TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2025
Municipal Office Building – Room 1 & 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

Participating:

Board of Finance Members:
William Barney
Joseph Corbett
Todd Gelston
Eric Kolasinski
Harvey Thomas

Absent: Maureen Goff

Others: Valerie Belles, Finance Director
Irene Haines, First Selectwoman
And other members of the public

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

GUESTS & AUDIENCE COMMENTS

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

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence discussed at the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting – December 9, 2024 – Mr. Gelston called the Board's attention to the minutes of their December 9, 2024 regular meeting in their meeting packets. Ms. Haines noted that on page 3, the fifth bullet point under the First Selectmen's report should be corrected as follows:

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

Motion made by Mr. Barney to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 9, 2024 as amended. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Motion made by Mr. Thomas to add item c. Liaisons' Report under this agenda item. 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 reported that the Communications Sub-Committee's last meeting was rescheduled to January 20th. He stated that they will update the Citizen's Guide and the articles on Financial Terms and the Budget Process that are regularly published in the East Haddam News.

ii. Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee – Ms. Haines reported that the next LRCIC meeting is scheduled for January 29th. Mr. Gelston noted that a Tri-Board meeting is scheduled for the same evening and advised that he has drafted a BOF presentation for that meeting. He stated that he will email it to the Board members so that they can provide input.

iii. Financial Policies – Mr. Thomas reported that he plans to confer with current Finance Director Belles and former Finance Director Varricchio to prioritize the next financial policy to review.

c. Liaison Assignments – Mr. Gelston encouraged the Board to schedule meetings with their liaison assignments in anticipation of the budget season. He stated that he would like to see more communication between the BOF and the Town's Boards, Commissions, and department heads not only during the budget season, but throughout the year.

FIRST SELECTMEN'S REPORT

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

- She expects to have preliminary data from the roads survey to share with the BOF at their next meeting.
- The Firehouse Building Committee will be coming before the BOF to request moving the unspent funds in their renovation design budget to a building design budget.
- The 6-week test of the automated traffic safety devices in still in process. The Board of Selectmen have reviewed a draft ordinance for the program and it has been forwarded to the Town's attorney for review.
- Land Use Administrator Ventres plans to request the BOF approve funding for the WPCA's sewer repairs.

- The opening ceremony for the Swingbridge walkway was postponed until March and there may be one additional 63-hours bridge closure scheduled. In response to a question from Mr. Gelston, Ms. Haines confirmed that there would be no additional cost to the Town for this project.

Mr. Thomas noted that, at their December meeting, it was agreed that First Selectwoman and Resident State Trooper would attend the January meeting to address any questions the Board has about the size of the police fleet. Ms. Belles confirmed that the motion to approve transfers to fund Capital Project C0246 (a Police Cruiser) and new Capital Project C0335 (a Police Truck) failed to carry at that meeting. There was a general discussion regarding the appropriate number of vehicles needed for the Town's police force. Ms. Haines advised that the Resident State Trooper is currently on administrative duty; however, she will ask her to attend the February BOF meeting.

Mr. Gelston expressed concern about the low number of full-time police officers in the Town's employ and suggested the Town form a study committee to research and recommend best practices used by other municipalities for attracting and retaining police officers.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. November YTD Budget Report – Ms. Belles called the Board's attention to the November YTD budget report in their meeting packets. She advised that the WPCA budget falls within the Land Use budget and provided clarification about that line item. She responded to questions from the Board.

b. FY 2023-2024 Audit Update – Ms. Belles stated that the 2023-2024 audit is underway and the auditors have scheduled their field work for the first week in February. She noted that the target date to complete the audit is April 30th.

   Ms. Belles also reported that the Town is at the end of its 3-year contract and the related 2-year extension for auditor services. She stated that she is currently reviewing the RFP for audit services that will start with the audit of the Town's 2024-2025 financials.

   Ms. Haines complimented Finance Director Belles for all the work she has done to get the Town back on track with its audit schedule.

c. Bond Update – Ms. Belles called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packets related to this agenda item. She stated that the Town is very close to have expense figures for a number of large capital projects, including roads/bridges and the new firehouse and recommended waiting until those estimates are in before inviting Mr. Lindsey back to a BOF meeting.

   In response to a question raised by Mr. Thomas, Ms. Belles confirmed that it was the Board's consensus to pursue ban/bonding scenario #2 as presented by Mr. Lindsey at the last BOF meeting he attended. She stated that that scenario also provides an idea of how to begin saving for the upcoming capital projects.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed at the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Discuss 2025-2026 Budget Meeting Calendar – Ms. Belles called the Board's attention to the draft budget calendar in their meeting packets. She reviewed the document and the related upcoming tasks and noted that the BOF's budget workshops are scheduled for March 10th through the 24th, with the 25th and 26th reserved if extra time is needed. She stated that the target date for the Public Hearing on the 2025-2026 budget is scheduled for April 8th.

Motion made by Mr. Thomas to add agenda item b. Historic Preservation Grant Acceptance to this agenda item. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

b. FY 25 Historic Preservation Grant Acceptance – Annual Grant Acceptance

Ms. Belles called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packet related to this agenda item. She stated that this is an annual grant that the Town Clerk receives from the State of Connecticut State Library for the purpose of preserving historic documents.

Motion made by Mr. Barney to recommend the Board of Selectmen accept a grant in the amount of $5,500.00 from the State of Connecticut State Library for the purpose of historic document preservation and appropriated to the Historic Document Preservation Fund (account 261041-43000), and to ask the Board of Selectmen to schedule a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Mr. Kolasinski to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m. Mr. Barney seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
William Barney
Secretary