

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
REGULAR MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2020, 7:00 P.M.  
MEETING ROOM 1, SALEM TOWN HALL**

**PRESENT**

Kevin Lyden  
Edward Chmielewski, Jr.  
Ron LaBonte  
Hugh McKenney  
Terri Salas

**ABSENT**

*none*

**CALL TO ORDER**

First Selectman Lyden called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

**1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. Tuesday, October 6, 2020 Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting**

**M/S/C: Chmielewski/LaBonte, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of Thursday, October 6, 2020, with the following amendments:**

**Page 5, Item 5(B), 2nd Paragraph, 1st Sentence:**

...the Director of Student Services Donna Gittleman has also announced her retirement, effective August ~~2020~~ 2021.

**Page 6, Item 5(D), 1st Paragraph, last Sentence:**

~~She~~ *Selectwoman Salas* stated that she would voice his concerns to the Commission and....

**Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.**

**ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA:**

Agenda Item 4(F), Executive Session, was moved to follow Item 5, Reports.

**3. CORRESPONDENCE/PUBLIC COMMENTS**

*E-mail public comment to [SelectmenPublicComment@salemct.gov](mailto:SelectmenPublicComment@salemct.gov) prior to 7:10 p.m.*

No comments were received via e-mail or the white dropbox located in front of Town Hall.

First Selectman Lyden reported that he received several positive verbal comments regarding the organization of the elections. Present on Election Day were Selectman & Moderator McKenney and both of the town's Resident State Troopers. He thanked everyone for their hard work and efforts and for creating a very smooth and seamless process. Selectman Chmielewski also commended Selectman & Moderator McKenney and his staff for organizing a very safe and successful election process. Selectman & Moderator McKenney thanked Registrar of Voters Betsy Butts and Deputy Registrar of Voters Doris Burr on a phenomenal job.

**4. AGENDA:**

**A. Approve the Meeting Dates for 2021** (Discussion & Action)

**M/S/C: LaBonte/Salas, to approve the proposed Meeting Dates for 2021. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.**

**B. COVID-19 Update** (Discussion)

First Selectman Lyden reported that the town graduated to Phase III for a short period, we have rolled back to Phase II after being designated as a 'red' zone. The town has since been upgraded as an 'orange' zone and an updated report is expected. To date, there have been 39 total positive cases and 1 death in Salem. He urged everyone to continue practicing the appropriate safety protocols to help reduce the spread of the virus. The CDC's (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) Recommendations for Holiday Celebrations have been posted on the town website and includes safety guidance for low, moderate, and high-risk gatherings and activities.

The recent drive-thru COVID-19 testing serviced 109 individuals. The free testing event was sponsored by Sema4 and offered through the Department of Emergency Management. For other free testing events, visit the state website at [ct.gov](http://ct.gov). Selectman McKenney stated, for those who might be hesitant, that the testing was non-intrusive and painless.

Information regarding the State of Connecticut's Temporary Rental Housing Assistance Program for those residents that have been impacted by the pandemic is available on the town website.

He commended the local businesses and residents on doing a good job keeping everyone safe and healthy. The basketball hoops at Lou Ulffer's Sports Complex on Round Hill Road have been re-installed; the tennis courts, playground, and trails remain open, and; the baseball fields are open for practices. Selectman McKenney commended Nik and Alex Alevras, the owners of *Two Brothers Restaurant*, who spent their time cleaning the entire restaurant to ensure the safety of the town during their recent two-week closure.

**C. Emergency Services Update** (Discussion)

Selectman and Liaison to Emergency Services Chmielewski expressed his pleasure with working with Director of Emergency Services Michael Bednarz. who has a wealth of knowledge. He commended Director of Emergency Services Bednarz for his professionalism and outreach efforts with both of the fire departments. They have held numerous discussions with the newly-appointed Fire Chiefs and Deputy Fire Chief, the pertinent Town Hall staff, Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company President, and former Salem Volunteer Fire Company Chief to help streamline the process and gain additional insight and input. Currently, there is a vacancy for the Deputy Fire Chief at the Salem Volunteer Fire Company. Because there are only two (2) paid firefighters serving the town, the positions call for veteran firefighters who can take initiative and make any necessary leadership decisions.

Director of Emergency Services Bednarz thanked and presented his report to the Selectmen. The main priority has been to improve communication between the various agencies and the town. He expressed his appreciation to Selectmen Chmielewski and Lyden, with whom he regularly communicates, for their ongoing guidance and support. As stated by Selectman and Liaison Chmielewski, monthly meetings and open and frequent communications have been established with Salem Volunteer Fire Company Chief Chip Weston and Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company Chief Pete Silva. He also acknowledged his appreciation for the continued work and support of retired SVFCO Chief Gene Maiorano.

He is in the process of investigating a user-friendly, shared scheduling platform to manage the schedules of the day-time career staff, ambulance, and R-1 Services. The responses received for the part-time Firefighter/Emergency Medical Technician (FF/EMT) job posting are being reviewed and the job posting for the full-time Career FF/EMT/Maintainer position has been published. It is hoped that a full-time Career FF/EMT/Maintainer will be hired by mid-January. With openings for similar positions at three (3) of the surrounding towns and 8-12 departments state-wide, Director of Emergency Services Bednarz stated that the competition for the available position is high. There are currently six (6) part-time employees and one (1) full-time career employee. The current full-time vacancy has been filled by a part-time employee since the beginning of the fiscal year and the volunteers have been able to assist when coverage was needed.

He thanked the Board for the opportunity to represent the town in this capacity and expressed his appreciation for the support he has received from the various town agencies and the leadership.

Selectman Chmielewski reiterated that the communication between the fire companies, both formal and informal, have been very open and positive. Along with himself, the First Selectman and Director of Emergency Services Bednarz are available 24/7 to support the Fire Chiefs and Deputy Fire Chiefs of both Departments. Their goal is to establish standard operating procedures, rules and regulations, protocols, and reducing any redundancies within the Fire Companies and in conjunction with the Town Hall staff to ensure a streamlined process.

First Selectman Lyden thanked Director of Emergency Services Bednarz for his hard work and efforts and voiced his confidence in his ability to find and hire the right individual who would be able to make the necessary decisions during pressing times and would serve the town well. He also expressed his appreciation to both of the Fire Companies for their handling of the recent school bus rollover. The town is very fortunate to have Director of Emergency Services Bednarz, the paid staff, and volunteers serving the town. The town will, inevitably, need to invest additional funds in emergency services in the future as the number of volunteers continues to decrease due to the growing investment in time, training, and certifications. As such, the need to seek out more efficiencies and streamline the process

is becoming more urgent. Director of Emergency Services Bednarz will be providing regular reports to both the Boards of Selectmen and Finance.

In response to Selectman LaBonte regarding whether any correspondence has been recently received by the public regarding any emergency services concerns they might have, First Selectman Lyden reported that no correspondence, with the exception of the letter that was received by the GLVFCO and recited during their October meeting, has been received.

**D. Tax Collector Refunds (Action Item)**

**M/S/C: McKenney/Salas, to direct the Town Treasurer to issue refunds, recommended and certified by the Tax Collector, as presented, to the Board of Selectmen in the amount of \$731.87 (seven hundred thirty-one dollars and eighty-seven cents) on the 4th day of November 2020.**

**F. Executive Session regarding legal strategies for the current lawsuit “The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. Town of Salem” pursuant C.G.S. Section 1 200 (6)(B) – see below, following Item 5, Reports**

**5. REPORTS:**

**A. FIRST SELECTMAN**

First Selectman Lyden reported that information regarding TVCCA’s (Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc.) Energy Assistance Program for heating assistance to residents in need may be found on the town website at salemct.gov. Heating assistance includes oil, propane, and wood; they also aid residents with such things as boiler replacements. Residents must apply for the program annually.

He encouraged residents to either subscribe to E-Alerts via the town website or contact the First Selectman’s Administrative Assistant Meredith Eisenberg at (860) 859-3873, ext. 100, to receive the town’s news and announcements via e-mail.

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

Selectman McKenney reported that the BOE continues to seek a volunteer to serve on the Board and encouraged any interested residents to contact the Superintendent’s office for details. The school staff, especially Nurse Maggie, continues to work hard to ensure the safety and security of the students. The Superintendent informed the BOE that the state is discussing the possibility of moving schools to distance learning between the Thanksgiving and New Year’s holidays, i.e., the month of December, depending upon the status of the ongoing pandemic.

**C. BOARD OF FINANCE**

First Selectman Lyden reported that the Board of Finance will be finalizing their RFP (Request for Proposal) for auditing services. The town’s FY2019/2020 audit is coming to a close.

#### **D. PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

Selectwoman Salas reported that the Commission continued to hold their Public Hearing regarding the proposed motor truck terminal to be located at 142 East Haddam Road. Based on the comments and concerns received during their previous meeting, the Applicants presented their revised plans, which included changes to the landscaping; revised locations of the truck parking/storage area, shipping containers, and storage bins, and; enhancements to the bio-retention basins. Discussions also included the waiver for the asphalt paving, the possible need for routine inspections, and possible input from the Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commission. The application and site plan were approved, with conditions, along with the waiver with a vote of 5 to 2.

The Commissioners continued their discussion regarding the Riparian Corridor Overlay Zone (RCOZ) regulation and agreed to send the draft, with amendments, to the Town Attorney for review.

They have also begun drafting the survey questions for the 2022 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and requesting the input of the boards and commissions. As the liaison, she requested that any input they might have can be relayed through her. Selectman McKenney expressed his hopes for the formation of a sub-committee that would develop a draft for the Commission's review. He also stated the importance of not only receiving input from the various boards and commissions, each of which was issued various tasks in the 2012 POCD, but also the residents. First Selectman Lyden added that, for example, the age-restricted development regulation, which has led to the establishment of a six-unit development and the proposed 48-unit development, can be updated.

An application for the activity that has been taking place at the old Scout Camp on Forest Drive has been submitted and the Public Hearing has been scheduled for November 17.

The Commission also engaged in a discussion regarding signage. Zoning Enforcement Officer (ZEO) Matt Allen informed the Commission of a Supreme Court decision (Reed v. Gilbert) which found that municipalities may regulate the size, placement, number, and/or ability to post signage on a property, etc., but not the content of a sign. In Salem, a permit must be applied for and issued by the ZEO; the permit is free of charge. The Commissioners also briefly discussed the difference between flags and signage. The town's regulation will be amended to align with the court decision in the near future. ZEO Allen also informed the Commissioners of unpermitted activity that took place within the RCOZ on a property located on Witch Meadow Road. The Property Owner has agreed to engage the services of a professional to evaluate the damage.

Selectwoman Salas commended the Commissioners on their meetings, which are very positive, open, and respectful. Selectman Chmielewski was pleased to hear that debate and discussion is valued in the Commission.

**E. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)**

Selectman Chmielewski reported that their October meeting included reports from Senator Paul Formica, Representative Holly Cheeseman, and the First Selectman regarding their continued efforts to support the local businesses. Recently appointed Commissioners Carl Fontneau and Steven Shelley were welcomed to the Commission. Thanks to the efforts of the First Selectman, the Town Attorney, and the Public Works Department, positive feedback continues to be received from the business owners and the public regarding the progress that has been made at the Salem Plaza (1 New London Road); it is hoped that the owners will continue to maintain and keep the property safe. The Commission continues to plan to publish the second edition of the business directory and support age-restricted housing, which would allow the town's senior residents to downsize and remain in town, close to their friends and families. Selectwoman Salas added that the Planning & Zoning Commission will be holding a Public Hearing regarding the proposed 48-unit age-restricted development on November 24. The public is encouraged to attend the meeting and voice their concerns and/or support. The notice of and access to the Public Hearing will be posted on the website and on the agenda; an e-blast may also be sent to subscribers. Those with comments may also submit a comment in writing in the white drop box or via e-mail.

Viewing themselves as the ambassadors for the town's businesses, the Commission continues to engage in business outreach and provide support for the local businesses. Commissioner Shelley is currently working on developing an electronic survey while Commissioner Robillard will continue to engage in in-person outreach and Commissioner Fontneau is developing a welcome packet for new businesses. Discussions also included the POCD with Commissioner Fontneau, who will be acting as the liaison between the EDC and Planning & Zoning Commission, of which he is also a member.

**F. LIBRARY**

Selectman LaBonte reported that the Library staff and volunteers, who are anxious to increase their service to the town, have been investigating the various ways in which they can serve the community. In addition to continuing their curbside pick-up service, the Library hosted the Summer Reading Program, reached out to Amazon, expanded their Bibliomation offerings to receive items from other libraries in an effort to offer more services to the residents. They are looking forward to the completion of the new HVAC (Heating, Venting, and Air Conditioning) system. First Selectman Lyden reported that the furnaces have been installed and are now working, the heat pumps and controls need to be replaced and the old air conditioners need to be removed. The under-ground tank will be de-installed this week.

**G. MILITARY LIAISON**

Selectman Chmielewski reported that they continue to work with their military community, both those who are currently serving and have served. They have provided support to an active duty retiree to receive services and helped a retired reservist complete the necessary

pension paperwork, after having served in the National Guard 10 to 20 years ago. The state is fortunate to have a Connecticut Veterans Home, providing a safe shelter for homeless veterans and veterans-in-need.

**8. AGENDA**

**E. Executive Session regarding legal strategies for the current lawsuit “The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. Town of Salem” pursuant C.G.S. Section 1 200 (6)(B)**

**M/S/C: Chmielewski/Salas, to enter into Executive Session at 8:15 p.m. to discuss legal strategies for the current lawsuit “The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. Town of Salem” pursuant C.G.S. Section 1 200 (6)(B). Discussions to include the Board of Selectmen, Deputy Fire Marshal and Salem Emergency Services Administrator Michael Bednarz, and Town Attorney Brian Estep. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.**

**M/S/C: Chmielewski/Salas to exit from Executive Session at 8:57 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor. No votes were taken during Executive Session.**

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

**M/S/C: McKenney/LaBonte to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes T. Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Salem