

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2023, 7:00 PM
COMMUNITY CENTER, THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SALEM**

**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 (7:21 p.m.)

ABSENT

none

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Chmielewski called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Town Attorney Brian Estep spoke with respect to the expected conduct for this evening's meeting. He stated that, as a Special Meeting, the Board of Selectmen is limited to the items on the Agenda and no additional discussion may take place.

First Selectman Chmielewski thanked everyone for attending the meeting and expressed his appreciation to Pastor Jonathan Chechile for allowing the Town to utilize the Community Center. He explained that Municipal Resources Inc. (MRI) was retained by the Town to conduct a town-wide impartial public safety analysis. A similar analysis was conducted in 2014. The analysis includes short-, mid-, and long-range strategies, goals, professional assessments, and recommendations to enhance the Town's public safety. The Report will also help the Town manage its limited resources in a fiscally responsible manner. The Board of Selectmen, Finance Department, Resident State Troopers, Firefighter/EMTs, Fire Marshal, and Emergency Management officials continue to partner and collaborate with the volunteer firefighters and emergency responders. For over two (2) years, the Town has hosted monthly Fire Chiefs Roundtable meetings, which include the Chief Officers from both Fire Companies, the paid Firefighter Supervisor, and Town Officials to resolve conflicts, plan and coordinate training, and conduct after-action review exercises. He asked the members of the audience to offer their heartfelt appreciation to the Town's First Responders.

This evening's Agenda and Study are posted on the Town website, was e-blasted, and shared on social media. Hard copies of the Agenda, Study, and PowerPoint slides for this evening's presentation are also available at the entrance.

2. EMERGENCY RESPONDERS AWARDS ORDINANCE FOR THE TOWN OF SALEM UPDATE

First Selectman Chmielewski stated that he proposed an update to the Town's existing Emergency Responders Awards Ordinance at a monthly Fire Chiefs Roundtable meeting one year ago. The Ordinance currently provides volunteer firefighters who meet the requirements with a \$1,000.00 real estate tax abatement as a token of the Town's appreciation. Since the establishment of the Ordinance, the State of Connecticut has increased the value of the abatement, resulting in the need to revise the existing Ordinance. He thanked Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company (GLVFCO) Chief Pete Silva, Salem Volunteer Fire Company (SVFCO) Chief Gene Maiorano, and Selectman Liaison LaBonte for collaborating with him in recrafting the language to allow the Town to provide the maximum incentive amount, as provided by the state without the need for a Town Meeting.

Selectman Lyden stated that the Ordinance has been in existence for approximately ten (10) years and started at approximately \$400.00. The allowable amount has since increased to \$2,000.00. Due to the continued decline in volunteers, the incentive was established by the state to encourage residents to volunteer or continue volunteering. To receive the incentive, volunteers must respond to a minimum of 15% of the calls. Currently, the Town receives over 600 Calls for Service. The Ordinance also allows Salem resident retirees who have served in the Fire Department for 25 years or more to receive the incentive. It is important to seek ways to recruit and retain volunteers to help minimize the cost of emergency services. The issue with declining volunteers affects not only the Town of Salem but is a nationwide issue as more hours and training are required and individuals lead busier lives while dealing with the rising cost of living. Currently, neither of the Fire Companies has met or exceeded the maximum number of individuals who can receive the incentive.

Selectman LaBonte thanked everyone for attending this evening's meeting. The revised Ordinance is a positive step for the Town. In addition to increasing the amount, the updated Ordinance will also increase the window of time to process the abatements, which will be helpful to both the Fire Companies and Town Hall staff.

Selectman Butcher also thanked everyone for giving up their evening for such an important issue. He felt that it was the very least the Town could do to keep the members of the Fire Companies and the community, as a whole, safe.

First Selectman Chmielewski expressed his confidence in the Board's unanimous support of the revised Ordinance. The Ordinance will be formally presented to the public at a Town

Meeting, per the Town Charter.

3. PRESENTATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES ANALYSIS, PROVIDED BY MUNICIPAL RESOURCES, INC. (MRI)

First Selectman Chmielewski stated that, in 2014, Former First Selectman Lyden commissioned MRI to conduct a detailed Public Safety Services Study. Many of the recommendations that were included in the Study were accomplished. One year ago, another (updated) Study was commissioned and recently completed. He introduced Donald Bliss who has extensive experience in the field and is one of the primary members of the Project Team.

Mr. Bliss thanked everyone for attending this evening's presentation. The Project Team, which included Westborough (Massachusetts) Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director Patrick Purcell, was tasked with assessing the current state of the Town's public safety services, including its fire services, emergency medical services, Fire Marshal, Emergency Management, and law enforcement. The methodology of the various entities, including the Town Charter, Ordinances, budgets, financial reports, Capital Improvement Plan, Personnel Policies, Response Patterns, Standard Operating Procedures & Guidelines, and the like, were reviewed and a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis was conducted. Site visits and interviews were also conducted and the Town's future public safety challenges and needs were considered. The recommendations provided in the document are based on nationally recognized standards and best practices, tailored to the Town.

Selectwoman Munro entered the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

The Report's ultimate goal is to provide a guideline for the Town's current and future public safety needs. It is a living document that provides recommendations upon which the Town may ponder and make appropriate and well-thought-out decisions in collaboration with the different departments and organizations that would be impacted.

The Key Strengths of the community's public safety organizations include the Town's strong community support, spirit, camaraderie, and desire to support the public safety organizations. The Town has a desire to maintain its rural character and robust system that includes a very dedicated cadre of volunteers. He noted that the Report reviews the organization and the systems that are currently in place and is in no way critical of the volunteers and their dedication, time, energy, and efforts. Other strong points include the Town's maintenance of up-to-date equipment and apparatus, two (2) Fire Stations, a strong fire and EMS Mutual Aid system, membership in a Regional Emergency Communication Center, involvement in the Resident State Trooper Program, a pro-active Emergency Management Program, reinvigorated Fire Marshal Program, which includes additional

staffing and a Mutual Aid Agreement, and the Town's administrative and operation support to the Fire Companies, including the Town's full- and part-time Firefighter/EMTs and part-time supervisory staff, administrative staff, and the ownership of the fire apparatus and one of the Fire Company buildings.

The Key Challenges include the recruitment and retention of volunteers, which is a nationwide issue; the age of its ambulance, which, at 11 years of age, is well past its recommended life expectancy, resulting in increased maintenance costs; the time it will take to purchase a new ambulance; lack of a reserve ambulance; lack of municipal oversight over the ambulance transport revenue, which is under the guise of the GLVFCO; lack of unified management and oversight of the Fire/EMS Services; lack of coordinated Fire Company Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs), and training procedures; ongoing rivalries between the two Fire Companies; need for a risk-based approach for apparatus purchase and deployment, which should be reviewed from a town-wide, rather than individual, standpoint, and; the ongoing litigation between the Town and GLVFCO, which detracts from the Fire Company's primary role of providing quality fire and EMS services.

Long-Term Considerations for the Town include the impact of the growth of the community and its aging population on the current public safety operations and the importance of partnering with the planning and economic development initiatives with respect to anticipating the budgetary, equipment, and staffing needs. The Town is encouraged to continue seeking and expanding upon the available opportunities to regionalize and share services and resources with surrounding communities and seek potential changes to public and private insurance reimbursement formulas for ambulance transport as well as pursuing available grants.

The Report outlines thirty-three (33) recommendations based on the size of the community, dwindling member volunteers, the recruitment of volunteers from the same pool, and the administering of the various aspects of a Fire/EMS Agency. The Key Recommendations include:

- Consolidating all of the firefighting, rescue, and EMS functions under the administrative management of the Town within one (1) year. The consolidation would entail establishing a single Fire/EMS Department under a single Fire Chief, employed by the Town of Salem. As such, GLVFCO's EMS Primary Service Area (PSA), its Firehouse and ambulance, and administration of patient billing and revenue collection would be transferred to the Town. The Town and GLVFCO should continue to take immediate steps to negotiate a new EMS service contract to be in effect until the consolidation is finalized. Both fire companies may continue to maintain their 501(c)(3) status and support their respective volunteers and fundraising, social, and community

events. (Chapter VI)

- While both fire companies fund and support their volunteer firefighter and EMT recruitment and retention initiatives, MRI recommends that the Town continue to enhance its program by using the resources available through the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC). (Chapter VII)
- Upon its reorganization, the operational job titles and responsibilities should be re-aligned to ensure their consistency. The reorganization should include the establishment of an EMS Coordinator who ensures that its members receive the proper training, certifications, continuing education, and quality assurance. Two (2) additional Firefighter/EMT positions should be established to ensure adequate coverage during weekday hours. It is recommended that a FEMA SAFER (Federal Emergency Management Agency Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) Grant be applied for to help defray the cost of these positions. (Chapter VIII)
- The future Organizational Chart should include a paid Fire Chief, under whom the paid Firefighter/EMTs and volunteer Fire Police, Deputy Chiefs, and EMS Coordinator work. The volunteer Captains, Lieutenants, Firefighters, and EMTs would work under the Deputy Chiefs. While the Department would be under the Town of Salem, the individual fire companies may maintain their names. (Chapter VIII)
- The GLVFCO should take immediate action in initiating the purchase of a new ambulance. The MRI Team expressed extreme concern with respect to the age of the current ambulance, the growing risk of a catastrophic failure during use, and the timeframe within which a new ambulance would be delivered. The immediate acquisition of a replacement/reserve ambulance, which may be shared/regionalized between neighboring agencies, was also highly recommended. (Chapter IX)
- The recommended distribution of fire apparatus, which may be adapted depending on operational needs, response patterns, and the like, is provided in the document. Plans, including the allocation of funds and determination of specifications, should be made to purchase a new Engine Tanker (ET-127) by Fiscal Year 2025. The Town should continue funding the personal protective equipment (PPE) and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) equipment, which are extremely critical to ensure the safety of the firefighters and their ability to effectively fight fires. New members should receive new equipment and the strict guidelines for the maintenance and cleaning of the equipment should be maintained. (Chapter IX)
- All of the policies, procedures, and training should be aligned and uniform across the fire companies, including the establishment of a single set of SOGs; a joint occupation health and safety committee, a schedule for fire and EMS training, a firefighter and EMT recruitment program, and; a common software platform for incident reporting, training and certification records, vehicle and building maintenance records, fire pre-

plans, etc. (Chapter X)

- Installation of an automatic fire sprinkler system in each fire station to protect the facility and the equipment housed within the facility. (Chapter XII)
- The establishment of policies, procedures, and schedules for inspections and re-inspections by the Fire Marshal. This particular item is currently being undertaken by the reinvigorated Fire Marshal Department. The inspections are an opportunity for the Fire Marshal to educate property owners on how to make their property safer, thereby helping to maintain the economy of the community. It was noted that most businesses that experience a fire do not reopen. (Chapter XIV)
- The establishment of a regular schedule of tabletop and full-scale exercises to test and improve the Town's disaster response capabilities by the Emergency Manager. Grants are available to help fund the hiring of an outside contractor)
- Continue to contract for police services and dispatching through the Connecticut State Police Resident State Trooper Program and the Quinebaug Valley Emergency Communications Dispatch Center. (Chapters XVI and XVII)

An Overarching Concern that surfaced throughout the investigation was the relationship between the Town and the GLVFCO. The ongoing litigation detracts from the Fire Company's ability to prioritize its EMS/Fire services and has negatively impacted the SVFCO. The GLVFCO's patterns of dysfunction include past internal investigations, the current slander lawsuit, their lack of adherence to Town policies and procedures and fiscal transparency, and the expenditure of ambulance revenues to help fund their litigation costs. The litigation has also had a negative impact on the recruitment and retention of volunteers and the community's perception of the two fire companies. During their investigation, the team found that the Town has made considerable efforts to support its volunteers and strengthen the coordination and communication between the two fire companies. As the litigation continues, the risk of long-term negative impacts in terms of their ability to recruit and retain member volunteers grows in addition to incurring additional costs.

The Immediate Priorities include the purchasing of a new ambulance, the recruitment and retention of volunteers, and the financial transparency of the ambulance revenues.

It was emphasized that no decisions would be made this evening. Mr. Bliss urged all parties to continue focusing on the vision of providing the highest quality public safety services possible and centering all of their decisions around this focus. He recommended that the Town consider each of the recommendations with the utmost care and respect.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Board of Selectmen Comments

Selectman LaBonte, who has been acting as one of the Selectman Liaisons to the Fire

Departments/Emergency Services, stated that one of the first questions raised at each of their Fire Chiefs Roundtable meetings is the status of the purchasing of a new ambulance. The response has consistently been, “We’re spec’ing it out”. His nightmare scenario is their inability to keep the Town safe. He is also pleased with the Town’s strengths as outlined in the Report. He felt that the objective view provided by a third party was invaluable and looks forward to playing an instrumental role in making the necessary improvements. He looks forward to hearing and learning from the public’s comments and questions.

Selectman Butcher recalled discussing the need for another third-party, objective review of the Emergency Services Department at length with former First Selectman Lyden. As a former Chairman of the Board of Finance, he was concerned with ensuring that the finances of the Town were transparent and that the controls were fair and equitable for all of the departments. He did not feel that this was the case with Emergency Services. While some of the recommendations provided in the initial Report were completed, other recommendations were not initiated. He thanked Mr. Bliss for an excellent review of their services, adding that all of his concerns were addressed and felt that the public should be grateful to the Board of Selectmen who opted to engage the services of MRI to provide a revised Report. He felt that the blueprint, as provided, should be followed to make the Town as safe as possible.

Mr. Bliss expressed his appreciation to the community and those who provided their input and information and contributed to the Report.

Selectwoman Munro stated that, while she understands that the Report will take some time to digest, she is looking forward to hearing the residents’ comments. She stated the importance of their viewpoint and the Town’s primary responsibility to keep the community as safe as possible through the emergency services they provide.

Selectman Lyden commented on a thorough Study that includes a significant amount of material that would need to be carefully reviewed and considered. He, too, looks forward to hearing from the public and suggested that a three-minute time limit be established to ensure that all of the members of the community have an opportunity to speak.

First Selectman Chmielewski recognized each of the individuals who played an instrumental in the formation of the final Report. He noted that this evening’s meeting is being videotaped, which they intend to post online, along with the minutes.

Public Comment

Carl Nawrocki, Music Vale Road, took the opportunity to announce that the Friends of Salem Library’s upcoming Annual Book Sale will be held at the end of October. He questioned how the proposed Organizational Chart would fit into the Town structure and to whom the Fire Chief would be reporting, administratively and organizationally. He also questioned where the Emergency Management Committee and Resident State Trooper(s)

would be placed within the Organizational Chart.

SFVCO Chief Gene Maiorano, West Road, who has been the Fire Chief for over 30 (thirty) years and a member of the Fire Company for nearly 57 (fifty-seven) years, stated that the SVFCO has attended all of the Fire Chiefs Roundtable meetings. He noted a contradiction that was made in the Report regarding the recommendation for one (1) tanker truck, which is not sufficient in a rural Town where water is not readily available. He stated the importance of having a water supply, the need to work with mutual aid, and the use of the Tanker Task Force. The same applies to the Forestry unit. He also stated that the Town Seal was placed on all of their vehicles, as directed by a former First Selectman, and expects the Salem Fire Company name to remain on all of their emergency apparatus. He is pleased with the Report and reported that he has received calls from residents who have expressed the same. He also expressed his support for the recommendation of a single Fire Chief leading both Fire Companies, which other towns have successfully accomplished.

Vernon Smith, 169 Norwich Road, who found the Report interesting, quoted the following passages with which he concurred, as evidenced by the total revamping of the Town's emergency services team, resulting in a highly functioning professional team that the Town deserves:

“The town's leadership team, including the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance, have made considerable efforts to support and strengthen public safety services in Salem, and specifically, to support the town volunteer fire companies financially and administratively.” (page 44)

“The prompt and efficient delivery of public safety services is one of the most important responsibilities of local government.” (page 16)

He expressed his concerns with the following passage and felt that its resolution should be a priority:

“The MRI study team has particular concerns about the relationship between the town and GLVFC. ...GLVFC...continues to resist and obstruct efforts to collaborate with town officials, follow town policies, and be fully transparent about its fiscal management practices....Without commenting on the merits of any of these lawsuits, the MRI study team believes that their existence is indicative of the dysfunctional relationship that currently exists between the town and GLVFD.” (Page 19)

Andy Frausini, Darling Road, a member of the SVFCO since 1977, and a retiree from the Department since 2013, stated that he, along with seven (7) other individuals, returned as a volunteer this year as a temporary band-aid to help supplement the Town's emergency services. He stated that homeowners, such as himself, who are generally more established and financially stable, would benefit from the \$2,000.00/year property tax abatement while the younger generation, who are unable to purchase property and would be the first to enter

the burning buildings and risk their lives, would receive a much smaller cash stipend. He found the disparity “ridiculous” and “pathetic” and felt that it was not up to standards and added to the difficulty of retaining its volunteers. He also noted the discrepancy with the Town’s current point system, which is used to determine their eligibility for the incentive, and suggested the possibility of making the points accrue by the hour. He commended the Report and the presentation, but was exhausted by the numerous recommendations that will need to be initiated to build a successful emergency services department. He also stated the need to hire consultants and/or paid individuals to allow the members to attend the necessary training sessions and ensure that the department is adequately staffed.

Mike Bednarz, Skyline Drive, Emergency Management Director, believed that the process in which MRI engaged as they evaluated the Town’s emergency services was fair. He learned a great deal from Mr. Bliss and his team through his involvement and plans to take the recommendations in stride and will strive to fulfill them. He expressed his appreciation for the Report.

Tom Main, Career Staff Supervisor and Interim Fire Marshal, agreed with the findings in the Report. One of the key items is the ambulance, which responds to approximately 85% of the Town’s emergency calls. Based on the current supply chain issues and the time that it takes to receive equipment, the process of purchasing a new ambulance should have begun years ago. He reported that they are currently investigating the possibility of collaborating with the surrounding communities and enhancing the inspection process in the Fire Marshal’s office to help improve their insurance rate. While the current system is satisfactory, the recording system is lacking and the Town has not been receiving its due credit. They are currently working on devising a plan that will be personally, professionally, and fiscally beneficial to the Town, the volunteers, and the community. One of the biggest issues, he felt, was administration. While the Calls for Service have increased five (5) times over the last ten (10) years, the administrative work has increased twenty-fold. He proposed hiring an individual who is tasked with handling the administrative work. This would allow the volunteers to complete their training, maintain their quality of life, and serve the community.

Jeff Standish, Deputy Fire Marshal and Assistant Supervisor to the Career Staff, who started his career as a Volunteer Firefighter in 1991 and is now a Lifetime Member of the SVFCO, stated that he, along with Interim Fire Marshal and Career Staff Supervisor Main, Emergency Management Director Bednarz, and other key players, have been working to facilitate the Fire Chiefs to meet and organize. He agreed with the hiring of an individual to handle the administrative work. Numerous discussions will be held to move forward. He stated their support for the fire companies and the Town.

Sue Spang, Hartford Road, questioned whether the recommendation for a reserve ambulance was included in the 2014 Study, whether the Town has ever had a reserve ambulance,

whether a reserve ambulance would be necessary after the new ambulance is received, and whether any other towns of similar size maintain a reserve ambulance.

It was not believed that the recommendation was included in the 2014 Study. The Town has never had a reserve ambulance and, upon the receipt of a new ambulance, a reserve ambulance would still be recommended. It is not uncommon for similar-sized towns to maintain a reserve ambulance.

Norm Rabe, Valley Drive, questioned whether there were adequate funds in the ambulance account to purchase a new ambulance.

Mr. Bliss stated that, based on their projections, adequate funds would be available upon the arrival of a new unit. First Selectman Chmielewski stated that one of the reasons the Boards of Selectmen and Finance were interested in conducting an audit of the Fire Company's financial reports was to determine whether there were adequate funds in GLVFCO's ambulance fund to purchase a new ambulance.

Gaylene Smith, Salem Ridge Drive, a former volunteer on the ambulance, assured everyone that, should the ambulance go out of service, American Ambulance would be available to provide ambulance services to the Town. Having had the same concerns regarding the ambulance, she stated that she has confirmed that the GLVFCO has been discussing the purchasing of a new ambulance over the past year.

Cory Bourgeois, West Road, thanked Mr. Bliss for the comprehensive study. She questioned whether other similar-sized towns were benchmarked in terms of their apparatus, their offerings, and their efforts to regionalize their services.

Mr. Bliss stated that, while they have conducted studies for other towns that included such comparisons, it was not within the scope of services for this particular Report. Most communities are experiencing similar issues and county-wide or regional emergency services, which are prevalent in other parts of the country, have not progressed. Rather, the regionalization of services is instituted on a town-by-town basis through the mutual aid system and the establishment of specialized teams, e.g., hazardous materials teams, high-end rescue teams, dive teams, and communication centers. Based on his findings, he felt that the Town is participating at, relatively, the same level as most communities in the state and is suggesting that the community maintain an open mind to explore other opportunities as they arise.

Selectman Butcher stated the possibility of having a regionalized reserve ambulance, citing the Town's recent borrowing of an ambulance from a neighboring town while theirs was out of service. Selectwoman Munro added that they might also be able to gain revenue for materials and supplies by doing so. First Selectman Chmielewski further stated that such discussions have taken place to lean forward and think outside the box.

GLVFCO Chief Silva, Way Road, stated that he is looking forward to working with the Town and accomplishing some of the recommendations. He assured the public that the ambulance was fully operational and well-maintained. While he is open to looking into purchasing a reserve ambulance, he noted that they had investigated the same possibility in the past and found that they did not meet the criteria, based on the Town's population and number of calls for service, per the state.

Tony Griggs, 122 New London Road, complimented the Report and felt that it illuminated many of the existing issues. Having resided in the Town of Salem for 40 (40) years, he felt that many of the questions have remained the same over the years. He questioned how other towns have proceeded to implement and complete the recommendations and whether a committee or sub-committee should be formed. He felt that a status report should be provided to the Town periodically to maintain transparency and feared that the Report and its recommendations would lie fallow.

Mr. Bliss concurred, stating that most communities that have successfully implemented the recommendations form a subcommittee for policy oversight. The subcommittee would be tasked with prioritizing the recommendations and setting goals and tasks with specific benchmarks and metrics within a specified timeframe for the First Selectman or Town Manager. The project should be managed and followed up, given the available resources. Because the Board of Selectmen contracted the Report, a status report would, typically, be provided by the Board.

Selectman Butcher ensured Mr. Griggs that the Board was deeply committed to implementing the recommendations and was confident that the majority of the recommendations would be implemented, stating that he plans to work very hard to do so. The big questions include their priorities and the amount of funding necessary to achieve the goals. Selectman LaBonte was unsure as to how they would implement the recommendations and referred Mr. Griggs to their swift scheduling of this evening's presentation as evidence of its importance and their commitment. First Selectman Chmielewski added that he committed to the Town and Boards of Selectmen and Finance to commission and bring the study to fruition. While he was pressured to provide a completed study within a tighter timeframe, he felt that it was important to take the necessary time to provide a good, solid Study. Many of the recommendations provided in the 2014 Study were implemented and the Town has continued to inform the public regarding the status of the Town's emergency services. Over the past three years, Selectman Liaison LaBonte and himself have been holding the Fire Chiefs Roundtable meetings to discuss operational issues. The Town's relationship with the Fire Chiefs and Commanders has been phenomenal and all of the issues that have been raised during these meetings have been resolved. He looks forward to continuing to work with all of the Town's emergency service entities and the Boards of Selectmen and Finance to move forward and implement and achieve their goals.

Hugh McKenney, 33 Woodland Drive, commended the Report and expressed his support for many of the recommendations. He urged them to swiftly move forward and leave the past behind. During his tenure on the Board of Selectmen, he had recommended that they review the recommendations provided in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) on a quarterly or bi-annual basis to ensure that they stay on track. He urged the Board to do the same with the recommendations provided in the Report and ensure that they are followed through to completion. The cost of some of the tasks is irrelevant to the risks associated with emergency services and the resulting liability. He recommended that they "pay it now, instead of paying it later".

Former SVFCO Chief Chip Weston, Meadow Lane, former SVFCO Chief and a member of the SVFCO for over 35 years, spoke concerning the regionalization of emergency services. During his tenure as Fire Chief, he stated that quarterly meetings were held with neighboring Fire Chiefs to discuss the possibility of regionalizing their services. Numerous questions, including the handling of workers' compensation, stipends, training, response times, equipment, and the like, were raised. The regionalization of services is a common theme throughout the area and is continuing to be discussed. He also concurred with SVFCO Chief Maiorano and is a proponent of maintaining a single Chief who handles the financial and operational duties and under whom the fire companies serve.

David Bingham, Birch Road, provided a brief childhood story and thanked and commended the Town's fire services and their cooperation with the neighboring towns. The members who provide an expedient response, receive the necessary training, and handle the lifesaving equipment are invaluable. He expressed his full support of the Report and his hopes that the Town will prioritize and help fund a new ambulance and, possibly, regionalize a second, reserve ambulance.

Norm Rabe, Valley Drive, questioned why the GLVFCO is not yet ready to order a new, fully equipped ambulance when it has sufficient funds to do so. He felt that the Town should take action and order the ambulance and request that the funds in GLVFCO's ambulance fund be transferred to the Town for its purchase.

SVFCO Chief Maiorano, in reference to Volunteer Firefighter Frausini's comments, stated that the incentives (tax abatement & stipends) have been provided to the volunteers for the past 18 (eighteen) years. He agreed that the stipend increase to \$750.00 in the amended Ordinance is too low for those who are investing their time, and energy, and lives, but do not own any real property in the Town. He noted that other towns provide gas money or offer retirement packages. He stated the importance of investing in the younger generation, who are their future, and the need to retain the few that they have.

Selectman Lyden stated that the Ordinance is still in progress and agreed that the younger generation should be better compensated, whether it is through offering an on-call stipend,

gas reimbursement, or other incentive. The compensation might also be outlined in a policy, rather than an Ordinance that requires a presentation to and vote by the townspeople at a Town Meeting. A policy, on the other hand, would merely require the approval of the Boards of Selectmen and Finance. He also commented on the resistance that was received when the 2014 Study was conducted in contrast to the acceptance of the need to change with the current study.

SFVCO Chief Maiorano reported that over the past 18 years that the incentive has been in place, an annual average of 13 (thirteen) members have qualified to receive the tax incentive, and seven (7) members have qualified to receive the stipend.

Bart Drennen, 7 Salem Hollow Lane, stated that the Report clearly shows that significant funding must be allocated to implement the recommendations and provides existing grant opportunities to help alleviate the costs. He questioned if and who applies for grants for the Town.

First Selectman Chmielewski stated that the Town has grant writers and will continue to seek out and apply for grants.

Horace Lindo, 542 Flanders Road, Oakdale, noted and concurred with the majority of residents who have spoken this evening and their concerns with the status of the GLVFCO's ambulance. He stated that neither the SVFCO nor GLVFCO is suitable to run an ambulance service that could serve the Town 24/7 as that would require that they work very long shifts and/or sleep at the fire company. As such, the Town must plan for a different facility to house the ambulance and its volunteers to provide 24/7 service to the community.

6. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Lyden/Butcher, to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 p.m. Discussion: First Selectman Chmielewski thanked everyone for attending this evening's meeting and taking part in the discussion. 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.