

STATE OF CONNECTICUT • COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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First Selectman

MARY B. CARDIN
Deputy First Selectman

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

Town Administrator
MATTHEW D. REED

Safety & Health Committee Meeting Minutes

April 9, 2026

Nicholas J. DiCorleto, Jr. Meeting Hall

Minutes

Members Present: Matthew Reed, Chairman/Town Administrator; Pete Hany, Chief, Ellington Volunteer Ambulance Corps; Kevin Gambacorta, Assistant Foreman, Casey Lombardi, Facilities Crew Chief, Department of Public Works (DPW); Mary Bartley, Assistant Recreation Director; Kathy Kane-DiBacco, Assistant Animal Control Officer; Ashley Dabbondanza, HML Assistant Director/Head of Youth and Family Services; Sheila Grady, Senior Center Director; Rebecca Stack, Human Services Director; Craig Webb, Emergency Services Director; Kristen Harp, Youth Services Director

Members Absent: Bob Smith, Chief, Ellington Volunteer Fire Department (EVFD); Bryan Harvell, Crystal Lake Fire Department (CLFD); Margaret Schmidt, Town Hall Representative; Sydney Kern, Fire Marshal; Joe Decker, Tim Merrill, Sgt., Resident State Troopers' Office; LouAnn Cannella, Interim Human Resources Coordinator/Director

I. Call to Order: Mr. Reed called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

II. Approval of Minutes – January 8, 2026

MOVED (HANY), SECONDED (WEBB) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 8, 2026 SAFETY & HEALTH COMMITTEE MEETING.

III. New Business

- A. **LAP Claims:** Mr. Reed spoke about two open claims.
- B. **Workers' Compensation Claims:** Mr. Reed reported that one workers' compensation claim was submitted in the month of March for a minor injury where an employee cut the top of their head working under the hood of a conveyor and one additional claim was submitted in the month of April for a public works employee who had a tick encounter off premises. Mr. Reed reminded employees to begin taking preventative measures when outside to avoid contracting tick bites and should follow standard protocol and follow up with their supervisor and HR if they are bit.
- C. **Employee Training Updates**
Mr. Reed shared a Workplace Violence & De-escalation handout [ATTACHED].

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D. Promoting Safety & Health in the Workplace

1. Workplace Violence & De-escalation:

Mr. Reed addressed that Town employees at some point will have interactions with the public in the office or on the road and they may be upset. He identified some warning signs to look out for such as a raised voice, clenched fists, invading personal space, repeating themselves and throwing out personal insults.

He suggested some de-escalation techniques for employees like staying calm and professional, acknowledging their emotions, listening, offering solutions and setting boundaries if necessary. These five steps can be helpful when dealing with upset members of the public. Phrases such as "I understand your concerns" or simply nodding your head in agreement while listening to them may also be helpful. He also suggested employees avoid phrases such as "calm down" or "that's not my problem" and maintaining an appropriate distance and keeping a clear exit to the situation if you feel things aren't calming.

Mr. Reed also added the importance of reporting any incident or confrontation with the public to a supervisor or HR as well as jotting down the time, subject and details of the interaction even if it does not seem significant at the time, it may be necessary to recall at a later date. He reminds employees that there are cameras to look back on at video footage if necessary. Lastly, he explained that you should trust your instincts, call for help early and never physically intervene.

2. Building Safety

The topic of building safety was discussed including the recent installation suggested by Mr. Reed of handrails and new stair treads in the Town Hall. These are now ADA compliant and will mitigate injuries or falls.

Mr. Reed reminded employees that the mats that are placed at the entrances of the buildings are meant to collect water and dirt; however, if they are folded or curled, they can be a hazard. He asks that employees fix them when they see problems and report any issues for replacing to DPW.

Brief discussion was held regarding the air quality and HVAC/boilers, mechanical rooms and electrical panels. While some facilities have better air quality than some of the older facilities Mr. Reed recommends any odor, moisture or potential issues be communicated to DPW as soon as possible. Radon testing is also being done as required.

3. General Observations, Recommendations or Concerns from Committee Members

Sheila Grady had a concern regarding the new camera system not showing the great room and she was told this would be updated in the next phase. Mr. Reed said they may be available now but the view on their monitors may need revising; he will look into it.

Mary Bartley asked that the new overhead lights scheduled to be installed in their offices be done on a Friday if possible so that employees are not interrupted during the workday. Casey Lombardi will reach out to the installer and request a Friday installation.

Sheila Grady shared that the Senior Center organized hiking outings are now down from two to one being supervised by a staff member. The residents would prefer to have two hikes scheduled, but due to staffing it is not possible. Ms. Grady has concerns about the liability and injury risks. Mr. Reed suggested that waivers continue to be collected and that staff could potentially train several people to attend as trained volunteers for the hikes. It was also suggested that the Trails Committee assist with this. Further discussion will be held separately.

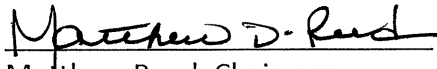
IV. Communications from Department Heads or Agency Representatives

No additional communications were received.

V. Adjournment

MOVED (HANY), SECONDED (BARTLEY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO AJOURN THE SAFETY & HEALTH COMMITTEE MEETING AT 10:41 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,


Matthew Reed, Chairman

Workplace De-escalation Guide

Customer Service & Public-Facing Staff

■ Warning Signs

- Raised voice or rapid speech
- Clenched fists or pacing
- Invading personal space
- Repetitive complaints
- Personal insults

■ 5-Step De-escalation

- Stay calm and professional
- Acknowledge emotions
- Listen actively
- Set boundaries
- Offer solutions

■ What to Say

- Let's work through this together
- Here's what I can do
- I understand your concern

■ Avoid Saying

- Calm down
- That's not my problem
- You're wrong

■ Body Language

- Open posture and calm expression
- Maintain appropriate distance

- Nod to show listening

■ Safety Reminders

- Trust your instincts
- Keep exit path clear
- Call for help early
- Do not physically intervene