EAST HADDAM BOARD OF FINANCE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Monday, August 3, 2026 – 7:00 PM

Meeting Room 1 & 2 / Via YouTube Live

Participating: Debra Denette
Maureen Goff
Scott W. Jezek (remotely)
Eric Kolasinski
Harvey Thomas

Absent: Joseph Corbett

Others: V. Belles; R. Casner; C. Mansfield, D. Stein, and other members of the public

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairwoman Goff called the Special Meeting of the East Haddam Board of Finance to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Kolasinski made a motion to move Item 9a, the Moodus Firehouse Building Committee presentation, forward to the first item of business before Guest and Audience Comments. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion passed.

9a. Moodus Firehouse Building Committee – Presentation of Firehouse Project

The Board received a presentation from the Moodus Firehouse Building Committee. Craig Manfield, Chair of the Building Committee, and David Stein of Silver Petrucelli & Associates, architects and engineers, presented the project. Several committee members were also present.

The presenters reviewed the history of the project, explaining that the original renovation committee determined that the existing firehouse could not reasonably be renovated to meet current public-safety building standards. The committee subsequently became a building committee and evaluated alternative sites before determining that the existing Moodus location remained important for response coverage and ISO considerations.

The presentation described the operational changes affecting modern fire departments, including paid staffing, overnight sleeping requirements, expanded EMS responsibilities, larger apparatus, increased training and storage needs, and current firefighter health, safety, OSHA, ventilation and contamination-control requirements. The proposed facility would provide separated apparatus, gear, training, administrative and residential areas, including dedicated bunk rooms, showers and support spaces.

The proposed building was described as approximately 14,500 square feet, with five drive-through apparatus bays, dedicated equipment and gear areas, living quarters, offices, training space, site improvements, a new well and septic system, stormwater controls, and systems intended to improve energy efficiency and sustainability. The project would also be prepared for a future solar installation.

The committee reviewed project costs and value-engineering efforts. The design-development estimate had been approximately $15.16 million; the committee subsequently refined the project, removed non-essential elements such as a proposed gym, changed exterior and roofing materials, and incorporated site-related costs identified through geotechnical work. The committee reported that the design was approximately 98–99% complete and approaching the bidding stage.

The committee stated that construction costs had increased and that delaying the project could result in additional escalation. The current plan anticipated bidding in the fall, construction beginning in approximately January or February, roughly eleven months of construction, and completion in 2028. The committee also described continued public outreach, a project website, informational materials, and a planned path through the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Town Meeting and referendum.

The committee presented an estimated tax impact of approximately $224 annually, or about 61 cents per day, for a home assessed at $250,000, noting that the estimate could change as project and financing numbers developed.

Board members asked questions concerning the location of the firehouse, ISO coverage, response times, construction comparisons with other Connecticut communities, financing, the town's long-term capital plan, tax impact, temporary apparatus storage during construction, and the relationship between the project and the town's outstanding audit. The committee explained that the project had been incorporated into long-term capital planning and that financing would ultimately be addressed through the town's established capital and debt-planning process.

Mr. Jezek participated remotely and raised questions concerning the financial capacity of the Town, the percentage of the grand list supported by residential taxpayers, comparisons with other communities, and the effect of the delayed audit on borrowing. The committee stated that its charge was to develop the building and project cost and that ultimate financing was outside the committee's charge.

2. Guest and Audience Comments

Bob Casner addressed the Board regarding the firehouse project and expressed concern about the project cost and the Town's broader capital-planning process. He acknowledged the need for the firehouse but questioned the Town's overall approach to long-term capital needs and the timing of a project of this magnitude.

Other members of the public expressed their opinions about the firehouse project.

3. Correspondence

a. Letter from H. Thomas

Ms. Goff called the Board’s attention to a letter in their meeting packets from Harvey Thomas in which he expressed his opposition to installing a LED sign in front of the Municipal Office Complex

4. Approval of Minutes

a. Approval of June 8, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes

Ms. Goff called the Board’s attention to the draft minutes of the June 8, 2026 regular meeting in their meeting packets. There were no corrections. The minutes were approved as distributed.

5. Chairman's Report

a. Audit Update

Ms. Goff reported that a draft audit had been issued. She stated that Ms. Belles is completing the Management's Discussion and Analysis (MD&A) section, with the intent to return the completed material to the auditors by the end of the week so that the audit could be issued shortly thereafter.

b. Liaison Reports

Ms. Goff reported meeting with the First Selectman and the Chair of the Board of Education. She advised that the Board of Education's business director position is vacant. Ms. Goff noted that the Board of Finance will provide written direction concerning deliverables, dates and sequencing, and expected to continue working with the Board of Education as the position was filled.

Ms. Goff also discussed an anticipated visit from Leslie Zoll/CLA in September and the use of audit-management software to organize and track audit deliverables among the Finance Director, Tax Collector, Assessor, Board of Education and other responsible parties.

c. Subcommittee Reports – Financial Policies

Mr. Thomas reported that the Financial Policies subcommittee had discussed several potential interface points that could be established with the Town Assessor which they felt would be helpful in getting the Town's statistical information in better order.

6. First Selectman's Report

First Selectman Gelston reported on traffic enforcement, noting that speed-limit monitoring signs are not speed cameras or license-plate readers. He stated that in June, the police conducted approximately 60 traffic stops, resulting in five infractions, 50 written warnings and four verbal warnings.

Mr. Gelston reported that the Redevelopment Agency continued work on its second phase and he encouraged residents to participate in the Agency's meetings. He stated that the Black Birch Golf Course feasibility study committee had provided its report which will discussed at the August 19th Board of Selectmen meeting.

Mr. Gelston advised that the Economic Development Commission had two vacant alternate member positions and he encouraged interested residents to apply.

Mr. Gelston reported positively on the July 11th America 250 celebration, noting strong feedback from attendees. He also reported that the Town's five-year property revaluation was underway, with two bids received and a bid-review committee expected to make a recommendation.

7. Finance Director's Report

Finance Director Belles reported that the Town was closing fiscal year 2026, completing the 2025 audit, opening fiscal year 2027, and beginning preparation for the fiscal year 2028 budget. She stated that year-end financial statements were not presented because reconciliations, particularly on the Board of Education side, remained outstanding.

8. Old Business

There was no old business discussed at the meeting.

9. New Business

b. Grant Authorization Request – BOE Safety and Security Grant

The Board discussed a second opportunity to apply for a U.S. Department of Justice School Violence Prevention Program grant. The proposed grant would provide lockdown, alert, access-control and door-security upgrades at each school building. The requested grant amount was $500,000 with a required Town match of $125,000 The Board discussed the effect of receiving a smaller award and clarified that a smaller award would result in fewer improvements rather than an increased Town contribution.

Motion was made by Ms. Denette to authorize the grant application presented by the Board of Education to apply for a grant from the US Department of Justice (DOJ) School Violence Prevention Program to provide lockdown and door security upgrades to each school building. The grant amount requested is $500,000 with a Town match amount of $125,000 Mr. Jezek seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion passed

c. Capital Transfer Request – Department of Public Works

The Board considered a request from the Department of Public Works to transfer unused balances from closed capital projects to the DPW plow account to complete the purchase of a plow truck. During discussion, it was clarified that a reference to the Board of Education in supporting paperwork was a typographical error and that the request concerned the Department of Public Works.

Motion was made by Ms. Denette to authorize a transfer totaling $98,422 from the following closed DPW projects Capital Account 33250013-58926 - $3,949 from C0222 Pole Barn. $29,263 from Public Works Truck #8 C0228. $15,660 from Public Works Tuck #9 C0239. $6,444 from Public works Truck #9 C0240. $3,428 from PW John Deere Loader C0244. $477 from Transfer Station Scale House C0295. $20,009 PW Garage Siding C0313 and $19,192 from PW Falls Bashan Culvert Design C0237 and to request that the Board of Selectmen schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Harvey seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion passed.

d. Grant Acceptance – Edmund T. and Barbara S. Delaney Fund and Whelen Family Endowed Fund

Motion was made by Ms. Denette to accept a grant in the amount of $5,000 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). and request the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Kolasinski seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion passed

e. Grant Acceptance – M. Jones Fund at the Community Foundation of Middlesex County

A question was raised concerning a date appearing in grant correspondence. It was explained that the Town was completing the required procedural acceptance through Town Meeting and that the prior grant acceptance documentation had been signed.

Motion was made by Ms. Denette to accept a grant in the amount of $1,000 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). and request the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Kolasinski seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion passed.

f. Grant Acceptance – Connecticut Humanities Council for America 250 Celebrations

Motion made by Ms. Denette to accept a grant in the amount of $750 from the Connecticut Humanities Council for the purpose of supporting America 250 celebrations (revenue account 33050-43000-G3902 and expense account 33055011-58820-G3902) and request the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Kolasinski seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion passed.

g. Gift Acceptance – Gelston House for America 250 Celebration

Motion made by Ms. Denette to accept a monetary gift in the amount of $500 from the Gelston House for the purpose of supporting America 250 celebrations (revenue account 33050-43000-G3902 and expense account 33055011-58820-G3902) and request the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Jezek seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion passed.

10. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Kolasinski made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Denette seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:06 PM.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Denette