STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

55 MAIN STREET – PO BOX 187
ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187

TEL 860-870-3100 FAX 860-870-3102

www.ellington-ct.gov

LOGAN JOHNSON
Chairman

Vice Chairman
ELIZABETH NORD

Members
MAURICE BLANCHETTE
DOUGLAS B. HARDING
DANIEL KEUNE
GOMATHI RAMACHANDRAN

September 1, 2026
BOARD OF FINANCE

Regular Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Liz Nord, Maurice Blanchette – via Zoom, Doug Harding, Dan Keune, Gomathi Ramachandran.

Members Absent: Logan Johnson.

Others Present: Laurie Burstein – First Selectman; Matt Evans – Finance Officer; Tom Palshaw – Resident; Peggy Busse – Library Board/Resident; Cole Prato – EVFD via Zoom.

Call to Order

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Present: Liz Nord, Maurice Blanchette – via Zoom, Doug Harding, Dan Keune, Gomathi Ramachandran.

Absent: Logan Johnson.

Chairman's Report

None.

Public Comment

Mrs. Burstein introduced the town's new Finance Officer, Matt Evans.

Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting – August 4, 2026

A motion to approve the August 4, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (HARDING) SECONDED (RAMACHANDRAN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 4, 2026, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES.

Presentation

None.

Financial Report

Mr. Evans presented the financial report for the fiscal period ended July 31, 2026. He reported that everything is looking good and running smoothly. Property tax collections are currently at 4.4% of the budget, which is lower than expected due to the budget being passed late. Auditors will be on site next week.

New Business

A. **FY2027-28 Board of Finance Budget Guidelines**

Mr. Keune stated that he would like to change the approach to the budget guidelines by identifying issues that are known from the beginning. That way, when they say it is a tough year, they can explain why and help the public understand why certain issues are being addressed.

Peggy Busse – 37 Abbott Road: Stated that once the letter is released to the public, they need to make sure that everything in it can be easily explained to the public, not just make sense to department heads. The public should understand what they are voting on.

Mrs. Nord stated that they need a plan. Do they want to have a paid fire department? What are they looking at for the future? Mr. Keune stated that this is a conversation for the Board of Selectmen.

Laurie Burstein – First Selectman: Stated that the Board of Selectmen recently approved paid firefighters starting in July. There also needs to be a push to get more volunteers, with certain incentives currently being offered for training, with the hope of having more volunteers in the future. Mrs. Nord asked if there are any grants available. Mrs. Burstein stated that this is a common issue and that everyone is feeling the same thing nationally, and they are waiting to see what happens. Mr. Harding stated that there are grants available, but a plan needs to be in place before they can apply for them.

Mr. Harding stated that there are several major issues coming up, including motor vehicle reimbursement, which could also create a loss for the town, as well as a potential loss in education funding. It is unclear what the legislature will do next year. Mr. Keune stated that the motor vehicle shows that there is a shortfall coming, but there are also savings for taxpayers.

Mr. Harding asked about the target for capital improvements. Do they want to keep it close to one million or in the 1.5–1.6 range? Mrs. Ramachandran stated that putting it at 1.6 would be a disservice to the taxpayers. She recommended 2.3–2.6 million.

Tom Palshaw – 120 Pinney Street: Speaking as a taxpayer, he stated that the town had a lighting project that cost $3 million. When the project was completed, money remained, and the Board was not involved in deciding how to spend it. He stated that the leftover money should have been returned to the taxpayers. He recommended looking at what was approved and determining what can be received in return.

Mr. Keune stated that the cost of everything has gone up drastically and that, at the moment, maintaining the pressure of keeping the target at 1.6 million made sense. The Board agreed that they are comfortable moving up to a total target of 2 million.

Mrs. Burstein stated that they have a subcommittee for capital improvements.

Mrs. Nord recommended having Matt, the Finance Officer, draft a letter for the next meeting for the Board to approve. She also recommended having another meeting where both sides bring forward recommendations. Mrs. Burstein stated that a few months ago, she asked all departments for their five-year plans so they could look further ahead and understand their needs. She emphasized the importance of having both long-term and short-term plans and stated that, as a Board, they need to determine what they want to accomplish.

Peggy Busse – 37 Abbott Road: Stated that the town elected the Board to put together the finances, not the Finance Officer. Mr. Harding stated that the Board of Finance Chair writes the letter and brings it to the Board for review before it is sent out.

Mrs. Ramachandran stated that it would be a fair request to ask the Board of Education for a long-term plan as well, so there is a complete long-term plan for the entire town, and everyone can be on the same page. Mrs. Nord, as the Board of Education liaison, stated that she will spend time with the Superintendent.

The next meeting will be a workshop to work on the letter.

B. Moody's Credit Rating Update

Mr. Evans stated that the town is one notch below the highest credit rating and emphasized the importance of maintaining that trend throughout the budget process. The report has been posted on the town's website for further information.

Mr. Harding asked whether Moody's provided any suggestions for achieving the highest rating. Mr. Keune stated that they need to spend more time explaining to the public why this is important. He recommended developing a clear message about how a higher credit rating benefits the town and relating it to real-life situations that the public can easily understand.

Factors That Could Lead to an Upgrade of the Ratings
Improved income and wealth metrics
Available fund balance levels in line with higher-rated peers, excluding capital projects
Sustained increases in liquidity to levels commensurate with higher-rated peers
BANs: N/A

Factors That Could Lead to a Downgrade of the Ratings
Contraction of the local economy
Sustained structural imbalance, causing the available fund balance to fall below 25% of revenues
Significant increase in long-term liabilities to above 200% of revenues
Downgrade of the issuer rating to below A2 (BANs)

Committee and Liaison Reports

A. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
None.

B. Shared Services
None.

C. Deferred Compensation
None.

D. Ad Hoc Emergency Services
None.

E. Permanent Building
Mrs. Nord stated there was a little snag in the opening of the Windermere preschool, but they were able to get it approved and passed and are under budget for the project.

F. Board of Education Liaison
Mrs. Nord stated that they have a new Finance Director, Charles Carey. HVAC improvements have been approved at the middle school and high school. They are planning to hold an open house for the community in October at Windermere School.

G. Hall Memorial Library Liaison
None.

Adjournment

MOVED (HARDING) SECONDED (RAMACHANDRAN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF FINANCE AT 7:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Elizabeth Luginbuhl, Recording Secretary