

Board of Selectmen's Meeting – August 17, 2020 - (Approved Minutes)

Robert McGarry called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm Via GoToMeeting

Kate Anderson and Sean Moriarty were present

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda: Moriarty made a motion to approve the Agenda as written. No discussion. Motion approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Anderson made a motion to approve the July 13, 2020 minutes. No discussion. Motion approved unanimously.

Public Comment:

Neal Perron: re: Facebook posts: he commented that he was on the Board of Ed and decided to resign from his position as he was unable to give it the time it deserved and put the Town's best interest first. He suggested Maggi & Luisi think about what is most important to them, the betterment of the town and moving forward or their personal opinion on social media.

Re: Storm Iaais: suggested that when we know a big storm is coming our way we have 2 crew members here in Haddam Neck ready to go.

Brenda Buzzzi: Citizen: curious on what the Republic Party think about this issue with the Facebook posts re: Maggi & Luisi.

Tim Teran: read the following into the record:

On behalf of Peter Baird and myself, Tim Teran, both members of the Haddam Board of Finance, I would like to read a statement into the record concerning the recent sexism, racism and bias expressed by two Haddam elected officials.

We believe in accepting apologies when people make mistakes, but we struggle to accept them when they come from individuals who have demonstrated a longstanding pattern of such comments. These were not mistakes, they were the purposeful actions of 2 individuals seeking to spread racism and sexism in our town.

We are grateful for First Selectman Bob McGarry's comments on Saturday stating that the recent posts from these individuals are reprehensible and do not reflect the values upon which our community is based. However, when it was brought to our attention that a pattern of long-standing bias has been exhibited by these two individuals we believe we must do more to put an end to the divisiveness on the part of elected officials that threaten not just our town's reputation, but our ability to conduct business in a fair and just manner.

To be clear, these posts are part of a longstanding pattern. Here are just two of the many comments they have posted in the past. Some time ago one of them commented on Facebook, and I quote, "Trump has to fix what the half breed screwed up" in reference to our former President. Perhaps even worse, the other shared a meme that actually defacto endorses White Supremacy, again I quote, "Warning Signs of White Supremacy: full time employment, literacy, having a professional or technical degree, attending regular church or temple services, having car insurance, having a good credit rating, and no criminal record." Neither of the recent posts are isolated or even rare. And, they are not the remarks of misguided teenagers.

These remarks were made by 2 members of The Planning & Zoning Commission -- elected officials entrusted with the power to decide what land use gets approved for which individuals. Their ongoing posts on social media clearly make us question if they have the objectivity and sense of equality to do this job in a way that makes us feel proud.

At a time when we as a community express a strong desire to attract new people to Haddam – especially young people – Peter and I feel neither of these 2 Planning & Zoning Commission Members demonstrate the ethics, the moral fortitude or the openness to represent our town. So, what should we do? We must put in checks and balances to mitigate this ever happening again. And so, we ask that a bipartisan commission be established to institute sensitivity and ethics training for all elected officials – the kind of training that state representatives and corporate executives have been required to complete annually for years.

To ensure this is a bipartisan effort we would further ask that Selectmen Kate Anderson and Sean Moriarity spearhead this commission with a mandate of bringing First Selectman Bob McGarry a plan that can be executed at the beginning of the next calendar year.

We appreciate the opportunity to come before you on this important matter and thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Tim Teran & Peter Baird

Statement from the Haddam Democratic Town Committee on recent social media posts by elected officials:

We were saddened and disturbed by the recent and ongoing social media posts from two Republican Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) members, most recently those that attacked Vice Presidential Candidate Kamala Harris in a sexist and racist manner. These posts reflect badly on the individuals, and we were happy to see that both of these men apologized. However, at a time of heightened awareness regarding sexism, racism and bias, we are concerned that their comments also reflect poorly upon our community, especially when we are doing so much to revitalize Higganum and Haddam, present our town as a centerpiece for outdoor recreation and increase our commercial activity.

The Haddam Democratic Town Committee believes that these individuals' posts do not represent the attitudes of our community, our town governance, or the goals of our PZC. The scope of responsibility of the PZC requires it to consider the impact of racism and bias in their work. Zoning regulations can be established, either inadvertently and purposely, that can be biased against lower income people and people of color. Trust in our planning and zoning process is essential. We therefore request that these individuals resign from their elected office.

We also would like to work with the Board of Selectman to set a voluntary Code of Standards for all elected officials to follow, which discourages expressions of bias, racism or sexism in their communications, including those expressed on social media and other online platforms.

PUBLIC COMMENT RECEIVED VIA E-MAIL:

I'm writing in response to your letter condemning the racist and misogynistic internet postings of our elected officials, Dan Luisi and Larry Maggi. It is clear what your vision is for our town and I'm proud that you lead with such class and integrity. I sincerely thank you.

I'm glad that we can agree that hate has no place here and this behavior should not reflect the future of Haddam. PZC officials that are openly bias and hateful towards so many is frankly, dangerous.

These men should resign and I hope to see Republican Town Committee who endorses these men publicly condemn this behavior as well.

Our children are watching and learning. It's time to be the example.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Respectfully,

Marie Lippincott

PUBLIC COMMENT RECEIVED VIA E-MAIL:

Dear Mr. McGarry, Ms. Anderson and Mr. Moriarty,

I'm writing as citizen of Haddam concerned that decency no longer matters here.

The fact that TWO elected officials in our town that currently sit on the Planning and Zoning Commission are responsible for sharing offensive and degrading opinions about women and non-white human beings on the internet is not only reprehensible, but completely unacceptable and they should resign immediately. Self-expression and Freedom of Speech is our right. But, with that freedom comes accountability and consequence.

It's time to condemn the facilitation of misogynistic, racist, and oppressive speech by our chosen party representatives. I am deeply concerned that while these men sit shielded by a computer screen, projecting offensive and dangerous hate, it is happening without the Republican town committee objecting publicly or at all for that matter.

I moved my family to Haddam for the beauty of the area and the quality of the school system. I struggle with the idea that openly bigoted people are given the great responsibility of shaping and making decisions in our town. I think it's time to wake up and realize that freedom of speech does allow you to say (or post on the internet) whatever you choose. But, what you say can have grave consequences that should be enforced.

I want better for my son in a community than knowing that elected officials look down upon women and people of color and have no qualms about spreading those opinions repeatedly online.

Sincerely,

Eric Lippincott

PUBLIC COMMENT RECEIVED VIA E-MAIL:

In a small town like Haddam, we live together, attend church together, we shop in each other's stores, buy Christmas trees from each other, plow and shovel each other's driveways, see each other at school and sports events, and our children are friends in school. The closeness of our community makes it all the more shocking when we see residents post racist, sexist and other bigoted statements on their social media, even to their private accounts.

While freedom of speech is an essential aspect of our society, speech has always held consequences. Haddam's reputation as a fair, civil, gracious and welcoming community is important to me, and I'm sure to everyone. I'm glad these individuals have apologized, and I'm thankful for the statement from Bob McGarry, the Haddam Lion's Club and others.

To help address future conduct, I propose that we adopt a Code of Standards for public officials, and establish a Board of Ethics to oversee both public employees and public elected officials. While we have no way to "fire" an elected official (nor would I want such a power to

override the people's vote) I do think we'd all be helped by developing a Code of Standards that sets expectations on language, including on social media, consistent with what most businesses and organizations have for their employees or members. I would ask that Bob McGarry appoint a bipartisan commission to develop these Codes, to be voted upon at a future Town Meeting. Thank you, Jane and Peter Baird

Selectman's Update:

Projects:

Scovil Hoe: State Garage Candlewood Hill: We got permission from the state to access the site. The engineering and consulting firm can access the site and to the environmental and structural evaluation. Kick off meeting was on August 6, 2020. We did a preliminary walkthrough on the property.

Tylerville Water: Hook ups are at approximately 95% complete
109 Little Meadow Service - comes into Eagle Landing Road. Looking into three options.
Waiting on prices of all three.

Rossi Property:

The owners have a formal appraisal of the property. Bill Warner and I met with them today, August 17, 2020. They presented their appraisal to us. I will be coming to the Board of Selectmen meeting to discuss the terms of the contract, negotiation strategy and how to move forward.

Road Work:

Christian Hill – Grinding to start next week (8/24/20) The crew has done some drainage work. The storm has put public works behind schedule about two (2) weeks. The next road is Lt. Schubel followed by Dublin Hill.

Storm Isaais

Outages affected most of the town. Eversource response was lacking. Eversource has always said their priority is "make safe work" clearing the roads to get emergency vehicles through so people are not trapped in neighborhoods as well as restoring power to critical facilities such as hospitals, fire stations, police stations elderly care facilities etc... unfortunately they seem to be focused on restoring power rather than clearing roads. Advice for all: be prepared for 3 days of possible isolation in a storm like this.

Budget: July Tax Collections are about the same as last year. End of August will be a better indication.

Public Health:

COVID-19: 45 cases, 1 fatality
West Nile Virus: first case was found in Connecticut.
EEE in MA: Not found in CT – but in MA

Primary – August 11, 2020

We had enough poll workers to have all three polling places open. Thank you to all the volunteers. 705 ballots were cast via absentee. Typically, the highest turnout for absentee ballots are about 400.

There was a recount done in the second district congressional race. The recount was completed today. We are waiting for those results.

Town Meeting/Hearing

There were two items of discussion:

Charter Revision report from the Charter Revision Committee There were no questions from the public. The Charter Revision question to approve will be on the November ballot.

Proposed Ordinance to establish a Public Water Control Authority. If the town gets the community septic that has been discussed at Haddam Elementary School, we will need to have one in place. The Ordinance would have to pass at a Town Hearing.

The Town Meeting held same day was to vote for the vacancy on the Board of Ed. Prem Aithal won in a close race. We conducted the votes both in person and by driving by. We had a total of 160 people voting.

Farmers Market: over 470 people at the market, goal is to beat 500.

Kate commented on the work that McGarry put in behind the scenes at the Town Hall regarding Storm Isaais. Residents have expressed interest in having a community meeting to discuss emergency planning. Lastly, thank you to all the volunteers and the registrars who worked very long hours relating to the elections. Between the Board of Ed election with drive through voting and the Primary last week. Everyone did a great job. It is appreciated. The Farmers market is going very well, and are in need of volunteers. We will take all the help we can get. Please reach out to Kirsty Benson. Her information is on the Higganum Farmers Market page.

Moriarty commented that the Public Works response to the storm was phenomenal. He's heard a lot of great feedback from the residents. Thank you to all who volunteered in the Election.

McGarry also thanked Kevin McManus, the Assistant Emergency Management and Haddam Neck Fire Department volunteers who helped at the cooling station. He encouraged residents to sign up for the Everbridge alert system.

You can sign-up at <https://member.everbridge.net/index/431700047822951/#/signup> or text **AlertHD to 888777**

Routine messages will be sent to your email. Important messages will be sent to you by email and text. Critical messages will be sent to you by email, text, and voice phone call. You may enter more than one phone number or email address for alerts.

Board of Education update: Attached as schedule 1

Tax Refunds:
Motor Vehicle (03)

thorndike	19-3-59178	\$480.74
TOYOTA	18-3-59281	\$207.03
Total		\$687.77

Moriarty made a motion to approve the August 17, 2020 Tax Refunds. No discussion. Motion approved unanimously.

New Business:

Approval of CSEA Union Contract: There was discussion regarding the changes in the union. The Contract was expired on June 30, 2020. Due to COVID-19 we did not negotiate for the normal 3-year contract. We extended the current contract for one year with minor changes made. Anderson made a motion to accept the CSEA Union Contract as presented. No further discussion. Approved unanimously.

Approval of DPW Union Contract: Moriarty made a motion to accept the DPW Union Contract. No further discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

Resignations:

- **Board of Finance:** Prem Aithal – resigned after being elected to the Board of Education.
- **Transfer Station Attendant:** Sabine Nyenhuis
- **Assistant Assessor:** Debbie Copp. She will be missed. She was asset to the Town.

Moriarty thanked Prem, Sabine & Debbie for their time with the Town and wished them good luck in the future and is looking forward to working with Prem in the future. Anderson agreed with Moriarty's comment.

Appointments

- **Board of Finance:** Sandy Olsen: There was a brief discussion. Moriarty made a motion to appoint Sandy Olsen to the Board of Finance. No further discussion. Motion approved unanimously.
- **Municipal Agent for the Elderly:** Jessica Condil: Anderson made a motion to appoint Jessica Condil for 4-year appointment as the Municipal Agent for the Elderly. No further discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

Anderson made a motion to adjourn. Motion approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:28 pm

Minutes taken by JoAnn Ricciardelli

Schedule 1 – September 14, 2020 – Bord of Selectmen’s Meeting

Summary of August 2020 Board of Education Meetings

2020-2021 School Year:

The last month before RSD17 schools reopened was spent fine tuning the details. In August, after local districts were granted flexibility on how to best open schools, the RSD17 Reopening Committee decided to open in a hybrid model for the first four weeks of school, with the option for full remote learning for any family. The district surveyed families to identify how many students would opt to learn remotely, who would ride the buses, and those that would purchase school lunch. Laptops and masks were distributed to every student, and curriculum was modified to ensure continuity, whether at home or in school, with all students participating in synchronous learning throughout the day. As school begins, the District will continue to re-evaluate the circumstances and will communicate with families in September on future steps.

Policy Committee:

The Policy Committee recommended temporary COVID-19 related amendments to existing policy for the 2020-21 school year. These temporary policies, such as limiting visitors in the schools, technology procedures, and internet safety were approved by the Board and emailed to parents by the Superintendent.

Out-of-District Tuition Students at RSD 17:

The Board received a request for out-of-district students to transfer into RSD17. The Board had a discussion and decided to defer the item to the Policy Committee for further exploration.

New Board Member:

The Board welcomed Prem Aithal of Haddam as the eleventh member of the Board of Education. Prem was voted in by Haddam residents to fill the remainder of the term left behind by Gerry Mathews. He will serve on the Finance Committee and chair the Strategic Planning Committee.

Diversity Committee:

A Diversity Committee of district teachers and staff was established this summer with the purpose to review and enhance the school district's efforts to address topics of multiculturalism in the curriculum. The committee worked on reviewing and updating the Language Arts and Social Studies Curriculums, including incorporating new reading materials for the coming year.

Capital Improvements:

Oil tanks for both BES and KES will be installed in September. A temporary oil tank was placed at Burr Elementary to produce hot water until the permanent tank can be installed. The Field House has progressed over the summer with the installation of the voice evacuation system, wiring for lighting and the pole vault box, and painting the walls and ceilings. Patches and repairs to the cement were identified and will be filled and a laser leveling analysis was completed to ensure the floor will pour evenly. Crews are working weekends, but delays due to COVID-19 and other minor complications have delayed the projected completion to October.

On our RSD17.org Website:

You can view the schedules and read the minutes from each of the BoE Subcommittee meetings by going to the “BOE Meeting Schedules and Minutes” and clicking on the subcommittee links at the top.