

**TOWN OF SALEM
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2024 – 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

Corinne (Cory) Bourgeois, Clerk
Kate Belleville
John Bernier
Deborah Cadwell
Janet Griggs
Maryann Casciano, Alternate
James Moran, Alternate

ABSENT

William “Skip” Dickson, Chairman
Matt Rucci, Alternate

ALSO PRESENT

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski
Finance Specialist Lisa Jablonski

CALL TO ORDER

Clerk Bourgeois called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS: *none*

SEAT ALTERNATE, IF NEEDED:

Alternate Commissioner Casciano was seated for Chairman Dickson.

COMMUNICATIONS: *none*

AGENDA:

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: FEBRUARY 8, 2024 BOF REGULAR MEETING

M/S/C: Griggs/Bernier, to approve the February 8, 2024 Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes, with the following amendments:

Page 2, Item 1, Approval of Minutes

M/S/C: Griggs/Cadwell, to approve the January 25, 2024 Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes,...

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

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CALL TO ORDER

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RECOGNITION OF VISITORS: *none*

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COMMUNICATIONS: *none*

AGENDA:

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M/S/C: Griggs/Bernier, to approve the February 8, 2024 Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes, with the following amendments:
 - Page 2, Item 1, Approval of Minutes**
M/S/C: Griggs/Casciano Cadwell, to approve the January 25, 2024 Board of Finance Regular Meeting Minutes,...
Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

5. ACT ON PROPOSED APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2023-2024**A. #116 ASSESSOR**

Assessor Mike Kapinos presented the budget request for Department #116 – Assessor, with an increase of \$3,864.00 or 19.31% due to increased vendor costs, including the JD Power Pricing Guides, Grand List Binding, New England Geosystems Mapping (one-time expense), and Vision Government Solutions.

Line Item 5-116-205, Board of Assessment Appeals (Board Member Bernier) – The proposed amount for the line item should be adequate. The overage in previous years was absorbed by the Department's other line items.

B. #118 TAX COLLECTOR

Tax Collector Vivian Waters presented the budget for Department #118 – Tax Collector, with a flat budget. She reported that, as of this morning, the collection rate was 97.03%. The rate excludes approximately \$92,000.00 in back taxes. The unpaid motor vehicle tax payments (totaling approximately \$5,000.00), which were due in July, have been sent to the collection agency. The Point & Pay system to help streamline the payment process continues to be in progress.

Line Item 5-118-306, Conference/Mileage/Dues (Clerk Bourgeois) – The proposed amount for the line item should be adequate. She plans to attend a Regional Tax Collectors' Conference in the spring and the fall.

C. #158 LIBRARY

Library Director Shannon Henson presented the budget for Department #158 – Library, which includes an increase of \$2,830.00 or 6.61%. She provided a brief update, including the installation of an Art Wall, donated by the Friends of the Library, and the painting and installation of protective paneling in the small meeting room. The Library also instituted a Seed Library and Resource Center, which provides seeds, donated by UCONN, and informational handouts. She proceeded to provide a line-by-line review their proposed budget request. The increases derive from the costs of purchasing three (3) new computers, per their five-year replacement schedule, and a replacement printer and associated supplies; conference fee increases, and; increased prices for supplies and circulation materials, including an increase in fees for subscriptions, audio- and e-books, and streaming services.

Adult & Children's Programs (Board Member Casciano) – The Story Time programs and Take & Make Kits are being brought in-house. All other programs are funded by the Friends of the Library.

Circulation Materials (Board Member Casciano) – Their records reflect a 15% increase in circulation from FY2021/22 to FY2022/23. DVDs and Hoopla subscriptions have increased as have the patron counts and the number of programs and attendance has nearly quadrupled.

Anticipation of Decreased Use of Physical Materials (Board Member Bernier) – While she anticipates a decreased use of physical materials, she stated that the CDs and DVDs are increasing in circulation. Large print and children's books are also popular, followed by adult fiction books.

Replacement Printer (Clerk Bourgeois) – It may be possible to purchase the replacement printer through the current year's budget.

D. #220 GARDNER LAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT, CHIEF

GLVFCO Pete Silva presented the budget for Department #220 – Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company (a.k.a. Salem Fire Department), Chief, with a flat budget. The funds are used for mileage and, sometimes, uniforms.

#222 GARDNER LAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT

GLVFCO Pete Silva presented the budget for Department #222 – Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company (a.k.a. Salem Fire Department), with a decrease of \$2,085.00 or -2.35%. He reviewed the budget line-by-line as follows:

Line-Item 5-222-013, GLVFC Equipment – The line item is currently overbudget due to unexpected purchases, including thermal imaging cameras, a spectacle kit for the cameras, and batteries for their hydraulic rescue tool, i.e., jaws of life.

Adequacy of Funded Amount (Board Member Casciano) – The past years' overages are due to unexpected purchases.

Thermal Imaging Cameras (Clerk Bourgeois) – The new cameras are an upgraded version of their current cameras and are smaller, more easily held, provide a clearer image, and can be attached to their SCBA (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus). The life expectancy of the cameras is up to eight (8) years. The old cameras, which provide a view of a larger area, will continue to be used.

Line-Item 5-222-217, GLVFC Professional Fees – The line item includes costs for computer repairs and upgrades.

Line-Item 5-222-225, GLVFC Physicals – The Fire Company is working with a new company that provides physicals during the second half of the fiscal year for an average of \$300.00/person. Some of the members receive their physicals through the fire companies that they are employed with.

Company Used (Clerk Bourgeois) – The Salem Volunteer Fire Company receives its physicals from a different company that provides coverage for occupational hazards.

Physical Requirements (Board Member Casciano) – All responding members are required to have an annual physical. The level and cost of the physicals are dependent on the member's position.

Line-Item 5-222-478, GLVFC Expendables – The line item includes paper products, cleaning supplies, and dumpster service. While the full-time Firefighters/EMTs are no

longer stationed at the Firehouse, the space is used by other organizations, including Salem Little League, Girl Scouts, and Salem Seniors.

Line-Item 5-222-517, GLVFC Training – The line item was decreased by \$1,500.00 due to the adoption of ESO Fire Records Management System.

Line-Item 5-222-527, GLVFC Insurance – The funds have been expended; the remaining amount may be used to offset any overages in the remaining line items.

Line-Item 5-222-478, GLVFC Fire Wells – The line item was reduced by \$500.00, based on the previous years' expenditures.

Line-Item 5-222-612, GLVFC Vehicle Maintenance – The line item includes the annual inspections, pump tests and repairs, etc.

Line-Item 5-222-614, GLVFC Testing – The line item includes ladder testing for both Fire Companies, hose testing, OSHA testing, etc. The line item may also be moved to Department 240, Public Safety/Fire Marshal/Career FF/EOC.

Line-Item 5-222-629, GLVFC Radio Repair – The Board agreed to reduce the line item to \$1,000.00 in anticipation of the approval of the Capital Request for Radio Upgrades.

Line-Item 5-222-612, GLVFC Building Maintenance – Due to unexpected necessary repairs to the air conditioning system, water heater, and security camera system, the line item is currently over budget.

E. #222 SALEM VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

SFVCO Chief Gene Maiorano presented the budget for Department #222, Salem Volunteer Fire Company, with an increase of \$16,750.00 or 16.92%. The increases include:

Line-Item 5-222-018, SVFC Equipment – The line item was increased by \$1,000.00. They are preparing a \$90,000.00 FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) Grant for Gear Replacement and a Gear Washer. The total cost of the equipment is \$95,305.00. Should the grant be awarded, the town's share would be \$4,538.00. The Washer, which has a life expectancy of 15 to 18 years and is consistently used by both Fire Companies, is 23 years old and will take approximately 10 to 12 weeks to be delivered. They are also in need of new meters. One meter has been ordered and he is in the process of investigating the possibility of receiving a grant to help offset the cost. In addition, one of the vehicles is being serviced for new brakes. The Fire Company has expended approximately \$5,000.00 of its fundraising funds to help offset some of the costs.

Line-Item 5-222-218, SVFC Professional Fees – The line item was increased by \$3,500.00 to provide a salary for their Treasurer, who will be required to track the town's incentive plans.

Line-Item 5-222-222, SVFC Physicals – The line item was increased by \$500.00. The average cost for physicals is \$455.00+/person. Any overages would be allocated to equipment costs.

Line-Item 5-222-437, SVFC Supplies (Medical) – The line item remains flat.

Line-Item 5-222-438, SVFC Chief's Account – The line item reflects an increase of \$3,500.00 for mileage and gas.

Line-Item 5-222-477, SVFC Expendables – The line item was increased by \$2,750.00 to accommodate the additional staffing at the Firehouse.

Line-Item 5-222-529, SVFC Insurance – The line item was increased to accommodate an increase in coverage due to rising replacement costs for their trucks. A brief discussion ensued regarding the various options; the Board agreed to raise the coverage, further increasing the line-item to \$33,500.00. The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company will also investigate the possibility of increasing the coverage of their trucks.

Line-Item 5-222-618, SVFC Repair/Maintenance of Equipment – The line item includes an increase of \$9,000.00 to accommodate the added maintenance and repair costs as a result of the use of the equipment on a more regular basis by the career staff. The Public Works Foreman has agreed to maintain the smaller vehicles. A brief discussion ensued regarding the possibility of reducing the increase.

Line-Item 5-222-619, SVFC Testing – The line item was reduced to \$4,000.00 in anticipation of the ladder testing being moved to Department 240, Public Safety/Fire Marshal/Career FF/EOC.

Line-Item 5-222-518, SVFC Training – The line item was decreased by \$1,500.00 due to the adoption of the ESO Fire Records Management System.

Line-Item 5-222-622, SVFC Radio Repair – The line item was reduced to \$1,000.00 in anticipation of the approval of the Capital Request for Radio Upgrades. The amount includes the cost of batteries, repairs, etc.

The Board agreed to maintain the costs for Building Maintenance in the Fire Company's budget (included in line items 5-222-218, SVFC Professional Fees, and 5-222-477, SVFC Expendables). An additional line item for Building Maintenance will be added for clarity.

F. #230 AMBULANCE

GLVCO Chief Pete Silva presented the budget for Department #230, Ambulance, with a decrease of \$1,000.00 or -3.47% due to a reduction in line items 2-230-519, Training, as a result of their transition to the ESO Platform, and 5-230-623, Radio Repair in anticipation of the approval of the Capital Request for Radio Upgrades.

Ambulance Staffing (Board Member Casciano) – There are currently approximately 12 (twelve) individuals available for ambulance service.

Status of New Ambulance (Board Members Bourgeois and Casciano) – A new Ambulance has been spec'd out and they have been placed on the waiting list while the details are being finalized over the next month. The new Ambulance is estimated to cost \$400,000.00 through Life Line Emergency Vehicles and is estimated to take two years to be delivered. No down payment will be required until the vehicle is ready for production. A final estimate/contract will be provided to the Board.

Condition of Current Ambulance (Board Member Casciano) – The current ambulance continues to be in good condition. He is investigating the possibility of selling the current ambulance; the trade-in value was lower than expected.

F. #240 PUBLIC SAFETY/FM/CAREER FF/EOC

Fire Marshal Tom Main presented the budget for Department #240, Public Safety/FM (Fire Marshal)/Career FF (Firefighters)/EOC (Emergency Operations Center), with an increase of \$32,064.00 or 23.16%. Before discussing the details of the budget, he presented the following Proposed Budget Realignment:

From Line Item	To Department #240
5-240-220, 911 Emergency Contract	\$ 19,836.00
5-222-432, Fire Wells	\$ 2,000.00
5-222-614, GLVFC Testing	\$ 6,500.00
5-222-619, SVFC Testing	\$ 1,700.00 *

Similarly, should the Capital Request for the Radio Equipment/System Upgrade be approved, he proposed that the following line items be reduced by \$1,000.00:

- 5-230-629, GLVFC Radio Repair
- 5-230-623, Ambulance, Radio Repair
- 5-222-622, SVFC Radio Repair *

* The SVFCO Proposed Budget included the reductions.

The remaining items may be maintained under the Department.

He proceeded to review the proposed budget line-by-line:

Line Item 5-240-421, Civil Preparedness Expense/Emergency Management, which includes EPA Consumables/Meetings/Supplies, Staff Stipends, Everbridge Contract, Civic Plus (Town Website), EOC Operations/Equipment/Maintenance, and Training/Planning/Public Service Announcement (PSA) media, was increased by \$5,900.00 or 48%.

Line Item 5-240-420, Fire Marshal Expense, includes an increase of \$2,900.00 for mandatory training classes, office supplies, memberships, subscriptions, and Salem School Fire Prevention supplies.

Line Item 5-240-920, Fire Police, remains flat.

Line Item 5-240-951, Fire Training Building, includes an increase of \$2,500.00 to accommodate for the replacement of the steel in the burn room. The final amount could be reduced by any donations and in-kind services that are received from the fire companies who utilize the building. The increase is a one-time cost.

Line Item 5-240-952, Training Career FF/EMT, remains flat.

Line Item 5-240-960, Gear, remains flat. The Gear was moved last year, reducing the line item. The remaining funds were utilized to purchase t-shirts and sweatshirts for the Career Staff.

Line Item 5-240-625, Alarm Maintenance, remains flat.

Previous Years' Actuals (Clerk Bourgeois) – Finance Specialist Jablonski stated that the annual alarm maintenance and testing are conducted in the spring and repairs are necessary to part of the system due to ongoing malfunctions, which result in overtime costs. Emergency Management Director Mike Bednarz stated that, due to other upgrades, the system should also be upgraded. Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of reducing the line item and including some of the costs in the current year's budget.

Line Item 5-240-970, On-Call Nominal Fees, includes an increase of \$20,000.00.

Emergency Services Liaison Selectman Ron LaBonte provided the status of the On-Call Nominal Fees Agreement between the Board of Selectmen, the Town, and the GLVFCO, which was canceled in March 2023 and expired in June 2023. No funds from the line item, which was moved from Department #230, Ambulance, to Department #240, Public Safety/EM/Career FF/EOC, have been expended due to ongoing negotiations, which began in April 2023. The Board of Selectmen is holding the Fire Company accountable for an Audit and requested that the Board of Finance do the same. The Fire Company receives significant funding from ambulance transports and the Town has been requesting an Audit for several years to determine the status of their accounts. While they eventually agreed to an Audit, they are not allowing the Auditors to access their books. Nevertheless, the Selectmen Liaisons, Fire Marshal, and Emergency Management Director continue to move forward with the recommendations provided in the MRI (Municipal Resources, Inc.) Public Safety Services Analysis, a.k.a. MRI Study to enhance their emergency services and are requesting additional funding for the line item to provide stipends to those who volunteer and provide coverage to the Town during the weekends. Should the Agreement become finalized, the stipends may be provided to the Fire Company, retroactively. He added that part of the Agreement included that they set aside funds for the purchasing of an Ambulance every ten (10) years. Their current Ambulance is 13 years of age. He also cited the letter the Fire Company mailed just before the election, which stated that "The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company is a private corporation.... Nowhere does it give the Town the right to audit a private corporation that provides service to the town residents." While the Fire Company owns

the building, it generates significant revenue and is provided funding by the Town's taxpayers without any fiscal accountability. Furthermore, the Fire Company filed an amended complaint to the pending lawsuit regarding the On-Call Nominal Fee stipend payments. He encouraged the Board of Finance to join the Board of Selectmen in holding the Fire Company accountable.

The First Selectman added that the additional funding would also be used to provide stipends to the Volunteer Firefighters and Fire Police who respond to Calls for Service.

Primary Service Area (PSA) Requirement (Board Member Bernier) – The First Selectman stated that the Fire Company currently owns the PSA to provide Ambulance Service to the Town while the Salem Volunteer Fire Company owns the R1 PSA to provide First Responders. He echoed Selectman LaBonte's comments regarding the significant amount of funds they surmise the Fire Company currently has based on the ten-year Ambulance-Replacement Plan.

Town Charter and Agreement Contents (Clerk Bourgeois) – Currently, there are no Agreements between the Town and the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company.

Repercussions if the Department is not Funded (Board Member Belleville) – The Company has been providing the stipends through its own funds and submitting a quarterly invoice to the Town for reimbursement. The invoices have not been paid over the last three quarters, totaling approximately \$65,000.00 to \$75,000.00. First Selectman Chmielewski stated that, at a recent Board of Selectmen Meeting, Horace Lindo, representing the Fire Company as its Public Affairs Officer, stated that the Fire Company is responsible for providing Ambulance Services to the Town regardless of whether they are receiving funding from the Town. He added that there is no other Town in Eastern Connecticut that funds their Ambulance Service. Rather, a portion of the Ambulance income is provided to the Town they serve to pay the volunteers, new ambulance, and, sometimes, the Town.

Finance Specialist Jablonski added that the Town provides funding to the Fire Company that is not included in their departmental budget. Totalling approximately \$200,000.00 to 451,000.00/year, these items include utility costs, capital items, and fuel.

Board Member Casciano expressed her dismay and proposed tabling their proposed budget request, adding that, while she understands the situation, the Town-owned vehicles are stored at their facility and their volunteers respond to the Calls for Service.

Line Item 5-240-220a, 911 Emergency Contracts, includes an increase of \$6,664.00 due to the addition of the Scheduling and Training Modules and onboarding of the GLVFCO to the ESO Program. The cost of the Program is based on the call volume and, as such, is fluid. The system allows Fire Companies and Fire Marshal records to streamline their records. It was noted that \$4,000.00 of the increase was moved from the Fire Departments' budgets (Line Items 5-230-519, Ambulance, Training, \$1,000.00; 5-222-

517, GLVFC Training, \$1,500.00, and; 5-222-518, SVFC Training, \$1,500.00). A new line-item number will be created, eliminating the “a”, and will be placed under the Fire Marshal budget.

The following line-items were presented by Emergency Management Director Bednarz:

Line Item 5-240-020, Communication Equipment, includes a \$3,000.00 increase due to cost increases. The line item includes the annual maintenance costs for the towers, monthly fees for communication services, Civic Plus (Town Website), Radio Licenses/Radios/Pagers/Repair, and Professional Fees/Programs/Training. The towers have not been tested or inspected for three (3) years due to the pandemic and subsequent difficulties in locating a specialist to conduct the work.

Line Item 5-240-220, 911 Emergency Contracts, remains flat. The line item includes the QVEC Dispatch Center and I Am Responding for both Fire Companies; both are Emergency Management-related. The ESO Record Management Program and I Am Responding Programs, totaling \$28,500.00, which are Emergency Services-related items, may be moved to the Fire Marshal’s budget.

Line Item 5-240-421, Civil Preparedness, includes a \$5,900.00 increase. The line item includes EPA Consumables/Meetings/Supplies and Staff Stipends, Everbridge Contract, Civic Plus, EOC Operations/Equipment/Maintenance, and Training/Planning/Public Service Announcement (PSA) media. The increase includes the setup and recurring costs for cyber-security and training and certification fees. They are in the process of organizing the details of the certifications and training some of the staff receive through their primary employment.

Grants (Clerk Bourgeois) – Due to a lack of staffing, the search for available grants has been less than ideal.

Extensive discussion ensued regarding the budget request increase in the line item. Emergency Management Director Bednarz stated the importance of housing a trained staff and improving their communication with the public and other entities. The Board Members agreed to reduce the line item by \$3,500.00 and requested additional information and more exact numbers.

The realignment of funds was reviewed as follows:

<i>from</i> Line-Item	<i>to</i> Line-Item	Amount
5-222-432, GLVFC Fire Wells	5-240-625, Alarm Maintenance	\$ 1,500.00
5-222-614, GLVFC Testing	5-240-625, Alarm Maintenance	\$ 6,500.00
5-222-619, SVFC Testing*	5-240-625, Alarm Maintenance	\$ 1,500.00
TOTAL		\$ 9,500.00

* The item was already deducted from the FY2024/25 Proposed Department 222, Salem Fire Department Budget. The line item includes both the ladder and hose testing.

The revised line items in the proposed FY2024/25 Budget for Department 240, Public Safety/FM/Career FF/EOC, were as follows:

Line-Item	Revised Amount
5-240-625, Alarm Maintenance (<i>to be changed to Testing/Maintenance</i>)	\$ 17,500.00
5-240-421, Civil Preparedness	\$ 14,800.00

M/S/C: Cadwell/Bernier, to approve the appropriation of funds for the following departments, subject to review and/or revision and pending approval at the Board of Finance's March 21, 2024 Regular Meeting:

Department	FY2024/25 Proposed Budget
#116 – Assessor	\$ 24,964.00
#118 – Tax Collector	\$ 13,500.00
#158 – Library	\$ 45,630.00
#220 – Gardner Lake/Salem Volunteer Fire Companies, Chief's Account	\$ 2,500.00
#222 – Gardner Lake/Salem Volunteer Fire Companies	\$ 191,681.00
#230 – Ambulance	\$ 26,854.00
#240 – Public Safety	\$ 219,964.00

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

G. #210 SECURITY (*deferred from previous meeting*)

First Selectman Chmielewski presented a revised budget sheet and supporting documentation for Department #210, Security, as requested. The projected salaries and overhead costs for the Resident State Troopers and estimated overtime costs for Salem School, Gardner Lake Park, and Boat Launch Area, Emergencies/Storms/Special Assignments, Community Policing, and Town events were provided.

Projected Overhead Costs of \$124,268.00 (Clerk Bourgeois) – The costs include 85% of the Resident State Troopers' ammunition, training, pension, and vehicle costs. He noted that the Town's Junior Trooper has also moved up one step.

Gardner Lake Park & Boat Launch Area Cost of \$87,890.00 (Clerk Bourgeois) – The Town is partnering with CT DEEP (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection), State Senator and Representatives, the Montville Mayor, Bozrah First Selectman, and Gardner Lake Authority to resolve and monitor the Park. Board Member Bernier stated the need for the Town to fund the item and handle the issues at the Park and the importance of the townspeople expressing their dismay and pressuring the State to take more responsibility. Board Member Casciano recommended the First Selectman inform the public regarding the costs of handling the issues at the State Park at the Budget Public Hearing and Town Meeting.

The Board Members agreed to reduce the proposed amount for line-item 5-210-216, Resident Troopers from \$442,513.00 to \$384,881.00.

M/S/C: Cadwell/Bernier, to approve the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$387,981.00 for Department #210 – Security, subject to review and/or revision, pending approval at the Board of Finance’s March 21, 2024 Regular Meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

4. STATUS OF DEDICATION SCRIPTS AND PHOTOS FOR ANNUAL REPORT

Board Member Griggs reported that she has sent the Dedication to Eric Belt to the Chairman.

Finance Specialist Jablonski reported that the Auditors have filed the Audit.

OLD BUSINESS: *none*

ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Griggs/Belleville, to adjourn the meeting at 11:02 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**