East Haddam Planning and Zoning Commission
Land Use Office

Regular Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2026

1) CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Brownell called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm.

2) COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Crary Brownell (Chairman), James Curtin (Vice Chairman), Richard Pettinelli, Bernard Gillis, Susan Kinsman, Maureen Pierson, Eric Chamberland, D. Duncan Orr, and Gary Turenne. Mr. Brownell appointed voting member Gary Turenne to sit in Ms. Langdon's position.

   COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Deborah Langdon

   OTHERS PRESENT: James Ventres LUA, Eric Canser -Silver Petrucelli & Assoc, Will Walter – Alfred Benesch & Co

3) MINUTES – Mr. Brownell instructed the April 14, 2026, minutes to be filed as amended.

4) BILLS – Halloran & Sage $40 – Banner special exception date, $360 and $240 for the Shahani Inc Gas Station project.

   A motion was made by Mr. Curtin to pay the bills as presented. Seconded by Ms. Kinsman and unanimously approved.

5) HOME OCCUPATIONS

   Application #26-04 84 Falls Rd, Map 65, Lot 099, John Gagnon, property owner. Online only kitchenware retail shop.

   The application was tabled since we did not receive the certificates of mailing.

6) SITE PLAN REVIEW

   Application #26-05 1 Laurel Cove Beach Rd, Map 48, Lot 115, Eddy Richman, construction of a single-family residence.

   Mr. Nemergut presented the site plan to the commission. He noted this site was previously approved for a single-family home. Mr. Ventres reminded the commission that they are only looking outside the upland review area, and that the dock and boat house fall under the Inland Wetlands and Water Commission review. He also read into the record the Chatham Health District approval.

Mr. Turenne made a motion to approve the construction of a single-family residence outside the upland review area. Ms. Kinsman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Brownell made a motion to change the order of business. Seconded by Mr. Pettinelli and unanimously approved.

Mr. Ventres added to the agenda an application for a Lot Line Change on Map 65, Lots 188 and 189, 2 and 4 Clark Gates Road, Michael Shaw, 4 Clark Gates Holdings, LLC.

Mr. Gillis made a motion to approve the Lot Line Change on Map 65, Lots 188 and 189, 2 and 4 Clark Gates Road, Michael Shaw, 4 Clark Gates Holdings, LLC. Mr. Pettinelli seconded the motion and passed unanimously.

Mr. Ventres presented a letter to be turned into a half page advertisement to be placed in the East Haddam News regarding junk collecting in residents yards. The cost is $247.

Mr. Gillis made a motion to place a half page ad for junk removal at the cost of $247. Seconded by Ms. Kinsman and approved unanimously.

Mr. Brownell made a motion to take a five minute break before opening the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gillis.

6) PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Brownell called the Public Hearing to order at 7:45 pm.

Mr. Pettinelli read the application as follows:

Application #26-1 44 WM F Palmer Rd, Map 65, lot 138, East Haddam Fire Department, construction for new firehouse and demolition of the existing building. CGS 8-24 Review – Public Improvement

Eric Canser, Architectural Designer for Silver Petrucelli & Associates presented the proposed project, describing a 14,400 square foot new fire station intended to replace the existing building due to structural deficiencies and operational limitations.

Key building features include:

- Five drive-through apparatus bays
- Capacity for approximately 8–10 pieces of equipment
- Bunk rooms and bedrooms for potential full-time staff

- Commercial kitchen (approved by the Chatham Health District)
- Training room designed for public use
- Gear storage, decontamination rooms with holding tanks, laundry facilities
- EMS and quartermaster storage
- Separation of service functions and administrative/public spaces

Construction materials and design include:

- Two perpendicular gable roofs with asphalt shingles
- Fiber-cement board-and-batten siding
- Brick façade on the public-facing portion of the building
- Design allows for future solar installation
- Insulation exceeding current energy code requirements
- Radiant floor heating in apparatus bays
- Dedicated outdoor air mechanical systems
-

Will Walter, Professional Engineer, stated that the application before the Commission was not a site plan review, but a §8-24 determination regarding public necessity and consistency with the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

Site-related highlights:

- Existing firehouse is structurally compromised and unsafe
- Drainage and septic deficiencies exist at the current facility
- Proposed new septic system designed with the Chatham Health District and pending final approval
- Apparatus access redesigned to improve safety by reducing curb cuts
- Separate access for emergency vehicles and visitor parking
- Approximately 44 parking spaces provided, including overflow grass pavers
- Wetlands approval has been received
- Building coverage and impervious coverage comply with zoning regulations

Commission members questioned and discussed:

- Apparatus capacity and operational needs
- Sustainability measures and absence of immediate solar installation
- Energy-efficient systems proposed
- Cost considerations influencing material choices
- Site size, traffic safety, and location constraints
- Whether the facility design was scaled appropriately to the community and the lot

- Prior evaluations and repair history of the existing firehouse
- Consideration of alternative sites within town

Mr. Ventres clarified that the Commission's role under §8-24 is limited to determining whether the proposal meets a public need and aligns with the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), not evaluating financing or choosing alternative locations.

Mr. Casner, speaking as a town resident, expressed concerns including:

- Insufficient exploration of alternative sites
- The size of the proposed building relative to the lot
- Limited opportunity for future expansion
- Traffic and safety issues at the Route 149 intersection
- Belief that the existing building could be repurposed
- Recommendation that a larger parcel be used for a long-term facility

A correction was entered into the record clarifying that the proposal includes approximately 44 parking spaces, not 18.

Commission members expressed concern that:

- The Commission was asked to act without sufficient input from the Board of Selectmen or the Public Building/Siting Committee
- Additional clarification was needed regarding site selection and long-term planning
- Sustainability goals of the POCD warranted further explanation

Mr. Pettinelli made a motion to continue the Public Hearing on May 12, 2026. Mr. Turenne seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously, ending the Public Hearing at 8:24 pm.

8) DISCUSSION

A. Housing Bill 8002 Review

Mr. Ventres reported on a recent meeting of the Regional Housing Committee, which reviewed housing conditions throughout the Connecticut River Valley region. Data presented indicated that housing stock growth across the region has been minimal while the population has continued to age.

Discussion focused on the lack of available housing for aging residents seeking to downsize and moderate-income households unable to enter the current housing market.

Commission members noted that while East Haddam has a significant number of lower-priced homes, seasonal cottages, and accessory units, these units are not counted under the state affordable housing statutes because they are not deed-restricted. Members expressed concern that the state's 40-year deed-restriction requirement discourages private participation and limits opportunities for small-scale or incremental housing solutions.

Accessory dwelling units were discussed as one potential housing source; however, it was noted that such units also do not count toward affordability thresholds and require property owners to navigate complex income-eligibility requirements, which often acts as a deterrent.

The Commission discussed the implications of pursuing a regional housing plan versus an independent town plan. Benefits of the regional approach include access to professional planning resources, broader coordination, and potential eligibility for infrastructure funding. Concerns were raised that participation in a regional framework could obligate the Town to accept development pressures that may not align with East Haddam's infrastructure capacity, land constraints, or long-term goals.

Members noted population projections contained in existing planning documents estimating a decline of approximately 1,000 residents by 2040, questioning how large-scale housing construction aligns with those projections in a town with limited developable land, no municipal sewer system, and significant environmental constraints.

The Commission agreed the topic requires further study before decisions are made later in the year.

B. Moodus Village Master Plan – Regulation Review

The Commission continued discussion of zoning framework options for the Moodus Village area, specifically comparing a two-district model versus a three-district model.

Discussion emphasized that Plains Road differs in character from the rest of Moodus Village due to older and historic housing stock, existing multi-family residential buildings that have been rehabilitated, a wider roadway and more traditional village streetscape, and the absence of large commercial or industrial buildings.

Several members stated that Plains Road warrants a distinct zoning district to preserve its residential character while allowing appropriate reuse of existing historic structures. Properties discussed included former institutional and residential buildings that may be suitable for adaptive reuse, such as cultural, civic, or residential purposes.

Boundaries of the proposed district were discussed, including where transitions to surrounding residential areas should occur and how zoning lines correspond with existing roads, natural features, and historical

development patterns. Members acknowledged that exact boundary placement will require refinement and further mapping review.

By consensus, the Commission expressed a preference for the three-district zoning model, recognizing it offers greater flexibility to address differing land-use patterns while protecting residential areas. No formal vote was taken at this time.

9) LAND USE ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Mr. Ventres provided an update regarding prior and ongoing sewer planning efforts affecting East Haddam, including historic regional studies that did not include the Town and more recent outreach from neighboring municipalities. East Haddam has long maintained a sewer avoidance strategy, relying instead on coordination with the Health District for septic oversight, particularly regarding seasonal-to-year-round conversions. Mr. Ventres stated that the town currently has no known systemic septic failures necessitating centralized sewer infrastructure.

Discussion included concerns regarding regional wastewater planning initiatives originating outside East Haddam that could create unforeseen financial or land-use pressures if the Town were included without adequate representation. Mr. Ventres shared information about communications rejecting participation in a proposed long-range sewer planning study, emphasizing East Haddam's preference for localized, decentralized solutions should future density warrant infrastructure investment.

The Commission discussed the status of public water infrastructure around Lake Hayward. Staff explained that while main water lines exist along certain roadways, full service extensions into side roads have not occurred and are not imminent. It was clarified that year-round residences connecting to public water are required to abandon existing wells, consistent with health and safety regulations, rather than maintaining dual systems. Discussion emphasized the importance of preventing cross-contamination risks and preserving water quality.

10) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Curtin to adjourn at 9:02 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gillis and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Lori Olson
Recording Secretary