

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
NOVEMBER 6, 2024
7:00 P.M.
83 Mountain Road, Suffield CT
Hybrid Meeting**

TOWN CLERK
SUFFIELD, CT

2024 NOV 14 AM 8:03

REC'D BY: K

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

Also Present: Eric Remington – Chairman of the Charter Revision Commission (via Zoom) and Derek Donnelly, Town Attorney (Arrived at 7:19 p.m.)

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

Michael Bula - CFO, Marcus Communications – Mr. Bula spoke on bid results for the Emergency Services Radio Project which his company took part in. They were not awarded the project and he felt that some information involved in making the final decision has either been withheld from them or may be inaccurate. He offered a letter to the selectmen outlining his concerns, which included a request for information that has gone unanswered, a financial discrepancy of \$260,000 in the total cost comparison numbers and an unusual decision that allowed his company to be called back in to present a more expensive bid, which did not make sense to him

Don Miner, 1855 Mapleton Avenue – Mr. Miner expressed his support for the Emergency Services Radio Project and emphasized the importance of moving forward and getting it completed as soon as possible.

Approval of the minutes from the October 15, 2024 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance

Selectman Harrington MOTIONED to approve the minutes from the October 15, 2024 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance as presented.

First Selectman Moll made a friendly amendment to include one change on line 3 of Page 1 which indicated that Chris Childs and Mike Haines were “present” when it should indicate they were “absent.”

Selectman Harrington accepted the friendly amendment to the motion. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the minutes from the October 23, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Selectman Harrington MOTIONED to approve the minutes from the October 23, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen with the following changes:

- Page 4 under Public Comment section Don “*Minor*” should read Don “*Miner*.”
- Page 5 under Selectman Updates there were comments that started with “Selectman Harrington noted...” a header should be added that reads “Elections Emergency Contingency Plan.”

Vote: 4 in favor (Moll, Mahoney, Harrington and Chafetz) and 1 abstain (Hill.) Motion passed.

Discussion and approval to appoint a full member to the Economic Development Commission to fill the remainder of Brian Banak's term through March 31, 2025

Selectman Mahoney MOTIONED to appoint Jeff Girard as a full member to the Economic Development Commission to fill the remainder of Brian Banak's term through March 31, 2025. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval to appoint an alternate member to the Economic Development Commission

First Selectman Moll noted there were two candidates interested in the alternate position on the Economic Development Commission. The Roger Murray, the RTC nominated candidate and Joe Artioli, a resident volunteer. A brief discussion ensued among the selectman about the qualifications of both candidates

Selectman Harrington MOTIONED to appoint Roger Murray as an alternate member to the Economic Development Commission. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed.

Selectman Mahoney MOTIONED to move to agenda item 7 while waiting for the chair of the Charter Revision Commission to connect to Zoom. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion on affordable housing required by the State of CT

First Selectman Moll noted that the selectmen have had a few months now to consider the recommendations brought forth by the Affordable Housing Committee. He acknowledged that affordable housing is a sensitive topic and not just a Suffield issue, as it is a state mandate. First Selectman Moll shared that he is strongly opposed to affordable housing in Suffield and provided a detailed explanation of the reasoning behind his opinion. He opened the floor to the other selectmen who shared their thoughts and opinions on the subject as well as what they might be willing to consider based on the recommendations of the committee. All agreed that the process will be lengthy and the sooner the town begins moving forward the better. The selectmen discussed the possibility of Bill Hawkins, Director of Planning & Development, taking the lead on this endeavor with assistance as needed.

Presentation and discussion of recommendations from the Charter Revision Commission

First Selectman Moll thanked Chairman Remington and the members of the Charter Revision Commission for their hard work and efforts to review the board's request. He suggested that Chairman Remington walk the board through the updated presentation the commission submitted. Chairman Remington thanked the members of the committee and commented on their dedication to the task. He provided a timeline of events and explained in detail the process that they followed. He noted that the final recommendation of the commission this evening was to migrate the Treasurer position to being appointed from elected, but keep the Town Clerk and the Tax Collector as elected.

Chairman Remington described the extensive due diligence the commission conducted. The group met with all three incumbents currently holding the positions as well as previous office holders, the current First Selectman and past First Selectmen. Wide-ranging research was done on each position, including determining the roles, responsibilities and qualifications required to effectively perform the duties of each position. The group also reviewed how surrounding towns have been handling these positions and where Suffield falls in comparison. Chairman Remington reported that the majority of feedback the group received indicated that all three positions should remain elected, with many feeling that if nothing is broken why are we trying to fix it. He also described a few items that came up during their research which included job descriptions within the charter that no longer align with actual job responsibilities of the positions, a desire to take a broader view of the town's organizational structure and a deeper dive on the possibility of moving to a town manager form of government. Chairman Remington explained that as these items were not within the charge given and therefore, the committee chose not to engage at this point in time. The key arguments that determined the final recommendations for the Tax Collector and Town Clerk positions included the opinions that; 1) elected officials are more accountable to the voters, 2) an elected position provides a level of independence from other elected officials which they would not have if those roles were appointed, 3) by electing town residents for these positions the voters will receive a higher level of service than a regular employee because they are accountable to the voters and 4) if it is not broken then don't fix it. According to the research, Suffield is not an outlier by having these positions remain elected. As for the Treasurer position, the recommendation to transition to an appointed position stems from the fact that the duties of the job

have become much more complex over time and the responsibilities have evolved into daily activities. Chairman Remington emphasized that it is in no way a reflection of the current Treasurer at all. While the town is very fortunate today with the current treasurer, ten years down the road we need to be prepared for change and as this position has access to tens of millions of dollars of the town's funds it could be concerning if we were to end up with an elected official without integrity. He noted that many towns still have elected treasurers, however, due to the level of sophistication we need for a town of our size, it makes sense to migrate this position to appointed after the election in 2027.

First Selectman Moll opened the floor for further discussion. The selectmen took the opportunity to ask a number of very in-depth and specific questions pertaining to the process the commission had followed; what type of public representation was involved and the metrics used to lead them to their final recommendations. The choice to move only the Treasurer position to appointed was strongly probed. Chairman Remington answered all questions accordingly and Town Attorney Donnelly offered legal clarifications and guidance as to how to move forward and follow all appropriate guidelines and deadlines required. First Selectman Moll suggested that the selectman take some time to gather their thoughts and plans to circle back to further discuss it at the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

Discussion and approval of Emergency Services Radio Project and School HVAC Project funding and refer to Board of Finance

First Selectman Moll noted that during the last meeting of the Board of Selectmen the conclusion was made to move forward with the Emergency Services Radio Project and School HVAC Project funding. He asked if any of the selectmen had questions or concerns. Selectman Donnelly offered to clear up the concerns regarding earlier comments by Mike Bula of Marcus Communications whose company did not win the bid for the project. It appears that Marcus Communications did not meet what was requested in the RFP and thus were allowed to come back and present based on the requested bid specifications. The FOIA request and possible financial error in bid comparison documents will be reviewed and responded to accordingly. Questions were raised about the School HVAC project which Chairman Remington addressed by providing a timeline of events leading to this point, the scope of the project and the status at this time. First Selectman Moll also added that there may be a conflict of interest with Marcus Communications and explained why he felt that way. The HVAC project, despite possible setbacks, is expected to be completed within the allowable time frame according to Chairman Remington.

Selectman Mahoney MOTIONED to approve the Emergency Services Radio Project and School HVAC Project funding and refer to Board of Finance. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Mike Bula, CFO Marcus Communications – Mr. Bula clarified how Marcus Communications had actually completed the bid incorrectly by submitting the bid with four sites instead of five.

Selectman Updates

Firefighter Volunteers

First Selectman Moll extended thanks to those firefighters who recently volunteered to assist the Town of Berlin with the Hawthorne fire.

Veterans Day Programs

Veterans Day Programs will be held at all four of the Suffield Public Schools on Monday, November 11th. In addition, there will be a Veterans Day Ceremony at the Veterans Memorial Monument at 11 a.m. which will include the unveiling of the new Global War on Terror Monuments. All are encouraged to attend.

Field of Flags

Thank you to the Suffield High School Boys Soccer Team and their Coach Mark Cervione for assisting us with the installation of our annual Field of Flags on the town green as well as installing flags around the Veterans Memorial Monument in advance of the upcoming Veterans Day Ceremony.

Early Voting & Election Day

Thank you to the Registrars and Volunteers for all their hard work during early voting and on election day. They all did an amazing job with the entire process.

Suffield Alight

It is exactly one month away from our annual Suffield Alight celebration on the town green. This year's event will be held on Friday, December 6th from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. with a rain date of Saturday, December 7th. All are invited to join the fun and kick off the holiday season with friends and family!

Halloween Community Trick or Treat

Thank you to the Kent Memorial Library, Suffield Senior Center and local businesses for taking part in the Halloween Community Trick or Treat event. This year, 20 local businesses joined in the fun and provided candy to our young ghosts and goblins. The event was a great success!

Suffield Connect

Thank you to IT Director Becky Osleger for her work on rolling out a new method of communication called Suffield Connect which will streamline messages from all areas of town including Town Hall and Emergency Services organizations.

Parents Under Pressure Program

On November 14, 2024 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Suffield Senior Center the Friends of the Library, Barbara Dowd Memorial Fund, Suffield Youth Services & SLPC are sponsoring a "Parents Under Pressure" program. The program will be presented by Scarlett Lewis who is an author, advocate and founder of the Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement and mother to Jesse Lewis, a victim of the Sandy Hook Tragedy. All are encouraged to attend

Selectman Mahoney MOTIONED to adjourn at 8:52 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary