

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
JANUARY 4, 2023
7:00 P.M.
Town Hall Meeting Room, 83 Mountain Road, Suffield CT
Hybrid Meeting**

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

Also present in person or via Zoom: Library Director Julie Styles, Town Engineer Karen Isherwood and Economic Development Commission Alternate Member Gayle Demko

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

Brian Fry, 43 Wisteria Lane – Mr. Fry, a resident, parent and member of the Board of Education, expressed his support for the proposed Digital Community Bulletin Board initiative being discussed this evening. He explained why he felt they would be a benefit to the community and asked the Board of Selectmen for their support.

Bill Hoff, BOE Business Manager – Mr. Hoff echoed Mr. Fry’s sentiments, added some additional commentary of his own and urged the Board of Selectmen to support this initiative.

Approval of the minutes from the December 7, 2022 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Selectman Harrington requested the following change:

Page 2 – The second paragraph should reflect Selectman Harrington making a motion to appoint Elizabeth Tracey and then withdrawing the original motion and making a new motion to table the agenda item until the end of the meeting and reassign it as item 14a pending confirmation from Town Counsel. The vote should be reflected as 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Selectman Chafetz requested page numbers be added to the document.

Selectman Harrington motioned to approve the minutes from the December 7, 2022 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen with changes as noted. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Department updates from the Kent Memorial Library Director

First Selectman Moll invited **Library Director Julie Styles** to address the board. **Ms. Styles** spoke of the observations she has made since assuming her new role as the Library Director in late August 2022, including learning the “ins and outs” of the library itself, acquainting herself with the library staff, the Kent Memorial Library Commission and the Library Foundation as well as planning for the future of the library. **Ms. Styles** provided an overview of what she has accomplished thus far, what she is currently working on and what she envisions for the future of the library. She mentioned a “Brick Sale” Fundraiser as a possible means to assist with the beautification of the atrium or patio area. Another idea includes creating more of a community center environment at the library which she feels is becoming more necessary as the role of the public library has changed drastically as a result internet availability and technology advancements. She also noted that there is a strong need to create space for our teenage population to be able to “hang out” and decompress. Currently there

are quite a few students who make their way to the library after school and she feels that they need more than what the library currently has to offer. She suggested a possible staffed space within the library that could be used to redirect their energies.

The selectmen thanked **Ms. Styles** for her updates and applauded her enthusiasm and “out of the box” thinking, noting that it was nice to have a person with fresh views coming into this position. Discussion ensued with the selectmen asking a number of questions, many of which centered on the idea of the community center concept, which **Ms. Styles** answered accordingly.

Discussion and approval to apply for the CT DOT Local Bridge Program and refer to the Board of Finance

Town Engineer Karen Isherwood explained that every two years bridges greater than 20 feet require an inspection by the state. She gave the following overview of the 2022 bridge inspection report:

- The 2022 bridge inspection report listed Bridge #04569, Russell Avenue over Philo Brook, as poor condition and recommended we engage the services of a professional engineering firm immediately to prepare plans for rehabilitation or replacement before the condition degrades further.
- Connecticut DOT has prepared a preliminary application for reconstruction of this bridge under the Federal Local Bridge Program. As indicated in the attached application, the total project cost is estimated at \$2,925,000.
- Design (\$750,000 estimate) Timeframe approximately 1 year:
 - 100% covered by DOT. This will either utilize 100% Federal Funds or 80% Federal Funds and 20% State Funds.
 - The Town will not be asked for any money for this phase.
- Rights-of-Way (\$50,000 estimate – if applicable) Timeframe approximately 1 year:
 - If the Town chooses to have the Department acquire rights on behalf of the Town, then this will 100% be covered by DOT. Same funding as Design
 - The Town will not be asked for any money for this phase.
- Construction (the only phase where the Town is responsible for funds) (\$2,125,000 estimate) Timeframe approximately 1.5 years (2025 into 2026.)
 - This phase is a reimbursement. The Town will be responsible for paying the Contractor up front.
 - Contract Items (excluding non-participating items), Contingencies, Construction Inspection will be 100% reimbursed. Same funding source as Design above.
 - If a utility is municipally owned (sewer), then its relocation is 100% reimbursed. Private utilities are non-reimbursable.

If the Town wishes to pursue this opportunity, we would need to sign and submit the Federal Local Bridge Application and appropriate \$2,125,000 prior to construction with the anticipation of full reimbursement.

Discussion ensued with the selectmen expressing their thoughts and asking various questions of **Ms. Isherwood** which she answered accordingly.

Selectman Mahoney motioned to approve applying for the CT DOT Local Bridge Program and refer to the Board of Finance. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of Digital Community Bulletin Boards

Gayle Demko, alternate member of the Economic Development Commission, presented the board with a proposal to purchase Digital Community Bulletin Boards. **Ms. Demko** emphasized the need for our community to “plan, prepare and protect” and explained that the Digital Community Bulletin Boards are valuable communication tools which will provide our residents with real time information. **Ms. Demko** presented four major points of discussion and elaborated on each. Discussion points included:

- Why the boards are needed
- Goals and objectives of the boards
- A Work Plan
- Cost and funding

Discussion ensued with the selectmen asking questions and expressing their thoughts and concerns on the topic. **Ms. Demko** was able to address the majority of questions and those that required additional information she agreed to further investigate. One of the biggest concerns from the selectmen was how this would impact traffic safety as it seems to be a possible distraction for drivers. There was generalized support by all selectmen, however, they would like to delve deeper into the safety aspect. They would also like to review regulations and/or policies from other towns who currently have these digital bulletin boards in order to determine standard practice for posting information. It should be noted that this proposal requires buy-in by the Planning and Zoning Commission prior to moving forward. The selectmen thanked **Ms. Demko** for her presentation and expressed interest in holding further discussions in the future.

Discussion and reappointment of Kevin Goff and Joseph Sangiovanni to the Permanent Building Commission through December 31, 2026

Selectman Mahoney motioned to approve the reappointment of **Kevin Goff** and **Joseph Sangiovanni** to the Permanent Building Commission through December 31, 2026. **Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.**

Discussion and appointment of David Innes to the Retirement Commission to fill the remainder of Eric Remington’s seat through 8/31/2024.

Selectman Harrington motioned to approve the appointment of **David Innes** to the Retirement Commission to fill the remainder of **Eric Remington’s** seat through 8/31/2024. **Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously**

Discussion and appointment of Elizabeth Tracey to full member of the Historic District Commission effective January 4, 2023 through December 31, 2026

First Selectman Moll explained that **Elizabeth Tracey**, being the longest alternate member on the commission, should be appointed as a full member to take the vacant seat. **Selectman Hill** recused himself from discussion and voting.

Discussion ensued among the members and included conversation regarding the lack of balance in party affiliation/representation as Democratic representation is very limited. **First Selectman Moll** outlined the process he followed which included opportunities for both party chairs to bring forth recommended candidates. He stands by his opinion that **Ms. Tracey** should be appointed as she has been the longest alternate member despite the party affiliation balance concern. He also noted that he is aware of a possible democratic candidate who will be put forward by the DTC, however, as of this date he still has not received a resume. Once the resume is received he plans to put them on the agenda for consideration to fill the remainder of the vacant alternate position term.

Selectman Harrington motioned to appoint Elizabeth Tracey to full member of the Historic District Commission effective January 4, 2023 through December 31, 2026. Vote: 3 in favor (Moll, Harrington and Mahoney) 1 abstain (Hill) and one against (Chafetz.) Motion passed.

Discussion of open seat on the Advisory Commission on Capital Expenditures

Selectman Harrington asked if a motion should be made to amend the agenda as there is no option to appoint based on the agenda item wording. First Selectman Moll explained his reasoning behind the wording and agreed that should they decide to move forward this evening with an appointment an amendment to the agenda will need to be made.

Discussion ensued with regard to the fact that at this time there have been no candidate recommendations put forth by the DTC. The two candidates up for consideration this evening are both Republican. One candidate was recommended by the RTC and the other volunteered directly. Discussion continued as to how the group would like to handle the filling of the full member position. Party representation was a strong topic of discussion.

Selectman Mahoney motioned to amend the agenda to add item 10a *“Discussion and appointment to fill open seat on the Advisory Committee for Capital Expenditures.”*

Recording Secretary Kristen Lambert suggested language clarification on the motion being made. Selectman Harrington accepted the friendly amendment.

Selectman Mahoney updated the motion to amend the agenda to add item 10a to read *“Discussion and appointment of full member to ACCE to fill the remainder of Geert “James” Mol’s term through 5-31-2024.”* Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and appointment of full member of ACCE to fill the remainder of Geert “James” Mol’s term through 5-31-2024.

Selectman Chafetz motioned to appoint Alexander Lepage as a full member of ACCE to fill the remainder of Geert “James” Mol’s term through May 31, 2024. Vote: 2 in favor (Hill and Chafetz) and 3 against (Moll, Mahoney and Harrington.) Motion failed.

Selectman Harrington motioned to appoint Mark Englander as a full member of ACCE to fill the remainder of Geert “James” Mol’s term through May 31, 2024. Vote: 3 in favor (Moll, Mahoney and Harrington) and 2 against (Hill and Chafetz.) Motion passed.

Selectman Mahoney motioned to amend the agenda to add item 10b *“Discussion and appointment of alternate member to ACCE to fill the remainder of Mark Englander’s term through 5/31/2023.”* Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and appointment of alternate member to ACCE to fill the remainder of Mark Englander’s term through 5/31/2023

Selectman Harrington motioned to appoint Scott Crosson as an alternate member to ACCE to fill the remainder of Mark Englander’s term through 5/31/2023.

Discussion ensued amongst the selectmen with regard to whether the appointment of the alternate member should be postponed until the next Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting in order for the DTC to have an opportunity to put a candidate forward. Opinions were shared and the ACCE meeting schedule was discussed in depth,

including how a delay in appointment would impact the commission. **First Selectman Moll** reminded all that a motion was on the table.

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

Discussion and appointment of Brian Depray as alternate to the Building Code Board of Appeals

Selectman Mahoney motioned to appoint Brian Depray as alternate to the Building Code Board of Appeals. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and re-approval of River Valley contract

First Selectman Moll explained that the River Valley contract had been edited to include a change to item #13 on Page 3 in regards to a “one-time credit.” He reviewed the language and discussed the rationale for the change and answered questions posed by the selectmen.

Selectman Harrington motioned to re-approve the River Valley Animal Contract with updated language as presented. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Selectman Mahoney motioned to amend the agenda to add item 12a “*Discussion and approval to waive the Bid and Purchase Policy to allow the Community Services Director to purchase a vehicle.*” Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval to waive the Bid and Purchase Policy to allow Community Services to purchase a vehicle

First Selectman Moll explained the individual situation regarding the purchase of a vehicle for Community Services to replace one of their older vehicles. **First Selectman Moll** felt that, although the majority of the funds for the vehicle have been donated to Community Services, it was still a gray area as the total amount of the purchase exceeds set limits. He felt it would be a wise decision to bring this before the board for discussion and approval.

Selectman Mahoney motioned to waive the Bid and Purchase Policy to allow the Community Services Director to purchase a vehicle. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Selectmen Updates

Affordable Housing Committee and Environmental & Sustainability Task Force

First Selectman Moll reported that the town has obtained enough volunteers to support the Affordable Housing Committee and the Environmental & Sustainability Task Force. More information will be forthcoming at the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

Pedestrian and Traffic Safety and Infrastructure Sub-Committee

The sub-committee is working on developing a survey to assist the committee with prioritization of projects in order to make future recommendations free of any bias.

Board of Finance

First Selectman Moll recently met with the Board of Finance and noted that at their next meeting they will be discussing what budget impacts we would have if a major building project based off of our Facilities Master Plan were to be considered. Project recommendations are expected to be discussed in the next few months.

Budget

Budget season is kicking off. Selectmen are encouraged to attend any departmental meetings that may be of interest to them.

Parks and Recreation Sub-Committee Meeting - 1/5/2023

First Selectman Moll will be attending this meeting tomorrow evening to discuss plans for the Bridge Street Park and possible funding ideas.

Drone Donation

On January 5th at noon **First Selectman Moll** and the Police Department will be accepting a new drone which was donated by the Suffield Women's Club. Thank you to the Suffield Women's Club for their generosity.

Search for new Fire Chief

First Selectman Moll is working with the Fire Department and the Fire Commission as they begin the search for a new Chief. **First Selectman Moll** extended his thanks to all of the volunteers, career staff and the Fire Commission for all their efforts during this time. He noted that it has been a team effort and everyone has really stepped up.

ARPA Recommendations

The American Rescue Plan Committee came up with some recommendations last evening at their Special meeting. These recommendations will be presented at the next Board of Selectmen meeting for discussion and possible approval.

Fire Marshal Position

The town has officially posted for the Fire Marshal position. Interviews will be conducted over the next couple of days.

ACCE

ACCE will hold their first meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 2023.

Jamie Kreller – WPCA Superintendent

WPCA Superintendent Jamie Kreller was recently awarded the Regional Operator of the Year Award. Mr. Kreller was nominated by the State DEEP. **Selectman Mahoney** noted that this award is *not* handed out to an operator in Connecticut each year, in fact, it has only been handed out to a CT operator three times in the last 20 years. Congratulations Jamie!

Public Comment

Tom Frenaye, 489 Warnertown Road – Mr. Frenaye questioned whether there was another opening on the Historic District Commission and expressed his concerns that the second Historic District Commission position was not included on the agenda this evening. He also questioned whether Michael Stevens, Chairman of ACCE, is actually Unaffiliated, as he believes him to be a member of the Republican Party. He expressed his disappointment at the unreasonably short notice he feels was given to him with regard to presenting a Democratic candidate for the ACCE full member position that was left vacant due to the resignation of Geert “James” Mol. He claimed not to have heard about this resignation until last Thursday. In his opinion, less than a week is not enough time to put forth a qualified candidate. He also had questions and concerns pertaining to the recently created Affordable Housing Committee and Environmental & Sustainability Task Force.

First Selectman Moll addressed **Mr. Frenaye’s** concerns and confirmed that **Mr. Frenaye** was included on all of the same communications as the RTC Chair regarding the ACCE commission and possible resignation of Mr. Mol which extend back three weeks. He promised to forward Mr. Frenaye copies of these email communications. **First Selectman Moll** also reiterated to **Mr. Frenaye** that there is no “second” position for the Historic District Commission, but in fact it is the same position that the board has been holding as they await a resume from the DTC for consideration.

Executive Session – Town Hall, Library and Dispatch Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreements

Selectman Harrington motioned to enter Executive Session to discuss **Town Hall, Library and Dispatch Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreements at 8:22 p.m. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.**

Executive session ended at 8:32p.m.

Action on Executive Session

Selectman Mahoney motioned to approve the **Town Hall, Library and Dispatch Tentative collective Bargaining Agreements. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.**

Selectman Mahoney motioned to adjourn at 8:33 p.m. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary