Meeting Minutes

Town of East Haddam
Black Birch Golf Course Feasibility Study Committee
Special Meeting

Date: April 28, 2026
Location: Municipal Office Complex, Meeting Room #3

1. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, & Attendance

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Alan Ponanski at 7:00 PM in Meeting Room #3. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Committee Members Present:
Alan Ponanski, Steven Longobardi, Mike Morris, Daniel Zimmerman, Jeff Miller, Donald Lorusso, Jef Wolter.

Additional Attendees:
Michael Callahan (resident and member of Banner HOA), Jason Hendry (resident and former captain of the Black Birch men's golf league).

2. Approval of Agenda

The Meeting Agenda prepared by Chairman Ponanski was reviewed by the Committee and a motion to approve was made by Wolter, second by Miller and approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes for Tuesday, April 21, 2026 Special Meeting

Minutes were distributed by Secretary Miller and reviewed by the Committee. No corrections or additions were proposed by the Members, but Miller noted that Town Clerk Kathleen Klinck asked that we always note that when the Chairman returns Regular Session that no motions or decisions were made while in Executive Session. Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes, made by Wolter with second by Miller and approved unanimously.

4. Old Business

Jef Wolter handed out a draft "Summary Digest" of the Committee's work as of April 28, which will be used for an interim report and/or the Committee's final report to the Board of

Selectmen. Chairman Ponanski thanked Wolter for his efforts to summarize all the issues and information discussed by the Committee to date.

5. <u>Public Comment</u>

Resident Jason Hendry testified that Black Birch G.C. is an important recreational resource for not only East Haddam residents, but for multiple surrounding towns. The scarcity of golf courses open to the public and the increased popularity of golf since the Pandemic has made it impossible to secure a weekend starting time.

Jason was the organizer of a men's golf league at Black Birch of more than 65 members who have played there for decades and would return if the course were restored and reopened. They were primarily from East Haddam, East Hampton, Colchester and Salem. The league lost half the members when the course closed in 2020 and then reopened in 2021. Jason grew up learning to play golf at Black Birch and then worked there while in high school. Many friends also played and worked there. The league ultimately ended when the course closed in 2023.

Jason said the best years at Black Birch were 1994 to 2001 when it was under the previous ownership and managed by John Gale with Todd Davis as course superintendent. Gale owns Rolling Meadows in Ellington and Cedar Knob in Somers, CT. He suggested that the Committee meet with John Gale. Jason also noted that with Fox Hopyard G.C. going private in 2022 that the Hale-Ray high school golf team must be loaded into a bus and taken up to Tallwood G.C. in Hebron to play home matches. He also suggested that a restored Black Birch could be the center of youth golf instruction programs for area kids.

Chairman Ponanski thanked Jason Hendry for his testimony.

6. <u>New Business</u>

Secretary Miller noted that he will be meeting on May 1 with Matt Glilchrist, President of EG Home, a potential residential developer at Banner Estates/Black Birch. The purpose is to interest EG Home in possibly partnering with a golf course manager like Alliance Golf to restart residential construction at Banner and start the restoration of the golf course.

Miller is also meeting on April 30 with Jeff Hartmann, President of Elm Tree Communities, to determine if they would be interested in partnering with a golf course operator at Black Birch.

Miller is also working with partners Karl Augenstein and Jim Leach of FCG Associates to schedule a course tour and meeting with the Committee sometime the week of May 4th. Over 35 years ago FCG took over Triggs Memorial, a Donald Ross layout owned by the City of Providence, restored it with private capital and have been managing it on a series of 10-year net leases.

7. Executive Session

The Committee went into Executive Session at 8:00 pm on a motion by Wolter, second by Longobardi, and a unanimous vote. The purpose was to discuss confidential financial information, permit applications, ownership discussions, feasibility studies, engineering inspections with Randy Dill, the Chairman of the East Haddam Inland Wetlands Commission.

Chairman Ponanski returned to Regular Session at 9:12 pm stating that no motions or decisions were made while in Executive Session.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm on a motion by Longobardi, second by Miller, and a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Miller
Secretary, Black Birch Golf Course Feasibility Study Committee