

**TOWN OF SALEM
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.**

PRESENT

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

ABSENT

John Bernier, Alternate
Joseph Duncan, Alternate
Dean Wojcik, Alternate

ALSO PRESENT

First Selectman Kevin Lyden

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Dickson called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:

David Bingham, White Birch Road.

SEAT ALTERNATE IF NEEDED: *none*

COMMUNICATIONS: *none*

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA: *none*

AGENDA:

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES: AUGUST 12, 2021 BOARD OF FINANCE MEETING**
M/S/C: Griggs/Collins, to approve the August 12, 2021 Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

2. **TREASURER’S REPORT**
 - A. REVENUE SUMMARY**
 - B. TRIAL BALANCE**
 - C. FUND BALANCE**
 - D. OTHER**

In response to Board Member Bourgeois regarding Line Item 4-094-0533 – Licenses & Permits, Tipping Hauling Fees, First Selectman Lyden stated that the line item includes income received from local commercial entities who drop off garbage and/or recycling at the Transfer Station. A brief discussion was held regarding the issues surrounding the future management of the State’s solid waste stream.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Board Member Griggs reported on the following public comments she received:

- a. Per Robert's Rules, an action cannot be taken on any item that is not on the agenda; there were two votes taken that were not on the agenda during their last meeting.
- b. While the town's two fire companies receive funding from the town, they are both independent 501(c)(3) entities.

4. SELECTMAN'S REPORT

First Selectman Lyden expressed his appreciation to the Board for wearing their masks. Due to the growing number of positive cases, Salem, along with its surrounding towns, has issued temporary indoor mask mandates. A letter was also sent to Governor Ned Lamont requesting that he issue a Statewide Mask Mandate. The mask mandate, which will be in place until September 30, has received mixed reviews. While he appreciates the public's concerns and understands their frustrations, he emphasized the need for the public to act for the greater good of the community and either receive the vaccination or wear masks and avoid public areas. It is estimated that approximately 80% of those being admitted into the hospital are unvaccinated. All of the Town Hall employees have been vaccinated and all, but one of the Library staff have been vaccinated. According to a report issued today, there have been four deaths, 270 positive cases, with 6 new cases over the past two weeks, in Salem. He and his wife visited Mark Gendron, who was ill with COVID-19, and his wife in the hospital and offered a card and gift certificates for their family. They visited the family two weeks following his passing with food and other offerings of support on behalf of the town.

A virtual public meeting regarding the State's proposed Route 85 Corridor improvements was held on September 1. The project consists of improvements to Route 85 and Sullivan Road and sightline improvements to Route 85 and Music Vale Road. The project will take place in Spring 2023 and will not include the full blockage of the road(s). Two (2) speed signs, which take photographs and document the speed of the vehicles, were received through a grant and have been installed. Additional speed signs have been ordered.

Two (2) State of Emergencies were declared for Hurricane/Tropical Storm Henri and Hurricane Ida. Approximately 500 households lost power and numerous basements and areas were flooded as the result of Hurricane Ida, which was considered a 100- to 200-year flood. Members of the Gardner Lake and Salem Volunteer Fire Companies, EOC (Emergency Operations Center), and the Public Works employees were called upon to standby for any emergencies during both hurricanes. The resulting expenses are currently being calculated for the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Aid) reimbursement. He commended all of the volunteers and staff for all of their efforts.

The 66-day Route 82 project to repair and replace a 93-year-old bridge is currently on schedule for completion on September 21. He understands the resulting inconvenience of the

road closure. A well-received Public Hearing was held two years prior to the project. As part of the agreement, an ambulance is available 24/7 and a water tank is being provided during the project's duration.

In response to Board Member Casciano regarding the status of the 48-unit age-restricted housing development, First Selectman Lyden reported that it is scheduled for completion at the end of this year/beginning of next year. The units will be offered as rentals.

In response to Clerk Collins who inquired about the status of their communication regarding the establishment of a unified fire protection services, First Selectman Lyden reported that he has consulted with the members of the Board of Selectmen and, while they understand their frustrations and agree that the progress might appear slow, progress is being made. Monthly meetings are held between Emergency Services Liaison Selectman Ed Chmielewski and Emergency Services Administrator Mike Bednarz and the Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs of both fire companies to discuss and implement the standardization of their policies and procedures. He felt that the term "unified fire protection services" and the manner in which it would be accomplished should be more clearly defined. He agreed with the need to hold an educational meeting(s)/forum(s) to educate the public, but felt that holding a Town Meeting and presenting the question at the November referendum was premature. Clerk Collins clarified that the question is whether the town should *consider* unified fire protection services. From a fiscal standpoint, he felt that the Board of Finance is not able to do much more and would like the Board of Selectmen to provide the necessary leadership to move the item forward. He cited the letter from four (4) former Selectmen who stated that there is no public safety reason for the need to have two fire companies and felt that the voters should be educated and have the opportunity to discuss and vote upon the matter. Because the two fire companies are considered two 501(c)(3) legal entities separate from the town, Board Member Griggs questioned the authority of the Board of Selectmen to implement unified fire protection services and felt that the holding of meetings and negotiations between the two fire companies would be a more appropriate path. First Selectman Lyden agreed, adding that the paid staff is funded by the town. The budgets have been combined into one department and Emergency Services Administrator Bednarz has been making progress. He also noted that the town is continuing to work with one of the fire companies to settle the pending lawsuit. The issues with respect to the need to hire more paid staff to support the dwindling volunteer pool are ongoing throughout the region, state, and nation. He also felt that their request was somewhat disrespectful to the volunteers who donate their time and energy to support the health and safety of its townspeople.

5. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

BOE (Board of Education) Subcommittee (Board Members Cadwell and Griggs)

Board Member Griggs reported that, per Superintendent of Schools Brian Hendrickson's letter to the Chairman, the BOE will be returning \$24,175.81 to the town. The concrete pad

for the School's oil tank replacement project is now in place and, to the best of her knowledge, the tank has not yet been ordered, pending confirmation of the RFP (Request for Proposal) stipulations. The School will be subscribing to the new Federal Free Lunch Program to accommodate all of the schoolchildren.

Discussion ensued regarding the letter received by Superintendent Hendrickson to discuss the upcoming negotiations with the Teachers' bargaining unit. The letter included requests for a joint meeting between the two boards and information to aid in the negotiation process. Chairman Dickson felt that it would be useful to receive a schedule of the negotiation meetings and suggested designating two Board Members to meet with the BOE and gather the requested information. Board Member Casciano volunteered to gather the information on the list. Clerk Marshall also favored the creation of a working group, rather than a meeting involving all of the Board Members. Chairman Dickson will speak with Board Member Bernier regarding his possible interest in serving on the working group.

Fire Safety Subcommittee (Board Members Bourgeois and Casciano) – *no report*

OLD BUSINESS

A formal request will be made to the BOE and General Government for a monthly summary of all of the line-item adjustments (year-to-date), indicating the amount budgeted, expended, and adjusted, per their last meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 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