

Board of Selectmen
Town Office Annex
December 15, 2010
Regular Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: Mark Walter, Pete Govert and Emmett Lyman.

Also Present: L. Alt, C. Behilo, R. Casner, E. Blaschik, D. Coster, R. Everett, C. Farrow, G. Giesey, N. Giesey, J. Golec, W. Golec, R. Hayes, E. Malavasi, M. Malavasi, C. Mansfield, P. Maxwell, A. Merrow, B. Parker, W. Peckham, C. Smith, B. Sullivan (HTNP), S. Wheeler, M. Ziobron, Patch.com representative

1. First Selectman Walter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Approval of Agenda: Mr. Walter stated that he would like to add a discussion of a Senior Center Pavilion to the agenda as item I under New Business. Mr. Govert suggested amending the agenda to hold the discussion of item 5A – Middle School Conversion Committee Report, immediately following the approval of the minutes. Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Lyman, to approve the agenda as amended. Unanimous aye.
3. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting of November 9, 2010 and Regular Meeting of December 1, 2010:

Special Meeting of November 9, 2010: Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Lyman, to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of November 9, 2010 as written. Unanimous aye.

Regular Meeting of December 1, 2010: Ms. Wheeler noted that the list of “Also Present” on the December 1, 2010 minutes needed to be updated to include R. Casner and A. Merrow. Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Govert, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 1, 2010 as amended. Unanimous aye.

5.A. First Selectman’s Report – Middle School Conversion Committee Report: Ms. Malavasi reviewed the priorities the Committee had originally set for the project. She referenced the two Public Hearings that had been held and noted that she felt the citizens were split 50/50 on whether or not to go forward with the project. She distributed copies of the Committee’s preliminary recommendation and stated that the plans could be modified prior to bidding the project in anticipation of a Town referendum.

Ms. Malavasi reviewed the recommendation noting that it was for a full-conversion of the Nathan Hale and Ray buildings. She noted that two grants had been approved for the project and that, if the project goes forward, there will be opportunities for additional grants.

Mr. Walter thanked Ms. Malavasi and the Committee for their hard work and dedication, noting that they had fulfilled their charge. He advised that he planned on making a motion at this meeting to establish a Financial Needs Committee so he did not want to take any action on the recommendation at this time. He stated he would prefer to have the Financial Needs Committee consider the Middle School Conversion Committee’s recommendation at their first meeting.

Mr. Govert stated he would like to discuss the recommendation and asked several questions. In response to his questions, Ms. Malavasi advised the following:

- The vote on the recommendation was not unanimous, it was 5 in favor and 3 against;
- The minority vote's primary concern was the cost of the project;
- Newfield Construction generated the estimate in the recommendation and has not billed the Town for the work but, if a referendum was to be held, the Committee would like to have firm bids which would require a contract with Newfield and a fee of approximately \$20,000.00;
- Additional design costs would be incurred if the project was scaled back to just the Hale building.

Mr. Govert stated that he felt a sense of urgency to move forward with the project because the cost would only increase the longer it was delayed. He stated he felt there were three potential options: renovate both the Hale and Ray buildings, renovate only the Hale building and renovate the Hale building at some future time or tear it down, and demolish both buildings. He noted that he did not want to procrastinate on the project until the building deteriorated to a point that the decision was made for the Town and the buildings must be demolished. Ms. Malavasi stated that citizen feedback received by the Committee was almost unanimous against demolishing the Hale building.

There was a general discussion regarding what would be involved if the project were scaled back to a renovation of just the Hale building. Mr. Mansfield noted that a significant amount of redesign would be needed because the existing mechanicals were interconnected between the two buildings. Mr. Walter reported that the architect had stated that "it would be like starting over". Ms. Malavasi noted that limiting the scope of work to the Hale building resulted in a \$2-3M savings but would reduce the usable space by approximately 50%

Mr. Walter stated that, prior to building the new Middle School, the Town had one of Connecticut's lowest debt per capita but was now in the middle. Moving forward with the Middle School Conversion project would result in the Town having one of Connecticut's highest debt per capita ratios. Mr. Govert stated that he disputed the per capita debt ratios because he felt they were not an apples-to-apples comparison.

Mr. Govert stated that he felt the taxpayers should make the decision on this project and he would like to move the project to referendum. He stated that before he made such a motion, he would like to have information on the additional expense to make that happen. Middle School Conversion Committee members provided information on Newfield Construction fees, the cost for PCB testing and to drill a test well for the geothermal system. In response to Mr. Govert's question about the potential for cost-overruns, Mr. Mansfield noted the high percentage of contingency funding in the budget and Ms. Malavasi stated that the contract with Newfield Construction called for a Guaranteed Maximum Price. Ms. Malavasi stated that the Middle School Conversion Committee would provide Mr. Govert with an estimate of additional expenses that must be incurred to get a firm bid for a referendum.

Mr. Walter inquired about the level of readiness of the bid specifications and Mr. Blaschik advised that the Committee was working to resolve that question with Silver/Petrucelli.

Mr. Walter invited the public to comment on the project and the follow statements were offered:

- Mr. Parker complimented the Committee on their time commitment and the quality of work they had done. He strongly supported a referendum on the project. He noted that approximately \$250,000.00 has already been spent on the project and stated that he felt it

would be like throwing that money away if the Town did not make the additional investment to get a firm bid on the project for a referendum.

- Mrs. Alt also thanked the Middle School Conversion Committee for their work and said she agreed with Mr. Parker that the project should be decided on at referendum. She stated that the taxpayers should not have to spend this much money without getting to vote on the project.
- Mr. Peckham also complimented the Committee but said that he felt the present economic conditions will negatively impact a referendum. He stated that he felt that no more money should be spent on this project and that the Town, collectively and individually, cannot afford to do the project.
- Mr. Malavasi noted specific indications that the economy was starting to rebound and stated that he believed now was a good time to get this project moving forward.
- Mr. Blaschik noted the expense the Town has already incurred on this undertaking and stated that, even if the project did not move forward, the building would still have to be maintained and that the cost to do so was not inconsequential. He added that he was not happy with the \$12M projected cost of the project; however, he believed that, when the economy improved, it would be even more expensive because construction and borrowing costs would increase.
- Mr. Everett stated he felt it would be better for the Town to expand on the existing Town Office space, however, he supported approving the additional funds to go out for firm bids.
- Mr. Farrow stated that he felt the visionary aspect of the project has been missing from the discussion. He advised that he believed the old Nathan Hale School was a gem that could be fixed up and become a source of pride for the Town, as well as an economic engine for Moodus.
- There was a brief discussion regarding the impact on operating costs.

Mr. Govert stated that he believed this was the biggest decision the Town will have to make for a generation and requested the Middle School Conversion Committee provide him with the additional financial detail so that he could make a motion to move the project to referendum at the next regular Board of Selectmen's meeting. Ms. Malavasi stated the Committee would gather the information at their next meeting and forward an estimate to Mr. Govert prior to the January 5th Board of Selectmen's meeting.

4. Correspondence: Mr. Walter called the Selectmen's attention to a copy of a letter received by the principal of the elementary school, dated November 18, 2010, from Mr. Alex Johnston, CEO of ConnCAN. He noted that ConnCAN is an advocacy group dedicated to closing the state's schools' achievement gap and that the letter stated, "*This year, among all Connecticut elementary schools, East Haddam Elementary School ranked first in improvement*". He noted that the school will be featured in ConnCAN's 2010 State of CT Public Education report and on their website.

The Selectmen also discussed the following correspondence:

A. CL&P – Optional Midnight Service: Mr. Walter requested Mr. Govert bring the December 1, 2010 letter from CL&P, offering a voluntary, partial or “midnight” street light rate option, to the attention of the Clean Energy Task Force for their review and analysis. He stated he would like the Clean Energy Task Force to make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.

B. DOT – Swing Bridge Gusset Plate Connection Strengthening: Mr. Walter called the Selectmen’s attention to a letter from the CT Department of Transportation, dated December 7, 2010, advising of proposed work on the Swing Bridge. He noted that the letter did not contain any information on the impacts to the Town.

C. Public Meeting – Chester/Hadlyme Ferry: Mr. Walter referred to a web-notice regarding a public meeting on December 16th at the Hadlyme Public Hall to discuss the future of the ferry service. He stated that he believed the purpose of the meeting was to gain political momentum in advance of budget cuts that could affect the ferry service. There was a general discussion about the importance of the ferry service to the area and Mr. Walter encouraged the Selectmen and public to attend the meeting. Mr. Govert stated that he could not attend the meeting; however, he asked that whoever attended recommend a fee increase to offset any negative balance in the ferry’s budget. Ms. Ziobron stated she would be attending the meeting and would make that suggestion.

D. Open burning – Olde Field Drive: Mr. Walter called the Selectmen’s attention to a copy of a letter in their meeting packets from Ms. Jean Breuler, dated December 13, 2010. He stated that he had already responded to an earlier complaint from Ms. Breuler and that the Fire Marshal had issued a cease and desist order to her neighbor. He noted the December 13th letter was concerning two other neighbors. Mr. Lyman stated that the issue was on the agenda for consideration at the January 19th Planning and Zoning Commission meeting.

E. Other: Mr. Walter distributed a copy of a letter addressed to Mr. Christopher Behilo, dated December 15, 2010, responding to his request for information on why the Public Works Director modified the bulk area of the Town’s transfer station. He reviewed the contents of the letter and noted that the modifications were done to comply with OSHA regulation #1910.23 which requires any exposed pit to be protected by a removable standard rail, or a constant attendant. In response to a question from Mr. Behilo, Mr. Walter agreed that some of the damage to the protective gates in front of the bulky waste bins could also have been caused by transfer station employees.

5. First Selectman’s Report: Mr. Walter distributed copies of an information sheet on the Town’s Emergency Management notification system. He noted that the form to register for emergency notifications could be accessed through the Town’s website. Mrs. Alt complimented the new Town website and commended the people that maintain its content.

A. Middle School Conversion Committee Report: This agenda item was discussed earlier in the meeting and is reported on in the above minutes.

B. Chatham Health District – Town of Colchester Participation: Mr. Walter advised that the Chatham Health District (CHD) has agreed to a request by the town of Colchester to join the district and now the request needed to be approved by the Colchester citizens. Mr. Walter advised that he felt the addition of Colchester to CHD would have a positive impact overall. He noted that he expected the cost of participating in the district will go up, but not as much as it would have without the addition of Colchester. In response to a question from Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Walter confirmed that the CHD will absorb most of Colchester’s Health Department employees.

Ms. Ziobron noted that CHD already has limited time to devote to East Haddam's needs and expressed concern that including Colchester into the mix could negatively impact the services the Town received from CHD. Mr. Walter stated that he believed that the opposite will be true because the additional employees will allow for more flexibility of the CHD workforce.

At Mr. Walter's request, Mr. Casner agreed to provide feedback, from a business perspective, of any issues or concerns about including Colchester into the CHD.

Mr. Govert stated that he supported the addition of Colchester in the Chatham Health District.

6. Citizen's Concerns: Ms. Ziobron expressed concern about Ms. Breuler's drive to restrict or eliminate outdoor wood furnaces and campfires. She noted that her family heats entirely with wood and she felt Ms. Breuler's campaign threatens her quality of life. She also pointed out that there were several existing campgrounds in Town and a new one was opening in Moodus and that campfires were normal activities for those businesses. Ms. Ziobron stated she felt the Board of Selectmen should inform the citizens that this issue was up for discussion before Planning and Zoning takes any action on Ms. Breuler's letter. There was a general discussion about the proper use of outside furnaces.

Mr. Casner advised that the modifications to the bulky waste bin area at the transfer station have made it difficult for him to mechanically unload his dump truck into the bins and that he now has to unload manually. A ramped solution was discussed and at Mr. Walter's request, Mr. Casner agreed to inform Mr. Toolan of the maximum barrier height the smaller dump trucks can tolerate. Mr. Lyman agreed to solicit and coordinate feedback from Mr. Casner, Mr. Behilo, and other contractors regarding this issue.

Mr. Blaschik stated that he wanted to correct the record concerning the vote on the Middle School Conversion Committee's recommendation. He noted that the vote was 6 in favor and 3 opposed.

In response to a question from Mr. Blaschik concerning the proposed move of the Food Bank to the Grange, Mr. Walter confirmed that the Town had filed a Change of Use request for the Grange with the Planning and Zoning Commission and that it would be voted on at their next meeting.

7. Unfinished Business

A. 4-8 Middle School: There was no new update on this agenda item.

B. Goodspeed Opera House Update: Mr. Blaschik reported that construction on the new actors' housing continues to progress. He also reported that they had received the Phase II approval.

C. Old Middle School: Mr. Walter reported that the furnace heating the Ray building had sprung a leak and that the repair had cost approximately \$400.00.

D. STEAP Power House Road Grant: There was no new update on this agenda item.

E. Rotary Club Donation of Edgar D. Williams Park: Mr. Walter stated he will follow-up with the Goodspeed to get copies of the Phase I and II reports on the property.

8. New Business

A. RFP Award – Financial Audit Services: Mr. Walter called the Selectmen’s attention to a memo from the Finance Administrator in their meeting packets, dated December 14, 2010. He reported that Ms. Varricchio’s memo advised that the Board of Finance has recommended that Blum Shapiro be awarded a three year contract as the Town’s audit firm with the option to negotiate an additional two year extension. Mr. Walter noted the multi-year contract would have to be approved at a Town Meeting.

Mr. Govert noted that Blum Shapiro’s bid was \$10,000.00 higher than several other firms and asked what factors were considered by the Board of Finance in making their recommendation. Mr. Maxwell advised that the bids of some of the other firms were flawed in that they did not provide all of the information requested in the RFQ and that Blum Shapiro has more municipal experience than the other firms, including specific experience with the Town of East Haddam.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Lyman, to award the contract for Financial Audit Services to Blum Shapiro and Company for a 3-year contract for FY 2011 - \$35,000, FY 2012 - \$36,000, FY 2013 - \$37,500 with the option to negotiate for an additional two years and send said multi-year contract to Town Meeting for approval. Unanimous aye.

B. Financial Needs Committee Charge and Appointments: Mr. Walter reiterated that he would like to establish a Financial Needs Committee to research and analyze the Town’s short and long-term financial needs and make recommendations on planning for projected expenses as well as how to structure the necessary financing. The Selectmen reviewed the language of the proposed Resolution.

Mr. Govert recommended adding some language regarding the appointment of a Chair person. In response to Ms. Ziobron’s concern that the Economic Development Commission was not represented on the Committee, Mr. Walter advised that the intention was to have the committee invite in representatives from the various Town boards and commissions when needed. There was a general discussion about the proposed term of the committee and Mr. Walter confirmed that it would be installed for one year and then the Selectmen could re-evaluate whether or not to extend its term. Mr. Blaschik stated that he felt the responsibilities Mr. Walter was describing belonged under the Board of Finance. Mrs. Alt stated that the purpose and reporting structure of the proposed Committee was not clear to her. Ms. Ziobron stated she did not feel the Committee could be effective meeting quarterly and suggested monthly meetings.

There was additional discussion regarding the responsibilities, make-up, and reporting structure of the proposed committee and the Selectmen made several changes to the draft Resolution.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Govert, to recommend the adoption of the following resolution:

RESOLVED: That a Financial Needs Roundtable of seven (7) members, be appointed, for the purpose of researching and analyzing the Town’s short and long-term financial needs and infrastructure and to make recommendations on planning for projected expenses, revenues and the structuring of debt and savings.

The Roundtable shall be composed of the First Selectman; the Chairman of the Board of Finance (or his designee) and one other member of the Board of Finance from the opposing party; the Chairman of the Board of Education (or his designee) and two other members of the Board of Education from opposing parties; and the Chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission (or his designee).

Members shall be appointed by the Board of Selectmen and the terms of office shall be for one year. Members shall serve with no compensation. The First Selectman (or his designee) shall Chair the Roundtable. The Roundtable shall meet at least quarterly and their meetings shall be open to the public. The Roundtable shall invite advisory participants to their meetings as needed.

The Roundtable shall make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen for short and long-term needs and requirements and corresponding economic and taxpayer impacts.
Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Lyman, to appoint Mark Walter, Paul Maxwell, Bruce Dutch, Nancy Haslam, Bryan Perry, Brian Pear and Crary Brownell to the Financial Needs Roundtable terms to expire January 1, 2012. Unanimous aye.

C. Call for Town Meeting: The Selectmen discussed the call to send various items to Town Meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Govert, to approve the following call for Town Meeting:

The Electors and citizens of the Town of East Haddam, Connecticut qualified to vote in Town Meeting are hereby warned and notified that the Annual Town Meeting will be held in the Town Hall on Town Street in the said Town of East Haddam, at 8:00 p.m., Tuesday, December 28, 2010 for the following purposes, to wit:

Item 1: To consider and accept the Annual Town Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010.

Item 2: To consider and act upon the recommendation that the Board of Selectmen be authorized to enter into all necessary agreements with the Transportation Commissioner of the State of Connecticut for the receipt of State Aid for town highways in accordance with the General Statutes of Connecticut.

Item 3: To consider and act upon the recommendations of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance to enter into a three-year agreement with Blum Shapiro and Company for Financial Audit Services; with the option to negotiate for an additional two years.
Unanimous aye.

D. Board Reappointments (ZBA): Mr. Walter reported that he had discussed reappointments with Chairman Stuart Wood who had advised that the Zoning Board of Appeals will fill the vacant alternate position first and if there is another individual interested in joining the Board he will ask one of the part-time members to step down.

Ms. Alt expressed interest in joining the Zoning Board of Appeals and Mr. Walter provided her with an application to complete. Ms. Ziobron suggested posting the vacancies on the Town's website.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Lyman, to reappoint Norman Gobelle and Diane Quinn as regular members and Guy Gibb as an alternate member for five-year terms to expire January 2016 on the Zoning Board of Appeals. Unanimous aye.

E. Committee Resignations (GREEN): Mr. Walter called the Selectmen's attention to an email from Martha Hansen, Secretary of the Green Committee, advising of resignations and recommending the removal of several committee members who have been inactive for an extended period.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Govert, to accept the resignation of Roger McNelly and approve the removals of Jon Russell and Angela Spradlin as regular members and Allen Compagno as an alternate member on the Green Committee. Unanimous aye.

F. Commission & Committee Appointments (EDC & GREEN): Mr. Walter called the Selectmen's attention to a letter from the Economic Development Commission recommending appointments to their commission and an email from Martha Hansen, Secretary of the Green Committee recommending an appointment to their committee.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Govert, to appoint Edward O'Dell to a vacant regular member term to expire June 30, 2013 and Gerry Rucker to a vacant regular member term to expire June 30, 2011 and Pamela Rubenbauer and Ralph Parady to vacant alternate member terms to expire June 30, 2015 on the Economic Development Commission. Unanimous aye.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Govert, to appoint Terry Smith as a regular member to fill a vacancy on the Green Committee. Unanimous aye.

G. Volunteer of the Month: Mr. Walter called the Selectmen's attention to a letter in their meeting packets from Craig Mansfield, Emergency Management Director, dated December 14, 2010, recommending Joseph Szczech as Volunteer of the Month. Mr. Mansfield's letter stated, *...Joe has been a great assistance to me with coordinating the specification and installation of some equipment into the Towns current Emergency Operations Center [and] is always willing to assist ... other town departments in any way he can*".

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Lyman, to name Joseph Szczech as volunteer of the month for December 2010. Unanimous aye.

H. Tax Refunds: Mr. Walter called the Selectmen's attention to three tax refunds.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Govert, to award tax refunds in the amounts presented.

- \$ 5.14 to Keleigh A. Olearnick,
- \$129.11 to GMAC, and
- \$170.13 to Toyota Motor Credit Corp.

Unanimous aye.

I. Senior Center Pavilion: Mr. Walter distributed copies of a Planning & Zoning application for construction of picnic pavilion at the Senior Center. Mr. Govert advised that the Commission on Aging has expressed some concerns about the proposed Heritage Park plans at the Tyrseck property and suggested that, before submitting the application, that Mr. Walter should discuss it with the Commissioners. There was a general discussion regarding the Heritage Park project and the status of the use of the Senior Center. Mr. Walter agreed to reach out to Mr. O'Brien to discuss the pavilion application before it was submitted to Planning & Zoning.

9. Public Comment: There was no public comment.

10. Selectmen's Discussion: Mr. Walter distributed articles on the state of Connecticut's economy and taxes.

Mr. Govert advised that the State still has \$3-4M available for solar energy grants. He suggested the Town consider applying for a grant for solar arrays on the new Middle School. The Selectmen discussed Mr. Govert's suggestion and agreed that he should ask BeFreeSolar to conduct a feasibility analysis of the Middle School.

11. Adjournment: There being no additional regular business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Lyman, to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Respectfully submitted,

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630A
630B
631A

Emmett Lyman, Secretary