

Board of Selectmen  
Municipal Office Complex  
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2  
August 21, 2024  
Regular Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: I. Haines; T. Bourgoïn; E. Dill

Also Present: D. Barry; E. Blaschik; J. Cotter; J. Curtin; K. Daigle; L. D'Aquila; N. D'Aquila; D. Distefano; D Distefano; T. Gelston; M. Hansen; E. Johnson; R. Johnson; W. Kiley; J. Masci; M. Masci; M. Masci, R. Masci; J. Moreau; J. Nowell; S. Pare; A. Shaltiel; R. Smith; K. Thompson; J. Ventres; L. White; C. Woodward; L. Woodward; L. Zemienieski; and other members of the public

1. First Selectman Haines called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoïn, to approve the agenda as written.  
Unanimous aye.

3. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting of August 7, 2024

Motion made by Ms. Bourgoïn, seconded by Mr. Dill, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 7, 2024 as written. Unanimous aye.

4. Correspondence: Ms. Haines read the following correspondence into the record:

A. Emails Regarding Roadside Mowing: An email from Richard Laudenat complimenting the Public Works road crew on mowing the roadside of A.P. Gates Road and stating, "... *it is one of the best jobs I've seen*".

B. Email Regarding Parks & Recreation Summer Day Camp: An email from the step-grandfather of Lila Ferraro complimenting the Parks & Recreation summer camp counselors for doing "... *an outstanding job*".

Ms. Haines read an email from Robert and Sharon Smithberger about Public Works staffing, expressing their concerns about the safety of Town roads. Mr. and Ms. Smithberger also stated that they are sad about the number of trees that are being taken down around Town and were unhappy with the attitude of the Board of Finance members when the public commented on this issue at their last meeting.

Ms. Haines also read an email from Jeff Carlson expressing concern about the amount of heavy equipment being maintained, but not utilized, by the Public Works Department and recommending the Town auction off the excess equipment.

## 5. First Selectmen's Report

Ms. Haines reported on the following items:

- She provided an update on the Swingbridge project and stated that it is on target for a February 2025 completion date.
- She reported that the Town has been served with a second lawsuit from Robert Smith, Amalia Shaltiel, Roger Paley, Denise Paley and James Leatherbee regarding its tree removal program.

Ms. Haines advised that, Public Works Director Velez has been conferenced into this meeting and she will respond to some of the questions raised at the August 7<sup>th</sup> Board of Selectmen meeting but, due to the lawsuit and upon the advice of the Town's attorney, cannot respond to all of them.

Ms. Velez noted the following:

- There was no written Town policy on tree management when she assumed the position of Director of Public Works.
- The Town's previous Tree Warden had informed her that, in the past, trees were not tagged or posted because the Town did not want to be held responsible for taking them down.
- A written policy (Town of East Haddam Tree Removal and Pruning Standards) was created in April 2024 and is available on the Town's website.
- She stated that she has made every effort to preserve the natural beauty of the Town.

Director Velez disputed several of Mr. Smith's interpretations of her statements to him and emphasized that, as the Town's Tree Warden, she makes the final determination on which trees will be removed, not the vendor. She stated that she does understand the related laws governing a municipality's tree removal actions as well as the meaning of the term "an act of God".

Ms. Velez also responded to several questions raised at the August 7<sup>th</sup> Board of Selectmen meeting by Ruth Masci and Jay Moreau and confirmed that she had received Ms. D'Aquila's email expressing concern about a tree on Warner Road. She advised that the tree is being assessed.

## 6. Public Comment

The following public comments were brought up at the meeting:

- Jay Moreau – Expressed his concern about the staffing level at Public Works. He raised questions about recent layoffs and the transfer of funds from the department's road budget into the tree maintenance budget.

- Ruth Masci – Stated she appreciated the feedback from the Public Works Director but stated that, in general, she was dissatisfied with the Town’s response to questions she has raised about the Public Works staffing and budget. She also noted that there had been no written documentation of performance issues related to the recent layoffs.
- Robert Smith – Contradicted Public Works Director Velez’s statement that there had been no written tree policy prior to her being hired and stated that he still believes there is a conflict of interest in giving Distinctive Tree Care the responsibility of making the initial identification of trees that should be removed.
- Rob Johnson – Inquired if the Town utilizes an “accountability model” and/or a “resolution tracking program” and suggested both are effective management tools that save time, help defuse anger and avoid rumors. He offered his assistance in creating such tools for the Town.
- Amalia Shaltiel – Stated she agreed that it is a conflict of interest in delegating the responsibility for identifying damaged/diseased trees for removal to the Town’s contractor and recommended hiring a consultant arborist to provide a second opinion. She also provided information about a “healthy” tree that had been taken down after Director Velez promised it would not be removed. Ms. Shaltiel stated that she feels the Town is wasting money and not getting objective service from Distinctive Tree Care.
- Mike Masci – Advised that he had formerly worked for Public Works and confirmed that some street sweeping had been done this year; however, he did not agree with Director Velez’s description of the amount of sweeping that had been done. He also disputed her information concerning the level of utilization of the department’s heavy equipment.
- Laurie D’Aquila – Reiterated her concern about the safety of the ambulance crews in responding to emergencies during inclement weather if Public Works does not have sufficient staff to clear the roads ahead of the ambulance. She also advised that the town of East Hampton has established an ambulance task force which has begun the process of researching options available for responding to EMS calls and expressed concern that the proposed East Haddam Ambulance Task Force be established with “unbiased” citizens.
- Denise Distefano – In response to Ms. Distefano’s inquiries about the timing for establishing the Town’s Ambulance Task Force and information related to the anticipated expense of setting up a new model, Ms. Haines stated that that information would be made public “soon”.
- Bill Kiley – Expressed his concern about the proposed Town ordinance that would restrict the use of wake boats on Bashan Lake and stated that he believes it will “... *open up a can of worms*” and should be thought through more thoroughly.

## 7. Unfinished Business

Ms. Haines advised that the Board would have to recess their meeting in a few minutes to allow a Town Meeting to take place in Meeting Rooms 1&2. She noted that agenda item B under Unfinished Business would be a quick discussion and, consequently, the Board agreed to address item B before the recess and come back to item A after the recess.

- B. Bashan Lake – Wake Surfing Potential Ordinance Discussion: Ms. Haines advised that CT DEEP had provided feedback on the draft ordinance the Town had submitted regarding imposing restrictions on wake surfing on the Town's lakes. She stated that she had forwarded DEEP's comments to the Lakes Association and would like to defer further discussion of this agenda item until she hears back from them. Ms. Haines responded to questions from the Board and it was agreed to postpone discussion of this agenda item until the Lakes Association comments on DEEP's feedback.

Motion made by Ms. Bourgoïn, seconded by Mr. Dill, to recess the meeting at 7:54 p.m.  
Unanimous aye.

The meeting reconvened at 8:45 p.m.

- A. Ambulance Task Force Discussion: Ms. Bourgoïn advised that some updates need to be made to the draft resolution proposing the Town establish an Ambulance Task Force. The Board agreed to postpone further discussion of this agenda item until their next regular meeting.

## 8. New Business

- A. RFQ/RFP Award – Environmental Consultant Brownfield Assessment: Ms. Haines called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packets related to this agenda item. She advised that evaluation results and documents were sent to the CT DECD for their review and concurrence with award recommendation. She invited Mr. Cotter, Chairman of the Redevelopment Agency Environmental Subcommittee, to speak to this agenda item.

Mr. Cotter provided background information on the Redevelopment Agency's recommendation and responded to questions from the Board. He confirmed that the Town has a \$200k grant award to pay for the brownfield assessment.

Motion made by Mr. Dill seconded by Ms. Bourgoïn, to award the contract for an Environmental Consultant – Brownfield Assessment to Vannasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) in an amount not to exceed \$130,600.00, pending concurrence of the Department of Environmental and Community Development (DECD). Unanimous aye.

- B. Bid Waiver – Audio Video Integration Municipal Office Complex Meeting Rooms 1&2: Ms. Haines advised that, because the A/V components in Meeting Rooms 1&2 are

proprietary to Opticom, Matt Hall, IT Manager, recommended the most economical solution was to replace the Opticom components that are at the end of life/end of support by Opticom. She stated that requests for proposals had been considered for this project but that would result in a complete replacement of the rooms' A/V system at a much higher cost. She confirmed that ARPA funds would be used for this project.

In response to a question from Mr. Dill, Ms. Zemienieski reported that many of the components currently in use for this system are from 2013. There was a general discussion about the request to waive the bid requirement and Mr. Dill requested additional information. He noted that he is aware of the time sensitive nature of this capital project due to the use of ARPA funds. The Board agreed to postpone a decision on this agenda item at this time.

- C. Board/Commission/Committee Changes (CEM): The following Board, Commission, or Committee changes were discussed at the meeting:

**Cemetery Commission**

Ms. Haines called the Selectmen's attention to the minutes of the Cemetery Committee regarding reappointments to their committee.

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to reappoint Karl Stofko, Debra Denette and Crary Brownell as regular members on the Cemetery Committee for two-year terms to expire June 30, 2026. Unanimous aye.

- D. Tax Refunds: Two tax refunds were considered at the meeting:

Motion made by Ms. Bourgoin, seconded by Mr. Dill, to award tax refunds in the amounts as presented.

- \$1,123.70 to Toyota Lease Trust, and
- \$ 559.55 to Ryan Fazzino.

Unanimous aye.

9. Selectmen's Discussion

- A. Liaison's Reports: Ms. Bourgoin advised that the Sustainability Committee will be hosting a Repair Café and toy/school supply swap at the Grange on August 25<sup>th</sup> between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. She also reported that the Sustainability Committee had applied for a Climate Leadership certification.

B. Other

1. Executive Session – Clerical Collective Bargaining Agreement and Police Department Memorandum Agreement Discussions

Motion made by Ms. Bourgoin, seconded by Mr. Dill, to enter into executive session at 9:03 p.m. to discuss the East Haddam Clerical Union (CSEA, SEIU, Local 2001, CTW) Collective Bargaining Agreement and Police Department Memorandum of Agreement and to invite Ms. Zemienieski into this session. Unanimous aye.

The Selectmen returned to regular session at 9:14 p.m. No motions or decisions were made.

2. Vote on Clerical Collective Bargaining

Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to accept the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Town of East Haddam and Clerical Union (CSEA, SEIU, Local 2001, CTW) for the period from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. Unanimous aye.

3. Vote on Police Department Memorandum of Agreement

Motion made by Ms. Bourgoin, seconded by Mr. Dill, to accept the Memorandum of Agreement between the Town of East Haddam and International Brotherhood of Police Officers Local 394 to set private duty shift eligibility for part-time positions for the collective bargaining agreement dated July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025 and shall be the basis for successor contract negotiations. Unanimous aye.

11. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 p.m.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,  
Erik Dill, Secretary