

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024, 7:00 PM
SALEM TOWN HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

B. Murphy
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2024 MAR 14 A 10:39**

**The minutes submitted below have been filed in accordance with
Section 1-225 of the CT General Statutes. They are subject to
final approval with or without amendments by a vote of the Board of Selectmen.
Approval and any such amendments will be detailed in subsequent minutes.**

PRESENT

Edward Chmielewski, Jr.
Thomas (TJ) Butcher
Ron LaBonte
Kevin Lyden
Pam Munro

ABSENT

none

ALSO PRESENT

Attorney Steven Mednick (via speakerphone, 8:09 p.m.)

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Chmielewski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was followed by a moment of silence for Salem Resident Kelly J. Vandale, who recently passed away.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Tuesday, February 6, 2024, Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting

**M/S/C: LaBonte/Butcher, to approve the Board of Selectmen February 6, 2024
Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.**

3. CORRESPONDENCE/PUBLIC COMMENTS

Correspondence

- a.** Copy of an e-mail from Superintendent Bruce Hendrickson to Salem School Principal Dan Driscoll and Facilities Director Chris Lund, dated January 26, 2024, regarding the fire alarm
- b.** Copy of an e-mail from the First Selectman to Superintendent Hendrickson, Principal Driscoll, Facilities Director Lund, and BOE Chairman Sean Reith, dated January 26, 2024, regarding the fire alarm
- c.** Copy of a letter, dated January 26, 2024, from Fire Marshal Tom Main to Superintendent Hendrickson, Principal Driscoll, Facilities Manager Lund, and BOE Chairman Reith regarding school fire alarm and furnace incident

- d. Copy of the Fire Watch Services Proposal, dated January 31, 2024, from Advantage Maintenance, Inc.
- e. Copy of an e-mail trail, dated January 31 to February 1, 2024, between the Fire Marshal, Facilities Director, First Selectman, Superintendent, and Business Manager regarding the fire watch
- f. Copy of a letter, dated February 2, 2024, from Superintendent Hendrickson to CIRMA (Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency) providing a follow-up to a conference call between CIRMA, Fire Marshal, First Selectman, and Human Resources/Finance Specialist, Salem School District Business Manager, Facilities Director, and himself regarding the Fire Watch
- g. Copy of a letter, dated February 2, 2024, from BOE Chairman Reith to Board of Finance Chairman Skip Dickson regarding the failed boiler and fire panel integrity issues
- h. Copy of a letter from the Director of Facilities Lund to Superintendent Hendrickson, dated February 2, 2024, providing a review of the boiler incident
- i. Copy of a letter from Superintendent Hendrickson to the Fire Marshal, Deputy Fire Marshal, and Salem and Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company Chiefs, dated February 2, 2024, regarding the Fire Watch Duty (after February 9, 2024), Non-Emergency Access to Salem School, and Annual Fire Alarm System Inspection
- j. Copy of an e-mail, dated February 5, 2024, between CIRMA, the Fire Marshal, and Salem School Facilities Director regarding the receipt of a report and an explanation and plan of repair, satisfying their concerns and releasing any restrictions and/or limitations
- k. Copy of a letter, dated February 6, 2024, from BOE Chairman Reith and Superintendent Hendrickson to the Board of Selectmen regarding an update on the boiler and fire panel
- l. Copy of a Memorandum, dated February 27, 2024, from Town Planner Liz Burdick to the First Selectman regarding the status of the Planning & Zoning Commission's Mandatory Land Use Commissioner Training. With the exception of the Alternate Commissioners, all of the members are in compliance with the training requirement. The Alternate Commissioners must complete their initial training by November 21, 2024.

With respect to the boiler and fire alarm, BOE Liaison Selectwoman Munro confirmed that the security panel has been tested and the boiler is in working order. No action is necessary by the Board of Selectmen at this time.

Public Comments

Dee Doolittle, 300 East Haddam Road, recited a letter, dated February 20, 2024, signed by the members of the Library Board of Directors regarding their FY2024/25 Proposed Budget increase for salaries. While expressing their appreciation of the previous year's increases, it was found that, in comparison with the Library Director's salary in neighboring

communities, the Director is earning 15.5% less pay than her colleagues. Other requested salary increases include state-mandated increases to meet the minimum wage requirement, increases for long-time valuable staff members, and fair and equitable increases. The negative consequences of denying their request may lead to the cutting of programs and operation hours. A packet, which includes comparable Director salaries of similar-sized neighboring towns, program attendance records that reflect the popularity and use of the Library and its programs, job descriptions, and requested staff salary increases, was provided to the Board.

Friends of the Library President Carl Nawrocki, Music Vale Road, echoed Ms. Doolittle's comments, confirming that the Library Director's salary is not comparable with other similar-sized towns. Based on his experience, he stated that, oftentimes, the salary level is equal to the quality of individuals the position attracts and provided examples of past applicants. He also recommended that the Town conduct a periodic Comparability Study of the salaries for the entire Town staff.

Alan Benkert, 230 West Road, spoke in support of Ms. Doolittle and Mr. Nawrocki's comments. Having worked as the Groton Library Director for 18 years and a member of a previous hiring committee for the Library Director, he stated the difficulty in hiring individuals with good qualifications who maintain their position for a substantial period of time and the importance of providing a competitive salary to ensure a quality candidate pool. He expressed his support for paying more property taxes to support the salary increases.

4. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: To provide an update and to discuss legal strategies regarding the current lawsuit brought against the Town of Salem by the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc., "The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. Town of Salem" pursuant to C.G.S. Section 1-200 (6)(B) New London Judicial District Docket number KNL-CV-20-6046141-S**

M/S/C: Butcher/LaBonte, to enter into Executive Session, pursuant to C.G.S. §1-200(6)(E), for the purpose of discussing legal strategies regarding the current lawsuit brought against the Town of Salem by the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc., "The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. Town of Salem" pursuant to C.G.S. Section 1-200 (6)(B) New London Judicial District Docket number KNL-CV-20-6046141-S. Discussions to include the Board of Selectmen. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor. Invited parties exited Conference Room One for Executive Session at 7:23 p.m. First Selectman Chmielewski resumed the meeting at 8:09 p.m. No motions were made and no votes were taken during Executive Session.

5. AGENDA:

a. Appointment and Draft Report Date of the Salem Charter Revision Commission

First Selectman Chmielewski recited the proposed Resolution and reviewed the option of requiring the submission of a final draft no later than September 1, 2024, or September 1, 2025, and the projected schedule.

M/S/C: Lyden/Butcher, to

WHEREAS, pursuant to C.G.S. §7-188(b) at its meeting on February 6, 2024, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Salem voted to initiate action to amend the Charter of the Town of Salem; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of Selectmen seeks to establish and appoint a Charter Revision Commission in accordance with the provisions of C.G.S. §7-190.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Salem that:

- 1. Pursuant to C.G.S. §7-190(a), the following eight (8) members are appointed to serve as members of the Charter Revision Commission:**

Robert Ross	Leeland Cole-Chu	Joseph Duncan
John Bernier	Walter Volberg	Sue Sullivan
Frederick Revoir	Linda Schroeder	

Not more than one-third of these appointees hold any other public office in the Town of Salem, and not more than a bare majority of appointees are members of one political party.

- 2. Pursuant to C.G.S. §7-190(b), the Charter Revision Commission appointed herein shall be authorized to consider such changes and other items and matters as it deems desirable or necessary to improve the governance of the Town of Salem, including the administrative and governance structure of the Town.**
- 3. Pursuant to C.G.S. §7-190(b), the Charter Revision Commission shall submit its draft report on or before June 1, 2025, so that the Board shall complete its final action on any proposed revisions to the Charter no later than September 1, 2025, in order to assure that the final report, proposed charter revisions, and questions will be submitted in order to be considered at referendum in the general election of 2025.**
- 4. Pursuant to C.G.S. §7-190(c), the Charter Revision Commission shall terminate upon acceptance or rejections of its final report by the Board of Selectmen.**

Discussion: Attorney Mednick explained and discussed the options and the projected calendar with the Selectmen. The Board agreed that the shorter timeframe may not provide the Commission and Board of Selectmen with sufficient time to properly review the document, inform and educate the public, and present the recommended amendments to the public so that the townspeople can make an educated decision. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

Atty. Mednick departed from the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

b. Negotiations Update between the Town of Salem and the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc., for an On-Call System (OCS); Nominal Fee Stipend Payment/Structure for Volunteer/Emergency Responder Ambulance Crew Members

Emergency Services Liaison Selectman LaBonte reported that the Board of Selectmen canceled the On-Call System Nominal Fee Stipend Agreement one year ago and is in the process of discussing the (1) On-Call Nominal Fee Stipend Agreement, (2) Ambulance Funds Agreement, and (3) Emergency Services Agreement. A tentative date of March 13, 2024, has been set for the five (5) members to meet. While they are unable to negotiate the Agreements without the completion of the Audit, they are able to meet and discuss related or other matters. He continued to provide a brief history of the negotiation process. In response to an October 2023 letter, the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company (GLVFCO) provided a letter in December 2023 to the Town stating their agreeance to submit to an Audit. To date, the Audit has not yet been completed. In addition, as of last Thursday, March 29, a new ambulance has not been ordered. The First Selectman confirmed that no update has been provided regarding the status of the Audit – a standard procedure for agencies that receive public funding. The purpose of the Audit is to determine the Fire Company's revenue and ensure that the Ambulance is properly funded. Selectman Butcher stated that part of the issue is the age and resulting accessibility of the Fire Company's accounting system. While the Negotiation Team has agreed on several items, there are still some outstanding issues. He recognized GLVFCO Deputy Chief Kevin Milligan, who has been negotiating in good faith. First Selectman Chmielewski expressed his concerns regarding the age of the accounting software and lack of security patches and updates. Selectman Lyden added that the Auditors will also provide suggestions and guidance for improvements and best practices. The First Selectman expressed his wish to resolve the issues and move forward, including his goal to provide stipends to the Firefighters, Fire Officers, and Fire Police.

c. Supplemental Appropriation, per Section 10.09 of the Salem Town Charter, in the amount of up to \$27,000.00 Emergency Services Consulting – no discussion/action

- d. Set the Transfer Station Spring Amnesty Dates for Saturday, May 11; Sunday, May 12, and; Wednesday, May 15, 2024**

Selectman Lyden recommend the Amnesty Dates be changed to Saturday, May 18; Sunday, May 19, and; Wednesday, May 22 so as not to conflict with Mother's Day.

M/S/C: Lyden/LaBonte, to Set the Transfer Station Spring Amnesty Dates for Saturday, May 18; Sunday, May 19, and; Wednesday, May 22, 2024.

Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

- e. Extend the Contract for Municipal Services for Transfer Station Operations and Support Services with Contractor/Operator Gary Alligood for a period of one-year, effective July 1, 2024**

The First Selectman commended Contractor/Operator Alligood for a superb job, providing a clean and well-maintained Transfer Station, and maintaining good communications with the Public Works Department. Selectman Butcher proposed considering increasing his rate by more than 2%. First Selectman Chmiewlewski stated that he has discussed the matter with Mr. Alligood, who expressed his satisfaction with the current contract. Selectman Lyden recommended maintaining the current contract and issuing an RFP (Request for Proposal) for the next fiscal year, should they wish to increase the rate.

M/S/C: Lyden/LaBonte, to authorize the First Selectman to extend the Contract for Municipal Services for Transfer Station Operations and Support Services with Contractor Operator Gary Alligood for a period of one-year, effective July 1, 2024. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

- f. Appointment to Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commission**

First Selectman Chmiewlewski acknowledged the receipt of a letter from the Democratic Town Committee regarding the impending expiration of Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commissioner Ed Natoli's term.

M/S/C: Butcher/LaBonte, to Appoint Alternate Members Lavan Norwood and David Carlson to fill the vacancies for a Full Member of the Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commission. Discussion: Selectman Butcher felt that the Commissioners, who are new to the Commission, are positive additions to the Commission. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

- g. Appointment to Gardner Lake Authority**

M/S/C: Lyden/LaBonte, to appoint Vivian Waters to fill a vacancy as a member of the Gardner Lake Authority. Discussion: Ms. Waters will be filling a vacancy left by Jim Miller, who recently resigned from the Gardner Lake Authority. Ms. Waters is an active member of the community who resides in the area and is interested in helping resolve the issues. Selectman

Butcher added that Ms. Waters is also an excellent Tax Collector. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

h. Tax Collector Refunds – *none*

6. REPORTS:

a. FIRST SELECTMAN

First Selectman Chmielewski provided the departmental updates to the Board. He commended the Public Works, Emergency Services, Emergency Management, Fire Companies, and Emergency Operations Center who have worked well together during the recent storms.

He has been meeting with Bozrah First Selectman Glenn Pianka and Montville Mayor Leonard Bunnell, Sr., regarding the safety and security enhancements to Gardner Lake State Park. He also provided testimony at the State Capitol with Representatives Holly Cheeseman and Irene Haines regarding an initiative to allow CT DEEP (Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection) to conduct a study/assessment to close the Park when it is over-capacity. He is also working with the Gardner Lake Authority and State Police to coordinate their efforts and plan the summer seasonal patrols of the area. The services of a tow truck will also be engaged. The Town will continue to work with the State whose responsibility it is to maintain the safety and security of the State Park. Selectwoman Munro commended the First Selectman on his testimony, which is available online.

Concerns have been raised regarding the condition of the Animal Control Facility in the Town of Montville, with whom the Town partners with for its services. He reported that the Agreement was recently signed and the Montville Police Department will be assuming the duties of the Animal Control Officer.

b. EMERGENCY SERVICES - POLICE / FIRE

Selectman Liaison LaBonte reported that a Chiefs' meeting was recently held. Discussions included the ESO software and the Gear Washer, which is 23 (twenty-three) years of age. Due to the age of the Washer and increased use to comply state-mandate requiring emergency personnel to wash their gear after each use and/or every six (6) months to help mitigate the cancer-causing agents, the Salem Volunteer Fire Company (SVFCO) is seeking funding to purchase a new Gear Washer. Upon ordering the equipment, the estimated delivery period is 12 (twelve) to 14 (fourteen) weeks. A mobile unit is available to wash the gear in the interim, if necessary. Selectman Lyden recommended a letter be sent to the Board of Finance stating that the Board of Selectmen supports the item's inclusion in the FY2024/25 Capital Budget. The SVFCO is continuing to enter their data into the ESO system and GLVFCO has been encouraged to do the same.

c. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT – *see report*

d. RECREATION COMMISSION – *see report*

e. BOARD OF FINANCE

The Board of Finance continues to meet with the different departments to review and discuss their proposed FY2024/25 budgets.

f. BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE)

Selectwoman Munro reported that the BOE will be presenting their proposed FY2024/25 Budget to the Board of Finance this Thursday, March 8. Kindergarten registration is underway with 32 children registered for the 2024/25 school year. The Salem School Cross Country, Soccer, and Basketball teams won their Middle School Conference Titles.

g. PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

The Commission welcomed Town Planner Liz Burdick, who will also be assisting the Town with their zoning and wetlands needs until the position is filled.

h. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Economic Development Commission is planning for the year's upcoming events and is collaborating with Bozrah businesses.

i. LIBRARY – *see Public Comment*

j. TVCCA (Thames Valley Council for Community Action)

Selectwoman Munro reported that former TVCCA Director of Housing Jon-Paul Mandelburg was appointed as the Chief Operating Officer (COO). With the support of the Southeastern Connecticut Legislators, a Bill was introduced that would enable TVCCA to move forward with its plan to construct a larger preschool/daycare facility in Groton.

6. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: LaBonte/Lyden, to adjourn the meeting at 9:13 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, 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 SELECTMEN – MEETING VIDEOS.