Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Room 3
Wednesday, October 21, 2026
Regular Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: T. Gelston; E. Dill, T. Sevigny
Others Present: L. D'Aquila; T. Carr; R. Dill; J. Miller; A. Ponanski; J. Sina; L. Zemienieski, 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 the attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Agenda: The Board agreed to amend the agenda by moving Item 12, Public Comment, ahead of the Executive Session so that residents' comments could be captured on the YouTube recording.

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

3. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting of October 7, 2026: The Board reviewed the minutes of the October 7, 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 October 7, 2026 as presented. Mr. Dill abstained and the motion passed by a majority of ayes.

4. Correspondence: No correspondence was presented.

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

   Public Safety – Proposed Firehouse
   The Firehouse Building Committee had updated the Board of Finance on the firehouse project and was expected to return to the Board of Selectmen for further discussion of the bond resolution.

   Public Safety – Speed Monitoring
   The Town has eight speed-monitoring signs (six pole-mounted and two trailer-mounted); they are not speed cameras or license plate readers. Police continued traffic enforcement. In September, police made 46 traffic stops, issuing seven infractions, 34 written warnings, and five verbal warnings, compared with 90 stops in August.

   Public Works – Road Paving: Seven roads have been paved—five in Hadlyme and two elsewhere in Town. Completion of driveway aprons, curbing, and painting is expected by month-end. Great Hillwood Road requires stormwater drainage design and construction before paving; drainage work is planned for spring and paving for summer.

Property Revaluation: The Town received two proposals for the required five-year property revaluation and selected the lower-cost vendor. Contract details would be discussed in Executive Session. Mr. Gelston stated that the procurement process followed Chapter 106 of the Town Ordinances.

East Haddam Village Redevelopment Agency: The agency was continuing its next phase of site development and planning, including discussions with potential developers and refinement of site plans. Residents were encouraged to attend or watch meetings.

Economic Development Commission: The Commission filled three regular-member vacancies and now has seven regular members, but two alternate positions remain open. Michael Robidoux was elected chair. Mr. Gelston noted the strong community turnout for the Halloween in the Village event.

Long Range Capital Improvements Committee: The committee met October 1st and discussed using the Town's strategic plans to guide capital priorities rather than developing a list that is later displaced by budget constraints. The next meeting was scheduled for November 5th.

Revenue opportunities: Two cell-tower companies were no longer actively interested in the Hood Lane site. Mr. Gelston said he had asked them for an explanation and would remove this item from future agendas until there was a new development.

6. Public Comment

Laurie D'Aquila - representing the East Haddam Volunteer Ambulance Association, presented the annual report. She advised that the agency received 1,020 calls, its highest total to date. The mutual-aid rate was 1.76%, with 18 calls requiring an outside ambulance; East Haddam Ambulance assisted other towns 84 times. Reported response metrics included a 1.79-minute dispatch-to-ready time and a 9 minute time to scene. Approximately 30% of calls required advanced life support, and 69% were medical calls. The service has increased its volunteers to 15 and has 12 per-diem staff. A second-ambulance staffing shortage remained a concern; 119 second-ambulance calls went to mutual aid during the year. The agency participated in more than 25 community events and encouraged residents to obtain reflective address markers through Easthaddam.org. A cardiac-safety event was planned for February 20th.

7. Unfinished Business

   A. Cell Tower Discussion — 440 Town Street or 7 Hood Lane: Mr. Gelston reported that neither of the two companies was currently interested in installing a cell tower at the Hood Lane site. This item will be removed from future agendas until there is further activity.

B. Ethics Commission Discussion on Potential Changes to the Code of Ethics Ordinance: The Board reviewed substantial proposed revisions to the Code of Ethical Conduct. Copies, including cleanup language from Attorney Owen Weaver, were provided in the October 7th meeting packets. A public hearing is scheduled for October 28, 2026. Stronger language concerning false statements, requested by Selectman Erik Dill, has been circulated for consideration and could be introduced at the hearing. Members expressed general support for the revisions and thanked the Ethics Commission for its work. Mr. Gelston had shared earlier Board edits with Ethics Commission Chair Kevin Staehly.

C. Agriculture Recommendation for Farm Building Tax Exemption Ordinance Discussion: Mr. Gelston advised that the proposed farm-building tax exemption remained with the Board of Finance for review and approval. The Board of Finance received the information on September 14th. Ms. Zemienieski recommended combining this and other proposed ordinances into one public hearing, if appropriate.

D. Agriculture Recommendation for Farm Equipment Tax Exemption Ordinance Discussion: Mr. Gelston reported that state law allows an exemption of up to $250,000.00 for farm equipment, and the Assessor reported that no equipment exemption currently approached that threshold; the highest was approximately $112,000.00. The Board's expressed view was to retain the $250,000.00 level for now rather than pursue a local increase to $500,000.00.

E. Assessor Recommendation for Exemption for Ambulance-Type and Modified Handicap-Accessible Vehicle Ordinance Discussion: Mr. Gelston stated that the proposed ordinance would restore the exemption that had been discontinued for the 2025 Grand List because the Town had been granting it without a local-option ordinance. If adopted, it would allow the Assessor to issue certificates of correction for 2025 applicants and continue the exemption in future years. The item was awaiting Board of Finance review, expected at its November meeting.

F. Tax Relief for Elderly & Disabled Ordinance Discussion: Mr. Gelston advised that this ordinance is due to sunset with the 2026 Grand List. He noted that the Board of Finance sets the terms under state law and that the Board of Finance would review the request at its November meeting before it returned to the Board of Selectmen.

G. Town Investment Committee Ordinance Discussion: Mr. Gelston stated that a revised draft ordinance had been received from Town Counsel and shared with Finance Director Belles. He noted that he would ask Town Attorney Gustafson whether the Board of Finance needed to vote on the ordinance or whether sharing it with that board as a courtesy would be sufficient, then bring the matter back to a future meeting.

H. Sina Property Donation Discussion and Potential Resolution: Mr. Gelston advised that Joseph and Janice Sina proposed donating 40.518 acres on Daniels Road to the Town as open space. He stated that the title search had been completed, and a revised warranty deed and schedules A and B had been provided by the Town Attorney. The Board reviewed the documents and indicated they were acceptable for further processing. The plan is to bring the matter back to the Board of Selectmen on November 4th and to Town Meeting on November 18th.

I. Fee Schedule for Contracted Snow Plowing: The Board reviewed Public Works Director Don Angersola's October 21st memo summarizing submitted rates and recommending hourly rates for contracted snow removal. The rates would also apply if the Town used other contractors.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Mr. Sevigny, to accept the recommendation of the Public Works Director and set the snow plowing rates as follows:

- Up to 10,000 GVW with plow and sander — $200.00 per hour;
- Up to 10,000 GVW with plow and V-Jet sander — $225.00 per hour;
- Between 10,000 and 25,999 GVW with plow and sander — $240.00 per hour;
- Over 26,000 GVW with plow and V-Jet sander — $330.00 per hour;
- 3.5 Yard Loader — $200.00 per hour.

The motion passed unanimously.

8. New Business

A. Discussion Regarding the Potential of Creating a Black Birch Golf Course Follow-up Committee: Representatives of the prior Black Birch study committee discussed continuing work toward a solution for the golf course, including collaboration with the property owner, Town, and Planning and Zoning, and identifying potential state and federal grant funding. Members discussed a possible follow-up committee, its charge, meeting frequency, meeting-room availability, and the need to maintain agendas and minutes. The former committee members will come back to a future meeting with some suggested language for a committee charge.

B. Board, Commission and Committee Changes: The Board considered a Conservation Commission membership change.

Motion made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Dill, to change the status of David Walls from alternate member to regular member, effective October 30, 2026 to fill a vacancy with a term to expire June 30, 2028 on the Conservation Commission. Unanimous aye.

C. Tax Refunds: Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to three tax refunds.

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

- $316.08 to VW Credit Leasing LTD;
- $53.82 to Enterprise FM Trust, and

- $327.72 to Randolph Forsyth II.

Unanimous aye.

9. Selectmen's Discussion

A. Liaison Reports: Mr. Sevigny reported the following:

- The East Haddam Village Redevelopment Agency's November 12th meeting was expected to include finalized traffic, sewer, and water studies.
- He had spoken with a grant writer who had assisted the EHVRA and was awaiting responses from two other grant-writing services. He expected to provide options at the next meeting, including individual grant writers on an as-needed basis or a firm. Ms. Zemienieski shared an example of Hartford's request for proposals for on-call grant-writing services.

Additional discussion covered local road and culvert work, easements needed for state/local bridge projects, and the Pine Brook crossing. Participants discussed the need to complete easements and bring them to the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting for approval. The engineering specifications for the Pine Brook project called for wood railings because it is a scenic road.

B. Other

1. Drug Take Back Day (10/24 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. - Police Office): Residents were reminded that unwanted medications could be brought to the Police Office in the Municipal Office Complex on Saturday, October 24th, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

2. Public Hearing - Code of Ethical Conduct (10/28/26, at 7:00 p.m. – Municipal Office Complex): The Board reminded residents of the public hearing on proposed Code of Ethical Conduct changes, scheduled for October 28th at 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Office Complex.

3. Project Safe Halloween (10/31 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. – Municipal Office Complex): Project Safe Halloween was announced for October 31th from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Municipal Office Complex.

12. Public Comment (moved ahead of Executive Session)

Mr. Randolph Dill raised concerns about scenic-road work at the Molly Brook crossing on Beebe Road, including the width of the road/bridge area, metal guardrails that were viewed as inconsistent with the scenic-road character, possible encroachment into wetlands and the pond, and beaver activity affecting culverts. Mr. Dill noted that the issue had been discussed at the Inland Wetlands Commission and asked that it be addressed with Public Works. Board members discussed safety benefits of the installed railings, grading and drainage concerns, and possible measures to limit erosion and beaver access. Mr. Dill asked if he could reach out to Mr. Angersola to discuss the guardrails.

Mr. Gelston discussed the easement documents needed for the Beebe Road culvert replacement with Cloverdale Farms and Mr. Dill noted that they are ready to sign them and would reach out to Mr. Ventres for the documents.

Tim Carr asked about "Right to Farm" signs for the Town and Mr. Gelston confirmed that signs had been designed and locations selected. He stated that he was working with the Connecticut Department of Transportation for approval because the proposed locations were on state highways. He noted that approximately eight signs were planned. One of the eight signs is on a town road.

10. Executive Session — Reappraisal and Revaluation of Real Property for the 2027 Grand List Project — Proposal Negotiations Discussion

    Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Mr. Sevigny, to enter into executive session for the purpose of negotiations for the Reappraisal and Revaluation of Real Property for the 2027 Grand List bid proposal and to invite Executive Manager Linda Zemienieski into this session at 8:47 pm. Unanimous aye.

    Selectmen returned to regular session at 9:02 pm. No motions or decisions were made.

11. Potential Action on Reappraisal and Revaluation of Real Property for the 2027 Grand List Proposal Agreements

    Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Mr. Sevigny, to award a contract for Reappraisal and Revaluation of Real Property for the 2027 Grand List to Vision Government Solutions, Inc. in the amount of $130,320.00 for a majority portion of this project with a total project cost including subcontractor needs not to exceed $228,000.00. Unanimous aye.

13. Adjournment**:** There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Dill, to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Erik Dill, Secretary