TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Minutes
November 8, 2021
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 and 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Dutch called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

SWEARING IN OF NEW MEMBERS

Town Clerk Denette swore in Todd Gelston, Tracey Gionta, and Rebecca Whatley.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Dutch solicited nominations for the position of Chairman of the Board of Finance. Mr. Thomas nominated Mrs. Gionta for the position and Ms. Whatley nominated Mr. Gelston.

Motion made by Mr. Thomas to close the nominations for the Chairman of the Board of Finance. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Motion made by Mr. Thomas to elect Mrs. Gionta as Chairman of the Board of Finance. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion. In favor Mr. Corbett, Mr. Dutch, Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Gionta. Motion carried.

Motion made by Ms. Whatley to elect Todd Gelston as Chairman of the Board of Finance. Mr. Dutch seconded the motion and Mr. Gelston and Ms. Whatley voted in favor. Motion failed.

Mrs. Gionta solicited nominations for the position of Secretary of the Board of Finance and Mr. Thomas nominated Mr. Dutch for the position.

Motion made by Mr. Corbett to close the nominations for the Secretary of the Board of Finance. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Motion made by Mr. Thomas to elect Bruce Dutch as Secretary of the Board of Finance. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

In attendance:

Board of Finance Members:
Tracey Gionta, Chairman
Bruce Dutch, Secretary
Joseph Corbett
Todd Gelston
Harvey Thomas
Rebecca Whatley

Others:
Debra Denette, Town Clerk
Denise Dill, Tax Collector
Eric Dill, Selectman
Maureen Goff, Town Treasurer
Irene Haines, First Selectman
Cynthia Varricchio, Finance Director
Sharon Wheeler, Recording Secretary
And several members of the public

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mrs. Gionta advised that a "Guests and Audience Comments" discussion item will be added to the agenda following the Approval of Minutes.

Motion made by Mr. Gelston to approve the agenda as amended. Ms. Whatley seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. Gionta called the Board's attention to the October 13, 2021 meeting minutes in their meeting packets.

Motion made by Mr. Gelston to approve the October 13, 2021 special meeting minutes as written. Ms. Whatley seconded the motion. Ms. Whatley abstained from the vote and the motion was approved by a majority of ayes. Motion carried.

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS

There were none.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence discussed.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

a. **Handbook for Boards of Finance for Board Members:**

Mrs. Gionta advised that a copy of the Handbook was provided to new Board members. She stated that if anyone else requires another copy, they should let Mrs. Varricchio know.

b. **2021-2022 Budget Book:**

Mrs. Gionta noted that Mrs. Varricchio had distributed the 2021-2022 budget book to the Board Members.

c. **Board of Finance Member List and Contact Information:**

Mrs. Gionta called the Board's attention to a copy of the Board of Finance Member List and Contact Information form in their meeting packets. She noted that members should notify Mrs. Varricchio if they have any questions or changes that should be made.

d. **Board of Finance Liaison Assignments:**

Mrs. Gionta called the Board's attention to the list of Board of Finance Liaison Assignments in their meeting packets. She requested the members review the list and advise her of their preferences for liaison appointments. She stated she would like to finalize the list by the Board's December meeting.

e. **Board of Finance Rules:**

Mrs. Gionta called the Board's attention a copy of the Rules of Procedure for Board of Finance Meetings in their meeting packets. She asked the members to review them and to let her know if they have any questions.

f. **Board of Finance Policies**:

Mrs. Gionta noted that the approved Board of Finance Policies have been provided for Board members. She noted that revisions had been made to several policies and the updated versions were adopted at the Board's October 13th meeting.

g. **Educational Workshops:**

Mrs. Gionta called the Board's attention to several documents in their meeting packets that outlined educational workshops available to municipal employees and Board members. There was a general discussion regarding the workshops and Mrs. Gionta stated that if any Board members want to attend, they should advise Mrs. Varricchio and she will register them.

h. **Tax Collector's Report–September:**

Mrs. Gionta called the Board's attention to the Tax Collector's Report for September 2021. She noted that, after deducting overpayments and fees, total payments were $954,733.05. Mrs. Varricchio noted that there has been a significant increase in the use of credit cards to pay tax bills this year.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

Mrs. Haines reported the following:

- Mr. Jezek declined the position as third Selectperson and, consequently, Ms. Govert was sworn in for the position.

- The mask mandate for Municipal Offices has been lifted for all but those individuals that have not been vaccinated. She stated that the policy would be revisited if there is a notable increase in positive COVID cases in Town.

- She has begun meeting with Department Heads and an all-employees meet-and-greet luncheon has been scheduled for November 9th.

- She has been talking with the Town's attorneys about several employee grievances.

- The schedule for the Town Meeting and referendum regarding the proposed development of the 1 and 7 Main Street property had been discussed at the November 3rd Board of Selectmen's meeting. They would like to move the dates up to December 1st for the Town Meeting and December 14th for the referendum; however, that will require resolutions from the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen. She noted that the Town's attorney is currently drafting those resolutions, as well as the question for the referendum, and, if they are ready for the Selectmen's November 17th regular meeting, she would like to hold a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance to move the resolutions forward.

  There was a general discussion about the Town Meeting and referendum process and Mrs. Haines responded to several questions from the Board members. Mr. Gelston expressed concern about scheduling a referendum before a number of the concerns raised by the public are addressed.

  Mrs. Haines thanked the Board of Finance members for their service and said that she is looking forward to working with them.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. **September YTD Budget Report:**

Mrs. Varricchio called the Board's attention to copies of the 2021-2022 YTD budget report summary in their meeting packets. She noted that the report reflects 25% of the fiscal year. She pointed out that only 12% of projected annual expenditures have occurred to date but noted, however, a great deal of the Town's expenditures occurs in the 4th quarter. She stated that 43% of the projected annual revenues have been collected.

b. **Draft 2022-2023 Budget Calendar:**

Mrs. Varricchio called the Board's attention to a draft of the 2022-2023 Budget Development Calendar in their meeting packets. She provided a brief overview of the calendar and noted that the Tri-Board meetings have been moved out one month. She responded to several questions from the Board and confirmed that the schedule would be posted on the Town's website when it is finalized. She requested that Board members let her know of any dates in March with which they may have scheduling conflicts.

Mrs. Gionta reviewed the role of the Board of Finance in the Town's budgeting process. She noted that it is their responsibility to consider the draft budgets presented by the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education and determine if the Town can afford the projected expenditures and also how to plan for the required expenses. She emphasized that it is not the role of the Board of Finance to "get down into the weeds" of determining the cost of operating the Town and the schools. Rather, it is the responsibility of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education to provide the estimates of their anticipated annual expenses.

Mrs. Gionta strongly recommended that if any member of the public is interested in having a voice in how and where the Town spends its revenues, they should attend the public meetings of the Boards of Selectmen and Education when they are deliberating the upcoming annual budget.

c. **COVID Grants:**

Mrs. Varricchio provided brief comments about the Town's COVID grants. She noted that there may be additional grants coming available to the Town but emphasized that there are very precise rules about how the funds can be used.

LIAISON REPORTS

There were no liaison reports presented at the meeting.

Mrs. Gionta stated that reports from the Policy, Communications, and Long-Range Capital Needs Planning Committees would be postponed.

Mr. Thomas recommended that, in anticipation of the upcoming annual budget planning season, a Long-Range Capital Needs Planning Committee meeting should be scheduled. Mrs. Haines stated that, as Chair of that committee, she will be scheduling the meeting soon.

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Mrs. Dill encouraged the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen to not unduly delay the referendum on the Swingbridge Landing proposal.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed at the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

a. **2022 Meeting Schedule:**

Mrs. Gionta called the Board's attention to a list of proposed Board of Finance meeting dates for 2022. She requested the members review the dates and advise Mrs. Varricchio of any scheduling conflicts. She stated that she would like to finalize the schedule at their December meeting. It was noted that the February meeting was scheduled for the 14th and that Board members should determine if they would like to meet on that date.

OTHER

There was no other business discussed at the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 7:49 pm. Ms. Whatley seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
Bruce Dutch
Secretary