Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Room 1
September 1, 2026
Special Meeting Minutes

Present: T. Gelston; E. Dill, T. Sevigny
Others Present: V. Belles, Atty. J. Gustafson (remotely), R. Lambert. Atty. O. Weaver (remotely), Linda Zemienieski

1. Call To Order and Pledge of Allegiance: First Selectman Todd Gelston called the Board of Selectmen's special meeting to order at 12:02 p.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Ethics Commission Discussion on Potential Changes to the Code of Ethics Ordinance: The Board discussed proposed revisions to the Code of Ethics Ordinance prepared by Attorney Kari Olsen, together with comments and a proposed change from Attorney Owen Weaver. The proposed revisions included a new conflict-of-interest disclosure form. Attorney Weaver recommended adding to the definition of a gift information that is exempt from disclosure under FOIA.

   Attorney Weaver raised questions concerning proposed language stating that persons should strive to avoid activities that may be seen or perceived as a conflict of interest, noting that the language could create a broader, more subjective basis for an ethics complaint based on an appearance of impropriety. He also questioned who would determine whether an appearance by a public employee or official before a board, on behalf of a third party, was in the best interest of the Town.

   The Board discussed safeguards against the possible weaponization of ethics complaints, the role of the Town Attorney, and the importance of providing a respondent an opportunity to present their side. The attorneys explained that the proposed procedure contains confidentiality and probable-cause protections and that representation issues would depend on the particular facts and potential conflicts.

   The Board also discussed when the proposed conflict-of-interest disclosure form would be filed. The discussion indicated that the form would be completed when a conflict or potential conflict becomes apparent, with the proposed ordinance providing for filing within seven days. The Board noted that training would likely be appropriate for members of boards and commissions.

   Following discussion, the Board agreed to remove the proposed "appearance of impropriety" sentence from the conflict-of-interest section and to revise the language concerning appearances before boards so that an appearance is permitted when it is within the scope of duties explicitly established for the position. The Board reached consensus to proceed toward

a public hearing, with the changes to be communicated to the Ethics Commission chair before the matter is formally advanced.

3. Agriculture Recommendation For Farm Equipment and Farm Building Tax Exemption Ordinance Discussion: The Board discussed the proposed local-option tax exemption for farm buildings and the related issue of the farm-equipment exemption. It was explained that Connecticut law already provides a mandatory farm-equipment exemption, subject to the statutory criteria and timely application, and that the current state exemption is up to $250,000. A further local-option exemption for farm equipment would require a separate ordinance.

   The proposed farm-building exemption would permit an exemption from assessed value for qualifying buildings used actually and exclusively in farming. The Board discussed the proposed $100,000 exemption per eligible building, the application requirements, and the fiscal impact. The Assessor reported that eight parcels classified as farmland had combined farm-building assessments resulting in an estimated grand-list reduction of $398,370 and an estimated revenue loss of $11,421.27 at the proposed level. The Board also discussed the possibility that additional property owners could qualify.

   The Board reviewed language concerning qualifying and disqualifying structures and discussed revisions to clarify the ordinance. Attorney Weaver reviewed applicable case law concerning voting following recusals and advised that, if two members recused themselves while remaining present, the remaining member could constitute the voting member of the Board.

   The Board discussed the process for advancing the farm-building ordinance. The Board favored obtaining Board of Finance input before proceeding to a public hearing. The Board also discussed whether to pursue an additional local-option farm-equipment exemption beyond the existing $250,000 state exemption and agreed to seek input from the Agriculture Commission before deciding whether an additional ordinance was warranted.

4. Assessor Recommendation for Exemption for Ambulance-Type and Modified Handicap-Accessible Vehicle Ordinance Discussion: The Assessor presented the proposed local-option exemption for ambulance-type and modified handicap-accessible vehicles. The Board was advised that the exemption is authorized under Connecticut General Statutes §12-81C and would require local adoption. The proposed ordinance would define qualifying modified vehicles and establish the application process.

   The Assessor reported historical fiscal impacts of the exemption, including an estimated revenue loss of $1,896.85 for 2024, $885.49 for 2023, and $997.30 for 2022, as discussed during the meeting. The exemption had not been granted for the 2025 Grand List after it was determined that the local-option authority had not been formally adopted.

   The Board discussed the proposed effective date and the possibility of issuing certificates of correction for qualifying vehicles for the affected Grand List. The attorneys indicated that the

proposed language tracked the applicable statute. The Board agreed that the matter should be referred to the Board of Finance for input and then proceed to a public hearing.

5. Town Investment Committee Ordinance Discussion: First Selectman Todd Gelston presented the proposed Town Investment Committee concept. The Board discussed establishing a committee to provide coordination, transparency, continuity, and oversight concerning the Town's various investments and funds, including funds associated with the Board of Education, cemeteries, libraries, and other Town interests.

   The discussion emphasized the value of having a centralized understanding of how the various funds are invested, their purposes, expected income, and how investment information could inform the budget process. The Board discussed the importance of the Town Treasurer's involvement and the possibility that the committee could develop an investment policy and plan and establish bylaws addressing communications with financial agents.

   The Board also discussed the committee's proposed membership and appointment process. Representatives would be designated by the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Cemetery Committee, Library Trustees and Board of Education, with a resident member also contemplated. The Board discussed whether minority representation requirements would apply to the committee. Attorney Jeremy Gustafson agreed to research the issue and report back. The Board further discussed whether financial agents should participate in an advisory capacity and whether the committee could recommend consolidation or changes among financial agents.

   The Board agreed that the proposed committee could improve communication, transparency, continuity, predictability, and coordination of investment information and that a short report would be presented at the following regular meeting.

6. Executive Session – Reappraisal and Revaluation of Real Property for the 2027 Grand List Proposal Negotiations:

   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 Finance Director, Valerie Belles, Assessor Rochelle Lambert, Attorney Jeremy Gustafson and Executive Manager Linda Zemienieski into this session at 1:48 p.m.. Unanimous aye.

   Selectmen returned to regular session at 2:58 p.m. No motions or decisions were made.

7. Potential Action on Reappraisal and Revaluation of Real Property for the 2027 Grand List Proposal/Contract: No action on the reappraisal and revaluation of real property for the 2027 Grand List proposal/ contract was taken during this meeting.

8. Public Comment: There was no public comment discussed at the meeting.

9. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Dill, to adjourn the meeting at 3:00 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Erik Dill, Secretary