

**TOWN OF SALEM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2020 – 7:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN OFFICE BUILDING**

Per State of Connecticut, Governor Lamont Executive order 7B, the Town of Salem Board of Selectmen Meeting on April 7, 2020 will be following the suspension of in-person open meeting requirements. The public can access this meeting at salemct.gov

PRESENT

Kevin Lyden
Edward Chmielewski, Jr.
Hugh McKenney
Terri Salas

ABSENT

Ron LaBonte

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Lyden called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

First Selectman Lyden prefaced the meeting by commending the citizens of the town during this period as they continue to comply with the social distancing requirements, including the town's local businesses, who are all limiting the number of shoppers who could enter into their establishments at one time. The playgrounds have been closed and the Round Hill Road and Salem School basketball hoops have been de-installed and the lights at Round Hill Road basketball/tennis courts have been temporarily turned off. The town's tennis courts, fields, and trails remain open for the time being.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Wednesday, February 26, 2020 Board of Selectmen Special Meeting

M/S/C: McKenney/Chmielewski, to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of Wednesday, February 26, 2020. Discussion: The Special Meeting was held to discuss the General Government Budget. While no motions were taken, the Board agreed on all of the items before they were sent to the Board of Finance. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor.

b. Tuesday, March 3, 2020 Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting

M/S/C: Chmielewski/Salas, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of Tuesday, March 3, 2020, with the following amendment:

Page 4, first paragraph:

As such, to date, 9 members ~~are slated to~~ *would* receive the \$1,500.00 and 4 individuals ~~are slated to~~ *would* receive \$1,000.00 *if the Ordinance is amended.*

Discussion: None. Voice vote, 3-0-1. Voting in Favor: Selectmen Chmielewski, Lyden, and Salas. Voting in Opposition: None. Voting in Abstention: Selectman McKenney.

c. Thursday, March 19, 2020 Board of Selectmen Special Meeting

M/S/C: McKenney/Chmielewski, to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of Thursday, March 19, 2020. Discussion: The Special Meeting was held to extend the State of Emergency Declaration to April 30, 2020. Voice vote, 3-0-1. Voting in Favor: Selectmen Chmielewski, Lyden, and McKenney. Voting in Opposition: None. Voting in Abstention: Selectman Salas.

ALTERATIONS TO THE AGENDA

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

4(E) Extension of Declaration of the State of Emergency for the Town of Salem, Connecticut

Discussion: None. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor.

3. CORRESPONDENCE/PUBLIC COMMENTS

E-mail public comment to SelectmenPublicComment@salemct.gov

First Selectman Lyden stated that two e-mail accounts have been created for the purpose of receiving public comments for the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance meetings.

No comments have been received to date.

4. AGENDA:

A. Approve Low Interest Program pursuant to Executive Order 7S (*Discussion & Action*)

First Selectman Lyden stated that the Governor's Executive Order 7S provides the option for towns to offer either a deferment or low-interest rate program to those residents who are in arrears. After reviewing their options, consulting with other municipalities, and confirming their ability to institute the changes with the Assessor's office and software developers, the Tax Collectors recommended instituting the low-interest rate program. The item has also been reviewed by the Town Attorney.

M/S/C: Chmielewski/Salas, to approve the Low Interest Rate Program option from Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7S, Section 6.b., dated April 1, 2020 and directs the Tax Collector to take all actions necessary to effectuate this program. Discussion: The Executive Order will aid those who are currently behind in their tax payments by reducing the State's required interest rate from 18% to 3% per annum. Should the impact be found to be greater, the item might be revisited by the State and another Executive Order would be issued. Selectman Chmielewski expressed the timeliness of the Executive Order and the need to support the town's residents. Selectman McKenney, who

appreciated the receipt of the Executive Orders and felt that the overall impact on the town due to the reduction should be minimal, expressed his support.

Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor.

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

First Selectman Lyden reported that he was notified today by the Uncas Health District that an additional Salem resident tested positive for the Coronavirus, COVID-19, totaling four (4) cases in the town. He explained the protocol for the receipt of the notifications for those individuals who are either considered or suspected COVID-19 positive. Proper PPEs (Personal Protective Equipment) are being provided to all Emergency Medical Personnel, who are utilizing universal precautions for those individuals. Selectman McKenney reported that he has a friend in town who is making masks and Selectwoman Salas reported that *JOANN Fabrics* is offering free mask making kits and noted the recent recommendation of wearing gloves. She and Selectman McKenney also encouraged everyone to take heed of the precautions and informative signage that are posted at the larger establishments. First Selectman Lyden added that the local stores have also enforced proper social distancing recommendations and have limited the number of customers who can enter the store at one time. Because the requirements have been set forth by the State Governor, those who witness any non-compliance should report those incidents to the Resident State Troopers.

While other municipalities are currently monitoring or closing their parks and trails, the Town of Salem has not encountered any issues and the parks and trails will remain open for the time being. Campgrounds will remain closed until May 1.

The *United Way* has indefinitely cancelled the *Mobile Food Pantry* and is in the process of organizing a temporary six-month food distribution site, which will offer dry goods only. He hopes the site will be available to the residents within the next two weeks. Volunteers will be either bagging or delivering the food items to residents' doorsteps. Due to the pandemic, the number of individuals and families in need of assistance has grown.

All Town Hall departments are operating, though not at normal levels. A white drop box has been installed in front of Town Hall for the receipt of any paperwork and arrangements may be made to receive any necessary paperwork. The Transfer Station will remain open. All departments have been provided with wipes and a homemade bleach solution created to eradicate the virus.

Both the Lions Club Road Race and Easter Egg Hunt were cancelled and the Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony and Amnesty Day might also be cancelled.

Residents and organizations interested in helping our town's residents in need are encouraged to donate to the town's Benevolent, a.k.a. Needy, Fund. Monetary donations may be made via mail to the Town Hall or placed in the drop box. Donations of any amount, big or small, are accepted. The town has purchased \$1,000.00 worth of gift certificates to *Salem Prime Cuts* and *Dollar General* and the Salem Volunteer Fire Company has donated \$500.00 worth of

gift certificates to *Two Brothers Restaurant* to help those in need. The pandemic is now considered a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and all expenditures are being recorded for possible partial reimbursement.

The town's ten-year revaluation is also scheduled to begin this summer for next year's Grand List. Due to the pandemic, adjustments may be made in how they are conducted or the revaluation might be rescheduled.

Selectman Chmielewski commended the town on being proactive during these difficult times. First Selectman Lyden added that the town is very fortunate to have very cooperative residents who are willing to come together and help each other.

C. Explanation of Budget Process for FY20/21 pursuant to Executive Order 7I (*Discussion*)

First Selectman Lyden recited the letter he sent out to the townspeople regarding the budget process for FY2020/21. He stated that, under normal circumstances, the Public Hearing would have been held tomorrow evening, followed by the Town Meeting and Referendum. Due to Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7I, the In-Person Budget Adoption Requirements are suspended. Residents are strongly encouraged to either e-mail or drop off their comments regarding the budget following the distribution of the draft municipal budget on or about May 20, 2020. All comments must be received prior to the meeting date. The budget will be made available to the public both online and in print. He anticipates that all comments will be recited (with a three-minute limit), entered into the record, and considered by the Board of Finance as they vote to approve the budget. All comments must include the individual's name and address.

Selectman McKenney proposed the possibility of mailing the budget to the residents, having printed copies available at the Dollar General, and/or instituting a user-friendly voicemail system for public comment. Selectman Chmielewski suggested the possibility of posting the budget on the board in front of the Library and/or purchasing realtor-style brochure boxes.

D. Tax Collector Refunds (Action Item)

M/S/C: Salas/Chmielewski, 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 \$106.04 (one hundred six dollars and four cents) on the 7th day of April 2020. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor.

E. Extension of Declaration of the State of Emergency for the Town of Salem, Connecticut

M/S/C: Chmielewski/McKenney, 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; to further extend the Declaration of the State of Emergency for the Town of Salem, Connecticut to May 15, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

5. REPORTS:

A. FIRST SELECTMAN – *no report*

B. BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE)

Selectman McKenney reported that the BOE budget currently has 0.5% of unencumbered funds. There will be no relief from the transportation contracts due to Governor's Executive Order requiring that all transportation contracts be honored. They will be saving on fuel costs and, possibly, Special Education transportation costs. All of the cuts that were recommended by the Board of Finance were made by the BOE. In addition, one teacher has accepted the Teacher's Retirement Incentive and another has expressed interest.

The meals distribution program since the Coronavirus outbreak has been a great success. Selectman McKenney commended the Executive Director of the program. Meals are distributed at Salem School on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. for all Salem children.

The graduation ceremonies and contract negotiations for the non-certified staff have been placed on hold.

C. BOARD OF FINANCE

As noted earlier, First Selectman Lyden reported that there will be no Public Hearing, Town Meeting, or Budget Referendum this year. The Board of Finance's Regular Meeting is tentatively scheduled for this Thursday, April 8. No final decisions regarding the budget will be made until May when the draft budget will be finalized. The final budget will be approved in early June.

He applauded the BOE for implementing the Retirement Incentive Plan. The School currently has 21 teachers earning a top pay of approximately \$87,000.00. Should two teachers accept the incentive, the town would save approximately \$40,000.00 per teacher. While the Incentive was offered to six (6) teachers, he hopes that the BOE will extend the offer to ten (10) teachers, adding that if all ten teachers were to accept the incentive, the BOE would save up to \$400,000.00 that could go towards the approximately \$900,000.00 they are requesting during these uncertain times and would help make their salaries more in line with other surrounding districts. Selectman Chmielewski expressed his appreciation to the senior teachers and concurred, adding that, additional funds could be saved on insurance premiums.

D. PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION – *no meeting; no report*

E. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)

Selectman Chmielewski reported that the Commissioners continue to work on updating the town's businesses and touch base with our local businesses. He commended the local businesses as they practice proper social distancing practices while still serving the public. He added that Senator Paul Formica and Representative Holly Cheeseman are also working with the State to secure small business loans and grants.

F. LIBRARY – no meeting; no report

First Selectman Lyden reported that the Library Director continues to work in both the Library and at home and while some members of the staff have been laid off, others are working on projects remotely. In response to Selectwoman Salas, First Selectman Lyden will investigate the possibility of residents being able to acquire a library card so that they could take advantage of borrowing e-books or audiobooks through *Bibliomation*.

G. MILITARY LIAISON

Selectman Chmielewski reported that things are changing daily for all active and retired military families and urged them to visit the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs' website to receive up-to-date information.

Selectwoman Salas thanked all of the essential employees of the town, who are continuing to work and place themselves into harm's way. First Selectman Lyden agreed, adding that the town is very fortunate for all of its employees from the Public Works department to Town Hall to the Emergency Responders and Emergency Management team.

6. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Lyden/Salas, to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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