

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2023, 7:00 PM
SALEM TOWN HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

**The minutes submitted below have been filed in accordance with
Section 1-225 of the CT General Statutes. They are subject to
final approval with or without amendments by a vote of the Board of Selectmen.
Approval and any such amendments will be detailed in subsequent minutes.**

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 7:18 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Tuesday, April 4, Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting

M/S/C: LaBonte/Lyden, to approve the Board of Selectmen April 4, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

b. ~~Friday~~ Thursday, April 20, 2023 Board of Selectmen Emergency Special Meeting

M/S/C: Butcher/LaBonte, to approve the Board of Selectmen April 20, 2023 Special Emergency Meeting Minutes. Discussion: The day was corrected from Friday to Thursday on the Agenda. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

3. ALTERATIONS TO THE AGENDA

M/S/C: Lyden/Butcher, to add the following item to the Agenda:

5(k) Executive Session

To enter into Executive Session to provide an update and to discuss legal strategies for the current lawsuit “The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. Town of Salem” pursuant to C.G.S. Section 1-200 (6)(B)

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

4. CORRESPONDENCE/PUBLIC COMMENTS

a. Copy of a Letter from Salem Volunteer Fire Company Chief Chip Weston regarding the Emergency Responder Tax Abatement and Cash Stipends

First Selectman Chmielewski stated that the Tax Assessor has reviewed the list received by the Salem Volunteer Fire Company (SVFCO) and the list was received by Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company (GLVFCO) Chief Pete Silva today. A brief discussion ensued regarding the process and the timeframe within which the list is received, reviewed, and approved. It was agreed to include the item on the June Regular Meeting Agenda for review and approval.

Sue Coffee, 10 Saunders Hollow Road, Old Lyme, provided a brief history of and her plans for the property that was left to her by her father, Raymond Snarski, including donating part of the land to the Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company and creating a Sue Coffee/Ray Snarski Preserve. She currently pays an individual to maintain the Paugwonk Cemetery where her father is buried and continues to maintain the area around the Fire Company's two (2) dry wells located on her front pond. Since the sale of the neighboring property, she has had to deal with countless issues ranging from the breaking down of a stone wall, motocross racing, shooting, fires, and confrontations resulting in stress, anxiety, and discomfort. She felt that it is not the job of the town's citizens to patrol and report such issues, but that of the Zoning/Wetlands Enforcement Officer (ZWEO) whose limited hours preclude him from doing so. She requested that the town hire an additional individual to aid him in his duties. To her knowledge, there have been no inspections made on the properties, and was shocked and devastated to receive an e-mail from ZWEO, suggesting she contact an attorney to seek restitution for any damage, she feels, was caused by her neighbor's actions. At the suggestion of the Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commission, she has submitted a formal complaint and photographs of the damage will be submitted to the ZWEO or Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commission Chairperson.

The Board commended and thanked Ms. Coffee for cleaning up the property.

5. AGENDA

- a. Supplemental Appropriation, per Section 10.09 of the Salem Town Charter, in the amount of \$50,000.00 for Town Counsel, Account 5-126-208.**

First Selectman Chmielewski stated that, due to ongoing legal issues with the GLVFCO, their funds have been exhausted. Because the amount is over one-fifth of one percent (0.2%) of the Town Budget, a Special Town Meeting would be required.

M/S/C: Lyden/LaBonte, to approve the Supplemental Appropriation, per Section 10.09 of the Salem Town Charter, in the amount of \$50,000.00 for Town Counsel, Account 5-126-208. Discussion: Procedurally, the request for a Supplemental Appropriation must be approved by the Board of Selectmen to send the item to the Board of Finance for approval to send the item to a Special Town Meeting, which must be held within 30 days of the Board of Finance's endorsement. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

- b. Supplemental Appropriation, per Section 10.09 of the Salem Town Charter, in the amount of \$10,000.00 for Labor Relations, Account 5-126-202.**

First Selectman Chmielewski stated that, due to negotiations related to the Firefighter/EMT Contracts, the line item is currently over budget for FY2022/23. Any remaining funds would return to the General Fund.

M/S/C: LaBonte/Butcher, to approve the Supplemental Appropriation, per Section 10.09 of the Salem Town Charter, in the amount of \$10,000.00 for Labor Relations, Account 5-126-202. Discussion: It was noted that the Firefighter/EMT Contracts is now a four-year contract. Contract negotiations for the Public Works employees have begun. Because the item is within the same department (Department 126, Town Counsel) as the previous Supplemental Appropriation, it would be included in the same Special Town Meeting. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

- c. Supplemental Appropriation, per Section 10.09 of the Salem Town Charter in the amount of \$20,000.00 for Planning & Zoning Commission, Legal, Account 5-630-224.**

M/S/C: LaBonte/Lyden, to approve the Supplemental Appropriation, per Section 10.09 of the Salem Town Charter in the amount of \$20,000.00 for Planning & Zoning Commission, Legal, Account 5-630-224. Discussion: First Selectman Chmielewski stated that the Commission is requesting additional funding for legal expenses due to ongoing issues. He also reported that he is awaiting the input of the Planning & Zoning and Inland Wetlands & Conservation Chairpersons and Town Planner regarding the possible need to increase the hours of the Zoning/Wetlands Official. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

- d. Tax Collector Refunds**

M/S/C: LaBonte/Lyden, 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 \$3,987.57 (three thousand nine hundred eighty-seven dollars and fifty-seven cents) on the 2nd day of May 2023. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

3. REPORTS

- a. FIRST SELECTMAN**

First Selectman Chmielewski reviewed the highlights of the Departmental Updates included in the First Selectman's Report.

- b. EMERGENCY SERVICES – POLICE/FIRE – see *Departmental Updates, First Selectman's Report***

Selectman LaBonte expressed his appreciation to the First Selectman, Finance Specialist,

Fire Marshal/Emergency Services Director, and GLVFCO Chief Silva for obtaining the necessary details, their objectivity, expediency, and organizing the recent Emergency Special Meeting regarding the GLVFCO Ambulance during which he learned many things that he was not previously aware. Selectwoman Munro concurred, adding that she was pleased with the attendance, the information provided, and objectivity, which helped expedite the process. First Selectman Chmielewski stated the town's goal was to ensure the safety of the residents and First Responders and thanked everyone for working together to resolve the issue. It was noted that the GLVFCO Ambulance is now back in service.

The renegotiation of the GLVFCO contract was briefly discussed. While their initial meeting was not held, Selectmen Butcher and LaBonte are hoping to meet with them soon.

c. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT – *see Departmental Updates, First Selectman's Report*

d. RECREATION COMMISSION – *see Departmental Updates, First Selectman's Report*
Selectman Butcher reported that the revised Disc Golf Course project is underway and the new fairways are being constructed and installed. First Selectman Chmielewski added that the Commission is also working on the construction of a volleyball court at the Pavilion.

e. BOARD OF FINANCE

The Annual Town Meeting for the proposed FY2023/24 Budget will be held tomorrow, Tuesday, May 3, at 7:00 p.m. in the Salem School Multi-Purpose Room. The Budget Referendum will be held on Wednesday, May 10, from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Salem Town Hall.

f. BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE)

Selectwoman Munro reported that the Salem East Lyme High School Student Liaison reported on numerous activities for April, May, and June. Salem School's annual spring testing is underway for grades 3 to 8 and numerous applications for open positions have been received for the 2023/24 School Year. The BOE's proposed reductions for FY2023/24 due to the Board of Finance's \$88,000.00 BOE budget reduction will not be available for tomorrow evening's Annual Town Meeting.

g. PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

The Commission has been experiencing a very busy year and strives to move forward and continue working together with the staff on the applications and issues being presented.

h. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Commission is planning to host a Christmas in July event this July at 11:00 a.m. at the Salem Community Park Pavilion to highlight the town's businesses.

i. LIBRARY

The renovation of the Library's storage closet was completed. Selectwoman Munro is aiding the Library Board of Directors Policies revision; the final draft will be referred to the

Town Attorney for review. Selectman Lyden added that the Friends of the Library are working in part of the Public Works' warehouse to sort and organize books in preparation for the annual Book Sale. The renovation of the Old Library is continuing. The ADA-accessible bathroom, the painting of the basement, and the installation of the HVAC system have been completed. The cupola will be raised, the upstairs will be painted, and the carpeting/flooring will be completed with the remaining funds. Upon completion, the building will be available for town organizations to meet and the Friends of the Library will have books available for purchase. The project is funded by the town's ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds.

j. TVCCA (Thames Valley Council for Community Action) – no report

k. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- 1) To enter into Executive Session to provide an update and to discuss legal strategies for the current lawsuit "The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. Town of Salem" pursuant to C.G.S. Section 1-200 (6)(B)

M/S/C: Lyden/LaBonte, to enter into Executive Session to provide an update and to discuss legal strategies for the current lawsuit "The Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. vs. Town of Salem" pursuant to C.G.S. Section 1-200 (6)(B). Discussion to include the members of the Board of Selectmen. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor. Invited parties exited the conference room for Executive Session at 7:46 p.m. First Selectman Chmielewski resumed the meeting at 8:50 p.m. No motions were made or votes were taken during Executive Session.

4. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: LaBonte/Butcher, to adjourn the meeting at 8:51 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

A VIDEO RECORD OF THE MEETING CAN BE FOUND ON THE TOWN'S WEBSITE UNDER BOARDS & COMMISSIONS – BOARD OF SELECTMEN – MEETING VIDEOS.