Meeting Minutes - DRAFT

Town of East Haddam
Black Birch Golf Course Feasibility Study Committee
Regular Meeting

Date: March 24, 2026
Location: Municipal Office Complex, Meeting Room #3

1. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, & Attendance

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Alan Ponanski at 7:03 PM in Meeting Room #3. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Study Committee Members Present:
Steven Longobardi, Donald Lorusso, Jeff Miller, Mike Morris, Alan Ponanski, John "Jef" Wolter, Daniel Zimmerman

Study Committee Members Absent:
None

Additional Attendees:
Michael Callahan (resident and member of Banner HOA)

2. Approval of Agenda

The Meeting Agenda prepared by Chairman Ponanski was reviewed by the Committee and a motion to approve was made by Dan Zimmerman with a second by Donald LoRusso. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the Agenda.

3. Approval of Minutes for Monday, March 16, 2026 Special Meeting

Minutes were distributed by Secretary Jeff Miller and reviewed by the Committee. No corrections or additions were proposed by the Members. Jef Wolter moved to approve the minutes with a second by LoRusso. The minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Old Business

a. Review Goals for Committee - Chairman Ponanski handed out binders to the Committee members containing relevant documents, including Town memos, reports,

maps, resident input, and the Leisure Appraisal report dated January 2025. He then summarized the Committee's goals as follows.

- Determine the fair market value of the Property and a reasonable price.
- Estimate the cost of restoration for use as a public golf course.
- Investigate issues regarding water/irrigation system availability and cost.
- Prepare revenue projections and operating costs.
- Determine the overall feasibility of acquisition, restoration, and operations.
- Draft the Committee's recommendation to the Selectmen by June 14, 2026.

Secretary Miller asked if our scope includes recommending possible alternate uses. It was agreed our focus should be the golf course feasibility only. Miller suggested that the identification of federal, state, and private funding sources be included as a goal to determine feasibility and volunteered to take the lead on that.

b. <u>Review of Any Handout Material</u>

Chairman Alan Ponanski invited Michael Callahan, former President of the Banner Estates HOA to share with the Committee a summary "Black Birch Golf History – 2024 to 2026". Callahan recounted the effort starting in May 2024 and supported by EDC Chairman Bob Casner to explore acquisition and restoration of Black Birch.

Callahan and Zimmerman discussed the visits by Guilmette Golf, LLC, a Portland, CT firm owned by two brothers, that manages several golf courses, including Minnechaug in Glastonbury, and Keney Park and Goodwin Park in Hartford. Guilmette Golf visited Black Birch multiple times and prepared several estimates of restoration and operating costs, with the most recent completed in October 2025.

Miller mentioned his conversation with a partner in FCG Associates, which restored and has been managing Triggs Memorial, owned by the City of Providence, for the past 35 years on a net lease basis. Their current contract specifies they must pay the City $289,000 annually and invest another $1.5 million in golf course improvements. They would be interested in visiting Black Birch to learn more in upcoming weeks.

The Committee agreed that Guilmette Golf, FCG and other 3rd party investors and/or managers should be contacted for a possible meeting at Black Birch on Saturday, April 11th.

The Committee's discussion continued into matters of appraised values, potential purchase prices, and financial matters. Chairman Ponanski noted the confidentiality issues and proposed to continue the meeting in Executive Session at about 7:40 pm. It was so moved by LoRusso with a second by Miller and approved unanimously.

c. Future Meeting Schedule

The Committee will meet on Tuesday, March 31 and Chairman Ponanski suggested that Town Planner Jim Ventres be invited to participate and share his thoughts. The Committee agreed and a Saturday morning work session was suggested. It was agreed that Saturday, April 11th worked for all.

d. Other

No other issues were discussed outside of Executive Session.

5. <u>New Business</u>

a. Outline of Steps Necessary for Completion of Feasibility Study by June 16, 2026

To be continued at March 31 Committee meeting.

b. Assignment of Action Leaders for Each Step

Held over to March 31 meeting and completion of a. Outline of Steps.

6. Public Comment

No other members of the public other than Mr. Callahan were present to comment and no written or emailed comment was received prior to the meeting.

6. Adjournment

Motion to end Executive Session and adjourn the meeting at 9:05 pm by Longobardi with second by Miller and unanimous Committee approval.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Miller
Secretary, Black Birch Golf Course Feasibility Study Committee