

**TOWN OF SALEM
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 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 7:01 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS: *none*

SEAT ALTERNATE IF NEEDED: *none*

COMMUNICATIONS: *none*

AGENDA:

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

a. JANUARY 27, 2022 BOARD OF FINANCE REGULAR MEETING

**M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the January 27, 2022 Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

b. FEBRUARY 20, 2022 BOARD OF FINANCE REGULAR MEETING

**M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the February 20, 2022 Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

First Selectman Chmielewski expressed his appreciation to the Board for helping create a smooth transition from the previous administration. He has gained much insight and learned a great deal through their discussions and looks forward to continuing their work together. He commended the Town Hall staff for their hard work and efforts to aid the Board during the

budget process. Chairman Dickson echoed his comments, adding that the staff is very responsive.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:

M/S/C: Collins/Griggs, to add the following items to the Agenda:

4(a) Addition of Evelyn Cunningham to the Annual Report Dedication

5. FOIA WORKSHOP UPDATE

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

3. ACT ON PROPOSED APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY2022/23

A. #116 ASSESSOR

Assessor Mike Kapinos presented the budget request for Department #116 – Assessor, with a flat budget. The Vision 8 Software increase of \$9,637.00 or 214.15% (Line Item 5-116-436) is offset by reductions from other line items. In response to Board Member Bernier who questioned the cost for LexisNexis, he stated that the cost is equally divided between the Tax Collector and Assessor's budgets. He provided information regarding the 2021 Grand List and Revaluation and reported on a very positive experience with Vision Government Solutions. Based on the results, he felt that it would be a good opportunity for the Board to reduce the mil rate, adding that it would be in the best interest of the taxpayers. The Board applauded him for his continued hard work and efforts.

B. #118 TAX COLLECTOR

Tax Collector Vivian Waters presented the budget request for Department #118 – Tax Collector, with a flat budget. The Town's current collection rate is 97.7%. She reported that Assistant Tax Collector Cindy Noe retired in November and is in the process of seeking additional help. She will also begin attending the certification classes next week.

C. #158 LIBRARY

Library Board of Directors Secretary Mary Cikatz presented the budget request for Department #158 – Library, with an increase of \$1,265.00 or 3.31% primarily due to the purchase of an additional computer (replacement) and electronic resources. A detailed explanation of each of the line items was also provided. Clerk Collins questioned the possibility of including the replacement computers in the Capital Plan and/or on the list for ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funding. Library Director Vicky Coffin informed the Board that the Library recently received a COVID-related Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and, to utilize the grant funds for the purchase of computers, the Library was required to be CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act)-compliant, i.e., filtering software must be installed on all of the computers. The Board expressed their appreciation and commended the Library Director for the explanation sheet.

D. #222 GARDNER LAKE FIRE COMPANY

Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company (GLVFCO) Chief Pete Silva presented the proposed budget for Department #222 (combined with Salem Fire Department) – Gardner

Lake Fire Company, with a flat budget. GLVFCO Chief Silva apologized for the technical miscommunication resulting in the untimely submission of the budget sheet. He explained that the line-item increases were offset by line-item decreases, resulting in a flat budget.

Line Item 5-222-612, GLVFC Vehicle Maintenance (Board Member Bourgeois) – The Engine Tanker, Tanker, and Forestry vehicles are included in this line item and the Rescue vehicles, Service Truck, Ambulance, and ATV are included in the Ambulance budget (Department #230). Per the Board's previous request, GLVFCO Chief Silva will modify their budgets such that the Ambulance is the only vehicle included in the Ambulance budget; all other vehicles will be included in this budget. The modification will make the department's budget more in line with that of the Salem Volunteer Fire Company (SVFCO). The budgeted amount between the insurance line items for both budgets (Line Items 5-222-527 and 5-230-531) will be adjusted accordingly.

Line Item 5-222-225, GLVFC Physicals (Clerk Collins) – Due to COVID restrictions, the firefighters have not had full physicals, i.e., lung capacity and fit testings, for the past two years, resulting in reduced expenditures. As they come out of the pandemic, an increase in this line item for both the full physicals and pending physicals for four new interior firefighters, which is more rigorous, is expected. Additional details, including the number of firefighters, the type of physicals, and related costs, will be provided to the Board.

Line Item 5-222-517, GLVFC Training (Chairman Dickson) – No firefighters took the Firefighter I or II courses during the Fall. This Spring, firefighters will be taking the Fire Officer and Fire Instructor courses. The new firefighters are trained and will not be required to take the courses. A training plan, listing the members and their current and future training will be provided to the Board. With the exception of courses sponsored by the Connecticut Fire Academy, joint training has been conducted with the SVFCO in the Town over the last two years.

Line Item 5-222-527, GLVFC Insurance (Board Member Rucci) – The insurance costs are expected to remain flat.

Line Item 5-222-629, GLVFC Radio Repair (Board Member Bourgeois) – Two (2) radios are currently in need of repair. If they cannot be repaired, they will need to be replaced at a cost of approximately \$1,000/each. They are hoping to replace one or two additional radios with the remaining funds.

Board Member Bourgeois also reminded him to provide a list of the Fire Company's gear and hose, their respective ages, and the number of past (5 years), current, and projected volunteers.

F. #230 AMBULANCE

GLVFCO Chief Silva presented the proposed budget for Department #230 – Ambulance, with a flat budget. He explained that, due to a new vendor, the proposed amount for Line Item 2-230-519, Training, was reduced. Line items 5-230-531, Insurance, and 5-230-624,

Repair/Maintenance of Equipment, will be adjusted per the Board's request to separate the fire and ambulance vehicles.

Line Item 5-230-919, Uniforms (Board Member Bourgeois) – The purchase of additional shirts, sweatshirts, and EMS Jackets for both the Ambulance and Fire Companies is expected.

The Board agreed to table the budgets for Departments #222 – Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company and #230 – Ambulance pending the receipt of the revised budget. They also requested that more detailed information regarding the line items.

E. #222 SALEM FIRE DEPARTMENT

Salem Volunteer Fire Company (SVFCO) Chief Chip Weston presented the proposed budget for Department #222 – Salem Fire Department, which includes a decrease of \$900.00 or 0.95%. He provided a line-by-line review of the budget.

Line Item 5-222-018, SVFC Equipment – The line item remains flat. As of February 3, \$1,690.00 was expended. Outstanding Purchase Orders totaling approximately \$3,000.00 for replacement cameras and saw remain.

Line Item 5-222-218, Professional Fees – The line item was reduced by \$200.00 or 4.76%. The lease for the new copier will continue to be billed to the Fire Company.

Line Item 5-222-222, Physicals – The line item was reduced by \$1,000.00 or 20%. At least four (4) firefighters will require full physicals by the year's end. Like GLVFCO Chief Silva, additional information will be provided to the Board.

Line Item 5-222-437, Supplies (Medical) – Due to the increasing cost for the supplemental medical supplies, the line item was increased by \$300.00 or 25%. Some of the medical supplies are provided by and included in the GLVFCO's budget.

Line Item 5-222-438, Chief's Account – Line item remains flat.

Line Item 5-222-477, Expendables – The line item, which includes cleaning supplies, remains flat. As they come out of the pandemic, the Fire Company is expected to be utilized for the Salem Seniors' meetings and other Town activities.

Line Item 5-222-518, Training – The line item remains flat. He confirmed that all of the training took place within the Town of Salem, with the exception of those sponsored by the CT Fire Academy or other local Fire Companies. This year, two individuals took training courses. They will also be renewing their training software which will allow them to participate in online training courses.

Line Item 5-222-529, Insurance – The line item remains flat. While insurance costs were increased by approximately \$1,000.00, he maintained the line item. Two claims were submitted this year.

Line Item 5-222-618, SVFC Repair/Maintenance of Equipment – The line item is currently overbudgeted by \$777.00 due to the unexpected expenditure for the Tanker lights. An additional expense of approximately \$6,200.00 for the Ladder Truck valve replacement is also expected. He is hoping to make line-item transfers at the end of the fiscal year to balance the budget for the department. The line item was increased by \$2,000.00 or 9.52% due to the age of the vehicles.

Line Item 5-222-619, Testing – The line item was reduced by \$1,000.00 or 18.18%. Some of the testings are conducted by GLVFCO. In response to Board Member Casciano who questioned whether the line item for testing could be combined with GLVFCO, he stated that each of the fire companies owns different equipment and expressed his preference to maintain the budgets separately.

Line Item 5-222-822, Radio Repair – The line item was reduced by \$1,000.00 or 20%. \$4,200.00 was recently expended for the replacement of four (4) radios.

He will also provide a list of the Fire Company's gear and hose and their respective ages and the number of past (5 years), current, and projected volunteers.

F. #240 PUBLIC SAFETY

Emergency Management Director/Emergency Services Coordinator Mike Bednarz presented the proposed budget for Department #240 – Public Safety, with an increase of \$1,350.00 or 1.07% due to an increase of \$1,800.00 for the Annual 9-1-1 Contract with QV (Quinebaug Valley Emergency Communications), a regional dispatching service. The increase is partially offset by reductions in other line items. The Board agreed to remove the additional "I" in Line Item 5-240-420, Fire Marshall Expense.

Line Item 5-240-421, Civil Preparedness (Board Member Bourgeois) – The reasoning behind the increase in the line item from FY2020/21 to FY2021/22 will be investigated. To his recollection, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) recently updated its equipment. The new radio system that is included on the proposed list for ARPA Funding is not included in this budget. The annual maintenance costs for the Record Management Software, which is included in the proposed list for ARPA Funding (purchase and initial set up fees), will be included in future budgets.

Line Item 5-240-920, Fire Police (Clerk Collins) – The past years' trends for the line item will be investigated.

Line Item 5-240-970, On Call Nominal Fees (Board Member Casciano) – The amount included on the proposed list of items for ARPA Funding should cover the additional expenses for the On-Call Nominal Fees until December 2024, when the ARPA funds must be expended. The Board will monitor the expenditures for the On-Call Nominal Fees over the next two years to gauge the amount the line item should be funded in the future.

Additional Line Item for Training (Board Member Casciano & Chairman Dickson) –

Because the volunteers are trained during the evenings, the full-time career firefighters must be paid overtime to engage in the same training. Expenses for travel and books will also require additional funding. He plans to present the Board with a more detailed list of the needs and costs in the future. They are hoping to host more State-run classes that will provide them with open seats that are gratis to the host town as well as increase the town's exposure and its local businesses.

Radio Expenditures (Board Member Bourgeois) – Currently, there is no budget for gear and equipment for career firefighters. In previous years, the gear was included in the budget for the volunteer firefighters. Unfortunately, the expenditures for the career firefighters must be separate from the volunteers. Currently, one or two working radios are available; additional radios are available through the fire companies.

Emergency Management Director/Emergency Services Coordinator Bednarz agreed to add additional details in the future, similar to that of the presentation offered by the Library.

First Selectman Chmielewski announced that a Special Town Meeting will be held on Monday, February 28 to discuss and vote on the proposed expenditures for the first allotment of ARPA Funds. The list has gained the endorsement of both the Democratic and Republican Town Committees. A report regarding the expenditures is due in mid-April. The Board of Selectmen and ARPA Committee will continue to seek their input and guidance.

H. #645 RECREATION COMMISSION

Recreation Chairman Alan Maziarz presented the proposed budget for Department #645 – Recreation Commission, with an increase of \$10,000.00 or 21.23%. In response to his suggestion regarding communicating with the relevant parties regarding their need for written justification for their proposed budget requests, Board Member Bourgeois stated that the Board will work on a written process. He stated that the Board cut the Recreation budget by \$5,000.00 for FY2022/22 and, to date, approximately 60% of the budget has been expended. As the pandemic comes to a close, it is hoped that they will be able to offer more programs and activities.

Line Item 5-645-645, Maintenance – The line item was increased by \$7,000.00 or 60.87% based on the porta-potty rentals that they have incurred to date. Board Member Casciano recommended adding porta-potty rentals in the explanation. Additional details regarding the porta-potties, including the costs, locations, and time periods as well as a cost-benefit analysis of utilizing the concession stand bathrooms vs. porta-potty rentals, including the cleaning fees, will be provided. Clerk Collins also requested the invoices for the clay, fertilizers, and the like for the fields that are included in the Commission's budget. A comma will be added between the words clay and court in the explanation.

Line Item 5-645-927, SRA Programs (Board Member Bourgeois) – The fields are no longer rented out to outside organizations. The fields are used throughout the year for Salem

recreation programs, including Salem Little League. The bathrooms by the concession stand have not been used due to the feedback received from the community. The Commission is planning to resurrect the bathrooms using part of the ARPA Funds.

Discussion ensued regarding the allocation of the proposed ARPA Funds for recreation. The proposed list includes \$19,000.00 for Salem Recreation Programs and \$22,000.00 for Salem Recreation Trail Upgrades. Part of the funds will be utilized for safety measures at the Disc Golf Course, including adding trail markers and signage. Board Member Bourgeois wished to ensure that they are not doubling up on the funds, noting that \$18,500.00 is budgeted for Maintenance (Line Item 5-645-645), which includes trail repair/maintenance, and \$15,000.00 for Fee-Based Activities (Line Item 5-645-946) for recreation programs. The possibility of offering additional programs that the residents could come to expect resulting in an ongoing expense was raised.

Based on the cost of porta-potties and trends, Board Member Casciano did not feel that the increases for Line Item 5-645-645, Maintenance, and 5-645-927, SRA Programs, were unreasonable.

Line Item 6-645-928, Holiday Activities – Due to the pandemic, the Commission did not host or support the annual holiday activities. As they enter into a more endemic environment, they are planning to host and/or co-host more activities during the next fiscal year. He expressed his willingness to decrease the line item to \$1,200.00.

Line Item 6-645-929, Community Outreach/Other Appropriated Expenses – The line item includes fees for dues and conferences, including the Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association (CRPA) and National Recreation Association. Recreation Commission Chairman Maziarz stated that future projects will require the hiring of a consultant and questioned whether a new line item for Consulting Fees should be added or if the costs could be included in this line item. He wished to allocate \$5,000.00 to the line item for FY2023/24.

Line Item 6-645-945, Weekend School Access – The line item includes the fees for the janitors to clean the school for weekend recreation activities.

Line Item 6-645-946, Fee Base Activities – The line item includes the fees expended to those who offer various recreation programs and activities and is balanced out by the revenues received by the participants.

He stated that he looks forward to offering more programs, events and activities and inviting the community to enjoy their facilities.

Board Member Casciano reminded the Board that Recreation Commission Chairman Maziarz and the Commissioners are volunteers; the Board should express their appreciation and treat them accordingly. Board Member Bernier stated that the Commission's budget, which accounts for approximately 24% of the budget, has a huge impact on those who take

advantage of its offerings. He explained that, because the increases are so large, the Board would like to have an understanding of the reasoning behind those increases. Board Member Bourgeois thanked him for his feedback and reiterated that the Board will plan on creating a document delineating the process for the future.

Chairman Dickson will send Recreation Commission Chairman Maziarz an e-mail reminding him of their conversation and information requests.

Discussion ensued regarding the budget process and improving their communication with the boards, commissions, and departments resulting in more productive meetings. Possible options proposed included providing a template, hosting a training session, and/or providing written guidelines and timelines regarding the budget process. Clerk Collins stated that the burden is on each of the departments to present and defend their budget requests.

M/S/C: Collins/Cadwell, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$21,100.00 for Department #116 – Assessor, 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 \$13,500.00 for Department #118 – Tax Collector, 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 \$39,475.00 for Department #158 – Library, 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 table the appropriation of funds for Departments #220 – Gardner Lake Fire Company, #222 – Salem Fire Company, and #230 – Ambulance. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$128,000.00 for Department #240 – Public Safety, 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 table the appropriation of funds for Department #645 – Recreation Commission. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

4. STATUS OF DEDICATION SCRIPTS AND PHOTOS FOR ANNUAL REPORT

The dedications for Bob Appleby and Helen Woronik have been written and edited. The photographs will be sent to Meredith Eisenberg in the First Selectman’s office.

a. Addition of Evelyn Cunningham to the Annual Report Dedication

M/S/C: Collins/Griggs, to add a dedication to Evelyn Cunningham for the 2021/22 Annual Report. Discussion: The dedication for Evelyn Cunningham will be written by Tiffany Cunningham. Sample dedications from past years will be provided for reference. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

5. FOIA WORKSHOP UPDATE

Discussion ensued regarding the recent FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) Workshop during which Tom Hennick, Public Education Officer, Freedom of Information Commission, discussed the difference between a subcommittee and liaisons. A subcommittee of two members of a board/commission who attend the meeting of another board or commission would be subject to FOIA requirements while two liaisons who attend a meeting of another board or commission would *not* be subject to FOIA requirements. While Clerk Collins disagreed with his understanding of the State Statute, he proposed the Board designate one liaison to the Board of Education and Emergency Services, each. Due to the extensive commitment, the BOE liaisons expressed their preference to have two liaisons. Chairman Dickson will contact Public Education Officer Hennick for further clarification.

Board Member Cadwell stated that she was pleased to see that many board/commission members attended the Workshop, which she found very informative. The Board Members who attended the Workshop concurred.

OLD BUSINESS

BOE ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) Funds

Clerk Collins reminded the Board that they have not yet received information regarding the receipt and allocation of the BOE's ESSER Funds. The information would be helpful as they determine the budget, adding that the network upgrades would be a perfect one-time expenditure of the funds.

Audit for the year ending June 30, 2021

Physical copies of the Audit for the year ending June 30, 2021 were distributed to the Board.

Recording of Grant Funds and related expenditures

Board Member Bernier requested clarification regarding the recording of revenues that are received by the Town and its various entities and their related expenditures. For example, the COVID-related grant that was received by the Library and the donations received by the Fire Company. It was noted that, for auditing purposes, the ARPA Funds are placed in a separate account and maintained separately from the Town's operating budget.

ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Bourgeois/Collins, to adjourn the meeting at 9:24 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