Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
Wednesday, October 7, 2026
Regular Meeting Minutes

Present: T. Gelston; T. Sevigny Absent: E. Dill
Others Present: K. Dodge; J. Sina; L. Zemienieski, and other members of the public.

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance: First Selectman Todd Gelston called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and the attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Agenda: The agenda was reviewed. No additions or corrections were offered.

   Motion made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Gelston, to approve the agenda as presented. Unanimous aye.

3. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting of September 16, 2026: The Board reviewed the minutes of the September 16, 2026 regular meeting. No additions or corrections were offered.

   Motion made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Gelston, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 16, 2026 as written. Unanimous aye.

4. Correspondence: No correspondence was presented for discussion.

5. First Selectman's Report

   <u>Public Safety – Proposed Firehouse</u>
   First Selectman Gelston reported that, at its September 14 meeting, the Board of Finance voted 3–2 not to approve the resolution authorizing a $15,975,000 appropriation for the proposed new firehouse. The Moodus Firehouse Building Committee has asked the architect, construction manager, and committee to develop additional information in response to residents' and taxpayers' questions, including the rationale for the William F. Palmer site versus the Harris property; the realistic cost of repairing the existing firehouse while meeting new functional needs; the cost of constructing a firehouse in stages; and whether elements of the current design could be removed without compromising function. The additional analysis is expected to take approximately a month. Mr. Gelston noted that a referendum may be possible in January at the earliest, in part because of voting-machine scheduling restrictions. The Building Committee is expected to return to the Board of Finance with further information for another vote.

   <u>Public Safety – Speed Monitoring</u>
   The Town has eight electronic speed-monitoring signs: six fixed signs and two trailer-mounted signs that are moved in response to residents' requests. Mr. Gelston emphasized that these devices are not speed cameras or license-plate readers. He advised that police continue to monitor traffic and provided the following statistics for September: police made

46 traffic stops, issued seven infractions, gave 34 written warnings, and gave five verbal warnings. He stated that these figures were approximately half the previous month's totals; the reason for the decrease was not known.

Public Works – Road Paving
Paving is underway on five roads in East Haddam, one road in Moodus, and one road in the Lake Hayward area. Milling is nearly complete, and work is progressing ahead of the original end-of-October target. Completion before the end of October is considered possible.

Property Revaluation
The Town is undertaking the statutorily required five-year property revaluation, including on-site review of residential and commercial properties. Two vendor proposals had been received, and the lowest-cost vendor was selected. The Assessor has prepared contract details and is negotiating to ensure the requirements are included, following the Town's purchasing ordinance. Work is expected to begin by November 1, 2026, and be completed by January 2028.

Economic and Community Development
The East Haddam Village Redevelopment Agency is in its next phase of site development and planning and is speaking with potential developers. Residents were encouraged to attend Agency meetings in person or watch them on YouTube.

The Economic Development Commission has two open alternate-member positions; applications are available through the Town website. The Commission recently elected Mike Robidoux as chair and has projects it would like to advance. Mr. Gelston also noted that the Commission and Friends of the Rathbun Library are sponsoring Halloween in the Village on October 17 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Cell Tower Update
Two companies had expressed interest in a cell tower at Hood Lane; one remains interested. Mr. Gelston plans to arrange an on-site meeting with ARX Wireless, also identified in the meeting materials as Phoenix Partnership, LLC, and he will provide an update at a future meeting.

A. Board of Assessment Appeals – Fall 2026 Report: Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the Board of Assessment Appeals report, dated September 27, 2026, in their meeting packets. He noted that the BAA held one public hearing in September 2026, with no motor-vehicle appeals. No assessments were adjusted and there were no out-of-pocket expenses. He stated the report listed six hours and twelve hours of work at $16.94 per hour, for a total-charge of $110.11. It was noted that the report stated that appeals were fewer than in prior years, reflecting the new process for motor-vehicle assessments. The Board reviewed the report; no further questions or comments were recorded.

6. Public Comment: The Chair invited public comments. No comments were offered during this portion of the meeting.

7. Unfinished Business

A. Cell Tower Discussion – 440 Town Street or 7 Hood Lane: Mr. Gelston reported that ARX Wireless remained the interested company for the Hood Lane site. The earlier 440 Town Street/firehouse location is no longer being pursued as the preferred location. He stated that an on-site meeting is to be scheduled.

B. Ethics Commission Discussion on Potential Changes to the Code of Ethics Ordinance: Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to a clean revised draft of the Code of Ethical Conduct Ordinance from Town Attorney Owen Weaver included in their meeting packet. The Board discussed the proposed public hearing, tentatively targeted for October 28, 2026, subject to room availability.

Mr. Gelston said the Ethics Commission chair, Kevin Stahley, should be informed of the changes made to the Commission's draft and the anticipated hearing date so Commission members could be available to help answer the public's questions.

It was noted that an additional suggestion included in an email from Selectmen Dill had not yet been incorporated and that the draft could still be revised after the public hearing and before Town Meeting.

The Board had previously voted to hold a public hearing on the proposed changes to the Code of Ethical Conduct Ordinance before sending the matter to Town Meeting. No new motion was made on this item.

C. Agriculture Recommendation for Farm Equipment and Farm Building Tax Exemption Ordinance: Mr. Gelston advised that the draft farm-building tax-exemption ordinance had been forwarded to the Board of Finance for their review and approval prior to proceeding to a public hearing and that the Board of Finance is expected to discuss it at its October 19th meeting.

Mr. Gelston reported that the Agriculture Commission wanted the potential farm equipment exemption increased an additional $250,000, resulting in a potential total exemption of $500,000.00. He noted that a separate draft ordinance for farm equipment would, therefore, be needed. Mr. Gelston said he would follow up with the Assessor.

D. Assessor Recommendation for Exemption for Ambulance-Type and Modified Handicap-Accessible Vehicle Ordinance: Mr. Gelston reported that the potential ordinance for the Exemption for Ambulance-Type and Modified Handicap-Accessible Vehicle Ordinance had been sent to the Board of Finance for review and approval at its September 14th meeting. He advised that Board of Selectmen can proceed to a public hearing after the Board of Finance has taken action on the draft ordinance. The Board awaited the Board of Finance's analysis and recommendation.

E. Tax Relief for Elderly & Disabled Ordinance Discussion: Mr. Gelston reported that the ordinance for Tax Relief for Elderly & Disabled is due to sunset with the 2026 Grand List. He reiterated that state law assigns the Board of Finance responsibility for setting the terms of the tax-relief ordinance and that the draft had been provided to the Board of Finance on September 14th, and the Board of Selectmen was awaiting their response before forwarding the matter to Town Meeting.

F. Town Investment Committee Ordinance Discussion: Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the revised draft Town Investment Committee ordinance from Town Attorney Weaver included in their meeting packet. It was noted that the draft addressed questions raised by the Board, including minority representation and quorum requirements.

Mr. Gelston stated he had shared the draft with Finance Director Belles and planned to discuss it with Town Attorney Gustafson before bringing it up for discussion and recommendation at a future Board meeting.

Mr. Sevigny raised the question of whether the ordinance must be submitted to the Board of Finance prior to a public hearing and Mr. Gelston agreed to ask the Town Attorney.

8. New Business

A. Sina Property Donation Discussion and Potential Resolution: Mr. Gelston stated that Joseph and Janice Sina plan to move out of Town and wish to donate 40.518 acres on Daniels Road to the Town for open space. He advised that the Town Attorney is ordering a title search and reviewing the paperwork and proposed warranty deed submitted by Land Use Administrator Ventres. Mr. Gelston reported that approvals have been obtained from Open Space, Wetlands, and Planning and Zoning.

Provided all the appropriate paperwork has been completed, the Board anticipated considering the donation at its October 21st meeting and forwarding it to a Town Meeting in mid-November.

B. Fee Schedule for Contracted Snow Plowing: The Board discussed the proposed fee schedule for contracted snow removal. It was noted that only one bid had been received, and Public Works Director needs to establish rates for different truck sizes so that contractors would be paid consistently.

Discussion of this agenda item was postponed to the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

C. Beer & Hard Cider Approval – Grange Hall – Moodus Drum & Fife: Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to an email in their meeting packets from Patrick Murray of the Moodus Drum & Fife Corps, dated September 28, 2026 requesting permission to serve beer and hard cider at its annual Muster on October 16 and 17, 2026.

Motion made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Gelston, to approve the serving of beer and hard cider at the Grange Hall for the "Moodus Drum & Fife Muster" on October 16 & 17, 2026. Unanimous aye.

D. Central Regional Tourism District Representative: The Board reviewed the Economic Development Commission's September 17th meeting minutes recommending Juliet Del Rio as East Haddam's representative to the Central Regional Tourism District. Debra Mathiasen had served in the position and will step down to allow Ms. Del Rio to complete the balance of her three-year term, which expires December 31, 2027.

Motion made by Mr. Gelston, seconded by Mr. Sevigny, to appoint Juliet Del Rio as East Haddam's representative to the Central Regional Tourism District, filling the balance of a three-year term to expire December 31, 2027. The motion passed by a unanimous aye vote.

E. Regional Agriculture Council Representative: The Board considered an email from Aaron Taylor, chair of the Agriculture Commission, dated October 6, 2026, recommending Stephanie Cobleigh as East Haddam's representative to the Regional Agriculture Council. No term length was specified.

Motion made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Gelston, to appoint Stephanie Cobleigh as East Haddam's representative to the Regional Agriculture Council. Unanimous aye.

F. Board, Commission and Committee Changes (COA, CC): The Board considered the resignations of Joseph Sina from the Commission on Aging and the Conservation Commission, both effective October 30, 2026.

Commission on Aging
Motion made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Gelston, to accept, with regret, the resignation of Joseph Sina from the Commission on Aging effective October 30, 2026. Unanimous aye.

Conservation Commission
Motion made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Gelston, to accept, with regret, the resignation of Joseph Sina from the Conservation Commission effective October 30, 2026. Unanimous aye.

G. Tax Refunds: Mr. Gelston presented three tax refunds.

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

- $142.49 to Raymond Comstock,
- $290.17 to Honda Lease Trust, and
- $295.42 to Nissan Infinity LT LLC.

Unanimous aye.

9. Selectmen's Discussion

A. Liaison Reports: No liaison reports were offered.

B. Other

Golf Course Committee: Mr. Sevigny asked whether a committee could continue in some form to facilitate efforts to keep the golf course operating as a golf course. Mr. Gelston agreed to draft a proposed committee charge and circulate it before placing the matter on the next meeting agenda.

Grant Writer RFP: The Board discussed the request for proposals and differing views on whether to retain one firm or engage specialized grant writers for particular projects. Mr. Gelston reported that the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities no longer offers its grant-writing program but had provided him with contact information regarding the firm they had been working with.

The Board discussed identifying municipal grant-writing firms and learning their areas of expertise before deciding on how to proceed. Mr. Sevigny volunteered to make phone calls and research potential firms. The discussion also covered possible grant needs for the Library, Board of Education, Sustainability Team, Redevelopment Agency, Firehouse, and Brownfield Remediation.

1. Thunder in the Valley (10/17 Parade at 12:00 noon – Grange Hall): Mr. Gelston stated the October 17th Thunder in the Valley parade beginning at noon and proceeding from Chestelm to the Grange Hall, hosted by the Moodus Drum & Fife.

2. Halloween in the Village (10/17 from 2:00pm to 5:00pm – East Haddam Village): It was noted that Halloween in the Village is scheduled for October 17th from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Mr. Gelston reported that the Department of Transportation and US Coast Guard had agreed to cancel the bridge's 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. marine openings to support pedestrian access, with other openings available earlier or later if needed.

3. Drug Take Back Day (10/24 from 10:00am to 2:00pm – Police Office): The Board noted that Drug Take Back Day is scheduled for October 24th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Police Office.

4. Project Safe Halloween (10/31 from 5:00pm to 8:00pm – Municipal Office Complex): Mr. Gelston advised that Project Safe Halloween is scheduled for October 31th from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Municipal Office Complex.

Ms. Zemienieski mentioned that the Friends of the East Haddam Free Public Library will hold a book sale at the Grange Hall the weekend of October 10-11.

10. Public Comment

Kim Dodge asked about the status of the golf course and whether the Town would consider purchasing and operating it as a municipal golf course. Mr. Gelston responded that the Golf Course Feasibility Committee's report, available on the Town website, recommended that the Town not purchase or operate the course because of the expense, required expertise, and

financial risk. Additionally, he noted that the committee recommended that a well-capitalized private entity purchase and renovate the course and hire an experienced operator. The discussion included estimates that renovation alone could cost at least $10 million over two to three years, in addition to the purchase price.

Ms. Dodge expressed concern that the property could be redeveloped for another use and argued that a golf course could generate revenue and provide tax relief. Board members reiterate that the Town should explore ways to facilitate a qualified purchaser rather than assume the cost and risk of ownership. Mr. Gelston noted that a referendum would require a clear, well-developed proposal. Ms. Dodge expressed interest in serving on a potential committee.

11. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Gelston, to adjourn the meeting at 8:05pm Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Todd H. Gelston, First Selectman