TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
October 20, 2025
Municipal Office Building – Room 1 & 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

Participating:	William Barney
	Joseph Corbett
	Todd Gelston
	Maureen Goff
	Harvey Thomas
Absent:	Eric Kolasinski
Others:	Valerie Belles, Finance Director
	Irene Haines, First Selectwoman
	And other members of the public

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Gelston called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and the attendees said the pledge of allegiance. He reviewed the meeting's agenda.

GUESTS & AUDIENCE COMMENTS

There were no guest or audience comments raised at the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. July 22, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes – Mr. Gelston called the board's attention to the minutes of their July 22nd Special Meeting in the meeting packets.

Motion made by Mr. Corbett to approve the minutes of the July 22, 2025 Special Meeting as written. Mr. Barney seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

b. September 8, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes - Mr. Gelston called the board's attention to the minutes of their September 8th Regular Meeting in the meeting packets.

Motion made by Mr. Corbett to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2025 Regular Meeting as written. Ms. Goff seconded the motion. Mr. Barney abstained from the vote and the motion was approved by a majority aye vote. Motion carried.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

a. Review of Exit Poll Comments – Mr. Gelston distributed his analysis of the comments in the exit polls he reviewed. He noted that most of the comments pertained to the BOE budget, and he compared the feedback from the exit poll taken following the first budget referendum to comments included on the second budget referendum exit poll forms. He stated he feels taxpayers are still concerned about the overall budget.

   Ms. Goff and Mr. Thomas also reviewed the comments in the exit polls they appraised. Mr. Thomas noted that approximately one-third of the comments in the exit polls he reviewed were about the BOE budget. Ms. Goff emphasized that, even though the BOF had instructed the Town and BOE to reduce their proposed budgets after the first failed referendum, the BOE's FY2025-2026 budget still reflected a year-over-year increase.

b. Review of Board of Assessment Appeals Fall Report – Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the Board of Assessment Appeals Fall Report, dated September 28, 2025, in the meeting packets. He noted that no assessment adjustments had been made at their September public hearing and $160.00 expenses were incurred.

c. Board Subcommittee Reports

   - Communications – There was no new update on this agenda item.

   - Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee – Mr. Thomas reported that he had no update for this meeting; however, he hoped to have something prepared to present at the Board's November meeting.

   - Financial Policies - Presentation of Town of East Haddam Draft Outlook – Mr. Thomas explained that the BOF's policies call for an annual report be drafted of the Town's financial history and future projections of its financial status, assuming no changes are made. He reviewed the draft report he and Ms. Belles had created and solicited feedback from the Board. He stated that, in addition to demographics on the Town's population, he feels the report should a decile chart of the Town's source of revenues and a chart of 5-years of budgeted expenses.

     Mr. Thomas recommended that future increases in the overall Town's budget should not exceed the increase in its Grand List for the representative year. He proposed that, going forward, the BOF should communicate a compelling message of the acceptable rate of increase to the BOS and BOE prior to the beginning of their budget development process. He also suggested that annual scorecards of achievements and goals be developed for the BOF, Town Operations, and the BOE. The unanimous consensus of the Commissioners agreed with his recommendation that the BOF provide "guardrails" to the BOS and BOF prior to each budget season.

     The Board members thanked Mr. Thomas and Finance Director Belles for all their work creating an outline for a Financial Outlook document.

SELECTMEN'S REPORT

First Selectwoman Haines provided the following report:

- The Swingbridge weight restriction has been lifted.
- CT DEEP has approved the Lake Hayward Association's request for a permit to repair its dam.
- Early voting is currently in progress from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily and the hours will be extended on 10/28 and 10/30.
- The Sheepskin Hollow bridge was repaired by lining, rather than replacing the culvert pipe. A significant savings was recognized since the repair cost $200k vs. the projected $2M to replace the culvert pipe. The temporary lining has an expected lifespan of 25-30 years.
- Jones Hill Road has been repaved with shim overlay and Public Works is currently working on Smith, Alger, and Daniel Roads. Repaving of Maple and Great Hillwood Roads is scheduled for next spring.
- Public Works is working on securing easements for the repairs to the bridges on AP Gates and Beebe Road and the Public Works Director expects to bid out the work in January.
- The Fire Department plans to place orders for two new firetrucks by the end of next year and they anticipate a 2-3 year lead time for delivery.
- Design work on the new Fire House is close to completion; the bid documents will be drafted, and the Building Committee hopes to release an RFP in January.
- The BOS is moving forward with an ordinance for the use of automated speed cameras in Town; the contract for the cameras no longer requires any up-front outlay of funds.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. YTD Financials – Finance Director Belles called the Board's attention to the year-to-date financials in their meeting packets. She noted that the June financials are still outstanding, and the July financials were a bit high because she had made the interfund transfers that month, but the August financials were back on track. She responded to questions from the Board and agreed to check out the discrepancy in Fringe Benefits.

b. Audit Update – Ms. Belles reported that the auditors plan to be on-site the last week of November and the first week of December and have had a preliminary meeting with the new Business Manager.

c. Budget Calendar – Due to the anticipated changes in membership of the BOS, BOF, and BOE following the November election, Ms. Belles suggested scheduling the Tri-Board meeting for January 12, 2026.

There was a general discussion regarding when and how the BOF should communicate its acceptable rate of budgetary increase for FY2026-2027 to the BOS and BOE. It was agreed that the BOF would determine the acceptable rate of increase at its regular November 10th meeting and communicate same to the BOS and BOE, via a written memorandum, immediately following that meeting. They also agreed that the Guidance Memorandum should include an invitation to both Boards to attend the December 8th BOF meeting where the Board would present its justification for the FY2026-2027 acceptable rate of budgetary increase. Ms. Belles agreed to provide the BOF with a sample of a Budgetary Guidance Memorandum.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Review and Discussion of Tax Incentive Financing (TIF) Policy – Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to a draft Tax Incentive Financing policy. Ms. Haines provided background on the Town's proposed TIF policy and explained how it could benefit both developers and the Town. She responded to several questions from the Board.

   It was the consensus of the Board that the Town should post the draft TIF policy on the Town website.

b. Grant Acceptance – Early Voting Grant 2025 – Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packet regarding this agenda item.

   Motion made by Mr. Barney to accept a grant in the amount of $8,256.84 from the State of Connecticut, Office of the Secretary of the State (revenue account 33050-43000-G2101 and expense account 33055011-58820-G2101) for the purpose of costs related to implementing and conducting early voting upon the terms and conditions set forth in an Agreement between The State of Connecticut, Office of the Secretary of the State and the Town of East Haddam and request the Board of Selectmen schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Ms. Goff seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

c. Grant Acceptance – FY2024 Emergency Management Performance Grant – Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packet regarding this agenda item.

   Motion made by Mr. Barney to accept a grant in the amount of $5,000.00 from the State of Connecticut, Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, entitled "FY 2024 Emergency Management Performance Grant", (revenue account 10542-43000 and expense account 10542070-51590) and request the Board of Selectmen schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Ms. Goff seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Mr. Barney to adjourn the meeting at 9:42 p.m. Ms. Goff seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
William Barney
Secretary