

**TOWN OF EAST HADDAM**  
**Board of Finance**  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
January 13, 2020  
Municipal Office Complex Meeting Rooms 1 and 2

Mr. DiCristofaro called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and recording devices started.

In attendance:

Board of Finance Members

William DiCristofaro, Chairman

Bruce Dutch, Secretary

Joseph Corbett

Todd Gelston

Harvey Thomas

Others

Robert Smith, First Selectman

Debra Denette, Town Clerk and Recording Secretary

Brian Auld, Fire Chief

John Sarnik, Fire Captain

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to amend the Agenda to accommodate the Firemen in attendance. Mr. Dutch seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

Mr. DiCristofaro stated that New Business would be discussed following the approval of the minutes.

**GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2019 regular meeting as presented. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

## **NEW BUSINESS**

a. **Grant Acceptance—FY2020 Comprehensive DUI Enforcement Grant:**

The grant application was approved by the Board of Finance in November. The grant has been awarded by the State. It was noted that this is the same grant that we receive every year.

**Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to accept the FY2020 Comprehensive DUI Enforcement Program Grant for the Resident Trooper for the amount of \$9,745.04 and to request that the Board of Selectmen schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

b. **Grant Acceptance—2020 Historic Document Preservation Grant:**

The grant application was approved by the Board of Finance in August. The grant has been awarded by the State. The state mailed the approval documentation to our old address delaying receipt. The Board of Selectmen has not yet accepted. Mrs. Denette advised the Board that this grant will be utilized for the conservation of historic archives held at the Rathbun Library.

**Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to accept a grant (contingent upon acceptance by the Board of Selectmen) from the State of Connecticut, State Library for the amount of \$5,500 for historic document preservation (Historic Document Preservation Fund, account 26041-43000) and to request that the Board of Selectmen schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

c. **Grant Authorization—Fire Department Assistance to Firefighters Microgrant:**

Fire Captain John Sarnik advised that the Fire Department is looking to apply for an Assistance to Firefighters grant to acquire eight AED's and two chest compression devices. There is a town match in the range of \$2,452.78 to \$4,905.56 or 5% to 10%. The Fire Department did not budget matching funds from its budget for this grant. Captain Sarnik noted that at present the large firetrucks do not have this necessary life-saving equipment.

Responsive to an inquiry, it was noted that the AED's have a life expectancy of ten years. It was recognized that the larger town match increases the chances for the award. Mr. Gelston suggested that it would be prudent to split the difference with 5% of the match coming from the fire department and 5% coming from the Board of Finance Contingency Fund. Mr. DiCristofaro stated that this is a request to apply for the grant, such determination would be premature as the grant may not be awarded.

**Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to authorize the Fire Department to apply for the Assistance to Firefighters grant for the amount of \$49,056.56 with a ten percent match**

**(10%) to acquire eight AED's and two chest compression devices. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

d. **Funding Request—Video/Access System Firehouse #1:**

The 2019-2020 capital budget has \$6,000 budgeted for security cameras for the firehouses. Further evaluation of different options has led to the recommendation that video access systems be installed that dovetail into the Municipal Office Complex system for the cost of \$16,374 (\$10,375 difference). It is the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen to either transfer from Board of Finance contingency or make a special appropriation at a Town Meeting so that cameras can be installed at Company #1 in this fiscal year and the cameras at Company #2 can be addressed in next year's capital budget (same cost \$16,374). Mr. Smith noted that the Board of Finance approved a \$9,000 transfer from contingency for purchase and installation of a gate at the Transfer Station. Mr. Smith advised that as of mid-November the gate had not been ordered. He has halted its acquisition as he has different ideas.

Mr. Smith expanded that the security system envisioned for \$6,000 would lack remote access and appropriate back-ups. To assure the integrity of the system he concurs with Director of Operations Ron Turner that the more secure system, the same as utilized by the Town and the schools, is recommended. Mr. DiCristofaro requested a discussion on the Transfer Station be held under the First Selectman's report. It was recognized, however, that if the funding anticipated for the Transfer Station were moved to this line, it would essentially be a wash.

Mr. Thomas inquired whether the camera system would be external or internal. Mr. Sarnik responded both. He stated that eight cameras in total are proposed with two outside and six inside. He cited several examples of why the system is needed. Mr. Corbett inquired if any recurring costs would result with the system. Fire Chief Brian Auld stated those would be questions for Mr. Turner. Mr. Smith stated that fees for storage or maintenance would be nominal if any, as the system is already utilized town-wide.

**Motion made by Mr. Gelston to transfer \$10,374 from the Board of Finance contingency fund (10549010-58910) to the Capital Projects Fund (33250013-58926-C0188) to install a video/access system at Firehouse #1. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Nothing noted.

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

### **a. Board Subcommittee Reports:**

**Communications:** Mr. Gelston advised that the next planned article will focus on the finances of the Transfer Station. Mr. DiCristofaro encouraged a focus on where savings could be realized and to document the increased costs. He noted that recycling used to pay \$5.00 per ton and it now costs \$30.00 per ton. Mr. Gelston noted that the savings piece will be a tough nut. It was recognized that ordinance changes would likely be required. Mr. Gelston stated that he has been charged with drafting the article. Mr. Thomas stated that there have been several articles in the paper already, including diagrams of proposed changes, yet nothing has come to fruition. He suggested the article speak to what happened to change the thinking and why. Mr. DiCristofaro stated that it is disheartening that after five months and action by the Board of Finance, the identified course of action did not occur.

**Financial Needs Roundtable:** Mr. Thomas advised that this committee is now the Long Range Capital Improvements Committee. The newly constituted Committee met two weeks ago. The new policy and process were presented to the Committee as many Committee members had changed since the recent election. Mr. DiCristofaro stated that as the process moves forward it appears that surprises will be reduced.

**Financial Policies:** Mr. DiCristofaro stated that now that the policies are mostly done, this group will be looking at strategies. Mr. Thomas stated that it is a big undertaking. Mr. Gelston stated that he has been very pleased with the efforts.

## **FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT**

- Mr. Smith advised that he has requested an audit be done regarding personal property. Preliminary reports have the Grand List down from last year because of the loss of Klar Crest (Camp Chomeish) which filed non-profit status and from minimal growth. Capturing appropriate tax for personal property is hoped to offset the deficit. It was further noted that such an audit has not occurred in several decades. Mr. DiCristofaro encouraged Mr. Smith to be mindful of the Economic Development Commission's concern that East Haddam is not business-friendly.
- Mr. Smith noted that the State still carries funding from the failed Center for Community Agriculture (aka Harris property) on their books and that the town may be able to request to repurpose up to \$400,000 for upgrades and improvements to the Transfer Station with that funding.
- Mr. Smith stated that he had air quality testing performed at the Transfer Station. The testing showed the air was within acceptable limits.
- Road and bridge issues were discussed.
- A lengthy discussion was held regarding the town's dead and dying trees. Mr. Smith advised that he had a meeting scheduled with Eversource for January 16, however, it has been

postponed until January 24. Mr. Smith noted that he had an assessment done on four feeder roads and that over 800 trees were identified in need of removal. Mr. DiCristofaro was not confident of the report from someone that would financially benefit from the tree removal. He stated that he would like to see a comprehensive study on what the town needs and how to get there. Mr. Smith noted that trees well beyond the road margins are having an impact. He also noted that Asian longhorn Beetles are predicted to impact maple trees. Responsive to an inquiry from Mr. Thomas, it was noted that as of December 12, 2019, \$77,000 remained of the \$150,000 budget for tree removal.

Mr. DiCristofaro suggested that an ad hoc tree Committee would be beneficial to study the problem and make suggestions as to how to address it in the most efficiently and economically manner. Mr. Smith responded that the Lieutenant Governor visited the other day and assured that the Governor is looking at relief to municipalities hardest hit with the tree blight. Mr. Smith invited a representative of the Board of Finance to the meeting with Eversource on January 24. He also noted that there will be a presentation at the Senior Center and could provide more detail if anyone was interested.

The size of East Haddam was recognized. The priority has been power lines, bus stops, and other high traffic areas. Mr. Gelston suggested property owners be educated so they can be proactive about their trees. The trees that surround cemeteries were also identified as a concern.

#### **FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mrs. Varricchio was not present due to a training conflict.

#### **LIAISON REPORTS**

Nothing noted.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

Nothing noted.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Previously discussed.

#### **GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

None.

## **OTHER**

Mr. Gelston reported that he attended the CCM conference. He stated that in his communication class there was much focus on social media, however, they emphasized that a small newspaper covering your town beats everything. Mr. Gelston noted how fortunate East Haddam is to have the *East Haddam News*.

**Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 8:30 pm. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Debra H. Denette  
Recording Secretary