



LOGAN JOHNSON
Chairman

STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187
www.ellington-ct.gov

ELIZABETH NORD
Vice Chairmen

BOARD OF FINANCE SPECIAL MEETING May 28, 2026 Minutes

MAURICE BLANCHETTE
DOUGLAS HARDING
DANIEL KEUNE
GOMATHI RAMACHANDRAN

Members Present: Logan Johnson, Daniel Keune, Maurice Blanchette, Gomathi Ramachandran, Doug Harding.

Members Absent: Liz Nord

Others Present: Laurie Burstein – First Selectman, Felicia LaPlante– Assistant Finance Officer, Tom Modzelewski - DPW Director, Matt Reed – Town Administrator, Jennifer Dzen – BOE, Miriam Underwood – BOE, Tom Palshaw – Resident, Cole Prato – EVFD, Tyler Devine, Assessor, Marcia Lacock – resident, Jim Lacock – resident, Donna Allen – resident, Jenn Mullin – BOE, Peg Busse – resident, Keith Danforth – resident, James Prichard – BOS, David Hildebrand – resident, John Kuehn – resident, Donna Hosey – town clerk, Kate Lemire – resident, Steve Viens – BOE, Oliver Barton – BOE, Harry Lambert – resident, Jo Lambert – resident, Ethan Biggs, Craig Webb – Emergency Management, Bill Hulligan – resident, Donna Hulligan – resident, Timothy Sitz – CLFD, Arthur Biyrukas – IT, Peter Hany – EVAC, Alisha Smith – EVAC, Robert Smith – EVFD, Mary Bartley – Rec, Susan Philips – Library, Johney Pappas – resident, Ralph Olioleri– resident, Gary Feldman – resident, John Turner – resident, Kerry Socha – BOE, Ann Harford – resident, Jamie Boucher – BOS, David Stavens – BOS, Edward Bradley – resident, Kevin Barrett – Rec, Angela Moser – BOE, Tracy Mercier, Su Thanvanthri – BOE. Zoom: Mary Blanchette, Diane Trueb, Jim Fay, Kerrie, Jay, Greg, Marge, Lisa Houlihan, Mary Cardin, Melissa Scarbrough, Stephanie V, Michael Vengruskas, Zack Antil, Warren, Kristin Doughty, Jean Prest, AnnMarie, Christal, Charlotte Ward, Jacquelyn Chaarest, Elizabeth Sciarra, Helen Meany, Lis Nord, David Gyure, Darcy Murphy, Cory LaFountaine, Edward Bradway.

Call to Order

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Present: Logan Johnson, Maurice Blanchette, Doug Harding, Dan Keune, Gomathi Ramachandran.

Absent: Liz Nord (joined via Zoom at 7:47 pm).

Public Comment

Peg Busse – 37 Abbott Road: Mrs. Busse spoke in her role as Library Board Chair and as a taxpayer. She noted that the library's proposed budget represented a 1.8% increase over last year, approximately \$12,000. She explained that 82% of the library budget is allocated to personnel, 10% to books, and 6% to contractual expenses such as Wi-Fi services. As a result, 98% of the budget is largely fixed, and any significant reductions would likely require staffing cuts and reduced operating hours.

As a taxpayer, Ms. Busse stated that the town's current budget challenge is primarily the result of the recent revaluation process and encouraged the Board to address long-term budget planning so that the town does not face the same situation again next year.

Laurie Burstein – 10 Woodland Trail (First Selectman): Mrs. Burstein expressed support for maintaining funding for emergency services. She stated that challenges facing the ambulance and fire departments have been deferred for many years and that it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain volunteers.

Zack Antil – 240 Mountain Road: Mr. Antil commented on the town's fire services, noting that Ellington operates two fire departments. He suggested exploring consolidation opportunities, including reducing administrative costs. He also noted that a significant portion of fire department expenses relates to water costs.

Mary Cardin – 32 Middle Road (Board of Selectmen): Mrs. Cardin discussed tax abatements, stating that one of Ellington's challenges is its limited commercial tax base. She noted that some residents have raised concerns about tax abatements provided to farms and businesses. She explained that these abatements are intended to encourage growth and future property improvements that will ultimately increase the town's tax base. She added that a stronger commercial tax base would help reduce the tax burden on homeowners.

Edward Bradway – 40 Buff Cap Road: Mr. Bradway reviewed the percentage allocations of various department budgets.

Matthew Reed – Town Administrator

Mr. Reed stated that the town currently has only three active tax abatements. He explained that tax abatements serve as economic development tools and that without them, businesses may choose to locate in neighboring communities.

Budget Deliberations

The Town presented revised budget adjustments. Mrs. LaPlante reviewed updates to the expenditure accounts, totaling \$76,142,819, as well as revenue account adjustments.

Sanitary Landfill Program

A proposed reduction involved converting the sanitary landfill program to a fee-based service. Mr. Johnson asked Mr. Modzelewski to explain the proposal and its impact on residents.

Mr. Modzelewski stated that this option had been discussed during the first round of budget deliberations. He explained that Ellington currently offers a beneficial bulk disposal program that is free to residents except for tires and mattresses. Under the proposal, residents would pay an annual fee, with a recommended charge of \$40 per use, while maintaining unlimited usage.

He noted that eliminating the \$44,000 budget allocation could lead to an increase in illegal dumping. He stated that the average cost for the Department of Public Works to respond to illegal dumping

incidents is approximately \$150 per occurrence.

Fire Truck Financing

Mr. Johnson stated that there appears to be consensus regarding the need for the new fire truck, with the primary question being how to finance it. He indicated a preference for purchasing the vehicle outright rather than leasing it to avoid additional interest costs.

Mr. Keune stated that leasing would spread the expense over multiple years and avoid a high one-time cost, adding that he was comfortable with the leasing option.

Mr. Johnson asked Fire Chief Cole Prato to share his perspective.

Cole Prato – Fire Chief: Chief Prato stated that leasing would help smooth payments over time. He emphasized that the department needs the fire truck and supported the concept of setting aside funds annually for future apparatus replacements.

Vote: Motion to proceed with leasing the fire truck passed (Aye: Keune, Ramachandran, Harding - Nay: Blanchette, Johnson).

Library Funds

Mr. Johnson asked where the library obtains funding for maintenance and capital improvements. Ms. Busse explained that the library maintains special funds, including maintenance-related funds that may be used when necessary.

Mr. Blanchette stated that voters should understand that future expenses, such as elevator repairs, will eventually require significant funding. He expressed concern that reducing current budget costs by relying on reserve funds could create future financial challenges.

Ms. Busse responded that the funds belong to the Library Board of Trustees and that the board understands the importance of long-term planning. She stated that maintaining safety and security for residents remains a top priority.

Sanitary Landfill Vote

Mr. Keune stated that he did not support cutting the sanitary landfill program, noting that residents actively use the service. Mr. Harding agreed and expressed concern that illegal dumping would increase if the program were eliminated.

Vote: Motion to retain funding for the sanitary landfill program passed unanimously.

Mr. Harding asked Mrs. Dzen whether removing the Board of Education vehicle replacement item would result in the request returning next year.

Mrs. Dzen stated that the request would return next year if not funded, noting that the maintenance vehicle is nearing the end of its useful life.

Vote: Motion to retain the \$30,000 vehicle replacement item passed unanimously.

Mr. Johnson then asked about the \$30,000 request for Board of Education classroom furniture replacement.

Mrs. Dzen explained that approximately 52 classrooms still require furniture replacement and that the annual allocation helps gradually address those needs.

Vote: Motion to retain the \$30,000 classroom furniture replacement item passed unanimously.

Finance Office Discussion

Mr. Harding asked about the potential for combining the Town and Board of Education finance functions and whether the cost savings had been estimated.

Mr. Johnson stated that no proposal is currently moving forward because significant savings are not expected.

Mr. Reed added that some savings could be realized, but many factors would need to align. He noted that the Town is proceeding with the hiring of a Finance Officer.

Ms. Burstein stated that no detailed analysis had been completed and suggested reviewing budget items from the bottom up.

The meeting recessed at 7:13 p.m. for approximately 15 minutes, or until called back to order by the Chair for budget calculations.

The meeting reconvened at 7:47 p.m.

Liz Nord, Board of Finance Vice Chair, joined the meeting via Zoom at 7:47 am.

A motion to reduce the following budget revenue accounts.

MOVED (RAMACHANDRAN) SECONDED (KEUNE)
AND PASSED (AYE: RAMACHANDRAN, KEUNE,
HARDING, NORD – ABSTENTION: BLANCHETTE) TO
INCREASE THE FOLLOWING BUDGET REVENUE
ACCOUNTS
PEQUOT/MOHEGAN FUNDS \$64,292
EDUCATION COST SHARING GRANTS \$413,666
INVESTMENT INCOME \$250,000
MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE \$20,000
APPROPRIATION-FUND BALANCE \$126,606
TOWN CLERK - CONVEYANCE TAX \$20,000
POLICE SPECIAL REVENUE \$25,000
EMPG GRANT \$8,300
HISTORIC PRESERVE AWARD \$4,000

MOVE TO REDUCE THE FOLLOWING BUDGET
EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS
111-50101 HUMAN RESOURCES \$7,000
930-50149 FICA \$1,687
950-50156 DEFERRED COMP \$2,588
1065-50130 SALARY ADJUSTMENT \$371,050
510-50101 RECREATION \$15,046
410-50102 DPW OT \$7,000
112-60240 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY \$13,500
210-50103 REGISTRAR OF VOTERS \$5,200
CAPITAL NON-RECURRING FUND EVFD RESCUE 143

REPLACEMENT \$310,000
CAPITAL NON-RECURRING FUND BOE A/V
UPGRADES \$103,547
CAPITAL NON-RECURRING FUND LARGE/SMALL
DUMPTRUCK REPLACEMENT \$10,000

CAPITAL NON-RECURRING FUND TOWN HALL RENOVATION/ADDITION
\$40,000
CAPITAL NON-RECURRING FUND LIBRARY UPDATES
\$75,000

FURTHER MOVE TO INCREASE THE FOLLOWING BUDGET EXPENDITURE
ACCOUNTS (SEE ATTACHED DOCUMENT)

The revised projected mill rate is **25.65 mills**, reduced from the **26.30 mills** presented at referendum, representing a decrease of **0.65 mills**.

The final mill rate will not be published until the budget is approved at the referendum.

The next budget referendum is scheduled for June 9, 2026, from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Adjournment

MOVED (BLANCHETTE) SECONDED (HARDING) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Elizabeth Luginbuhl

Elizabeth Luginbuhl, Recording Secretary

MOVE TO REDUCE THE FOLLOWING BUDGET REVENUE ACCOUNTS

CURRENT YEAR LEVY \$1,483,410

MILL RATE STABILIZATION \$371,050

MOVE TO INCREASE THE FOLLOWING BUDGET REVENUE ACCOUNTS

PEQUOT/MOHEGAN FUNDS \$64,292

EDUCATION COST SHARING GRANTS \$413,666

INVESTMENT INCOME \$250,000

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CAPITAL NON-RECURRING FUND LARGE/SMALL DUMPTRUCK REPLACEMENT \$10,000

CAPITAL NON-RECURRING FUND TOWN HALL RENOVATION/ADDITION \$40,000

CAPITAL NON-RECURRING FUND LIBRARY UPDATES \$75,000

FURTHER MOVE TO INCREASE THE FOLLOWING BUDGET EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS

420-60351 EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE \$28,912

FURTHER MOVED THAT THE SUM OF MONEY

RECOMMENDED FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 IS

ALL EDUCATION COST SHARING GRANTS (ECS)

ARE DEEMED TO BE APPROPRIATED TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

FURTHER MOVE TO RECOMMEND TO THE REFERENDUM THE FOLLOWING

ITEMS:

GENERAL GOVERNMENT	2,510,768
BOARDS, AGENCIES, COMMISSIONS	124,770
PUBLIC SAFETY	4,190,569
PUBLIC WORKS	5,831,553
CULTURAL ARTS & RECREATION	900,023
LIBRARY	807,012
HUMAN SERVICES	1,039,612
TOWN PROPERTIES	640,190

DEBT SERVICE	3,971,960
FIXED CHARGES	4,289,751
MISCELLANEOUS	780,813
GENERAL GOVERNMENT TOTAL	25,087,021
CAPITAL OUTLAY	1,960,290
BOE	49,199,508
BUDGET GRAND TOTAL	76,246,819

FURTHER TO RECOMMEND TO REFERENDUM AN APPROPRIATION OF
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 FOR THE CAPITAL NON-RECURRING FUND
SAID APPROPRIATION TO FUND THE ATTACHED PROJECTS:

1100 CAPITAL NON-RECURRING FUND

Project Requests

- Road Overlay
- Local Capital Improvement Program
- Unimproved Road Improvement
- Sidewalks
- Culvert Maintenance & Repair
- Rd Construction-Large/Small Bridges
- DPW - Town Hall Addition/Renovation
- DPW - DPW Building Maintenance
- DPW - Library Updates
- EVFD - Station 243 HVAC Replacement
- DPW - Parking Lot Renovations
- DPW - Tennis & Basketball Court Maintenance
- DPW - High School Track
- DPW - Guiderail Program
- Assessor - Revaluation
- BOE - Modern Classroom Furniture
- BOE - BOE Computer Replacement Cycle
- BOE - AV Upgrades
- DPW - Snow Plow Dump trucks Replacement
- DPW - Sidewalk Plow/Thro
- DPW - Vacuum Trailer
- DPW - Replacement Generator
- EVAC - Spare Ambulance Equipment
- BOE - Vehicle Replacement
- Police - Interceptor SUVs
- Police - Taser Replacement
- EVFD - Light Rescue Truck

DEPARTMENT TOTAL

LESS-FEDERAL/STATE/TRUST FUNDS

Municipal Grants in Aid

Ambulance Fee Fund

Town Road Aid

State Grant-LOCIP

TOTAL

NET COST TO TOWN

CAP NON REC FUND

76,246,819

\$ 1,960,290

2026-27 BUDGET REQUEST	ADDITIONS (REDUCTIONS)	2026-27 BOF RECOMMEND
\$ 650,000	\$ -	\$ 650,000
165,800	-	165,800
75,000	-	75,000
20,000	-	20,000
20,000	-	20,000
20,000	-	20,000
40,000	(40,000)	-
20,000	-	20,000
75,000	(75,000)	-
20,000	-	20,000
30,000	-	30,000
25,000	-	25,000
25,000	-	25,000
20,000	-	20,000
57,000	-	57,000
30,000	-	30,000
168,300	-	168,300
103,547	(103,547)	-
290,000	(68,000)	222,000
80,000	-	80,000
36,000	-	36,000
65,000	-	65,000
132,000	(83,685)	48,315
30,000	-	30,000
160,875	(80,000)	80,875
52,000	-	52,000
310,000	(310,000)	-
\$ 2,720,522	\$ (760,232)	\$ 1,960,290

\$	223,527	\$	-	\$	223,527
	132,000		(83,685)		48,315
	340,983		-		340,983
	165,800		-		165,800
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\$	862,310	\$	(83,685)	\$	778,625
\$	1,858,212	\$	(676,547)	\$	1,181,665