TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2024
Municipal Office Building – Room 1 & 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

Participating:

Board of Finance Members:

William Barney
Joseph Corbett
Todd Gelston
Maureen Goff
Eric Kolasinski
Harvey Thomas

Others:

Valerie Belles, Finance Director
Patrick Burke, Citizen
Michael Callahan, Citizen
Robert Casner, EDC Chairman
Michael Robideau, EDC Vice-Chairman
Irene Haines, First Selectwoman
Linda Zemienieski, Executive Manager
Daniel Zimmerman, Citizen
And other members of the public

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

GUESTS & AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Mr. Callahan encouraged the Board to approve the expense for a professional appraisal of the Banner Golf Course.

Mr. Burke stated he was the President of the Banner Estates HOA and noted that expenses for that community are going up and the Association dues are becoming unaffordable. He said that reopening the golf course would be good for the Banner Estates community and Moodus at large.

Mr. Zimmerman and Mr. Robidoux concurred with Mr. Callahan's and Mr. Burke's comments about the benefits of making Banner Golf Course a municipal golf course and also encouraged the Board to approve the expense for a professional appraisal of the property.

In response to questions raised by Mr. Thomas, Ms. Belles clarified how the Town would use ARPA funds for the appraisal and she confirmed that the Town will instruct the appraiser to determine a fair market value for the golf course.

Mr. Gelston stated that, in consideration of the citizens attending the meeting who are interested in the future of the Banner Golf Course, he would like to move New Business item d. ARPA Project Approval – Banner Gulf Course appraisal, up for consideration at this time.

The Board discussed the request to use ARPA funds to pay for an appraisal of the Banner Golf Course.

Motion made by Mr. Thomas to authorize up to $10,000.00 of the remaining ARPA funds for the Banner Gulf Course Appraisal (account number 15010500-58926, Project C0334). Any amount not covered by the ARPA balance to be covered by Contingency (account number 10541020-58910). Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence discussed at the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting – November 18, 2024 – Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the minutes of their November 18, 2024 regular meeting in their meeting packets.

Motion made by Mr. Thomas to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 18, 2024 as written. Mr. Barney seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

b. Board Sub-Committee Reports

i. Communications – Mr. Gelston stated that there was no new update on this agenda item; however, he stated that he hopes to publish the regular budget season articles in the East Haddam News again this year.

ii. Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee – Mr. Thomas reported that the Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee met on December 4th and made several revisions to the mechanics of the ranking system. He stated that the Committee segregated a list of annually recurring capital items, which they have agreed should not need to be ranked. He added that they also created a list of items that are identified as "Town priorities" (i.e. mandated and safety related capital requests), which they also believe do not need to go through the ranking process.

Mr. Thomas further reported that Ms. Belles, Ms. Hughston, and he will refine how the rankings work in the system and stated that the Town will be opening up ClearGov so

that department heads and the Board of Education can input their 2025 Capital requests. He noted that the next meeting of the LRCIC is scheduled for December 29th.

iii. Financial Policies – Mr. Thomas stated that he would like to defer his report regarding Financial Policies until the Board considers agenda item (a) under Old Business - Approval of General Fund Revenue Policies.

Liaison Assignments – Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the Liaison Assignments chart in their meeting packets and Ms. Belles provided information on the assignments. No changes were made to the liaison assignments.

Mr. Gelston noted that a new secretary for the Board of Finance needed to be appointed and Mr. Barney volunteered for the position.

Motion made by Ms. Goff to appoint William Barney as secretary for the Board of Finance and Mr. Thomas seconded the motion. Mr. Barney abstained from the vote and the motion was passed by a majority of ayes. Motion carried.

iv. Bond Plan Brainstorming – Mr. Gelston reiterated that the goal is to align the bond plan with the needs of the Town. He noted that Mr. Lindsey will be attending one of the Board's next meetings to discuss the Town's future need for bonds. Mr. Gelston summarized that he believes the BOF will look to Mr. Lindsey for not only financial planning but also some financial education, such as the types of bonds available to municipalities, the best timing for soliciting bonds, the importance of the Town's credit rating in securing bonds, and the appropriate use of BANs.

Mr. Gelston stated it would also be helpful to get Mr. Lindsey's input on the best use of bonds to support the Town's upkeep of its roads and what experience other municipalities have had with using bonds for this purpose. He suggested asking Mr. Lindsey to provide a model, over a specified period, comparing the use of bonds vs. "cash" to pay for road maintenance, which shows the net cost to the tax payer.

FIRST SELECTMEN'S REPORT

a. First Selectmen Updates – Ms. Haines provided the following updates:

- The final 63 hour closure of the Swingbridge will occur from 8:00 p.m. on December 15th thru 11:00 a.m. on December 18th and a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new walkway will occur on Monday, December 16th between 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

- The automated traffic safety devices are in place for the test required by the CT DOT and the Town is working on drafting an ordinance to support the program.

- The road survey contractor is currently conducting a 6-day video surveillance of all of the Town roads.

- The Town and Youth & Family Services are holding four sessions of an all community dialogue on race. The program is run by the Justice Department and the first session will be held at the end of January. Citizens can go onto the Town's website to sign-up and/or submit comments. Daycare will be available during the sessions.

- She reminded the Board about the need to bond for the proposed new firehouse and the replacement of two firetrucks. She noted that an RFP for the firehouse design will be released in January.

- The Town has had difficulty filling vacant police, fire fighter and EMT positions due to the Town's low pay scale.

Mr. Gelston suggested using lawn signs to publicize the dialogue on race sessions.

Ms. Haines advised that the Town had fallen behind in its schedule to replace police cruisers due to the turnover of its Resident State Troopers and Finance Directors. She noted that the proposed transfer of funds for this purpose was lost in the process and the Town needs to make the fleet of six vehicles whole again. Ms. Zemienieski provided some of the history behind this issue. Ms. Haines responded to questions from the Board.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. Year-to-Date Budget Report – Ms. Belles called the Board's attention to the YTD budget report in their meeting packets. She reported that the Town had received it first ECS payment from the state and that its tax collections are healthy. She confirmed that the monthly budget reports are now regularly posted on the Town's website.

b. FY 2023-2024 Audit Update – Ms. Belles stated that the 2023-2024 audit has been finalized. She projected the timeframe for the Town's 2024-2025 audit and noted that she has applied to the state for one extension for that audit.

c. Bond Update – Ms. Belles reported that, on December 4th, the Town has closed on the bond anticipation note for the High School Athletic Complex, the Elementary School Envelope, the Kronberg Open Space, and Board of Education's HVAC and High School Chiller projects.

Ms. Belles advised that the Town's AA+ credit rating had been reaffirmed and stated that Mr. Lindsey advised that AA+ is the highest rating a municipality the size of East Haddam can achieve.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Approval of General Fund Revenue Policies – Mr. Thomas called the Board's attention to the revised General Fund Revenue policies in their meeting packets and provided background on the revisions. Ms. Belles responded to several questions from the Board.

Motion was made by Ms. Goff to approve the revisions on General Fund Revenue policies related to Grants, Local Revenues, Endowments and Taxation and to note, for

the record, that the Board has reviewed the General Fund Revenue Policy. Mr. Kolasinski seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Approve 2025 Board of Finance Meeting Calendar – Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the BOF's proposed 2025 meeting calendar in their meeting packets. No conflicts were noted at this time.

Motion made by Mr. Barney to approve the Board of Finance's 2025 regular meeting schedule as presented. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion carried.

b. Transfer Request for Capital Projects - BOE facilities – Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the Facilities Director's request in their meeting packets that the unused funds from several completed Board of Education projects be transferred for use to complete the Stage Furniture, Middle School Door Access/Video, and Systemwide Lockdown/Security Software projects.

Motion made by Mr. Barney to authorize a transfer of $6,916.00 from Systemwide Padding for Basketball poles (account number 33250013-58926, project C0323), a transfer of $10,000.00 from Ceiling Tiles (account number 33250013-58926, Project C0224), and a transfer of $8,321.00 from Elementary School Sidewalk project (account number 33250013-58926, Project C0315) to fund $2,737.00 for new capital project Stage Furniture (account number 33250013-58926, Project C0335), $11,600.00 for capital project Middle School door access/video project (account number 33250013 58926, Project C00336), and $10,900.00 for capital project Systemwide lockdown/security software (account number 33250013-58926, Project C0337). Mr. Kolasinski seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion carried.

c. APRA Project transfer – Transfer Station Generator – Ms. Belles provided the background on a recommendation to approve a transfer of $268.00 from unexpended ARPA funds to cover a small overage on the Transfer Station Generator project.

Motion made by Ms. Goff to authorize a transfer of $268.00 from unexpended ARPA funds to the Town Hall Exterior project (account number 15010500-58926, Project C0325). Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion carried.

d. APRA Project Approval – Banner Gulf Course Appraisal

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

Motion made by Mr. Thomas to add item (e) – Police Cruiser and Truck Capital Transfer to the agenda. Ms. Goff seconded motion and it was approved unanimously. Motion carried.

e. Capital Transfer Request to Cover Cost of Police Cruiser and Purchase of Police Truck – Ms. Belles and Ms. Zemienieski provided the background on this agenda item.

Motion made by Ms. Goff to approve transfers up to $133,000.00 from the 2024-2025 Police Regular to fund capital account 33250013-58926, Project C0246 - Police Cruiser for up to $40,000.00 and to fund new capital account number 33250013-58926, Project C0335 - Police Truck for up to $93,000.00, and request that the Board of Selectman schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Motion was seconded by Mr. Barney.

In response to questions from the Board, Ms. Belles provided clarification for the purpose of the requested transfers. There was a general discussion concerning the appropriate number of cruisers needed for the Town's police and the need for a truck to transport the police boat.

In response to a question from Mr. Corbett, Ms. Belles confirmed that the Town has already taken delivery of and paid for the Project C0246 Cruiser and the $40k transfer is simply to correct the accounting trail for that transaction. She further advised that, since the Town has been unable to recruit either full-time or part-time officers for some time, the funds for the proposed truck/cruiser would come out of the surplus in the Police Salary line.

The Board agreed that there is a need to have a back-up cruiser for times when one of the other cruisers was out for repair; however, they felt that they did not have enough information to approve the purchase of an additional vehicle. Ms. Belles agreed to invite the Town's First Selectwoman and Resident State Trooper to the Board's January meeting to address any questions the Board has about the size of the police fleet.

Mr. Corbett expressed concern about the "last minute" notice the Board of Finance had gotten about these capital projects and Ms. Goff concurred with his concern. Mr. Thomas recommended postponing a decision on this agenda item until the January meeting when the Resident State Trooper and Ms. Haines were in attendance to discuss the issue.

The motion was defeated by a unanimous nay vote. Motion failed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Mr. Kolasinski to adjourn the meeting at 9:21 p.m. Mr. Barney seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
William Barney
Secretary