

**TOWN OF SALEM  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.  
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

Per State of Connecticut, Governor Lamont Executive Order Number 7B, the meeting followed the suspension of in-person open meeting requirements. The public may view this meeting at:

<https://zoom.us/j/96417630020?pwd=bmFVZlFHMfZLS1QvTGNFMIJGT0s2Q09>

**Password:** 886185

**Or Via Telephone:**

(312) 626-6799, (646) 558-8656, (346) 248-7799, (669) 900-9128, (253) 215-8782, or (301) 715-8592

**Webinar ID:** 964 1763 0020 | **Password:** 886185

**PRESENT**

William “Skip” Dickson, Chairman  
Marshall Collins, Clerk  
Corinne (Cory) Bourgeois  
Deborah Cadwell  
Maryann Casciano  
Janet Griggs  
Joseph Duncan, Alternate

**ABSENT**

John Bernier, Alternate  
Dean Wojcik, Alternate

**ALSO PRESENT**

First Selectman Kevin Lyden

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Dickson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:** *none*

**SEAT ALTERNATE IF NEEDED:** *none*

**COMMUNICATIONS:** *none*

**ALTERATIONS TO THE AGENDA:**

**M/S/C:** Griggs/Cadwell, to add the following item to the agenda:

**7. BOE EARLY TEACHERS’ RETIREMENT INCENTIVES**

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

**AGENDA:**

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: FEBRUARY 11, 2021 REGULAR MEETING**

**M/S/C:** Casciano/Bourgeois, to approve the Board of Finance February 11, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS – none**

**4. ACT ON PROPOSED APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY2021/22**

**A. #158 LIBRARY**

Library Board President Susan Butler presented the budget for Department #158 – Library, with an increase of \$38,210.00 or 1.29%, due to anticipated PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) costs, an increase in circulation materials, and an increase in maintenance service fees (Bibliomation). The increased costs are offset by the need to purchase two, rather than four, computers and a decrease in costs for workshops and conferences due to the pandemic. In response to Clerk Collins regarding the expenditures of the Circulation Materials (Line Item 5-158-515) as of December 2020, which appears low, First Selectman Lyden stated that 51.1% of the line item has been expended to date. Library Director Vicky Coffin added that the Junior Library Guild subscription of \$3,650.00 was also expended most recently. Circulation materials are expended throughout the year, though publishers tend to release their publications at the end of the calendar in preparation for holiday sales. The funds in the Line Item are expected to be expended by the end of the fiscal year. First Selectman Lyden stated that the Library has been offering curbside pick-up throughout the pandemic, with the exception of a temporary closure due to a COVID-19-positive employee. In response to Board Member Casciano who questioned whether there was a decrease in the number of needed supplies due to the pandemic, Library Director Coffin stated that specialty library supplies, e.g. stickers, barcodes, and book covers, in addition to basic office supplies are an ongoing need. She added that, since May 2020, approximately \$1,100.00 of the \$2,300.00 that has been expended for PPE in anticipation of the re-opening of the Library has been reimbursed from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and the State. With respect to the equipment, she stated that approximately two to four computers are replaced on an annual basis.

**B. #600 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Economic Development Commission Chairman Ed Chmielewski presented the budget for Department #600 – Economic Development, with an increase of \$285.00 or 0.18%, due to an increase in the mailing of materials. Line Items 5-600-223, Consulting, and 5-600-498, Mailing & Materials, is related to the projected costs for the publication of the upcoming 2021/22 Business Directory, which will utilize funding from both their budget and advertising revenues. Their first Directory was very well-received and it is hoped that it will help boost the town's local businesses and recover some of their losses due to the pandemic. The Consultant will be producing and organizing the printing of the Directory.

**C. #610 CONSERVATION COMMISSION INLANDS/WETLANDS**

Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commission (IWCC) Chairperson Kimberly Bradley presented the budget for Department #610 – Conservation Commission Inlands/Wetlands, with an increase of \$150.00 or 4.69%, due to an increase in Line Item 5-610-261, Legal Services, as a result of an outstanding bill. She reported that she was recently elected and

the Commissioners were not able to meet this month due to inclement weather. As a result, the budget was not reviewed/approved by the Commission, but felt that the proposed budget would be agreeable to them. She explained that the expenditures for legal services and engineering are dependent upon the applications that are brought before the Commission and are difficult to predict. In response to Board Member Casciano, she stated that the services of the Town Engineer are utilized for the review of any complex applications that come before the Commission. While they have not expended any funds to date for Conferences (Line Item 5-610-324), the State does require that at least one of the Commissioners engage in training annually.

**D. #630 PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) Chairman Vernon Smith presented the budget for Department #630 – Planning and Zoning Commission, with an increase of \$4,600.00 or 30.87%, due to the production of the town's 2022 Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), which is required by the State to be reviewed and updated every ten years. In response to Clerk Collins who questioned the reasoning behind the allocation of \$1,000.00 for Line Item 5-630-325, ZEO Mileage, based on the previous and current (as of December 2020) years' actual expenditures, First Selectman Lyden stated that the mileage to date is \$339.00 and PZC Chairman Smith added that the additional funds also provides a cushion should their POCD line item be over-expended. First Selectman Lyden reminded the Commission that, due to the recent influx of Public Hearings, supplemental appropriation of \$20,000.00 was recently provided to the Commission for Legal Services.

**E. #640 ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

First Selectman Lyden presented the budget for Department #640 – Zoning Board of Appeals, with an increase of \$100.00 or 12.5%. He was open to reducing the budget to \$800.00, making it a flat budget. The frequency of the Board's meetings is based upon the number of appeals that are submitted and involves fees for public notices and, sometimes, the engagement of the town attorney.

**F. #710 MUNICIPAL INSURANCE**

First Selectman Lyden presented the budget for Department #710 – Municipal Insurance, with an increase of \$8,676.00 or 6.83%, due to a 3% increase in Workmen Compensation Insurance, a, relatively, level General Liability Insurance. While the underground tanks will be de-installed and will no longer require insurance, a new \$1 million Cyber Policy, which was recommended by the Auditors, for both the town and the School will need to be purchased. The employees will also be required to take cyber training courses.

**G. #810 UNANTICIPATED EXPENSES**

First Selectman Lyden presented the budget for Department #810 – Unanticipated Expenses, with an increase of \$100.00 or 10.00%. He was open to reducing the increase by \$100.00, making it a flat budget.

**H. #935 REVALUATION**

First Selectman Lyden presented the budget for Department #935 – Revaluation, with a decrease of \$60,000.00 or 73.17%. The funds are expended over a two-year time period; the bulk of the expenses will be included in the town’s FY2021/22 budget and the remaining amount will be included in the town’s FY2022/23 budget.

**I. #222 SALEM FIRE DEPARTMENT (AND GARDNER LAKE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY)**

Salem Volunteer Fire Company (SVFCO) Chip Weston presented the budget for Department #222 – Salem Fire Department, with a decrease of \$22.00 or 0.03%. Items of note include the reduction of expenditures for Line 5-222-477, Expendables, and Line Item 5-222-518, SVFC Training. Due to the pandemic, the Firehouse has been closed and town and community organizations have been able to utilize the building, greatly reducing the need for cleaning supplies and consumable items. Similarly, in-person training has been unavailable.

In response to Clerk Collins who questioned whether the SVFCO also provides co-pay reimbursements as indicated in the Explanation for Line Item 5-222-225, GLVFC Physicals, SVFCO Weston stated that the Fire Company utilizes one Agency and all costs are sent directly to and paid for by the Fire Company so as not to affect the members’ insurance. An exception might be any additional testing that is required outside of the regular physical; he has not personally encountered the need to reimburse any co-payments to date.

**J. #230 AMBULANCE**

GLVFCO Chief Pete Silva presented the budget for Department #230 – Ambulance, with an increase of \$793.00 or 1.71%. The most significant increases include:

Line Item 5-230-019, Equipment – increase of \$615.00 or 9.63%, for the replacement of recently failed and/or aging equipment; includes PPE purchases.

Line Item 5-230-624, Repair/Maintenance of Equipment – increase of \$550.00 or 3.56%, due to unexpected failures to the electrical system of their equipment, the replacement of six (6) ambulance tires, and additional items that will need to be repaired/replaced due to their age. The line item also includes the annual maintenance and inspections for the boat, rescue, service truck, and ATV trailer.

Board Member Bourgeois and Clerk Collins requested that the Fire Company and Ambulance’s equipment and insurance line items be segregated to increase transparency and determine the actual numbers to ensure that both departments are adequately and fairly funded. In response, GLVFCO Chief Silva stated that they would investigate the possibility of separating the items for the two departments, adding that renaming the department, “Rescue” might be more appropriate because the department primarily includes Rescue and EMS equipment. First Selectman Lyden suggested that Emergency

Services Liaisons Bourgeois and Casciano and the town's Finance Specialist devise a suggested template.

In response to the First Selectman, GLVFCO Chief Silva confirmed that Line Item 5-230-919, Uniforms, does not include the uniforms for the full-/part-time paid employees, which is funded by the town; the line item includes the cost of t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, and the like, making the members easily identifiable at the scene of an incident, as required by the State. With regards to the explanation provided in Line Item 5-230-019, Equipment, which includes medical-related equipment and supplies, First Selectman Lyden questioned whether the increase could be eliminated as, per the 2003 Agreement between the town and the Fire Company, such items should be purchased by the Fire Company. It was confirmed that the Fire Company continues to purchase and supply all of the medical supplies for both Fire Companies. GLVFCO Chief Silva agreed to eliminate the increase.

With respect to the Fire Company's accounts, GLVFCO Chief Silva stated that the Fire Company has approximately \$205,000.00 in their account designated for the replacement of the ambulance. A new ambulance is estimated to cost approximately \$300,000.00 and they anticipate replacing the ambulance in approximately three to four years, depending on its use. The Fire Company also has approximately \$80,000.00 in their account designated for operating costs. These funds are utilized to purchase all of their EMS medical supplies, training costs, AED and accompanying pads, stretcher, etc. There are no other cash reserves. Clerk Collins questioned their need for additional funding, based on the existing funds in their account. GLVFCO Chief Silva explained that they budget approximately \$105,000.00/year for the purchase of a new ambulance. In response to Clerk Collins regarding any payments provided to their officers or directors for their services, GLVFCO Chief Silva stated that the EMS Bookkeeper is paid approximately \$10,000.00/year through their EMS ambulance (billing) account. Clerk Collins felt that, for the sake of transparency, their revenue, along with their expenses, should be revealed to the public.

First Selectman Lyden commended GLVFCO Chief Silva, adding that he has been working very well with the Board's Liaisons, SFVCO Chief Weston, and Emergency Services Director Mike Bednarz. Every community must invest funds towards an ambulance and the question is whether the funds should be adjusted. Per their 2003 Agreement, the Fire Company is required to utilize their revenues for the purchase of a new ambulance and/or medical-related supplies and they have a right to reserve funds received through the income they generate. In the future, the town might allow them to spend their reserve funds towards repairs providing them with more flexibility. He added that the Board of Selectman is looking into the possibility of providing funds to hire additional paid staff due to the ongoing shortage of volunteers.

In response to Board Member Bourgeois who felt that \$47,000.00 to fund an ambulance service for the town is minimal and acceptable, Clerk Collins felt that he did not have the necessary information upon which to base the numbers. Furthermore, he referred to the

letters from four former First Selectmen stating that the two departments should be consolidated and a Consultant who stated that the two Fire Companies should train, recruit, etc. together – none of which has been done. She felt that the new group has been making some positive progress. First Selectman Lyden stated that, to his knowledge, the two fire companies have been training together. She requested that the Board be patient with the fire companies, especially during these trying times, and reiterated that they have been making progress. She commended the fire companies and ambulance departments.

**K. #220 GARDNER LAKE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY**

GLVFCO Chief Pete Silva presented the budget for Department #220 – Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, with a decrease of \$22.00 or 0.03%. With respect to Line Item 5-222-225, GLVFC Physicals, no co-pays have been recently reimbursed.

While expressing his appreciation to the Fire Company for their hard work, Clerk Collins reiterated his confusion due to the mixture of the fire and ambulance costs and hopes that the Board of Selectmen and Fire Companies will continue to move forward with and expedite the progress. Chairman Dickson also acknowledged their progress and looks forward to the future.

**M/S/C: Bourgeois/Casciano, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$38,210.00 for Department #158 – Library for FY2021/22, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance's March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Bourgeois/Casciano, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$1,900.00 for Department #600 – Economic Development for FY2021/22, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance's March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Bourgeois/Casciano, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$3,350.00 for Department #610 – Conservation Commission/Inland Wetlands for FY2021/22, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance's March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Bourgeois/Casciano, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$19,500.00 for Department #630 – Planning & Zoning Commission for FY2021/22, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance's March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Bourgeois/Casciano, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$800.00 for Department #640 – Zoning Board of Appeals for FY2021/22, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance's March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

- M/S/C: Bourgeois/Casciano, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$135,648.00 for Department #710 – Municipal Insurance for FY2021/22, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**
- M/S/C: Bourgeois/Casciano, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$1,000.00 for Department #810 – Unanticipated Expenses for FY2021/22, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**
- M/S/C: Bourgeois/Casciano, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$22,000.00 for Department #935 – Revaluation for FY2021/22, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**
- M/S/C: Bourgeois/Casciano, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$171,610.00 for Department #222 – Salem and Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Companies for FY2021/22, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting. Discussion: Clerk Collins stated that he would be voting in opposition pending the segregation of the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company and Ambulance accounts. Voice vote, 5-1. Voting in Favor: Board Members Bourgeois, Cadwell, Casciano, Griggs, and Dickson. Voting in Opposition: Board Member Collins.**
- M/S/C: Bourgeois/Casciano, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$46,685.00 for Department #230 – Ambulance for FY2021/22, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting. Discussion: Clerk Collins stated that he would be voting in opposition pending the segregation of the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company and Ambulance accounts. Voice vote, 5-1. Voting in Favor: Board Members Bourgeois, Cadwell, Casciano, Griggs, and Dickson. Voting in Opposition: Board Member Collins.**
- M/S/C: Bourgeois/Casciano, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$2,500.00 for Department #220 – Gardner Lake Fire Company for FY2021/22, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

#### **4. DISCUSSION REGARDING RFP FOR AUDITING SERVICES**

Because the services indicated in the RFPs (Request for Proposal) from King, King & Associates, P.C., and PKF O’Connor Davies were comparable and it was confirmed by the First Selectman that no additional charges would apply for calls or e-mails throughout the year, Board Member Bourgeois favored King, King & Associates, P.C., whose RFP was less expensive. Clerk Collins concurred, adding that there is a \$15,650.00 difference over the term of the contract between the two firms, which are very comparable in terms of their experience

with small towns, presence in the region, and their proposals. In response to Board Member Casciano regarding the presentation of a draft of their audits, First Selectman Lyden stated that, traditionally, O'Connor Davies also provides a brief PowerPoint audit presentation to the Board, which they were unable to do this year. King, King & Associates stated that they would prepare a physical handout for the Board. Both firms are comparable and are good, reputable firms; the largest difference lies with the State Single Audit, which is not always required. He noted that the staff is agreeable with either firm. He informed the Board Members that they may feel free to contact either of the firms with any questions they might have. An Auditor must be selected by the Board by the end of March. To gain the input of Board Member Bernier, the Board agreed to further discuss and make a final decision during their next scheduled meeting.

**5. STATUS OF DEDICATION SCRIPTS AND PHOTOS FOR THE ANNUAL REPORT**

Board Member Griggs is in the process of making final revisions to the dedication for Carole Eckhart and will be working on making the formats visually similar. The deadline for the dedication is March 1.

**6. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**A. BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE)**

Board Member Liaison Cadwell reported that the BOE budget request for FY2021/22 includes an increase of \$11,488,526.50 or 4.67%. The following questions/requests will be forwarded to the BOE for responses during their budget presentation:

- After the pandemic subsidies, will the school continue to offer support for homeschooled children who are currently receiving school support? (Board Member Bourgeois)
- The make-up of and projections of the teaching staff, their levels, and accompanying salaries and benefits, including pay increases. (Board Member Casciano)
- The projected and actual past, current, and expected number of enrolled students (Board Members Casciano and Collins)
- A breakdown of all of the line item transfers that have been made over the course of the school year. (Board Member Collins)
- The projected and actual savings resulting from the hiring of a 10-month vs. 12-month Assistant Principal, taking into account the subsequent pay increase and additional compensation. (Board Members Bourgeois and Collins)
- Explanation and clarification regarding the IT Educator position, i.e., is it a certified position, what is the difference between this position, the consortium, and the IT contract. (Board Member Collins)
- Are they exploring the possibility of sharing Central Office functions, including Business Officers, Special Education, and Superintendent positions, with other districts. (Board Member Collins)



## **B. EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Board Members Liaisons Bourgeois and Casciano are continuing to work closely with Emergency Services Director Mike Bednarz and the Fire Companies.

## **7. BOE EARLY TEACHERS' RETIREMENT INCENTIVES**

Chairman Dickson provided a brief recap of the Board's offer for the early teachers' retirement incentive, stating that three (3) teachers accepted the incentive and a total of \$75,000.00 of the original offering of \$150,000.00 was expended from the current year's budget. Subsequently, \$25,000.00 was deducted from the line item and \$50,000.00 remains. A brief discussion ensued regarding the incentives. Per the Auditor's opinion, because the funds are available for the current fiscal year, the town may opt to extend the program. The Auditors also questioned whether the teachers who would take advantage of the incentive were planning to retire anyways and whether this would become a regular practice. The incentive has gained a savings of approximately \$12,000.00 in FY2019/20 and approximately \$80,000.00 in FY2020/21.

**M/S/C: Griggs/Cadwell, to extend the allocation of the remaining \$50,000.00 to fund the Board of Education Teachers' Retirement Incentives of up to \$25,000.00 per teacher for those who are currently at Step 12 or above. The allocation expires at the end of FY2020/21. Discussion: Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

## **OLD BUSINESS – none**

Clerk Collins expressed his appreciation to the Board Members for all of their hard work and efforts as well as all of the departments in the town. His frustration lies with those who state their understanding of the difficult job the Board has, but seek to receive the funding they request in full. Their decisions do not reflect their appreciation for them. He also expressed his discouragement with the State whose fiscal issues directly affect towns, like Salem, that are well run and appear wealthy. He is also frustrated with those who given extra money for working hard over the holidays or are provided with retirement incentives while businesses are closing and people are losing their jobs, working for reduced pay or are on furlough in order to maintain their positions, are unable to pay their taxes, and receiving food deliveries. He felt that they have been misled in a number of ways and is distressed with the years of confusion regarding the GLVFCO and Ambulance budgets. While he is pleased that progress is being made, it is, for him, painfully slow. The budget should be viewed in both the short- and long-terms, taking into account the State's fiscal issues that directly affect the town. He thanked the Subcommittee members and commended the Board, as a whole, on their ongoing hard work and efforts.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**M/S/C: Griggs/Collins, to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 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