

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, JULY 7, 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 7:00 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Tuesday, June 7, 2020 Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting

M/S/C: McKenney/LaBonte to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of Tuesday, June 7, 2020. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0.

b. Friday, June 26, 2020 Board of Selectmen Special Meeting

M/S/C: LaBonte/Chmielewski, to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of Friday, June 26, 2020. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0.

3. CORRESPONDENCE/PUBLIC COMMENTS

E-mail public comment to 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.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA:

M/S/C: McKenney/Chmielewski, to move agenda Item 4(E), Executive Session, to follow Item 5, Reports. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0.

4. AGENDA:

A. Update on COVID-19 Issues (*Discussion*)

First Selectman Lyden reported that, to date, a total of five (5) Salem residents are reported as testing positive for the coronavirus — three (3) of who have recovered. The three (3) additional residents who were originally reported as testing positive are individuals who have a Salem address, but reside elsewhere. He commended the town's local restaurants, including *Two Brothers Restaurant* who is now offering both in-person and take-out meals. Selectman McKenney concurred and commended the restaurant as he witnessed first-hand the good job they are doing following the recommended safety protocols.

Each of the town's departments has been operating since the onset of the pandemic. Currently, one (1) employee is working half-time remotely. Meetings continue to be held virtually via Zoom. The Library continues to offer curbside pick-up and the fines are temporarily suspended. Various adjustments have been made to accommodate the public, including waiving the fees for title searches. The white drop box located in front of Town Hall, which is frequently used, is checked twice daily. Individuals may enter the building by appointment only; contact information is posted on the door. All individuals who enter the building must wear a mask. Plexiglas shields have been installed at each of the departments to protect the employees and the public. In addition, the building is being cleaned twice daily. All expenses that are being incurred due to the pandemic are being itemized for FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) reimbursement.

Amnesty Day was held in June, rather than May; the Round Hill Road playground has been opened and safety signage has been posted, and; the tennis courts, fields, and trails remain open. The basketball courts continue to be closed and little league has devised a COVID-19 plan and will be utilizing the fields for practices only. Porta-Potties are not available at the fields. The school playgrounds will remain closed and the school will be consulted with regarding its reopening.

In response to Selectman McKenney regarding the deferral program, First Selectman Lyden stated that approximately 30 to 40 taxpayers have applied for the deferral program, which allows them to defer their tax payment for three (3) months with no repercussions. He does not believe that the deferrals will result in a significant negative impact on the town; the payments will be due after the deferral period. Selectman Chmielewski commended the First Selectman for his common sense approach to the re-opening process. In response to Selectman McKenney who questioned the testing recommendations for the coronavirus that may have been provided by the Uncas Health District, Selectman LaBonte stated that the testing decisions are being coordinated at the state level.

B. Extension of the State of Emergency for the Town of Salem, CT until August 15, 2020

(Discussion & Action)

M/S/C: LaBonte/Salas, to extend the Declaration of the State of Emergency for the Town of Salem, Connecticut that was originally signed and issued on March 16, 2020 at 5:49 p.m. and was previously extended to April 30, 2020, May 15, 2020, June 5, 2020, and again to July 15, 2020 to 5:00 p.m. and to further extend the Declaration of the State of Emergency for the Town of Salem, Connecticut to August 15, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

C. Tax Collector Refunds (Action Item) – none

D. Appoint Anthony Lasaracina as a Salem Representative to the Gardner Lake Authority. (Discussion & Action)

M/S/C: Lyden/Chmielewski to appoint Anthony Lasaracina as a Salem Representative to the Gardner Lake Authority. Discussion: Mr. Lasaracina, a long-time Salem resident, will be filling a vacancy on the Gardner Lake Authority. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

5. REPORTS:

A. FIRST SELECTMAN

The First Selectman reported on the ongoing issues with the plaza located at 1 New London Road. A Cease and Desist Order has been issued on the property and the town and Uncas Health District have been trying to work with the owner to correct the violations. The Town Attorney is in the process of placing a lien on the property to recoup the costs for the town to clean and maintain the front of the property. The Uncas Health District has also issued an order to clean the rear of the property.

He is in the process of investigating the possibility of installing solar panels on ten (10) acres of the Gadbois property and/or the transfer station.

B. BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE)

Selectman McKenney reported that the BOE will be meeting in the near future to review the Superintendent's proposed plan and any associated costs for the upcoming school year. He encouraged the Selectmen to financially support the BOE during this unpredictable period and expressed his confidence with the Superintendent and the BOE's efforts to ensure the safety of the children and staff. The plan will require much flexibility during these uncertain times. Selectman Chmielewski concurred and thanked Selectman McKenney for his efforts.

C. BOARD OF FINANCE

First Selectman Lyden commended the Board of Finance on the budget for fiscal year 2020/21. The BOE budget received a \$500,000.00 increase, in addition to the funding of \$100,000.00 for technology equipment and \$125,000.00 for the early retirement incentive. PKF O'Connor Davies was re-appointed as the Town Auditor and an RFP (Request for Proposal) will be issued for auditing services in the near future.

D. PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

Selectwoman Salas reported that the Commission discussed and voted to approve the:

- allocation of funds for the services of a scientist to offer his/her unbiased opinion regarding the Riparian Corridor Overlay Zone (RCOZ) regulation.
- Salem Land Trust's request for a letter of support as part of their application to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant for the purchase of a 55-acre property. The property would expand its current 4-acre Alfred & Sylvia Bingham Preserve and is designated as part of the Audubon CT's Important Bird Area. Concern was raised regarding the removal of the land from the town's Grand List, but because the land is under PA490, it was determined that its financial impact would be minimal.

The Commissioners also discussed the:

- proposed amendments to the Special Agriculture Overlay Zone regarding animal keeping limitations and allowing the zone to be located within the municipal boundary.
- POCD (Plan of Conservation and Development) – Preliminary discussions have been held with various groups and organizations regarding the historical section of the Plan.
- application a non-matching grant by SCCOG (Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments) through the State Department of Housing to secure funding for the development and adoption of an Affordable Housing Grant Plan, which the town is required to do by October 2022.

Selectman McKenney suggested the Town Planner work with his colleagues to determine the history of the regulation and the reasoning behind the regulation change(s). He also commented on the importance of beginning their work on the POCD, which takes much time and effort. First Selectman Lyden expressed his support for the Salem Land Trust's purchase of the property.

E. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)

Selectman Chmielewski reported that the Commissioners discussed the Plaza located at 1 New London Road due to several comments that have been expressed by the public. The possibility of gathering a group of community members to clean up the Plaza was proposed, but due to the ongoing enforcement actions being taken by the town and because the property is privately owned as well as safety concerns, it would not be possible to hold such a gathering. First Selectman Lyden added that two Public Works employees have since cleaned the front of the property.

Senator Paul Formica and Representative Holly Cheeseman spoke with the Commissioners regarding their efforts to support the local businesses during this period.

Other items that were discussed included the 2021 Business & Service Directory and senior-friendly age-restricted housing. In addition, an Advisory Committee was formed to gather positive input from the town's local businesses.

Selectwoman Salas stated the importance of supporting the local businesses as many small businesses are struggling as a result of the pandemic.

F. LIBRARY

Selectman LaBonte reported that the Library Director continues to follow the State's guidelines and consult with the other librarians throughout the state. Items are available for curbside pick-up and are being quarantined, cleaned, and sanitized upon its return. The Library Board also discussed the Library HVAC and phone systems. The Friends of the Library were disappointed that they were not able to sort any books this summer for their Annual Book Sale.

First Selectman Lyden added that a new phone system has been installed at the Library, replacing their 16-year old system. The town received a State bid pricing on the system.

G. MILITARY LIAISON

Selectman Chmielewski reported that former BOE member Steve Buck is now serving as the Commander of the Salem VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars). In addition, during the past month, he has had the opportunity to provide service referrals and mentorship and guidance for employment to the town's veterans.

Selectman LaBonte expressed his appreciation to the Army and Air Force guards who are currently on State and Federal Active Duty in response to COVID-19 and are responsible for all of the testing, including those being conducted at the nursing homes. The security forces and military police were also called upon to manage the protests and support the local law enforcement.

A five-minute break was held at 7:56 p.m.

4(E) Executive Session regarding legal strategies for current lawsuit between The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. The Town of Salem, pursuant to C.G.S. Section 1-200(6)(B). (Discussion & Action)

M/S/C: LaBonte/McKenney, to enter into Executive Session at 8:00 p.m. Discussion to include members of the Board of Selectmen. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Chmielewski/LaBonte, to exit from Executive Session at 9:39 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor. No votes were taken during Executive Session.

6. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Salas/McKenney, to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 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