

TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
June 22, 2020
Municipal Office Complex Meeting Rooms 1 and 2

Mr. DiCristofaro called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:00 pm and the recording devices were started. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

In attendance:

Board of Finance Members

William DiCristofaro, Chairman
Bruce Dutch, Secretary (remotely)
Joseph Corbett
Todd Gelston
Tracy Gionta
Harvey Thomas

Others

Robert Smith, First Selectman
Debra Denette, Town Clerk and Recording Secretary
Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director
James Ventres, Land Use Administrator

At the request of Mr. DiCristofaro, a motion was made by Mr. Thomas to amend the Agenda to move New Business—Item b—Grant Authorization Open Space and First Selectman's Report to the beginning of the Agenda in order to accommodate individuals that needed to leave early for another meeting. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

b. **Grant Authorization Open Space**

Mr. Ventres stated that the State of Connecticut is accepting grant applications for open space purchases. He presented a proposal to acquire a 124 acre parcel at Lake Hayward. The parcel abuts the Shugrue parcel, incorporates the 8-mile river watershed, drains to Roaring Brook and checks all of the boxes pursuant to the open space criteria.

It was emphasized that if the grant is awarded, it would be brought back through the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and ultimately to Town Referendum for approval. The action being sought tonight is to apply.

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to authorize the Open Space Committee to apply for the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Open Space and Watershed

Land Acquisition Grant, purchase price of \$328,000 with a town match in the range of \$117,700 to \$198,200. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Mr. Ventres advised that the State's matching component would be in the range of 50-65% and determination would likely be made in late fall.

Mr. Thomas noted that as the project meets all criteria and conforms to the Plan of Conservation and Development, it would be foolish not to move forward. Responsive to inquiry from Mr. Gelston it was noted that a full A2 survey is on file for the parcel, and that it has the realistic development potential of 13-15 homes.

Mrs. Gionta inquired about the amount of funding remaining in the open space account. Mrs. Varricchio advised that there is \$700,000 of the initial \$5,000,000 authorization unspent. Mr. DiCristofaro noted concern that such a purchase was not on the radar of the Long Range Capital Improvement Committee when they digested long term capital projects and what the town could afford. It was noted that an additional layer needs to be worked into a debt plan with the Financial Advisor Bill Lindsay. It was also noted that tax revenue of approximately \$780 annually will be lost to the town.

Mr. Thomas noted Mr. DiCristofaro's concerns, but added that the Town voted overwhelmingly to make open space acquisition a priority and although that action was some 15 years ago, the recent plan of conservation and development reaffirmed the priority.

The motion was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Smith:

- Highlighted the reopening schedule for the Town
- Provided an update on the Village Revitalization project
- Created a Committee to review potential impact of purchasing the Goodspeed Airport
- Provided an update on the number of trees cut and added that he is looking to put together a Committee. He noted that Lake Hayward has been deemed a priority area as any falling trees have property damage potential.
- The COVID crisis has put many items onto a back burner, including changes for the Transfer Station.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to approve the minutes of the May 5, 2020 special meeting as presented. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Motion was made by Mrs. Gionta to approve the minutes of the May 7, 2020 special meeting as presented. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

a. **Blum Shapiro Engagement Letter:**

The Blum Shapiro Engagement letter was provided to the Board. The letter outlines the roles and responsibilities of the town and the auditors for the annual audit. Mr. Gelston asked several questions regarding CAFR and cost.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

a. **Tax Collector's Report:**

Mr. DiCristofaro advised that he was pleased to see that tax collection remained strong. He added that out of \$27,000,000 due in taxes, only \$100,000 has yet to be collected.

b. **Board of Assessment Appeals Spring 2020 Final Report:**

The Board of Assessment Appeals Report was noted. After brief discussion of trends noted in the report, it was requested that the Chairman send a letter to the Board of Selectmen and Planning and Zoning requesting a review of the root cause and opportunities for corrective action.

c. **Board Subcommittee Reports:**

Communications: Mr. Gelston noted that the subcommittee anticipates meeting again soon and would hope to have its next article published in late August or September.

Financial Needs Roundtable: Mr. DiCristofaro stated that this Committee has not met since March due to COVID-19.

Financial Policies: Mr. DiCristofaro stated that this Committee has also not met due to COVID-19.

Mr. DiCristofaro stated that the next meeting of the Board of Finance is scheduled for August 10, 2020. In the meantime, if necessary a special meeting would be called.

Finance Director's Report

a. **May YTD Budget Report:**

Mrs. Varricchio stated that she has registered the Town with FEMA for COVID relief. Year-to-date budget—expenditures are at 84% of budget and revenues are at 95% of budget. The expenditure budget is tracking under budget and there will likely be no need to utilize the \$300,000 reliance of fund balance budgeted. Mrs. Varricchio stated that in August she will be able to provide the Board with greater year end information.

OLD BUSINESS

Nothing noted.

NEW BUSINESS

b. Grant Authorization Historic Preservation Grant:

Mrs. Denette reviewed her request to apply for a Historic Document Preservation Grant in the amount of \$5,500. This grant will be utilized to convert older land records into electronic format. Mrs. Denette noted that strides made to date cannot be recognized enough in light of the Pandemic world we are now living in. She further noted that the Clerk's Office, through the on-line land records available received over \$900 in copy revenue during the month of April, while the building was closed.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to authorize the Town Clerk to apply for the 2021 Historic Document Preservation program in the amount of \$5,500 with no required town matching funds. Mr. Gelston seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

c. Gift Acceptance Shed (Nichols Field):

Motion was made by Mr. Gelston to accept a gift from the AAU Bearcats Baseball Team valued at approximately \$3,150. Due to COVID-19 pandemic and response, Governor's Executive Order 7CC issued April 21, 2020 permits the municipality's legislative body (Board of Selectmen) and budget making authority (Board of Finance) to authorize certain actions by a majority vote of each such body to include (1) the application for or acceptance of any grants, funding or gifts. Mrs. Gionta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Guests and Audience

Mr. DiCristofaro called for a brief recess to allow for public comment to be received via email at 8:19 pm.

Mr. DiCristofaro reconvened the meeting at 8:25 p.m. No questions or comments were received.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Mrs. Gionta to adjourn at 8:26 pm. Mr. Corbett seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra H. Denette
Recording Secretary