

**TOWN OF SALEM  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2022 – 7:00 P.M.  
SALEM TOWN HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

**The minutes submitted below have been filed in accordance with  
Section 7-342 of the CT General Statutes. They are subject to final approval  
with or without amendments by a vote of the Board of Finance (BOF).  
Approval and any such amendments will be detailed in subsequent BOF minutes.**

**PRESENT**

William “Skip” Dickson, Chairman  
Marshall Collins, Clerk  
Corinne (Cory) Bourgeois  
Janet Griggs  
Matt Rucci  
John Bernier, Alternate (*seated*)

**ABSENT**

Deborah Cadwell  
Kate Belleville, Alternate  
Maryann Casciano, Alternate

**ALSO PRESENT**

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Dickson called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:** *none*

**SEAT ALTERNATE IF NEEDED:**

**M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to seat Alternate Board Member Bernier for Full Board  
Member Cadwell. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**COMMUNICATIONS:** *none*

**AGENDA:**

**1. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. To provide an update and to discuss legal strategies for the current lawsuit “The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. Town of Salem” pursuant to C.G.S. Section 1-200 (6)(B)**

**M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to enter into Executive Session for an update and to discuss legal strategies for the current lawsuit “The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. Town of Salem” pursuant to C.G.S. Section 1-200 (6)(B) at 7:07 p.m. Discussion to include First Selectman Ed Chmielewski, Acting Selectman Kevin Lyden, and Town Attorney Brian Estep. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor. Chairman Dickson**

resumed the meeting at 8:30 p.m. No votes were taken during Executive Session.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**a. AUGUST 11, 2022 BOARD OF FINANCE REGULAR MEETING**

**M/S/C: Collins/Griggs, to approve the August 11, 2022 Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes, with the following amendment:**

**Page 4, Cooling Station, second to last sentence:**

The cost of opening the Library as a cooling station will derive from the ~~Library's~~ *General Government* funds.

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

**3. TREASURER'S REPORT**

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

The Board reviewed the *Balance Sheets* and *Budget vs. Actual* Reports. The Board questioned the Undesignated Fund Balance Audit Entry report.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENTS – none**

**5. SELECTMAN'S REPORT**

First Selectman Chmielewski stated that a report of the department updates will be provided for the record. He reported that, after five months of serving as the Interim Library Director, Shannon Henson was officially appointed as the Head Librarian. Her appointment had the unanimous support of the Library Board of Directors, Former and Acting Selectman and Library Board Liaison Kevin Lyden, and Human Resources Lisa Jablonski.

"The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. Town of Salem" Legal Fees (Clerk Collins) – Approximately \$80,000.00 in Town funds have been utilized over the past two years. In addition, the Town has expended nearly \$40,000.00 investigating formal complaints that were received against members of the Fire Company. The individual(s) attempted to resolve the issues by working with the leadership of the Department and Board of Directors prior to submitting a formal complaint to the Town. The allegations included a toxic work environment, workplace violence, and sexual harassment. Immediately following the receipt of the complaint, the First Selectman contacted CIRMA (Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency) who recommended the Town contact the Town Attorney to investigate the complaints. The investigation opened an additional investigation that is currently in progress. The allegations regarding sexual harassment and a toxic work environment were substantiated by the independent investigator. Per CIRMA's recommendation and to protect the employees, the Town's career

Firefighter/EMT/Maintainers were removed from the alleged environment and moved to the Salem Volunteer Fire Company, which is owned by the Town. In the past, one Firefighter/EMT/Maintainer was housed at each of the Fire Companies. A letter addressed to those immediately associated with the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company and handed to the Gardner Lake Board of Director Secretary was drafted and sent. It is his understanding that the letter was not presented to or discussed by the members. A procedure was established to help maintain the safety of the employees and the residents they serve. The ambulance is picked up in the morning and returned to the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company at the end of the day. Some issues have arisen in the interim and additional funding might be necessary for the purchase of medical equipment. The ambulance is staffed by volunteers during the weekend and evening hours.

First Selectman Chmielewski requested that Line Item 38, GLVFC AED Replacement, on the Town's Capital Plan be changed to Town of Salem AED Replacement. ARPA Funds were allocated to purchase the AEDs. He explained that the AEDs were formerly under the helm of the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company and the Fire Company was provided with the authorization to purchase the AEDs when the funding was approved. The items have not yet been purchased and, due to rising costs, the funding is no longer sufficient. As such, the Town is now researching and will purchase the AEDs and the career Firefighter/EMT/Maintainers will inspect them. The AEDs are estimated to cost approximately \$2,200.00 to \$2,400.00 each and approximately 30 AEDs are needed.

**M/S/C: Bourgeois/Collins, to make the following technical revision on the Town's Capital Plan:**

~~GLVFCO~~ **Town of Salem** AED Replacement

**Discussion: It was confirmed that making the technical change would be acceptable to do at this time. The First Selectman has informed the GLVFCO Chief that the Town would now be investigating, purchasing, and maintaining the AEDs. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

Zemko Building Insurance (Board Member Griggs) – Because vacant buildings are considered a liability by the Insurance Company, the building was being used for storage. First Selectman Chmielewski stated that the items that were stored in the Zemko building were temporarily removed to assess its condition and determine any necessary maintenance. The insurance company has not been informed that the items were temporarily removed. The final use of the building is to be determined.

Heating Oil Costs (Clerk Collins) – The heating oil costs will be provided at a later date.

**6. FIRST SELECTMAN TRANSFER REQUESTS:**

First Selectman Chmielewski stated that the request for the transfer of funds is to accommodate two (2) recently received from the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, dated January 4, 2022, and April 2, 2022.

**M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to transfer \$1,070.21 from Security, Resident Troopers (Line Item 5-210-216) to Salem Fire Department, GLVFC Equipment (Line Item 5-222-013). Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.**

**7. TOWN INVENTORY/BUDGET INITIATIVES**

First Selectman Chmielewski reported that he has requested the department heads to submit a list of assets and equipment to the First Selectman's office. The lists will be collated and organized by his assistant and reviewed with Board Member Bourgeois before it is presented to the Board.

Board Member Bourgeois will finalize and send the budget presentation to the Board Members. A presentation to the department, board, and commission heads will be scheduled for October. She also reported that she met with Finance Specialist Lisa Jablonski to discuss the possibility of re-titling Department 5-222 from Salem Volunteer Fire Company to the Town of Salem Volunteer Fire Companies. Due to logistical issues, it was determined that the name change would not be advisable. Board Member Griggs proposed including an annotation on the budget sheets for the public for transparency purposes.

**8. LIAISON REPORTS**

**a. EMERGENCY SERVICES**

In response to Clerk Collins' questions regarding the ambulance staffing, Board Member Bourgeois reported that the ambulance is staffed by the two Career Firefighter/EMT/Maintainers during the weekdays. Should a call be received while the staff is on a call, mutual aid will be called for assistance. During the evenings and weekends, the volunteers staff the ambulance. It was confirmed that the Town is paying for the two Career Firefighter/EMT/Maintainers to respond to ambulance calls and the revenue received from those calls is received by the Gardner Lake Fire Company and not the Town.

**b. BOE**

The Board reviewed the summary, drafted by Board Member Liaison Griggs. The summary includes the salaries, line-item transfers, and staffing and board changes. A new BOE (Board of Education) member was appointed from a pool of seven (7) highly qualified candidates. The vacancies for the two teachers are not additional teachers, but are due to staffing shifts. The current total enrollment of students is unknown. Two additional proposals for the energy audit were received and are in the process of being analyzed and reviewed.

In response to Clerk Collins' questions from their previous meeting, she reported that the Assistant Principal's position remains a 10-month position. The new Facilities Director's salary is comparable to the former Facilities Director's salary. The new Director is scheduled to work part-time five days per week and is not receiving health

insurance. Clerk Collins stated that the former Director was a 0.4 FTE and questioned the new Director's FTE.

The Board Members expressed some confusion regarding the fiscal year the budgets that were provided refer to. Board Member Bernier noted the fairly significant downward adjustments in the East Lyme Special Education (ELSPED), General, and Regular Education tuition costs.

## **9. LIAISON REPORTS**

Clerk Collins expressed the need to improve the communication between the Boards of Education and Finance and the role of the liaison, which, he felt, is to provide a brief report to the Board. While commending BOE Liaison Board Member Griggs, he felt that it was unfair to expect her to represent the BOE and be able to respond to the Board's questions. As such, he felt that a representative from the BOE should be attending their meetings to provide a report and respond to their questions. He felt that it was inefficient and a waste of time for her to provide a report to the Board and then return to the BOE with their questions and so on. Chairman Dickson stated that the role of a liaison is to gain insight into what the BOE is working on – it is an element that the Board was never aware of until the budget season. Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of sending a formal request to the BOE for one of their members to attend their meeting on a bi-monthly basis and provide an update and respond to any questions that might arise. The possibility of holding a workshop was also proposed. Chairman Dickson will speak with BOE Chairman Reith and return with a process for the future.

In the same respect, Clerk Collins also expressed the need for the District Office and Board of Education to work with the Town. More specifically, he questioned why the BOE is not working with the Town to source their oil for a lower cost and contact the Town before changing insurance broker's and consider the fiscal impact the change might have on the Town's finances.

**OLD BUSINESS:** *none*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**M/S/C: Rucci/Griggs, to adjourn the meeting at 9:52 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

**A VIDEO RECORD OF THE MEETING CAN BE FOUND ON THE TOWN'S WEBSITE UNDER BOARDS & COMMISSIONS – BOARD OF FINANCE – MEETING VIDEOS**