

**TOWN OF SALEM
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2023 – 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
Corinne (Cory) Bourgeois, Clerk
John Bernier
Deborah Cadwell
Janet Griggs
Matt Rucci
Kate Belleville, Alternate
Maryann Casciano, Alternate
James Moran, Alternate

ABSENT

none

ALSO PRESENT

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski
Finance Specialist Lisa Jablonski

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Dickson called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

The Board Members welcomed Board Member James Moran to the Board of Finance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS: *none*

SEAT ALTERNATE, IF NEEDED: *none*

COMMUNICATIONS:

- a. A copy of an e-mail from Board of Education (BOE) Chairman Sean Reith regarding correspondence received from the state concerning the MBR (Minimum Balance Requirement).

AGENDA:

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES: AUGUST 10, 2023 BOF REGULAR MEETING**
M/S/C: Cadwell/Griggs, to approve the August 10, 2023 Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

2. TREASURER'S REPORTS

A. REVENUE SUMMARY

B. TRIAL BALANCE

C. FUND BALANCE

Treasurer Pam Henry reviewed the *Balance Sheet* and *Budget vs. Actual* Reports. While very little in State and Federal Funds (Line Item 420000) were received during August, the town's Revenue Use of Town Money (Line Item 4-096) continues to be very active. The Auditors were at Town Hall this week reviewing the town's books and were at the School today. The Town Hall has been experiencing internet and telephone issues (Line Item 5-134-299, Town Office Operation, Computer Expense). In response to Board Member Casciano who questioned Line Item 5-222-013, Salem Volunteer Fire Company, GLVFC (Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company) Fire Fighting Equipment which is 251.3% expended, Finance Specialist Jablonski stated that she is aware that both of the fire companies are experiencing issues with their equipment; she will further investigate the matter.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS – none

4. FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

First Selectman Chmielewski welcomed Board Member Moran to the Board and thanked him for his service to the community. A successful Salem School opening was held and he was happy to greet the children with the Resident State Troopers on their first day of school. The Troopers continue to be present before and/or after school as often as possible. The School also welcomed approximately 30 new teachers. He recited his letter to the public announcing the presentation of the long-awaited Public Safety Services Analysis next Wednesday, September 20, at the Community Center at the Congregational Church of Salem. Emergency Management has been monitoring and preparing for the incoming storm. He has been meeting with the CT DEEP (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) regarding the ongoing issues at Gardner Lake State Park resulting in unexpected expenses to staff the Park with a Trooper and tow truck during the month of August. He plans to hold future discussions with the Boards of Selectmen and Finance regarding the possibility of allocating additional funds to provide additional coverage at the Park. The Selectmen — all of whom have agreed that great care should be taken in considering the matter — will be discussing their responses to Chairman Dickson's questions concerning the BOE's request for a non-lapsing account. He expressed his appreciation to the Board and Finance Department for ensuring a smooth audit and keeping the town in good financial standing.

Live Video Feed of Public Safety Analysis Presentation (Board Member Casciano) – While the meeting will not be broadcast live, he hoping to have a video recording of the presentation, which will be posted online following the meeting.

State Funding for Gardner Lake State Park (Board Member Rucci) – The town is working with the legislators to handle the ongoing issues at the Park and is maintaining an accounting of the related expenses. Because the Park is open 24/7, is located in the Town of Salem, and the state's staffing issues, the responsibility has fallen on the town. He plans to continue working with the Towns of Bozrah and Montville and state legislators regarding the ongoing issues.

5. **BOE (BOARD OF EDUCATION)**

a. MBR State Findings

According to the communication received from BOE Chairman Reith, the town's MBR has been negatively impacted as a result of the Board's decision to reduce the BOE's FY2023/24 budget. The communication states that "Salem was not eligible for a Resident Student Deduction (there was no decrease in their resident student count) and their ECS entitlement remained flat from the previous year so the appropriation for 2023-2024 would need to be at least what was appropriated for 2022-2023". Board Member Griggs stated that the largest change involved the state's repeal of the \$88,000.00 ECS (Education Cost Sharing) Grant reduction and the algorithm. She also stated that, in reviewing the total enrollment for the years in question, the state was correct in its determination. Board Member Bernier stated that the Board's decision was not related to its enrollment numbers. Rather it was based on the following section regarding *Permitted Longstanding MBR Reductions* of the Research Report titled *State Enforcement of the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR)*, issued by the Office of Legislative Research:

2. A town without a high school that pays tuition to other towns for its resident students to attend high school there and is paying for fewer students than it did in the previous year may reduce its MBR by the full amount of its lower tuition payments.

Board Member Bernier stated that the section was the crux of their decision to reduce the BOE budget, without repercussion, and reviewed the numbers upon which the Board based the reduction amount. Chairman Dickson proposed informing the BOE of how the reduction amount was determined, referring them to the above-mentioned section, and requesting that they relay the information to the state. Should the state disagree, a supplemental appropriation of \$22,657.00 will need to be made by June 30, 2024. The Board concurred with Chairman Dickson, who will send the correspondence, with the supporting document, to BOE Chairman Reith.

b. Non-Lapsing Account Update

As noted by the First Selectman, the questions were provided to the Board of Selectmen. In addition, Clerk Bourgeois forwarded the information she received from Sherri DiNello, Director of Government Affairs, CASBO (Connecticut Association of

School Business Officials); Sharon Bruce, Executive Director, CASBO, and; Marybeth Sullivan, Senior Legislative Attorney, Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Legislative Research. The Board is awaiting input from the CCM (Connecticut Council of Municipalities).

Board Member Bernier recalled Salem School District Business Manager Kim Gadaree's statement that the MBR is calculated against the appropriated, rather than expended amount. As such, should a supplemental appropriation be granted, the MBR would be raised. Whereas the funds included in a non-lapsing account would not affect the overall MBR. Discussion ensued regarding supplemental appropriations, referendums, town meetings, and the non-lapsing account and their possible effects on the MBR.

6. LIAISON REPORTS

a. EMERGENCY SERVICES

As announced by the First Selectman, the Public Safety Services Analysis will be presented to the public next Wednesday, September 20, at the Community Center at the Congregational Church of Salem.

b. BOE (Board of Education)

BOE Liaison Griggs reviewed her summary reports for the August 14 and September 11 BOE Regular Meetings. A full-time Director of Special Services was hired, based on the recommendations of the previous Director (0.45 FTE) who informed the administration that it was not possible to complete the necessary duties of the position as a part-time employee. Over the summer, the new Director drafted all of the necessary policies, met all of the children and their families, and held summer teacher workshops. The kindergarten registration numbers were lower than predicted resulting in the reduction of one class. The teacher hired for the position has been reassigned to supplement the school's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) program.

The new Facilities Director reviewed and physically inspected all of the school's systems, including their age and service history, and will be drafting a report of his findings as well as a replacement/repair plan with pricing estimates. Discussion ensued regarding the issues he discovered with the roof drainage system, which is draining into the school's septic system, which has caused issues in the back parking lot, where the leaching field is located, and the gymnasium floor. Board Member Bernier recalled that an architect was hired in, possibly, 2007, to review the school's mechanical systems before starting the school building project, which might prove helpful.

SPED (Special Education) Student Status (Chairman Dickson) – Line-item transfers were made to help offset some of the unanticipated SPED expenses.

AFSME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) Contract Negotiations (Board Member Casciano) – It will be confirmed what contract negotiations are being negotiated. The administration is currently negotiating with the custodial staff. As a result of staffing shortages, an outside cleaning company was hired, and an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) was drafted, which resulted in a modification of the current contract.

OLD BUSINESS – *none*

ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Rucci/Bourgeois, to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 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

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