

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
JUNE 15, 2022
7:00 P.M.
Town Hall Meeting Room, 83 Mountain Road, Suffield CT
Hybrid Meeting**

Selectmen present: Colin Moll, Kathleen Harrington, Mel Chafetz, Pete Hill and Jerry Mahoney

Also present in person or via Zoom: Town Attorney Derek Donnelly, Facilities Manager Chris Matejek, Police Chief James Canon and Finance Director Eric Remington

First Selectman Moll called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked everyone to join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Sadie Hill, 523 North Main Street – Miss Hill spoke on the subject of teen mental health, outlining the struggles facing our youth today, including teen suicide, ADHD, eating disorders and self-harm. Noting that May was Mental Health Awareness Month, she reflected on the fact that the Town of Suffield needs to make changes to the way we handle mental health in our community. Despite our community having been touched by teen suicide on a number of occasions over the last few years, it seems as though we have not changed the ways in which we handle mental health issues and the time to end the stigma surrounding mental health is now. **Miss Hill** proposed ideas for outreach programs, community events and educational opportunities that would bring change to our community and allow for parents and children to have a clearer understanding of their struggles, let them know help is available and how to obtain it when needed. We must all remember that we never truly know what another person is going through and it is up to all of us to advocate for those who are struggling and cannot.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *On July 16, 2022 the Suicide Lifeline will be changed from 1-800-273-8255 to 988 in order to get individuals connected to help as quickly as possible.*

Selectman Harrington motioned to amend the agenda to add agenda item #3a “Discussion and approval to waive the Bid and Purchase Policy for Beneski Field Turf Replacement.” Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the minutes from the May 24, 2022 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Selectman Harrington motioned to approve the minutes from the May 24, 2022 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen as drafted with three (3) changes as follows:

Page 1 – Under the approval of the minutes from the May 4th Regular Meeting Selectman Harrington’s motion was to adopt them as drafted with three corrections which she restated as follows:

1. **On Page 1** there is a need to close parentheses on the motion to amend per Derek Donnelly’s suggestion.
2. **On Page 4** three quarters of the way down the page “selectman” should be changed to “selectmen.”

3. **On Page 5 under the discussion of Tamer’s Witness Stone under Selectman Harrington’s comments at the end she had asked that they include the sentences that “the Board of Selectmen voted unanimously in favor of a placement last year for Tamer’s Witness Stone but the State Department of Transportation rejected the proposed location thus causing the delay and requiring further consideration for a placement site.”**

Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval to waive the Bid and Purchase Policy for Beneski Field Turf Replacement

Attorney Donnelly provided an overview of documentation provided to the board with regard to a state statute that may help the town with the proposed turf replacement for Beneski Field. The statute in questions reads as follows:

Statute:

C.G.S. 7-148v (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of the general statutes or any municipal charter, special act or ordinance, any municipality may purchase equipment, supplies, materials or services from a person who has a contract to sell such goods or services to other state governments, political subdivisions of the state, nonprofit organizations or public purchasing consortia available through a regional educational service center or regional council of governments, in accordance with the provisions of such contract.

Attorney Donnelly explained that the state statute allows the Town to utilize an approved vendor that has been competitively bid by the State or other regional agencies, including a regional education service center, without having to competitively bid, allowing the town to streamline the bid and purchase process.

In pricing out the upcoming Field Turf project at the High School, Town staff found an opportunity to take advantage of competitive pricing through CREC, with both significant savings to the Town and the additional benefit of being able to complete it this summer. Earlier this year the Town authorized the use of \$750,000 in ARPA money for this project and this proposal is \$100,000 less than budgeted.

It is **Attorney Donnelly’s** opinion that this proposal fits squarely into the statute and he believes the Town staff could move forward without additional Board of Selectmen approval. However, in the past, that has not been the town’s modus operandi. Given the amount of money in question, the importance of transparency and the involvement of ARPA funds, he recommends that the Board of Selectmen approve the waiver of the bid and purchase policy for this contract, out of an abundance of caution.

Discussion ensued amongst all members of the board. Topics included clarification of the applications of the statute, interpretation of the process for the Bid and Purchase Policy, the waiving process and expected timeline should the waiver be approved. Numerous questions were asked regarding the generic vendor contract that had been provided to the selectmen for review. **Attorney Donnelly** and **First Selectman Moll** cautioned the selectmen from getting too caught up in the details of the contract as this was not a contract specific to the Town of Suffield turf replacement project but more of an example to work from. **Selectman Hill** and **Selectman Mahoney** felt that moving forward with the RFP process and waiting for bids may be a better way to proceed. A discussion followed regarding the difficulties the town has with getting contractors to bid on projects, especially a project with such a specialized item as astro-turf. **Mr. Matejek** used the recent RFP process for the Middle School Basketball and Tennis courts as a recent example of how difficult it can be and the obstacles the town is up against, including a unique construction climate, escalating materials costs and supply chain issues. Financial savings and the proposed timeline of the project, should we move forward with the vendor currently being discussed,

appear to be quite favorable but due to the information only being received a few hours earlier, neither **Selectman Hill** nor **Selectman Mahoney** feel it is appropriate to move forward. **Selectman Harrington** asked numerous questions about the contract language which **Attorney Donnelly** addressed to the best of his ability. He did note that he also has many additional questions that he plans to ask about the contract and assured the selectmen that he will make sure all concerns are addressed in a satisfactory manner.

Selectman Harrington motioned to waive the Bid and Purchase Policy for Beneski Field Turf Replacement.

Selectman Harrington explained her reasoning for making the motion to waive by stating that she sees the waiving of the policy as simply allowing us to move forward in the process as it is not a matter of signing a contract. She trusts that **Attorney Donnelly** will handle the concerns brought to light this evening and if he is unable to reach an agreement that will work for the town, the selectmen will revisit ways in which to move forward with the replacement of the turf field.

Selectman Hill and **Selectman Mahoney** again expressed their discomfort at making a decision and voting on the subject this evening.

Vote: 3 in favor (Moll, Harrington and Chafetz) and 2 against (Mahoney and Hill.) Motion passed.

Approval of tentative agreement for the Fire Union

First Selectman Moll explained that this was a subject already discussed at a Special Meeting of the Board of Selectman but action could not be taken as the wording of the agenda did not allow for it.

Selectman Harrington motioned to approve the tentative agreement for the Fire Union. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval of Dairy Abatement in the amount of \$6,730.65 to Benjamin J. Bielonko

Selectman Harrington motioned to approve Dairy Abatement in the amount of \$6,730.65 to Benjamin J. Bielonko. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval of Dairy Abatement in the amount of \$1,951.49 to David and Deborah Coulter Fusiek

Selectman Harrington motioned to approve Dairy Abatement in the amount of \$1,951.49 to David and Deborah Coulter Fusiek. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval of Dairy Abatement in the amount of \$4,620.80 to Lawrence and Susan Hastings

Selectman Harrington motioned to approve Dairy Abatement in the amount of \$4,620.80 to Lawrence and Susan Hastings. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval to transfer funds from past capital project accounts and create a new account for "Stoney Brook Bridge Repairs" and refer to the Board of Finance

Facilities Director Chris Matejek addressed the selectmen and provided them details on old capital project accounts that still had fund balances in them which could be used to perform Stony Brook Bridge Repairs. He itemized each account and the balance associated with it, along with a description of what

the original projects had been. He also discussed the current structural state of the Stony Brook Bridge and what repairs will be necessary. According to Mr. Matejek, the amount of money we would be able to pull from these old accounts should sufficiently cover the cost of bridge repairs.

Selectman Mahoney motioned to approve transfer of \$21,046.70 from past capital project accounts and create a new account for “Stoney Brook Bridge Repairs” and refer to the Board of Finance. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval to create an account for donations received for the 10-year tree plan

First Selectman Moll explained the 10-year tree plan and the Tree Committee’s desire to set up account in order to accept donations. In addition, the Tree Committee plans to apply for grants that are only available to municipalities and if they are given the funds they must have a designated account for the money. Donations will be used to help pay for items that cannot be paid for with grant funds as those funds can only be used to pay other non-profits.

Selectman Hill motioned to approve the creation of an account for donations received for the 10-year tree plan and refer to the Board of Finance. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval to transfer funds from contingency to the Highway Department and refer to the Board of Finance

First Selectman Moll explained that there was no longer a need for this item and asked for a motion to table.

Selectman Mahoney motioned to table the transfer of funds from contingency to the Highway Department and refer to the Board of Finance. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval to transfer funds from contingency to the Police Department and refer to the Board of Finance

Police Chief Jim Canon and **Finance Director Eric Remington** provided an overview of the current financial situation as it relates to the Police Department budget, explained issues that had been recently discovered, provided commentary on the issues and offered a plan of action moving forward in order to correct the problems. The board was in agreement with the proposed action plan and satisfied with Mr. **Canon** and **Mr. Remington’s** explanation and thanked them for a thorough job on their review of the numbers.

Selectman Hill motioned to approve transfer of funds in the amount of \$269,245.88 from contingency to the Police Department and refer to the Board of Finance. Vote: 4 in favor (Moll, Hill, Chafetz and Harrington) and 1 opposed (Mahoney.) Motion passed.

Discussion and approval to transfer funds from Library Budget payroll to Materials Budget

First Selectman Moll explained that it is currently looking as though there will be an approximately \$22,000 surplus in the Library Payroll budget. As there is a current need for materials (i.e. books) he recommends a transfer of \$5,000.00 to the Materials Budget to assist with materials purchases. This will be applicable to the current fiscal year budget.

Selectman Harrington motioned to approve transfer of funds in the amount of \$5,000.00 from Library Budget payroll to Materials Budget. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval to transfer funds from First Selectman's payroll budget to purchase newer town vehicles to replace older vehicles

Selectman Harrington motioned to table the transfer of funds from First Selectman's payroll budget to purchase newer town vehicles to replace older vehicles. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Selectman's Updates

New Building Official

The Town of Suffield welcomes our new Building Official, **Kimberly Rogers**, who will be replacing Ted Flanders upon his retirement in July. She is currently training with Ted on Thursday and Friday of each week.

Director of Public Works

Congratulations to our current Facilities Manager **Chris Matejek** who has been promoted to Director of Public Works. This position will combine the roles of the Facilities Manager and the Highway Foreman.

Hydro-seeding on Multi-use Trail

Hydro-seeding is being completed along the new multi-use trail and fencing will be installed along the trail over the next few weeks. A ribbon cutting will be held at the beginning of July.

Summer Fair

A friendly reminder for all to check out the Suffield Summer Fair which will be held this weekend beginning on Friday, June 17th and running through Sunday, June 19th. The fireworks will be held on Friday with a rain date of Saturday.

Parks and Recreation – Summer Concert Series

Reminder to check out the Summer Concert Series calendar for all the upcoming shows.

Tamer Witness Stone Placement Update

Location has been confirmed and placement should be complete within the next month or two.

Broad Brook Brewery Payments

The funds owed to the Town of Suffield by Broad Brook Brewery have begun with the first payment being received at the end of May.

PCB Testing at the Library

More to come, but it looks as though the town may be granted leniency on the PCB testing at the Library.

Public Comment

None

Executive Session - Discussion of personnel matter

Selectman Mahoney motioned to enter Executive Session at 8:29 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter and invited Attorney Donnelly to join. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session ended at 8:40 p.m.

Action Taken on Executive Session

No action taken.

Selectman Hill motioned to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary