TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2023
Municipal Office Building – Rooms 1 & 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

Participating:
Board of Finance Members:
Joseph Corbett
Bruce Dutch
Todd Gelston
Tracey Gionta
Harvey Thomas
Absent: Rebecca Whatley

Others: Robert Casner, EDC Chairman
Rob Funk, Finance Director
Irene Haines, First Selectwoman
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 7:00 p.m. and the attendees said the pledge of allegiance.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence discussed at the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. July 11, 2023 Special Meeting - Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to a copy of the minutes of the Special Meeting of July 11, 2023 in their meeting packets.

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of July 11, 2023 as written. Ms. Whatley seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Motion carried.

b. July 19, 2023 Special Meeting - Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to a copy of the minutes of the Special Meeting of July 19, 2023 in their meeting packets. Ms. Whatley noted that Superintendent Reas' name was mis-spelled on pages 1, 2, and 6 and should be corrected.

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of July 19, 2023 as amended. Ms. Whatley seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Motion carried.

c. August 16, 2023 Public Hearing - Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to a copy of the minutes of the August 16, 2023 Public Hearing in their meeting packets.

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing of August 16, 2023 as written. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Motion carried.

d. August 16, 2023 Special Meeting - Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to a copy of the minutes of the Special Meeting of August 16, 2023 in their meeting packets. Mr. Funk stated that the start and end time of the meeting should be noted in the minutes as 10:05 p.m. and 10:55 p.m. respectively.

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

2023-2024 BUDGET

a. Discussion and Potential Adjustments (if September 12, 2023 referendum fails) – Ms. Gionta reported that the budget had passed referendum. Consequently, there was no discussion of this agenda item.

b. Guests and Audience Comments – There were no guests or audience comments made at this time in the meeting.

c. Discussion on Timeline for Budget Next Steps – There was no discussion of this agenda item.

d. Possible Vote to Send Budget to Town Meeting – There was no discussion of this agenda item.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

a. Board Subcommittee Reports

i. Communications – Mr. Gelston reported that the Communications Sub-committee will be scheduling a meeting in the near future to discuss potential topics for its next article.

ii. Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee – First Selectwomen Haines confirmed that she would schedule a meeting of the Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee.

iii. Financial Policies – Ms. Gionta reported that she had received several communications from Mr. Thomas and stated that they will schedule a meeting for this sub-committee to meet in the near future.

b. Liaison Reports

i. Redevelopment Agency – Mr. Thomas reported that the Redevelopment Committee is scheduled to meet on September 14th and he will provide the Board of Finance with an update on the Agency's activities at their next meeting.

FIRST SELECTMEN'S REPORT

First Selectwoman Haines confirmed that the budget had passed at its third referendum. Mr. Thomas noted that a suggestion had been made to poll the voters, possibly on the ballot, about whether they felt the budget was "Fair", "Too High", or "Too Low". There was a general discussion regarding the most appropriate way to conduct such a poll and Mr. Thomas asked Ms. Gionta to include a discussion of this topic on the Board's next meeting agenda.

Ms. Haines reported the following:

- The Swingbridge repair work is moving forward on-schedule.
- A public information meeting is scheduled for October 26th to discuss the Town's consideration of a project to establish a municipal broadband fiber network. Ms. Haines stated that a press release regarding the meeting will be issued and communications will be sent to targeted audiences.
- A new mini-park was opened at the quarry area along the river below the Riverhouse.
- Public Works' new Transfer Station stickers will go into effect on Saturday, September 16th.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Whatley, Ms. Haines advised that the recruitment and hiring for the IT manager and Superintendent positions are being handled by the Board of Education; the posting for the Finance Director position has been closed and there are seven applicants, and she will be submitting a Memorandum of Understanding to the police union so that the Town can change the full-time police officer posting to part-time positions.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. June 2023 Preliminary Year to Date Budget Report – Estimated – Finance Director Funk called the Board's attention to the June 2023 YTD Budget Report in their meeting packets. He noted that the FY2023 budget had relied on $500k from Fund Balance and $360k of unexpended Board of Education operating funds that were appropriated to Capital Reserves. He advised, however, that rather than a decrease in Fund Balance, he is anticipating an increase in the account because the actual FY2023 expenses are under budget and revenues are higher than projected resulting in the budget being approximately $1.3M to the good.

b. Audit Update – Mr. Funk reiterated that the FY2022 audit had been completed and reported that the FY2023 audit started on-schedule.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed at the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Grant Acceptance – DEEP Grant for Bike Trail Study – Ms. Gionta called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packets related to this agenda item. She advised that the DEEP grant is for the planning and design of a bike path and stated that the total project cost is $40,000.00, which will be covered by the grant plus an $8,000.00 required Town match. She further noted that, at their August 16, 2023 meeting, the Board had approved a transfer of $8,000.00 from the Economic Development Commission's FY2023 operating budget to capital for the project.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to accept a grant in the amount of $32,000 from the State of Connecticut DEEP – Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, State Parks Division, requiring a Town match of $8,000.00, for the purpose of planning and design of an outdoor bike path (account 10549010-59700) and to recommend that the Board of Selectmen schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Dutch seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Motion carried.

b. Other Business – Mr. Thomas thanked Finance Director for his work for the Town and with the Board. Mr. Thomas and the entire Board wished him well on his return to work for the city of New London.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Gelston, there was a discussion regarding beginning the Town's budget workshops earlier next year. There was a consensus to move the FY2024-2025 budget planning schedule up approximately two weeks.

AUDIENCE AND GUEST COMMENTS

Mr. Casner, Chairman of the Economic Development Commission, advised that EDC has been working with CT Landmarks, the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, and the towns of Chester and Haddam, for several years on the bike trail project. He thanked the Board for accepting the grant that will move the project forward the next step.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Mr. Dutch to adjourn at 7:38 p.m. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
Bruce Dutch
Secretary