

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2022, 7:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL, CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

Edward Chmielewski, Jr.
Thomas (TJ) Butcher
Ron LaBonte
Kevin Lyden
Pam Munro

ABSENT

none

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Chmielewski called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Tuesday, April 5, 2022 Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting

M/S/C: Lyden/LaBonte, to approve the Tuesday, April 5, 2022 Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

3. CORRESPONDENCE/PUBLIC COMMENTS

Steven Wlodarczyk, 23 Cockle Hill Road, expressed his support for the company with extensive experience building disc golf courses and numerous available volunteers who are willing to conduct the work free of charge as opposed to utilizing taxpayer funds to pay an outside company with no experience building a course.

4. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

a. Tax Collector's Refunds

M/S/C: LaBonte/Butcher, 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 \$3,497.80 (three thousand four hundred ninety-seven dollars and eighty cents) on this third day of May 2022. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

b. Salem Disc Golf Course Update

First Selectman Chmielewski provided a brief background of the Disc Golf Course. He reported that, due to the evident liability(ies), the decision was made to temporarily close the course. He offered financial support and the full support of the staff to resolve the issues and reached out to meet with the then-Chairman of the Recreation Commission to discuss the issues. As a result of the lack of cooperation, he sought the input of key

individuals including emergency services, an environmental engineer, and the Town's insurance carrier, for guidance. In addition, various reports, extensive research, and numerous discussions have been held with those involved with the creation of other area municipal disc golf courses. Most recently, the newly-elected Chairman and Co-Vice Chairpersons of the Recreation Commission, Recreation Coordinator, Public Works Foreman, Finance Specialist, and Insurance Carrier met to discuss the necessary safety enhancements and a Disc Golf Subcommittee, comprised of the Recreation Commission Chairman and Co-Vice Chairpersons, was formed. The Subcommittee will partner with a Disc Golf Consultant, CIRMA (Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency), Emergency Services, Public Works, Town Attorney, and others to discuss and implement the enhancements. He expressed his appreciation to those who initiated, planned, and constructed the course with great passion and enthusiasm and looks forward to enhancing its safety and reopening the course. The safety enhancements will include the posting of signage, stating the rules.

Selectman Lyden also expressed his appreciation to the volunteers who initiated and helped construct the course and stated his continuing support. He felt troubled with the Commissioners who felt some bitterness or resentment that might have derived from miscommunication(s) and ultimately resulted in their resignations. He explained that, during this period, the Town was also experiencing changes in leadership and illness. Oftentimes, the First Selectman and/or Board of Selectmen are faced with decisions that some might not find favorable. The Town's risk management team clearly expressed the existence of safety concerns and the First Selectman has since reached out to an engineer and an outside firm for an assessment upon which a corrective action plan will be created. While the enhancements will not eliminate the liability(ies), they will help mitigate them. He stated the importance of working together to create a safe course that welcomes all of the Town's residents, young and old, and would be viable for the next 20+ years while minimizing the risks to the Town. He commended the First Selectman on his efforts.

Selectwoman Munro added that the Town's risk management team stated that any additions, modifications, or manipulation of the natural environment, including the movement of elements or installation of manmade structures, increases the Town's liability. It was confirmed that any contractors who are hired to construct any bridges or the like will be required to submit a Certificate of Insurance. Selectman LaBonte stated the importance of working together and viewing the course, its risks, and effects on the Town and its residents from all angles.

Selectman Butcher proposed the possibility of moving the first hole of the course to Volunteer Park at Forsyth Road, which would resolve one of the issues regarding its proximity to the Pavilion. The move would also provide more ample and/or additional parking for the public.

First Selectman Chmielewski reiterated his full support for the course and stated the importance of taking the time to ensure that they are offering a safe course that welcomes people of all ages.

c. Emergency Responder Awards Ordinance

In accordance with the Ordinance, the town annually awards up to 60 (sixty) Emergency Responder Awards to qualified volunteers serving the Town's two fire companies. Qualified volunteers receive a \$1,000.00 abatement on their real estate taxes or a \$550.00 stipend. First Selectman Chmielewski recited the names of the qualifying individuals, as submitted by their respective Fire Company Chiefs.

M/S/C: Lyden/Butcher, to approve the Emergency Responder Tax Abatement of \$1,000 and \$550 Cash Stipends to be paid to qualifying individuals, as presented by Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company Chief Pete Silva and Salem Volunteer Fire Company Chief Chip Weston. Discussion: Selectman Lyden stated that the tax abatement would be allocated in July 2022 for their FY2021/22 taxes. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

d. Naming of the Soccer Fields at Volunteer Park on Forsyth Road, "Bob" Appleby Fields

M/S/C: Lyden/Butcher, to name the Soccer Fields at Volunteer Park on Forsyth Road, "Bob" Appleby Fields. Discussion: Selectman Lyden expressed his support, stating that Mr. Appleby was a very active member of the community whose accomplishments included building the Town's soccer program and helping create the Park. First Selectman Chmielewski concurred, adding that Mr. Appleby was a longtime coach and member of the Recreation Commission. He was also a great mentor, leader, and volunteer, who is often referred to as the "Father of Salem Soccer". The Recreation Commission unanimously voted to support and send the naming of the fields, "Bob" Appleby Fields, to the Board of Selectmen for approval. A mock-up of the sign, which was presented to the Commission by former Commissioners David Kennedy and Sue Spang, was presented to the Board. The proposed sign would be placed below and match the existing "Volunteer Park" sign. Selectwoman Munro felt that the quotation marks around his first name were not necessary. The Commission will work with the Public Works Department to order and install the sign. A dedication ceremony, honoring Mr. Appleby, presenting the naming of the fields, and revealing the new sign, will be held. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

e. Review existing Ethics Policy

Selectman Lyden suggested the Board review the Town's Ethics Policy, which was last updated in 2011, and forward any suggestions to the First Selectman. He also

recommended the document be reviewed by the Town Attorney, along with the Personnel Policy. Selectmen Butcher and LaBonte concurred. Selectwoman Munro added that any revisions should coincide with the State's Policy under which the Policy was created.

The Policy is reviewed and signed by the Town's elected officials, staff, and volunteers. The Town will be checking and updating its records to confirm that each of the board and commission members have reviewed and signed the Policy. Selectman LaBonte clarified that, per the Policy and State Statutes, individuals are bound to the Policy whether they have signed it or not. Selectman Butcher concurred, adding that having the individuals sign the Policy releases the Town from any possible liability as a result of an ethics violation.

Selectman Lyden stated that ethics complaints are referred to the First Selectman or his/her designee and are confidentially reviewed. With respect to recent statements regarding a possible violation of the Policy, First Selectman Chmielewski felt that it was their responsibility as Selectmen to mentor and guide individuals as best they can through the process. Selectman Lyden added that, oftentimes, the issues simply need to be brought to the individual's attention who might not be cognizant of the effects of their statements. As a small town, it is beneficial to try and resolve such issues on a civil level.

6. REPORTS

a. FIRST SELECTMAN

First Selectman Chmielewski reported that the newest issue of *Our Town Salem*, which includes the redistricting map, has been published. He commended the Registrars for their hard work organizing and planning for the redistricting. He congratulated and thanked the Town's new board and commission members, each of whom represents the Town's diversity. The Tax Collector reported a collection rate of 98.98%, as of May 2. The Annual Town Meeting regarding the budget will be held tomorrow, Wednesday, May 4, at 7:00 p.m. in the Salem School Multi-Purpose Room. Selectman LaBonte, a former Police Officer, EMT (Emergency Medical Technician), Firefighter, and Medical Services Superintendent for the U.S. Air Force Reserve, and Health Services Administrator for the Connecticut Department of Corrections, was recently appointed as the Emergency Services Liaison. As noted earlier, he has met with the Chairman and Co-Vice Chairpersons of the Recreation Commission, Recreation Coordinator, and Public Works Foreman – all of whom have been working well together to discuss and move forward with the safety enhancements at the Disc Golf Course. A successful Opening Day of Baseball was held. He commended the Public Works team who work on and prepared the fields for the event.

The Town continues to search for volunteers to serve as Emergency Responders and/or on one or more of the Town's many organizations. He encouraged everyone to visit the Town and School websites to view agendas, minutes, calendars, access various documents, and the like. He also reported on the Town's strong fiscal condition, with its high bond rating and healthy Rainy-Day Fund.

He congratulated former Public Works Director and Fire Marshal Donald Bourdeau, Jr., on his recent retirement. Former Public Works Director and Fire Marshal Bourdeau served the Town for over 30 years in various capacities, including as the First Selectman, Emergency Management Director, and Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company Chief and Member. He and his family actively served the community for many years.

He invited everyone to attend and/or participate in the Town's Annual Memorial Day Parade on Monday, May 30, at 10:00 a.m. Bulky Waste "Amnesty Day" will be held on Saturday, May 14; Sunday, May 15, and; Wednesday, May 18.

b. EMERGENCY SERVICES – POLICE / FIRE

First Selectman Chmielewski commended Emergency Management Director/Emergency Services Coordinator Mike Bednarz for his presentation to the Town's full-time Firefighters and State Police to discuss and prepare for the upcoming Emergency Management drills at the School utilizing the Town's new Smartboard technology.

Emergency Management Director/Emergency Services Coordinator Bednarz reported that the Town's full-time Firefighters received 28 Calls for Service, 7 of which were Mutual Aid calls, in the month of March. CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) Classes were held for the Town's Public Works employees and are being planned for the Town's Town Hall employees. Both of the Town's full-time Firefighters and Resident State Troopers were present for the recent Lions Club Road Race and worked well together to help provide a very safe and successful event.

In preparation for the brush fire season, he reminded residents to read and check the relevant box on the Burn Permit applications. The residents must contact the Dispatch Center prior to burning their brush to not only inform emergency personnel, but to also ensure that it is safe to do so.

c. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Emergency Management Director/Emergency Services Coordinator Bednarz confirmed the receipt of the Smartboards, which they are currently evaluating and testing. The technology has, so far, exceeded their expectations. He hopes to introduce and incorporate the Smartboards into some of the Town's board and commission meetings in the near future. The new LED Road Sign is scheduled for delivery tomorrow and the Public Works Department will be assembling and learning how to use the sign. No new enrollments have been received to the Town's Everbridge system. The Town's Public Service Announcement for the month is "When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors".

Selectman Lyden encouraged residents to register for Everbridge and the Town's News and Announcements through the Town website. Information disseminated through Facebook is not official. Selectman Butcher recommended an article be written and published in the next issue of *Our Town Salem* to help promote the notification system.

As First Selectman Chmielewski reported, a debriefing was held with emergency personnel and another meeting will be held with the School to discuss an upcoming drill.

Selectman Liaison LaBonte stated that he is looking forward to working with and building upon what the First Selectman and former Liaison has built with Emergency Management Director/Emergency Services Coordinator Bednarz. He expressed his pride and concerns regarding the diminishing list of volunteers. Selectman Lyden added that the lack of volunteers is a nationwide issue due to the increased amount of competing activities and growing training requirements.

d. BOARD OF FINANCE

As stated, the Town's Annual Meeting to discuss and send the budget to a Referendum will be held tomorrow, May 4, at 7:00 p.m. at Salem School. The Budget Referendum will be held on Wednesday, May 11, at Town Hall from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Selectman Lyden felt that the Board of Finance has crafted a fair budget. The Town's Unassigned Fund Balance, a.k.a. Rainy-Day Fund, is expected to grow at the end of the fiscal year to approximately 16.5% or 16.6%, which is within the 15% to 20% range of the Town's Fund Balance Policy. The goal is to have an Unassigned Fund Balance of 18%. The Town also has a Supplemental Capital Fund Balance of approximately \$370,000.00 that may be used on Capital Items to help balance the budget. One of the budget concerns include rising fuel costs.

First Selectman Chmielewski reported that approximately \$17,000.00 in revenue will be received from the recent sale of Public Works equipment.

e. BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE)

Selectwoman Munro reported that the BOE voted to approve the Healthy Food Initiative. The East Lyme High School AP (Advanced Placement) exams are in process and the Junior and Senior Prom will be held this month. The Salem School 8th Graduation Ceremony will be held outdoors, weather permitting, on June 16. The East Lyme High School Graduation Ceremony is scheduled for June 15. The School District's meeting agendas, minutes, videos, and other information are available online at salemschools.org.

First Selectman Chmielewski added that he has met with the Superintendent and BOE Chairman and Vice-Chairman to discuss various items to further collaborate and help reduce costs.

f. PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

First Selectman Chmielewski reported that the Commission continues to review and discuss the Town's Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD). A waiver to extend the deadline was signed and submitted to the State. Once completed, the document will be forwarded to the Board for their review and input.

g. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

First Selectman Chmielewski reported that the Commission continues to reach out to the Town's businesses and is discussing ways in which they could utilize the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds to help promote the Town's businesses.

h. LIBRARY

First Selectman Chmielewski reported that Assistant Librarian Shannon Henson, who holds an M.A. in Library Sciences and has extensive experience with both university and public libraries, was appointed as the Interim Library Director. Ms. Henson was recommended for the position by outgoing Library Director Vicky Coffin and Library Board Chairperson.

Selectman LaBonte reported that the Library Board's April Regular Meeting was cancelled and a Special Meeting will be held next week.

i. MILITARY LIAISON

First Selectman Chmielewski announced that the Town's Annual Memorial Day Parade will be held on Monday, May 30, at 10:00 a.m. Members of an independent volunteer organization are continuing to clean and maintain the Town's old cemeteries.

Selectman LaBonte reported that, though the work continues and the need for testing and vaccinations has not subsided, the Connecticut Guard is beginning to wind down their COVID-19 efforts.

j. UNSUNG HEROES

Selectman LaBonte reported that the Unsung Heroes Committee will be seeking nominations for the Unsung Heroes Award. The Unsung Heroes Award was formed by the Democratic and Republican Town Committees to recognize the Town's volunteers. The purpose of the Award is to celebrate volunteerism and recognize those individuals who have volunteered for the Town in exceptional ways; the selected individuals will be honored and their contributions will be celebrated at a Ceremony to be held in November.

k. TVCCA (Thames Valley Council for Community Action)

Selectwoman Munro reported that she is in the process of learning about the organization's many offerings and disseminating the information to the residents. The organization serves 22 area towns and offers such programs as oil, electric bills, employment, and housing assistance and Head Start programs.

8. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: LaBonte/Lyden, to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by: Agnes T. Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Salem