TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Minutes
October 17, 2022
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 and 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Life

Participating:

Board of Finance Members:

Joseph Corbett
Bruce Dutch, Secretary
Todd Gelston
Tracey Gionta, Chair
Harvey Thomas
Rebecca Whatley

Others:

Rob Funk – Finance Director
Irene Haines – First Selectwoman
Cynthia Hughson – BOE Business Manager
Brian Reas – Superintendent of Schools
Joseph Spurgeon – BOE Capital Projects Committee Chairman

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Gionta called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and the attendees said the pledge of allegiance.

Ms. Gionta stated she would like to amend the agenda as follows:

- Move item 11a – "Grant Authorization Request—School HVAC Grant" – up for discussion following agenda item 5 – Correspondence.

  Motion made by Mr. Dutch to move agenda item 11a up for discussion following agenda item 5a. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Motion carried.

- Add agenda item 11b – Grant Authorizations: DUI Grant and APRA Rural Roads Grant

  Motion made by Mr. Dutch to add agenda item 11b – Grant Approvals – DUI Grant and APRA rural Roads Grant. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Motion carried.

a. Regular Meeting - September 12, 2022

Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to a copy of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 12, 2022 in their meeting packets.

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 12, 2022 as written. Ms. Whatley seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Motion carried.

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE

There was no discussion under this agenda item.

CORRESPONDENCE

a. No correspondence

NEW BUSINESS

a. Grant Authorization Request—School HVAC Grant

Ms. Gionta recognized Superintendent Reas who introduced Mr. Spurgeon, Chairman of the BOE Capital Projects Committee, and Ms. Hughson, BOE Business Manager. He stated they are requesting permission to apply for a state grant for the BOE's proposed HVAC project.

Mr. Reas distributed a copy of his presentation to the Board and reviewed the history of the schools' HVAC project from 2017 to present. He stated that there has been growing support for the use of air-conditioning in schools for air quality purposes and noted that the Town's Long Range Capital Improvements Committee had ranked the BOE's HVAC proposal as one of its top five capital improvements projects. He added that the BOF had previously approved $175,000 in funding to conduct a study for the purpose of developing technical drawings for the project.

Mr. Reas advised that the CT Department of Administrative Services has announced a grant program for school HVAC projects. He stated that the state's maximum reimbursement rate for the grant is 52.15% and the grant application deadline is December 1, 2022. He noted that the approved HVAC project work must be completed by December 31, 2024.

There was a general discussion regarding the BOE's request and Mr. Reas responded to several questions from the Board. He advised that the maximum cost to install HVAC in the Town's three schools is projected to be approximately $4.3M and potential reimbursement from the state is $900k each for the Middle and High Schools and $350k for the Elementary School. Mr. Spurgeon and Ms. Hughston provided additional clarification regarding the proposed project and the grant.

Ms. Gionta expressed concern about the fact that there are not yet firm cost projections for the project but noted that the short timeframe for submitting the grant application precludes getting final quotes. It was the consensus of the Board that it would be prudent to authorize the BOE to apply for the grant based on the project estimates that have been developed.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to authorize the application for a Department of Administrative Services HVAC grant in the amount of $2,150,000 for the upgrade and improvement of air handling systems at the three schools, noting that there is a required match to the grant that, if awarded and accepted, would require additional appropriation approval by the Town. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Motion carried.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT$

a. Tax Collector's Report

Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to a copy of the Tax Collector's Report for September 2022 in their meeting packets. The Board reviewed the report and, in response to a comment made by Mr. Gelston, Mr. Funk advised that there is a procedure in place to write-off the approximately 1% of annual uncollected taxes.

b. Board of Finance Annual Report

Ms. Gionta advised that Ms. Varricchio, the Town's former Finance Director, agreed to write the BOF's narrative for the Town's 2021-2022 Annual Report.

c. Board of Assessment Appeals Fall Report

Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to the Board of Assessment Appeals' Fall Report, dated September 30, 2022. The Board reviewed the report and, in response to a question raised by Mr. Gelston, it was noted that the adjustments to vehicle assessments were primarily due to mileage and/or condition. Regarding adjustments to real property assessments, Mr. Thomas asked if the Board of Assessment Appeals could include a brief description for the reason for the adjustments and Ms. Gionta agreed to pass along that request.

d. Board Subcommittee Reports

i. Communications – Mr. Gelston reported that the Communications Subcommittee had decided not to pursue an article explaining how the Board of Education's budget is created. Ms. Whatley advised that the subcommittee's next meeting is scheduled for October 27th.

ii. Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee – In response to comments made by Ms. Haines, Ms. Gionta confirmed that the Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee (LRCIC) falls under the authority of the Board of Selectmen and, consequently, the First

Selectman schedules those meetings; she also supported Ms. Haines recommendation to hold the LRCIC meetings quarterly.

iii. Financial Policies – Mr. Thomas reported that he has completed his research of 32 of 38 source of revenue accounts and he will draft the policies for those accounts in the appropriate format.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

The First Selectwoman provided the following report:

- The new Public Works Director began work today; consequently, the Town is now fully staffed and staffing is within budget.
- She is looking into the use of solar in additional locations around Town.
- The Broadband Committee is researching the feasibility of creating a Town sponsored broadband network.
- The Sustainability Committee applied for and received a Bronze certification from Sustainable CT; the compost bins at the Transfer Station have been well-received and have increased to twelve from the original two.
- The New Library Study Committee is researching potential locations for a new library building. She has asked them to consider the basement of Municipal Office Building as a potential location.
- The Redevelopment Agency has been meeting regularly and is hoping to schedule a meeting with Centerbridge Group to discuss possible changes to their proposal.
- She is soliciting input from the Youth & Family Services agencies in surrounding towns regarding the development of a more cohesive social services program.
- Prior to signing a new agreement with the Ambulance Association, she has requested they conduct, and submit to the Town, a financial audit for their organization.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Gelston, Ms. Haines advised that the Human Resources Director has returned from a FMLA absence and is working for the Town 15 hours per week at the rate budgeted by the BOF. She stated that he is currently working on a handbook of policies and procedures for Town employees and an organization chart and job descriptions. She confirmed that he is available to meet with employees during the day by appointment.

Ms. Haines advised that the Superintendent had informed her that the BOE does not need the services of an HR director at this time; however, the BOE may utilize his services as needed on a project by project basis. Mr. Gelston expressed his disappointment that the BOE has not agreed to participate fully with the Town on the HR position. Mr. Thomas questioned how the position is being funded since the amount budgeted for the position had been put into contingency when the Town and the BOE could not agree on offering the role to one of the applicants; he voiced his objection to moving forward until the Town and BOE are in agreement. Ms. Gionta agreed to reach out to the Superintendent and ask him to clarify the BOE's objections to participating with the Town on funding and utilizing an HR director.

There was a brief discussion regarding employees' need for an independent source who they can go to with HR questions and to whom they can voice any work related concerns they may have.

In response to a question from Mr. Gelston, Ms. Haines confirmed that there is a plan in place to construct a shelter over the large trash bins at the top of the Transfer Station.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. August YTD Budget Report – Mr. Funk called the Board's attention to the July and August 2022 YTD summary budget report in their meeting packets. He noted that he expects the Town's energy costs to be high this year but they have taken steps to mitigate the expense. He responded to several questions from the Board.

b. 2023-2024 Draft Budget Calendar

Mr. Funk called the Board's attention to a draft 2023-2024 budget calendar in their meeting packets. He reviewed the calendar and noted that the review of Capital Project requests is not included in the presented schedule. Ms. Gionta advised that the Tri-Board meeting is scheduled for January 9th.

LIAISON REPORTS

There were no liaison reports presented at the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Lakes Associations Reserve Policies as addendum or revision to Fund policy

Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to a draft Appendix B, in their meeting packets, addressing the Lakes Associations' request to transfer unexpended funds in any fiscal year to reserves. The Board reviewed the draft and Mr. Thomas responded to questions from the Board. Mr. Funk clarified how the transfer process would work. Ms. Gionta stated that the Board could continue to review the draft Appendix and bring any additional questions to their next regular meeting.

b. Board of Education Reserve Policies as addendum or revision to Fund policy

Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to a draft Appendix A, in their meeting packets, which outlines the process to be used for the transfer of any unexpended BOE funds, in any fiscal year, to capital reserves. Ms. Gionta stated that the Board could review the draft Appendix on their own and bring any questions they may have to the BOF's next regular meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Grant Authorization Request – School HVAC Grant

This agenda item was discussed earlier in the meeting and is covered in the minutes above.

b. Grant Authorizations – DUI Grant and APRA Rural Roads Grant

Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packets related to the annual DUI Enforcement grant.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to authorize a grant application for the FY2023 Comprehensive DUI Enforcement Program in Resident Trooper Towns for up to $20,000.00 with no town match. Ms. Whatley seconded the motion.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Gelston, there was a general discussion regarding what types of driving impairment "DUI" encompassed.

The motion was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packets related to an APRA Rural Roads Grant from the CT Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection.

Motion made Mr. Gelston to authorize a grant application for a FY2023 ARPA Rural Roads Speed Enforcement grant in the amount of $5,000.00 with no town match. Ms. Whatley seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE

There was no guest or audience discussion at the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 8:38 p.m. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
Bruce Dutch
Secretary