TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
March 6, 2023
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 and 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

Participating:

Board of Finance Members:

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

Others:

Donald Angersola – Facilities Director
Lori D'Aquila – East Haddam Ambulance Association
Rob Funk – Finance Director
Irene Haines – First Selectwoman
Cynthia Hughston – BOE Business Manager
Brian Reas – Superintendent of Schools
Patricia Stricker - BOE
Linda Zemienieski – Executive Manager
And other members of the public

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.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed at the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Grant Authorization – DEEP Grant for Design and Survey of Bike Trail on Route 82. Requiring Town matching funds

Ms. Gionta provided background on the request to apply for a DEEP grant for the design and survey of a bike trail on Route 82. In response to a question raised by Mr. Gelston, Ms.

Zemienieski provided clarification of the Board of Selectmen's required acceptance of the grant, should it be approved.

Motion made by Mr. Thomas to authorize the application for a grant from CT DEEP requesting the amount of $40,000.00 for the design and survey of a bike trail on Route 82. If awarded and accepted, the grant would require a 20% match of Town Funds. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion passed.

b. Approval of Multiyear contracts - Comprehensive Energy Efficient Facility Upgrade (EHFPL & Rathbun Library) relating to Energy Audit

Mr. Funk provided information regarding the proposed multi-year contracts for energy efficient upgrades to the Town's two libraries. In response to Mr. Gelston's concern about the affects of blue light, Mr. Angersola stated that the LED bulbs the Town uses in its facilities are all programmable. Mr. Funk and Mr. Angersola responded to questions from the Board.

Motion made by Mr. Thomas to approve the 36-month agreement on behalf of the Town with Energy Resources for a comprehensive energy efficiency upgrade to the East Haddam Free Public Library and recommend to the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for a vote. Mr. Dutch seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion passed.

Motion made by Ms. Whatley to a approve an 18-month agreement on behalf of the Town with Energy Resources for a comprehensive energy efficiency upgrade to the Rathbun Free Memorial Library facility and to recommend to the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for a vote. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion passed.

c. Discussion on Request from Cemetery Committee for a creation of a Special Revenue Fund or Capital Reserves Fund

Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to a copy of a memo from the Cemetery Committee in their meeting packets requesting that a Special Revenue or Capital Reserves Fund be established for their use. She reviewed the memo and there was a general discussion regarding the Cemetery Committee's request. Mr. Funk responded to several questions.

Ms. Gionta observed that there appeared to be a consensus of the Board to establish a Capital Reserve Fund for the Cemetery Committee's use and, possibly in the future, a Special Revenue Fund. Mr. Funk agree to draft an appropriate motion for the Board's next regular meeting.

2023 – 2024 BUDGET

a. Board of Education Budget Presentation

Superintendent Reas distributed handouts to the Board. He reviewed the Board of Education's budget process, priorities, and accomplishments. He discussed enrollment, budget drivers, and provided details about the percentage distributions of the BOE budget.

Mr. Reas noted that the proposed budget increased 3.21% over FY23 and Ms. Stricker advised that budget increases in surrounding towns ranged from 7% to 9%. She briefly reviewed the impact of COVID on the staff and students.

Ms. Whatley noted a discrepancy in the Wages & Salaries information. Mr. Reas responded to the Board's questions and agreed to provide a detailed report regarding the BOE's Purchased Services budget at the BOF's March 11th budget workshop meeting. Ms. Stricker responded to questions about staffing increases.

b. Board of Selectmen Budget Presentation

First Selectwoman Haines reviewed the Board of Selectmen's budget considerations and discussed the public's ability to access detailed budget information via ClearGov. She advised that the Town's operating budget was drafted as a zero-based budget which resulted in a 2.4% increase over FY23.

Ms. Haines discussed the BOS's recommendation that the Town use its ARPA funds to pay for a number of non-repeatable capital expenses and set aside a portion of the funds for grant matches.

Ms. Haines reviewed the Town's budget drivers and challenges and discussed a number of the Town's economic development opportunities. She encouraged the BOF to be forward thinking in funding the items that will increase the Town's commercial tax base.

c. Budget Calendar

Ms. Gionta and Ms. Haines previewed the BOF's upcoming budget workshop meetings and Mr. Funk provided additional details. In response to a request from Mr. Thomas, Mr. Funk stated he would provide documentation that will illustrate the impact of incremental changes in the budget on the mill rate. There was a general discussion regarding the impact of the recent property revaluation on the Town's Grand List as well as the number of assessment appeals that were subsequently submitted.

GUEST AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Ms. D'Aquila spoke on behalf of the East Haddam Ambulance Association and requested details about the amount budgeted for the Association in FY24. Mr. Funk noted that the Capital Budget for FY24 is not yet complete; however, it currently does not include a contribution to the Ambulance Association.

There was a general discussion regarding the Association's status as a Town vendor and the EMS support provided by the Fire Department staff. Mr. Gelston requested the BOF be provided with a

chart outlining the proportions of EMS staffing provided by the Fire Department and the Ambulance Association along with the related costs.

Ms. D'Aquila noted that the state is currently experiencing a crisis in EMS services and most municipalities are experiencing the same financial challenges. She inquired about the status of the Association's July request to discuss a contribution of $100k from the Town to cover their projected budget shortfall in FY24. Ms. Gionta stated that the Ambulance Association must work through the Board of Selectmen to resolve this issue. She noted that the Board of Finance can only act on the Selectmen's recommendations for the budget.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 9:06 p.m. Ms. Whatley seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
Bruce Dutch
Secretary