Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
August 19, 2026
Regular Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: T. Gelston; E. Dill.
Absent: T. Sevigny.
Also Present: M. Callahan; R. Casner: D. Dill; S. Longobardi; D. Lorusso; J. Miller; A. Ponanski; J. Wolter and other members of the public.

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance: First Selectman Gelston called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Agenda: The Board reviewed the agenda. First Selectman Gelston requested that Item 7.F. Bid Award Discussion – Reappraisal and Revaluation of Real Property for the 2027 Grand List, be postponed to the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

   Motion made by Mr. Gelston, seconded by Mr. Dill, to postpone discussion of Item 7.F. Bid Award Discussion – Reappraisal and Revaluation of Real Property for the 2027 Grand List, to the next Board of Selectmen meeting. Unanimous aye.

   Motion made by Mr. Gelston, seconded by Mr. Dill, to approve the agenda as amended. Unanimous aye.

3. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting of August 5, 2026: First Selectman Gelston stated that he had no corrections, additions, or omissions to the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 5, 2026.

   Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Mr. Gelston, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 5, 2026. Unanimous aye.

4. Correspondence: There was no correspondence reported.

5. First Selectman's Report: First Selectman Gelston reported on the following matters:

   Public Works and Road Paving: Public Works is focusing on paving roads that require only minimal stormwater drainage piping improvements. The roads identified for paving include Hemlock Valley I and II, Old Town Street, Hungerford Road, and Cold Spring Road in the Hadlyme section, with Neptune Avenue in Moodus and Glimmer Glen at Lake Hayward added to the paving program. Paving was expected to begin in the first or second week of September and conclude in mid- to late October, weather permitting.

   Speed Enforcement: The Town has eight electronic speed-monitoring signs in use. First Selectman Gelston emphasized that these are speed-display signs and are not speed cameras or license-plate readers. Six signs are mounted on posts and two are trailer-mounted and movable in response to resident requests.

Police cruisers are also monitoring traffic for adherence to speed limits. In July there were 74 weekday traffic stops, resulting in eight infractions, 58 written warnings, and eight verbal warnings. Monthly traffic stops had increased from 38 in March/April combined, to 55 in May, 60 in June, and 74 in July. Saturday enforcement has also begun, with five stops recorded on the first Saturday. Residents have expressed appreciation for the enforcement, and some have offered their driveways as locations for police cruisers.

New Firehouse: Mr. Gelston reported on the August 3rd Board of Finance informational presentation concerning the proposed new firehouse and attendance at that meeting was nearly full. He advised that the Town is working toward an October 13th referendum. Mr. Gelston noted that no immediate grant funding source has been identified and, if the project is approved, bonding would likely be the funding source.

Ambulance Service: Mr. Gelston reported that the working group studying ambulance service has conducted seven workshops, with another session scheduled. The goal is to provide the best ambulance service at the least cost while maintaining or improving current service capability.

Commercial / Recreational Development:

- The East Haddam Village Redevelopment Agency is working on the next Phase of Site Development and Planning. Mr. Gelston encouraged residents to attend meetings either in person or electronically.
- The Black Birch Golf Course Feasibility Study Committee provided its Report to the Board of Selectmen this week and it will be discussed with the members of the Feasibility Study Committee at tonight's meeting

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Economic Development Commission: Mr. Gelston reported that the Commission now has seven regular members and is expected to meet the following week to elect a new chair. He stated that two alternate positions remain open and directed interested residents to the Town website and the Selectmen's Office volunteer application.

Property Revaluation: Mr. Gelston explained that the Town is required by state law to conduct a property revaluation every five years. He advised that two proposals have been received for the 2027 Grand List revaluation, which will include residential and commercial properties and on-site visits. Mr. Gelston noted that the Assessor is reviewing the proposals and will provide a recommendation.

Revenue Source: Mr. Gelston reported that the Town has two cell phone tower installers interested in the 7 Hood Lane Public Works Site; both potential installers are waiting for input from the cell phone service providers.

A. Black Birch Golf Course Feasibility Study Committee Final Report Discussion: The Board thanked the Black Birch Golf Course Feasibility Study Committee for its work and discussed the Committee's final report at length. The discussion addressed the feasibility of restoring the former Black Birch golf course and the relationship between golf-course restoration, residential development, water and wastewater infrastructure, permitting, financing, and the potential economic benefits to Moodus and East Haddam. The First Selectman read the key sentences of the Study Committee's conclusions and recommendations to the attendees of the Board of Selectmen's meeting.

The Committee discussed the Triggs Memorial Golf Course in Providence, Rhode Island, as an example of a municipal golf property operated under a long-term net lease. The course reportedly provides the City with approximately $269,000–$279,000 annually, while the private operator has made substantial capital improvements and operated the course profitably.

The Committee estimated that substantial capital investment would be required to restore the Black Birch property. Discussion included the need for extensive site work, tree removal, grading, drainage improvements, irrigation, and other course infrastructure. The Committee indicated that the irrigation system is only partially usable and that completing an 18-hole irrigation system could cost approximately $1.5 million or more. Total restoration and related development costs were discussed in the range of approximately $10 million to $20 million, exclusive of certain acquisition considerations.

A significant portion of the discussion concerned the existing approved residential site plan, which was reported to remain valid through 2031. The Committee explained that the existing plan and a fully restored golf course could not readily coexist without substantial changes. The potential community septic system was identified as a major issue, including its cost, permitting requirements, possible impact on golf-course playability, and the need to coordinate with Connecticut Water and state and local regulatory agencies. The Board and Committee also discussed water supply, water-diversion permitting, ledge and soil conditions, and stormwater requirements.

The Committee discussed whether a nine-hole golf course would be economically viable. The operators consulted by the Committee generally believed that a nine-hole course would produce materially less revenue and would not provide the same destination attraction as an 18-hole course. The Committee concluded that an 18-hole course offered greater potential as a regional recreational and economic asset.

The Committee also discussed the possibility of combining residential development with restoration of the golf course in a coordinated, privately financed development. Members emphasized that the Town should not become the owner or financial operator of the golf course, but could potentially act as a facilitator in bringing together a properly capitalized developer, golf-course operator, and other necessary parties. The Committee expressed willingness to continue assisting the Town in that capacity, including helping identify qualified developers and evaluating proposals.

The Board discussed the economic-development potential of the property, including the possibility that golf-related visitors and new residents could support businesses in Moodus and throughout East Haddam. The discussion also recognized that the existing property has produced limited residential development over many years and that a new, well-capitalized development approach could provide an opportunity to achieve both residential and recreational objectives.

6. Public Comment: Robert Casner praised the Black Birch Golf Course Feasibility Study Committee for its work and described the property as a significant opportunity for East Haddam. He stated that an 18-hole golf course could benefit Moodus, the Banner community, and the Town economically and could attract visitors from surrounding communities. He encouraged the Board to continue the effort, identify the right developer, and favor a unified ownership and development approach for the approximately 400-acre property.

Michael Callahan, 21 Augusta Circle, echoed Mr. Casner's comments and commended the Committee for producing a comprehensive report. He said the next step should be a comprehensive plan with sufficient safeguards to ensure that commitments are carried out. He emphasized the importance of finding the right developer and ensuring that the development ultimately delivers the promised results.

There were no further public comments.

7. Unfinished Business

A. Cell Tower Discussion – 440 Town Street or 7 Hood Lane: Mr. Gelston reported that there was no new information to report concerning the proposed cell tower. The Board noted that follow-up with the interested party remained necessary.

B. Ethics Commission Discussion on Potential Changes to the Code of Ethics Ordinance: The Board discussed the proposed changes to the Code of Ethics Ordinance and noted that the Town Attorney had reviewed the proposed amendments and provided comments. The Board will meet with the Town Attorney on September 1, 2026 at 12:00 noon to discuss the proposed ordinance changes and other ordinances under consideration.

No motion was made on this item at this time.

C. Agriculture Recommendation for Farm Equipment and Farm Building Tax Exemption Ordinance Discussion: The Board reviewed the status of the Agriculture Commission's recommendation concerning a tax exemption for farm equipment and farm buildings. Mr. Gelston noted that the item will be discussed further at the September 1, 2026 Special Meeting at 12:00 noon, together with additional proposed ordinances.

D. Assessor Recommendation for Exemption for Ambulance-Type and Modified Handicap-Accessible Vehicle Ordinance Discussion: Mr. Gelston reviewed the Assessor's recommendation concerning an exemption for ambulance-type and modified handicap-accessible vehicles. The matter had previously been discussed at the July 15, 2026 Board meeting and will be considered further at the September 1, 2026 special meeting at 12:00 noon.

E. Tax Relief for Elderly & Disabled Ordinance Discussion: Mr. Gelston reviewed materials concerning the Tax Relief for the Elderly and Disabled ordinance. The ordinance is scheduled to sunset with the 2026 Grand List. He noted that, by statute, the Board of Finance establishes the terms of the tax relief ordinance and stated that the matter will, therefore, be forwarded to the Board of Finance for review and action at its next meeting. He advised that after the Board of Finance acts, the matter will return to the Board of Selectmen for consideration of sending it to Town Meeting.

F. Bid Award Discussion – Reappraisal and Revaluation of Real Property for the 2027 Grand List: Discussion of this agenda item was postponed and will be taken up at the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

8. New Business

A. Call for Town Meeting: Mr. Gelston advised that matters previously approved by the Board must be moved forward to a Town Meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Mr. Gelston, 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, September 2, 2026 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 to approve an ordinance entitled "Article III Private Roads" and add to Chapter 285 Streets and Sidewalks Ordinance. Copies of said ordinance are on file in the Town Clerk's Office during normal business hours.

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 $5,000.00 from the Edmund T. and Barbara S. Delaney Fund and Whelen Family Fund at the Community Foundation of Middlesex County for the purpose of supporting summer 2026 camp programs (revenue account 28045-44709-R1099 and expense account 28045033-56900-R1099).

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 $1,000.00 from the M. Jones Family Fund at the Community Foundation of Middlesex County for the purpose of supporting summer 2026 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 $750.00 from the Connecticut Humanities Council for the purpose of supporting America 250 celebrations (revenue account 33050-43000-G3902 and expense account 33055011-58820-G3902).

Item 5: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance to accept a gift in the amount of $500.00 from the Gelston House for the purpose of supporting America 250 celebrations (revenue account 33050-43000-G3902 and expense account 33055011-58820-G3902).

Item 6: To consider and act upon the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen to approve the following resolution:

RESOLUTION TO JOIN THE ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT AS A MEMBER

WHEREAS, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-273b, the Estuary Transit District ("ETD") was established in 1981; and

WHEREAS, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-273b(e) provides that "the legislative body of any municipality may vote to establish a transit district or to join with any one or more municipalities to form such a district. Any municipality may at any time be included in the district if the legislative body thereof so votes and if accepted by a majority vote of the directors of the transit district."; and

WHEREAS, on February 14, 2025, the Board of Directors of the ETD moved to resolve and invite, among others, the Town of East Haddam to join ETD; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of East Haddam determined that it was in its best interests to join and become a member of the ETD; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN OF THE TOWN OF EAST HADDAM, that the Town of East Haddam hereby requests to join the ETD upon acceptance by a majority vote of the ETD Board of Directors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN OF THE TOWN OF EAST HADDAM, that upon such acceptance by a majority vote of the ETD Board of Directors that the Town of East Haddam shall become a member of the ETD in accordance with and pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-273b(e); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN OF THE TOWN OF EAST HADDAM, that First Selectman Todd Gelston is empowered to take any action necessary to effectuate the Town of East Haddam joining the ETD.

The motion passed unanimously.

B. Beer & Wine Approval – Rathbun Library: Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to an August 3, 2026 email from Evelyn Morgen advising that the Rathbun Library is hosting an art show opening on Friday, September 4, 2026 and requesting permission to serve beer and wine.

Motion made by Mr. Gelston, seconded by Mr. Dill, to approve beer and wine service at the Rathbun Library for the "Art Show Opening" on Friday, September 4, 2026. Unanimous aye.

C. Board, Commission and Committee Changes (NLEC)

New Library Exploratory Committee

Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the August 4, 2026 New Library Exploratory Committee minutes and the Committee's recommendation regarding membership.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Mr. Gelston, to change the status of Jennifer Esty from alternate member to regular member on the New Library Exploratory Committee with a term to expire upon completion of final report. Unanimous aye.

D. Tax Refunds: Gelston called the Board's attention to two tax refunds.

Motion made by Mr. Gelston, seconded by Mr. Dill, to award tax refunds in the amounts presented to:

- $150.18 to Kimberly Blanchard and
- $28.38 to Marc & Nancy Schroeder.

Unanimous aye.

9. Selectmen's Discussion

   A. Liaison Reports: There were no liaison reports or additional liaison matters discussed at the meeting.

   B. Other: There were no other matters brought before the Board.

10. Public Comment: There were no other public comments discussed at the meeting.

11. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Mr. Gelston, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,

Erik Dill, Secretary