through negotiated transactions, and may sell, lease, or otherwise transfer property, subject to

applicable Town Meeting approval requirements. He explained that negotiated acquisitions are not necessarily limited to appraised value, although an appraisal or other supporting valuation would be prudent.

Carella also reviewed the significant limitations applicable to eminent domain under the Town ordinance and discussed member liability. He advised that Agency members act as an agency of the Town and have governmental immunity when acting in that capacity. He further explained that substantive matters such as final redevelopment plan approval, property acquisition, and financing ultimately require Town Meeting action under his reading of the Town ordinance.

f. Master Planning

Tommy Boston of VHB and Jim Ventres, Land Use Administrator, provided a detailed Phase II Master Planning update.

Boston reported that, following further coordination with Ventres, VHB determined that development of a separate Form-Based Code may not be necessary. VHB's review identified the Town's existing **East Haddam Village District regulations and Appendix 6 Design Guidelines** as providing substantial design and compatibility standards applicable to the redevelopment area.

Boston reviewed the scope of the existing guidelines, noting that they address visual and pedestrian connections to the Connecticut River; protection of wetlands, streams, floodplains, rock outcrops, forested areas, scenic features and habitat; smaller dispersed parking areas and pedestrian access; landscape buffers, bioretention and permeable materials; and architectural compatibility standards addressing building materials, rooflines, windows, human-scale design, entrances, awnings and the treatment of larger building façades.

Ventres provided historical background on the development of the Village District regulations and Design Guidelines. He explained that the regulations grew out of an earlier Smart Growth planning initiative involving extensive public participation and were subsequently adopted as part of the Town's existing land-use regulatory framework. He noted that the guidelines were specifically developed to ensure that new development within the Village reflects its historic development pattern and architectural character.

Ventres further explained that the Design Guidelines intentionally provide developers with both written and visual guidance based upon the existing architectural character of East

Haddam Village. He noted that approximately 85 properties within the area contribute to the historic district and explained that new development should draw upon the established architectural vocabulary of the Village rather than introduce an unrelated design character.

In response to members' questions concerning building height, Ventres explained the history of the Town's discussions with the Connecticut River Gateway Commission. He reported that the Village District received an exemption from the otherwise applicable two-and-one-half-story limitation to accommodate development compatible with existing larger historic structures, particularly the Goodspeed Opera House. He explained that the regulations permit additional height subject to an established maximum elevation of approximately **92.5 feet above sea level**, corresponding to the Goodspeed Opera House elevation.

Boston stated that the existing Village District Design Guidelines accomplish many of the objectives VHB had intended to address through a new Form-Based Code. VHB recommended relying upon the existing Appendix 6 framework to establish expectations for urban and historic scale, natural setting, views, landscaping, public spaces, lighting, parking and architectural design.

Water and Sewer Infrastructure: Members discussed water and wastewater capacity in response to recurring questions regarding whether utility infrastructure could constrain redevelopment. It was noted that the Village wastewater system has a design capacity of approximately **50,000 gallons per day** and is currently averaging approximately **18,000 gallons per day**, with a recent peak day of approximately **33,000 gallons**. The discussion indicated that substantial wastewater capacity remains available for future development. The Agency also discussed potable water, recognizing that the redevelopment area presently relies on private wells and that a public water supply solution will need to be addressed as planning advances.

Traffic and Mobility: Boston reported that VHB's comprehensive traffic and mobility study is underway, with traffic counts intended to capture important seasonal conditions, including late-summer activity and conditions before and after the start of school. Boston explained that the study will evaluate **three principal access alternatives** for the redevelopment area, together with additional roadway and traffic-management concepts, including modifications to the Lumberyard intersection, a potential traffic circle, and a dedicated pickup/drop-off area near Goodspeed.

Ventres provided historical context regarding the earlier **Fuss & O'Neill traffic study**, noting that its proposed approach had previously been reviewed with CTDOT and had

received a generally favorable preliminary response. Members recognized, however, that the current VHB traffic study remains ongoing and that **no preferred traffic or access alternative has been selected**. The alternatives will also be discussed with prospective developers to obtain market and feasibility feedback before a preferred concept is developed and subsequently coordinated with CTDOT.

Developer Outreach and RFEI: Boston discussed accelerating developer outreach to obtain practical market feedback while Phase II work continues. The Agency's **September 10, 2026 regular meeting** will include a developer roundtable, with the exact meeting time to be determined. Agency members will participate in the discussion with invited developers.

The roundtable is intended to test the redevelopment concept against real-world development considerations, including density, building configuration, parking, access, infrastructure, market demand, financial feasibility, and other factors affecting whether the concept can successfully attract private investment. Jeff Miller participated in the discussion regarding prospective developers and outreach.

Following the September 10 developer roundtable, VHB will use the feedback received to further evaluate and refine the redevelopment concept, including its market and financial feasibility. Boston discussed then bringing the refined concept back through the public engagement process, potentially through a public workshop in October, before advancing toward preparation of the formal **Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI)**.

Boston emphasized that the developer roundtable is intended as an information-gathering and market-testing exercise rather than a developer selection process.

No motions or formal votes were taken under Master Planning.

4. Bills

No bills were presented for approval.

5. Old Business

There was no Old Business to report.

6. New Business

There was no New Business to report.

7. Next Scheduled Meetings

The next regular meeting of the Agency will be held on **August 27, 2026**. Tommy Boston of VHB is expected to present an evaluation of the conceptual redevelopment plan against the Appendix 6 Village District Design Guidelines and provide information to assist the Agency in preparing for discussions with prospective developers.

The **September 10, 2026** regular meeting will be dedicated primarily to the developer roundtable. The exact meeting time remains to be determined.

8. Public Comment

Robert Casner, Chairman of the East Haddam Economic Development Commission, commented on the evening's presentations and provided historical perspective regarding previous planning and redevelopment efforts in East Haddam Village. He noted that a substantial amount of planning work has occurred over the years and expressed support for drawing upon that prior work as the Agency continues the current redevelopment planning process.

9. Executive Session

Motion: To enter Executive Session at **8:27 PM** to discuss **Real Estate Matters**.

Lord/Nowell

Passed unanimously.

No guests were invited to participate in Executive Session.

The Agency returned to regular session at **8:45 PM**. No votes or actions were taken during Executive Session.

10. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at **8:45 PM**.

Cotter/Dill

Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

William DiCristofaro
Chairman