

Town of Goshen
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

REGULAR MEETING

This meeting held in-person and recorded via Zoom.us and is available as a recording

PRESENT: Todd M. Carusillo, Scott Olson; Dexter S. Kinsella (zoom)

OTHERS: Lori Clinton; Audrey Blondin; Joanna Kimball; Cindy Barrett; Janet Hooper; Marissa Wright; Susan Wheeler; Seth Breakell; Judi Armstrong

1. Call to order: Todd M. Carusillo called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 12/10/2024: In a **motion** made by Dexter S. Kinsella, seconded by Scott Olson, it was **voted** to approve the minutes of 12/10/2024 as corrected: Speed Humps were not installed. Voted unanimous.

3. Approval of the Payroll and Warrant – December 19, 2024:

In a **motion** made by Scott Olson, seconded by Dexter S. Kinsella, it was **voted** to approve the total warrant in the amount of \$80,127.38. Payroll was in the amount of \$14,719.77 and the warrant in the amount of \$65,407.61 Voted unanimous. Included in the warrant were: Civic Plus - \$5,462.13; CIRMA – 17,583.00; MIRA - \$13,768.10; USA Waste - \$9,821.95.

4. First Selectman's Report:

A big "thank you" to Rhonda Gelormino and the Fire Dept. for the *Annual Stuff a Truck*. Toys are collected and distributed to Goshen children. In addition, a big thanks to Erin Reilly and her efforts to collect not only toys but wanted/needed gifts to Goshen children.

Black bears are not quite ready to totally "hibernate". Be aware of their presence; use caution when going out to your yard, or porches, etc.

5. Correspondence: None

6. Old Business: None

6a. Appointments:

A letter was received from Andy Savage rendering his official resignation from the Affordable Housing Committee effective 12/12/24.

7. New Business:

7a. Bid for VFH Motorola Radio Repeater:

VHF Motorola Radio Repeater Replacement

December 17, 2024

	Total Bid Price <u>Equipment</u>	Installation <u>Price</u>
Utility Communications, Inc. 920 Sherman Avenue Hamden, CT 06514 203-287-1306	\$10,097.71	\$500.00

Norcom, CT 7 Great Hill Road Naugatuck, CT 06770 203-568-6919	\$11,933.04	No Installation Offered
--	-------------	-------------------------

Pittsfield Communications Systems, Inc. 1502 West Housatonic Street Pittsfield, Mass. 01201-7508 413-448-8214	\$10,566.83	\$600.00
---	-------------	----------

In a **motion** made by Dexter S. Kinsella, seconded by Scott Olson to have panel of three Todd Carusillo, Gary Stango, Sr. and Garret Harlow for review and recommendation of bid. Voted unanimous.

7b. Presentation: Lori Clinton

Ms. Clinton thanked Todd, Scott and Dexter for the creation of a "tool of conduct" – *Boards, Commissions and Committee – Code of Conduct*. She stated that this endeavor is relative to how to be "set for success, and conduct at meetings. Where it had been stated, "nothing can be done"; not so; the treatment of town staff is important. There should be a binder containing – a "code of conduct" ; "by-laws" ; terms of service; point of contact; number of members; a signed confirmation page. Mrs. Clinton proposes this task be completed by February 11, 2025. Thus, being ready for consideration as "formal ordinance." See draft attached to these minutes.

8. Other Business:

In a **motion** made by Scott Olson, seconded by Dexter S. Kinsella, it was voted to call for a Public Hearing and Planning & Zoning concerning the request to build a structure at 38 Torrington Road, (Public Works) inclusive of a new septic system. Voted unanimous.

9. Public Comment (Two (2) minutes):

Audrey Blondin agreed with "piggy back" *Code of Conduct with Code of Ethics*. The meeting with Public Works and Planning and Zoning is a great idea; gives more transparency. She found half-eaten pumpkins in her driveway and she feels confident that they are leftovers from a meal of a bear.

Joanna Kimball called for a round of applause for Lori Clinton and her authoring of "Code of Conduct". High time public officials exhibit more respect.

Cindy Barrett wants to give "thanks" to Lori Clinton for her "authoring "Code of Conduct". (And a copy of it being attached to the minutes of this meeting.)

Janet Hooper gives great support to Lori's hard work. She hopes she can move forward on this. She brought attention to the large posters on the wall authored by a committee under the former Governor Jodi Rell. The concepts they outline codes of conduct similar to what Mrs. Clinton has put together.

Marissa Wright wished everyone a "Happy Holiday". She feels the 38 Torrington Road property may be better suited for the new building from an environmental aspect. Perhaps we can get good input in front of this thing.

Scott Olson stated the project is great news.....However, if there is any disagreement regarding this project, the Board of Finance does have the *last say*.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

December 17, 2024

Page 3

Susan Wheeler can you tell how much the BOE budget is - \$7.5 million – 26%-25%. The BOE budget is the largest of our town budget. It is disturbing that they need more money 2.1 million from the taxpayers; there have been NO cuts; \$240,000 is for certified and non-certified. “Superintendent” supplemental – they have not made cuts. Ms. Wheeler to pay debt to Litchfield - Should there be a vote? Taxpayer money not on the radar. Nobody wants cuts. Teacher raises are 4.25% - done with no labor attorney! Todd Carusillo explained the Region 20 overages and expenses/costs to Goshen.

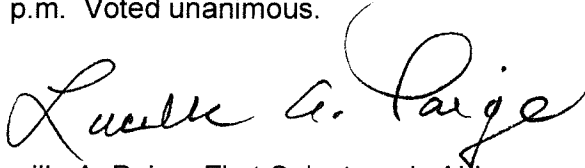
Marissa Wright – the STEAP grant – where are the matching funds coming from? Todd Carusillo replied “We are waiting for approvals.”

Judi Armstrong asked if a needs assessment done? (Public Works). Todd Carusillo answered that it’s being worked on. Scott Olson is working with Garrett Harlow, Supervisor of Public Works, on the needs assessment. Seth Breakell site visit at 190 Sharon Turnpike. The addition at the Firehouse needs an assessment. Dexter S. Kinsella, stated the Board of Finance will not release money until assessment is done.

Seth Breakell the needs assessment is required for the Fire House.

10. Adjournment:

In a **motion** made by Dexter S. Kinsella, seconded by Scott Olson, it was **voted** to adjourn the meeting at 5:51 p.m. Voted unanimous.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lucille A. Paige". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lucille" being the most prominent part.

Lucille A. Paige, First Selectman's Aide

Boards, Commissions and Committee

Code of Conduct

Boards, Commissions and Committee are composed of individuals (Members) with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, opinions, and goals. Despite this diversity, all have chosen to serve in public office in order to preserve and protect the present and the future of the community. In all cases, this common goal should be acknowledged even as they may "agree to disagree" on contentious issues.

IN PUBLIC MEETINGS

- **Practice civility, professionalism and decorum in discussions and debate**

Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of a free democracy in action. This does not allow, however, Members to make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments. No shouting or physical actions that could be construed as threatening will be tolerated. Members should conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.

- **Honor the role of the Chairperson in maintaining order**

It is the responsibility of the Chairperson to keep the comments of Members on track during public meetings. Members should honor efforts by the Chairperson to focus discussion on current agenda items. If there is disagreement about the agenda or the Chairpersons actions, those objections should be voiced politely and with reason, following procedures outlined in parliamentary procedure.

- **Avoid personal comments that could offend other Members**

If a Member is personally offended by the remarks of another Member, the offended Member should make notes of the actual words used and call for a "point of personal privilege" that challenges the other Member to justify or apologize for the language used. The Chairperson will maintain control of this discussion.

- **Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches**

Members have a public stage to show how individuals with disparate points of view can find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the community as a whole.

- **Be punctual and keep comments relative to topics discussed**

Members have made a commitment to attend meetings and partake in discussions. Therefore, it is important that Members be punctual and that meetings start on time. It is equally important that discussions on issues be relative to the topic at hand to allow adequate time to fully discuss scheduled issues.

IN PRIVATE ENCOUNTERS

- **Continue respectful behavior in private**

The same level of respect and consideration of differing points of view that is deemed appropriate for public discussions should be maintained in private conversations.

- **Be aware of the insecurity of written notes, voicemail messages, and e-mail**

Technology allows words written or said without much forethought to be distributed wide and far. Written notes, voicemail messages and e-mail should be treated as potentially "public" communication.

- **Even private conversations can have a public presence**

Elected officials are always on display – their actions, mannerisms, and language are monitored by people around them that they may not know. Lunch table conversations will be eavesdropped upon, parking lot debates will be watched, and casual comments between individuals before and after public meetings noted.

Member Conduct with Town Staff

Governance of a Town relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials, who set policy, and Town staff, who implement and administer the policies. Therefore, every effort should be made to be cooperative and show mutual respect for the contributions made by each individual for the good of the community.

- **Treat all staff as professionals**

Clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual is expected. Poor behavior towards staff is not acceptable.

- **Do not disrupt Town staff from their jobs**

Members should not disrupt Town staff while they are in meetings, on the phone, or engrossed in performing their job functions in order to have their individual needs met.

- **Never publicly criticize an individual employee**

Members should never express concerns about the performance of a Town employee in public, or to the employee directly. Comments about staff performance should only be made to the employee's manager or First Selectman through private correspondence or conversation.

- **Do not get involved in administrative functions**

Members must not attempt to influence Town staff on the making of appointments, awarding of contracts, selecting of consultants, processing of development applications, or granting of Town licenses and permits. (does Town charter have section on information about the prohibition of Council interference in administrative functions)

- **Check with Town staff on correspondence before taking action**

Before sending correspondence, Members should check with Town staff to see if an official Town response has already been sent or is in progress.

- **Limit requests for staff support**

Requests for additional staff support -- even in high priority or emergency situations -- should be made to the First Selectman who is responsible for allocating Town resources in order to maintain a professional, well-run Town government.

- **Do not solicit political support from staff**

Members should not solicit any type of political support (financial contributions, display of posters or lawn signs, name on support list, etc.) from Town staff. Town staff may, as private citizens with constitutional rights, support political candidates but all such activities must be done away from the workplace.

Members Conduct with the Public

IN PUBLIC MEETINGS

Making the public feel welcome is an important part of the democratic process. No signs of partiality, prejudice or disrespect should be evident on the part of individual Members toward an individual participating in a public forum. Every effort should be made to be fair and impartial in listening to public testimony.

- **Be welcoming to speakers and treat them with care and gentleness**

Speaking in front of Members can be a difficult experience for some people. Some issues the Members undertake may affect people's daily lives and homes. Some decisions are emotional. The way that Members treat people during public hearings can do a lot to make them relax or to push their emotions to a higher level of intensity.

- **Be fair and equitable in allocating public hearing time to individual speakers**

The Chairperson will announce limits on speakers at the start of the public hearing process. Generally, each speaker will be allocated three-minutes with applicants and appellants, or their designated representatives allowed more time.

No speaker will be turned away unless he or she exhibits inappropriate behavior. Each speaker may only speak once during the public hearing unless the Members requests additional clarification later in the process. After the close of the public hearing, no more public testimony will be accepted unless the Chairperson reopens the public hearing for a limited and specific purpose.

- **Give the appearance of active listening**

It is disconcerting to speakers to have Council members not look at them when they are speaking. It is fine to look down at documents or to make notes, but reading for a long period of time gazing around the room gives the appearance of disinterest. Be aware of facial expressions, especially those that could be interpreted as "smirking," disbelief, anger or boredom.

- **Ask for clarification, but avoid debate and argument with the public**

Only the Chairperson -- not individual Members -- can interrupt a speaker during a presentation. However, a Member can ask the Chairperson for a point of order if the speaker is off the topic or exhibiting behavior or language the Member finds disturbing.

If speakers become flustered or defensive by Member questions, it is the responsibility of the Chairperson to calm and focus the speaker and to maintain the order and decorum of the meeting. Questions by Members to members of the public testifying should seek to clarify or expand information. It is never appropriate to belligerently challenge or belittle the speaker. Members' personal opinions or inclinations about upcoming votes should not be revealed until after the public hearing is closed.

- **No personal attacks of any kind, under any circumstance**

Members should be aware that their body language and tone of voice, as well as the words they use, can appear to be intimidating or aggressive.

- **Follow parliamentary procedure in conducting public meetings**

The Town Attorney serves as advisory parliamentarian for the Town and is available to answer questions or interpret situations according to parliamentary procedures. Final rulings on parliamentary procedure are made by the First Selectman, subject to the appeal of the full Council.

IN UNOFFICIAL SETTINGS

- **Make no promises on behalf of the Board, Commission or Committee**

Members will frequently be asked to explain a action or to give their opinion about an issue as they meet and talk with constituents in the community. It is appropriate to give a brief overview of Town policy and to refer to Town staff for further information. It is inappropriate to overtly or implicitly promise Member action, or to promise Town staff will do something specific (fix a pothole, remove a library book, plant new flowers in the median, etc.).

- **Make no personal comments about other Members**

It is acceptable to publicly disagree about an issue, but it is unacceptable to make derogatory comments about other Members, their opinions and actions.

Members Conduct with Other Public Agencies

- **Be clear about representing the Town or personal interests**

If a Member appears before another governmental agency or organization to give a statement on an issue, the Member must clearly state:

- 1) if his or her statement reflects personal opinion or it is the official stance of the Town;
- 2) whether this is the majority or minority opinion of the Members. Even if the Member is representing his or her own personal opinions, remember that this still may reflect upon the Town as an organization.

If the Member is representing the Town, the Member must support and advocate the official Town position on an issue, not a personal viewpoint.

If the Member is representing another organization whose position is different from the Town, the Member should withdraw from voting on the issue if it significantly impacts or is detrimental

to the Town's interest. Members should be clear about which organizations they represent and inform the First Selectman and Members of their involvement.

- **Correspondence also should be equally clear about representation**

Town letterhead may be used when the Member is representing the Town and the Town's official position. A copy of official correspondence should be given to the Town Clerk to be filed as part of the permanent public record. It is best that Town letterhead not be used for correspondence of Members representing a personal point of view, or a dissenting point of view from an official Member position.

Member Conduct With Other Boards, Commissions and Committees

The Town has established several Boards, Commissions and Committees as a means of gathering more community input. Citizens who serve on Boards, Commissions and Committees become more involved in government and they are a valuable resource to the Town's leadership and should be treated with appreciation and respect.

- **If attending a Board, Commission or Committee meeting, be careful to only express personal opinions**

Members may attend any Board, Commission or Committee meeting, which are always open to any member of the public. Members should be sensitive to the way their participation – especially if it is on behalf of an individual, business or developer -- could be viewed as unfairly affecting the process. Any public comments by a Member at a Board, Commission or Committee meeting should be clearly made as individual opinion and not a representation of the feelings of the entire Board, Commission or Committee they are on.

- **Be respectful of diverse opinions**

A primary role of Boards, Commissions and Committees is to represent many points of view in the community and to provide the Town with advice based on a full spectrum of concerns and perspectives.

- **Keep political support away from public forums**

Board, Commission and Committee members may offer political support, but not in a public forum while conducting official duties. Conversely, Members may support Board, Commission and Committee members who are running for office, but not in an official forum in their capacity as a Member.

- **Inappropriate behavior can lead to removal**

Inappropriate behavior by a Board, Commission or Committee Member should be noted to the First Selectman, and the First Selectman should counsel the offending Member. If inappropriate behavior continues, the First Selectman should bring the situation to the attention of the Selectman and the individual could be referred to the State Attorney's General's Office.

Member Conduct with The Media

Members may be contacted by the media for background and quotes.

- **The best advice for dealing with the media is to never go "off the record"**

Most members of the media represent the highest levels of journalistic integrity and ethics, and can be trusted to keep their word. But one bad experience can be catastrophic. Words that are not said cannot be quoted.

- **The First Selectman is the official spokesperson for the representative on Towns position.**

The First Selectman is the designated representative of the Town to present and speak on the official Town position. If an individual Member is contacted by the media, the Member should be clear about whether their comments represent the official Town position or a personal viewpoint.

- **Choose words carefully and cautiously**

Comments taken out of context can cause problems. Be especially cautious about humor, sardonic asides, sarcasm, or word play. It is never appropriate to use personal slurs or swear words when talking with the media.

Sanctions

- **Public Disruption**

Members of the public who do not follow proper conduct after a warning in a public hearing may be barred from further testimony at that meeting or removed from the meeting.

- **Inappropriate Staff Behavior**

Members should refer to the First Selectman, any Town staff who do not follow proper conduct in their dealings with Members, other Town staff, or the public. These employees may be disciplined in accordance with standard Town procedures for such actions.

- **Members Behavior and Conduct**

Members who intentionally and repeatedly do not follow proper conduct may be reprimanded or formally censured by the First Selectman. Serious infractions of the Code of Conduct could lead to other sanctions as deemed appropriate by the First Selectman.

Chairperson should point out to the offending Member infractions of the Code of Conduct. If the offenses continue, then the matter should be referred to the First Selectman in private. If the Chairperson is the individual whose actions are being challenged, then the matter should be referred to the First Selectman.

If violation of the Code of Conduct is outside of the observed behaviors by the Chairperson or Members, the alleged violation should be referred to the First Selectman. The First Selectman and/or the Town Attorney should investigate the allegation. It is the First Selectman's responsibility to take the next appropriate action. These actions can include but are not limited

to: discussing and counseling the individual on the violations; recommending sanction to the full Board, Commission or Committee to consider in a public meeting; or forming a ad hoc subcommittee to review the allegation; the investigation and its findings, as well as to recommend sanction options for consideration. The member may also be referred to the State Attorney's Generals Office.