

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2021, 7:00 P.M.
MEETING ROOM 1, SALEM TOWN HALL**

PRESENT

Kevin Lyden
Edward Chmielewski, Jr.
Ron LaBonte
Hugh McKenney
Susan Sullivan

ABSENT

none

CALL TO ORDER

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

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Tuesday, September 14, 2021, Board of Selectmen Special Meeting

M/S/C: LaBonte/McKenney, to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of Tuesday, September 14, 2021. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

4. CORRESPONDENCE/PUBLIC COMMENTS – *none*

5. AGENDA:

A. Discuss ARPA Funds

First Selectman Lyden reported that a letter, along with an informational packet, has been sent to the Boards of Selectmen and Finance regarding the use of ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds. The town has received approximately \$600,000.00 and will be receiving an additional \$600,000.00 next year. The funds must be expended by December 2024. He recommended they review the needs of the town and the allowable uses of the funds as they begin reviewing their FY2022/23 budget. To date, the following funds have been allocated:

Uncas Health District	\$ 6,000.00
Conference Room 1, Audio-visual system	\$ 7,000.00

Other possible items include:

School Generator Replacement	\$ 175,000.00
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The item is currently on the town's Capital Plan and should qualify for funding as the school is used for shelter during emergencies

Broadband infrastructure

The benefits of offering broadband in the town would need to be further investigated

Renovate and add ADA-accessible bathroom to main floor of the old Library

Two years ago, a wheelchair ramp and side exit were added to allow the Friends of Salem Library to transport and sort books. The town is currently working with the Library and the Friends to enhance and, possibly, utilize the space as a meeting room.

Expand and enhance the Library's programs to benefit lower income residents and those who have been impacted by the pandemic

Benevolent, aka Needy, Fund

Recreational activities

Improving the town's stormwater runoff on various roads

(suggested by Selectman McKenney)

Improvements to help mitigate the town's stormwater runoff issues that were exposed during the recent storm; Resolving some or all of these issues would help protect the town's watershed and natural resources

Upgrade the town's EOC (Emergency Operations Center)

(suggested by Selectman Chmielewski)

The EOC is used six to ten times a year during emergencies and is need of upgrading with modern equipment

Upgrade the communication system between the town and Emergency Services

(suggested by Selectman Chmielewski)

The recent storm also revealed issues with the town's communication equipment

First Selectman Lyden agreed with the Selectmen's suggestions and recommended that any large expenditures, such as the School generator, be included in the town's Budget Referendum for the townspeople to vote. Items costing between \$32,000.00 and \$160,000.00 could be approved via a Town Meeting. Smaller items, under \$32,000.00, may be expended more informally. Selectman McKenney agreed, adding that the process should be formally written, for the townspeople's information. He also stated the importance of informing the public that the funds cannot be utilized to reduce their tax burden.

First Selectman Lyden noted that the Board of Education has its own source of funding and the Boards of Selectmen and Finance can work together and create a plan of action to ensure that the funds are spent wisely and on items that will benefit the entire town.

B. Tax Collector Refunds

M/S/C: McKenney/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 \$501.68 (five hundred one dollars

**and sixty-eight cents) on the 5th day of October 2021. Discussion: None.
Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.**

5. REPORTS:

A. FIRST SELECTMAN

First Selectman Lyden announced that the Uncas Health District was recently awarded an NAACP Award. The town's Safety Committee has elected James McIntyre as their new Chairman. The Committee, which includes members of the Public Works department, Library, Town Hall, Emergency Services, and the State Trooper, meets bi-monthly to review and discuss the safety concerns of the town. Thanks to the Committee, the town received an award for embracing safety a few years ago and has helped reduce the town's insurance costs. He stressed the importance of maintaining the same insurance plan for the town and the school as the use of the facilities is intertwined. Salem School's Annual Safety Plan has been reviewed and submitted. Granite posts have been installed at Salem Cemetery; the swag chains will be installed in the near future. He commended the town's new Public Works Foreman Tony Gallicchio, who is working under Public Works Director/Advisor Don Bourdeau, Jr.

B. BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE)

Selectman McKenney reported that a special presentation was provided by the Principal and Vice-Principal regarding the students' testing scores which revealed increases in the number of students who scored at or above the norm in language arts and science and declining scores in mathematics. Immediate corrective actions are being taken to supplement the students' mathematics curriculum and strengthen their scores.

The Facilities Manager is investigating the possibility of upgrading the School's HVAC equipment utilizing their ARP ESSER (American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds. Extensive discussion was held during Business Manager Kim Gadaree's report, which included a potential savings of \$58,000.00 due to the use of seven, rather than eight, buses as a result of the bus driver shortage. No significant impact was reported in the busing between Salem and East Lyme High School. A \$5,000.00 insurance policy was purchased by the School for the underground oil tank due to a construction delay. The estimated cost for repairing or replacing parts, many of which are rusty and/or sharp, of the school playground is \$10,887.00. Based on a growing national trend, the School was forewarned of a potential food supply issue for food services.

The BOE is working on their Long-Range Capital Plan as they prepare for the FY2022/23 budget season.

C. BOARD OF FINANCE

First Selectman Lyden reported that the Auditors have conducted the second part of their audit at the town and the School. The Audit must be completed by December and an extension may be requested and signed by the First Selectman by November 30.

D. PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

Selectwoman Sullivan reported that the Commission is continuing its work on the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). A Public Hearing regarding the Affordable Housing Plan was held with a few members from the town providing comments and suggestions. Overall, the Plan received positive feedback.

E. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)

Selectman Chmielewski commended Commissioner Steven Shelley, who is working on the Commission's Business and Services Directory, which is expected to be published soon. The Commission also continues to work on the POCD, spearheaded by Commissioner Carl Fontneau.

F. LIBRARY

Selectman LaBonte reported that the Library Board held a brief virtual meeting. Discussions included fall decorations, providing in-house services, and renovations to the old Library. The knitters and quilters are now meeting in-person (masked).

G. EMERGENCY SERVICES

Selectman Chmielewski expressed his pleasure in working with Emergency Services Director Mike Bednarz over the past 15 months. He provided a brief recap of their progress as they continue to meet regularly with the Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs of both fire companies. Both of the departments, full- and part-time staff, and training officers have conducted joint training exercises. In November, the town will be sponsoring an aerial ladder certification training for the paid staff and volunteers. They continue to work on standardizing their protocol standard operating procedures, guidelines, and the like. During the last year, a second full-time firefighter and several part-time firefighters have been hired. While they have been faced with some challenges, there were no noteworthy issues to report. The team continues to work well together and creatively resolve issues as they aim to enhance the team. Action reviews of incidents are being regularly conducted to help improve their procedures and move forward in a positive manner.

Emergency Services Director Bednarz reported that there were 60 calls for service in the month of August. He is in the process of conducting a Call Volume Study and has accumulated eight months of data, to date. On average, approximately 50% of the overall calls occur during weekday hours. As stated by Emergency Services Selectman Liaison Chmielewski, the last 15 months have been both exciting and challenging. The

need to establish their roles arose as a result of a requirement that was identified when issues regarding the Federal Labor Laws, which precludes the town from having their volunteers move into a paid position, arose. As a result, there has been an increase in costs for gear and equipment and the need to increase their available pool of employees. His goal is to improve the communications between the fire companies, emergency services, and the town so that they can adequately meet the present and future needs of the town. He thanked the Board for their attention, support, and the opportunity to serve the town.

In response to Selectman LaBonte regarding the possibility of the need for a third Firefighter/EMT (Emergency Medical Technician), Emergency Services Director Bednarz stated that, ideally, there should be four Firefighter/EMTs, based on the two-in, two-out concept in times of emergencies and their call volume. They have been very fortunate in past years to have had volunteers serving their town. Unfortunately, based on recent trends, additional funding will be necessary for emergency services to ensure that the town is adequately covered. With respect to the Call Volume Study, Selectman LaBonte expressed his interest in seeing the locations of where the calls are deriving such that, in future discussions regarding the consolidation of emergency apparatus, they could determine the appropriate placement of the equipment. Emergency Services Director Bednarz stated that he is keeping the data very broad at this time, concentrating primarily on the timeframes of the calls to determine when coverage is most needed. He expressed the difficulties with conducting a risk/vulnerability study, adding that risks and vulnerabilities exist in all areas of the town.

In response to Selectwoman Sullivan who questioned whether the Call Volume Study includes the types of calls being received, Emergency Services Director Bednarz stated that while he is not differentiating whether the calls are fire, EMS (Emergency Medical Services), or rescue, he is keeping track of the mutual aid calls.

The Board thanked Emergency Services Director Bednarz for his hard work and efforts.

6. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: LaBonte/Chmielewski, to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 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