TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2023
Municipal Office Building – Room 3
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

Participating:

Board of Finance Members:

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

Others: Rob Funk
Irene Haines, First Selectwoman
Eric Kolasinski
And other members of the public

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to a copy of the minutes of the Special Meeting of October 16, 2023 in their meeting packets. Mr. Gelston noted several typographical errors.

Motion was made by Mr. Dutch to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of October 16, 2023 as amended. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Motion carried.

GUESTS AND AUDIENCE COMMENTS

There were no guest or audience comments raised at the meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence discussed at the meeting.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Gionta introduced Mr. Kolasinski and congratulated him on his election to the Board of Finance. She also congratulated Mr. Corbett and Mr. Thomas on their re-election to the Board. She noted that Mr. Dutch will be retiring from the BOF and she thanked him for his service to the Town.

a. Board Subcommittee Reports

i. Communications – Mr. Gelston reported that the Communications Sub-committee met on November 1st and discussed several topics for its next East Haddam News article. He reviewed the list of potential topics and advised that he and Ms. Whatley will meet again on December 5, 2023.

ii. Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee – First Selectwomen Haines advised that the Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee meeting scheduled for October 25th had been cancelled and will be rescheduled in December.

iii. Financial Policies – There was no new update for this Sub-committee.

b. Liaison Reports

i. Redevelopment Agency – Mr. Thomas reported the following:

- The contract with a financial consulting firm has been signed.
- The Redevelopment Agency is drafting articles about the history and next steps of the Village project.
- The Board voted to have Andrew Lord replace Melanie Kolek as Chairman and William DiCristofaro was voted in as Vice-Chairman.
- CT DOT and others are reviewing road and traffic patterns in the Village to determine what changes to the roads that the state might consider making.
- A group of Wooster Polytech students are doing a case study on the planned redevelopment of the Village as their senior project.
- A team of grant funding specialists were interviewed by members of the Agency and will attend the December meeting to speak with the full Board.

Mr. Thomas responded to several questions from the BOF members.

FIRST SELECTMEN'S REPORT

Ms. Haines reported the following:

- One-way traffic on the Swingbridge will begin December 1, 2023 and run through March 31, 2024.

- She provided an update on the work of the Broadband committee and advised that a number of public information sessions have been held and more will be scheduled in the future. She

noted that the higher the rate of adoption for the Town's proposed broadband network, the lower the cost will be to everyone.

- A new Town Finance Director has been hired and will begin work on December 4th. Ms. Haines noted that the individual has a solid background in municipal and Board of Education finance work. She and the Board thanked Mr. Funk for his work and his interim support during the search for a new Finance Director.

Ms. Haines noted the planned retirement of Bruce Dutch and read a proclamation thanking him for his service on the Board of Finance and a number of other Town Boards, Commissions, and Committees. Mr. Thomas provided additional complimentary comments.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. September 2023 Year to Date Budget Report – Mr. Funk called the Board's attention to the September 2023 YTD Budget Report in their meeting packets. He advised that Building Department revenues and revenues from interest are trending up while expenses in general are trending to be under budget; however, he noted that it is early in the fiscal year and those trends may flatten out over time. Mr. Funk responded to several questions from the Board.

b. FY23 Audit Update – Mr. Funk advised that he and the BOE have been providing preliminary information to the auditors but noted that all of the FY23 journal entries have not yet been completed. There was a general discussion regarding the delay in completing the FY22 audit and the general consensus was to issue an RFP for a new audit firm. Mr. Funk recommended issuing the RFP in January 2024.

c. FY25 Budget Development Calendar – Mr. Funk and the Board reviewed proposed calendars that accelerated the FY25 budget development process by one- and two-weeks respectively. The Board agreed to utilize the calendar that projects completing the budget development one week earlier than in past years.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Discussion Regarding Open Space Reissuance of Bond Authorization Relating to Purchase of the Kronberg Property – Ms. Gionta reviewed the proposed schedule for a referendum on purchasing the Kronberg property and a referendum, and other preliminary meetings, regarding reissuing the $5M Open Space bond. The general consensus was to move forward with a January referendum on the Kronberg property.

b. Discussion Regarding Open Space Future Bonding Authorization – The Board and First Selectwoman Haines discussed possible schedules for public information meetings and a referendum on issuing another $5M bond authorization for open space. Ms. Haines recommended any new bond authorization be split equally between open space purchases and economic development projects.

Ms. Gionta expressed concern about asking the public to vote on a $5M bond authorization until borrowing needed for current and upcoming capital projects is defined. Mr. Thomas added that while the bonding for open space purchases is unambiguous, bonding for "economic development" purposes should be more specifically clarified before asking citizens to vote on it.

The Board agreed to invite the Town's bond counsel to its next meeting to discuss developing a borrowing plan for all of the Town's proposed capital projects and postpone their discussion of scheduling a referendum on a new $5M bond authorization for open space and, potentially, economic development projects until after they meet with Mr. Lindsey.

c. Next Year's Budget Referendum Exist Poll – Ms. Gionta presented potential strategies for including an exit poll at the referendum for the FY2025 budget. There was a general discussion about what question to ask on the exit poll and Mr. Funk noted that state statutes address what can and cannot be asked on a municipal ballot. No action on this agenda item was decided on at the meeting.

d. Budget Transfer Request – Board of Education Request to Transfer Funds Between Capital Projects – from Elementary School Envelope Project to Athletic Complex. (This item was tabled at the October meeting until more final cost amounts are available for the project.) – Mr. Funk advised that the BOE has not yet finalized the amounts they would like transferred and this agenda item was tabled until the December meeting.

e. Discussion and Possible Outline of Schedule to Bring Bonding Request for the Town Match Portion of the Proposed School HVAC Project to Referendum – Ms. Gionta provided background on this agenda item and there was a general discussion regarding whether or not to include the request to approve funds for the Town match portion of doing HVAC upgrades in all schools on the January referendum. The Board agreed not to include this request on the January referendum.

f. Other Business – Ms. Gionta stated that the Public Works Department has asked to transfer approximately $15k from one capital project to a proposed project to upgrade the scale house at the Transfer Station. Mr. Funk noted that all the details for the transfer have not yet been worked out. Ms. Gionta advised that Facilities Director Angersola will be invited to the BOF's next meeting to provide more details on the Public Works' transfer request.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion on 2024 Board of Finance Meeting Schedule for a December Vote with the New Board – Discussion of this agenda item was postponed until the December BOF meeting.

b. Other Business – There was no additional New Business discussed at the meeting.

AUDIENCE AND GUEST COMMENTS

There were no guest or audience comments raised at the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 8:09 p.m. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
Bruce Dutch
Secretary