

**TOWN OF SALEM  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, MARCH 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  
Maryann Casciano, Alternate

**ABSENT**

John Bernier, Alternate

**ALSO PRESENT**

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski  
Finance Specialist/HR Lisa Jablonski

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:** *none*

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

**COMMUNICATIONS:** *none*

**ALTERATIONS TO THE AGENDA:** *none*

**AGENDA:**

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**a. FEBRUARY 24, 2022 BOARD OF FINANCE REGULAR MEETING**

**M/S/C: Griggs/Collins, to rescind the approval of the February 10, 2022 Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes in the February 24, 2022 Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the February 10, 2022 Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes, with the following amendments:**

**Item 5. ACT ON PROPOSED APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY2022/23**

**M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$14,760.00 for Department #122 – Registrar/Elections, 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 \$1,500.00 for Department #600 – Economic Development, 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.**

**a. MARCH 10, 2022 BOARD OF FINANCE REGULAR MEETING**

**M/S/C: Griggs/Bourgeois, to approve the March 10, 2022 Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes, with the following amendment:**

**Page 4, 2nd sentence:**

**These savings derive from the reduction of one bus, one *proposed new* Certified Elementary School Teacher, one Tutor, Two Instructional Aides, an adjustment to their ELHS Student Projection,...**

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

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS: *none***

**3. TREASURER'S REPORT**

- A. REVENUE SUMMARY**
- B. TRIAL BALANCE**
- C. FUND BALANCE**
- D. OTHER**

The Board reviewed the Treasurer's Report with no comments.

**4. FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT**

First Selectman Chmielewski wished everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day. He reported on a very busy, productive, and rewarding four months. He commended and highlighted the Town Hall, Public Works, and Library staff who streamline the inner workings of the town. He also expressed his appreciation to all of the volunteers who serve the town in various capacities and whose skills and expertise further enhance the Town and its services.

**5. ACT ON PROPOSED APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY2022/23**

First Selectman Chmielewski presented the proposed FY2022/23 budget, which was reviewed and approved by the Board of Selectmen.

**A. #100 SELECTMAN'S DEPARTMENT**

The budget for Department #100 – Selectman has an increase of \$90.00 or 1.19% due to an increase in membership fees (Line Item 5-100-201). He will investigate whether the membership fees for CCM (Connecticut Council of Municipalities)/CIRMA (Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency) is included in the line item.

**B. #126 TOWN COUNSEL**

The budget for Department #126 – Town Counsel remains flat. First Selectman Chmielewski noted that the contract negotiation for the Firefighters is upcoming and other town issues are continuing. The Line Item 5-126-208, Town Issues, is currently over-budget.

**C. #134 TOWN OFFICE OPERATION**

The budget for Department #134 – Town Office Operation was increased by \$690.00 or 0.65%. Increases were offset by decreases in other line items. There is currently no contract with Yucatech for IT services; the costs are need-based. The First Selectman stated that he will be discussing the Independent IT Network Study and the possibility of sharing services with the BOE. It was explained that Walsh-Gems Financial (Line Item 5-134-299) is the software company utilized by the Town's Tax Collector and Assessor's offices.

**D. #135 MUNICIPAL BUILDING MAINTENANCE**

The budget for Department #135 – Municipal Building Maintenance was increased by \$5,220.00 or 9.91 %. Whenever possible, the Public Works crew handles town projects, leading to cost savings. It will be investigated if the Quick Spend Grant (Line Item 5-135-316) for \$2,400.00 is included in the department's budget.

**E. #138 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

The budget for Department #138 – Employee Benefits has an increase of \$5,220.00 or 9.91%. To save costs, both the Town and BOE are on the same insurance plan. Due to the Town/BOE's high loss ratio, the Town's Insurance Carrier, Anthem, will be increasing their rates by 54%. As discussed at the previous meeting, Finance Specialist Jablonski reported that two of the remaining options include the State Insurance Plan, with a policy increase of approximately 16%, and a Region 18 Plan, which the BOE applied to and received a higher increase than the current plan. Should they opt to adopt the State Insurance Plan, BOE Chairman Sean Reith reported that no new information is available regarding the Anthem renewal or Region 18 Plan rates. They are currently involved in preliminary discussions with the Salem Federation of Teachers (SFT). The Board Members agreed to increase Line Item 5-138-802, Insurance (PHS & BC Dent) to \$313,728.00 or 20% for a Department total of \$504,936.00.

**F. #140 UTILITIES**

The budget for Department #140 – Utilities has an increase of \$10,593.00 or 6.81%.

**G. #152 TOWN SERVICES**

The budget for Department #152 – Town Services was increased by \$4,650.00 or 4.04%. Increases are included for Senior Services to provide additional services to the Town's seniors; Gardner Lake Authority, which also receives funding from the Towns of Bozrah and Montville; Animal Control Officer, whose services are received from the Town of Montville, and; Planning Services, which are received through the Southeastern

Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG). While the Recreation Commission sponsors some activities for the seniors, the line item (Line Item 5-152-812, Senior Services) funds such services as transportation to medical appointments.

**H. #157 REGIONAL SERVICES**

The budget for Department #157 – Regional Services has an increase of \$210.00 or 1.72% due to an increase for Regional Probate (Line Item 5-157-824).

**I. #310 PUBLIC WORKS**

The budget for Department #310 – Public Works has an increase of \$15,820.00 or 5.94% due, in part, to increases in the maintenance of its aging vehicles. The increase in Line Item 5-310-633, Field Maintenance, is in line with the actual amounts expended for FY2019/20 and FY22020/21.

**J. #410 TRANSFER STATION**

The budget for Department #410 – Transfer Station was increased by \$9,080.00 or 5.10% primarily due to an increase in the cost of trash bags and tipping and hauling fees. It is unknown as to whether other firms handle tipping and hauling. To help decrease the costs, the Town has run campaigns to promote composting. Board Member Rucci suggested investigating any available State Grants to hire a consultant to review Transfer Stations and optimize their use. Clerk Collins suggested the First Selectman inquire with the Senator and Representative regarding any available grants.

**K. #105 SALARIES**

The budget for Department #105 – Salaries has an increase of \$54,794.00 or 4.12%. The Town's employees are, in general, receiving a 3% increase. First Selectman Chmielewski proposed the possibility of further increasing the salaries of the Assessor, who is a CCMA (Certified Connecticut Municipal Assessor) 1 and 2 (line item 5-105-106), and Finance Specialist, who works countless hours to handle the increased workload (line item 5-105-109). In addition, he stated that the salaries for both of these individuals have been left behind the average salary for these positions. He stated the importance of retaining both of the individuals, who are highly qualified and work diligently to save the town funds. The Public Works Director (line item 5-105-117) will be retiring and the line item has been zeroed out; the duties will be handled by the Foreman. He also proposed the possibility of increasing Line Item 5-105-115 – Recreation Coordinator to \$14,000.00.

Clerk Collins agreed that both the Assessor and Finance Specialist positions are underpaid, especially given their qualifications. Board Member Bourgeois agreed, especially in comparison to the BOE's Business Manager, and felt that they should be compensated for their hard work and efforts. Board Member Griggs felt that the Board should consider the series of past line-item transfers, many of which were for overtime costs for non-salaried employees. It was stated that the overtime costs were primarily for the Public Works and

Firefighter/EMTs and were not associated with the increases for the positions in question. The Board Members agreed to the following increases:

Line Item	Proposed	Revised
5-105-106, Assessor	\$69,242.00	\$75,000.00
5-105-109, Finance	\$69,242.00	\$75,000.00
5-105-115, Recreation Coordinator	\$12,100.00	\$14,000.00

**L. #925 CAPITAL RESERVE ACCOUNT**

**M. #926 OPEN SPACE LAND ACQUISITION FUND**

The budget for Departments #925 – Capital Reserve Account and #926 – Open Space Land Acquisition Fund remain flat.

**M/S/C: Collins/Cadwell, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$7,660.00 for Department #100 – Selectman, 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 \$46,645.00 for Department #126 – Town Counsel, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: Line Item 5-126-208 – Town Issues was increased to \$42,645.00. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Collins/Cadwell, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$107,000.00 for Department #134 – Town Office 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 \$57,920.00 for Department #135 – Municipal Building Maintenance, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: The inclusion of the Quick Spend Grant in the Department’s budget will be investigated. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Collins/Cadwell, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$504,936.00 for Department #138 – Employee Benefits, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: Line Item 5-138-802 – Insurance (PHS & BC Dent) was increased to \$313,728.00. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Collins/Cadwell, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$166,185.00 for Department #140 – Utilities, 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 \$119,700.00 for Department #152 – Town Services, 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 \$12,413.00 for Department #157 – Regional Services, 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 \$281,980.00 for Department #310 – Public Works, 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 \$187,180.00 for Department #410 – Transfer Station, 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 \$1,397,875.00 for Department #105 – Salaries, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance's March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: Line Items 5-105-106, Assessor, and 5-105-109, Finance, were increased to \$75,000.00 and Line Item 5-105-115, Recreation Coordinator, was increased to \$14,000.00. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Collins/Cadwell, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$1.00 for Department #925 – Capital Reserve Account, 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 \$1.00 for Department #926 – Open Space Land Acquisition Fund, 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.**

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **6. ACT ON TABLED APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY2022/23**

Clerk Collins reminded the Board that one of the reasons the Salem and Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company budgets were combined into one department was to help them compare the numbers side-by-side. Unfortunately, due to the timing in the receipt of their proposed budget, they were unable to have it prepared as such for the meeting.

#### **A. #222 SALEM VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY**

Salem Volunteer Fire Company (SVFCO) Chief Chip Weston presented the requested information to the Board.

Number of Volunteers (Board Member Bourgeois) – The number of members includes active Medical, Fire Police, and Firefighters members who continue to be trained and respond to calls. The number does not include the life members, who are no longer responding to calls, and/or social members who are active in other ways.

Active and Awarded Incentive Program – Members qualify for the program by receiving a minimum number of hours for training and earn points based upon the number of calls he/she responds to. Those who have reached 59 years of age and provided 20 years of service automatically qualify for the incentive.

Reduction in Members (Board Member Bourgeois) – The number of volunteers from 2020-21 to 2021-22 dropped from 35 to 23 due to the pandemic. It is hoped that many of these members will rejoin the team in the very near future. Between the two Fire Companies, there have been no issues responding to all of the calls. They are also part of the Mutual Aid Agreement which neighboring towns can be called upon for additional help.

Hose Age and Inventory – The Inventory List includes all of the hoses the Town owns. The hoses are divided between the Town's two Fire Companies.

#### **B. #222 GARDNER LAKE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY**

The Board reviewed the revised budget and requested information for the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company (GLVFCO).

Legal Fees (Clerk Collins) – Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company (GLVFCO) Chief Pete Silva stated that the pending lawsuit is being funded through their Ambulance account. The Ambulance account funds the (future) new Ambulance and medical supplies and is not included in the Town's budget.

Number of Volunteers (Board Member Bourgeois) – It was confirmed that the numbers, like those of SVFCO, does not include the life and/or non-responding members.

Line Item 5-222-432, GLVFC Fire Wells (Clerk Collins) – The number was increased by 100% due to necessary repairs for weather-related damage and expected maintenance.

Line Item 5-222-629, Radio Repair (Board Members Bourgeois and Collins) – The line item includes the radios for the rescue vehicles (moved from Department #230 – Ambulance). Other Fire Company-related items that were included in the Ambulance Budget (Department #230) were moved to the Fire Company’s Budget and vice-versa.

**M/S/C: Bourgeois/Griggs, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$186,791.00 for Department #222 – Salem Volunteer Fire Company, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: Clerk Collins expressed his appreciation to Board Members Bourgeois and Casciano who have been working with the Fire Companies. He also expressed the difficulties he encountered with the process and the inability to seamlessly compare the numbers. Former SVFCO Chief Gene Maiorano explained that the Town owns the SVFCO Building and, as such, there are no funds allocated for the maintenance of the building. Voice vote, 5-1. Voting in Favor: Board Members Bourgeois, Cadwell, Griggs, Rucci, and Dickson. Voting in Opposition: Board Member Collins.**

**A. #230 AMBULANCE**

The Board reviewed the revised budget for Department #230 – Ambulance.

Line Item 5-230-624, Repair/Maint. of Equipment (Board Member Bourgeois) – “Brakes Rescue-127”, which belongs in the Fire Company budget, will be removed from the Explanation.

Legal Fees (Clerk Collins) – As previously stated, funding for the legal fees derive from the Ambulance Fund.

Line Item 2-230-419, Office Supplies (Clerk Collins) – The Ambulance utilizes a very minimal amount of office supplies as information is electronically entered. SVFCO Chief Weston believed that both of the Fire Companies and EMS utilize the same software, which is funded through the Emergency Services budget. Currently, the Firehouses utilize six to seven different types of software. As such, they are in the process of investigating the possibility of acquiring new software, reducing the number of programs by approximately half and streamlining the process. It is hoped that the cost will be equitable. Funding for the software is included in the town’s ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds.

**M/S/C: Rucci/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$30,604.00 for Department #230 – Ambulance, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: Clerk Collins expressed his opposition to the Ambulance Budget, stating his discomfort with the funding for the GLVFCO lawsuit deriving from the Ambulance Fund. Part of the reasoning behind the Town funding the Department is to allow them to save funds to purchase a**



**new ambulance. He was dismayed with the continuing practice of the comingling of budgets for the Fire Company and Ambulance. He questioned how much money is in the Ambulance Fund and whether they are being over-funded. Board Member Bourgeois felt the proposed budget was reasonable, adding that the Town is supporting a service they are offering to the Town. Voice vote, 5-1. Voting in Favor: Board Members Bourgeois, Cadwell, Griggs, Rucci, and Dickson. Voting in Opposition: Board Member Collins.**

**M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$2,500.00 for Department #220 – Salem Fire Department (Chief's Account) 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.**

#### **E. #645 RECREATION COMMISSION**

Recreation Commission Chairman Alan Maziarz submitted all of the past invoices for the porta-potties and a spreadsheet of the expenditures for Line Item 5-645-645, Maintenance. He reminded the Board that they are renting seven (7) porta-potties located at the three locations (Lou Ulffer's Sports Complex/Round Hill Road Fields, Volunteer Park/Forsyth Road Field, and Salem Community Park Pavilion), costing approximately \$2,100.00/month. The proposed increase of \$7,000.00 would help fund the rentals as well as materials to maintain the fields. A cost analysis of utilizing the existing bathrooms at the Round Hill Road Fields would save them approximately \$500.00/month for the rentals (one regular, one ADA porta-potty, and one wash station) and require either the volunteers or Public Works crew to clean and maintain them. The possibility of reducing the number, types, and length of time the porta-potties are rented, depending on the location, was discussed. Recreation Commission Chairman Maziarz and the Board agreed to decrease the line item to \$15,000.00. While it was unknown as to the particular items that are included in the Recreation Department's line item for field/trail repairs/maintenance vs. the Public Works Department's line item for the same, it was thought that the Recreation Department's budget included those items that are unique to the fields.

Due to the pandemic, which resulted in the reduction or cancellation of programs, the Commission did not provide funding to the SRA Programs (Line Item 5-645-927). It was noted that the line item also includes the cost for the porta-potties that were necessary to accommodate the programs. It was agreed to reduce Holiday Activities (Line Item 5-645-926) to \$1,200.00, based on the trend.

Discussion ensued regarding the submission of an approximately \$4,000.00 invoice for mileage for the Disc Golf Course and providing such compensation for volunteers. First Selectman Chmielewski and Finance Specialist Jablonski stated that it is unusual for the Town to pay the mileage for volunteers; it is primarily utilized by the staff. It was explained

that the Commission agreed to help compensate for expenses incurred by one of the volunteers who was instrumental in creating the Course. Because a written contract was not submitted, it was not usual practice and would set a precedence of providing funds for mileage to volunteers, Board Member Bourgeois felt that the payment should be denied. Clerk Collins agreed that a contract and sufficient documentation should have been submitted. It was noted that the invoice has not been paid. Recreation Commission Chairman Maziarz stated that, because the Course is a Capital Item, the subject was not relevant to the proposed operating budget.

**M/S/C: Rucci/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$52,000.00 for Department #645 – Recreation Commission subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: Clerk Collins expressed his dismay with the Chairman who did not appear at the scheduled times to present either the proposed Capital Requests or the Operational Budget and his outspoken criticisms of the Town Hall. While he supports the proposed budget because it offers programs and activities utilized by the town’s residents, he felt that the “absolutely horrendous performance” of the Chairman, on behalf of the Recreation Commission for an important function in the town, was not acceptable. He also expressed his zero confidence in the numbers. Board Member Bourgeois expressed her support for the budget, which benefits the entire town. Chairman Dickson felt more comfortable with the budget after the reductions and agreed that the process was less than optimal. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

#### **E. BOARD OF EDUCATION**

BOE Chairman Sean Reith reported that no new updates were received for the insurance costs for the Region 18 LEARN Cooperative or Anthem Renewal Plans. The BOE and BOE Budget Subcommittee held Special Meetings and the BOE Attorney was consulted with to help them better determine and review their options. The BOE agreed that the State Partnership Plan might be the best option. Superintendent Brian Hendrickson spoke with the SFT President to determine its impact with the Certified Teacher Contract and it was agreed to request the BOE Attorney to draft a Memorandum of Understanding. The SFT will meet with the healthcare representative to discuss the details, compare the two plans, and present it to the membership before the SFT signs the MOU. If adopted, they will be able to move forward with the State Partnership Plan without renegotiating the contract and the overall budget would be reduced by \$131,172.00, resulting in a 6.8% increase.

Implications (Board Member Rucci) – With the State Plan, they would lose the flexibility to search for alternative options for three (3) years. While the annual increases are not predictable, it is estimated that the cost will increase approximately 8% annually. It was

noted that other districts, including East Lyme, are currently with the State Plan, and the rate adjustments are adjusted for the entire County.

Final Pricing (Board Member Casciano) – Should the MOU be agreed upon, the following changes would be made to the BOE’s Proposed FY2022/23 Budget:

Salem School: Page 2a, Benefits – Health Insurance:

Previously Proposed	Revised Amount (Under State Plan)	Difference
\$823,962.00	\$730,283.00	\$93,679.00

Salem School District Central Office: Page 5a, Benefits – Health Insurance:

Previously Proposed	Revised Amount (Under State Plan)	
\$138,943.00	\$101,450.00	\$37,493.00

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TOTAL:		\$131,172.00
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The total proposed FY2022/23 Budget Request is \$11,384,452.00, an increase of \$333,566.00 or 3.02%.

Cost per Pupil vs. Other Districts (Board Member Casciano) – The cost per pupil data is retrieved from published sources/verifiable data.

Out of District Costs (Board Member Dickson) – The determining factors for the Out of District Costs include the individuals, the services the individuals require, and the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Formula.

Early Retirement Notification Incentive (Board Member Bourgeois) – While the incentive was offered to the entire staff, there were no notifications received from any certified teachers. The Incentive helps them gauge and reevaluate the positions and make any necessary changes without compromising the level of programming.

Enrollment in relation to Cost (Board Member Bourgeois) – Board Member Bourgeois expressed her continuing concerns with the decreasing enrollment and rising costs. While she understands the salary increases, she hopes that the budget could meet at a midway point. Another concern is the rising administrative staff relative to the decreasing student population. The budget, she felt, is becoming unsustainable. She noted that the FY2018/19 Actual Budget was approximately \$10.4 million vs. the Proposed FY2022/23 Budget of \$11.4 million – a \$1 million increase over a five-year span.

Chairman Dickson agreed and understood the unpredictability of some of their costs. He was encouraged by the comparative data they received regarding the per-pupil spending and salaries, which reflected the difficulties that towns with small schools have, noting their inability to benefit from the same efficiencies in the staffing and services of larger schools, many of which have higher per-pupil spending. He was pleased that they are reviewing their staffing, which should help ease their budget in the future.

BOE Chairman Reith understood and shared their view. With that in mind and realizing that 75% of their budget is invested in salaries and benefits, he stated that the Early Retirement

Notification Incentive was introduced. He noted that the Administrative salary costs have been reduced by approximately \$30,000.00 over the past nine years (since 2013).

Board Members Rucci and Belleville felt that the increases were, relatively, reasonable. Board Member Belleville expressed her appreciation for a well-organized presentation and their time and efforts; she hopes the teachers will agree with the revised Health Plan. Board Member Casciano recommended the BOE try to maintain and continue taking the opportunity to review and shift their staffing, as necessary. She agreed with Chairman Dickson regarding the unpredictability of the Out of District costs and was appreciative of and pleased with the outcome of their budget this year vs. that of the previous year. While commending them for their hard work and efforts, Clerk Collins shared Board Member Bourgeois' concerns regarding the long-term effects of the budget and the need to find efficiencies, including reviewing the curriculum which could, possibly, be shared with East Lyme, and sharing or regionalizing technology and supplies. He stated that the Central Office Staffing, which has increased by approximately 11.2% over the last two years with the decreasing enrollment, is unsustainable. He urged them to consider utilizing either the BOE or Town's COVID-19-related funding for the technology and network upgrades, rather than including the items in this year's Town's Capital Plan, and stressed the importance of completing the IT Network Study. While he supports the 3.02% increase, he expressed his lack of confidence with the requested amount for the Network Upgrades. Board Member Cadwell expressed her appreciation and commended them on their budget. Board Member Griggs stated her support for the budget, adding that their budget increase is lower than that of other towns, per various published newspaper articles.

The Board expressed their appreciation for the details and responses to their questions and hard work and efforts to offset as much of their expenses as possible.

**M/S/C: Rucci/Bourgeois, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$11,384,452.00 for the Board of Education subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance's March 24, 2022 Regular Meeting. Discussion: Clerk Collins expressed his support for the budget this evening and stated that, should the Network Upgrades not be removed from the Capital Plan Budget, he will change his vote. Voice vote, 5-1. Voting in Favor: Board Members, Cadwell, Collins, Griggs, Rucci, and Dickson. Voting in Opposition: Board Member Bourgeois.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**M/S/C: Rucci/Collins, to adjourn the meeting at 10:16 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