Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
January 19, 2022
Via YouTube Live
Regular Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: I. Haines; E. Dill; T. Govert
Also Present: E. Blaschik; K. Dodge, C. Gelston; T. Gelston; M. Gillis; C. Hemphill; T. McCabe; J. Olin; L. Pepin (Sertex); T. Sevigny; A. Shaltiel; R. Smith; M. Solitro (Sertex); M. Thiede; L. Zemienieski, and other members of the public

1. First Selectman Haines called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Agenda

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

3. Approval of Minutes: Regular of January 5, 2022 and Special Meeting of January 10, 2022

   Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Govert, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 5, 2022, as written. Unanimous aye.

   Motion made by Ms. Govert, seconded by Mr. Dill, to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of January 10, 2022, as written. Unanimous aye.

4. Correspondence

   A. Letter of Appreciation – Public Works: Ms. Haines called the Board's attention to an email in their meeting packets from Forrest Anderson, dated January 11, 2022, to Mr. Hedler complimenting the Public Works Department on the job they did removing dangerous trees from his road. She read his email to the Board which stated, in part, "*You and your crews were quick and cleaned up the area superbly*".

5. First Selectmen's Report

   A. Broadband Feasibility Study Presentation: Ms. Haines introduced Mr. Mike Solitro of Sertex who she had been introduced to at the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities Convention event. Mr. Solitro also introduced Laura Pepin as Sertex's Marketing and Office Manager.

      Mr. Solitro advised that Sertex has a full spectrum of services and products that will help municipalities determine if there is enough support in the community for the Town to build a broadband system. He provided an overview of the company's internet-based survey tool, SertexConnect. He stated that there is a one-time set-up fee of $1,400.00 for the product and a $400/monthly support fee.

      Ms. Govert noted that Entry Point had provided the Town with a quote for a comprehensive feasibility study for creating a broadband system for the Town and Mr. Solitro stated he had done a preliminary estimate of comparable work by Sertex which he could provide. There was a general discussion about whether or not an open-network system offering several provider

options was realistic and Mr. Solitro responded to several other questions from the Board. Ms. Haines thanked him for his presentation.

6. Public Comment

In response to a question raised by Mr. Smith, Ms. Haines advised that the Town is negotiating with the Connecticut Department of Transportation on the dredging work at Wigwam Pond.

Ms. Haines read a public comment received just after the January 5 Board of Selectmen meeting from Alice Walls.

> I have been following in the Haddam News, reporting of the successful implementation of the Free Compositing Project at their Transfer Station with the town's partner, Blue Earth Compost. I wholeheartedly agree with this project being implemented as well in East Haddam. Food scraps are not trash and by removing these materials from our trash, we can reduce the fees the town pays to have trash hauled away. Also, Blue Earth accepts many food items which cannot be placed in a backyard compost. By initiating this project not only will the cost of garbage removal be reduced, we will be doing something to benefit the environment. It may seem like a small step, but by working together, we can do great things for our community and our planet.
> Alice K Walls

7. Unfinished Business

A. New Library Study Committee Charge Discussion: Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

8. New Business

A. Retail Cannabis Discussion: Ms. Haines advised that she had received correspondence from Mark Thiede requesting a discussion item regarding prohibiting the retail sale of cannabis in East Haddam be added to the Board's meeting agenda. She opened this discussion to the public and invited Mr. Thiede to begin the discussion.

Mr. Thiede distributed handouts to the Board and stated he works closely with Youth & Family Services as well as the Local Prevention Council. He provided some additional background regarding his work on youth issues in Town. He stated that the Town recently received an application to open a retail cannabis establishment near his place of business and advised that he would like the Town to create an ordinance prohibiting the sale of cannabis in Town and bringing it to a referendum. He stated that if the Board does not want to pursue such an ordinance, he will petition for the referendum.

The following comments were also made at the meeting:

- Kim Dodge – stated she feels prohibition does not work and she thinks it would set a dangerous precedent. She pointed out that there are other substances that influence the brain, such as alcohol and caffeine, that are sold in Town which could also be prohibited. She stated that medical marijuana has many benefits and noted that recreational marijuana has been made legal by the State of Connecticut.

- Charlotte Gelston – stated she did not agree with Ms. Dodge and she feels a referendum would be a good way to gauge the community's feelings.

Ms. Zemienieski and Ms. Haines provided information about the process that would happen prior to bringing the matter to referendum

- Todd Gelston – thanked Mr. Thiede for bring this issue to the Board of Selectmen's attention. He stated that he is not in favor of allowing the retail sale of recreational marijuana in Town.

- Toni McCabe – stated she is the Director of Youth & Family Services. She stated she feels it is important to have a community discussion on this issue because it will impact kids, families, and the Town's culture. She noted the distinction between recreational and medical marijuana.

- John Olin – stated that East Haddam is a special town and the community needs to consider the change that the sale of cannabis could bring to the Town and its culture. He stated the public needs to discuss the potential consequences of allowing the retail sale of cannabis within the community.

- Chad Hemphill – stated he worked on the Coalition for Prevention and supports the opportunity to listen to what the community has to say on the subject.

- Kim Dodge – noted that she appeared to be in the minority and advised that she also works for a youth service agency. She said that she believes that selective prohibition does not work and stated that the prohibition of alcohol only led to more crime. She noted that she feels being honest with our young people and using our resources to address the problems of more serious drugs, such as opioids and fentanyl, would do more to protect young people than banning the sale of a legal substance. She noted that, unlike alcohol, cannabis does not cause deaths and that even though some have tried to link deaths from automobile accidents to the use of marijuana, the science does not support that position.

  Ms. Dodge stated that she feels young people can see through the artifice of adults focusing on cannabis to avoid the more challenging issue of dealing with life-threatening drugs such as fentanyl. She stated she feels adults should give young people credit for being able to make good choices rather than telling them what to do.

- Toni McCabe – stated that the THC levels in the current versions of cannabis are much higher than in previous years and she believes any drug use by young people, including alcohol, is dangerous. She noted that 20% of the Town's high school students currently report that they use alcohol and/or marijuana and she does not recommend increasing their access to those substances.

- Amalia Shaltiel – stated that she is a parent and said that, when her children went away to college, the drug use on campus was much higher than 20%. She stated, however, that for her the scariest part of youthful experimentation with cannabis was that it was illegal and could have life-changing criminal impacts. She said that she wants to ensure the community does not confuse the criminal stigma attached to marijuana with the use of the drug. She noted that she is pleased that cannabis has been decriminalized because now it can be studied and people will be able to get fact-based information about it. She added that she does not want to perpetuate fear through a lack of knowledge.

Irene Haines advised that several towns have already acted on moratoriums or prohibitions of cannabis. She read a draft ordinance that she said could be considered at a referendum and/or Town Meeting and stated she will ask the Town's attorneys to review it. Ms. Haines said she would entertain a motion to move the subject to a Public Hearing on February 2, 2022.

Ms. Govert stated that her initial reaction is that the draft language is more all-inclusive than she is comfortable with at this time. She stated that she feels the cultivation of cannabis is a different issue than its retail sale and deserves further discussion. She also stated that she is uncertain if initiating the ordinance as it is written will have any legal ramifications for the pending discussions of this topic by the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Ms. Govert said that she supports coupling the referendum on the prohibition of the retail sales of cannabis with the budget referendum because it could result in more of the community coming out to vote on it. Mr. Dill stated that he also supports coupling the cannabis ordinance referendum with the budget referendum.

Ms. Haines expressed her personal concern about allowing recreational use of marijuana and noted that she did not vote in favor of the legislation at the state level. Ms. McCabe offered to research the aspect of allowing cultivation of cannabis within the Town and report her findings to Ms. Haines.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Govert, to move the discussion of a proposed ordinance banning cannabis establishments within the Town of East Haddam to a Public Hearing on February 2, 2022. Unanimous aye.

B. Grant Acceptance – FY 2022 Historic Document Preservation Grant

Ms. Haines called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packets from the CT State Library, dated December 28, 2021, regarding an award of a Historic Documents Preservation Grant for $5,500.00.

Motion made by Ms. Govert, seconded by Mr. Dill, to recommend to the Board of Finance and then to Town Meeting the adoption of the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that a grant in the amount of $5,500 is hereby accepted from the State of Connecticut, State Library, for the purpose of historic document preservation; and that Irene M. Haines, First Selectman, is empowered to execute and deliver in the name and on behalf of this municipality, a contract with the Connecticut State Library for an Historic Documents Preservation Grant.
Unanimous aye.

C. Property Tax Exemption Request: Ms. Haines called the Selectmen's attention to an email from Linda Topping, dated January 17, 2021 in their meeting packets. She noted that Ms. Topping has requested a tax abatement for two properties but she is waiting for input from the tax assessor before moving forward on the request. Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

D. Board/Commission/Committee Change

Agriculture Commission

Ms. Haines called the Selectmen's attention to an email dated January 11, 2022 from Ron Gross, Chairman of the Agriculture Commission noting recommendations on membership changes for the Commission. She noted that some of the updates should have been made in January 2021 and the Commission is catching up on its reappointments.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Govert, to accept, with regret, the resignation of Keith Wilson as an alternate member on the Agriculture Commission. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Govert, to reappoint Ronald Distefano and Ronald Gross for three-year terms, to expire January 1, 2024, as regular members on the Agriculture Commission. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Govert, to reappoint Carleen Quinn, Peter Dean and Bonita Buongiorne for three-year terms, to expire January 1, 2025, as regular members on the Agriculture Commission. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Ms. Govert, seconded by Mr. Dill, to reappoint Mark Henderson for a two-year term, to expire January 1, 2023, as an alternate member on the Agriculture Commission. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Govert, to appoint Shaleen Thody and Aaron Taylor for two-year terms, to expire January 1, 2024, as alternate members on the Agriculture Commission. Unanimous aye.

Economic Development Commission

Ms. Haines called the Board's attention to the minutes of the January 6th Economic Development Commission meeting recommending an alternate appointment to the commission in their meeting packets.

Motion made by Ms. Govert, seconded by Mr. Dill, to appoint Elizabeth Glidden as an alternate member of the Economic Development Commission for a vacant five-year term to expire June 30, 2025. Unanimous aye.

E. Tax Refunds: There were no tax refunds considered at the meeting.

9. Public Comment

There were no additional public comments discussed at the meeting.

10. Selectmen's Discussion

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

B. Other: There were no additional items discussed by the Selectmen.

11. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Ms. Govert, seconded by Mr. Dill, to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Erik Dill
Secretary