

**TOWN OF SALEM  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.**

Per State of Connecticut, Governor Lamont Executive Order Number 7B,  
the Town of Salem Board of Finance Meeting will be following the suspension of  
in-person open meeting requirements. Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://zoom.us/j/91693774984?pwd=OGk1Q2NSbmEvRjY4K2dtMzE4NDBwZz09>

**Password:** 863733

Or Via **Telephone:**

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**PRESENT**

William “Skip” Dickson, Chairman  
Marshall Collins, Clerk  
Corinne (Cory) Bourgeois  
Deborah Cadwell  
Maryann Casciano  
Janet Griggs  
John Bernier, Alternate

**ABSENT**

Joseph Duncan, Alternate  
Dean Wojcik, Alternate

**ALSO PRESENT**

First Selectman Kevin Lyden

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Dickson called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**AGENDA:**

**1. MEETING – PUBLIC HEARING FOR FY2021/22 BUDGET**

**M/S/C: Collins/Casciano, to open the Public Hearing for the FY2021/22 Budget.**

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

Chairman Dickson provided a brief overview of the public hearing, which included brief presentations of the budget process; the Capital, General Government, and Board of Education (BOE) budgets, and; the public’s comments. The public hearing will be followed by the following events:

April 8, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Board of Finance Regular Meeting  
*Public Hearing comments will be considered  
and the FY2021/22 budget will be finalized*

May 5, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Annual Town Meeting

*Residents will vote to send the FY2021/22 to Referendum; Proposed budget amounts may only be approved or reduced.*

May 12, 2021, 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Referendum

All of the boards, commissions, and departments presented their proposed budgets before the Board and some alterations were made. A history of the town's mil rate, which is currently 32.2, was presented and an explanation regarding the impact of the cuts the town has experienced over the past several years by the State, including significant cuts to the town's Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) Grant Funding, Resident State Trooper program, and Uncas Health District funding, was provided. The State has agreed to maintain the town's current funding for the time being, but its future funding is unknown.

The budget is divided into three parts:

#### CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

The Capital Plan Budget for FY2021/22 includes large expenditures for the BOE, Library, Recreation, Public Works, and Public Safety Departments (Fire Companies, Ambulance). For planning purposes, the Board maintains a Ten-Year Capital Plan that maintains a steady, balanced amount from year to year. The Capital Plan budgets for FY2022/23 and FY2023/24 are currently over the Board's ideal amount.

#### GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET

The General Government Budget includes the Selectmen's Operating Budgets, the 18 Boards and Commissions Budgets, and the town's Principal and Interest.

#### BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE) BUDGET

The BOE Budget includes the education costs for the town's students. While the Board proposes the total funding amount for the BOE, the BOE controls how those funds are allocated within their budget.

The proposed amounts for each of the budgets are as follows:

General Government	\$ 4,191,824.00
Board of Education	\$ 11,050,886.00
<u>Capital Expenditures</u>	<u>\$ 1,130,972.00</u>
	<b>\$ 16,373,682.00</b>

#### CAPITAL PLAN BUDGET

##### Board of Education

Funding for the Replacement of the Salem School 1994 Roof Top and HVAC Units has been partially allocated. To receive reimbursement from the State for the project, funding for the entirety of the project must be authorized by the town. One of the items on the Referendum will include the approval of the re-funding, i.e., refinancing, of the bond for the

School Renovation and the inclusion of the project as part of the re-funding. Upon approval, the line item will be removed from the Capital Plan and the amount will be moved to the town's Principal and Interest.

Other items include the replacement of the Milestone Video Recording Server, Library Carpet Replacement, Gym Sound System Replacement, and an Independent Technology Analysis. The Analysis will be utilized to develop a long-term plan for the School's technology needs such that it may be evenly allocated and, thus, more predictable.

The total amount of funding for the Board of Education's Capital Expenses is \$113,794.00, excluding the Salem School Roof/HVAC Replacement.

#### Recreation Department

Funding of \$23,499.00 is being proposed for the Recreation Department's Disc Golf Course.

#### Public Works Department

The Public Works Department's Capital Plan requests, totaling \$764,679.00, includes the replacement for the Bucket Truck; Large Plow Truck (continuing payment); Field Groomer; Road Improvements, which is funded annually to help maintain the town's roads, ensure less costly upgrades, and avoid bonding costs; Bingham Field Restoration, which is spread out over three years and was moved from the BOE budget in FY2020/21 to help reduce their costs, and; the completion of the Town Hall Fuel Tanks/Generator project, which will be partially funded by a STEAP Grant (Small Town Economic Assistance Program).

#### Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company (GLFVCO)

Funding of \$10,000.00 is being proposed for the GLFVCO for the replacement of Fire Fighting Turnout Gear and Hose.

#### Salem Volunteer Fire Company (SVFCO)

The SVFCO's Capital Plan requests, totaling \$134,000.00, include the continuing payment for the Engine Tanker and Replacement Gear and Hose.

#### Salem Free Public Library

Funding of \$85,000.00 is being proposed for the completion of the Library's HVAC System Replacement.

### **GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET**

A review of the adjustments that were made to the General Government's proposed budget was presented. The adjustments include increases to the Salaries, Municipal Building Maintenance, Employee Benefits, Town Services, Transfer Station, Economic Development, and Planning & Zoning Departments and decreases to the Registrar, Town Counsel, Recreation Commission, Interest Payments, and Revaluation Departments. The \$133,816.00 increase in Salaries (Department 105) includes, in general, a 3% increase. The primary increases are for the Public Works Department (Line Item 5-105-116) and

EMT/Maintenance (Line Item 5-105-121). The Public Works Department, which has been working with one less employee, includes an increase to accommodate the hiring of a Manager/Foreman, who will work directly under the Public Works Director, and aid in the smooth transition should the Director retire in the future. The job has been posted and several applications have been received. The EMT/Maintenance line item has been consistently underfunded and the position requires a minimum amount of training. A full-time employee was recently hired and the part-time employees will continue to backfill the position, as necessary. The line item is expected to continue to rise as the number of volunteers continues to decrease. While the town's volunteers are greatly appreciated, the training, time, and commitment necessary to serve have proved difficult.

### **BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE) BUDGET**

BOE Chairman Sean Reith presented the SY2021/22 BOE Budget Book, which is available on the Salem School website and includes the modifications that were made following the Board of Finance's approved proposed budget increase of \$75,000.00 or 0.68%. The budget is divided into four sections:

Salem School (Pre-K to Grade 8)	\$ 6,138,769.00
District Central Office	\$ 881,198.00
East Lyme High School Program	\$ 3,271,979.00
<u>Out of District Services</u>	<u>\$ 758,940.00</u>
	<b>\$ 11,050,886.00</b>

The Salem School (Pre-K to Grade 8) Budget is comprised of salaries and wages, benefits, services, special education services, program improvements, staff development, utilities, building maintenance, repairs, instructional repairs, transportation, maintenance supplies, instructional supplies, support programs, library/media, and new and replacement of equipment. The Salem School Budget reflects an increase of \$148,092.00 or 2.47%.

The District Central Office Budget is comprised of salaries, benefits, services purchased, tuition (for Adult Education), and supplies. The District Central Office Budget reflects an increase of \$92,692.00 or 11.76%.

The East Lyme High School Program, which includes tuition costs, transportation, and special education services, reflects an increase of \$67,145.00 or 2.10%.

The Out of District Services, which includes the tuition and transportation costs, reflects a decrease of \$232,929.00 or 23.48%.

Chairman Dickson reiterated the budget schedule, adding that, should the budget referendum pass, the Board of Finance will meet and set the mil rate. Should the budget fail, the Board will revisit and revise the proposed budget and the budget process will begin again. He provided a brief description of the town's revenues.

## **REVENUES**

The town's revenues, in addition to income received through taxes, include:

Town Services – includes licenses, permits, library fees and fines, recording fees, interest, etc.

State Grants – includes funds received through PiLOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes), LoCIP (Local Capital Improvement Program, TAR (Town Aid Roads), and Mohegan-Pequot Funds.

State Grants for Education – includes Adult Education and Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Funds.

Federal COVID-19 Funding

The town's taxes are determined by subtracting the town's revenues from its expenditures. Based on the town's current Grand List, one mil is equal to \$385,749.00. To determine the taxes for a piece of property, the net assessment is multiplied by the mil rate (currently 32.2 or \$32.20 per \$1,000.00).

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

David Bingham, White Birch Road, stated the presumption that the new mil rate would be based on the new real estate values to be determined by the revaluation that the town is currently engaged in.

In response, Chairman Dickson stated that the mil rate will be based on the current year's Grand List; the revaluation will affect the budget for the following year.

Sue Spang, Hartford Road, requested that the following items be remedied before the Annual Town Meeting:

- percentage amount in the variance column for Department 105, Line Item 5-105-100, Salaries – Acting Selectman
- comments/clarifications to state that “prior to 2009, the line item was funded at \$10,000.00 *for the four (4) Selectmen.*”, per the Board's previous meeting discussion.

She expressed her opposition to paying the Acting First Selectman an annual stipend, stating that, to the best of her knowledge, the role of the Acting First Selectman is to come into the office to sign the check register for Accounts Payable and Payroll. A signature, she added, that could derive from any of the four Selectmen. She also compared his/her role with the BOE Treasurer, who signs each of the checks, totaling \$11 million, and the Registrars of Voters, who are required to have office hours and receive less compensation. She did not feel that the elected position should be receiving any monetary compensation, especially in light of the time and responsibility the position requires. She also questioned whether the Director of Emergency Services is a paid position, the amount the individual is paid, and from which line item the funds are allocated. Lastly, she questioned whether Resident State

Trooper Chris Pariseau's position would be replaced by a Trooper of lesser rank saving the town additional funds.

In response, First Selectman Lyden stated that Director of Emergency Services Mike Bednarz, whose hours vary, is paid an hourly rate out of the EMT/Maintenance line (Department 105, Line Item 5-105-121 – Salaries, EMT/Maintenance). Chairman Dickson stated that there could be cost savings earned from the replacement of the Resident State Trooper, but that savings would not be realized until the end of the fiscal-year when the invoice is received from the State.

David Bingham, White Birch Road, expressed his primary interest in preserving the BOE's budget and requested that explanations be provided should any of the Board Members wish to decrease the BOE budget.

Sue Spang, Hartford Road, questioned how the Town Meeting and the votes will be handled.

Chairman Dickson stated that the Town Meeting will be held virtually via Zoom, per Sector Rules, in a similar fashion to tonight's Public Hearing and a roll call vote will be taken. First Selectman Lyden confirmed the process, adding that a roll call vote regarding the following questions will be taken:

- 1) acceptance of the FY2021/22 Capital Plan
- 2) approval to submit the funding of the School HVAC/Roof Repair for \$1,050,000.00, which will be included as part of the re-funding of the current School Renovation bond, to referendum
- 3) approval to submit the Annual Town Budget to referendum

The votes will be validated and a mechanism will be in place allowing multiple individuals calling in or joining the meeting from one location to voice their vote. He also reported that new information was recently received from the Governor regarding absentee voting.

TJ Butcher, Norwich Road, commended the Board and the public on the presentation and subsequent questions and comments. He felt that the smooth process of this evening's public hearing reflects the fact that the public is very comfortable with the proposed budget and hopes that the Board will maintain the budget as is, ensuring a smooth Town Meeting and Referendum.

First Selectman Lyden thanked and commended the Boards of Finance and Education during these difficult times. He commended BOE Chairman Reith on a nice presentation and Superintendent Joseph Onofrio for his hard work and efforts during his tenure with the Salem School District. He reported that he has spoken with the Town of Marlborough, which is also seeking a 0.45 FTE Superintendent and has received 17 applications for the

position. As such, he recommended maintaining the Superintendent position at 0.45 FTE and allocating the remaining funds to the children.

Clerk Collins stated the difficulty in determining the amount and allocation of Federal funds that are expected to be received by the town. At this time, it appears that the town will be receiving approximately \$403,000.00 and the Board of Education will be receiving approximately \$181,000.00 in addition to \$56,000.00 in ESSERII (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) Funds. He requested that the Board be informed of any information either by the First Selectman or BOE Chairman regarding these funds for planning purposes.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to close the Public Hearing at 8:18 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