REGULAR MEETING OF THE LITCHFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2021 ~ 5:30 P.M.
IN-PERSON AT LITCHFIELD FIREHOUSE, 258 WEST ST. AND
REMOTE MEETING BY LIVE INTERNET VIDEO STREAM AND TELEPHONE

Call to Order: First Selectman Denise Raap called the hybrid meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. Selectmen present were Jonathan Torrant, Jodiann Tenney, Jeffrey Zullo and newly-elected Christine Harding. There were also 11 Zoom participants.

Approval of Minutes: Motion: J. Zullo moved to approve the regular 10/19/21meeting minutes and J. Torrant seconded. All voted aye except C. Harding, who abstained as a non-board member at that time, and the motion carried.

Motion: J. Zullo moved to add to New Business between e) and f) "Public Comment on Yellow Ribbons on the Green." J. Torrant seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion carried.

Public Requests/Comments
Cate Honan, Beach Street, handed D. Raap a letter written by Attorney Perley Grimes dated 9/21/21 pointing out conflicts of interest with Woodard & Curran, our independent engineer for the WPCA. It speaks of Engineer David R. Prickett working for Woodard & Curran, the firm that was also hired by Woodridge Lake Sewer District and again working for DPC Engineering, LLC on the Woodridge Lake study. *[see 9/9/21 WPCA minutes]* Further, she felt the route to Torrington would impact Goshen town roads less than the route down Beach Street per a previous Woodridge Lake update report authored by Woodard & Curran and DPC Engineering. In this report she said it was stated that detailed capital needs at the LWPCF were not evaluated, since Litchfield already has confirmed wastewater treatment and disposal capacity within the sewer service area, and such capacity is not available for WLSD. She also took exception to Tom Waterhouse's WPCA liaison report at the last Selectmen's meeting, taking issue with statements he made.

Selectmen's Requests: J. Zullo welcomed Christine Harding to the Board of Selectmen and offered to help wherever he could. J. Tenney said she has drafted a letter for the Traffic Committee regarding the issue with cameras on signs, and asked the Selectmen to review it for comment at the next meeting. J. Torrant asked R. Alexe to get the cost of the radar setup with camera as a possible submission for the American Rescue Plan funds.

First Selectman's Update Report: D. Raap welcomed the Board of Selectmen, especially new member Christine Harding, and announced that Christine will be our new BOS Liaison on the Water Pollution Control Authority. She also gave credit to all those who ran for office, successful or not, for trying to make a difference.

D. Raap said that after our Assessor left employment, we advertised for a replacement but have received no applications. She has worked with her assistant to find temporary alternatives to get to a point where we have a signed grand list. We have temporarily hired Andrew Vincent, who has worked in our Assessor's office before, who is doing 280 inspections, estimating it will take working five Saturdays to get done. We have also brought in Linda Bertaccini, who is the Assessor for the Town of Roxbury. She will be helping us on Mondays. Also present today is Chris Kelsey, the Middlebury Assessor, who reached out to us to offer his help. Hopefully we can use him on Wednesdays to fill in. Mr. Kelsey spoke of the shortage of Assessors, and shared his professional background and experience. He submitted his resume to the Board. J. Zullo asked him to give his thoughts on the 20 megawatt solar array that has

received Siting Council approval. We'd like to understand what the assessment plan is for such a solar array that is a commercial energy production site that sells power to Eversource. Mr. Kelsey said he knows quite a bit about them and would be happy to meet with Mr. Zullo to discuss. Since we are in a pinch in the Assessor's Office, D. Raap said Chris will help us out. She noted she filed an extension today for the grand list with the OPM Secretary. She thanked him for coming to meet the Board and for his willingness to help out. J. Torrant said they should consider increasing the salary for Assessor in the next budget since there is such a demand for the position.

Motion: J. Zullo moved to add under New Business Item g), Discuss Temporary Assessor Position. J. Tenney seconded, but J. Torrant wanted more time to discuss it further on December 7. J. Zullo withdrew his motion, and Ms Tenney her second. It was understood that Mr. Kelsey would be helping on Wednesdays per diem until then.

D. Raap announced the Broadband Commission is writing a request for proposal for broadband muni-hubs that will be located in Litchfield, Bantam, Northfield and East Litchfield. They are hoping to use the ARPA money to offset the cost.

D. Raap would like to meet at 4:30 p.m. on December 7th for the next ARPA meeting. All agreed.

The next regionalization meeting will be November 22nd at 6:00 p.m. at the Goshen Center School. D. Raap encouraged attendance from the Selectmen and the public. The proposed referendum is in June of 2022. J. Zullo noted they are working on debt level between Litchfield and Region 6.

Ali Weaver, Project Manager for Silicon Ranch, spoke with D. Raap and said their petition was passed for the solar project in the Town Farm/Wilson Road area. She will be talking about taxes that will be paid to the Town.

Sustainable Litchfield received silver certification and are the only town in the northwest corner to attain it. They will receive an award at the CCM Convention on November 30th.

Black & Warner has begun the work on the Bantam Lake jambs project, and J. Torrant offered kudos to Raz Alexe for moving it along. Mr. Alexe said it was very complex with all the different environmental and other concerns involved. He praised the current management for looking at all options in order to streamline the process.

Interviews, Appointments & Reappointments

a) Reappoint Michael Cicchetti to Bantam Lake Authority, term 12/2024: Motion: J. Torrant moved to reappoint Mr. Cicchetti as above, and J. Zullo seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

b) Reappoint Denise Raap to Capital Improvements Committee, term 11/2023: Motion: J. Torrant moved to reappoint D. Raap as above, and J. Zullo seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

c) Reappoint John Baker to Conservation Commission, term 12/2024:
d) Reappoint Diane Stoner to Conservation Commission, term 12/2024: J. Torrant moved to reappoint both Mr. Baker and Ms Stoner as above, and J. Zullo seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

e) Reappoint Jonathan Torrant to the Interlocal Advisory Board for the Bantam Lake Jambs, term 11/2023: Motion: J. Zullo moved to reappoint Mr. Torrant as above, and J. Tenney seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

f) Reappoint Ed Ryle to Sandy Beach Commission, term 12/2024: Motion: J. Torrant moved to reappoint Mr. Ryle as above, and J. Zullo seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

g) Reappoint Thomas McClintock to Torrington Area Health District, term 12/2024: Motion: J. Torrant moved to reappoint Mr. McClintock as above, and J. Zullo seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Liaison Reports/Commission-Committee Minutes: 10/18/21 Board of Finance; 10/14/21 WPCA; 10/4/21 Traffic Safety Community Action Group; 9/28/21 Conservation Commission; 10/14/21 Board of Education

Sustainable Litchfield Update: J. Zullo reiterated the receipt of the silver certification and noted they exceeded the points they needed. They will be attending the CCM Convention November 30th to receive the award. They will also be meeting with the SMART Task Force to try to reduce waste tonnage. They are also working on the Sustainable Cities Energy Challenge, and are having meetings with the consultants. They would like to apply this to reconfiguring the Annex for energy efficiency.

Vacancies: D. Raap said she and Christine will be working together to fill vacancies. The focus now is on Inland Wetlands Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.

Tax Refunds: Motion: J. Torrant moved to approve two tax refunds as submitted by the Tax Collector in the amount of $795.99. J. Zullo seconded, all voted aye and the motion carried.

Old Business: None

New Business

a) Role of Fire Commission and Hiring Process for New Fire Marshal - John Campbell: J. Campbell, Chairman of the Board of Fire & EMS Commission, gave the group an overview of its projects including pensions, insurance issues, budgets, capital, and Fire & EMS equipment and gear. He mentioned issues with Fire & EMS that have gone through the Selectmen but not through his Commission, and he would like that to stop. For the Fire Marshal position he said they need a full-time position in our town, with 3 assistants, and he works for the Fire Commission. He also noted the Fire Commission is the only entity that can hire the Fire Marshal. He suggested the hiring committee as Jeff Zullo, 2 fire commissioners, a full-time fire marshal at minimum, and perhaps Liz Callahan. They would like to get a plan together in February and start the recruitment process in March. He was asking for the Selectmen's support.

b) Road Safety Audit Presentation and Recommendations from Traffic Group - Jodi Tenney: J. Tenney, Chair of the Traffic Safety Community Action Group, explained the results of the completed road safety audit. Raz Alexe submitted an application for a Connectivity Grant, which they received and which paid for the audit. The State partnered with FHI Studio and members of the Committee in doing the Road Safety Audit (RSA). She pointed out focus areas in the center of Town and shared data collected. Findings showed drivers are speeding and not yielding to pedestrians, and crosswalks need to be updated. This data is needed as a preamble to traffic analysis by the State. Long car queues and major congestion was also noted. They will prioritize the trouble areas and continue with the next steps to remedy problems. They will need to do a more in-depth study with the DOT of the trouble area in the center.

J. Torrant said the report was good, but there was no mention of enforcement. J. Tenney said the Committee is working with Trooper Holm who is putting together a plan to add police presence. Going forward the Committee's traffic plan is to work on infrastructure, enforcement and education.

c) Assign Department Sponsoring Capital Request from Traffic Safety Community Action Group: D. Raap said it is agreed that this request will fall under the Public Works department.

d) Adopt 2022 BOS Meeting Schedule: Motion: J. Torrant moved to adopt the 2022 Selectmen's meeting schedule as presented, and J. Zullo seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

e) Adopt Resolution for Affordable Housing Steering Committee and Appoint Members: Motion: J. Zullo moved to adopt the resolution for the Affordable Housing Steering Committee, and J. Torrant seconded. D. Raap pointed out one small correction to be included in the approved resolution. All voted aye and the motion carried.

They then discussed the membership and who would be the two alternates. They decided on Jeff Zullo and Stacie Kavle as the alternates. Regular members will be Will Neary, Cleve Fuessenich, Michael L. Cappello, Dean Birdsall, Peter Losee, Ted Murphy and Diane Field. All members will be appointed for a two-year term. Jim Simoncelli, Jr. and Jill Groody Musselman will be advisory, non-voting members, and Denise Raap will serve as Ex-Officio, also non-voting. **Motion:** J. Torrant moved to appoint the members of the newly formed Affordable Housing Steering Committee as listed above. J. Zullo seconded, all voted aye and the motion carried.

-) Item Added: Public Comment on Yellow Ribbons on the Green

Leslie Caron, Bantam, spoke about the yellow ribbons that the Borough is taking down January 2nd. She would like the Board of Selectmen to help keep the ribbons up. She gave the history of a conflict 11 years ago with the Borough where a compromise was reached for one ribbon on each of five trees to represent the five branches of the military. As long as they were maintained, they would be allowed, and they were. She and her husband have been changing them every few months for the past 11 years. Now all five have been taken down in August. She found that the Borough voted in September to remove them. She said opposition was voiced at the Borough's October meeting, but nothing happened. In November the group was told by the Borough that they would not reconsider keeping the ribbons up. The War on Terror monument was reminder enough. Ms Caron said the monument does not represent everyone who is active in the military right now. The comment that the war is over is not accurate, either. She concluded that they do not want another big fight, so she asked the Board of Selectmen for help.

Pat Dauten spoke about the yellow ribbons, saying that Litchfield is recognized around the state as the town that won't allow the yellow ribbons. Of all the bad things that happen in this world, why are we worrying about ribbons that represent our military. Those in charge of the Borough need to know how to use their power, and she felt they are not using it correctly.

Amity Wolff, Litchfield, said she has a son currently serving in the National Guard in Utah. His duties have taken him away from his job, his family and loved ones to serve on behalf of us. She added her support to the Carons and any other families in Town who have military members currently serving. She understands the Borough is an historic district, but when has the green become so precious that we cannot put a yellow ribbon around a tree to honor our service members past, present and future. The monuments are wonderful, but that is not enough. She offered her support to everyone and hopes that the Borough can reconsider and come to a resolution. It is obvious the Carons take good care of the ribbons.

William Deering, 110 McBride Road in Litchfield, said we have funny rules in this town, referring to the illegal gun club on McBride Road that was defeated with thousands of dollars spent out of pocket by him. But we can't have ribbons honoring those who are serving to protect our country? What do they hurt? He thought there should be no continued fight of something that has already been granted.

Ron Leal: What happens to every other organization that has its cause and ribbons? Are they not allowed on the green?

Burke Gibney: Mr. Gibney spoke in favor of the ribbons and felt they have not been a problem, and he doesn't believe that residents have been flocking to the Borough's meetings asking for them to be taken down. The ribbons are harmless and he quoted an op ed posting on litchfield.bz today that said they "admire the subtle and powerful message these ribbons send." They are very meaningful to many people in this community, and it bothers him that the Borough has created this unnecessary controversy that is causing strife in the community. He also felt that since we've been operating with the ribbons on the green for 11 years, other parties have not come forward with a huge demand for other ribbons. The Borough is capable of deciding each request, case by case. He also reminded everyone that nine years ago, the Borough again took down the ribbons and there was another round resulting in the ribbons staying up.

Val Caron, Bantam, said the Borough Board has new people and is not respecting previous agreements. They are angry people on the Board, and have hardened hearts against the military and the families, and people who want the ribbons to stay up. It will be a sad day if the ribbons come down on Jan. 2.

Audrey Blondin, former resident of Litchfield and former BOS member: Ms Blondin noted her letter to the editor at the Republican-American and said this is an issue that is reflective of not just the northwest corner, but of the whole state. People are asking what is wrong with the people of Litchfield. It is a bad reflection on us all. The ribbons are political free speech, and unfortunately this may end up in litigation at a great expense to the taxpayers. The ribbons should stay; she totally supports them.

Linda Shuhi, Litchfield, believed the green does not belong to the Borough - it belongs to the people. It is used several times a year for public events, including the Litchfield Hills Road Race. Because of this the Board of Selectmen can help them persuade the Borough to reconsider their stance, rescind or amend their decision to take down the ribbons. Although we do not have an act of war right now, we are not at world peace.

f) Yellow Ribbons on Green Discussion: D. Raap said that in her tenure, she has only received one call from a resident who did not like the ribbons. She is very supportive of veterans and active duty servicemen, but it is frustrating that people do not understand that this is the Borough's decision and not the Town's. She met with the Board of Selectmen to see what it could do to help persuade the Borough of Litchfield that the Town may not oversee the buildings and parks, but it oversees all the people of the Town. She felt the Town should collaborate more closely with the Borough so that we are stronger together. She is also supportive of any ribbons for other causes that would be ruled on by the Borough.

J. Tenney felt the ribbons should stay and suggested the ribbons be put on the three trees in front of the Town Hall. We could establish a calendar for other ribbons, keeping the yellow ribbons always up.

Christine Harding said that before she was a resident of Litchfield, the appearance of the ribbons on the green was always appealing to her as she drove through. Her father is a Navy veteran, and she has always been an active supporter of the military. The ribbons made her feel that this was a warm, welcoming community. It showed unification and support, as a "small town USA" feeling. Those five trees representing the five branches of the military are amazing. The pink ribbons on the storefronts, as many others displayed by organizations, seem to have one month of recognition designated each year. The yellow ribbons are synonymous with a permanent and constant reminder for us all. She felt very strongly that the ribbons should stay as a reminder of our patriotic support for our country and servicemen.

J. Torrant, a veteran of the Vietnam era, said he was 100% in favor of the ribbons being on the green. We can deal with any ribbons that come forward later. What bothers him is that 300-400 voters in the Borough out of 4,500 in the Town get to decide what happens in the center of town, the focus of Litchfield, a first impression for motorists driving through town. At the last Borough Board election, 130 people voted on who would run the Borough. So a very small portion of the Town is making decisions on what will happen in a focused area of town. Non-Borough residents cannot vote for their Board. He reiterated his 100% support of the ribbons.

J. Zullo said he highly supports the ribbons on the green and understands the Borough's responsibility of managing the green. He questioned why this is happening again after the Board of Selectmen supported the ribbons 9 years ago and the First Selectman wrote a letter to the Borough Board in support. He felt this is a prudent course again, having the First Selectman write a strong letter to reverse their position. He said that he does not understand why the Borough did this, as it has no impact on the Borough's operations.

Motion: J. Zullo moved to endorse the First Selectmen writing a strong letter to the Board of Warden and Burgesses of the Litchfield Borough suggesting that they reverse their position on the yellow ribbons and continue with the agreement made in 2010, and not create this false controversy of not supporting our military. J. Torrant seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion carried. D. Raap said this issue will be revisited if nothing is changed.

Correspondence

a) 10/18/21 Letter from Perley Grimes Re DEEP Orders to Municipalities: J. Zullo felt the letter said DEEP does not have the authority to force us to join with Woodridge Lake Sewer District.

Adjournment: Motion: J. Tenney moved to adjourn at 7:11 p.m. and J. Zullo seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Denise Raap, First Selectman