Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
April 21, 2021
YouTube Live
Regular Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: R. Smith; T. Govert; C. Quinn
Also Present: A. Blaschik; E. Blaschik; K. Blaschik; T. Gelston; P. Stuhlman; 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 7:03 p.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Agenda

   Motion made by Ms. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Smith, to approve the agenda as written. Unanimous aye.

3. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting of April 7, 2021

   Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 7, 2021 as written. Unanimous aye.

4. Correspondence

   There was no correspondence discussed at the meeting.

5. First Selectmen's Report

   A. COVID-19 Reopening Report: Mr. Smith reported that, in spite of a brief spike in the Town's positive cases last week, reported deaths from COVID have remained stable for approximately 8 weeks. He stated that statewide tests having positive results are currently around 2.25% and noted the governor's decision to lift most of the state's COVID restrictions effective May 20th.

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

   Mr. Smith also reported the following:

   - The Board of Finance finalized the Town's proposed 2021-2022 Budget with an increase of 3.5% increase over the 2020-2021 Budget, which would result in a .62 mil rate increase.

     Mr. Smith stated that a Public Hearing to discuss the proposed budget is scheduled for May 12th at 7:00 p.m. in the High School auditorium. A Town Meeting will be held on May 25th and the referendum is planned for June 8th. He discussed several items in the proposed budget.

Mr. Gelston, who is a member of the Board of Finance, stated it was challenging job for the BOF to complete the budget. He noted that the Board will hold another meeting prior to the planned Public Hearing, and he encouraged the public to participate in the meeting.

- The opening of Neptune Avenue might be slightly delayed because the installation of the guard rails is planned for the week of May 3-7.

- The Town has retained a temporary, part-time assessor to fill-in until a permanent replacement for the assessor can be hired.

- The Finance Department hired a grant administrator to manage the Town's FEMA grants. Mr. Smith advised that the individual had informed the Town that FEMA grants were available for damages resulting from Tropical Storm Isaias and an application was submitted. He stated that he expects the Town will receive approximately $140,000.00.

- The CT Department of Transportation plans to begin work on the Shadybrook and Strongs Brook bridges next summer resulting in temporary closures of Routes 151 and 82.

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

7. Unfinished Business

   A. East Haddam Village Revitalization Committee Update: Mr. Smith advised that the Centerbridge Group's on-line presentation of their proposal to revitalize the old Town Office site in the Goodspeed Village and the link on the Town's website had had numerous views. He stated that he expects a public meeting to discuss the proposal will be scheduled for later in May. He then opened the floor up for questions about this agenda item.

   In response to a question raised by Mr. Stuhlman, Mr. Smith provided an overview of the approval process that will occur regarding this project. He emphasized that the revitalization proposal is not a Town project but, rather, a private development and reviewed some of the responsibilities the Town will take on if the sale of the property to the developer is approved.

   Mr. Gelston cautioned that, prior to the referendum, the public should be provided with firm figures for the expenses the Town will incur as a result of the project. He also recommended the developer be asked to provide more information about businesses committed to taking space in the new development so that citizens can better estimate the impact on the Town's tax base. There was a general discussion regarding the expenses and finances of the proposed project.

   Mr. Smith noted that, potentially happening at the same time of the development project, will be the state's multi-year project of repairs/upgrades to the swingbridge as well the construction of two proposed round-abouts on the Haddam side of the bridge. He further advised that, this summer, the town of Haddam will be installing sidewalks in Tylerville leading up to the swingbridge.

   B. Ordinance Amendment Request – Lake Hayward Speed Limit: Mr. Smith reviewed minor changes DEEP had made to the proposed amended ordinance concerning power boating on Lake Hayward.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert to send the amended ordinance entitled "Chapter 171 Boating, Article 1 Lake Hayward" which was previously approved by the East Haddam Town Meeting on August 20, 1964 and amended on March 28, 2018, to a Public Hearing. Unanimous aye.

C. Comprehensive Energy Efficient Facility Upgrade (Co#1, Co#2, GH) – Multi-year Contracts: Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

Mr. Smith provided information on how the public could submit their questions, comments and concerns to the meeting.

8. New Business

A. Grant Acceptance – Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Watershed – Patrell Preserve: Mr. Smith called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packet, dated April 7, 2021, advising East Haddam Conservation Commission Chairwoman Gleeson of a grant awarded by the Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Watershed Coordinating Committee for a project on the Patrell Preserve.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert, to accept a grant in the amount of $935.00 from the Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Coordinating Committee and the National Park Service under CFDA: 15:962-Eightmile Wild and Scenic River Assistance, for native plantings along the ADA accessible trail on the Patrell Preserve, and send approval for grant application and acceptance of said grant to the Board of Finance and acceptance of said grant to Town Meeting for approval.

In response to a question raised by Ms. Quinn, Mr. Smith confirmed that this communication was the first notice that the Board of Selectmen had received regarding the grant. Unanimous aye.

B. Broadband Evaluation Committee Discussion: Mr. Smith reviewed the background for his recommendation to create a Broadband Evaluation Committee. Ms. Govert emphasized the need for broadband infrastructure in the Town, noting that current internet availability is unequal across the Town, a lack of competition, and poor customer service from the existing providers. She stated that she is excited about the proposal to establish an Evaluation Committee.

Ms. Quinn noted that it appears that there is no Republican representation on the proposed committee and Mr. Smith acknowledged that he had not been successful in recruiting minority representation for the committee. Ms. Quinn volunteered to reach out to the Republican Town Committee to solicit qualified volunteers for the Broadband Evaluation Committee. The Board agreed to postpone adopting a resolution to establish the committee and Mr. Smith confirmed that the committee membership can be increased if there are sufficient qualified applicants.

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

D. Tax Refunds: Mr. Smith called the Board's attention to one tax refund.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to award a tax refunds in the amount as presented.

- $481.58 to Honda Lease Trust.

Unanimous aye.

9. Public Comment: The following public comments were discussed at the meeting:

   - Mr. T. Gelston supported the recommendation to establish a Broadband Evaluation Committee and stated that, given the pandemic motivated shift to work-from-home situations, residents interests, as well as those of the Town businesses, should be represented. In response to a question he raised, Ms. Govert advised that municipal broadband infrastructure would use fiber optic cable. Mr. Gelston expressed an interest in serving on the Broadband Evaluation Committee.

   - In response to a question raised by Mr. P. Stuhlman, Mr. Smith confirmed that at least one of the proposed members of the committee has a technical background in the field of broadband communication.

   - Mr. P. Stuhlman stated he is interested in serving on the Town's Ethics Committee and Ms. Zemienieski stated she would provide him with a volunteer application following the meeting.

10. Selectmen's Discussion:

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

    B. Other: There was no additional subjects discussed by the Board.

11. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made Mr. Smith by seconded by Ms. Quinn, to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Govert, Secretary