

**TOWN OF SALEM
BOARD OF FINANCE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.**

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PRESENT

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

ABSENT

Maryann Casciano, Alternate

ALSO PRESENT

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Dickson called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

Newly-elected Board Member Rucci was welcomed to the Board of Finance.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:

Diba Khan-Bureau, Hilltop Trail
Sue Spang, Hartford Road

COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Copy of a letter from Salem Democratic Town Committee Chairman Thomas (TJ) Butcher, dated November 10 and received November 18, addressed to the members of the Board of Finance, First Selectman Chmielewski, and Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman Vernon Smith stating the procedure for the filling of vacancies on a board/commission
2. Copy of a letter from Salem Democratic Town Committee Chairman Butcher, dated November 10, recommending David Bingham to fill the Alternate Board Member vacancy

3. Copy of a letter from Board of Finance Clerk Collins, dated November 19, addressed to and in response to Salem Democratic Town Committee Chairman Butcher correcting his statement(s) regarding the procedure for the filling of vacancies per the Secretary of State
4. Copy of a letter from Salem Democratic Town Committee Chairman Butcher regarding the appointment of Board of Finance Alternate Member Bernier, which the Salem Democratic Town Committee feels “was unethical on the part of both the BOF [Board of Finance] and the BOS [Board of Selectmen], violates the SMSA [Salem Minority Sharing Agreement] (formerly known as the ‘Gentleman’s Agreement’[sic]) and violates the minority representation rules.”

Clerk Collins explained that, because the party of the individual must meet the minority representation requirements, a Republican was precluded from being appointed to the position. It is the responsibility of the Democratic and Republican Town Committees to recommend candidates for vacancies. Per the Town Charter and State Statutes, it is the responsibility of the boards and commissions to fill the vacancies; should the board or commission not fill the vacancy within 30 days, the responsibility is transferred to the Board of Selectmen. Because the Board of Finance did not act within the required 30-day period, the responsibility fell on the Board of Selectmen who proceeded to appoint Alternate Board Member Bernier.

5. Copy of a letter from Alternate Board Member Bernier in response to Salem Democratic Town Committee Chairman Butcher’s letter, correcting the letter’s inaccuracies.

AGENDA:

1. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sue Spang, Hartford Road, recited her letter, submitted for the record, in support of David Bingham for the Board of Finance Alternate position. She cited the Democratic Town Committee’s support for the appointment of Mr. Bingham, an experienced individual who has shown an interest in serving on the Board, as evidenced by his past and recent candidacies, and stated the process which must be followed to fill the position, adding that the appointment of an individual recruited by the Board, itself, would “violate the public pronouncements from the leader of the Republican Town Committee to put election hostilities behind us and work together for the betterment of Salem.”

In response, Clerk Collins stated that he received a statement from the Office of Legislative Research via Democratic Town Committee Chairman Butcher, which states that “the Statutes do not appear to explicitly require appointing authorities to appoint a replacement belonging to the state political party as the member vacating a municipal board or commission.” He agreed that the vacancy must be filled by a member of a non-Republican party and they are obligated to receive and consider the Republican or Democratic Town Committees recommendations. The ultimate responsibility to fill the vacancy lies with the

members of the board/commission. Should the board/commission feel that there is a more qualified, willing, and able candidate to serve on the board/commission, it is their responsibility to appoint that individual.

Diba Khan-Bureau, 40 Hilltop Trail, also expressed her support for Mr. Bingham to serve as an Alternate Member of the Board of Finance, stating that he is a long-time Salem resident who has served the town in many capacities. She concurred with both Ms. Spang and Democratic Town Committee Chairman Butcher that the position should be filled by a non-Republican member of the community. Mr. Bingham has the qualifications, has shown great interest in serving on the Board, and should be considered for the position.

Leslie Hotary, Harris Road Ext., a 16-year resident of the town, also spoke in favor of the appointment of Mr. Bingham and echoed the comments made by Democratic Town Committee Chairman Butcher, Ms. Spang, and Ms. Khan-Bureau. She added that Mr. Bingham is not only qualified and interested in serving on the Board, but would also provide the Board with diversity; the appointment of an Unaffiliated individual who leans Republican would not create a diverse committee. As such, she felt that it would not only be their responsibility, but also in their best interest to appoint a Democratic candidate.

2. ELECT CHAIRMAN AND CLERK

M/S/C: Collins/Cadwell, to nominate and re-elect Chairman Dickson as the Chairman of the Board of Finance. There being no additional nominations, Chairman Dickson closed the nominations. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 6-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Board Members Bourgeois, Cadwell, Collins, Griggs, Rucci, and Dickson.

M/S/C: Dickson/Cadwell, to nominate and re-elect Clerk Collins as the Clerk of the Board of Finance. There being no additional nominations, Chairman Dickson closed the nominations. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 4-2. Voting in Favor: Board Members Bourgeois, Cadwell, Collins, and Dickson. Voting in Opposition: Board Members Griggs and Rucci.

3. APPOINT ALTERNATE MEMBER

Chairman Dickson, in response to Democratic Town Committee Chairman Butcher's letter regarding the appointment of Alternate Board Member Bernier, clarified that, in his recollection, he spoke with and requested from then-Democratic Town Committee Chairman John Houchin for a recommendation to fill the vacancy and received a response after the required 30-day period. It is not the Board's goal to prohibit the receipt of any recommendations from either the Democratic or Republican Town Committees.

M: Collins, to nominate Kate Belleville as an Alternate Member of the Board of Finance.

M: Griggs, to nominate David Bingham as an Alternate Member of the Board of Finance.

There being no additional nominations, Chairman Dickson closed the nominations. Discussion: Clerk Collins stated that Ms. Belleville, a Democrat, is a 26-year resident of the town who has raised her three children in the Town of Salem. He provided a brief background of her education and experience in the health industry. She is an active member of the community, a centrist, and a very forward-looking individual who would bring a lot to the table. Board Member Griggs stated that Mr. Bingham has invested a tremendous amount of time researching issues and presenting well-documented information which the Board chose not to allow her to present. She felt that Mr. Bingham is a very involved and committed individual whom she fully supports. She also commented on the importance of having diversity on the Board and believed that discussing all sides, listening to each other, and developing a compromise is the best way to meet the needs of the town; the Board would be doing a disservice to the town if they are not fully discussing the full spectrum of the issues before them. While Board Member Bourgeois agreed and encouraged the Board to be diverse in all aspects, she is also a proponent of providing new people with the opportunity to join, serve, and contribute to the town's boards and commissions by enlightening and presenting them with new ideas, regardless of his/her party. They are one town, one community, and one team, looking out for the citizens of Salem. Board Member Bernier added, in response to comments regarding the idea that unaffiliated voters do not represent diversity, that the political make-up of the Town of Salem is such that there are nearly more Unaffiliated individuals residing in the Town than there are Democrats and Republicans combined. As such, the notion that Unaffiliated members of the community should be excluded or are not representative of a diverse opinion is a fallacy. Roll Call vote, 4-2, in Favor of Kate Belleville. Voting in Favor of Kate Belleville: Board Members Bourgeois, Cadwell, Collins, and Dickson. Voting in Favor of David Bingham: Board Members Griggs and Rucci. Kate Belleville was appointed as an Alternate Member of the Board of Finance.

ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Collins/Bourgeois, to adjourn the meeting at 6:37 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