

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.

The budget increase includes additional funding for Regional Probate, which is shared with Montville, Old Lyme, and East Lyme, and the Women's Center.

Department #152, Town Services – \$33,852.00 increase or 26.77% \$ 160,325.00

The Department increase includes a significant increase of \$27,615.00 for Planning Services. The services include costs for Town Planner and Zoning/Wetlands Enforcement Officer (ZWEO). The individual(s) is paid hourly and dependent on the activity taking place within the Town. The amount includes an increase in pay for the Town Planner and the addition of a ZWEO. It was also noted that both the Planning & Zoning and Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commissions have consistently requested that the ZWEO's hours be increased. A portion of the line item will be offset in Department #150, Salaries. Selectman LaBonte stated the importance of funding the cemeteries which are maintained by volunteers. It was noted that the Town owns one (1) cemetery; many of the cemeteries are abandoned family cemeteries or family cemeteries located on private property. The liability involved with engaging volunteers to maintain the cemeteries was briefly discussed. The increased funding for the Gardner Lake Authority will assist the organization to deal with the ongoing issues. First Selectman Chmielewski stated that he is taking proactive actions and is engaging in discussions with the Towns of Bozrah and Montville and the Legislators to hold the state accountable and plan for the near future. It was noted that the Town has the ability to close the Park for safety reasons.

Department #140, Utilities – \$7,580.00 increase or 4.19% \$ 188,699.00

Selectman Butcher questioned the cost increases for Line Items 5-140-703, Telephone GLVFCO (Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company); 5-140-711, Heat Old Library; 5-140-721, Electricity Old Library, and; 5-140-734 Vehicle Fuel SVFDEPT (Salem Volunteer Fire Department). With respect to the vehicle fuel, Selectman LaBonte explained that over 50% of the Calls for Service are responded to by the Town's full-time Firefighter/EMTs who are utilizing the Fire Department's vehicles. Extensive discussion ensued regarding the issues between the GLVFCO and the Town. Selectman LaBonte, who acts as the Emergency Services Liaison with Selectman Butcher, questioned the allocation of funds to support the GLVFCO, which totals approximately \$500,000.00, including paying for the utilities for a building that is not Town-owned. The organization, which consistently claims that they are an independent organization that is not under the Town's purview, continues to lack fiscal transparency as evidenced by their failure to submit to an Audit. As such, he felt that the Fire Company should not be funded by the townspeople without the completion of the Audit. Selectman Butcher concurred, adding the need to clearly delineate the Town and Fire Company's responsibilities. He also stated the importance of supporting the Fire Company and proposed setting a deadline by which an audit must be completed. First Selectman Chmielewski emphasized that the Town wishes to support the Fire Company, but the career staff is not comfortable and he is not welcome at the Fire Company. The issues, he added, lie with the GLVFCO Board of Directors and not the Fire Chiefs or

Firefighter/EMTs. In response to Selectman LaBonte, Fire Marshal Tom Main stated that the Fire Company has not yet recorded their truck checks or training records into the ESO System, which was instituted on September 1, 2023. He explained that the process to enter the information is very labor intensive and each of the Fire Companies agreed to enter the information for the vehicles that are housed at their respective stations. Selectman Lyden stated the importance of educating the public regarding the status of the issues, adding that their requests are reasonable and fair. He proposed adding a Departmental note stating that \$30,400.00 is being allocated to support a building that is not Town-owned, but houses some of its vehicles. A similar note may also be included for the Fire Company's Budget. As a result of the limited timeframe, the Selectmen agreed to add a notation to Department 140, Utilities, and Department 220, Gardner Lake/Salem Volunteer Fire Companies Chief's Account, and Department 222, Gardner Lake/Salem Volunteer Fire Companies, stating the allocation of funds to the GLVFCO.

Department #138, Employee Benefits – *\$44,097.00 increase or 8.51%* \$ 562,097.00

The FICA and Medicare line items may need to be adjusted, depending on the final number for Department #105, Salaries. The Department includes an increase for the Emergency Services Stipends (Line Item 5-138-805, Firemen Awards) as a gesture of their support.

Department #135, Municipal Building Maintenance \$ 79,734.00

\$10,370.00 increase or 14.95%

The primary increase is for Grounds/Building Maintenance for all of the Town buildings, which includes the Town Hall, Library, Salem Volunteer Fire Company, Public Works Building, Grange, Historical Society, and Old Library (Line Item 5-135-609). The Line item is currently overbudget and has been frozen.

Department #134, Town Office Operation \$ 169,400.00

\$53,624.00 increase or 46.32%

The primary increase includes the Cleaning Service and Supplies and Computer. The increase for Cleaning Service includes the hiring of a cleaning service to clean the Town Hall, Library, and Center School. Currently, the Town Hall and Library are cleaned by the School Custodians as part of their shared services agreement. Due to a staffing shortage, the Custodian(s) is given one-hour to clean both the Town Hall and Library and the staff has been saddled with helping clean the building. It was noted that the School is provided with \$71,595.00 in in-kind services. Selectman Lyden stated the importance of working together. Cyberware/Firewall/Security will be added in the Explanation for the Computer line item.

Department #126, Town Counsel – *\$22,700.00 increase or 27.02%* \$ 106,700.00

<u>Department #100, Selectman</u> – \$17,840.00 increase or 63.58%	\$ 45,900.00
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The primary increase includes the cost for the legal advice and guidance for the newly established Charter Commission. The attorney's estimate will be provided to the Board of Finance; the Board of Finance might also opt to move the item to the Capital Budget. Selectman LaBonte stated that he would attend this week's Board of Finance Meeting to propose allocating funds in the Town's Capital Plan to conduct a Public Safety Study every five (5) years.

<u>Department #105, Salaries – \$221,825.00 increase or 13.92%</u>	\$ 1,814,825.00
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Discussion ensued regarding increasing the First Selectman's salary. Selectmen Butcher and LaBonte proposed increasing the line item by \$7,627.00 or 10%. Based on Social Security (3.2%) and Inflation (3.1%), Selectman Lyden proposed adjusting the increases from 4.0% to 3.5% and increasing the First Selectman's salary by 3.5%, adding that, while the position is difficult, it is a political position that does not require a skillset.

The Board agreed to the following increases:

Line Item 5-105-100, First Selectman	10%
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Line Item 5-105-101, Exec/Admin Asst/Senior Liaison

add grants to explanation

Line Item 5-105-102, Town Clerk 3.5%

Line Item 5-105-104, Tax Collector 3.5%

Line Item 5-105-105, Assistant Tax Collector	\$ 16,040.00
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Line Item 5-105-106, Assessor 3.5%

Line Item 5-105-107, Assessor Assistant	\$ 14,980.00
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Line Item 5-105-108, Treasurer	\$ 23,695.00
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add “increased duties” to explanation

Line Item 5-105-111, ZEO/WEO/Building Official (*decrease*) \$ 63,831.00

Line Item 5-105-113, Recording Secretaries	\$ 17,600.00
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Line Item 5-105-114, Adm FT/PT-Fin/HR

add qualifications & details regarding increased responsibilities

Line Item 5-105-118, Summer Help 3.0%

Line Item 5-105-120, Fire Marshals/C.P.

delete "C.P."

Line Item 5-105-121, EMT/Maintenance

Part- and Full-Time and Stipend Firefighter/EMTs are transitioning to 12-hour shifts/7 days a week. Also investigating the possibility of offering stipends to the Volunteer Firefighters, Fire Police, and non-Ambulance individuals.

Line Item 5-105-123, Library Salaries	\$ 99,000.00
Line Item 5-105-124, Head Librarian	\$ 73,500.00

Selectmen LaBonte and Lyden were in favor of conducting a Salary Study for the Town employees to ensure that they are being paid equitably.

M/S/C: Butcher/LaBonte, to approve the Selectmen's Operating Budget FY2024/25, per Section 10.02A of the Salem Town Charter, as amended. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

- b. To review and approve the FY2024/25 #240 Public Safety – *no discussion***
- c. Supplemental Appropriation, per Section 10.09 of the Salem Town Charter, in the amount of \$34,000.00 to Town Counsel 5-126-208 Town Services**

M/S/C: Butcher/LaBonte, to approve the Supplemental Appropriation, per Section 10.09 of the Salem Town Charter, in the amount of \$34,000.00 to Town Counsel 5-126-208 Town Services. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT – *none*

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:04 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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

