

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE LITCHFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2024 ~ 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 regular hybrid meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. with Selectmen John Bongiorno, Jeffrey Zullo, Jodiann Tenney and Denise Raap present. D. Morosani arrived at 5:37 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

a) Regular 2/6/24: Motion: J. Zullo moved to approve the regular 2/6/24 meeting minutes, and J. Bongiorno seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

b) Special 2/13/24: Motion: J. Zullo moved to approve the special 2/13/24 meeting minutes, and J. Bongiorno seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

c) Special 2/15/24: Motion: J. Zullo moved to table approval of the 2/15/24 meeting minutes, and J. Bongiorno seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Motion: J. Zullo moved to add to Old Business b) Program Income and to move Old Business a-4) up to fall after the First Selectman's Update. J. Tenney seconded, all voted aye and the motion carried.

Public Requests/Comments: Liam Stewart read his letter of support for the Oliver Wolcott Library. Ed Schuller spoke of how well the OWL serves the senior population and supports its bid for its budget request. Chris Franson spoke in support of the children's educational literacy programs at OWL. Jim Kelleher spoke of the importance of libraries to the education of its people and in being the heart of the town. He asked the Selectmen to give it the revenues to continue. Anna Marie Curtis, speech and language pathologist, sent a letter advocating for continued funding. Kathy Branch sent a letter saying how the OWL made an impact on her granddaughter's strides in confidence in learning to read. *[D. Morosani entered the meeting here, at 5:37 p.m.]*

Selectmen's Requests

D. Morosani will add to budget requests during the discussion. J. Zullo restated that any communications to the complete board via email must remain informational or logistical in nature. There can be no statements about positions or dialogue. Less than three selectmen on an email is not considered a quorum and therefore not an illegal meeting. J. Bongiorno said that he gave no position in his email. J. Zullo said that there was a position stated, and if he continues to do these group emails, keep his name off. J. Tenney thanked everyone for coming to the meetings regarding the budget, as it is important to the Selectmen to have the interest and involvement. D. Morosani thanked all those who came to support the library, and said his wife and daughter are avid storytime attendees.

First Selectman's Update Report: D. Raap tabled her update in the interest of time.

Old Business

a) 4. Budget Discussion - EDC: Tara Marie Lynch, Chairman of the Economic Development Commission, spoke about its mission statement. They serve residents and visitors alike, they support businesses both on and off the green, and they promote responsible economic development. The EDC

budget used to be \$500. Since it has become a much more sophisticated entity with a budget of \$1,000, it has also received \$33,500 in multi-year philanthropic giving and \$30,000 in ARPA funding. Current expenses are about \$1,300/month. They can only cover four more months of the granted funds into the new fiscal year. She said Litchfield, as measured by percentage allocations from its general fund, comes in dead last compared to other northwest towns. It allocates .0031% of its budget to EDC. The 21 northwest CT towns' average is \$21,000. Applied to Litchfield's budget, it would amount to \$50,000. Washington's budget is \$118,000. Despite a later start, our VisitLitchfieldCT initiative has passed theirs with fewer resources. They touch more than 100,000 people and garner tens of thousands of engagement actions every month. They have a budget strategy after a proof of concept exercise. When the grant monies dry up, they will need to decide how to sustain their work. They are looking to beef up incoming support and have a finance subcommittee to research grants. They need to brainstorm revenue generating possibilities for sustainability. The three-year plan continues momentum and refines strategy. They hope to lay the groundwork for making the transition from EDC marketing operations to a potential Town employee with economic and community development responsibilities. Year three could see these core functions to be a permanent function of the Town. The EDC is requesting \$25,000 from the Town. Broken down it would be \$11-\$15,000 for continued marketing support services, \$9,000 for a website improvement project, and \$5,000 for data collection analysis and consultant. Questions and comments were fielded from the Board.

Resignations

- a) Matt Tobin from Pension Commission, alternate member, effective 2/19/24: received and noted**
- b) Bill Cox from Board of Ethics, effective 2/15/24: received and noted**

Declined Reappointment/Not Reappointed

- a) Keetu Winter from Sustainable Litchfield Committee: received and noted**
- b) James Keithan from Sustainable Litchfield Committee: received and noted**

Interviews, Appointments & Reappointments

- a) Appoint Matt Tobin to Pension Commission, regular member, term 2/2027: Motion: J. Zullo moved to appoint Matt Tobin to the Pension Commission as a regular member until 2/2027. D. Morosani seconded, all voted aye and the motion carried.**

- b) Interview Francesca Kracht for Litchfield Housing Authority: Ms Kracht is the Sr. Vice President/Chief Risk Officer at Thomaston Savings Bank. She is on the Board of Ethics, has been Treasurer for the Tri-Town Baseball League, and was on the Litchfield Montessori board. In her position at the bank she is expected to serve on community boards, preferably ones with human needs. Motion: J. Zullo moved to appoint Francesca Kracht to the Litchfield Housing Authority for a term ending 8/2028. J. Tenney seconded, all voted aye and the motion carried.**

- c) Interview Theresa Lavoie for Litchfield Housing Authority: removed from consideration**

- d) Interview Kathleen Orr for Litchfield Housing Authority: Motion: J. Zullo moved to appoint Kathleen Orr to the Litchfield Housing Authority for a term ending 8/2024. J. Tenney seconded, all voted aye and the motion carried.**

- e) Reappoint Sustainable Litchfield Committee Members until 3/2026: Jeffrey Zullo, Carolyn Szwed Dean Birdsall, Diane Field, Margaret Hunt, Daniela Larsson, Barbara Carr and Cathleen Wyse.**

Motion: J. Zullo moved to reappoint all above members to the Sustainable Litchfield Committee until 3/2026. J. Tenney seconded, all voted aye and the motion carried.

Liaison Reports/Commission-Committee Minutes: 2/12/24 Board of Finance

Sustainable Litchfield Update: J. Zullo said they met today and have two vacancies open for anyone who is interested. They continue to work toward the gold certification that is due in August, 2024. They set the annual Earth Day celebration for April 20, 2024 at the Community Center, with the SMART Task Force cleanup in the morning.

WPCA Liaison Update - ARPA Update: J. Bongiorno said they had a good meeting and approved payment of bills. The study is going along well, almost done in Phase I. There is no work being done right now on the solar panels due to muddy conditions. They are meeting with Torrington to finalize the Intermunicipal Agreement.

Vacancies: The list of current appointed vacancies with term expirations is as follows:

Beautification Commission: 2 regular member 2/2025, 2/2026; 2 alternate members 2/2025
Broadband Commission: 1 alternate member 1/2025
Cable TV Advisory Council: 2 members, 1 BOE rep, both 6/2025
Conservation Commission: 1 alternate member 12/2024
Economic Development Commission: 2 regulars 6/2025, 6/2026
Inland Wetlands Commission: 2 alternate members 6/2024
Litchfield Prevention Council: 1 regular member; 6/2024, 2 alt. members 6/2026
Milton Historic District Commission: 2 regulars 1/2024, 1/2028; 3 alternates; 2-1/2024, 1-1/2025
Park & Recreation Commission: 1 alternate member 6/2025
Pension Commission: 2 alternate members 3/2025
Sandy Beach Commission: 1 regular member 12/2025
Social Services Board: 2 regular members 2/2024, 2/2025
Sustainable Litchfield Committee: 1 regular member 3/2026; 1 alternate member 3/2026
Town Facilities Review Committee: 1 BOF Member 3/2026; 1 BOE Member 3/2026; 2 alternates 3/2026
Veterans' Advisory Committee: 2 regular members 8/2023, 8/2025
Western CT Coalition, CAC #22 (formerly NW Regional Mental Health Board): 1 member 5/2025
Zoning Board of Appeals: 3 alternate members 3/2025

Transfers

a) Transfer #6 - \$18,670 from 01-1903-51703 Contingency to 01-1501-52111 Other Professional Services, for Building Dept. Engineering Services: Motion: J. Zullo moved to approve Transfer #6 in 2023/24 for \$18,670 from Contingency to Other Professional Services for the Building Inspector to hire an engineer to review the plans for the Silicon Ranch project. J. Tenney seconded. The Board of Finance approved this transfer at its 2/12/24 meeting. Upon voting all voted aye and the motion carried.

First Responders Recruitment and Retention: D. Morosani said he wants to add budget for the pay-per-call for first responders. J. Zullo said the request should come directly from the Fire Commission. D. Morosani said he would have them bring it back. He then spoke to the cost. Using a total call number of 6,543 (not counting LVA at 1,600), he came to \$162,900, which is \$20/call capped at 100 calls per person per year. This could be taken as a tax abatement or a 1099. The Fire Commission will bring its request to the next meeting.

Old Business

a) Budget Discussion

- 1. Oliver Wolcott Library: Motion:** J. Zullo moved that the Board of Selectmen approve the library budget request in the amount of \$425,450. D. Morosani seconded. Ann Marie White said that if the Board could approve OWL's revised budget request of \$425,450, the additional

\$17,000 would provide expansion of the early reading and literacy efforts, expansion of the digital offerings, and would reduce the impact on the endowment. D. Raap asked if she would consider taking nothing from the endowment this year if the Town met their request, and she said they would consider it. J. Bongiorno complimented her on her budget submission and asked about the increases and decreases. She explained the ebb and flow and adjustments but did not anticipate any big expenditures. **Move the Question:** J. Zullo motioned to move the question, and D. Morosani seconded. J. Tenney asked why they were voting on each request, and J. Zullo said he was just moving the question. Upon voting, all voted aye to move the question. **Vote:** Upon voting on the motion, all voted aye except J. Bongiorno, who voted nay, and the motion carried. J. Tenney wanted to look at the budget as a whole rather than voting on separate items.

2. **Conservation Commission:** The Conservation Commission submitted a budget this year, and Chairman Mark Austin was on hand to explain. He said previous attempts to submit a budget have been declined, and they have tried to operate within the Land Use budget. With more properties coming available that may be used for conservation, they are requesting advertising money and more professional services money (\$7,500). J. Zullo said we need an open space plan before we can budget for it. Mr. Austin said the Open Space Plan is for how we evaluate so we can begin an open space process. There is no date for completion of this. He thought a lesser amount of \$2,000 would get them in to get an additional layer in GIS, or another option would be to put the yellow book under the capital budget. J. Zullo noted this is not a capital expenditure.
3. **Litchfield Historical Society:** Jessica Jenkins was present to promote a workforce development program to provide employment opportunities to area youth in high school or alumni back in town.
4. **Economic Development Commission:** See above

b) **Request for Reprogramming of Small Cities Grant Money:** Peter Testa was on Zoom to answer questions. J. Zullo asked if the used funds can be replaced later with Town funds. Mr. Testa said the money originally came from the Department of Housing to provide loans for repairs on homes. Town funds cannot be used to replenish. The fund is only replenished when the home is transferred and the loan is paid off. If these funds are reprogrammed, they will be reallocated as a grant with administrative costs added. There is \$31,000 in the fund now with three outstanding loans. D. Raap asked A. Obi if we could use ARPA funds for predevelopment costs for the Wells Run project. If so, we can keep the program fund as is and allocate money for predevelopment costs from ARPA.

New Business

a) **Tri-Town Lease:** The lease expired in 2016, and Tri-Town is not excited about running the snack shack, so perhaps the Town's Park and Recreation may consider running it. This will be talked about more at the next meeting.

b) **Firefighting Foam Disposal and ESI Quote for Apparatus Tank Cleaning:** D. Raap said there is a grant for disposal of the PFAS foam, about \$11,500. D. Rogers has two more quotes to get first.

c) **Discuss/Approve Proposed Capital Improvements Budget 2024/2025:** Erich Marriott said a real advantage this year is that they will not have to borrow. Total capital request is \$2,433,900. They decided not to draw down the fund balance to 15% of the budget. **Motion:** J. Zullo moved that the Board of Selectmen approve \$2,433,900 for FY 2024/25 Capital Improvements budget. J. Bongiorno seconded. E. Marriott clarified some items in the Public Works budget and made observations about big items that need to be kept in mind for next year. Voting on the motion, all voted aye and the motion carried.

d) Adopt Authorizing Resolution for a Personal Service Agreement with DEEP: D. Raap read the resolution aloud. **Motion:** J. Zullo moved and J. Bongiorno seconded a motion to adopt the resolution as presented. All voted in favor and the motion carried. The resolution, as adopted, follows:

RESOLVED, that Denise Raap, the First Selectman, be and hereby is authorized to execute on behalf of the Town of Litchfield a Personal Services Agreement with the State of Connecticut for financial assistance in the amount of \$138,392.80 for the **VW NOx Mitigation Funds for Light Duty Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) Project**.

Correspondence: None

Adjournment: **Motion:** J. Zullo moved to adjourn and withdrew his motion for further comments by D. Morosani. D. Morosani added that he thought we should budget \$60,000 for the speed radar signs (10 for \$5,500 each). J. Zullo said that should be a Public Works line item and suggested that the committee that created this put it forward. J. Tenney said she would put it on the agenda for the next Traffic Safety meeting. She also wants to talk about the speed cameras, which should go hand in hand. D. Morosani then suggested D. Raap send a letter to Hartford to see how much money in AirBnB taxes (15%) go to them. Next, J. Zullo summarized his point on the \$2 million we're getting from Region 20 to administrate the paydown of the school bonds on the buildings we are going to transfer to them by the end of June. We are getting a compensating income from that money that will offset our debt service. E. Marriott said it is the mechanics and accounting behind it and he would like to put the money in escrow and defease the actual bonds outstanding that they will offset. J. Zullo then said he spoke to Town Counsel Mike Rybak about a mechanism to commit Region 20 to this payment. Mr. Rybak suggested a debt purchase agreement that Region 20 will sign when we do the transfer, and he said maybe we could put it in an escrow account and defease the actual note. J. Zullo said it is not correct to carry the debt level into our mill rate. He and E. Marriott both agreed this was the way to go. They will get bond counsel involved.

Motion: J. Tenney moved to adjourn at 8:19 p.m. and J. Bongiorno seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Denise Raap, First Selectman