

**TOWN OF SALEM  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 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  
Janet Griggs  
Maryann Casciano, Alternate  
James Moran, Alternate (*seated*)

**ABSENT**

Deborah Cadwell  
Matt Rucci, Alternate (*seated*)

**ALSO PRESENT**

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski  
Selectman Kevin Lyden  
Finance Specialist Lisa Jablonski

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Dickson called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:** *none*

**SEAT ALTERNATE IF NEEDED:**

**M/S/C: Belleville/Bourgeois, to seat Alternate Board Member James Moran for Board  
Member Cadwell. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.**

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

- a. Copy of a detailed summary report related the funding and staffing for the Library staffing from Carl Nawrocki

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:** *none*

**AGENDA:**

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 21, 2024 Board of Finance Regular Meeting**  
**M/S/C: Belleville/Bourgeois, to approve the Board of Finance March 21, 2024 Board  
of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes, with the following amendment:**

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RECEIVED  
TOWN OF SALEM, CT  
*Julie A. Stoker*

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**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: MARCH 17 14, 2024 BOF REGULAR MEETING**

**M/S/C: Cadwell/Belleville, to approve the March 17 14, 2024...**

**Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-1. Voting in Favor: Board Member Belleville, Bernier, Bourgeois, Moran, and Dickson. Voting in Opposition: None. Voting in Abstention: Board Member Griggs.**

**2. TREASURER'S REPORTS**

- a. REVENUE SUMMARY**
- b. TRIAL BALANCE**
- c. FUND BALANCE**
- d. OTHER**

Treasurer Pam Henry reviewed the *Balance Sheet* and *Budget vs. Actual* reports with no unusual occurrences. The Board will send an e-mail to the Town CPA requesting that the Unassigned Fund Balance be updated to the amount provided by the Auditor. The funding for the Gardner Lake Authority is traditionally paid during the spring.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Sue Spang, 129 Hartford Road, based on the comments made during the Public Hearing, suggested that the Board recommend the formation of a Sub-committee to review the MRI (Municipal Resources, Inc.) Public Safety Study to ensure that more than a few individuals are making budget-related decisions, which may increase the residents' confidence in those budget requests.

T.J. Butcher, 248 Norwich Road, understanding the scope and difficulty of their job, thanked the Board for their hard work. He encouraged them to reinstate the Library budget to their proposed \$103,000.00, adding that the additional \$8,000.00 would be well spent. The Library Board's presentation clearly reflected that the employees are not being paid the current rate and the residents appear to be pleased with the Library and its offerings. In addition, while appreciative of Salem Volunteer Fire Company (SVFCO) Chief Gene Maiorano's offer, he expressed his opposition to deferring the purchase of the Tanker Truck, which is aged and has undergone several repairs. He stressed the importance of the Tanker, which transports water to fires, for the safety of its citizens. He wished them luck with the tough job ahead of them and expressed his support.

Marshall Collins, 46 Round Hill Road, felt that there was a clear consensus from the Public Hearing regarding the residents' support for the Library budget and that the overall budget was too high. He is interested in hearing how large of a tax increase each of the members is willing to support. While a portion of the Unassigned Fund Balance, a.k.a., Rainy Day Fund, will need to be utilized, it will only mask what the Board will need to build into the budget for the following year(s), especially in relation to the MBR (Minimum Balance

Requirement) for the Board of Education (BOE); all of the cuts cannot be made on the General Government Budget alone. The Town's long-term plan and related costs of the implementation of the recommendations made in the MRI Study should be presented to the public before they begin piecemealing the expenses. He agreed with Selectman Lyden's suggestion to reduce the Capital Budget. He felt that there was some flexibility within the BOE Budget and that any unexpected, necessary funding throughout the year could be managed accordingly. He noted that a 4-mil increase equals 17% and a 2-mil increase is probably too high in the current economy. He wished the Board luck and thanked them for their service.

Gary Closius, 294 Hartford Road, reiterated some of the comments made during the Public Hearing. He stated the difficulty in placing a value on the costs deriving from the MRI Study due to the lack of sufficient explanation regarding the added expenses; he questioned whether they were actual needs.

SVFCO Chief Maiorano, 799 West Road, thanked Selectman Butcher for his support and reiterated his offer to defer the Engine Tanker. He also commented on the items that were implemented, per the MRI Study, including the ESO Program, which streamlines the Fire Companies' reporting system, and additional staffing.

Library Board Member Teresa Jorgensen, 295 Round Hill Road, who also works as a Librarian, recommended they raise the Library Director's salary, which is not comparable with those of other similar-sized towns. She urged them to request that the BOE provide the Board of Finance with the number of students that have left the school to be educated elsewhere and the students' performance levels. She felt that their level of funding should be based on the School's performance. Similarly, the performance of all of the Town's departments should be evaluated in relation to their funding. Oftentimes, the budget for other departments is cut to accommodate that of the BOE, noting that the Library, for example, serves the entire population of the Town and is not budgeted accordingly.

Fire Marshal Tom Main commented on the implementation of the recommendations made from the MRI Study. One of their initial tasks was to establish the ESO Program. The Program ensures that they are in compliance with the governmental requirements, consolidates and integrates the records for both Fire Companies, and improves the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company Ambulance's bill collection rate. The Program will also increase their ability to apply for and receive grants. Their budget request includes funding for an additional full-time Career Firefighter/EMT, increasing the coverage for the Town from 50 hours/week, Monday through Friday, to 12 hours/day, seven days a week. The resulting increase in coverage has also resulted in an increase in volunteerism due to some members' hesitancy to respond to calls without appropriate backup. While cognizant of the budgetary issues, phasing in the staffing will help ease the process and avoid an even larger increase in the future and staggers their training schedules, easing the stress of any scheduling issues. The lack of volunteerism and staffing is not unusual as, of the 44 Calls for

Service received in the month of March, 23 were Mutual Aid Calls. He estimated that the overall cost for the implementation for FY2024/25 is approximately \$120,000.00 to \$125,000.00.

Ryan Little, 85 Stonewall Road, in response to a previous comment, stated that the School's performance records are posted on the School's website (salemschools.org). Additionally, the administration is available to meet with any concerned parent(s) to address and discuss their concerns and review the data. He stated that their goal is to provide a strong education for their children and offer several programs for their students.

#### **4. SELECTMAN'S REPORT**

First Selectman Chmielewski thanked the Board for their service. He reported that the tax collection rate, as of today, is 98.2%. The Board of Selectmen has set a meeting date for the Annual Town Meeting for May 1, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., at Salem School. The Charter Revision Commission held its initial meeting this week and elected the following members: Commissioner Leeland Cole-Chu, Chairperson; Commissioner Robert Ross, Vice-Chairperson, and; Commissioner Walter Volberg, Secretary. A very productive meeting, which included the Mayor of Montville, Bozrah First Selectman, State Legislators, Montville Police Chief and Lieutenant, CT DEEP (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection), Resident State Troopers, Gardner Lake Authority, and relevant town entities, was held to discuss their plans for the summer season at Gardner Lake and the related funding issues. The State Police's Monthly Report for the month of March reflects that there were 278 Calls for Service (485 Calls for Service year-to-date), 114 (274, year-to-date) of which are Non-Reportable Matters, which includes their community policing efforts. A copy of the March Department Update report and a letter of appreciation from the Lions Club for the Center School renovations were provided.

Gardner Lake Tri-Town Follow-Up Meeting (Clerk Bourgeois) – A follow-up meeting has not been scheduled; their current focus is centered on maintaining the safety of the public during the upcoming summer season.

#### **5. FINALIZE BUDGET FOR TOWN MEETING**

Chairman Dickson stated that the Library's salary line was inadvertently cut and will be corrected. The Board Members reviewed the comments received during the Public Hearing. Board Member Bernier felt that it may not have been made clear to the public that they were not proposing a deficit budget. Rather, the budget will be balanced with funds deriving from either the Unassigned Fund Balance or a mil rate increase. While understanding the sentiment, he disagreed with the comment(s) regarding the incremental raising of the mil rate from year to year to avoid large mil rate increases. Doing so, he felt, would result in either placing additional funds in the Unassigned Fund Balance, a constant criticism, or the spending of additional funds on unneeded items. He also reiterated that the Unassigned

Fund Balance is currently high for the reasons cited during the Public Hearing. The Board reviewed and revised the budget as follows:

### **Capital Budget**

The following adjustments were made to the Capital Budget:

	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Revised</b>
BOE Fire Alarm Upgrade	\$ 116,900.00	\$ 73,000.00
<i>An updated price estimate was provided by BOE Treasurer Little</i>		
BOE Replace Floor – Multi-Purpose Room	\$ 46,500.00	0
<i>In consultation with BOE Chairman Sean Reith, it was agreed to defer the project one year</i>		
PW Large Snow Plow Truck #3	\$ 95,000.00	0
<i>The item was deferred by one year</i>		
PW Road Improvement	\$ 451,088.00	\$ 401,088.00
PW Commercial Mower	\$ 21,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
<i>The remaining \$11,000.00 will be included in the FY2025/26 Capital Budget</i>		
SVFCO Replacement 2500 Gallon Tanker	\$ 125,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
<i>The Tanker Truck will be further evaluated and the allocated funds will be used towards the financing of a new Truck, if necessary, and the remaining \$75,000.00 was added.</i>		
SVFCO Meeting Room Floor Sanding & Refinishing	\$ 5,500.00	0
<i>The item was deferred by one year</i>		
Gen'l Gov't Salary Study	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 10,000.00

The FY2024/25 Capital Budget was reduced from \$1,332,68.00 to \$995,788.00. The Capital Budget for the next two (2) years falls within the Auditor's suggested guidelines. Several of the future Capital Plan Requests for the outlying years were reviewed and deferred. The items will be reviewed, as necessary. Clerk Bourgeois suggested the possibility of conducting an assessment study for the Public Works equipment to determine whether the truck replacements are actual necessities.

### **General Government**

The following adjustments were made to the General Government Budget:

	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Revised</b>
<b><u>Department 105, Salaries</u></b>		
All of the salary increases were reduced from 3.5% to 3.0%.		
5-105-109 Financial/HR Advisor	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
5-105-111 ZEO/WEO/Building Official	\$ 65,831.00	\$ 65,831.00
<i>The Town Planner from SCCOG (Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments) is currently acting as the Interim ZWEO (Zoning/Wetlands Enforcement Officer) until the position is filled.</i>		
<i>The remark, "CCOG staff change", will be eliminated as it is only temporary. The line item remains flat.</i>		
5-105-123 Asst. Library Staff	\$ 95,000.00	\$ 99,000.00
Department #105 Tentative Total	\$ 1,762,121.00	\$ 1,757,240.00



5-105-000 Civil Preparedness (Board Members Bourgeois and Dickson) – The line item includes the stipends for the individuals who run the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The line item was separated from Line Item 5-105-120, Fire Marshal/CP, per the Board of Finance’s previous request.

<u>Department #134, Town Office Operation</u>	\$ 159,400.00	\$ 139,400.00
<u>Department #135, Municipal Building Maintenance</u>	\$ 77,734.00	\$ 73,734.00
<u>Department #152, Town Services</u>	\$ 154,430.00	\$ 144,430.00
5-152-826, Planning Services	\$ 65,000.00	\$ 55,000.00
<u>Department #240, Public Safety/Fire Marshal/etc.</u>	\$ 219,964.00	\$ 204,964.00
5-240-970, On-Call Fees Public Safety	\$ 110,000.00	\$ 95,000.00
<i>The funds include additional stipends for all Volunteer Firefighter/EMTs and Fire-Police</i>		
<u>Department #310, Public Works</u>	\$ 323,270.00	\$ 313,270.00
5-310-023, Repair/Maint. Vehicles	\$ 64,500.00	\$ 59,500.00
5-310-441, Snow Removal Supplies	\$ 104,000.00	\$ 99,000.00
<u>Department #600, Economic Development</u>	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 3,500.00
5-600-498, Mailings & Materials	\$ 3,200.00	\$ 2,700.00
<b>Revised FY2024/25 General Government Budget</b>	<b>\$ 5,282,043.00</b>	<b>\$ 5,217,662.00</b>

The FY2024/25 General Government Budget was reduced from \$5,282,043.00 to \$5,217,662.00.

### **Board of Education**

The Board continued their discussions from the previous meeting regarding the risk-sharing proposal, the East Lyme reconciliation, and the possible ability of the BOE to absorb its costs. Board Member Griggs noted that the BOE was able to absorb the costs this fiscal year as a result of the East Lyme reconciliation, the extraordinary number of teachers who took advantage of the early retirement package, and the need for one less Kindergarten teacher than expected – all of which are not usual occurrences. In response, Clerk Bourgeois stated that, in such cases, the proposed budget should reflect a salary savings. Rather, the funds were shifted to other areas, resulting in a proposed increase in Out-of-District Services and a total increase of \$623,332.00 or approximately 1.5 mils. The BOE Budget accounts for approximately 64% of the Town’s overall budget.

Selectman Lyden reminded the Board Members that, while they may continue to discuss the specifics of the BOE Budget, they may not make any line-item adjustments; they are only able to provide the bottom-line number. Extensive discussion ensued regarding the BOE Budget. Clerk Bourgeois proposed reducing the BOE Budget by \$400,000.00, citing the cuts they have made to the Capital and General Government Budgets, including the purchase of a new Engine Tanker to replace their 20+-year-old Tanker, which is a major need for the Town. She preferred the BOE return to the Board for a supplemental appropriation, Town Meeting, or referendum, rather than budget an amount that becomes part of the MBR (Minimum Budget Requirement) and cannot be reduced in the future. She noted that the budget increase not only includes the number of SPED (Special Education), District, and

Regular Education students but also includes salary increases for the Central Office staff, legal fees, etc. Board Member Belleville concurred but proposed reducing the BOE Budget by \$250,000.00. Board Members Casciano and Moran were agreeable to a \$400,000.00 reduction. Board Member Bernier proposed reducing the BOE Budget by approximately \$170,000.00, emphasizing that the Board may be taking a risk based on various factors. Board Member Griggs was agreeable to \$170,000.00. Chairman Dickson expressed his support for the BOE and their efforts while, at the same time, recognizing their fiscal responsibility. He was agreeable with a \$170,000.00 to \$200,000.00 cut.

**M/S/F: Bourgeois/Moran, to reduce the Board of Education Budget by \$400,000.00.**

**Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 2-4. Motion Failed. Voting in Favor: Board Members Bourgeois, and Moran. Voting in Opposition: Board Members Belleville, Bernier, Griggs, and Dickson.**

**M/S/A: Bernier/Griggs, to reduce the Board of Education Budget by \$170,000.00.**

**Discussion: Board Members Belleville and Bourgeois felt that the cut was too low.**

**M/S/C: Belleville/Bernier, to amend the motion and reduce the Board of Education Budget by \$250,000.00. Discussion: Board Member Bernier was agreeable with the proposed reduction. Board Member Griggs preferred to reduce the budget by \$200,000.00 and Clerk Bourgeois was willing to compromise by agreeing to a \$250,000.00 reduction. Roll Call vote, 6-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Board Members Belleville, Bernier, Bourgeois, Griggs, Moran, and Dickson. Voting in Opposition: None.**

Preliminarily, Chairman Dickson proposed utilizing \$950,000.00 of the Unassigned Fund Balance and a 0.47 mil rate increase to balance the budget. Depending on the future years' revenues and expenditures, the following years' budgets may include mil rate increases. It is important to note that the expenditures include increased services, compliance with state mandates, ongoing litigations, and increased costs for items. Clerk Bourgeois urged the BOE to develop a plan that would help the Town offset the growing costs, as is being requested for the Public Safety Department as related to the recommendations made in the MRI Public Safety Study. Board Member Griggs noted that, in comparison to other towns in which the average BOE Budget accounts for 75% of a town's overall budget, Salem's BOE Budget accounts for only 64% of the overall budget. In addition, the Town's BOE Budget has been decreasing while the General Government Budget has been increasing.

**M/S/C: Griggs/Bernier, to accept and send the Proposed FY2024/25 Budget for the General Government of \$5,217,662.00. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Bernier/Griggs, to accept and send the Proposed FY2024/25 Capital Budget of \$995,788.00. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Griggs/Belleville, to accept and send the following Proposed FY2025/26 Budget to a Town Meeting to be held on Wednesday, May 1, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., at Salem School:**

<b>General Government</b>	<b>\$ 5,217,662.00</b>
<b>Board of Education</b>	<b>\$ 11,677,833.00</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 995,788.00</b>
	<b>\$ 17,891,283.00</b>

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

## **6. LIAISON REPORTS**

### **a. BOE**

Board Member Liaison Griggs reported that a second payment of approximately \$170,000.00 was recently received from the state for the School Roof Project reimbursement. The HVAC Unit will be installed this summer. The required paperwork for the reimbursement of the Oil Tank Replacement was submitted to the state. An anticipated Excess Cost of approximately \$31,733.00 for SPED students is expected to be returned to the BOE.

### **b. EMERGENCY SERVICES – no report**

**OLD BUSINESS – none**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**M/S/C: Griggs/Belleville, to adjourn the meeting at 9:46 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 RECORDING OF THE MEETING CAN BE FOUND ON THE TOWN'S WEBSITE UNDER BOARDS & COMMISSIONS – BOARD OF FINANCE – MEETING VIDEOS**