



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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LAURIE E. BURSTEIN
First Selectman

MARY B. CARDIN
Deputy First Selectman

JAMISON J. BOUCHER
JAMES M. PRICHARD
DAVID E. STAVENS
SU THANVANTHRI
CHARLOTTE WARD

MATTHEW REED
Town Administrator

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

February 9, 2026

Nicholas J. DiCorleto, Jr. Meeting Hall
and via ZOOM Conferencing

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. ROLL CALL

Selectmen Present: Laurie Burstein, David Stavens, Su Thanvanthri, James Prichard, Mary Cardin, Charlotte Ward, Jamison Boucher

Town Staff Present: Matthew Reed, Town Administrator; Tom Modzelewski, Director, Perry Dikeman, Mechanic II, Department of Public Works (DPW); Tiffany Pignataro, Finance Officer/Treasurer; Cheryl Chamberlin, Library Technical Assistant, *Sue Phillips, Director, Hall Memorial Library; Tyler Devine, Assessor

Emergency Service Agency Representatives Present: Peter Hany, President/Chief, Alisa Smith, Lieutenant/Scheduler, Ellington Volunteer Ambulance Corps (EVAC); Robert Smith, Chief, Ellington Volunteer Fire Department (EVFD)

Elected Officials Present: Representative Jaime Foster

**Attended via ZOOM*

III. PUBLIC COMMENT [*Shall not exceed 30 minutes unless extended by majority vote of the Board*]: No citizens came forward.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 12, 2026 Regular Meeting

MOVED (CARDIN), SECONDED (WARD) AND PASSED [AYE: STAVENS/PRICHARD/BURSTEIN/CARDIN/WARD/BOUCHER; ABSTAIN: THANVANTHRI] TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 12, 2026 REGULAR MEETING.

B. January 28, 2026 Special Meeting – Capital Improvements Deliberations

MOVED (WARD), SECONDED (THANVANTHRI) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 28, 2026 SPECIAL MEETING – CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS DELIBERATIONS.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: No unfinished business was discussed.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Tax Refunds/Abatements

MOVED (CARDIN), SECONDED (WARD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE TAX REFUNDS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$7,144.44 AS RECOMMENDED BY THE TAX & REVENUE COLLECTOR AND AS SPECIFIED IN THE REFUNDS/ABATEMENTS STATEMENT DATED FEBRUARY 2026 [ATTACHED].

B. Earth Day Event – Closure of Church Street

MOVED (WARD), SECONDED (THANVANTHRI) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO GRANT THE REQUEST OF THE EARTH DAY COMMITTEE TO CLOSE CHURCH STREET DURING THE 2026 EARTH DAY EVENT ON APRIL 25, 2026.

C. Resolution – Opposition to Commercial Solar Expansion

First Selectman Burstein shared the following statement:

“Having served on Conservation Commission, I care about preserving our town’s character while ensuring our economic viability. The town has worked diligently on farmland preservation, and my concern is we have to continue to protect the farms. Across the country, farms are going away, and I know you’ve all heard it a lot but it’s very true – no farms, no food. I do support solar, just not on agricultural land.”

She added that the Capital Region Council of Governments includes the protection of farmland and open space in its 2026 goals, supporting legislation to prioritize the siting of renewal energy projects on previously developed, disturbed, or contaminated brownfield land while discouraging development on prime farmland, forested tracks, and designated open space.

MOVED (CARDIN), AND SECONDED (THANVANTHRI) TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:

WHEREAS, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 16-50k et seq., the Connecticut Siting Council is granted exclusive jurisdiction over the siting of electric generating facilities with a capacity greater than one (1) megawatt, thereby limiting municipal land use authority over such facilities; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 8-2, municipalities are charged with adopting zoning regulations to conserve the value of property, encourage the most appropriate use of land, and protect public health, safety, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Ellington supports responsible environmental stewardship and acknowledges the importance of renewable energy as part of Connecticut’s long-term energy and climate goals; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Selectmen recognizes that solar energy projects, when appropriately sited and scaled, can contribute to energy diversification and environmental sustainability; and

WHEREAS, commercial solar energy facilities exceeding one (1) megawatt frequently require the clearing or long-term dedication of significant acreage, including agricultural land, forested areas, and open space, which are integral to Ellington’s rural character, environmental resources, agricultural heritage, and economic viability; and

WHEREAS, such large-scale facilities may result in long-term and irreversible impacts to land use patterns, wildlife habitat, agricultural-based economy, stormwater management, soil health, and scenic resources; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Selectmen continue to support farmland preservation and a formal purchase of development rights program established in 2007 through a \$2 million bond authorization enabling

permanent preservation of hundreds of prime, state, and locally important farmland soils and partnerships with state and federal farmland preservation agencies; and

WHEREAS, the installation and operation of commercial-scale solar facilities can impose additional demands on local infrastructure, including roadways, drainage systems, and emergency response services, without corresponding municipal control or guaranteed mitigation; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Selectmen is concerned that the cumulative impact of multiple large-scale solar installations disproportionately affects rural and agricultural communities such as Ellington; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Selectmen finds that commercial solar facilities exceeding one (1) megawatt often provide limited direct benefit to the host municipality in terms of reduced local energy costs, enhanced grid resiliency, or long-term fiscal benefit relative to the land area consumed; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Ellington supports renewable energy development strategies that prioritize:

- Rooftop and canopy solar installations;
- Development on brownfields, landfills, and previously disturbed sites;
- Smaller-scale solar projects compatible with local zoning regulations; and
- Energy efficiency, conservation, and demand-reduction measures;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ellington Board of Selectmen hereby opposes the siting and installation of additional commercial solar energy facilities exceeding one (1) megawatt within the Town of Ellington; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Selectmen respectfully urges the Connecticut General Assembly, the Connecticut Siting Council, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and relevant state agencies to:

1. Restore and strengthen meaningful municipal input and consent in the siting of large-scale renewable energy facilities;
2. Encourage renewable energy development that is appropriately scaled and equitably distributed across the state; and
3. Protect agricultural land and agricultural economic viability, open space, and established community character while advancing Connecticut's renewable energy goals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Clerk is directed to transmit a copy of this resolution to Ellington's state legislative delegation, the Office of the Governor, the Connecticut Siting Council, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environment Protection, and other appropriate state agencies.

Ken Shores, Johnny Appleseed's Farm, shared that they have participated in Earth Day and other Town events for many years. He has a piece of property in the woods out by Crystal Lake that he wants to put solar panels on; it isn't visible to the surrounding areas, and he doesn't think that limiting what private property owners do with their property is fair. He noted that farming in this area isn't really financially viable and that many are struggling to keep business afloat; adding solar provides a source of income from his property. He added that people have approached him over the years to purchase smaller parcels of property, but he would like to keep it as one piece of land. Ms. Cardin noted that this motion is a resolution to formalize the Town's position on solar, not a prohibition on all solar activity.

Tom Palshaw, 120 Pinney Street, thinks the resolution is outdated. He stated that solar panels don't destroy farmland. As solar farms are developing, the fields enhance the pollinators which benefit

nearby farms. He stated that there are many things going on currently that aren't addressed by the resolution as presented. Lori Spielman, 179 Abbott Road, mentioned transparency, sharing that many farmers were unaware of this proposal and noting that there are other farmers in Town that would like to utilize solar to add steady income to their properties. Ms. Spielman added that she has considered solar on her land, but that she probably won't do it. She urged the BOS to think more about this, especially considering the farmers' ability to support their operations. First Selectman Burstein pointed out that the information was shared on the Town website, Town Facebook and her First Selectman Facebook. Seth Bahler, Oakridge Dairy, shared his belief that solar is extremely short-sighted on certain properties, mentioning a proposal to put 500 acres of solar on Frog Hollow Road. He shared that land is being lost to investors coming in from out of state, and many local farmers are trying to produce food on this land. He is in favor of the Town having more control and not allowing solar on prime ag soils. Ms. Thanvanthri noted one problem is that investors won't take the responsibility to return the solar properties to their prior state. Representative Foster noted that there is currently no local control and that the farm bureau refused to take a formal stance on this issue. While it is true that it's possible to farm on land that also has solar arrays in place, known as agrivoltaics, the issue in the legislature is that there are too many problems in the way that solar is being sited without local input and strategy. There have been problems with solar projects in East Windsor, and there are problems with the grid availability system as a whole. Representative Foster mentioned dual use property solutions, where solar is placed on a section of land where the soils are poorer. It seems like the goal is to put out a policy statement that indicates that Ellington wants to preserve farmland and is willing to use municipal time, energy, and resources to do so. Language can be provided that would be helpful in the further development of this resolution and Representative Foster urged the Town to adopt and include definitions of agrivoltaics and dual use. Mr. Boucher agrees that there should be more municipal control over the process as a whole, but it's also important to allow owners the right to use their property as they see fit. In listening to the discussion, it may be a good idea to rework the resolution to balance and identify all of the pieces more concretely. Jim Fay, 53 Shenipsit Street, provided a comment via Zoom, which Ms. Ward read into the record: "I would recommend removing that you are opposed to commercial solar over 1MW and change to recommend municipal input for projects over 1MW. The Town could have over 1MW for canopy in certain spots. I would also note to add AC after 1MW so it clarifies the project sized based on interconnection." Mr. Stavens commented that the Town can't dictate to property owners what they can do with their land. Ms. Ward asked if there was a way to be supportive of that but not allow very large projects without oversight. Ms. Thanvanthri commented that all the Town can do is ask for more control. Mr. Shores reiterated his concern about the Town having input on personal property projects. Mr. Bahler noted that the Town could word the resolution in a way that emphasizes the importance of municipal control in certain situations. Ms. Cardin shared that the BOS could postpone the adoption of the resolution as presented and provide additional opportunity for input. First Selectman Burstein thanked everyone for being engaged in the process. Mr. Reed added that while it was true that at one point the municipalities had no say in these matters, they are now able to legally file as interveners at the cost of the developer, speaking and providing evidence and testimony about proposed projects. He confirmed that this is essentially a policy statement, making it clear that Ellington has a formal position on the matter.

MOVED (CARDIN), SECONDED (WARD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO TABLE THE MOTION ON THE RESOLUTION.

D. Award – Recognition of Representative Jaime Foster on behalf of COST

On behalf of the CT Council of Small Towns (COST), First Selectman Burstein was pleased to present Representative Jaime Foster with a COST Town Crier Award. This award was established to recognize and honor state lawmakers and public officials who have distinguished themselves as outstanding advocates on issues affecting Connecticut's small towns. Representative Foster was selected in recognition of her leadership role in addressing these concerns, including issues relating to the siting and taxation of large solar arrays and the protection of open space, forest land, and farmland. She is also working on legislation to assist municipalities in connecting to statewide public safety radio systems to enhance public safety. She consistently works with lawmakers across party lines to develop thoughtful legislation to address concerns facing rural towns and other smaller communities. Representative Foster expressed her appreciation for this award, noting that she couldn't have done it without the collaboration of town leaders.

E. Discussion of Revision to Town Purchasing Policy

Ms. Pignataro explained that this is a request to increase the bidding threshold from \$25,000 to \$35,000. As of October 1, 2025, the state increased the threshold that municipalities could utilize. Currently, any purchase between \$5,000 and \$24,999 requires three quotes, so this would give the Town an extra \$10,000 in which to utilize that three-quote process; anything over \$35,000 would require a formal bid or piggybacking off of a state or collaborative bid. As a reference point, the federal government requires anything over \$250,000 to be put out to bid. Mr. Reed noted that by raising this threshold, the Town has more room for negotiations within the multiples quotes that would be acquired; when something goes out to formal bid, there is no room for negotiation. This will also lessen the burden of some relatively simple purchases.

F. Revision of Town Ordinance – Section 28-1

Ms. Cardin asked what the procedure is for these revisions. The ordinance revision needs to go to Town Meeting for approval, at which point the related policy can be amended by the BOS.

MOVED (CARDIN), SECONDED (WARD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO MODIFY SECTION 28-1 OF THE TOWN CODE TO CHANGE THE BIDDING THRESHOLD FROM \$25,000 TO \$35,000 TO ALIGN WITH PUBLIC ACT 25-92 AS ATTACHED, PENDING TOWN MEETING APPROVAL.

1. Set Public Hearing and Town Meeting

MOVED (CARDIN), SECONDED (THANVANTHRI) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING ON MARCH 9, 2026 AT 6:00 PM IN THE NICHOLAS J. DICORLETO, JR. MEETING HALL, ELLINGTON TOWN HALL, TO ALLOW CITIZENS TO COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED REVISION TO TOWN ORDINANCE – SECTION 28-1.

MOVED (CARDIN), SECONDED (WARD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO HOLD A SPECIAL TOWN MEETING ON MARCH 9, 2026, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED FOR 6:00 PM, TO DISCUSS AND VOTE UPON THE REVISION TO TOWN ORDINANCE – SECTION 28-1.

G. LOSAP Trust Agreement

Ms. Cardin asked for additional information on this item. Ms. Pignataro shared that this request is to establish a trust for the Length of Service Award Program, separating these assets and providing for professional management. This would be a huge step in the right direction for the beneficiaries, as their assets would be formally safeguarded. It was confirmed that the trustee of the plan would abide

by fiduciary responsibilities. Ms. Pignataro shared that she is also looking into this route for the OPEB plan in the future, which handles the insurance benefits for retirees.

MOVED (WARD), SECONDED (CARDIN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:

RESOLVED, that with respect to the Town of Ellington Fire Department Service Award Program, Arrow Bank National Association has been appointed Investment Manager and Trustee of said plan. The following Town employees shall serve as the Administrative Delegates of said plan and trust: Felicia LaPlante and Tiffany Pignataro. Each Administrative Delegate, individually, may act and Arrow Bank National Association may rely on the direction of either one of the above listed Administrative Delegates.

H. Award of Lease: Town-Owned Land on Middle Road and Maple Street

Mr. Stavens asked for clarification on the dates of the contract; it was confirmed that the first contract is for two years with three optional one-year extensions. It was noted that this is similar in price to the last lease; Ms. Pignataro shared that the overall rental income is \$600-\$700 more with this contract. The last time this item was put out to bid, there were four bidders; only Oakridge submitted a bid this time around. The initial lease term is limited to allow the Town flexibility in case there's an opportunity to develop this land in a manner that would benefit the Town. It was also confirmed that the Town will receive the listed price per year for the parcels.

MOVED (WARD), SECONDED (PRICHARD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO AWARD THE LEASES FOR THE TOWN-OWNED LAND – MIDDLE ROAD AND MAPLE STREET – TO OAKRIDGE DAIRY LLC, ELLINGTON, CT. THE TERM OF THE CONTRACT SHALL BE FOR TWO YEARS, EFFECTIVE MARCH 1, 2026 THROUGH FEBRUARY 29, 2028. THE TOWN OF ELLINGTON WILL HAVE THE OPTION TO EXTEND THE CONTRACT FOR THREE ADDITIONAL ONE-YEAR PERIODS. THE TOWN OF ELLINGTON WILL PROVIDE BASELINE SOIL CONDITIONS PRIOR TO VENDOR USE.

I. Re-establish Ad Hoc Emergency Services Committee

Ms. Cardin asked the purpose of re-establishing this committee. Mr. Reed commented that this decision is completely up to the BOS, noting that the background of this committee had been included in his report. He recommended that it stay in place, as there will be changes forthcoming under the new EMS Director. First Selectman Burstein agreed that it would be good to keep it in place at this time. Mr. Reed added that part of the original charge of the group was to "analyze organizational management and operation issues as they relate to the delivery of emergency services."

MOVED (WARD), SECONDED (THANVANTHRI) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO RE-ESTABLISH THE AD HOC EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE FOR ONE YEAR THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2027.

J. Appointment of Town Assessor

Mr. Devine was introduced, with Mr. Reed adding that he comes to Ellington with great experience and recommendations.

MOVED (CARDIN), SECONDED (WARD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPOINT TYLER DEVINE TO THE POSITION OF ASSESSOR FOR THE TOWN OF ELLINGTON, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR.

VII. ADMINISTRATIVE/DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS: Nothing was discussed.

VIII. SELECTMEN COMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS

A. Personnel Committee

MOVED (PRICHARD), SECONDED (CARDIN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPOINT NICHOLAS PINA AS AN ALTERNATE TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION TO COMPLETE AN UNEXPIRED TERM THROUGH JANUARY 31, 2027.

Ms. Ward asked for clarification regarding the current Personnel Committee processes; if one individual applies for a vacancy, they are appointed, and if there are multiple submissions for a single vacancy, a meeting would be called to review the applicants. Mr. Prichard confirmed that the Committee used to meet regularly prior to BOS meetings to review all Statements of Interest that were received; Ms. Ward asked if that practice should be brought back, as she wants to ensure that appointments are made in the best interest of the Town. Ms. Cardin added that it would make sense to have a conversation with individuals before they are appointed.

MOVED (PRICHARD), SECONDED (THANVANTHRI) AND PASSED [AYE: STAVENS/THANVANTHRI/PRICHARD/WARD/BOUCHER; ABSTAIN: CARDIN/BURSTEIN] TO APPOINT JULIET D'ANTONIO AS AN ALTERNATE TO THE INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY TO COMPLETE AN UNEXPIRED TERM THROUGH JANUARY 31, 2027.

MOVED (PRICHARD), SECONDED (BOUCHER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO REAPPOINT KARL NEUBECKER, ROBERT SMITH, ROBERT EDWARDS, TIM SEITZ, PETER HANY SR., BRUCE HOFFMAN, AND MATTHEW REED TO THE AD HOC EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE FOR ONE-YEAR TERMS THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2027.

MOVED (PRICHARD), SECONDED (CARDIN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO REAPPOINT PETER WELTI, THOMAS ADAMS, GARY FELDMAN SR., AND PATRICK STAVENS TO THE PERMANENT BUILDING COMMITTEE FOR FOUR-YEAR TERMS THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2030.

B. Liaison Reports

Ms. Ward shared that the Board of Education has had many recent meetings and a lot of budget discussions. Ms. Thanvanthri noted that the Zoning Board of Appeals was supposed to have their organizational meeting, but two regular members were absent, so it was put off. Ms. Cardin attended a recent Conservation Commission meeting, familiarizing herself with the work that group is doing to preserve land. Ms. Ward also reviewed recent Library Board of Trustees minutes.

IX. FIRST SELECTMAN/TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS

First Selectman Burstein has attended recent BOE and BOF meetings, an Earth Day coordination meeting for the event on April 25th, and a America 250 Celebration meeting for the event on October 3rd. She also went to the last Permanent Building Committee meeting held at Windermere School, which included a tour. She participates with COST and attended a recent Friends of Agriculture gathering where she saw Seth Bahler, and she received a tour of the Academy for Agriculture Science and Technology Education at Rockville High School by a student in the program run by Erika Bahler. She attended the EVAC banquet which was a lovely event that acknowledges the dedication of all of the volunteers and staff members. She has started a series of local business tours, starting with Barnyard, and she recently filmed an episode of Ellington News and Events with Community Voice Channel, featuring Officer Bridge and Sgt. Merrill.

Mr. Reed shared that the CT Siting Council approved the petition for the USS Somers Solar project at the Ellington Airport. First Selectman Burstein noted that the Town was not allowed to make any public comment on the appeal hearing. Ms. Thanvanthri asked if there were updates on the high school radio system. Mr. Reed noted that the bidirectional amp is part of funding that was received in conjunction with an East Windsor project. He talked to Oliver Barton, acting Superintendent, and the schools are taking the lead on this. There are a number of surveys that need to be done to measure efficacy, and certain ones need to wait until spring. The money goes through 2029 so that doesn't pose an issue; this is a long process and it's on track.

X. CORRESPONDENCE/OTHER COMMUNICATION FROM THE BOS

First Selectman Burstein noted that the BOS received the Annual Notice for Compliance to CGS 8-4c – Training for members of Planning, Zoning, or combined Planning and Zoning Commissions and Zoning Boards of Appeals. Members completed the required four hours of training.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED (CARDIN), SECONDED (PRICHARD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN AT 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Merriam

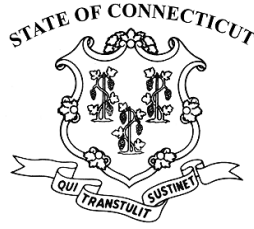
Julia Merriam, Recording Secretary

Laurie Burstein

Laurie Burstein, First Selectman

TOWN OF ELLINGTON
TAX AND REVENUE COLLECTOR'S REFUND REPORT
February 2026

Amount	Name	Tax	GL Year	Requesting Dept.	Reason
\$ 6,709.54	ALTER, PEARSON & HOPE LLC	RE	2024	TAX	OVERPAYMENT
\$ 42.33	HAKIAN CEDRIC + HEBERT CAROL	RE	2024	TAX	OVERPAYMENT
\$ 183.40	HARPER PAUL	MV	2024	ASSESSOR	APPLY EXEMPTION
\$ 18.15	HART KEVIN	MV	2024	ASSESSOR	SOLD 8/25
\$ 40.57	HOME LOAN SERV	RE	2024	TAX	OVERPAYMENT
\$ 150.45	TOYOTA LEASE TRUST	MV	2024	ASSESSOR	SOLD TO LESSEE 6/25
\$ 7,144.44	REFUND TOTAL FOR FEBRUARY 2026				



Substitute Senate Bill No. 1184

Public Act No. 25-92

**AN ACT INCREASING THE THRESHOLD FOR SEALED BIDDING
ON CERTAIN MUNICIPAL CONTRACTS.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Subsection (a) of section 7-148v of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

(a) Notwithstanding the provisions of any municipal charter or any special act to the contrary, any municipality may, by ordinance, establish requirements for competitive bidding for the award of any contract or the purchase of any real or personal property by the municipality. Such ordinance may provide that, except as otherwise required by any provision of the general statutes, sealed bidding shall not be required for contracts or purchases having a value less than or equal to an amount established in the ordinance, which amount shall not be greater than [twenty-five] thirty-five thousand dollars. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to invalidate any ordinance enacted by a municipality prior to October 1, 1989. Nothing in this section and no ordinance adopted pursuant to this section shall be construed to limit the ability of a municipality to enter into a contract pursuant to section 4a-53a.