

**TOWN OF SALEM  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024 – 7:00 P.M.  
SALEM TOWN HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

**The Minutes submitted below have been filed in accordance with section 7-342 of the CT General Statutes. They are subject to final approval with or without amendments by a vote of the Board of Finance (BOF). Approval and any such amendments will be detailed in subsequent BOF minutes.**

**PRESENT**

William “Skip” Dickson, Chairman  
Corinne (Cory) Bourgeois, Clerk  
Kate Belleville  
John Bernier (8:33 p.m.)  
Deborah Cadwell  
James Moran, Alternate (*seated*)  
Matt Rucci, Alternate (*seated*)

**ABSENT**

Janet Griggs  
Maryann Casciano, Alternate

**ALSO PRESENT**

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski  
Selectman Kevin Lyden  
Finance Specialist Lisa Jablonski

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Dickson called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:** *none*

**SEAT ALTERNATE, IF NEEDED:**

**M/S/C:** Cadwell/Bourgeois, to seat Alternate Board Members Moran and Rucci for Board Members Bernier and Griggs. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

**COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC COMMENT:**

a. Letter from Atty. Steven Mednick regarding the Charter Revision

Public Comment

Library Board of Directors Recording Secretary Mary Cikatz, 29 Corrina Lane, thanked the Board for doing a “thankless job” and referred to Ms. Dee Doolittle and Mr. Carl Nawrocki’s comments during last week’s Board of Finance meeting.

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*John A. Stokan*

**AGENDA:**

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: MARCH 17, 2024 BOF REGULAR MEETING**

**M/S/C: Cadwell/Belleville, to approve the March 17, 2024, Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes, with the following amendment:**

**Page 5, Item 7(e), #138 Employee Benefits:**

**M/S/C: Bernier/Griggs, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of ~~\$79,734.00 for Department #135, Municipal Building Maintenance~~ \$562,097.00 for Department #138, Employee Benefits, subject to review and/or revision and....**

**Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**2. ACT ON PROPOSED APPROPRIATION FOR FY2024/25**

**a. TABLED ITEMS**

Department #105, Salaries

The Board Members reviewed Selectman Lyden's suggested revisions for Department #105, Salaries. The adjustments included:

Line Item	Previously Proposed	Revised
5-105-100, First Selectman	10.00%	3.50%
5-105-107, Assessor Assistant	53.64%	25.54%
5-105-108, Treasurer	8.58%	3.50%
5-105-109, Financial/HR Admin	25.06%	3.50%
5-105-113, Recording Secretaries	4.76%	0.00%
5-105-123, Library Salaries	12.12%	7.59%
5-105-124, Head Librarian	10.23%	7.23%

The total increase for the Department was reduced from 15.12% to 10.62%, 5.01% of which are increases for the Emergency Services Department.

**M/S/C: Belleville/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$1,762,121.00 for FY2024/25 Department #105 – Salaries. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

Department #138, Employee Benefits

As a result of the reduction in Salaries, Line Items 5-138-800, FICA (ER Portion), and 5-138-801, Medicare (ER Portion) in Department #138, Employee Benefits were also reduced.

**M/S/C: Cadwell/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$558,048.00 for FY2024/25 Department #138 – Employee Benefits. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

The total increase for the General Government Budget is 5.61%.

**b. FINALIZE BUDGET FOR PUBLIC HEARING**

Per their previous meeting, the Board of Education (BOE) FY2024/25 Budget was revised to \$11,927,833.00.

Department #100, Selectman

Per Selectman Lyden's suggestion, the Board Members agreed to move the previously approved supplemental appropriation of \$20,000.00 for the Charter Commission needs from Department #100, Selectman, to the FY2023/24 Capital Plan.

**M/S/C: Belleville/Cadwell, to transfer the approved supplemental appropriation of \$20,000.00 (twenty thousand dollars) for the Charter Commission needs from Department #100, Selectman, to the FY2023/24 Capital Budget. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

First Selectman Chmielewski provided the attorney's estimate for his services for assisting the Charter Commission at \$48,000.00 (\$4,000.00/month). He proposed lowering that amount to \$37,500.00. Chairman Dickson proposed lowering the amount further to \$28,500.00.

Board of Education

One of the difficulties with the BOE Budget includes estimating the Out-of-District and SPED (Special Education) Costs. To reduce the mil rate increase, Chairman Dickson proposed sharing the risk and allocating only a portion of the estimated costs, with the understanding that the BOE may return to the Board of Finance for additional funding. BOE Chairman Sean Reith informed the Board that the proposed expenditures for those line items were not estimates but actuals based on the current needs. The current year's budget was estimated in a similar manner. Due to its fluidity, the unexpected expenses that arose throughout the school year were absorbed, and line-item transfers were made. While respectful of the Chairman's suggestion to share the risk, he warned that an unintended consequence could be the cutting of programming by the BOE to eliminate their financial risk(s). To that end, in response to Board Members Belleville and Bourgeois, BOE Chairman Reith stated that he did not believe that the general education students were negatively impacted by the line-item transfers. Chairman Reith agreed to provide a list of the line-item transfers, to date.

Clerk Bourgeois expressed her concerns and questioned their need for increased funding given their ability to absorb \$400,000.00 through line-item transfers, to date, and the possibility of having unexpended funds returned to the Town's General Fund. She also felt that the BOE should be able to absorb the additional costs as student enrollment continues to decline. BOE Chairman Reith explained that the budget is not based on the overall student population. Rather, it is based on the number of students within each grade, their needs, and the resulting staffing profiles.

General Government

The Board Members reviewed and agreed upon the following adjustments:

Department/Line-Item	Budgeted	Adjusted
#100, Selectman	\$ 45,900.00	\$ 8,400.00
5-100-4012, Charter Commission	\$ 37,500.00	\$ 0
#105, Salaries	\$ 1,833,897.00	\$ 1,762,121.00
5-105-100, First Selectman	\$ 83,893.00	\$ 78,935.00
5-105-107, Assessor Assistant	\$ 14,980.00	\$ 12,240.00
5-105-108, Treasurer	\$ 23,695.00	\$ 22,586.00
5-105-109, Financial/HR Admin	\$ 97,266.00	\$ 80,497.00
Financial/HR Adv. to Temp PT Fin Adv.	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Human Resources	\$ 38,400.00	\$ 0
5-105-113, Recording Secretaries	\$ 17,600.00	\$ 16,800.00
5-105-123, Library Salaries	\$ 99,000.00	\$ 95,000.00
5-105-124, Head Librarian	\$ 73,500.00	\$ 71,500.00
#126, Town Counsel	\$ 106,700.00	\$ 107,000.00
5-126-208, Town Issues	\$ 99,700.00	\$ 100,000.00
#135, Municipal Building Maintenance	\$ 79,734.00	\$ 77,734.00
5-135-609, Building Maintenance	\$ 55,000.00	\$ 53,000.00
#138, Employee Benefits	\$ 582,097.00	\$ 553,039.00
5-138-800, FICA (ER Portion)	\$ 112,541.00	\$ 109,252.00
5-138-801, Medicare (ER Portion)	\$ 26,320.00	\$ 25,551.00
5-138-802, Insurance (PHS & BC Dent)	\$ 322,662.00	\$ 317,662.00
#152, Town Services	\$ 160,325.00	\$ 154,430.00
5-152-826, Planning Services	\$ 70,895.00	\$ 65,000.00
#222, Salem Fire Department		\$ 195,981.00
5-222-219, Building Maintenance	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 4,300.00
#310, Public Works	\$ 328,270.00	\$ 323,270.00
5-310-441, Snow Removal Supplies	\$ 109,000.00	\$ 104,000.00
#410, Transfer Station	\$ 225,323.00	\$ 224,323.00
5-410-541, Trash Bags	\$ 17,000.00	\$ 16,000.00
#600, Economic Development	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
5-600-498, Mailings & Materials	\$ 4,200.00	\$ 3,200.00

*Board Member Bernier joined the meeting at 8:33 p.m.*

Revenue

The Board Members briefly discussed a discrepancy in Department #91, General Property Taxes, between the March 7 Regular Meeting Minutes and the Spreadsheet.

The Board agreed on the following:

Department #91, General Property Taxes	\$ 13,412,983.00
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Capital

The following items were added to the 10-year Capital Plan:

	FY2024/25	FY2025/26
SVFCO Gear Washing Machine	\$ 16,000.00	
Charter Commission	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 28,000.00
Salary Study/Department Assessment Needs	\$ 20,000.00	

The estimated cost of the BOE Generator Replacement, funded through the Town's ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds, was reduced by approximately \$65,000.00. Selectman Lyden suggested re-allocating the remaining amount to the following BOE Capital items, reducing the FY2024/25 Capital Budget by \$57,000.00:

BOE Replace 1994 Boilers	\$ 35,000.00
BOE New Stage Curtains-Gym Stage	\$ 12,000.00
BOE Repair Uneven Concrete Walking Areas	\$ 10,000.00
Total	\$ 57,000.00

An ARPA Committee Special Meeting will be scheduled to approve the re-allocation of funds.

The total proposed FY2024/25 Capital Budget is \$1,332,688.00.

Final Proposed FY2024/25 Budget

Extensive discussion ensued regarding the proposed budget and the utilization of the Unassigned Fund Balance to offset the shortfall. Based on the current Grand List, 1 mil equals approximately \$459,548.00. Chairman Dickson suggested allocating \$800,000.00, resulting in a 2.2 mil increase. Selectman Lyden recommended the funds be used for necessary Capital expenditures, per the Town's Fund Balance Policy. He also stated that the Board may request the General Government and BOE to provide an estimate of the amount of funds they expect to return to the Town, which might assist them in further offsetting the budget and reducing the mil rate.

While appreciative of their hard work and efforts, Chairman Dickson requested that the BOE review their budget for any possible ways to help offset the shortfall. BOE Chairman Reith informed the Board that the BOE will not require a supplemental appropriation to resolve the MBR (Minimum Budget Requirement) issue. In addition,



he will investigate the possibility of pushing out the Replacement of the Multi-Purpose Room Floor to FY2025/26 (\$46,500.00).

The following FY2024/25 Proposed Budget will be presented to the public for their input and suggestions:

General Government	\$ 5,282,043.00
Capital	\$ 1,332,688.00
Board of Education	\$ 11,927,833.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 18,542,564.00</b>
Revenue	\$ 16,723,432.00
<b>SHORTFALL</b>	<b>\$ 1,819,132.00</b>

**M/S/C: Belleville/Rucci, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$5,282,043.00 for FY2024/25 General Government Budget. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Moran/Rucci, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$1,332,688.00 for FY2024/25 Capital Budget. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Moran/Rucci, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$18,542,564.00 for FY2024/25 Total Expenditures. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-1. Voting in Favor: Board Members Belleville, Cadwell, Moran, Rucci, and Dickson. Voting in Opposition: Board Member Bourgeois.**

**OLD BUSINESS:** *none*

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**M/S/C: Rucci/Belleville, to adjourn the meeting at 10:46 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes T. Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Salem

**A VIDEO RECORD OF THE MEETING CAN BE FOUND ON THE TOWN'S WEBSITE UNDER BOARDS & COMMISSIONS – BOARD OF FINANCE – MEETING VIDEOS.**