Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
February 25, 2026
Special Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: T. Gelston; E Dill; T. Sevigny
Also Present: V. Belles; C. Brownell; M. Callahan; R. Dill: A. Lord; C. Mansfield; J. Miller; M. Robidoux; J. Sina; A. Taylor; L. Zemienieski and other members of the public

1. Call to Order

   First Selectman Gelston called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 4:33 p.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Gelston reviewed the meeting agenda.

2. 2026-2027 General Budget Review Workshop

   A. Conservation Commission Operating – This budget reflected a decrease of $1,200.00 (-7.41%) over its last fiscal year budget. Mr. Sina, Chairman of the Conservation Commission provided highlights of the Commission's projects and responded to questions from the Selectmen.

   B. Cemetery Committee Operating/Capital – There was an increase of $15,000.00 (88.24%) in this budget. Mr. Brownell noted that the Cemetery Committee was chartered two-years ago and is still in start-up phase. He reviewed a number of challenges the Committee is trying to manage and stated that the $15k increase is for tree care/removal, which had also been requested last year but had ultimately not been approved.

      Ms. Belles advised that the Committee has a balance of $10,625.00 in Capital and that an additional $8k/yr. is being requested for the next four years for Cemetery Improvements & Surveys. There was a general discussion regarding the lack of additional burial space in Town and the status of available property acquisitions.

   C. Land Use Office Operating/Capital (PZC, IWWC, WPCA, ZBA, HDC, OSC) – The Land Use budget reflected a decrease of $2,203.00 (-0.90%) over its last fiscal year budget. Land Use Administrator Ventres provided a brief overview of this budget.

      Mr. Ventres reviewed the department's Capital request of $50k for FY2026-2027 to establish a grant matching fund to implement the Moodus Center Master Plan. After discussing the project, in response to a question from Ms. Belles, Mr. Ventres agreed that this Capital request could be reduced to $30k.

      Mr. Ventres advised that the Town will have to go out to bid soon for the 2029 update of the Plan of Conservation & Development. Ms. Belles advised that there is a balance of $40k in that Capital account and recommended adding an additional $40k in FY2026-

2027. There was a general discussion about establishing a Capital savings plan of $10k annually for the next 10-year update.

Mr. Ventres also reviewed the following subsidiary budgets:

- Water Pollution Control Authority – There was a general discussion concerning the condition of the sewer plant equipment and the challenges inherent in the operation of the system and fee structure. Mr. Ventres responded to questions from the Board.

- Zoning Board of Appeals – This budget was decreased by $1,000.00 (-34.25%) over its last fiscal year budget; Ms. Zemienieski advised that the $1,000.00 has been moved to the Town's general Legal budget.

- Historic District Commission – This budget was flat over its FY2025-2026 budget.

- Open Space Commission - This budget reflected a decrease of $2,000.00 (-25.00%) over its last fiscal year budget.

D. Redevelopment Agency Operating/Capital – This budget reflected a decrease of $68,500.00 (-87.60%) over its last fiscal year budget by reducing its Operating/Purchased Professional Services budget line to $5,000.00 for FY2026-2027. Mr. Miller, Chair of the Redevelopment's Finance Subcommittee, advised that the Agency would like to establish a $50k Capital savings account that could, going forward, be used for purchasing professional services.

Mr. Miller advised that he will be reaching out to the state to discuss any potential financial assistance available to the Town to bring water lines from the Haddam side of the CT River to East Haddam. There was a general discussion regarding the need for the availability of potable water and water for fire-fighting if developers are going to consider investing in the area.

E. Agriculture Commission Operating – This budget was flat over its FY2025-2026 budget. Mr. Taylor stated that he is the new Chairman for the Agriculture Commission and that the Commission is currently reconstituting itself. There was a brief discussion about posting "Right to Farm" signs around Town and Mr. Taylor agreed see if it is possible to acquire such signs at no cost from the state.

F. Economic Development Commission Operating/Capital – The EDC Operating budget reflected an increase of $2,049.00 (7.24%) over its last fiscal year budget. Mr. Robidoux reviewed EDC's Operating budget and responded to questions.

It was noted that EDC has a balance of $12k in a Capital account for Phase II of the bike path project and an addition $28k be requested in FY2026-2027 to be used as matching funds for a DEEP grant for construction of the bike path. He also discussed a request for

Capital funds to investigate extending the sewer line into the Moodus business district; however, Mr. Gelston advised that Land Use Administrator Ventres had informed him that extending the sewer line to Moodus is not practicable and had suggested that a community septic system would be a more feasible alternative. Ms. Belles advised that such a project would fall under the WPCA's Capital budget account.

G. Emergency Management Operating/Capital – The Emergency Management's Operating budget reflected an increase of $5,028.00 (2.61%) over its last fiscal year budget. Mr. Mansfield advised that the increase was primarily due to an almost 4% ($4,721.00) increase in the Valley Shore fee. He noted that Valley Shore had been a victim of a cyber attack last year and had expended considerable funds addressing the resulting problems. Mr. Mansfield responded to several questions from the Selectmen.
It was noted that the Town receives an annual state grant of approximately $5,448.00 that offsets some of the department's Salaries/Wages expense.

Mr. Mansfield reviewed the following Capital requests for FY2026-2027:

- $10k (annually) for Replacement of Radio Equipment – Tower sites with a goal of establishing a $100k savings account.
- $10k (annually) for Out of Cycle Replacement of Radios Equipment -Mobiles and Portables with a goal of establishing a $50k savings account.
- Additional funds for the Portable Radio Replacement Cycle Capital account have been deferred for this fiscal year.
- Additional funds of the Mobile Radio Replacement Cycle Capital account have been deferred for this fiscal year.

Mr. Mansfield advised that the mobile and portable radio equipment is currently in good condition but noted that, at some point, it will not continue to be supported by the vendor. There was a general discussion about equipment and cell towers.

H. General Overall Operating/Capital Budget Review

There was a general discussion regarding establishing a budget line for the Town's America 250 Celebration. Ms. Belles suggested that a special appropriation from Fund Balance, that is approved by a public vote, would be a simpler way to handle the one-time expense. Mr. Gelston stated he would inform Ms. Belles of his projection of expected expenses for the event.

Ms. Zemienieski questioned whether or not the library group could achieve the goals of a building committee charter without a budget for professional services. There was a general discussion about expectations for a study committee versus a building committee.

3. Public Comment: There were no public comments raised at the meeting

4. Potential Budget Resolution: No budget resolution was made at the meeting.

5. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Sevigny, seconded by Mr. Dill, to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 p.m. .

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Erik Dill, Secretary