TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance – Regular Meeting
February 9, 2026
Municipal Office Building – Room 1 & 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

Participating: Joseph Corbett
Debra Denette
Maureen Goff
Scott W. Jezek
Harvey Thomas
Absent: Eric Kolasinski

Others: M. Callahan; First Selectman T. Gelston, and other members of the public

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Goff called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and the attendees said the pledge of allegiance.

GUEST AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Mr. Callahan commented on the January 12th Tri-Board meeting. He voiced his disappointment at the lack of key data such as the growth in the Grand List, student enrollment, and student achievements other than a discussion about the improvement in Elementary School test scores. He noted that the BOE's focus appeared to be more on extracurricular activities and expense drivers.

Mr. Callahan expressed his hope that the upcoming budget workshops will provide plans for additional detail and clarity and asked the following questions: (1) When will ClearGov be made available to the public? (2) What was the overall change in the Grand List from October 2024 thru October 2025 in numbers and year-over-year percentages?, and (3) Is the BOF still committed to not entertaining budgets for FY2026-2027 that exceed the change in the Grand List?

Ms. Belles advised that ClearGov will be available to the public starting with the Town's first scheduled budget workshop. Ms. Goff advised that she does not have details on the change in the Grand List with her, but stated she will provide that information to him. She also confirmed that she is still committed to not entertaining a budget for FY2026-2027 that exceeds the change in the Grand List.

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Goff read an email, dated 2/7/26, from Patrick Lacey, who wrote that he was pleased to see that the BOF will not consider any increases in the FY2026-2027 budget beyond the current approved budget but expressed his concern that that goal could change. Mr. Lacey also attached a Letter to the Editor that he had submitted to the East Haddam News.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of January 9, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes – Ms. Goff called the Board's attention to the January 9, 2026 draft minutes in their meeting packets. The Board had no corrections.

There being no changes to the minutes, the January 9, 2026 regular meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

a. Liaison Updates

Ms. Goff reported on her meeting with representatives from the BOE and the Town to discuss and understand the reasons behind the reported surplus in the BOE's unaudited FY2025-2026 budget as of June 25th. She advised that the group had reviewed the findings as well as the planned reconciliation and correction work. Ms. Goff reported that she had received confirmation that the reconciliation and correction work will be completed by the time the audit of the FY2025-2026 budget is completed in March.

Ms. Goff further reported that the BOE's FY25-26 budget reflects a $218k deficit in its Cafeteria Fund. She stated that the deficit is due to the fact that program costs exceed revenue raised from food sales due to a cap on allowable prices. She noted that this issue will be covered more fully when the Superintendent presents the BOE budget to the BOF.

Ms. Goff stated that she had emphasized the need for the BOE to complete their year-end budget numbers earlier in future years and that Ms. Bourne, the BOE's Business Manager, agreed and stated that the BOE's year-end numbers will be available by September going forward.

Ms. Goff advised that the group will reconvene next month to discuss what reconciliation and corrections took place to get to actual year-end numbers and surplus amount. She responded to questions from the Board and there was a general discussion regarding whether similar meetings should be open to other Board members and the public in the future.

There were no additional liaison updates provided at the meeting.

b. Board Subcommittee Reports

- Communications – There was no new update on this Subcommittee's work.

- Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee – There was no new update on this Subcommittee's work.

- Financial Policies - Mr. Jezek advised that he had made several suggestions at the January 23rd meeting of the Financial Policies Subcommittee regarding conveyance and property taxes. He distributed a list of data he would like to ask the Assessor to provide and asked the Board to review the list for discussion at a future BOF meeting.

Ms. Goff reported that the Subcommittee had agreed to table further work on the 5-year Outlook policy until after the conclusion of the FY2026-2027 budget season. Mr. Thomas thanked Ms. Goff for her suggestions for the Outlook policy.

FIRST SELECTMEN'S REPORT

First Selectman Gelston provided the following report:

- The BOS will begin their Budget Workshop meetings on February 19th and plan to submit their proposed budget to the BOF on February 28th.
- The Public Works' Road Crew Foreman position has been filled.
- Public Works has expended approximately 60% of its snow removal budget for FY25-26.
- He reiterated several steps the Town is taking to address the speeding problem and reported that 10 traffic stops had been made during the last ten days of November, 29 were made in December, and 13 in January.
- Three workshops with the EHAA and EHFD have been completed with good results and a fourth workshop is scheduled for the week of February 16th.
- Contracts for a new cell tower at 440 Town Street and 7 Hood Lane are being considered. If the contract for the Public Works site on Hood Lane is accepted, it would represent approximately $18k of new revenue for the Town.
- Seven of 18 applicants have been selected for the Black Birch Golf Course Feasibility Committee. The charge and membership for the Committee will be established at the February 18th BOS meeting. There will be no budget allocated to this Committee.
- He provided an update on the Town's plans for America's 250th birthday celebration in July 2026. He stated that he has received a list of Federal/State/Foundation grant sources from the America 250 Committee and encouraged citizens who would like to help the Town in planning and fundraising for the celebration should call the First Selectman's office.

Mr. Gelston responded to several questions from the Board.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S

a. YTD Financials - Ms. Belles called the Board's attention to the year-to-date financials in their meeting packets. She stated that, to date, approximately 37% had been expended and over 50% of property taxes has been collected. She responded to several questions from the Board. In response to questions from Mr. Thomas, Finance Director Belles provided clarification on the Shared Services budget and there was a brief discussion about the status of Local Revenues.

b. Audit Update - Ms. Belles reported that the auditors are currently on-site and wrapping up their field work. She noted that they are holding off on the grant reconciliation portion of the audit since they are still waiting for final figures from the BOE, but are working on other aspects of their review. She stated that she anticipates filing with the state for another extension by the end of February. Ms. Belles responded to questions from the Board.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Budget Calendar – Ms. Goff called the Board's attention to the FY26-27 budget calendar and Ms. Belles confirmed that the workshops are open to the BOF and members of the public.

NEW BUSINESS

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Thomas concerning the list of performance measures for the Town and BOE to submit to the BOF, Ms. Goff noted that she had thought those were part of the 5-Year Outlook policy that had been tabled until after the budget season concludes.

Mr. Thomas asked Ms. Goff, as the BOE liaison, to relay to that Board and the Superintendent that he will not be comfortable presenting a budget to the tax-payers without the BOE providing the following information:

- Enrollment projections,
- Class sizes,
- General staffing information (i.e. the number of FTEs with salary amounts, by category),
- Current SAT, ACT, and AP test scores,
- Any actions taken on recommendations included in the most recent report from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges accrediting organization.

Ms. Denette stated she would also like to have student/teacher ratios for the schools.

Ms. Denette noted that she had recently observed several members of the public assisting an EHAA vehicle with exiting a snow-clogged driveway. She stated that it is that kind of public involvement that she so appreciates about living and working in the Town of East Haddam.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Ms. Denette to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
Debra Denette
Secretary