TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Minutes
July 14, 2025
Municipal Office Building – Room 1 & 2
Via Zoom and YouTube Live

Participating:
Board of Finance Members:
William Barney
Todd Gelston
Maureen Goff
Eric Kolasinski
Harvey Thomas
Absent: Joseph Corbett

Others: Valerie Belles, Finance Director
Irene Haines, First Selectwoman
Jay Moreau, Citizen
Michael Callahan
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. He reviewed the meeting's agenda.

GUESTS & AUDIENCE COMMENTS

- **Jay Moreau** – Mr. Moreau provided information on his professional background and discussed the Fire Department's bonding proposal for a new fire house and several Squads. He stated that "Squad" is another term for a fire engine and noted that Squads are not multi-purpose vehicles. He said that he agrees that it is time for the department to down-size the number of apparatuses it retains and suggested that three engines and two tankers are sufficient to ensure that the public is well protected. Mr. Moreau advised that municipalities can purchase "off the rack" fire apparatuses which are less expensive than the proposed custom engines the Fire Department has requested and are immediately available. He recommended that the Town question the Fire Department about its current proposal, especially at this time when the Town's property tax rates are increasing.

- **Michael Callahan** – Mr. Callahan inquired about the status of the Board of Finance's 5-year outlook and Mr. Thomas advised that he and Finance Director Belles are meeting weekly to work on the plan and they hope to have something to present to the BOF before the next budget season. In response to questions Mr. Callahan raised regarding Schedule 1 of the financial audits, Ms. Belles agreed to email him the details he requested.

There was a general discussion about where the public can find information on the Town's debt service and bonding plans on line.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

a. Board Subcommittee Reports

- Communications – Mr. Gelston reported that he and Mr. Barney had updated the Citizens' Guide for the recent Public Hearing on the budget.

  In response to a question from Ms. Goff, Mr. Gelston and Ms. Belles identified locations where the July 22nd budget referendum lawn signs would be posted; Ms. Zemienieski provided additional details. Mr. Thomas suggested that, for future reference, a map should be created identifying where the signs are to be posted. Mr. Gelston stated he would create the map and use separate colors for the locations of the Town signs and the BOF signs.

- Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee – Mr. Thomas reported that he felt this budget season's long-range Capital Projects review process did not go well. He stated that he, Mr. Corbett, and Ms. Belles are working on streamlining and simplifying the capital projects ranking process and advised that they will run the proposed new process by the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education to get their buy in prior to the next budget season.

- Financial Policies – Mr. Thomas reported that the team has drafted revisions to the policy requiring the BOF's Approval to Apply for Grants which includes a waiver of the need for the BOF's approval for small grants that do not require any matching or on-going expenditures for the Town. Ms. Belles circulated the draft for the Board's review prior to discussing it at their next meeting.

2025-2026 BUDGET

a. Discuss July 22nd Referendum Exit-Poll Survey – The Board discussed the planned exit-poll that will be conducted at the July 22nd budget referendum. Mr. Barney noted that the Board had agreed at its last meeting that the poll had been a good idea and that they would conduct another one at the next budget referendum. He stated that he felt that the previous poll queries were appropriate and could be used for the July referendum.

   There was a general discussion about the 75' Rule for signage and the logistics for conducting the July exit poll.

b. Discuss July 22nd Post Referendum Meeting – Ms. Belles suggested an 8:30 p.m. meeting time on July 22nd and the Board agreed with her suggestion. She stated that she will draft and post an agenda for the meeting.

FIRST SELECTMEN'S REPORT

Ms. Haines provided the following report:

- She reviewed the results of the July 8th Town Meeting.

- She stated that the EDC/P&Z Joint Sub-Committee will hold a final public information meeting during the July 22nd budget referendum, in Meeting Rooms 1 & 2, for the public to review and provide comments on the proposed Moodus Master Plan.

a. July 16th Public Information Meeting – Capital Projects/Bonding – Ms. Haines advised that the three information sheets regarding the bonding proposals that will be discussed at the July 16th Public Information Meeting have been posted on the Town's website and were also included in the BOF's meeting packet.

Ms. Haines advised that the bonding plan that will be discussed at the meeting includes the road management plan, two culverts, and the fire apparatus. She noted that Public Works Director Velez, and the consultant that conducted the road survey, will be at the meeting to discuss the proposed road management plan and representatives from the Fire Department will be there to respond to questions about the fire apparatus.

There was a general discussion about the Board of Finance's role in the Public Information Meeting. Ms. Belles emphasized that the Board should make it clear at the meeting that details about the plans to bond for the listed items have not yet been finalized and that the purpose of the informational meeting is so that the public can give the Town permission to start that process. She stated that once the resolutions for the bonding are passed by the Boards of Selectmen and Finance a "no advocacy period" is imposed and no further informational sessions are allowed.

The Board discussed how the bonding for the individual projects might proceed, in particular for the fire apparatus. They discussed the potential sale of the retired fire trucks. In response to a comment made by Ms. Goff, Ms. Haines stated she would discuss Mr. Moreau's recommendations about the number of vehicles needed and the possibility of purchasing off-the-rack fire vehicles rather than custom-made fire trucks with the Fire Department

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

c. 2024-2025 Audit Update – Ms. Belles reported that the auditors began their review of the 2024-2025 financials at the beginning of July. Ms. Haines complimented the Finance Director on all the work she has done in getting the Town back on schedule with their audits.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Gelson, Ms. Belles advised that the outstanding financial reports for FY2025 should be available at their next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed at the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business discussed at the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Mr. Kolasinski to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 p.m. Mr. Barney seconded the motion and it was approved by a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
William Barney
Secretary