Board of Selectmen
On-Line Via Zoom & YouTube Live
February 3, 2021
Regular Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: T. Govert; C. Quinn; R. Smith
Also Present: J. Moreau; S. Wheeler; L. Zemienieski, and other members of the public via virtual media

1. First Selectman Smith called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda: Motion made by Ms. Govert, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to approve the agenda as written. Unanimous aye.

3. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting of January 11, 2021 and Regular Meeting of January 20, 2021.

   Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 20, 2021 as written. Unanimous aye.

   The review and approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting of January 11, 2021 was postponed.

4. Correspondence

   There was no correspondence discussed at the meeting.

5. First Selectmen's Report

   A. COVID-19 Reopening Report: The discussion related to this agenda item is reported on in the minutes below.

   B. Responses to Previous Meeting Questions: There were no responses to previous meeting questions discussed at the meeting.

      Mr. Smith reported the following:

      - He provided a status update on the repairs to Neptune Avenue and reiterated that the work is projected to be completed by May 1, 2021.

      - He has received several compliments from the public regarding the work Public Works did clearing the roads after the recent snowstorm.

      - Installation of the fence around the skate park has been completed.

      - The Town's Food Bank has experienced normal attendance and the consolidation of the CT Food Bank and Foodshare should not have any impact on the Town's program.

      - Tree removal crews have been working on Tater Hill Road; the next area they will move to is from Millington Green through A.P. Gates Road. He noted that Public Works is putting together a tree-removal budget proposal which will be discussed at the Board's Budget Workshops.

- The new grocery store in Moodus is projected to open in mid-February.

- On January 27, 2021, the Nutmeg Pharmacy staff administered COVID vaccines to individuals 75+ years old at the Senior Center. Inoculations for the same group are scheduled for the next two Saturdays.

  Ms. Govert noted that the CT Department of Health reported that 343 (72%) of East Haddam residents age 75 and older have received their first dose of the COVID vaccine. She stated that they also reported that a total of 799 (9%) of East Haddam residents have gotten their first dose of the vaccine.

  Mr. Smith reported that, to date, the Town has experienced a cumulative total of 315 positive COVID cases and 11 deaths. He noted that the statistics indicate an average of 5 new cases per day.

  Ms. Quinn emphasized the need for the public to continue to isolate with their immediate household and not to participate in gatherings of larger groups.

6. Citizens' Concerns: There were no citizens' concerns discussed at the meeting.

7. Unfinished Business

   A. East Haddam Village Revitalization Committee Update: Mr. Smith stated that Board of Finance Chairman, Bill DiCristofaro has asked for a joint meeting of the Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen and the East Haddam Village Revitalization Committee to be held in executive session on February 8, 2021.

      Mr. Smith reported that repairs to the Swingbridge are projected to run concurrent with the Village Revitalization project. He noted that the CT DOT Swingbridge project is expected to begin in 2022 and a number of 24-hour closures are scheduled during 2022 and 2023. He further advised that the DOT project calls for a 4-month closing of the bridge during the winter of 2023-24.

   B. Ordinance Amendment Request – Lake Hayward Speed Limit: Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

   C. Chatham Health District COVID Funding Request: Mr. Smith provided background on this agenda item.

      Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert, to support the request for funding to the Chatham Health District and request the Board of Finance allocate funds as they deem appropriate.

      Ms. Quinn recommended amending the motion to include a maximum amount, equal to the amount requested by the Chatham Health District, in the previous motion. Mr. Smith agreed to amend his motion.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert, to support the request for funding to the Chatham Health District and request the Board of Finance allocate funds, to a maximum amount of $12,523.40, as they deem appropriate. Unanimous aye.

8. New Business

A. Grant Acceptance – FY 2021 Comprehensive DUI Enforcement Program: Mr. Smith called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packets from Joseph Cristalli, Jr., Transportation Principal Safety Program Coordinator, CT Department of Transportation, dated January 19, 2021, regarding approval of the Town's application for a Comprehensive DUI Enforcement grant.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to accept a grant in the amount of $16,162.50 from the State of Connecticut, Department of Transportation, entitled "FY 2021 Comprehensive DUI Enforcement Program for Resident Trooper Towns", and send acceptance of said grant to the Board of Finance for approval. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and response, the Governor's Executive Order 7CC issued April 21, 2020 permits the municipality's legislative body (Board of Selectmen) and budget-making authority (Board of Finance) to authorize certain actions by a majority vote of each such body to include (i) the application for or acceptance of any grants, funding or gifts. Unanimous aye.

B. Grant Acceptance – Bob's Discount Furniture Charitable Foundation, Inc.: Mr. Smith called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packets from the Town's Board of Fire Commissioners and Ms. Kathryn Pianta, Lead Foundation Administrator for Bob's Discount Furniture Charitable Foundation, Inc. regarding a donation of a gift card to help furnish the Fire Department's living space.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert, to accept a grant in the amount of $2,500.00 from Bob's Discount Furniture Charitable Foundation, Inc., for furnishings at Company #2 Firehouse. The Board will need to accept the grant and send to the Board of Finance for acceptance. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and response, the Governor's Executive Order 7CC issued April 21, 2020 permits the municipality's legislative body (Board of Selectmen) and budget-making authority (Board of Finance) to authorize certain actions by a majority vote of each such body to include (i) the application for or acceptance of any grants, funding or gifts. Unanimous aye.

C. State of Connecticut – Proposed Property Acquisition – Bridge No. 06887 Replacement Project on Route 151 over Shady Brook: Mr. Smith called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packets from Mr. Andrew Silva, Division of Rights of Way, Connecticut Department of Transportation, regarding the Department's bridge replacement project on Route 151 over Shady Brook. Mr. Smith stated that the DOT will be acquiring certain property rights located at two different parcels each owned by the Town of East Haddam.

He noted that the planned road closure had been increased from 2-3 week to eight weeks to accommodate a Town requested widening of the road for a bike path and a sidewalk tie-in to the those by the Municipal Office Complex.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to refer the two proposed property acquisition transactions for 1 Plains Road and an area of 2,141± square feet on Wigwam Road at Route 151 to the Planning & Zoning Commission for review under CGS 8-24. Unanimous aye.

D. Board/Commission/Committee Changes (COA)

Commission on Aging

Mr. Smith called the Boards's attention to the September 24, 2020 minutes of the Commission on Aging and a letter from the Commission, noting changes in their membership.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert, to reappoint Alice Sabo, Jovita Cozean and Suzanne Bostelman as regular members for three-year terms to expire June 30, 2023 on the Commission on Aging. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert, to reappoint Mary Ellen Klinck as an alternate member for a one-year term to expire June 30, 2021 on the Commission on Aging. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to accept, with regret, the resignation of John Pagnani from the Commission on Aging. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert, to change the status of Maureen Gillis from an alternate member to a regular member on the Commission on Aging to fill a vacant three-year term to expire June 30, 2021. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to appoint June Guertin to fill a vacant a one-year term to expire June 30, 2021 as an alternate member on the Commission on Aging. Unanimous aye.

E. Tax Refunds: Mr. Smith called the Board's attention to two tax refunds.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert, to award tax refunds in the amounts as presented.

- $ 307.57 to Nicole Dombroski, and
- $1,467.38 to Bryan Goff.

Unanimous aye.

Ms. Quinn and the other Board Members thanked Mr. Bryan Goff for his service.

9. Public Comment

The following public comments were submitted via email:

Mr. J. Moreau submitted the following comments:

Good evening,
I am opposed to these virtual BOS Meetings except if absolutely necessary. There is ample room for distancing at the Municipal Office Complex based on the average number of Residents who attend, and the written statements or questions don't carry the same impact as they do in person. This should not become a regular way of having meetings. Even the dialogue between the 3 Selectmen is stifled compared to in person. It is hard enough to get information about what's going on in East Haddam without additional hurdles these virtual exchanges create.

Mr. Smith. Last meeting you stood by your decision to hire a Firefighter who did not meet the posted job qualifications. You stated that you would not let that person go from the position and not require any further fitness testing. Two wrongs don't make a right, the employee in question has a one-year probationary period where he should be required to pass the official CPAT. The Town should ensure that applicants meet all of the qualifications before a hiring list is created. I'm sure the candidates who were not offered a position find little consolation in the agreement made that it won't happen again.

It seems East Haddam has a problem playing by the rules and breaking from the small town, anything goes for some mentality. Conflicts of interest and behind closed door decisions are more common than should be. East Haddam has not learned all it could from its past.

10. Selectmen's Discussion

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

    B. Other

        1. Scheduled Budget Meeting Dates: Mr. Smith called the Board's attention to a calendar in their meeting packets with the Board of Selectmen's proposed 2021-2022 Budget Workshop schedule. He noted that the first meeting, with the Superintendent of the Public Works Department, will be held at 9:00 a.m. on February 4th via Zoom/YouTube Live. Ms. Govert and Ms. Quinn confirmed their availability for the meetings.

           Mr. Smith noted that Workshops to review the Capital Improvements programs have not yet been scheduled because he is waiting for additional input from several departments, Boards, and Commissions.

11. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Govert, Secretary