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

Selectmen Present: T. Gelston; E Dill; T. Sevigny
Also Present: P. Burke; M. Callahan; Kim Dodge; L. Zemienieski and other members of the public

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

2. Approval of Agenda: Mr. Gelston reviewed the meeting agenda.

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

3. Approval of Minutes – Special Meeting of December 17, 2025

   Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to draft minutes in their meeting packets.

   Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Mr. Sevigny, to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of December 17, 2025 as written. Unanimous aye.

4. Correspondence: There was no correspondence discussed at the meeting.

5. First Selectmen's Report

   Mr. Gelston reported on the following:

   - The Town continues to post the following open positions: Driver-Laborer and Road Foreman.
   - He provided an update on the proposed cell tower at Fire Company #1 and advised that the contract is being reviewed by the Town's attorney and he will discuss the project with Land Use Administrator Ventres when Mr. Ventres returns from medical leave.
   - The Town would like to purchase another speed monitor to help address speeding on the Town's roads and is investigating funding options. He is also working with CT DOT to get warning signs about speeding at each of the Town's entry points and has requested the State Police Speed Enforcement Team spend time in East Haddam.
   - A second workshop with the EHAA and EHFD had been conducted and the participants have drafted an agreement that will be reviewed at their next workshop which is scheduled for next week.

- He called the Board's attention to a draft charge for the Black Birch Golf Course Feasibility Committee which will be considered later in the meeting. He noted that the charge had been updated to include a requirement that the committee assess whether or not there is a sufficient quantity of water available for irrigation of the golf course.
- The Tri-Board meeting, which will kick off the 2026-2027 Budget season, is scheduled for January 12th.

A. America 250 Discussion: Mr. Gelston stated that the country will celebrate its 250th anniversary in July 2026. He reviewed the Middlesex County-wide plans and advised that East Haddam has begun planning for its own celebration. He requested that citizens who would like to help the Town in planning and fundraising for the celebration should call the First Selectman's office. There was a brief discussion about potential plans for East Haddam's America 250 Celebration.

B. Ethics Commission 2025 Activity Report: Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the Ethics Committee Summary Report for 2025, dated January 6, 2026, submitted by Kevin Staehly, Committee Chairman. He reviewed the report which stated that the Committee had identified several deficits in the Town's Code of Conduct that they will work to correct in early 2026. Mr. Staehly reported that the Committee will present their suggested revisions to the Board of Selectmen later this year.

6. Public Comment: There was no public comment discussed at this time in the meeting.

7. Unfinished Business

A. Cell Tower Discussion – 440 Town Street: This agenda item was addressed in the First Selectmen's report and is covered in the above minutes..

B. Open Space Discussion – Sprecher Property Exchange Proposal – Shanaghan Road: There was no update on this agenda item.

C. Open Space Discussion – Dale King Property – South Sheepskin Hollow Road: There was no update on this agenda item.

D. Black Birch Golf Course Discussion: Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to a draft charge for a Black Birch Golf Course Feasibility Study Committee. He reiterated that the charge had been updated to include a requirement that the committee assess whether or not there is a sufficient quantity of water available for irrigation of the golf course.

8. New Business

A. Grant Acceptance – FY26 Historical Document Preservation Grant: Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packets from the CT State Library, dated December 19, 2025, regarding an award of a Historic Documents Preservation Grant in the amount of $5,000.00.

Motion made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Dill, to recommend to the Board of Finance and then to Town Meeting the adoption of the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that a grant in the amount of $5,000 is hereby accepted from the State of Connecticut, State Library, for the purpose of historic document preservation; and that Todd H. Gelston, First Selectman, is empowered to execute and deliver in the name and on behalf of this municipality, a contract with the Connecticut State Library for an Historic Documents Preservation Grant. Unanimous aye.

B. Beer & Wine Request – Grange Hall: Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to a copy of an email from Rebecca Smith, dated December 30, 2025, requesting permission to serve beer and wine to adults at the Grange Hall for her child's 1st birthday party on February 15, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Mr. Sevigny, to approve the serving of beer and wine to adults at the Grange Hall for a "1st Birthday Party" on February 15, 2025. Unanimous aye.

C. Board/Commission/Committee Changes: There were no Board, Commission or Committee changes considered at the meeting.

D. Tax Refunds: Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to four tax refunds.

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

- $146.25 to JP Morgan Chase Bank NA;
- $326.16 to Kristopher & Cathy Forrette;
- $115.69 to Nissan Infinity LT LLC, and
- $490.37 to Toyota Lease Trust.

Unanimous aye.

9. Selectmen's Discussion

A. Liaison Reports: There were no liaison reports provided at the meeting.

B. Other

1. Boards of Finance, Education and Selectmen Tri-Board Meeting (1/12/26 at 7:00 p.m.): Mr. Gelston called the Board's and the public's attention to the scheduled Tri-Board meeting which will kick-off the 2026-2027 budget planning sessions.

In response to a request by Ms. Zemienieski, the Selectmen reviewed the FY2026-2027 budget workshop calendar and no changes were made at this time.

10. Public Comment

The following public comments were raised at the meeting:

- Patrick Burke – stated that the owners of the Black Birch Golf Course have been working with EDC for the past 16 months regarding the potential for the Town to purchase the golf course. He encouraged the Selectmen to move forward with establishing the Feasibility Committee expeditiously. There was a brief discussion concerning the Committee's makeup.
- Kim Dodge – Expressed concern about the CT Legislature's House Bill 8002. She stated that she feels the bill violates the CT Constitution Article 10 (Home Rule). She encouraged the Selectmen to consider the following: (1) adopting a Home Rule Proclamation, (2) passing a resolution extending the Proclamation to cover all its boards, commissions, and committees, and (3) enacting a Home Rule ordinance. Mr. Gelston agreed that there is broad concern about HB8002 and stated that the Lower River Valley Council of Governments is working on putting together a plan to stop the bill from moving forward.

  In response to a question raised by Mr. Dill, there was a general discussion about how this bill differs from the many other bills, specifically unfunded mandates, which are onerous to cities, towns, and municipalities but which municipalities are unable to stop the state from passing.

11. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Mr. Sevigny, to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 p.m. .

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Erik Dill, Secretary