

**TOWN OF SALEM
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2022 – 7:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

William “Skip” Dickson, Chairman
Marshall Collins, Clerk
Corinne (Cory) Bourgeois
Deborah Cadwell
Janet Griggs
Matt Rucci
Kate Belleville, Alternate
John Bernier, Alternate
Maryann Casciano, Alternate

ABSENT

none

ALSO PRESENT

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Dickson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS: *none*

SEAT ALTERNATE IF NEEDED: *none*

COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Governor’s Proposed FY23 State Budget Adjustments: Impact on Salem

If enacted, the only change that would affect the Town is the Motor Vehicle Tax Reimbursement. All assessments must be based on the fair market value and the mil rate must be uniform for all classes of property. All other grants, e.g., ECS (Educational Cost Sharing), LoCIP (Local Capital Improvement Program), PiLOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes), Town Aid Road, etc., will remain flat. He reminded the Board that, as per usual, the State Legislature will not adopt their final budget until after the Town sets its budget.

Board Member Griggs suggested the possibility of contacting The Day newspaper to publish an article explaining revaluation and its effects on their taxes. It was felt that an article in Our Town Salem, which is delivered to all Salem households, might prove most helpful. Board Members Collins and Griggs will draft an article explaining the budget for the next issue.

2. E-mail from Friends of the Library President Carl Nawrocki

AGENDA:

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: JANUARY 27, 2022 BOARD OF FINANCE REGULAR MEETING – *tabled*

2. TREASURER’S REPORTS

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

Treasurer Pam Henry reviewed the *Treasurer’s Reports*, stating that there were no unusual occurrences. A copy of the Reports indicating the percentage amounts will be provided to the Board at a later date. In response to Board Member Bourgeois regarding Line Item 5-210, Security, which indicates that only \$9,463.64 of the budgeted \$366,100.00 has been expended to date, Treasurer Henry stated that she would investigate the reasoning, adding that some invoices are received at the end of the fiscal year, including that of the Resident State Troopers Program.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS – *none*

4. SELECTMAN’S REPORT

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski reported that the Town has been faced with several challenges since their last regular meeting, including the rise in COVID-19 cases and Blizzard Storm Bobby. The Board of Selectmen expressed their support of a memorandum from the Registrar of Voters’ requesting a \$500.00 increase in each of their base salaries.

Over the past two months, the COVID-19 positivity rate hovered over 22%, resulting in a very challenging period as they aimed to keep the School, Public Works, Library, and Town Hall open. The numbers have since subsided. In addition to the COVID-19 At-Home Rapid Test Kits and Masks that were received on New Year’s Eve, the Town also received an additional 270 COVID-19 Test Kits and N95 Masks later in the month from the State. He commended Emergency Services Administrator/Emergency Management Director Mike Bednarz, Gardner Lake and Salem Volunteer Fire Companies, Public Works, Emergency Management, Emergency Services, and Town Hall staff for organizing a successful operations plan for the mass distribution of the test kits and masks. An LED road sign was borrowed from the Town of Hebron to notify passing drivers of the distribution and slow traffic on Route 85 and an ATV/UTV was borrowed from one of the fire companies, allowing them to quickly travel along the distribution route. Both pieces of equipment proved very useful. Everbridge Notification Program pamphlets were also distributed with the test kits and masks, resulting in 61 new sign-ups. The notification system sends out texts, emails, and/or phone calls regarding community-related announcements of their choosing. They are working on enhancing the

notifications and upgrading the existing pamphlets. Those who have already registered to receive the notifications do not need to re-register.

The Town has registered as one of the State's 169 cities and towns that will be receiving a share of the \$300 million landmark opioid settlement. The funds will be utilized for programs designed to help fight the opioid epidemic. The settlement is part of the \$26 billion multi-state agreement with opioid distributors/manufacturers. The exact amount and timing of the payment are unknown at this time.

Due to the anticipated high winds, heavy snow totals, and subzero windchill temperatures, a State of Emergency for Blizzard Storm Bobby was issued. A pre-operational meeting, led by Emergency Services Administrator/Emergency Management Director Bednarz, was held and the Town's EOC (Emergency Operations Center) remained in contact with all of the various town entities, including the Superintendent of Schools, Fire Companies, Public Works, Resident State Troopers, Volunteer Fire Companies, and Transfer Station, throughout the storm. The Salem Free Public Library and Transfer Station were closed on Saturday and the Transfer Station opened at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday. In addition, a dedicated Eversource representative maintained communication with the Town throughout the storm. The Town experienced winds measuring 18-25 mph, with wind gusts measuring up to 21 mph, and approximately 18" of snow with approximately 4' snowdrifts. The Town experienced some minor road issues, but no power outages or significant issues. Due to the dead zones for radio communication and cell reception, they are continuing to investigate possible ways to enhance their communications system. He commended the Public Works crew for clearing the roads in an efficient and timely manner. Having declared a State of Emergency, the expenses the Town incurred as a result of the storm might qualify for a 75% FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) reimbursement.

The Board of Selectmen appointed Joshua Rehrig, Alexandra Marsh, and Jocelyn Glidewell to the Recreation Commission.

He has reached out to Superintendent of Schools Brian Hendrickson and BOE (Board of Education) Chairman Sean Reith regarding the Board of Finance's request for a Technology Infrastructure Assessment. BOE Liaison Selectwoman Munro has also reached out to the BOE, BOE Chairman Reith, and Board of Finance BOE Liaisons to ensure unity of effort and purpose. The Town is committed to working with the BOE to conduct the requested assessment.

The ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Committee, which is made up of the Chairpersons of various boards/commissions and a member of the community-at-large, recently met and approved a proposed list of expenditures. Selectman Kevin Lyden was appointed as the Chairman of the Committee. Approximately \$600,000.00 was received and an additional \$600,000.00 is expected to be received later this year. Because the rules were constantly

changing, a meeting with the Committee members was delayed. An ARPA Coordinator from the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) has been hired to help ensure that the funds are properly allocated. The initial reporting to the Federal Government is due in April 2022; the funds must be expended by 2024. The approved list was sent to and endorsed by the Board of Selectmen. The list includes items that were previously submitted to the Board of Finance for inclusion on the FY2022/23 Capital Plan Budget. A Special Town Meeting has been scheduled to act on the proposed list of expenditures by a yes or no vote. A copy of the list will be provided to the Board.

An example of a completed Salem Project Approval Form, which was created with the input of the relevant parties, was provided to the Board. The form includes an initial approval for the proposed concept by the First Selectman followed by approvals from town departments. The form is a work in progress and may be amended, as necessary. It is hoped that the form will mitigate and minimize any future confusion, ensure that projects are properly approved, and help guide the overall process.

Due to safety issues that were brought to his attention, First Selectman Chmielewski reported that, in consultation with the former First Selectman, Public Works Director, CIRMA (Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency), Emergency Services Director, and others, the Disc Golf Course was temporarily closed. All of the parties expressed their support for the Course; it is hoped that the issues will be resolved and the Course will re-open in the very near future.

He commended Resident State Troopers Kevin Crosby and Ben Duffy for their hard work and community policing efforts, adding that Trooper Crosby has been accepted into the State's D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Program.

Fire Marshal Donald Bourdeau's Open Burning Official Certificate has expired. He has stated that he has no plans to renew his certification as he prepares for retirement. Deputy Fire Marshal Mike Bednarz now serves as the Town's only Open Burning Official.

He might be coming before the Board to request an additional appropriation of funds for pending legal issues.

A Virtual Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Workshop will be held on Wednesday, February 16, 2022, at 6:30 p.m., via Zoom. All members of boards, commissions, committees, and staff are strongly encouraged to attend.

In response to Board Member Rucci who questioned whether the ARPA Committee includes a member of the BOE, First Selectman Chmielewski stated that a BOE member was not appointed to the Committee as the BOE is receiving a separate allotment of COVID-related Funding. He added that \$175,000.00 for the Salem School Generator is included on the proposed list for funding. They plan to review and investigate the possibility of utilizing, at least, part of the remaining funds on the Town's infrastructure, including broadband. Board

Member Griggs felt that including a member of the BOE who is aware of the needs of the children might prove beneficial. Clerk Collins added that, in exchange, it would also be beneficial for members of the community-at-large be included on the BOE's ARPA Committee.

5. ACT ON PROPOSED APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY2022/23

A. #110 BUILDING OFFICIAL

Building Official Vernon Vesey, II, presented the budget request for Department #110 – Building Official. He requested a possible increase of \$55.29 or 4% for item (3) of Line Item 5-110-402 due to the Federal mileage rate increase from 56 cents to 58.5 cents per mile. The other items remain flat. While virtual inspections were conducted during the height of the pandemic, he has returned to conducting primarily in-person inspections. No additional equipment was necessary for the virtual inspections.

B. #112 TOWN CLERK'S DEPARTMENT

Town Clerk Linda Flugrad presented the budget for Department #112 – Town Clerk's Department, which includes an increase of \$1.00 or 0.01%. The increase is due to a bi-monthly software increase from \$18.88 to \$22.44 and was offset by a reduction in other line items.

C. #114 TREASURER/AUDITOR/BOF

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski presented the budget request for Department #114 – Treasurer/Auditor/BOF, with a 3.85% or \$1,479.00 increase due to the hiring of the new Auditor.

D. #122 REGISTRAR/ELECTIONS

Democratic Registrar of Voters Betsy Butts presented the budget request for Department #122 – Registrar/Elections, with an increase of \$3,958.00 or 36.64%. The increase is due to two main factors: (1) the certification costs for the new Republican Registrar of Voters, who will be replacing Republican Registrar of Voters Doris Burr who will be retiring in November 2022, and (2) the redistricting of the Town into two State Legislative Districts, which will require additional staffing as well as two different ballots. They are investigating the possibility of utilizing one tabulator for both districts and are, relatively, confident that they would be able to do so. There is a likelihood that primaries will be held this year, with the possibility of having up to four primaries. The redistricting does not divide the Town equally in half by either population or geography. She roughly estimated that there are approximately 1,400 voters in the 34th District and 1,600 voters in the 37th District.

E. #645 RECREATION COMMISSION – *not present; tabled*

F. #210 SECURITY

First Selectman Chmielewski presented the proposed budget for Department #210 – Security, which includes an increase of \$19,000.00 or 5.19%, due to the projected salary increase of the Resident State Trooper Program (Line Item 5-210-216).

G. #600 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

First Selectman Chmielewski presented the proposed budget for Department #600 – Economic Development, with a flat budget. The Commission recently published the *Salem Business and Services Directory* and, with the addition of their newly appointed members, are planning to conduct additional outreach. He was agreeable to Clerk Collins' request to reduce the budget for Line Item 5-600-223 – Consulting, by \$500.00 and increase Line Item 5-600-498 – Mailing & Materials by \$100.00.

H. #610 INLAND WETLANDS & CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commission Vice Chairperson Diba Khan-Bureau presented the proposed budget for Department #610 – Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commission, with an increase of \$250.00 or 7.46%. The increase primarily rests in Line Item 5-610-261 – Legal Services for ongoing cases that may require legal advisement. Like Legal Services, the Engineering/Environmental Services (Line Item 5-610-941) expenses are unpredictable.

I. #630 PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Planning & Zoning Commission Chairman Vernon Smith presented the proposed budget for Department #630 – Planning & Zoning Commission, with an increase of \$14,600.00 or 74.87%. Line Item 5-630-224 – Legal Services was increased for ongoing litigation, while Line Item 5-630-924 – Engineering was slightly decreased to help offset the increase. He was agreeable to Clerk Collins' request to reduce the budget for Line Item 5-630-430, Plan of Conservation & Development, by \$2,000.00.

J. #640 ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

First Selectman Chmielewski presented the proposed budget for Department #640 – Zoning Board of Appeals, with a flat budget.

K. #710 MUNICIPAL INSURANCE

First Selectman Chmielewski presented the proposed budget for Department #710 – Municipal Insurance, with an increase of \$6,328.00 or 5% due to an increase in the insurance rate. He will investigate and ensure that a reduction in insurance costs due to the de-installation of the Town's underground oil tank is included. He reported that the Town has been experiencing difficulties renewing its cyber-insurance policy.

L. #810. UNANTICIPATED EXPENSES

First Selectman Chmielewski presented the budget request for Department #810 – Unanticipated Expenses, with a flat budget. The funds are utilized for such discretionary items as the purchase of flowers to the families of those who have passed. One such individual is lifelong Salem Resident Helen Woronik who recently passed away at the age of 92 and whom the Board might like to consider for the dedication for the Annual Report.

M. #935 REVALUATION

First Selectman Chmielewski presented the budget request for Department #935 – Revaluation, with a reduction of \$21,999.00 or 100%. Clerk Collins commended the Assessor for his hard work and efforts. First Selectman Chmielewski concurred.

N. #910 INTEREST PAYMENTS

First Selectman Chmielewski presented the proposed budget for Department #910 – Interest Payments, with an increase of \$51,437.00 or 62.68% due to the re-bonding School Bond Interest Payment, which will ultimately save the Town approximately \$175,000.00.

O. #920 PRINCIPAL PAYMENTS

First Selectman Chmielewski presented the proposed budget for Department #920 – Principal Payable, which includes an increase of \$5,000.00 or 1.54% due to the refinancing of the School Bond Payment.

M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$4,348.00 for Department #110 – Building, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/Cadwell, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$16,884.00 for Department #112 – Town Clerk, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/Cadwell, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$39,848.00 for Department #114 – Treasurer/Auditor/BOF, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/Cadwell, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$385,100.00 for Department #210 – Security, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$3,600.00 for Department #610 – Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commission, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$32,100.00 for Department #630 – Planning & Zoning Commission, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 19, 2020 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$800.00 for Department #640 – Zoning Board of Appeals, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 19, 2020 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$141,976.00 for Department #710 – Municipal Insurance, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 19, 2020 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$1,000.00 for Department #810 – Unanticipated Expenses, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 19, 2020 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/ Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$1.00 for Department #935 – Revaluation, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 19, 2020 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$133,500.00 for Department #910 – Interest Payments, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 19, 2020 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$330,000.00 for Department #920 – Principal Payable, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 19, 2020 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

6. DISCUSSION REGARDING DEDICATION FOR ANNUAL REPORT

Chairman Dickson provided a brief background of the dedication page of the Town’s Annual Report, stating that the Board traditionally recognizes a member(s) of the community who has contributed to and served the Town.

In addition to Helen Woronik, Board Member Griggs proposed Diane Bourdeau, who supported former First Selectman and Emergency Management Director and current Fire Marshal and Public Works Director Donald Bourdeau, Jr. Board Member Belleville proposed Bob Appleby, who contributed to the Town’s youth soccer program and played an instrumental role in the creation of Volunteer Park/Forsyth Road Field. Clerk Collins will draft the dedication for Helen Woronik and Board Member Belleville will draft the dedication for Bob Appleby. Board Member Griggs will edit the dedications. Photos will also be requested. The dedications are due in early March.

7. LIAISON REPORTS

a. BOE (BOARD OF EDUCATION)

Board Member Griggs reported that the BOE approved line-item adjustments for Magnet School tuition costs and legal costs due to contract negotiations, personnel issues, and mediation fees. The application for the roofing was submitted to the State for approval; they are hoping to acquire the materials to conduct the work during the Summer. The Principal and a Tutor have submitted their early notification of the intent to retire. The Principal Search Process has begun. The BOE is working on the FY2022/23 Budget.

Board Member Cadwell reported that the Teachers' Contract has been ratified and is awaiting the necessary signatures.

b. EMERGENCY SERVICES

Board Member Casciano reported that Emergency Services Administration/Emergency Management Director Bednarz will be requesting the addition of a line item to the budget for Department 240 – Public Safety. The line item will include the required training costs for the full-time Firefighter/EMTs (Emergency Medical Technician).

ARPA Funds and Its Impact on the Budget – The Board members discussed the proposed list of items, the approval process, and the make-up of the ARPA Committee. The proposed list was approved by the ARPA Committee, endorsed by the Board of Selectmen, and will be voted upon during a Special Town Meeting. The funds are deposited into a separate account and are not included as part of the regular budget to maintain transparency and clarity. The following Capital Plan items that were recommended by the Board to the ARPA Committee for funding are included in the list:

BOE Generator Replacement	\$ 175,000.00
<i>\$318,755.00 was originally requested by the BOE to power the entire school. Because the entire school does not serve as the Town's shelter, it was felt that funding the entire project would not qualify as a valid expenditure of the funds.</i>	

Emergency Operations Services & Upgrades	\$ 50,000.00
Salem Recreation Trail Upgrades	\$ 22,000.00

Capital Plan Items that the Board was not anticipating, but were included on the list include:

AED Replacement – Town wide	\$ 42,000.00
SVFCO Reporting and Inventory Software	\$ 12,000.00

Clerk Collins stated that the use of ARPA Funds for Capital Plan Items would directly affect the mil rate and help mitigate any tax increases. He expressed his disappointment that the BOE Network Upgrades were excluded from the list and that the Boards of Finance and Education were not consulted with. The Town and BOE, he felt, should be working together to determine the expenditure of the ARPA Funds to ensure that such items are being covered. Chairman Dickson

will inquire with either the Superintendent of Schools Hendrickson and/or BOE Chairman Reith regarding the possibility of allocating part of its ARPA Funds for the network upgrades.

Clerk Collins also expressed his opposition to the voting process, stating that it would be more appropriate to vote for the items line-by-line rather than submitting a yes or no vote on the entire list. Board Member Casciano concurred. Board Member Bernier felt that an Informational Meeting held prior to the Special Town Meeting that would allow the townspeople to digest the proposed list would be beneficial.

Board Member Rucci expressed his disappointment with the lack of representation of the BOE on the ARPA Committee.

Board Member Bourgeois felt that most of the town's departments have been funded over the years without having presented a detailed plan. In contrast, Emergency Services, which has not received an increase in their budget for several years, has been researching the Smartboards that would help enhance communications between the departments. They have also expressed their willingness to engage the technology expertise of qualified individuals for additional input and advisement. She stated the importance of updating and modernizing the Town's outdated equipment and infrastructure to improve communications throughout the Town and ensure the safety of its citizens. Board Member Casciano proposed the possibility of establishing a Town-wide Technology Committee that would oversee and advise the various components of the Town, enabling them to make smart fiscal choices.

First Selectman Chmielewski stated that, at the behest of the Board, the ARPA Committee was formed and a meeting was held to discuss and approve a list of proposed expenditures of the Town's first allotment of ARPA Funding. The Committee includes the Chairpersons of nearly every major board and commission. While the BOE, which is receiving its own COVID-19-related Funding, is not represented on the Committee, approximately 30% of the Town's ARPA Funds are being allocated to the BOE. In addition, the bulk of the Town's budget is allocated to the BOE and very little has been expended for the Town's emergency services. He strives to continue his efforts to maintain and improve communications throughout the Town and stressed the importance of having unity of effort and unity of work. The Town is expecting to receive a second allotment of ARPA Funds that may be allocated and expended on other items. The proposed Smartboards would allow the relevant departments to communicate with each other in real-time which is, especially, important during emergency situations to help keep the Town and its residents safe. The Smartboards would be tested for the 30-day trial period before any final decisions are made. While one of the Fire Company's members expressed his opposition to the purchase, he felt that, based on what he has witnessed during emergencies of the lack of real-time information being relayed between the firehouses and ambulance crews, the need to improve and update the communications system in the Town's Emergency Operations Center is paramount. Such simple occurrences as a road closure due to a downed tree could be lifesaving by informing the ambulance to take a different route to an emergency. He added that the Town will need to invest additional funds for

emergency services as the volunteer pool diminishes. He commended the Board for their management of the budget and maintaining the mil rate and the Emergency Management Team which includes professionals in the field. He added that the Town Hall staff, which is taxed and stressed, must also be taken care of. All of the members are part of the team and need to work together. He looks forward to learning from the Board and receiving their fiscal advice and requested they do the same based on his background and experience.

OLD BUSINESS – *none*

ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Griggs/Rucci, to adjourn the meeting at 9:51 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