

## **Board of Selectmen's Meeting – February 11, 2019 (Approved Minutes)**

Lizz Milardo called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm at Town Hall, 21 Field Park Drive, Haddam CT 06438

Larry Maggi and Melissa Schlag were present

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Schlag made a motion to amend the agenda to add public comment to then end of the meeting, making it Number 7. No discussion. Approved unanimously.

Schlag made a motion to Amend the Agenda to add "Discussion of HES" to New Business, after appointments.

### **Public Comment:**

Potter, Cliff: North Branford, CT. He is still upset and offended that Schlag is kneeling during the Pledge.

Lundgren, Mark: Stated he was there to speak about the Haddam Elementary School property and the two-part proposal that was received by the Board of Education. He is interested to see the Town Matching the portion of the proposal so we can own Swan Hill. Stated he is less interested in the Town owning more buildings.

Gillespie, Dorothy: Stated she is trying to understand the Cost Benefit Analysis is and where should she get the answers. Milardo stated that is Board of Education information and that is how the Board of Education made their decision. Dorothy also commented on the Dublin Hill Bridge and asked if we knew what it was going to look like. Milardo stated that the design portion is completed and the bid will be awarded tonight.

Moriarty, Sean: stated that in the RFP, even though it has not officially been released, there were demands for tax incentives and reduced building permit fees which the Town does have control over. He implores the Board to not endorse the tax incentives. Milardo stated she does not have the document and cannot comment on that.

Perron, Neal: Urges people to go to Planning & Zoning meetings and stated that is another way to stop some of these issues.

Luisi, Dan: stated the Board of Education is closing the school and now we are fighting to keep a building, the Superintendent still transfers all of the kids and now the town has another empty building.

Karen, Elizabeth: stated it's a shame to sell an elementary school to turn it into housing which will bring families into town and then add onto Burr. It would be vacant, but the grounds and parking lot are used.

Hanson, Ross: The Middle School cost 48 million dollars to build. If it costs \$70,000.00 to hold onto HES for 50 years, for 3.5 million dollars and if you ever need a building again, you have it.

Lippincott, Marie: Stated when she goes to a Board of Education meeting they cannot talk. They are told it is “their” time and the residents are not listened to. Your residents are here to talk to their Board of Selectmen. We need help.

Milardo: Stated that in response to the letter the Selectmen sent the Board of Education responded and stated they would not pause the process. There are many people who are upset the school is closing. Milardo stated she’s asked for back-up for the budget, and asked for a cost on how much they want for the school.

Schlag: Stated the Selectmen did receive information from the Board of Education and doesn’t think the original letter sent to the Board of Education was strong enough. Stated she would like to demand the Board of Education to sit down with the Board of Selectmen of Haddam and Killingworth and work out something so the Town of Haddam acquires that building.

Block, Gina: Commented at the last Board of Education meeting Buzzi read the letter the Selectmen wrote and stated “our leadership is backing us, they don’t want HES to close” to which Nesti replied “That’s not how I interpreted it”. The letter was too vague.

**Schlag made a motion** That the board of education stop the process for at least a year so that the Board of Selectmen can sit with the Board of Education. No discussion. Approved unanimously.

Representative Christine Palm read a letter under record:

***To the Members of the Regional School District 17 Board of Education:***

***I am writing in the hope there is still the possibility of pausing the closure of Haddam Elementary School (HES) until further considerations can be taken into account. As a state representative, it is not my place to make a judgment call one way or the other on the actual merits of the school closure, nor to question the autonomy of local school boards, and I am doing neither.***

***However, I have now attended three meetings at which the HES closure was discussed, and have just viewed the videotape of the most recent BoE meeting on Feb. 5 (which I could not attend because of a conflict with another meeting elsewhere in my district). Each time, I have come away with a strong sense that people were not “on the same page” and that there are still many unanswered questions. Given that 1) the State Legislature is currently considering proposals for regional consolidation; and 2) the Governor’s and subsequent budgets have not yet come out, I believe it would be prudent to delay this process, as both the budget and any enacted legislation will have a direct impact on both Haddam and Killingworth. In the various meetings I have witnessed (or viewed on video), several reasons for the school closure have been put forth, including:***

- ***Declining enrollment***
- ***Cost savings to the taxpayer***
- ***Greater educational opportunities for children***
- ***Inadequate ECS funding***
- ***Sustainability of four campuses vs. five***
- ***School’s location as vulnerable to mass shootings***

***And these are just the ones I’m aware of.***

***I think everyone concerned with this decision would appreciate more information concerning the demographic studies and financial analyses that were used as a basis for the decision to close HES. Speaking for myself, this data would help me be a more effective advocate for our***

*town when ECS funding is discussed, and will help me make a more informed and responsible vote on any consolidation proposals that may come to fruition.*

*I would be happy to host a discussion or serve as a liaison to any state agencies that may be of help in your decision-making process. Please let me know how I can be of assistance.*

Moriarty, Sean: Asked if the letter the Selectmen received is up on the website?

**Milardo:** Stated the letter is not on the website. Milardo read a portion as it is lengthy letter: *With all due respect, your request to ... “pause the process until this information can be verified...” When the information has been available for almost a year, is not adequate reason to delay the implementation that is well underway and impacting many constituencies. Having sad that, please contact me if you have new, vital information that would impact the restructuring.*

Gillespie, Dorothy: Asked if we have a town lawyer and of there was any legal action the Town could take. Milardo answered, yes we have a lawyer, and she already spoke with him and was told there is not any legal action the town could take. She would like to see the Cost Benefit Analysis so she can understand.

Schlag: stated when she was First Selectman in 2015, she asked the Howard Thiery for a Cost Benefit Analysis and a professional study on the possibility of a school closure to save money because the town’s population had decreased lower than what it was when we built the Middle School. Schlag is still waiting for that information.

Packtor, Katy: Stated that there has been evidence, no studies, no research done to prove there is a reason to close a school and that there is a financial or education benefit to do so. She is hopeful that the people of town can work with the Board to bring the interests of the Town of Haddam to the Board of Education and to get the data we need to support giving this property to some developer for their own personal benefit hoping for economic development in town. This short term planning is not the kind of visionary leadership the town needs. We need to stop this process. This is a mistake that needs to be corrected.

Lippincott, Marie: Asked Milardo “What is your involvement with RAK Realty?” Milardo answered “I have no involvement” She also asked about tax relief records. Milardo does not know what she is referring to.

Andeen, Alan: Stated there are members on the Board of Education that should be reporting to us. We should put the pressure on them to get to the Board of Education, Superintendent, and tell him to knock it off.

Luisi, Dan: Stated the Board of Education has too much power. There is zero accountability and we need to dethrone the Board of Education. The Selectmen’s hands are tied and want to do what’s best for the town.

Turchi, Donna: Asked, Do the Selectmen determine a tax abatement? Milardo: It has to go to a Town Meeting for the people to vote on it. Maggi stated, we’d have to get to that point of the school selling and we don’t want to get there.

Turchi, Norman: stated if we do have to sell the school we have the power to make the decision on the tax abatement.

Buzzi, Brenda: Board of Education Liaison: She suggested the Selectmen go to the February 26, 2019 Board of Education meeting and tell them you want them you want it to halt.

Milardo: Stated a letter should go out sooner than that.

Olsen, David: Haddam Neck: Asked “Are the Board of Education member elected?” Milardo responded, Yes.

Olver, Dan: Asked if the school closes and it becomes apartments, do we need septic, do we need hospitals or a fire department?

Hesselberg, Erik: stated that he was able to look through old files and saw that if RSD17 were to sell the school the Town would have the first right of refusal. There is an article from 1974 in the Hartford Courant.

Milardo: Stated she pulled the Deed. She did not see anything that stated the town had the first right of refusal. I have asked the Board of Education for a value of the property. I was not given one. She asked him to send her the article.

Rizzo, Joe: Stated, if that is the case, the Right of First Refusal should go out to the Town people to vote.

Donnelly, Sean: Stated there is a real problem with the Board of Education and asked if we can come up with a game plan to move Haddam forward together? Do we know how much money it costs to run the building? Milardo stated she has some dollar figures but not all of them.  
Everett, Terry: Is Haddam Elementary School in the Historic Village? Milardo: It is in the Village District. Why can't we get an injunction?

Baird, Peter: Stated a group of people just met with an attorney and stated that it would be very expensive.

Bazazi, Liz: stated if the Town contacts the Board of Education and says “we’re interested in purchasing HES, can you pause the sale to RAK while the town figures out if we want to or not and if we could take the elementary schools and pull them out of RSD17”

Schlag: stated the Board of Education would have control over where they send the students and is not sure how it would work just pulling the elementary schools out of the district.

Joanne Baroni: Can you go back and ask Nesti if a year was a sufficient amount of time to digest the information given to you then. She does not think it is fair, it is not enough time, we need more time.

Everett, Terry: stated does it take to vote “no confidence” on the Board of Ed.

**Schlag made a motion** we, as the Board of Selectmen ask the Board of education to pause the closing for a year so we, as a town, can ask the residents and tax payers of Haddam whether to purchase the school or not, including the whole 155-acre parcel.  
No further discussion, approved unanimously.

**Schlag made a motion** that the Board will be looking into the legal aspects of whether the Town has the first right of refusal of a building and during the year that we are investigating that the school remain open as a school. No further discussion, Approved unanimously.

Harley, Jim: Stated he is new to town. He asked who does Howard Thiery answer to? (Board of Education) He has been delinquent in his job because of how he's going about it. It should be a red flag.

Moriarty, Tanja: Suggested we hire a town attorney to really see what is going on and to figure out what kind of recourse we have against Thiery. Instead of having a GoFundMe page to hire an attorney can we use our town Attorney to do that work?

Milardo: We would have to send it to the Board of Finance and then it would go to a Town Meeting to spend that money.

Representative Christine Palm: Stated how great it is to see the Board listening to their residents. She will fight for the ECS funding – it is very hard to do that if the Board of Education does not have the resident's backs.

**Schlag made a motion** to add to the letter in light of the legislature looking at possible expansion of regionalization to stop for a year until the legislature plays out. No discussion.  
Approved unanimously.

Hason, Ross: Stated the Board of Education lacks transparency. The state Board of Education will look into it.

Bazazi, Liz: Stated the Town of Haddam was awarded the "Best POCD" In the POCD HES is listed as a major asset to the Village and it's one thing the Haddam residents do not want to change.

DeCarli, Sue: Stated that the reason HES is closing is due to the decline of students. She's been involved as a parent from 1985 – 2013. She went through HES adding onto the building. Had to get the Middle School – there were so many students they needed a bigger building. Why did they build a new school if we did not need it and stated she is not in favor of the closing of HES.

Caparaso, Alyssa: The state Board of Education has 4 steps – they are as follows: 1: Know your date, both quantitative and qualitative, 2. Share the data well before school closure is ever an option, Step 3: Share ownership of the problems and ask the community to help solve them. 4. Weather the storm and point to the rainbow.

**Approval of Minutes:** January 14, 2019 – Tabled

**Tax Refunds:**

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Personal Property (02)</b>	
de Lange Landen Financial	\$408.16
Rogers Realty LLC	\$5.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$413.16</b>

**Motor Vehicle (03)**

Toyota Lease Trust	\$481.53
Toyota Lease Trust	\$312.31
Toyota Lease Trust	\$177.22
Toyota Lease Trust	\$267.33
JP Morgan Chase Bank	\$356.58
JP Morgan Chase Bank	\$389.69
Nissan Infiniti	\$212.10
Daimler Trust	\$106.32
Genovesio, Richard	\$11.76
Goduti, Emil 2nd	\$40.88
Cannata, Jason/James	\$58.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,176.27</b>

**Motor Vehicle Supplement (04)**

Tacinelli, Michael	\$10.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$10.00</b>

**Grand Total: \$1,599.43**

Schlag made a motion to accept the February 11, 2019 Tax Refunds. No discussion. Approved unanimously.

**Dublin Hill Bridge:** Seven (7) contractors submitted bids. One (1) was disqualified for not having all documents. Close, Jensen and Miller, P.C reviewed the bid DOT was also present for the bid opening. Schlag made a motion to award the Dublin Hill Bridge Contract to Arborio Corporation in the amount of \$1,666,218.00. No discussion. Approved unanimously.

**Resignations:**

David Fleig resigned from Economic Development effective February 4, 2019.

Diane Stock resigned from Planning & Zoning effective February 8, 2019.

**Appointments:**

Schlag made a motion to appoint Liz Bazazi to Planning & Zoning Commission to fill vacancy that Diane Stock left. No discussion. Approved unanimously.

**HES Discussion:**

Petrillo, Jennifer: Stated she's been asking the Board of Ed for documents since day 1. She's received documents with incorrect numbers. The money is not being spent where it says it's

being spent. 1 million dollars can be saved in other areas other than ripping our town center apart.

**Public Comment:** Perron, Neal – Haddam Neck. Requested the board to allocate money for the Haddam Neck Fire Department to get a boat? Haddam Neck Fire Department does not have a boat. The average response time from Haddam to the Connecticut river is 32 minutes. Haddam Fire Department has to keep their boat out of the water to respond to Millers Pond. Perron offered to keep a boat at his house on the river. He asked the board to speak with the HNFD Chief and the Board of Finance to do so. The average response time if a boat was kept in Haddam Neck would be 6 minutes.

Luisi, Dan: Commented that as a survivor of a boating accident in 2004, Haddam River Days – he backs up the comment Neal Perron made.

Bazazi, Liz: Thanked the Board for their support on the Haddam Elementary School closing.

Maggi made a motion to adjourn. No discussion. Approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned 8:36 pm.

Minutes taken by JoAnn Ricciardelli, Recording Secretary